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National College
for School Leadership

Schools and academies

Performance beyond expectations

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and the National College for School Leadership for sponsoring this project; for supporting the team through the peaks and troughs that come with a project as complex, demanding and unprecedented as this; for believing that this was a project worth doing and that could be done; and for appreciating that there would be important findings and insights to share with school and system leaders about performance beyond expectations.

We also want to thank the more than 220 leaders and other players in the 18 participating organisations who opened their schools, local authorities, businesses and sporting organisations to research inquiry and scrutiny – often for the very first time; who trusted our team and the research process; who gave generously of their time before, during and after the case study visits; and who offered thoughtful and detailed feedback on the drafts of our final case study reports.

1 Introduction

“The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark.”

Michelangelo

“Aim for the sky and you’ll reach the ceiling; aim for the ceiling and you’ll reach the floor.”

Bill Shankly, former manager of Liverpool Football Club 1913–81

1.1. In 2007, a transatlantic research team directed by Professor Andy Hargreaves of Boston College in the United States, and Professor Alma Harris, now of the London Institute of Education, sought and secured funding from the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust in England to undertake an unprecedented, firsthand research study of organisations that perform above expectations in business, sport and education. The health sector was also included in the initial plan but was later withdrawn. As far as the researchers could determine, no study on such a scale using firsthand data in public and private sector organisations across a range of personnel beyond the chief executive officer (CEO) had ever been conducted or published before.

1.2. The study explores how organisations in the private and public sector can achieve exceptionally high performance, given their history, size, client base and previous performance. It probes what it means to exceed expectations, the different definitions of performing beyond expectations that exist and prevail, and the leadership practices within organisations that enable these organisations to excel and outperform others.

1.3. The study addressed three key research questions:

- What characteristics make organisations of different types successful and sustainable, far beyond expectations?
- How does sustainability of performance beyond expectations in leadership and change manifest itself in education compared with other sectors?
- What are the implications for schools and school leaders?

1.4. We found that leading an organisation far beyond expectations entails an arduous yet inspiring journey. It is to be engaged in an epic narrative where organisational leaders and players:

- strive to reach a clear and compelling destination in relation to an unwanted or underestimated departure point
- establish solid underpinnings and creative pathways as well as clear indicators of progress for reaching the desired destination
- cultivate and co-ordinate everyone’s capabilities to embark on and complete the challenging journey together
- develop the drive that maintains momentum and provides the steering and direction that ensures the effort does not miss the mark

1.5. Leading and performing beyond expectations is evident in many fields. It is, for instance, the subject of some of the greatest narratives of history, politics, religion and literature – Moses in Exodus, Henry V at Agincourt, Frodo Baggins of Middle-earth, Dorothy on the Yellow Brick Road to Oz, and Barack Obama in the US presidency among them. In all of them, an unlikely and sometimes reluctant leader, who emerges from beneath or comes from beyond, gathers and galvanises a group of oddly assorted individuals with unrealised talents and capabilities. They set out from humble and sometimes humiliating beginnings on a treacherous yet sometimes thrilling journey, overcoming many obstacles, towards a distant and improbable destination, which offers almost unimaginable prospects of safety, security and success beyond measure for themselves and their wider community. This extraordinary leadership is also evident in business, sport and education.

1.6. This research is based on extensive literature reviews of performance beyond expectations in business, sport and education and on detailed case studies of 18 organisations, in multiple sectors, across 5 countries and 3 continents. We recorded and transcribed more than 220 interviews. After extensive analysis, we wrote original case study reports of between 8,000 and 16,000 words each to be approved by the participating organisations according to the ethical protocols of the participating universities¹. These reports also drew on the collection and analysis of extensive archival, documentary and website data such as mission statements, programme information, press articles, financial performance data, published rankings on various indices, and official histories of and research studies on the organisations in question. Except in one geographically remote instance, at least two of the nine research team members conducted the case studies to strengthen claims of validity. Details of the project's methodology are provided in Appendix 1.

1.7. The 18 case studies in this unique project provide a disciplined and diverse sample of organisations that exceed expectations. They stretch from large multinationals, through national and regional organisations, to relatively small companies, primary schools and sports teams. Some are mainstream, globally known brands. Other are alternative and innovative icons in their sectors. In some instances, the histories of the organisations extend back over a century – they have clearly been 'built to last'². In other cases, the sample includes essential and influential new entrants on the innovative terrain of their sector's landscape – internet companies, co-operatively owned industries and privately run public sector organisations, for example.

1.8. The nine education case studies comprise two local authorities (Tower Hamlets and Walsall), a strategic partnership of one school improving with the support of another (Central Technology College in Gloucestershire), two secondary schools (Grange Secondary in Oldham and John Cabot Academy in Bristol), three primary schools (Kanes Hill in Southampton, and Limeside and Mills Hill in Oldham) and a multi-site special education centre (West Oaks North-East Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre in Leeds).

1.9. In business, the case studies comprise leading retailer Marks & Spencer (M&S), international auto manufacturer Fiat Auto, internet shopping site Shoebuy.com, US-based iconic craft (real ale) brewery Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, and co-operatively run chemical company Scott Bader. In sport, the four case studies are international cricket leader Cricket Australia, championship football (soccer) club Burnley Football Club, Hull Kingston Rovers Rugby Football Club and Kilkenny Hurling (or Kilkenny Cats), the most successful hurling team in Ireland.

2 Criteria of performing beyond expectations

2.1. Not all the organisations in our sample are ones we first contacted or investigated in the preliminary stages of this research. Many organisations – some of them extremely well-known brands such as a leading premier league football club and a national medical organisation of worldwide renown – had to be rejected because they did not meet the criteria of the research. On closer scrutiny, some were perhaps peak performers but not especially above expectations given their extremely high levels of investment and support. Some were merely striving to perform above expectations but had not yet succeeded in doing so. In other cases, the official performance of the organisations in question was ethically compromised.

2.2. Each was eventually included only because of clear evidence that it met one or more of three clear performance criteria, demonstrating:

- sequential performance beyond expectations over time through revival or awakening after previous poor performance, or attainment of high success following unheralded early beginnings
- comparative performance beyond expectations in relation to high levels of achievement compared with peers
- contextual performance beyond expectations as evidenced in strong records of success despite various indicators of relatively weak investment, limited resource capacity or very challenging circumstances

2.3. All the case studies included had to meet standards of organisational responsibility or ethical performance beyond expectations in their treatment of workers, clients and the community. In more detail, these criteria involve sequential, contextual, comparative and ethical performance beyond expectations.

2.3.1. Sequential performance beyond expectations

Many of the case studies selected had faced bankruptcy, relegation, takeover, closure or public and professional ignominy after damning reports and disastrous results, yet they had turned around to achieve not only solvency and survival but also impressive levels of success. Fiat Motors, M&S, Scott Bader, Burnley Football Club, Hull Kingston Rovers, Walsall local authority, Tower Hamlets local authority, Grange Secondary School, Central Technology College, and Kanes Hill and Limeside primary schools all achieved remarkable revivals. In some cases, the declines and recoveries of coasting organisations that had been trading on past reputations, or that had experienced then recovered from unexpected performance dips, were less dramatic but nonetheless real. Cricket Australia, John Cabot Academy and Mills Hill Primary School all exemplify this sort of awakening.

2.3.2. Contextual performance beyond expectations

Many of the organisations in this sample faced great challenges in achieving satisfactory and then more than satisfactory levels of performance given the characteristics of their clientele or their initial levels of human and financial resources – actual or perceived. They did a lot with what appeared to be a little, often turning what had previously been considered liabilities in the local population into indispensable assets. Tower Hamlets, Grange Secondary School, Central Technology College, and Kanes Hill and Limeside primary schools all serve children and families in circumstances of intense poverty and extreme deprivation. The West Oaks North East Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC) educates and develops children with profound and extremely challenging special educational needs. Burnley Football Club was promoted to the premier league despite having the smallest playing squad and some of the lowest levels of wages and crowd attendances in its existing division. Hull Kingston Rovers similarly achieved its turnaround despite being situated in a highly deprived working-class community where resources for club development were in scarce supply and far inferior to the club's more opulent neighbour. To find similar challenges as a context for improvement in the business sector, it would be necessary to include social enterprises and not-for-profit organisations.

This was not feasible given the scope of the study. It is worth mentioning, however, that in comparison with other turnaround companies that often hire and fire at will, Fiat Motors turned around with a heavily unionised Italian workforce where dramatic improvements were attained, initially without closing a single factory (although, in 2010, the management has suggested this might be necessary).

2.3.3. Comparative performance beyond expectations

Organisations that perform above expectations often do so in relation to similarly placed peers, or after having improbable origins – frequently receiving awards and accolades for doing so. Through exceptional innovation and sustainable growth, these organisations outperform most or all of their counterparts over long periods of time. While almost all the organisations in this study fit this criterion to some degree – such as the schools that receive outstanding inspection reports, or the sporting organisations that do far better than their wealthier peers – the organisations for which this peer factor is the primary criterion of performing beyond expectations include Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, which endured an uneven start-up and went on to outperform most other US microbreweries; Shoebuy.com, which survived the dotcom bust and global economic collapse to win entrepreneur of the year awards and become the seventh largest internet shopping site; and Kilkenny Hurling, which attained consistently high levels of trophy-winning achievement compared with its peers, without any additional levels of investment that might otherwise explain its advantage.

2.3.4. Ethical performance beyond expectations

In addition to these criteria of performing beyond expectations, we have taken scrupulous care to exclude organisations that have questionable records of ethical integrity. The project has no interest in investigating and thereby elevating organisations that perform above expectations by ethically problematic means. Therefore, we have excluded retail organisations with records of possible labour exploitation in the developing world; energy companies with clear histories of avoiding responsibility for lowering their impact on environmental pollution; sports clubs under non-transparent, anonymous ownership; or schools and local authorities that manufacture the appearance of improvement by manipulating test score results through measures such as concentrating disproportionate attention on borderline students who will produce quick lifts in measured performance at the expense of the rest.

2.3.4.1. While we have ruled out the most obviously ethically problematic cases on the grounds discussed above, we also acknowledge that the ethical criteria for inclusion and exclusion are not always clear-cut. Like other criteria for performance beyond expectations, these too are open to argument and debate in some instances. One school in this study had a strategic partner that introduced an effective yet publicly controversial behaviour management strategy, which was criticised for treating the most severe cases of misbehaviour using complete isolation of offending students from their peers. Schools, like two of those in this study, which improve results in examination passes through students taking high numbers of art and technology courses, are defended by their advocates on the grounds that they concentrate on the curriculum that suits the interests and learning styles of their students, yet they are criticised by opponents for ignoring core subjects and concentrating on easier options.

