THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ON PUPIL OUTCOMES

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Introduction

This three-year study, commissioned by the *Department for Children, Schools and Families,* in conjunction with the *National College of School Leadership,* focuses upon the critical relationship between school leadership, in particular headteacher leadership, and improved pupil learning outcomes. Taking a review and evaluation of the growing international evidence base as a point of departure, the study investigates not only how successful school leaders impact on students' learning outcomes but also how, in order to do so, they adapt their practices to suit the many different contexts in which they carry out their work. For our purposes, such contexts include: sectors of schooling (primary, secondary); amounts of experience leaders bring to their work; socio-economic levels of their school's student intakes; and leadership in schools in three different 'improvement' groupings.

This interim report presents findings at the half-way point of the study. The report summarises the project design, provides a discussion of key findings and identifies emerging messages.

Research Design and Methods

Begun in January 2006, the study, which uses a mixed method approach linking qualitative (case study) and quantitative (survey) approaches, is being conducted in three phases. During the first, now-completed phase, a comprehensive review of literature was conducted (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins, 2006a), national data sets related to pupil attainment were analysed, and survey data were collected from both head teachers and key staff in a nationally representative achieved sample of high performing and improving primary (378) and secondary (362) schools during 2006/2007. Based on three years (2002-2005) of national pupil achievement data, schools in the sample were allocated to one of three groups for comparison purposes; schools that had significantly improved from a low to moderate level, schools that had improved from a moderate to high level, and schools that had demonstrated stable high achievement and effectiveness[1] These schools were selected to represent different levels of social disadvantage of their pupil intake identified by the % of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM band 1 to 4[2]). School case studies are being conducted over a two year period in phase two (September 2006 – August 2008). This report includes analyses of two rounds of the six round of data collection, in 10 primary and 10 secondary schools. In each school, these data include in-depth interviews with head teachers (N = 20), key staff (including deputy and assistant headteachers, heads of department, and keystage co-ordinators (N = 70), colleagues, including teaching staff, support staff and governors (N = 80), along with a researcher-administered pupil survey. A second wave of surveys to all sample schools also will be administered to follow up the emerging findings identified in phase one. The final phase of the project (September 2008 – January 2009) will entail the integration of all data collected and will seek to develop new insights about the contributions of successful school leadership to pupil outcomes.

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[1]Effectiveness as measured by combined absolute improvement in pupil attainment levels across three years (2003-2005) in key indicators of attainment (%pupils 5A*-C at GCSE for secondary schools; % level 4+ in English and maths at KS2 for primary schools) and significant improvement in value added results for pupil progress using contextualised Value Added (VA) models and simple VA models identified by Fischer
[2]Family Trust (FFT) analyses for three years (2003-2005) OR stable high effective schools in VA terms.
Although it is recognised that the FSM indicator has limitations, it is the only nationally available measure collected for all schools and shows a strong association with attainment. It is commonly used in research studies as an indicator of social disadvantage and in interpreting school performance. In the analysis of schools' attainment data more detailed pupil level data were included to contextualise the value added measures of effectiveness.

Framework Guiding the Research

Building on the literature review completed during the first phase of the research, the framework guiding data collection for the study conceptualised successful leadership practices within four broad categories – building vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation, and managing curriculum and pedagogy – each including a number of more specific actions or behaviours. These practices are influenced by the internal states (attributes) of leaders themselves (e.g., confidence, optimism, knowledge), as well as their perceptions of the broader environment in which their school is situated (e.g., national policies, community context). Successful leadership practices, in turn, influence pupil outcomes indirectly through their proximal effects on such key school conditions as, for example, school culture, academic focus (commonly called academic press in the international literature) - widespread agreement in the school about the priority to be accorded the academic work of students (e.g., Goddard, Sweetland and Hoy, 2000) in the school; the school's behavioural climate (e.g., Willms and Ma, 2004); and teachers' pedagogical practices.

Developing on this way of thinking about the nature, causes and consequences of successful leadership, our review of literature identified a series of seven knowledge claims justified by the available evidence. Six of these claims have been further tested using our project data, in varying degrees from phase one, and serve to organise our report of results in this summary. The seventh claim that "school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence upon pupil learning" will be addressed in the final report since it is dependent upon the sum of evidence provided through the other six claims. Whilst these interim results give additional support for all six claims, they also extend some of these claims in new directions, and provide a more nuanced understanding of how the claims manifest themselves in the unique contexts in which primary and secondary schools in England are situated. This summary includes a brief account of some early findings and messages of relevance to policy and practice. Claims three, four and five, in particular, will form a key part of our research in the final phase which will focus upon how patterns of leadership support and distribution influence a range of student outcomes.

Results

Claim 1. Almost All Successful Leaders Draw On The Same Repertoire Of "Basic" Leadership Practices.

Interim evidence from the study indicates that the four broad categories of "basic" leadership practices included in our initial framework capture a very high proportion of what successful leaders do. In addition, however, this evidence extends previous efforts to identify key specific practices or strategies within each of the categories. Our full interim report richly illustrates what these practices entail.

Building vision and setting directions.
Previous research associated three more specific practices with this category - developing a shared sense of purpose, identifying specific goals to guide the school improvement effort, and demonstrating high performance expectations for staff and students.

The majority of primary and secondary heads in the present study claimed to have increased their efforts over the past three years to develop among staff an overall sense of purpose for their work in the school. Most key staff (Senior and Middle leaders) believed their heads to be providing such an overall sense of purpose. About 75% of key staff respondents to the survey reported that their head teachers provided assistance to school staffs in setting short-term goals to help achieve the school's longer term vision or goals for teaching and learning. One in three heads claimed "a lot of change" on their part in demonstrating high expectations for staff and one in five claimed such change in demonstrating high expectations for students. The vast majority of key staff (92%) reported their headteachers to be demonstrating high expectations for pupil behaviour.

Understanding and developing people.
Previous research associated three specific leadership practices with this category – providing staff with intellectual stimulation (including CPD), offering individualised support to staff (an atmosphere of caring and trust) and modelling desirable values and practices.

Headteachers in successful schools demonstrated a range of strategies for providing staff with intellectual stimulation; they placed great emphasis on the continuing professional development of teachers through a range of formal and informal approaches which focused

upon individual and school related needs. This development was focused, in particular, on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment – especially the assessment of students' academic performance. More than half of heads who responded to the survey reported a substantial amount of change in such efforts on their part, although key staff were slightly more circumspect about the extent of such change. For example, 53% of primary heads and 58% of secondary heads who responded to the survey reported "a lot of" or "very significant" change in practice in relation to providing assistance to staff in setting short-term goals for teaching and learning.

Another focus for teacher professional development, was found to be nurtured by a large majority of primary heads (80%) and secondary heads (70%). This involved encouragement for staff to think about fostering their pupils' learning beyond the academic curriculum; about half of key staff survey respondents agreed that their heads strongly encouraged this focus (N = 933, 53%).

A fair degree of change was reported, also, by both primary and secondary heads in the frequency with which they discussed educational issues with staff. Over the past three years about two thirds (primary: 62%; secondary: 62%) reported either a "lot" or "partial" increase in this; and 70% of key staff reported their heads to be having such discussions with them.

A large minority of both primary (39%) and secondary (42%) heads reported substantial increases in their efforts over the past three years to provide individual staff with support intended to help them improve their teaching practices. About one in four heads also claimed to have significantly increased their efforts over the past three years to provide an atmosphere of caring and trust (an equal number reported little change on their part with respect to this practice, it should be noted). More than 75% of key staff respondents moderately to strongly agreed that their heads were working to develop such an atmosphere. A quarter of primary heads and about a third of secondary heads reported significantly increased efforts over the past three years to model a high level of professional practice and more than 80% of key staff reported their heads to be enacting this practice in their schools.

Designing the organisation. Specific leadership behaviours encompassed within this category include developing a productive professional culture, creating structures to support the culture, building productive school-community relationships, and connecting the school to the wider environment.