2.3.4.2. Several of our sports teams struggle with developing a successful approach to promoting racial diversity on and off the field. In the business sector, not everyone might be comfortable with including a case study of an organisation that produces alcoholic beverages. And in the aftermath of a global financial collapse, no one can be completely certain that the companies in this study will be able to maintain their high standards of corporate social responsibility in avoiding the exploitative labour practices sometimes adopted by lower-priced competitors, or in maintaining the safety standards of the auto industry, which have been breached by competitors when they have tried to produce too quickly or expand too fast³. Ethical integrity is not a one-time accomplishment but a continuing struggle and quest, and sometimes a matter of argument and debate.

2.4. This study is about understanding performance beyond expectations, not uncritically celebrating it. Just because the organisations in this study have performed above expectations at one point or for some time, does not mean or guarantee that they will perform above expectations forever, or even for the duration of this study itself. This report is an explanation, not a prophecy. We do not claim to be the George Soros or Warren Buffett of educational change – able to predict high performance in the future with exceptional

confidence. Retaining only those cases of performance beyond expectations in the sample that survived the research period would provide no assurance they would still survive one or two years later. Jim Collins' book *How the Mighty Fall*, written after the global economic collapse of 2007-08, points out that some of the companies that have gone into precipitous decline were once the very companies Collins picked out as improving in *Good to Great* or described as being 'built to last'⁴.

2.4.1. During the course of this project, some organisations have undergone remarkable and unexpected transformations as a result of external events largely beyond their control. On the day of our site visit in Turin, it became publicly apparent that in the midst of a global recession, Fiat Motors would merge with and possibly take over Chrysler Motors. Not only does this mean that in some respects it is now another organisation altogether, but the fate of the merger is not a foregone conclusion – indeed, the CEO's annual report in April 2010 indicated that progress had fallen short of turnaround targets at that point. Cricket Australia lost the Ashes to England for the second time in four years, after dominating the international series for a decade before. Burnley Football Club was included because it sustained solid status in the English championship league despite inferior levels of support compared with most of its peers. In the midst of this study, it then improbably exceeded even these expectations by being promoted into the premiership. Yet after an initial run of very promising results, its inspirational manager and management team were headhunted in mid-season by a similarly placed but wealthier competitor – a move that then plunged the club into a reverse trajectory of decline within a matter of months. And two of the study's high-performing and dramatically turned-around schools were closed and converted into city academies because of a wider social cohesion agenda in one case, and in the other after failing by one per cent (the equivalent of less than one pupil) to meet the government's newly defined floor targets for A*-C grade passes at GCSE.

2.5. Finally, what counts as performance beyond expectations, and who has the authority to award its status, are often not fully clear and are frequently contested on ethical, professional and technical grounds. Some sports teams put financial stability and sustainability over achieving the highest league position at any price, while competitors risk indebtedness to enhance their league position. Some companies celebrate being sector leaders in profits and growth, while others prefer to be a trusted brand leader or high performer on criteria of corporate social responsibility as long as their market position is strong enough. Existing leaders are often inclined to single out and celebrate high performance for which they can claim responsibility, whereas new leaders seeking organisational or political leverage are more inclined to point to evidence or indicators of failure and underperformance as an impetus for enhancing their authority to initiate remedial measures that will underpin their reputation for bringing about effective change and eventual success. In order to maintain momentum, private and sporting organisations often keep setting new targets for growth, profits, share returns or league standings after existing ones have been met. In the public sector, the strategy also includes altering (sometimes suddenly) the measures or methods themselves – what count as floor targets for examination passes or being designated as a school that is 'hard to shift', for example. In all these cases, performance beyond expectations is often subject to technical, professional and political debate and controversy.

2.6. This study highlights four key insights about performance beyond expectations and criteria to measure it.

- Criteria for performance beyond expectations are multiple. They can relate to past performance, surrounding circumstances or the performance of comparable peers, and on different criteria in each of these cases. There is no single factor that prevails above all others as a gold standard for performance beyond expectations.
- Criteria for performance beyond expectations are controversial and contested. There is often disagreement about and struggle over which are the most important criteria, and who has the right to define and impose them.
- Performance beyond expectations can be explained but not predicted. Only hindsight is an exact social science. Criteria for performance beyond expectations, such as the ways in which examination passes are calculated, may be changed, external crises like an economic collapse may intrude, and one kick or strike of the ball can separate stellar success from years of decline in sport.
- In research studies conducted in real time rather than just in hindsight, understanding how performance beyond expectations is defined and attained, and whether it persists and on whose criteria, is therefore an important prerequisite to explaining what produces exceptional performance.

2.7. Whether they outperform in relation to their peers, their conditions of operation, or their previous selves, all organisations in this study clearly meet some or all of the criteria for performing beyond expectations on multiple and verifiable indicators of success (Table 1).

Table 1: Performance criteria demonstrated by organisations performing beyond expectations

	Performing beyond expectations			
	Sequential		Contextual	Comparative
	Revival	Awakening		
Fiat motors	✓		✓	
M&S	✓			
Shoebuy.com				✓
Digfish Head				✓
Scott Bader	✓			
Burnley Football Club	✓		✓	
Cricket Australia		✓		
Hull Kingston Rovers	✓		✓	
Kilkenny Hurling				✓
Tower Hamlets LA	✓		✓	✓
Walsall LA	✓			✓
Grange School	✓		✓	✓
John Cabot Academy		✓		
Central Technology College	✓		✓	✓
West Oaks SILC			✓	✓
Kanes Hill Primary School	✓		✓	✓
Limeside Primary School	✓		✓	✓
Mills Hill Primary School		✓		

Note: LA = local authority

2.8. The findings in this research report are based on valid and reliable data derived from a rich set of case studies from within three sectors. The remainder of this report is structured into a further five sections, plus appendices. In section 3, each case study is described, covering its key characteristics, its performance trajectory over time including dips and peaks, and a set of precise, objective indicators of how it performs beyond expectations. Sections 4 and 5 investigate what explains performance beyond expectations. Section 4 gives a brief review of research literature on this subject, and section 5 explains why the 18 organisations in this project perform beyond expectations. There are 15 key factors or F factors, which explain performance beyond expectations and how high-performing leaders secure exceptional performance. At least three examples – one from each sector – are used to support the argument in relation to each of the factors. Section 6 sharpens our analysis and its implications by clarifying what performing beyond expectations does not mean and does not involve. It does this by addressing five common fallacies of change and improvement, which are challenged by the project findings. The final section sets out some implications for school leaders arising from our findings.

3 Case study descriptions and indicators

3.1. This section provides an overview of the 18 case studies and the indicators that justify their selection. We found it easiest to access the nine educational sites, which are all in England. They are accustomed to being researched, familiar with the sponsors, and usually cognisant of the professional and published work of the research directors. Obtaining access to business and sports sites was much more challenging. The research team had no established academic credibility with these sectors and few or no networks on which they could draw. There are not many precedents of multiple case studies using firsthand data in sport or business. Single case studies of leading organisations in business and sport tend to go to trusted insiders, hired consultants or high-profile journalists. Sports and business organisations also have to pay attention to guarding their secrets of innovation or training methods, and to managing their image, especially at times of scandal and controversy concerning matters such as player disputes or factory shutdowns. Access to non-educational organisations therefore took many months and usually more than a year to achieve in the face of suspicion from and rejection by many eligible organisations. We eventually had to halt our research in the health sector after extremely time-consuming difficulties with the sector's ethical review process, which reached a critical point during a national crisis on performance management and duties of care in one health trust.

3.1.1. Despite these obstacles, we were ultimately able to access a wide range of case study sites in business, sport and education, which met the project criteria for performing beyond expectations. This section introduces the background to and performance trajectory of each site and provides clear indicators of how, in what ways and to what extent the case studies do indeed demonstrate performance above expectations.

3.2. Business

The business sector case studies comprise a wide range of five company types: an international auto manufacturer, a global retail giant, a leading internet shopping site, a craft (real ale) brewing company and a co-operatively owned chemical manufacturer.

3.2.1. Fiat Auto⁵

3.2.1.1. Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino (Fiat) has come a long way from the brink of bankruptcy in 2004 when up to 200,000 jobs worldwide were at stake. As one of Ernest Hemingway's fictional characters put it, the slide towards bankruptcy happened 'gradually and then suddenly'. Founded in 1899, Fiat had built a classic and honourable reputation throughout most of the 20th century. It was arguably the pioneer of the European car industry. Its creator, Giovanni Agnelli, a former cavalry officer, became the king-like head of a family and corporate dynasty, which ruled Fiat in a regal and patrician style for more than 100 years. The Agnelli family was practically regarded as Italian royalty. For many decades, it was believed that what was good for Fiat Motors was also good for Italy as a nation.

3.2.1.2. Fiat's golden age is remembered by many people, including the company's executives, as the 1960s, when the tiny Fiat 500 was a market success and an iconic element in romantic European movies. By the early 1980s, the signs of Fiat's slow decline were already evident. A robust yet protected domestic market in which Fiat sales peaked at 59 per cent of market share in 1988, and a European market that still held up respectably at 15 per cent, masked a host of underlying problems. Outsourcing, which had comprised only 50 per cent of production in 1982, had escalated to 65 per cent a decade later. Similar patterns held for design work. In the United States, the boxy designs of Fiat vehicles were not only unattractive but also unreliable. Warranty repair costs on the 1974 Fiat Strada wiped out any profits on its sales. Among North Americans, Fiat became an acronym for Fix It Again, Tony or Fix It Again Tomorrow, and in the early 1980s the company abandoned the US market altogether.

3.2.1.3. When Gianni Agnelli passed away in January 2003, Fiat was not just in decline. It was in crisis. The company had posted losses for three successive years. A dizzying succession of four CEOs in three years failed to produce any indications of turnaround. Even Turin's mayor felt that Fiat was "a badly run company".

3.2.1.4. In 2004, an Italian-born Canadian, Sergio Marchionne, took over the reins at Fiat to become the first CEO ever to run the company from outside the influence of the Agnelli family. By 2004, Fiat had become a rudderless organisation in dire financial straits after 17 straight quarters in deficit. Marchionne had inherited what he later described as a 'laughing stock', even a 'cadaver'. With doom and gloom still on his side, Sergio Marchionne persuaded US General Motors to pay Fiat \$2 billion to withdraw from a partnership with it. By as soon as 2006, he had returned the company to profitability, and by 2008, before the global economic collapse, Fiat's bottom line was solidly in the black.