With respect to the professional culture in schools, case study evidence suggested that a key part of the focus for most heads was raising the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. The drive to evaluate the contributions of current practice had led to a *more rigorous culture of responsibility with greater individual and collective accountability*. Pupil failure was no longer considered to be an acceptable outcome of teaching. A distinct movement toward a "can-do" or "success" culture was in evidence.

As part of this culture, staff in many of the case study schools felt increasingly empowered to cope with change themselves. Pupils, as well, had increased their own expectations of themselves - especially their academic progress - and what they could expect from teachers. Survey evidence found that about two thirds of primary heads and staff believed that their colleagues shared similar values, beliefs and attitudes related to teaching and learning. Consensus on this matter was significantly weaker in secondary schools, however.

Also, a feature of the culture in at least four of the case study schools, one that appeared to account for part of their success, was a high level of trust, mutual support and openness among staff. The value of school cultures which foster trust among staff, parents and students receives considerable support from many other sources as well[3] .

Case study evidence also suggested the addition to this category of leadership behaviours aimed at *creating a positive behavioural climate* in the school. Six secondary and six primary schools in the study had introduced such a whole school approach to pupil behaviour management which interviewees believed had made significant improvements to pupil outcomes. The contribution of such a behavioural climate to the academic learning of pupils finds support in a growing body of impressive evidence (see, for example, Willms and Ma, 2004).

Managing and supporting the teaching and learning programme. This category of core leadership practices typically includes such specific behaviours, for example, as staffing,

[3]For example, see Tschannen-Moran, M. and Hoy, W. K. (1998). Trust in schools: A conceptual and empirical analysis. *Journal of Educational Administration, 36*(4), 334-352.

aligning resources with the teaching mission, monitoring student progress, supervising instruction, and buffering staff from distractions to their core work. Evidence from the study deepens our understanding of how these specific behaviours are enacted by successful leaders and recommends additional behaviours be added to this category.

Much of this evidence provided by the case studies carried out in 20 schools substantiates the importance that successful leaders attach to the *recruitment, development and retention of a stable staff team*, which is deeply committed to meeting a wide range of pupils' academic, social and emotional needs. Heads with this priority, for example, provided placements for teacher trainees in order to assess their strengths as future staff members; they also spent time observing applicants teaching and interacting with students as part of the recruitment process. There is an especially intense focus on serving the wide range of pupils' needs in schools serving a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils.

Successful heads worked to ensure the alignment of both human and material resources in their schools. For example, the majority of heads reported utilising support staff skills for the benefit of pupil learning and increasing their efforts to do so over the past three years. Similar proportions of heads also claimed to have significantly increased their efforts to locate and strategically allocate teaching resources in their schools.

To manage successfully the teaching and learning programme, considerable effort is required of leaders to keep attention in their schools focused on the core work of teaching. The majority of heads in this study reported regularly observing classroom activities, working with teachers directly to improve their teaching after observation, sometimes through coaching and mentoring; most Key staff agreed that their heads did these things.

Focusing on the core work of teaching was also encouraged by extensive use of data for decisions about pupil progress and the improvement of teaching for individual students as well as groups of students. *Significant increases in the use of pupil achievement data* were reported by more than 25% of heads in both primary and secondary schools; most key staff perceived their head teachers to be encouraging this use of data. As well, most heads (63% primary and 56% secondary) also claimed to use research evidence in their decision making and

about 75% of key staff respondents concurred. Finally, about a third of heads claimed to have been increasing their efforts to buffer teachers from distractions to their core work.

Overall, our interim analysis of data show that a *key strategy* on the part of successful heads to improve the cultures of teaching, learning and achievement in their schools is the *alignment of* structures and cultures with 'vision' and 'direction'. In effect, they *repositioned their schools internally* through changing expectations, aspirations, structures and cultures so that they were able to build and sustain improved performance. They increased effectiveness through a *sustained focus upon raising the quality of teaching and learning whilst at the same time raising the levels of individual and collective efficacy and involvement of staff*.

Claim 2. The Same "Basic" Leadership Values And Practices Are Enacted In Contextually Sensitive Ways.