3.2.1.5. Fiat's remarkable performance beyond expectations falls into six domains: financial performance (such as revenue and share value), market share compared with other auto manufacturers, previous performance, honours and awards, indicators of customer satisfaction, and progress in social responsibility. Indicators include:

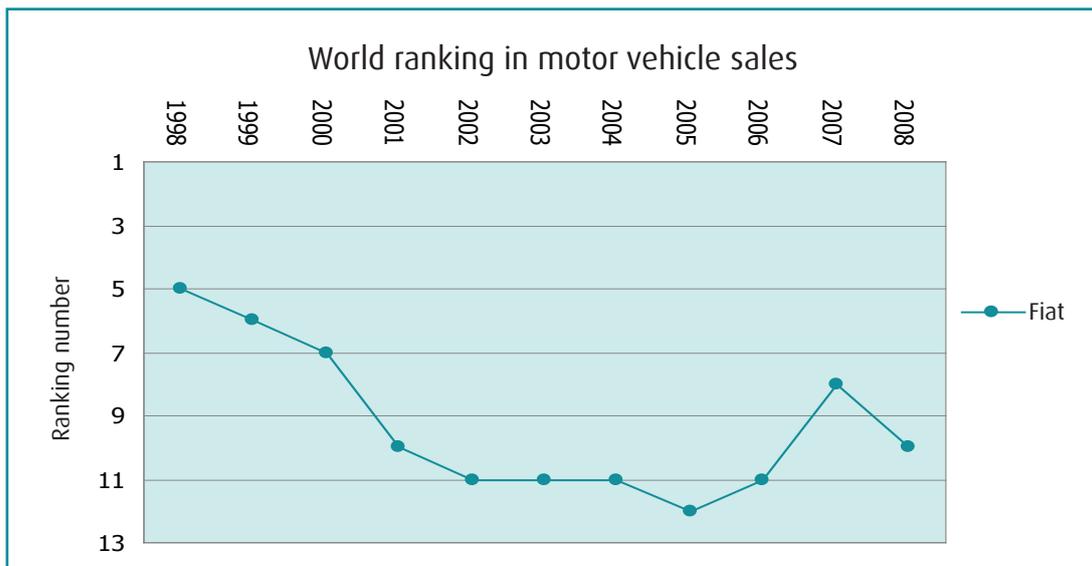
- 17 quarters in succession of being continuously in the red, followed from 2006 by 2 straight years in the black, ending only with the collapse of the global economy in 2007 and 2008
- moving from a €1.6 billion loss in 2004 to a profit of €1.6 billion per annum by 2008 – just 20 per cent short of the €2 billion that Marchionne first predicted when he took over the failing company in 2004
- an increase of about 10 per cent in European market share from 6.6 per cent to 7.2 per cent between 2008 and 2009, despite this period following the global economic downturn and a 3-year period of continuous growth in European market share before the 2008 downturn; market share also continues to grow in Italy and Latin America (where it stands at almost 25 per cent in Brazil); Italian market share has increased from 24 per cent to 33 per cent in 5 years
- the Fiat Group having 5.14 per cent of UK market share in the first 8 months of 2009 – its greatest percentage of shares since May 2001
- a tripling of share value between 2004 and 2007 and, after the global downturn and drop in share values across the market, an annual doubling of share value again between August 2008 and 2009
- increases in customer satisfaction levels (as measured by the Customer Satisfaction Index), for instance, by almost 25 per cent between 2005 and 2006
- awards and honours that include European car of the year 2008 for the Fiat Cinquecento, best city car for the same model in BBC's Top Gear awards (2007), Brazilian car of the year for the Fiat Grand Punto (2008) and the internationally juried Autobest award for the Fiat Linea (2008); other awards have been given in areas as diverse as best van of the year and best diesel engine

3.2.1.6. In addition to these indicators, there is Fiat's audacious merger with Chrysler Motors, which was first announced in January 2009. The merger and eventual possible takeover began with a 20 per cent stake in Chrysler increasing by increments of 5 per cent up to 35 per cent by January 2013 if it meets targets of producing Fiat engines in the US, introducing a new energy-efficient vehicle to the US, and generating more than \$1.5 billion in sales for Chrysler outside the US market. At this point, it will also have an option to purchase an additional 16 per cent stake, which will give it overall control at 51 per cent. All this has been achieved by US investment, without a cent of Fiat's own money. It is not a foregone conclusion that these measures will be successful in the long term; Sergio Marchionne's report of April 2010 shows that Chrysler has fallen somewhat short of its immediate turnaround targets, but Fiat's record of performing beyond expectations so far remains very impressive.

Figure 1: Fiat's percentage of worldwide sales, 1998-08



Figure 2: Fiat's world ranking in motor vehicle sales, 1998-08



3.2.1.7. Just a few years ago, Fiat was ranked below 10th in the world auto manufacturing sector. Its position has steadily improved since 2005, except at the onset of the global economic collapse in 2007 and 2008 and the accompanying crisis in the auto industry (Figures 1 and 2). The completion of Fiat's merger with Chrysler may now move it into the top three. This is in tune with the ethical aspects of exceeding expectations that are integral to this study – producing energy-efficient vehicles that contribute to combating climate change, supporting human rights through leading-edge and controversial advertising campaigns featuring Nobel peace prize winner Mikhail Gorbachev and actor and human rights activist Richard Gere, and keeping factories open and responding to workers' concerns wherever possible. Fiat is an improbable icon, a company that has exceeded expectations through its dramatic turnaround, its ability to overtake its peers, and its commitment to doing this with ethical integrity.

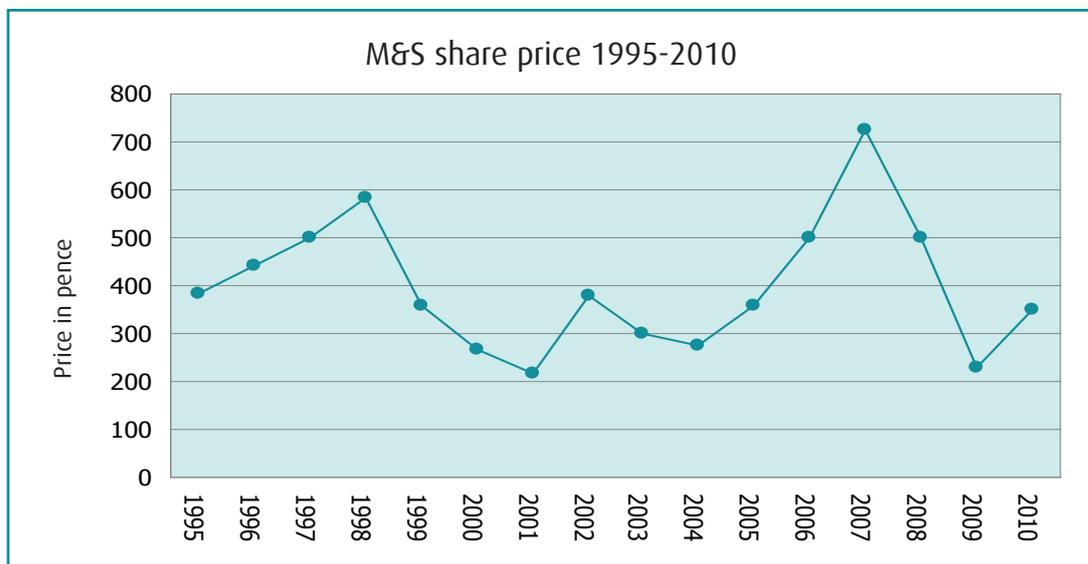
3.2.2. Marks & Spencer⁶

3.2.2.1. Marks & Spencer (M&S) is an iconic British institution. Its retail stores are among the buildings along the high streets of most UK towns and in every city centre. Shops and stores selling furniture, household goods, clothes and food form the nucleus of all its high-street stores and out-of-town shopping centres. In recent years, M&S Food has been sold through mini-markets in service areas along the UK motorway network and in railway stations.

3.2.2.2. M&S is a classic rags-to-riches story started by a Polish immigrant, Michael Marks, who opened a penny bazaar, the Victorian equivalent of Poundland, in Hartlepool in north-east England. After teaming up with Thomas Spencer in 1894, Marks opened the first M&S stall at Kirkgate market in Leeds. The company grew steadily during its first 100 years, establishing stores throughout the United Kingdom with a reputation for selling high-quality goods at reasonable prices with a no-quibble policy of exchanging goods returned as sold. In 1998, M&S became the first British retailer to return a profit of over £1 billion. It seemed firmly established as the nation's favourite store.

3.2.2.3. What the headline profit in 1998 concealed was the unsustainable nature of the store's expansion into Europe. Just because foreign tourists flocked into its London stores to take home suitcases full of goods, it did not follow that shoppers on the continent would welcome the arrival of M&S with branded British goods on the shopping boulevards of France and Belgium or in Spanish centros comerciales. Lulled into complacency by the loyalty of its home customer base, the company also lost sight of its core values of quality and service, and suffered a precipitous decline in the late 1990s. Meanwhile, the meteoric rise of cool new competition from stores like Next exposed a culture characterised by dull designs and archaic practices, such as refusing to take credit cards or install changing rooms. The boardroom seemed to be detached from changing British customer preferences and employee perceptions. It was also distracted by unsuccessful extensions into the European market and by foreign acquisitions of companies such as Brooks Brothers in the United States. By 1999, the company value on the stock market was down to £7 billion, less than half of the value in late 1997. The worst was still to come.

Figure 3: Marks & Spencer's share price, 1995-10



3.2.2.4. The appointment of high-profile designers produced a false recovery marked by eye-catching collections, but the designers had no loyalty to M&S and exploited their success and moved on, leaving the company no better off than before. It seemed as though M&S had completely lost its way and rumours of a takeover became rife. The major financial speculator and investor, Philip Green, seemed to be biding his time for the best opportunity. In 2004, Green moved to take over the ailing company but was met by fierce resistance from new CEO Stuart Rose, who had once worked as a manager in the M&S food service division. By waiting for the moment when he could maximise his financial advantage, Green had allowed time for Rose to stabilise the company and fight off the bid.

3.2.2.5. Avoiding takeover is one thing. Increasing turnover is something else. By 2008, M&S had re-established its position as an industry leader by reconnecting the store with its core values of quality, price and value and extending these values into a philosophy and brand identity of ecological sustainability. It recorded £1 billion in profits in the year to March 2008.

3.2.2.6. Like many other large retailers, M&S took a tumble after the global economic collapse, as customers downshifted to cheaper sections of the market, but it has now recovered somewhat and its gross and net profits are now well above 2005 values. In 2009-10, UK sales lifted by almost one per cent, following on from a strong fourth quarter. In the same financial year it had a 4.6 per cent increase in profits growth. M&S's share value currently tends to follow the trends of the wider market and is fluctuating more unevenly (Figure 3). A deep economic recession in the UK will continue to challenge the company to reconcile its commitment to sustainability with its ability to compete with lower-priced rivals. So, too, might an impending leadership change, though outgoing non-executive chairman Sir Stuart Rose has pledged to work with the new chief executive Mark Bolland to find a suitable successor and ensure a smooth transition.

3.2.2.7. M&S is now ranked as the 43rd largest retailer in the world with 600 stores in the UK and 285 more spread across 40 countries around the globe. In a 2009 survey of 5,000 British consumers, M&S was ranked as the most reputable company out of 140 of the largest UK companies. M&S is also a global sustainability leader in retail on the Dow Jones Sustainability Index. In 2009 it celebrated its 125th anniversary since starting as a penny market stall in Victorian England. Five years earlier, this would have seemed far beyond anyone's expectations.

3.2.3. Shoebuy.com⁷

3.2.3.1. No study of corporate performance beyond expectations would be complete without inclusion of the internet business sector. Studies of long-lasting companies with durability over decades may provide strong examples of businesses with historic reputations, but they exclude the dotcom sector, which has transformed the economy as dramatically in the 1990s as the rise of the service and retail sectors did in the 1960s and 1970s.

3.2.3.2. Shoebuy.com is one of the leading internet businesses in the United States. Former financial managers and investors Scott Savitz and his business partner decided to join the dotcom boom after accruing some personal wealth in the financial sector. Their idea of an internet company selling footwear rather than travel services or greeting cards was regarded by some as one of the worst internet ideas ever. Yet, from a makeshift 60 square-metre office in an old converted funeral parlour, Shoebuy.com survived the dotcom bust and now ranks as one of the two major internet footwear retailers and the 7th largest internet shopping site overall, sitting comfortably, though not opulently, with its 150 employees in prime office space in the central business district of Boston.

3.2.3.3. Shoebuy.com ranks as one of the internet's top 10 most visited apparel and accessory shopping sites and as one of the top 10 stickiest websites in the internet shopping sector, with an average visit time among its online customers of over 15 minutes. When shoppers reach the website, they tend to stay and keep coming back. Repeat buying has grown from 17.5 per cent of revenues in 2000, to over 36 per cent of revenues in 2004, and more than 60 per cent in 2009. Shoebuy.com has achieved eight straight years of double-digit percentage increases in revenue growth (Figure 4). At the same time, the organisation possesses very high rates of staff retention (for example, approximately 80 per cent of its current management team is composed of the original people hired for their roles), and it has a track record of promoting entry-level staff to positions of leadership.

Figure 4: Shoebuy.com performance indicators: 10-year growth through the dotcom bust 1999-09



3.2.3.4. Shoebuy.com is not as large as its major competitor, Zappos, but its inventory-free business design coupled with its emphasis on sustainable growth – which led it to refuse venture capital – and the prospect of rapid expansion in its early days have meant that even in the middle of the global economic crisis, Shoebuy.com continues to grow while Zappos is downsizing. In 2009, while Zappos was forced to cut at least eight per cent of its staff, Shoebuy.com continued to hire employees and projects another year of double-digit growth in sales volume. Shoebuy does not represent a sudden or meteoric rise to the top but demonstrates calculated, judicious and scalable business performance within a highly competitive market.

3.2.4. Dogfish Head Craft Brewery⁸

3.2.4.1. Started in 1996 in a New York City apartment as a tiny, innovative, one-man craft or real ale brewery, Dogfish Head Craft Brewery in Milton, Delaware, has become one of the most successful models of independent brewing in the United States. Its unique brews, flavoured with ingredients such as Finnish juniper berries and Antarctic water, combined with its near-cult status in the world of craft brewing, have brought it rapid success beyond any and all early expectations. Dogfish Head Craft Brewery prides itself as being off-centre in its product and employees. Even though one of its most popular beers, the 60 Minute IPA, continuously outperforms its peers in taste tests, Dogfish Head does not want it to be its signature beer. The company's business model is based on constant innovation and surprise, keeping distributors and consumers constantly guessing about what will be available and when.

3.2.4.2. Brewing and selling beer is big business, at least for those who can break into the industry. The top three beer companies selling most beer in the United States are Anheuser-Busch (now Anheuser-Busch InBev), MillerCoors. Together, these major players enjoy roughly 78 per cent of the market share. The remaining 22 per cent is fought over by 17 other large non-craft brewers and over 1,400 craft breweries.

Although craft brewers have been gaining market share since 2001, the craft brewing industry has just over four per cent of the US beer market. To put this in sharper focus, Boston Beer Company, with its popular Sam Adams beer, is the largest US craft brewery and boasts less than one per cent market share. Dogfish Head retains a mere 0.002 per cent. In 2008, it ranked 22 among top craft brewing companies by beer sales volume. Since 2003, Dogfish Head has averaged 40 per cent yearly revenue growth. Compared with the 2.1 per cent mean growth of the overall American beer industry in 2008, Dogfish Head's performance is astonishing (Figures 5 and 6). The company's growth has outpaced almost every competing craft brewery every year. In some years, Dogfish Head has been the fastest growing brewery in the United States.

3.2.4.3. Dogfish Head Craft Brewery is like no other. Where other companies stick to the traditional ingredients of beer, Dogfish adds as many ingredients as it likes, flouting tradition boldly and deliberately. While other brewing companies, even craft breweries, find the one beer that sells the best and claim it as their signature, aficionados of Dogfish Head are not likely to find their favourite beer on the shelf at all times, as many are seasonal or in limited production.

Figure 5: Dogfish Head Craft Brewery's employee growth, 2005-09

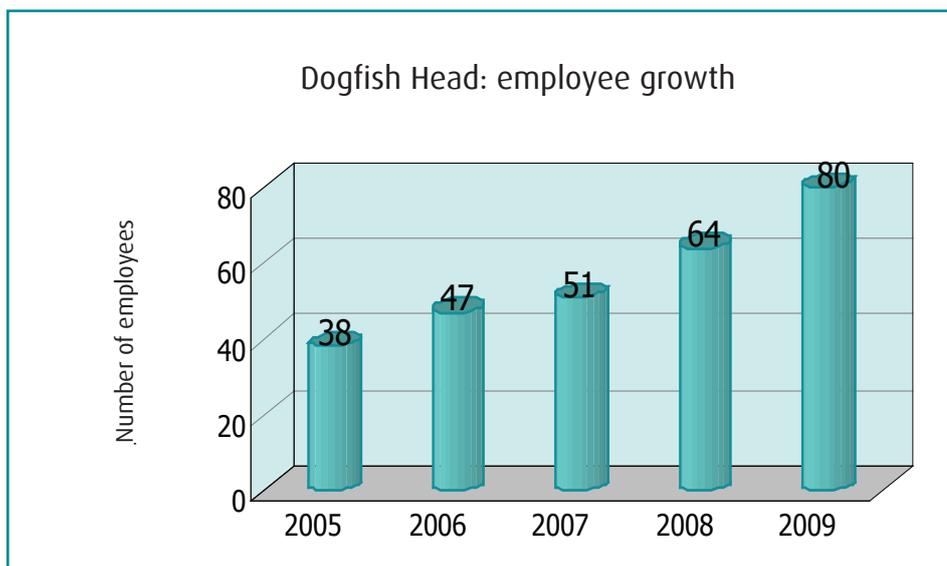
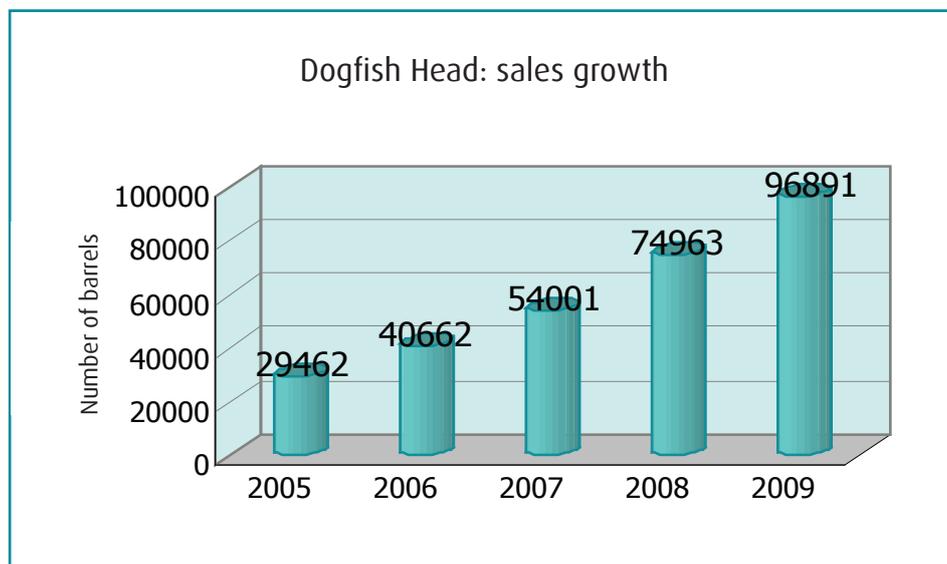


Figure 6: Dogfish Head Craft Brewery's sales growth, 2005-09



3.2.4.4. Dogfish Head sales have steadily risen over the past several years, and the high levels of production have necessitated building a larger facility and the purchase of new tanks and brewing equipment. The company is poised for a big future. Instead of creating sales plans for growth, however, Dogfish Head is planning for eventually levelling off production because it does not want to exceed its status as a craft brewery by entering the more traditional market of competitors such as Anheuser-Busch InBev.

3.2.5. Scott Bader⁹

3.2.5.1. Scott Bader is a modern, vibrant and successful multinational chemical company, based in the UK, which is owned by its workforce and still operates according to co-operative principles. How a company formed and governed by 19th-century ideals developed by conscientious entrepreneurs out of the industrial revolution could survive and flourish in the highly competitive technological era of the 21st century is surprising and beyond the expectations of its competitors. Today, the £180 million company employs 600 people worldwide. Its plastic resins are used to mould doors, window-frames, and parts for luxury yachts and racing cars.

3.2.5.2. The business was established by Swiss émigré, Ernest Bader, in 1921, and for 30 years it was run as a conventional company. By 1951, Bader was convinced that a world in which capital employed labour was unsustainable. He restructured his company and created Scott Bader Commonwealth on the fundamental principle that labour should employ capital to eliminate social injustice and waste. In doing so, he shared responsibility for the future of the company with its employees. The company continues to operate with this guiding philosophy today.

3.2.5.3. Coming from a lowly background, Bader strongly believed that it was better to work and live through collaboration rather than conflict. Scott Bader is one of a small number of co-operatives in England. When the commonwealth was formed, it gave every worker a stake in the company at a time when workers were still treated as third-class citizens elsewhere. The company established a clear moral framework and set of values, believing strongly in the rights of workers.