Interim results point to three features of leaders' contexts that shape the specific ways in which they enact the same core set of leadership values and practices - the extent of their leadership experience; the socio-economic status of their pupils and communities; and the stage of development, or improvement grouping, of their school.

Leaders' experience. Heads who had been in post for a shorter period of time reported more change over the past three years in nearly all aspects of policy and practice about which the study inquired. Less experienced leaders (in terms of time in their current school), for example:

• Made greater efforts to engage parents in the school's improvement efforts;
• Initiated more change in their school's internal review procedures; and
• Reported more efforts to restructure their schools to facilitate the work of staff.

Since recently appointed heads typically find themselves in schools that are new for them, it does not seem surprising that they promote more changes than heads who have been in their schools for some time.

School socioeconomic status. Disadvantaged school and community contexts both required and received more intense leadership effort by heads and others providing leadership in schools. Heads in more disadvantaged (FSM band 4) as

compared with more advantaged (FSM band 1) contexts were reported to make, and themselves reported making, greater efforts, for example:

- To engage parents in the school's improvement efforts;
- To restructure their schools to facilitate the work of staff;
- To help clarify the reasons for the school's improvement efforts; and
- To ensure wide participation in decisions about school improvement.

School improvement group. As we explained in describing our methods, all schools in the study were identified as being in one of three categories based on their three year pattern of student achievement change (schools that had significantly improved from a low to moderate level, schools that had improved from a moderate to high level, and schools that demonstrated stable high achievement).

Our analysis uncovered differences in the enactment of leadership practices by school improvement group, especially in the case of secondary schools. These differences were in the extent of reported change in almost all the aspects of *school structures*, *culture* and *curriculum, pedagogy and assessment*. Compared to other areas of change analysed in our surveys (e.g. academic focus, extracurricular programmes and leadership distribution) where fewer differences were found, these three areas appeared to have been a particularly strong focus of change and improvement for heads in the Low and Moderate/High improvement group in the secondary sample. To achieve rapid and sustained improvement from a low base, it appears that a focus on these areas is particularly important, especially in the larger and more complex organisational context of secondary schools.

Claim 3. School Leaders Improve Teaching And Learning Indirectly And Most Powerfully Through Their Influence On Staff Ability, Motivation And The Conditions of Teachers' Work.

The importance of cultural change in schools in promoting improved pupil attainment outcomes was strongly supported by the case study evidence. The qualitative evidence highlighted a number of dimensions which, taken together, seem to help embed changes in attitudes and practices that affected school culture in a positive way and lead to a greater focus on teaching and learning and raising standards, and also to enhance staff collegiality and commitment. Staff were supported in this by In-Service Education and Training (INSET), other in-house professional development and performance management processes. In this way they were prepared to be responsible and accountable for engaging all pupils more in learning which was set within consistent task and lesson organisation.

In the 20 case studies there were many examples of heads: aligning CPD to the school development plan; nurturing staff self-efficacy and motivation by, for example, building inclusive teams of staff in order to break down barriers to the commitment to whole school vision; improving the physical working conditions for staff and students; and engaging in succession planning through, for example, clarifying roles and distributing responsibilities to selected staff. The timing and application of these strategies were responsive to context but all were used. A key part of the focus for all heads was on raising the quality of teaching and learning. This meant there was a drive to evaluate all current practices and new initiatives. This in turn seems to have led to a more rigorous culture of responsibility with greater individual and collective accountability. One key feature of this culture was that staff felt increasingly empowered to cope with change and innovation.

Claim 4. School Leadership Has A Greater Influence On Schools And Students When It Is Widely Distributed.

This claim was widely believed by those in most roles who provided evidence for our study. Interim results indicate substantial, and quite explicit, distribution of leadership within schools. Such distribution aimed to increase – and sometimes to redesign - the leadership functions of middle managers, as well as to increase the effectiveness of the senior leadership team (SLT). Improving the relationships between heads and SLTs was also a goal for leadership distribution in some schools. In addition, leadership distribution included the creation of new leadership roles, for example, bursar or business managers, and pastoral teams composed largely of non-teaching staff.