3.2.5.4. In 2003, the company faced a financial crisis because of volatility in the chemical industry, and Scott Bader was poorly equipped to react to a continuously changing market. Its management practices were paternalistic and there was hardly any staff turnover in a company that was owned by its workforce and provided a very generous pension scheme. Most of the company's customers and competitors considered it a dinosaur approaching extinction because it was incapable of responding to the challenges it faced and seemed to be hampered by its outdated philosophy. By 2005, the company owed £18.5 million and looked as though it was on its way to bankruptcy.

3.2.5.5. In the past few years, Scott Bader has undergone a transformation that has made it highly successful while enabling it to retain its guiding principles. The company returned profits of £5 million by 2007, yet it retains the commonwealth's commitment to ploughing 60 per cent of the profits back into the business to ensure sustainability, and matches all its profit shares with donations to charitable trusts. Profits are being invested in expansion even at a time of financial downturn. While the main manufacturing plant is still located on the Scott Bader estate along with the original family residence and workers' homes, the company is opening new plants operating on the same principles in Croatia and the United States.

3.3. Sport

The sport sector case studies of performing beyond expectations include a world-leading national sporting organisation, a football (soccer) team that ascended from the championship league with fewer resources and capacity than its competitors, the most turned-around club in English rugby league, and a leading and consistently successful amateur sporting team, which attracts crowds far exceeding many professional sport counterparts.

3.3.1. Burnley Football Club¹⁰

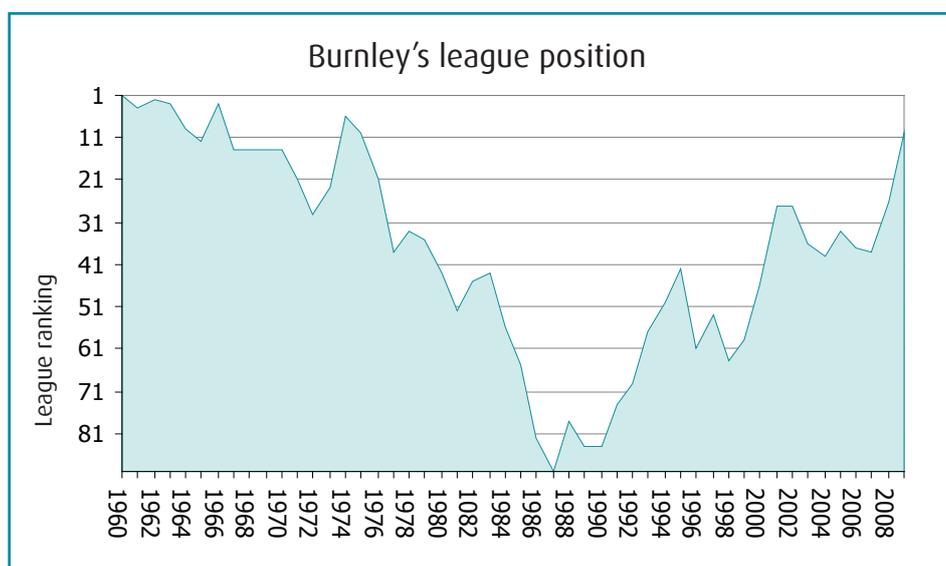
3.3.1.1. English football's premier league is the most successful, widely viewed and economically powerful league of football (or soccer) in the world. Stacked with strong teams, powerful brands and celebrity players, it is a global business as much as a venue for top-class, competitive sport. Expectations are always high and one or more of the top four or five teams are frequently successful. Some 20 years ago, before the globalisation of live English football through satellite and digital TV, and before the accompanying creation of a small and supremely wealthy football club elite, it was still just possible for a team to rise into England's top division without astronomical levels of investment simply by virtue of good luck and good management.

3.3.1.2. Burnley Football Club – along with neighbouring Accrington and Blackburn Rovers – is one of the 12 clubs that founded the English football league in 1888, the first such league in the world. Along with clubs from the other north-west mill towns, Burnley was for almost 80 years a well-supported and largely successful club, drawing crowds of up to 50,000, even though it took few top trophies – the exception being the FA Cup as long ago as 1914, and the league title in 1921. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, though, Burnley Football Club had entered its golden years. Under the autocratic and patrician chairmanship of large-scale butcher and meat-pie magnate Bob Lord, Burnley had become the top-performing football club in England. By 1960, the club won the English league championship and was a competitive performer in Europe.

3.3.1.3. Amid the crumbling economies of northern English mill towns and in the face of growing competition from big city teams with high media exposure like Liverpool and Manchester United, Burnley Football Club entered a period of long decline until it was almost relegated to amateur oblivion in 1987. Up to the very last minutes of that season, it was placed 92nd out of the 92 clubs of the English football league – saved only by a last-gasp victory in the final match, by a headed goal from the smallest man on the field. His framed shirt still hangs in the club today. This is arguably one of the greatest turnaround moments in sporting history.

3.3.1.4. Over 20 years, Burnley Football Club rose back up the divisions of the league to achieve mid-table respectability in the second-tier championship league before gaining promotion to the prestigious English premier league in the 2008-09 season and in doing so earning the right to play and sometimes achieve the improbable success of defeating global corporate giants like Manchester United (Figure 7). Although promotion was swiftly followed by relegation, the club has attained a key goal of financial stability and future promotion opportunity from the £48 million of additional income and investment that accompanied its promotion to the premier league.

Figure 7: Burnley's position in the English football league, 1960-09



3.3.1.5. It is not just this extraordinary and largely sustained turnaround that marks Burnley Football Club as a sporting club that performs far above expectations. Its status compared with its peers is also revealed by numerous indicators:

- The club's wage bills until 2008-09 ranked 20th out of 24 in the championship league, with some clubs on 3 or 4 times the wage bill of Burnley FC, though its league position was always higher at between 13th and 16th.
- Its wage bill in the 2008-09 promotion season ranked halfway in the championship league at £8 million compared with £17 million for Sheffield United and £25 million for Reading Football Club.
- Its ticket sales ranked 19th to 20th in the championship league.
- The club's home crowd averages about 12,000 compared with more than double that for clubs like Sheffield United.
- It has the smallest squad and lowest number of players used in the championship league promotion season.
- It plays more games than any other team in the championship league because of long runs of success in knockout cup competitions.
- On national rankings of multiple deprivation, the town of Burnley, the base of the club's support, is the fifth most deprived community out of 354 in England.
- The club's sustainable business model is based on a balanced, prudent budget rather than a rate of expansion or aspiration for success, which involves the high levels of debt that have led to precipitous declines for several rivals and public controversy even for top performers like Liverpool and Manchester United.

3.3.2 Cricket Australia¹¹

3.3.2.1. Cricket Australia consistently ranks among the top three teams in world cricket. Sporting prowess and participation are fundamental to Australian identity, and it is important to be number 1. Most of all, it is essential to beat the historic colonising enemy, England, for the coveted Ashes trophy, which is still keenly and even bitterly contested between the two nations. Indeed, securing the Ashes, a director of Cricket Australia told us, is the unwritten key performance indicator.

3.3.2.2. At the time of our data collection in early 2009, Australia did indeed rank number 1 in international test cricket and second in one-day cricket. It had won the Ashes for 9 out of the preceding 10 years. In 1997, after an Ashes victory that was judged to be less than convincing, Malcolm Speed, who would go on to head the International Cricket Council (ICC), turned Cricket Australia into a global business that would attract and increase income, especially from global media, and both reward and placate its increasingly disgruntled players. The loss of the Ashes in 2005 focused the whole board and indeed the country on the goal of defeating England in 18 months' time – motivating the national team and elevating levels of participation in cricket.

3.3.2.3. From its offices opposite the impressive Melbourne Cricket Ground, Cricket Australia now orchestrates the development of all cricketing talent and participation from the age of 7 up to the national team – competing with Rugby Australia, Soccer Australia, Bowls Australia and all 27 other national sporting organisations for viewing, participation rates, spectator revenue, media coverage and consumption of entertainment dollars. These are the new key performance indicators by which the game development and marketing departments of Cricket Australia measure progress and performance yearly and four-yearly. These are some of the indicators:

- In 2008-09, according to the ICC, Australia was ranked number 1 in men's and women's cricket at test-match level, and ranked second, just behind South Africa, in one-day cricket.
- Australia has won the Ashes against England on 9 of the last 11 occasions after winning only 1 Ashes series in the previous 12 years.

- Cricket ranks first or second every year in sport participation in Australia – only swimming sometimes surpasses it, and then only in years when the Olympic Games takes place.
- The targets for participation levels (at 550,000) set in 2005 for 2009 were exceeded by 2007.
- In 2006, after the loss of the Ashes, participation grew by over 13 per cent – the largest increase of any national sport in participation in a 12-month period.
- On every indicator, cricket became the sport of greatest interest to 61 per cent of Australians, making it Australia's favourite sport.

3.3.2.4. Cricket in Australia, as elsewhere, is now a business and spectacle as much as a traditional sport, and the Ashes coexist alongside these developments. Much of the modern game of cricket has moved far away from the five-day test match played in starched whites. The sport now has intensely exciting variants that last just one day or a single evening, with neon-costumed players engaging in market-oriented crowd pleasing and power hitting. Australia certainly reaches expectations and even exceeds them in most test-match cricket, especially against England, but its development as a business, and as a commercial and community network of national participation, is equally impressive compared with other sports and sectors.

3.3.3 Hull Kingston Rovers¹²

3.3.3.1. On the eastern edge of England, in the economically depressed former fishing port of Hull, the world-famous rugby league club, Hull Kingston Rovers, plays in the European super league. Such fame may surprise some people who are unfamiliar with the popularity of rugby league in the southern hemisphere, and it would certainly be beyond their expectations. The club's worldwide reputation stems from the 1980s when the Robins (Hull Kingston Rovers) won every major trophy in rugby league at a time when the game had developed a global presence. The club's golden era began with a famous 10-5 victory over its neighbour Hull in the 1980 challenge cup final in front of 95,000 spectators at Wembley Stadium. The boardroom clock at Craven Park, the Robins' home ground, is still stopped at 10 minutes to 5 to commemorate this victory.

3.3.3.2. In the late 1980s, the team and the stadium seemed to crumble together. After the final season at the old ground in 1989, Hull Kingston Rovers was relegated to the second division, and in 1995 to the third. This coincided with the establishment of the European super league in 1996. Facing near-oblivion at the time, the club's fight back to fourth place in the super league at the end of the 2009 season exceeded everyone's expectations.

3.3.3.3. The European super league began when English rugby league switched from winter to summer. Sponsored by Sky TV, super league Europe was formed by awarding franchises to 12 clubs. With a guaranteed income from the franchise, super-league clubs can attract and retain the best players. When the franchises were first awarded, it was certain that one super-league place was guaranteed for a team from Hull. With Hull Football Club in the first division and Hull Kingston Rovers in the third division at the time, the Rovers had no chance. They resisted a merger and Hull Football Club won the franchise. The outlook for Hull Kingston Rovers was bleak. Relative obscurity seemed to be the most favourable future and extinction was a real possibility when an insolvency expert was called in to help save the club.

3.3.3.4. Hull Kingston Rovers came back strongly through the lower divisions and almost made the playoffs in 1999. Instead, they slipped and progress was stalled over the next few years when leadership frequently changed hands. New leadership in 2004 restored confidence and direction; Rovers eventually won the playoffs in 2006 for a place in the super league. Big improvements all round at the club were acknowledged when Hull Kingston Rovers was selected as team of the year in 2008. Then the club rose to fourth place in the super league at the end of 2009, a position far beyond all expectations.

3.3.4. Kilkenny Gaelic Athletic Association¹³

3.3.4.1. With a national stadium to rival any in Europe, the Gaelic Athletic Association has brought an amateur sport to higher levels of success and popularity than many professional counterparts. Gaelic games are at the core of contemporary Irish cultural identity, with origins extending back over 2,000 years. Today, the all-Ireland finals of Gaelic football, men's hurling and women's camogie draw capacity crowds of more than 82,000 spectators every year to their spiritual home, Croke Park in Dublin. These amateur teams of unpaid

players, organised and managed by volunteers, also attract a full house for the semi-finals even when the games are televised live across the country and beamed via satellite to almost every Irish bar around the globe.

3.3.4.2. In Ireland and among Irish men and women worldwide, hurling continues to have great importance in its own right. The modern game was constituted by the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884. A network of over 2,500 Gaelic Athletic Association clubs exists across Ireland, in every parish and village. Hurling remains an amateur sport, which has grown in popularity into the 21st century. There are teams across Europe, Australasia and North America. It is the fastest existing ball game – played at the speed of ice hockey in a field measuring 137 by 82 metres with 15 players in each team.

3.3.4.3. The passion for hurling is widespread throughout County Kilkenny. The walls of the public bar in Langton's Hotel, Kilkenny are lined with photographs that record and celebrate the successful hurling teams that have played in their famous black and amber stripes over decades. This extended success began in 1904 when the senior hurling team first won the All-Ireland trophy for the county. Over the next nine years, the senior team raised the profile of hurling in Kilkenny by winning seven senior All-Ireland finals. Those sporting heroes laid the foundation of a proud hurling tradition, and a huge love of the game, which has flourished ever since with a record 32 All-Ireland senior hurling championship wins for the Kilkenny Cats (the club's nickname).

3.3.4.4. There are four reasons for the peak performance and sustained success of Kilkenny Gaelic Athletic Association, which enables it to perform beyond expectations:

- Players are selected for each county team according to their birthplace. In an amateur sport, there are no transfers of players from one team to another. Consequently, unlike many professional sports, it is impossible in Gaelic games to construct teams by buying the best players. Each county must make do with what it has. Kilkenny has one of the lowest number of Gaelic Athletic Association clubs in Ireland. Because there are only 12 clubs that play at senior level in Kilkenny, the senior team is formed from fewer people than most competitors.
- Although different counties have enjoyed periods of sustained success over the years, only County Cork had ever won four senior All-Ireland hurling championships in succession. Winning four in a row moved the Kilkenny Cats to the highest level of sustainable success when the team won its fourth consecutive title in 2009.
- The Kilkenny team's performance in the final at Croke Park on 7 September 2008 was described by all independent commentators as the greatest display of hurling in history.
- The Gaelic Athletic Association has four county hurling competitions: minor (under 18s), under 21s, intermediate and senior. Each competition has its own All-Ireland championship. No county had ever won all four simultaneous All-Ireland hurling championships in the same year until Kilkenny achieved this remarkable feat in 2008. In addition, the women's senior camogie team won the 2008 league title. This strength in depth qualifies the overall organisation, rather than just the senior team, as performing beyond expectations.

3.4. Education¹⁴

3.4.1. There is a range of educational settings in England where institutions perform beyond expectations: two local authorities (equivalent to US school districts), a strategic partnership of a turned-around school supporting a lower performing peer, and some primary, secondary and special education schools.

3.4.2. Tower Hamlets

3.4.2.1. The London borough of Tower Hamlets lies east of the City of London on the north bank of the Thames. It was created in 1965 through the amalgamation of the former East End boroughs of Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney, which grew around the small villages, or hamlets, just outside the city boundary. Its historic name originated in the 16th century when the inhabitants of the area were required to provide the yeomen for the Tower of London, which remains in the borough at its western edge on the Thames.

3.4.2.2. Tower Hamlets has the highest unemployment rate in the country. The wellbeing of children in the borough ranks 149th out of 149 local authorities. The correlation between material wellbeing and education is the highest (0.80) of all the deprivation indices. Unsurprisingly, Tower Hamlets was bottom of the local authority (formerly local education authority) league tables in 1997. Yet a decade later, Tower Hamlets had surpassed the national averages for Key Stage 2 national tests at the end of primary school and had closed the gap for GCSE secondary school examination results (Figures 8, 9 and 10).

Figure 8: Aggregate achievement at level 4 for students in Tower Hamlets schools at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, compared with national trends, 1996–09

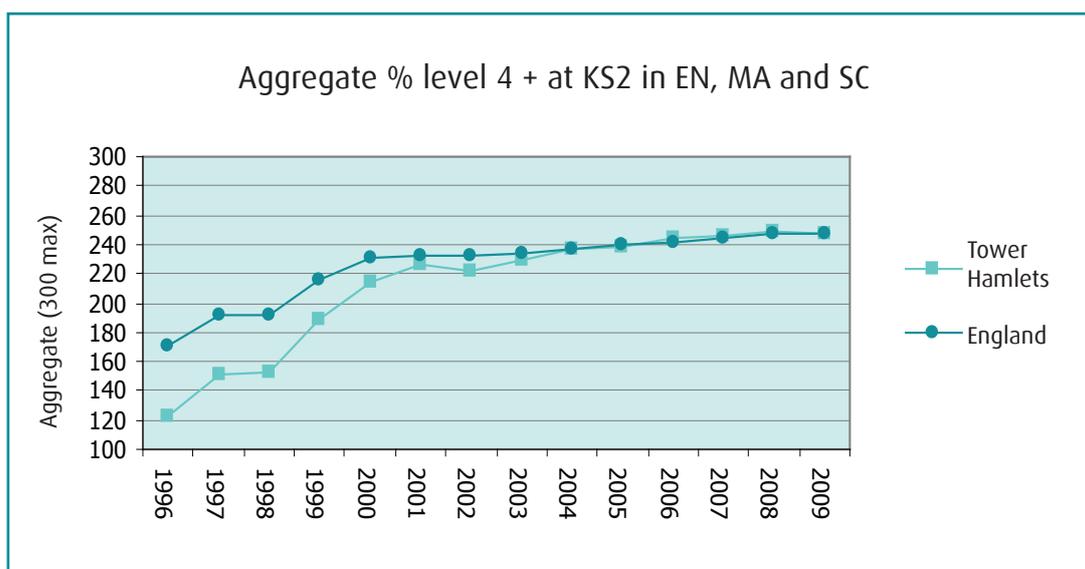
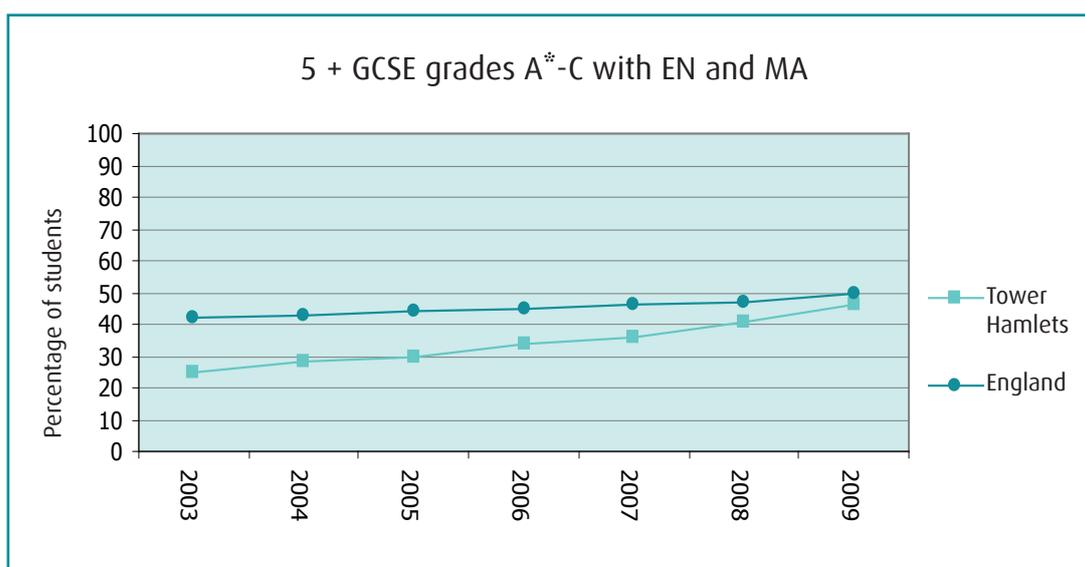
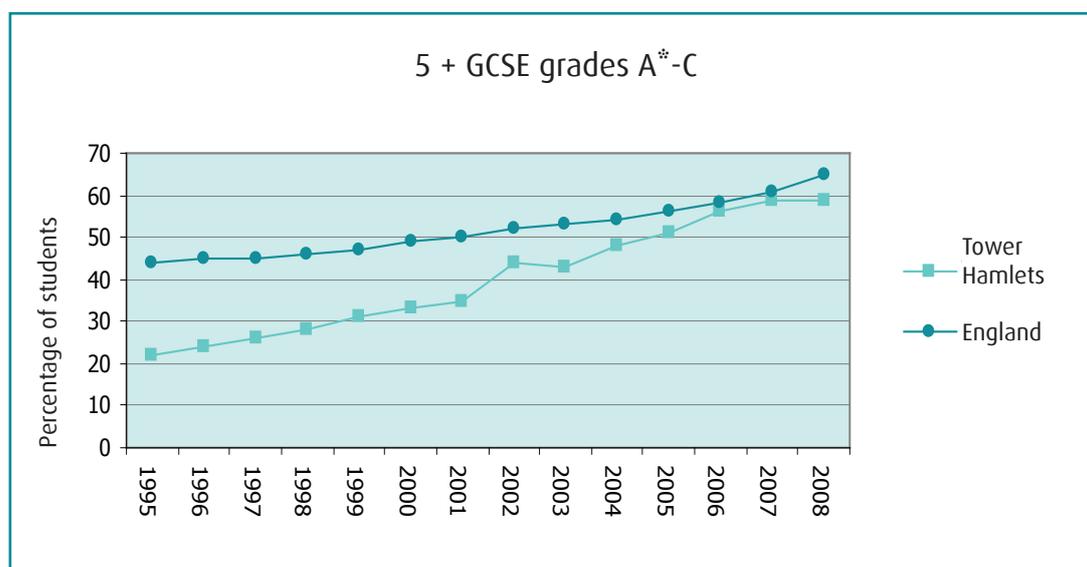


Figure 9: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*–C grades at GCSE in Tower Hamlets schools, compared with national figures, 1995–08



Note: GCSE results for 16 year olds. (This data series was ended by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2008.)