Substantial leadership distribution was viewed by most survey and case study respondents as very important to their school's success in improving pupil learning. According to respondents, distributed leadership cultivated a sense of ownership and agency on the part of staff, helped develop a vision for the school shared by most staff, increased staff understanding and sense of responsibility for whole-school matters, buffered teachers from non-teaching responsibilities, and developed the leadership potential of other staff.

Evidence from ten of the case study schools (5 primary and 5 secondary) also demonstrated the potential for distributing leadership to students. In these schools, student councils gave pupils a voice in decision making about changes within the school, for example, how funds should best be used to upgrade playground equipment. Several schools included members of the school council in staff recruitment processes. School council members in most schools were able to communicate directly with head teachers and, in several cases, the governing body. Students' views in six schools (5 secondary and 1 primary) were systematically collected on such matters as the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Questionnaires, interviews and feedback following teacher observations were examples of methods used to collect such views.

Claim 5. Some Patterns Of Distribution Are More Effective Than Others.

As yet our interim results do not include a strong test of this claim. We will address this aspect more directly in the final phase of the project. However, they do offer both provisional support and an important refinement. Leadership distribution, most frequently the product of delegation by the headteacher, commonly took one of two broad forms or patterns. One pattern, "consultative distribution", featured considerable participation of key staff in providing information and advice on school-wide decisions but final decisions were retained by Heads and Deputy Heads. The second pattern, "decisional distribution", awarded full responsibility and a high degree of autonomy to teacher leaders for all decisions in a designated area of responsibility. Both patterns fit within a still-hierarchical management structure, one that was being stretched horizontally but without much loss of vertical control; *the leadership structures in these schools were becoming "fatter" not "flatter".*

While most key staff believed that leadership was widely distributed in their schools, they also viewed the Head's role as pivotal to the school's improvement efforts. Heads largely determined the nature and pattern of leadership distribution in their schools. Which patterns they chose to foster arose from interactions among (a) heads' personal characteristics (e.g., need for control); (b) their own stage of development as leaders (e.g., more experienced leaders had less need to make all decisions themselves); and (c) their estimates of the readiness of their staff to take on greater leadership responsibilities.

These variables offer a more refined understanding of the claim that some patterns are more effective than others. For example, variation in staff readiness could provide justification for quite different patterns, a consultative pattern for staff with less leadership capacity and a pattern providing for more decisional authority for staff with relatively well-developed leadership capacities. This fifth claim, then, should likely be revised to state that "*some leadership patterns will be more effective in some circumstances than in others*". Evidence eventually provided by our full study should spell out the details needed to make such a conditional claim practically meaningful.

Claim 6. A Small Handful Of Personal Traits Explain A High Proportion Of The Variation In Leadership Effectiveness.

Among the small number of personal traits previous evidence has suggested have an influence on the behaviours of effective leaders, this interim report examines, in particular, the extent to which leaders felt self-efficacious about their work. A considerable amount of evidence indicates that feelings of self-efficacy (or self-confidence) related to one's work generates persistence in the face of sometimes daunting challenges and initial failure[4]. Persistence creates opportunities to acquire the abilities needed to address those daunting challenges.

Both primary and secondary heads' responses to items measuring their self-efficacy were positively skewed, indicating high levels of self-confidence on their part. The majority of key staff also viewed their head teachers as highly self-efficacious about their jobs. In both sectors, heads from more disadvantaged schools appeared to have the most positive views about their self-efficacy –

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[4] See Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D. (in press). Linking leadership to student learning: The contribution of leader efficacy, *Educational Administration Quarterly.*

arguably a very good thing given the scope of the challenges they face in their improvement efforts.

Primary heads, however, were relatively less confident than their secondary colleagues about some aspects of their jobs: their ability to manage multiple accountabilities from diverse audiences and their ability to sustain their job satisfaction and motivation in their leadership role, as well as their commitment to the teaching profession, although levels of confidence were still generally high. *Primary heads also were relatively less confident about their ability to raise achievement in national tests and examinations and to manage change in their schools*. Key staff in both primary and secondary schools generally believed that their heads had high levels of confidence; paradoxically, this view was held by more primary than secondary key staff respondents.