Figure 10: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE in English and mathematics in Tower Hamlets schools, compared with national figures, 2003-09



Note: GCSE results for 16 year olds. (The national benchmark of achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE including in English and mathematics was first published in 2003.)

3.4.2.3. For almost 100 schools in the most deprived local authority in England to improve test scores and examination results across two whole quartiles of achievement in just a decade is performance well beyond expectations.

3.4.3. Walsall

3.4.3.1. The borough of Walsall lies to the west of Birmingham, England's second largest city. Walsall's prosperity grew during the industrial revolution when local deposits of coal, iron ore and limestone stimulated the growth of manufacturing in the town. The intensity of the blast furnaces and foundries in Walsall, and neighbouring Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell, filled the air with soot, smoke and grime to such an extent that the region became known as the Black Country. Although the heavy, polluting industries have since disappeared leaving scars of derelict plots and buildings across the once industrial landscape, the name provides a perpetual reminder of the region's heritage.

3.4.3.2. There were several changes of administration in Walsall during the 1990s and at one point the council's decision-making process was paralysed by an absence of overall political control. The council could do little to support school improvement. Many secondary schools opted out and became grant maintained. Schools were largely left to fend for themselves and those with the greatest challenges struggled. The 1999 Ofsted report on the local education authority (LEA) bore testimony to the parlous state of local politics:

The LEA has been able to contribute little to improvement in school performance in recent years. For much of the 1990s, political instability, evidenced in successive administrations and culminating at one stage in the virtual paralysis of the decision making process, has handicapped practical action on education... The LEA has not shown itself adept enough to develop the new relations with schools which are at the centre of the government's Code of Practice on LEA-School relations. Given the opportunity to put the sour legacy of earlier politics firmly behind it, the LEA has so far failed to translate an ambition to work more productively with schools into convincing practice¹⁵.

3.4.3.3. In the early days of Ofsted from 1993 to 1999, 11 schools failed their inspections and a further 10 were designated as having serious weaknesses between 1997 and 1999. These represented significant proportions of Walsall's 120 schools.

3.4.3.4. The 1999 Ofsted inspection of the local education authority led to government intervention. Inspectors judged 12 of its functions to be inadequate – the lowest rating possible. They were not convinced that Walsall had sufficient capacity to improve by itself. Walsall had failed to adapt to the significant changes in national education policy over the previous decade. The management structure had not provided clear strategic direction or adequate operational control. Relationships between the authority and its schools were poor and morale was very low. Under these conditions, the gap between the local test scores and the national averages was widening.

3.4.3.5. The inspection report prompted immediate action. The council replaced all the senior officers within its education services and the government put several functions out to private tender. Serco, a private company that works for government across a range of public sectors, was the preferred bidder, and in 2001 it took responsibility for school improvement and the associated strategic services for five years. About 100 council staff were transferred to Serco. The local authority continued to manage the remaining education services. Ofsted returned in 2002 to find that, overall, insufficient progress had been made since the 1999 inspection and some of the services that had been retained by the local authority had deteriorated. By contrast, good progress had been made in those services managed by Serco.

Figure 11: Aggregate achievement at level 4 for students in Walsall schools at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, compared with national trends, 1996–09

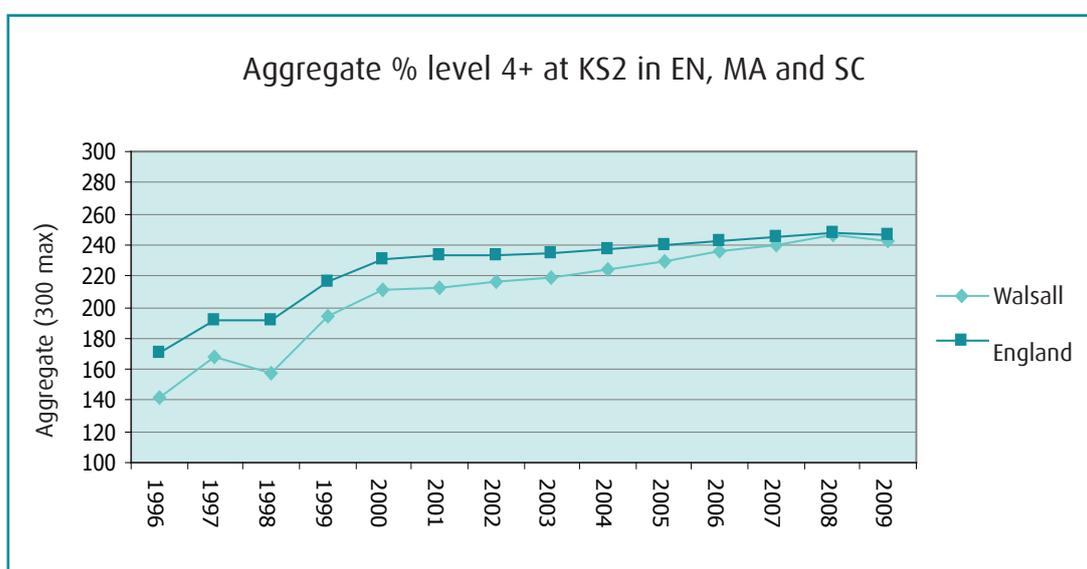


Figure 12: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*–C grades at GCSE in Walsall schools, compared with national figures, 1995–08

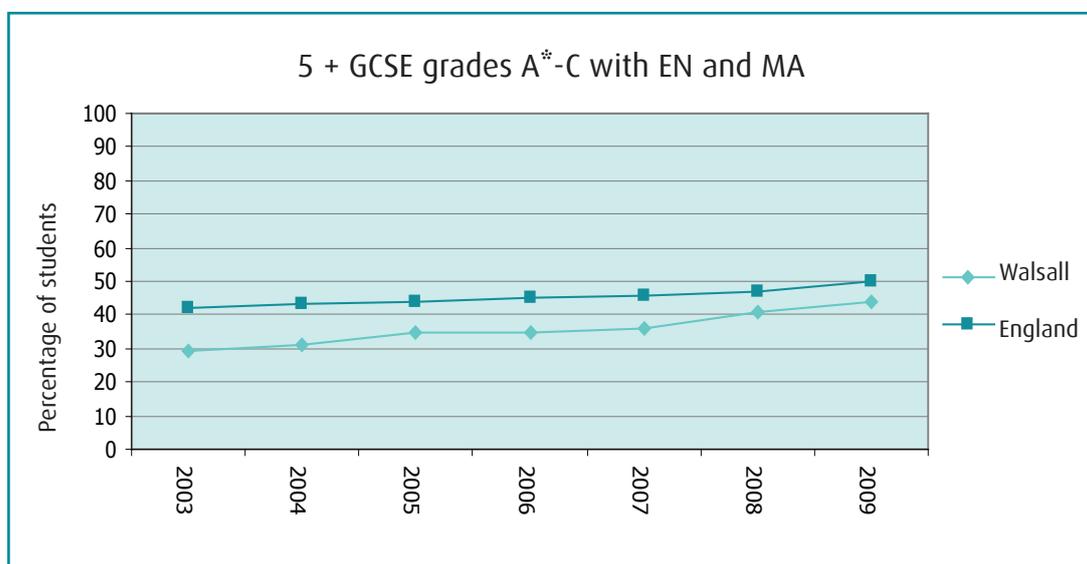
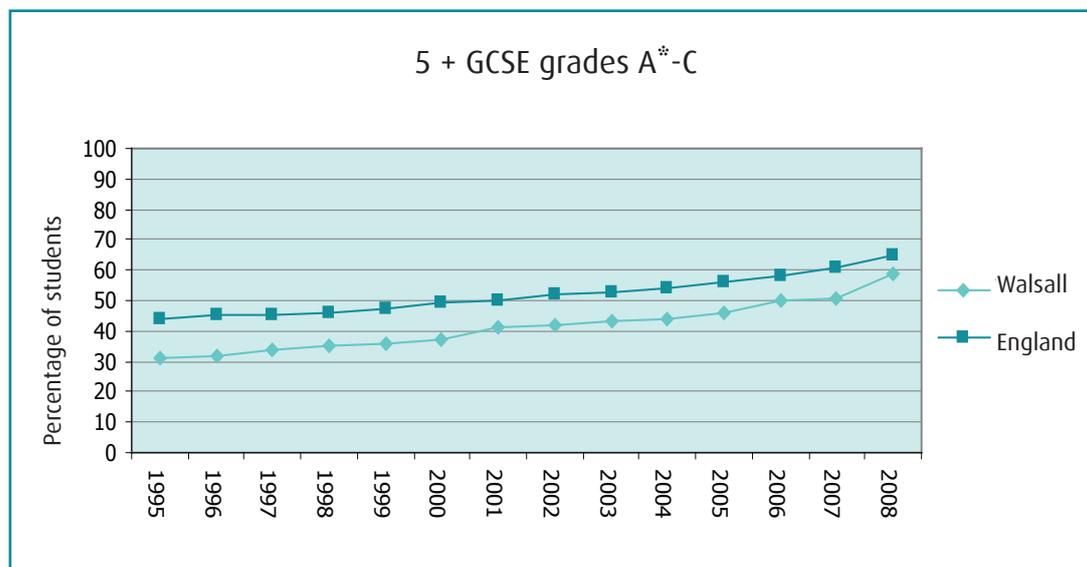


Figure 13: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE in English and mathematics in Walsall schools, compared with national figures, 2003-09



3.4.3.6. The authority agreed to outsource almost all education services to Serco from 1 January 2003. This resulted in the transfer of a further 300 staff from the local authority. This wider contract ended in 2008, and after an open round of bidding, Serco was once again commissioned to run Walsall’s children’s services for a further 12 years. This renewal of the contract is based on good ratings in annual performance assessments since 2001 and the significant improvements Serco has supported in the quality of educational provision, particularly in primary schools where the gap with national averages has been closed (Figures 11, 12 and 13). The performance of the secondary school sector has also been improving, although at a slower pace.