There are two final findings reported which add to existing knowledge in the field: i) diagnosis and differentiation; and ii) values led leadership.

i) Diagnosis and Differentiation

The headteachers in the case study schools do not, it seems, pursue only one strategy in their quest for success. Rather, they combine a number but prioritize within these. In other words, they are able to *diagnose* (needs), *differentiate* (in levels of importance and timing of strategies to meet these) and actively *co-ordinate* these strategies. They apply their judgements about the timing and nature of change, and prioritize their change strategies in their schools in different ways according to their diagnosis of need in relation to purpose and context.

Although, as suggested in our 'seven claims' review of the literature, headteachers draw upon the same range of qualities, strategies and skills, the combinations will vary as will the way they are applied, since this relates closely to their personal qualities and traits. This helps to account, for example, for the different ways in which they distribute leadership among staff. We use the term 'layered' or 'nested leadership' to indicate the presence of core aspirations, expectations, qualities and strategies which are available for use. Images of the headteacher as 'juggling' among priorities do not provide a sufficiently accurate description of the skilfully differentiated, careful, focussed (if sometimes intuitive) and caring ways in which these headteachers appear to exercise their responsibilities and accountabilities for raising standards in response to multiple initiatives; as with other aspects of

their work, there were differences in the relative strength of these by sector and by school context (measured by FSM band).

ii) Values and Virtues

All the data so far confirm the importance of leadership values of care, equity and achievement for all. These sit alongside such values as honesty, integrity, trust, fairness and persistence to the exercise and impact of successful leadership. These go beyond the personal traits identified in the literature and underpin the professional identities and actions of the leaders in this research. They are not simply leaders, but rather they are particular kinds of leaders with particular kinds of intra and interpersonal qualities.

Our interim data point to the impact of leadership values and virtues on the school's culture as an important influence on the improvement of student learning. It is these values and virtues of these headteachers which seem to define them, in the eyes of their colleagues and broader community, as confident, problem solving, coupled with proactive optimism, a high level of reflexivity, high ideals and expectations and moral commitment to enhancing pupil learning opportunities and outcomes to which cultures of praise, warmth and care are integral.

Summary of Key Messages

1. The Primacy of the Headteacher

Headteachers are still perceived as the main source of leadership by school key staff. Their leadership practice shapes the internal processes and pedagogic practices that directly result in school improvement especially for schools in challenging circumstances.

1.1 The leadership of the head has an important direct effect on the way teachers think about the leadership and management of their teaching and learning practices which, indirectly, influences pupil outcomes (chapters 7 and 9).

1.2 Leadership for improvement requires the alignment of structures, values and vision. This is orchestrated and reinforced by the headteacher in successful and improving schools (chapter 7 and 9).

1.3 Leaders in improving schools select, sequence and harmonize improvement strategies so they reinforce and support each

allows staff to maximize the improvement efforts without being distracted by competing strategies or priorities (chapter 7 and 9).

2. Leadership Qualities and Values

Headteachers are adaptive in their leadership and management strategies, within a core values framework governed by principles of care, equity and performance.

2.1 Flexibility, persistence, resilience and optimism within a system of values – led practices are key qualities of successful headteachers, particularly those facing daunting conditions (chapter 4).

2.2 The head leads in ways which demonstrate responsiveness to local culture and national policies, within clear ethical frameworks which emphasise care, equity and performance (chapter 7 and 10).

3. Expectations and Outcomes

Headteachers' expectations and aspirations emanated from a view of pupil achievement which incorporated improved behaviour, academic, personal and social and affective dimensions.

3.1 The setting of high expectations for staff and students was a central strategy in developing the teaching and learning programmes (chapter 5).

3.2 School success in raising student outcomes rests on the establishment of high achievement-focussed school cultures in which care and trust are predominant features (chapter 5).

3.3 Introducing a whole-school approach to pupil behaviour management is positively associated with improved student outcomes (chapter 5).

4. Leadership and Teaching and Learning

Agreement by key staff differed in relation to their perceptions of their headteachers' involvement in pedagogy and assessment. A substantial number of key staff noted that the headteacher uses data to plan for individual pupil needs and to make decisions about school improvement. However, not as many agree that headteachers are involved in the detail of curriculum development and the pedagogy of improvement. Moderate levels of agreement were identified with regards to the

promotion of CPD activities and the encouragement of teachers to think innovatively about their practice.

4.1 Head and other leaders had expanded the curriculum beyond the confines of the traditional academic subjects, in order to boost student engagement in school and, thereby, their achievement (chapter 6).

4.2 A key leadership strategy in the effective schools was that of placing a high priority and consistent emphasis upon improving classroom teaching across the school (chapter 6).

4.3 Allocating and distributing personnel and resources appropriately so as to foster student achievement was a focus for a significant number of headteachers and other leaders in the schools (chapter 6).

4.4 Head and staff in the schools were using increasingly detailed analyses of student progress and achievement data to inform their teaching (chapter 6).

4.5 Introducing a whole-school approach to pupil behaviour management is positively associated with improved student outcomes (chapter 5).

5. Leadership Distribution

All headteachers distributed leadership, but the forms, purposes and extent of distribution varied.

5.1 Effective leadership relies upon an increasingly close and collaborative relationship between headteachers and the SLT (chapter 4).

5.2 The creation of new 'distributed' leadership roles and patterns was a consistent feature of the effective schools (chapter 4).

5.3 Broadening participation in and communication about change needed to promote improvement is a key leadership strategy (chapter 4).

5.4 Development of student leadership in some schools was considered to be a means of enhancing pupil outcomes (chapter 5).

6. Leadership and Strategic Change

Headteachers used a range of strategies in building the effectiveness capacity of the school. Their leadership and management of schools' vision, direction, change agenda, and the direct and indirect influence which they exercise in relation to expectation

raising, capacity building, staffing, leadership and management structures, cultures and pedagogy are key to the improvement of schools.

6.1 The majority of primary and secondary school key staff reported moderate or strong agreement on the important role of headteacher leadership practices in relation to school structures, culture, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. However, whilst most key staff perceived that their head had a very important role in setting the direction, not as many agreed that he/she developed people or discussed educational issues with staff (chapter 7).

6.2 One-quarter of the key staff attributed the school's success in improving student outcomes to the head's strategic vision in positioning the school so that it could respond to change in a robust way (chapter 7).

6.3 Prominent strategies that the head used to promote a positive response to change within the school included:
- Developing the leadership potential of staff within the school by giving them additional responsibilities.
- Giving developing leaders opportunities to attend external leadership courses.
- Aligning CPD with the school development plan, and increasingly relying more upon internal models of CPD, rather than external courses.
- The head responding positively to external policy changes, and in this way providing a positive role model for how staff responded to change.
- Building a strong, caring and inclusive staff team was commented upon as important by the majority of participants across the case study schools, in ensuring all staff were committed to helping students achieve their best, as well as being aware of their role in achieving that vision (chapter 7).

7. Leadership Differences by Improvement Groupings
Schools which have improved from a low point (i.e. from low to moderate/high) have made the most changes.

7.1 The categorisation of schools into three distinctive groups reveals that there are statistically and educationally significant differences in certain leadership features and practices (chapter 8).

7.2 There are important relationships between school context and the school improvement group, and between school context and heads' time in post (chapter 8).

7.3 There are distinct features that differentiate schools in the three improvement groups. There is strong evidence that schools in the Low to Moderate/High group had made greater improvements in changing school culture, climate and addressing teaching and learning and use of performance data during the last three years (chapter 8).

7.4 Participants were significantly more likely to report substantial improvement in pupil behaviour, attendance, attitude and motivation. These aspects are likely to be important precursors and facilitators for improvement in students' academic achievements, especially in high disadvantage contexts (chapter 8).

7.5 Heads in the Low to Moderate/ High Group were more likely to prioritise strategies to improve teaching and learning and the use of data than those in the Stable High effective group (chapter 8).

8. Leadership Differences by Experience

Effective headteachers employ different improvement strategies depending on their experience and time in post and their perceptions of the need for change in their school. During their early years in a school (0-3 years), headteachers are more active in initiating changes to effect improvement.

8.1 Level of leadership experience of the head has an association with the level of change implementation to structures in the school (chapter 4).

9. Leadership Differences by Sector

There were differences between the leadership practices and influence of primary and secondary headteachers.

9.1 More primary than secondary heads reported a substantial amount of change in providing assistance to staff in setting short-term goals for teaching and learning and encouraging staff to thinking of learning beyond the academic curriculum (chapter 7).

9.2 Compared to primary heads, secondary heads tended to report more change in relation to the use of and prioritising regular classroom observation, coaching and

mentoring and redesigning resources for teaching (chapter 7).

9.3 Secondary heads are more likely to use indirect approaches (operating via the SLT and Head of Departments) to support the development of teaching and teachers (chapter 7).

10. Leadership Differences by Socio-economic Context

There are relationships between the extent of the disadvantaged context of schools (FSM band) and the amount of change in leadership practice reported by primary and secondary heads.

10.1 Most successful heads seem to draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices, including building vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organizing and managing the teaching and learning programme. However, this seems to be mediated by context, with a greater number of practices being required to effect change in more disadvantaged schools (chapter 4).

10.2 Effective heads in challenging circumstances have to be more responsive to school cultural and policy contexts in order to improve pupil outcomes and make greater efforts to effect improvement in a range of ways. Improvements in only one or two areas are unlikely to be sufficient (chapter 8).

10.3 Effective heads in challenging circumstances (disadvantaged contexts) employ a broader range of strategies in order to implement and manage change and especially seek to stimulate specific improvements in teaching and assessment and the use of performance data (chapter 8).

10.4 Changes in efforts to engage parents in school improvement were more likely to be reported by heads with less experience at their current school, and by headteachers in more disadvantaged contexts (FSM 3 and 4 schools) (chapter 4).

10.5 The use of performance data was reported more conclusively by schools improving in disadvantaged contexts (chapter 6).

Discussion

The research so far has provided evidence of a number of leadership qualities, virtues and strategies which were reported by heads, key staff and colleagues as being central to improving their schools to promote change. The qualitative data, in particular, point to the **primacy of the headteacher, as 'primus interpares', in leading others in leading change; and of the creation of cultures which combine high expectations of staff and students with high levels of care. In these successful schools, there is clear evidence that 'Every Child Matters'**.

The various changes in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and leadership structures and cultures were widely perceived to have promoted increased pupil and staff engagement and self-confidence and thus led to raised levels of engagement and attainment as cultures of aspiration, care and achievement grew. So far the evidence we have produced **provides stronger support for the indirect effects than for the direct effects model of the way heads influence pupil outcomes**. The emerging findings point also to the **heads' leadership activity varying over time (being stronger in the early years of headship in a particular school), by school context,** tending to be greater in disadvantaged (and usually) in secondary school contexts, and by school sector.

Our data so far suggest that the sample of highly effective and improved schools are not unusual (except in their strong positive impact of pupil outcomes), in that their leadership practices do not seem to be radically different from those in other schools. What may be more unusual is the mindset, culture and extent of strategic direction and clear focus that involves a commitment to a consistent and sustained focus on improving teaching and learning over several years achieved via changes in structures, culture, and curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Conclusion

We believe that the interim results summarised here, and the many other findings described in our full interim report, provide important insights about how successful heads improve student learning and how they adapt their practices to the unique features of the contexts in which they find themselves whilst maintaining a strong values-led ethos. Our interim results support, refine, extend, and add to claims justified by the earlier reviews of evidence about successful school leadership. Nonetheless, we still have more case study data to collect, a second wave of surveys to administer; and the quantitative data will be subject to structural equation modelling (see chapter 3). Data collected during the remainder of the project will considerably deepen and add to

the findings and key messages of this interim report.

Additional Information

Copies of the full report (DCSF-RB018) - priced £4.95 - are available by writing to DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ.

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Further information about this research can be obtained from James Rushbrooke, 6C, DCSF, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

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