3.4.3.7. The government’s intervention to transfer functions of the local authority in Walsall to a private company running them for profit was not the first time this had occurred in England. Various levels of intervention were made in other local authorities at around the same time, varying from complete transfer of all education services in Islington and Bradford to partial transfer in Hackney, Southwark and Waltham Forest. The success of these interventions has been uneven. In Hackney and Southwark, the private companies did no better than the local councils and further interventions were necessary. Walsall therefore constitutes an example of a local authority under the control of a private company, which has performed above expectations in relation to past performance, other similarly controlled local authorities, and local authorities facing similar challenges of poverty and deprivation. Specifically, performance beyond expectations is evident in:

- the rate of initial improvements achieved by Serco from 2001 to 2002 after a decade of underperformance
- the decision to transfer almost all remaining education functions to Serco in 2002
- Serco’s support of sustained improvements in student achievement from 2003 to 2008, working in an effective partnership with schools and Walsall Council
- the outsourcing of all children’s services to Serco, under a 12-year contract, from 2008

3.4.3.8. The most recent official data from Walsall, produced after the completion of our data collection, raises questions about the continuing success of Walsall’s performance and improvement record into the future under Serco. Although Walsall was consistently rated ‘good’ (ie, grade 3 out of four grades) by Ofsted from 2002 to 2008, after the period of our data collection (December 2009), its rating was lowered to grade 2. The reasons for this are not yet clear.

3.4.4. Grange Secondary School

3.4.4.1. Grange Secondary School is in the centre of the Lancashire mill town Oldham, at the heart of where some of the worst race riots in British history took place in 2001. From being the town's flagship comprehensive school when it was established in 1968 to almost failing in 1996, the examination results and inspectors' judgements at Grange Secondary School then improved significantly over 10 years, and it won an impressive number of national awards and accolades (Figures 14 and 15).

Figure 14: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE at Grange Secondary School, compared with local authority and national figures, 1996-08

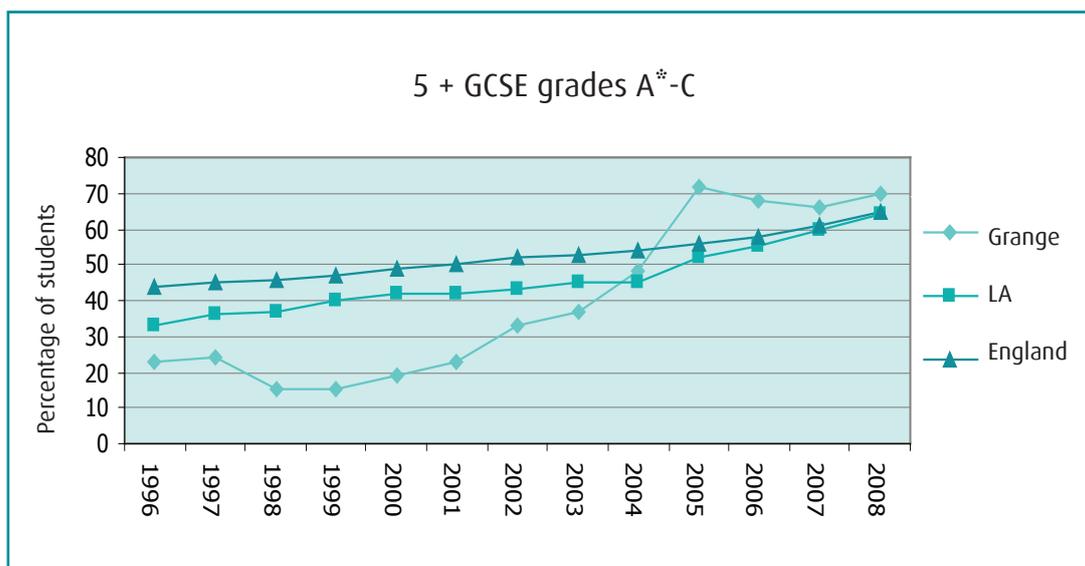
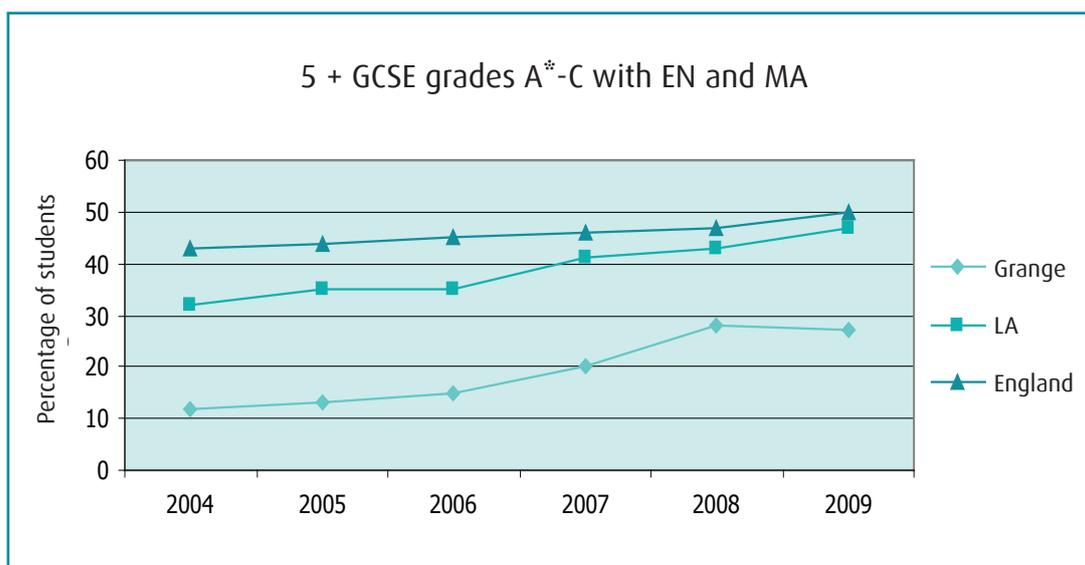


Figure 15: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE in English and mathematics in the Grange Secondary School, compared with local authority and national figures, 2004-09



3.4.4.2. Grange Secondary operates in extremely challenging circumstances. Oldham has two areas of multiple deprivation that fall within the most severe one per cent in the country. Grange is in one of these. More than 90 per cent of the school's students are Asian, the vast majority Bangladeshi, many from families where little English is spoken and even less is read. Almost two-thirds of the students qualify for free school meals.

3.4.4.3. The school's low watermark was at the end of 1996 when it scraped a 'satisfactory' grade in its Ofsted inspection. A new headteacher arrived in 1997 and the current head took on the job of his deputy. When the head moved on in 2004, the deputy replaced him until his own retirement in 2008. This period was a decade of remarkable recovery and significant improvement for Grange Secondary School:

- The proportion of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE increased from 15 per cent in 1999 to 71 per cent in 2008.
- Between 2000 and 2008, the proportion of leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) fell from 12 per cent to 3 per cent, less than half the national average of 7 per cent.
- Over a decade, attendance improved from 84 per cent to 92.5 per cent, close to the national average of 92.7 per cent.
- In 2008 Grange was positioned in the top 2 per cent of schools nationally and first among all 16 secondary schools in the local authority for the contribution the school makes to student progress between the ages of 11 and 16 (its contextual value-added score or CVA).
- Honours and awards include designation as a visual arts specialist school in 2002, becoming the highest performer of 30 such schools nationally in 2005 (and remaining in the top 2 today), and winning a number of significant visual arts prizes such as being the regional Arts and Minds winner in 2004.

3.4.4.4. Successive inspection reports by Ofsted support this overall trajectory of improvement far beyond expectations. Ofsted's 2002 report upgraded the school to the second highest category of 'good', which included 'areas of excellence' in the school's work. The report noted there had been 'very good' improvement since the 1996 inspection: 'There has been significant improvement in attendance and good improvement in the quality of the curriculum for Years 10 and 11. Teaching has significantly improved and standards are rising faster than nationally.' By the 2006 report, Grange was still a 'good school' at grade 2, but now with 'some outstanding features', particularly in supporting and caring for learners and forming partnerships with others. Although GCSE examination results were still 'below average', they were 'much better than at the time of the previous inspection'. This is an impressive improvement record after years of underperformance in the face of profound local educational and social challenges and compared with schools in similar circumstances.

3.4.4.5. In May 2008 the Labour government introduced a National Challenge initiative that set floor targets for secondary schools where at least 30 per cent of students were expected to gain 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE, including in mathematics and English (the target had not previously specified these subjects as requirements). Schools listed as failing to meet these targets included 638 secondary schools, and they were notified that they would be subject to intervention and possible replacement by or redesignation as academies if they did not meet their targets within one year. Despite its 10-year improvement on previous measurable criteria, its increasingly favourable inspection reports and its collection of honours and awards, Grange Secondary School's positioning below these newly defined floor targets placed it on the list of 638.

3.4.4.6. Graeme Hollinshead was headteacher of Grange Secondary in 2008. His reputation had led him to be appointed by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust as a consultant to advise other schools on how to improve and to serve as a school improvement partner or mentor for other headteachers. He appeared in the national press, on radio and on the BBC TV programme Panorama because Grange Secondary had the largest disparity of all schools in the country in performance rankings between previous examination results that excluded mathematics and English and the National Challenge criteria that included these two subjects. The Times Educational Supplement described Hollinshead as 'indignant about a statistical exercise which led to hundreds of schools being branded as failing' and quoted Mr Hollinshead: "Is this a high-performing specialist school or a failing school? Make your judgement. Every head I know would say Grange is a high-performing school. Who has got it wrong?" In 2010, for reasons concerning a wider social cohesion agenda, which have not emanated directly from the National Challenge, Grange is to be converted into a city academy, when it will eventually be combined with several other schools in the town.

3.4.4.7. The case of Grange Secondary prompts an evidence-informed debate about how the criteria for meeting expectations are defined, who has the power to define them, and under what conditions and within what timeframes new performance criteria should be introduced and applied. It is an example of how performance beyond or beneath expectations can be subject to struggle and debate when assessing what the criteria should be and whose definitions should prevail.

3.4.5. John Cabot Academy

3.4.5.1. John Cabot Academy currently serves 1,071 students aged 11–19. Originally known as John Cabot City Technology College, the school opened in September 1993 as the last of 15 city technology colleges set up through the Education Reform Act 1988. John Cabot City Technology College became John Cabot Academy in 2007. Its sponsors are Rolls-Royce plc and the University of the West of England.

3.4.5.2. Examination results at John Cabot have been consistently above national averages since its first cohort of students sat their GCSE examinations in 1998. Steady improvement in these results from 1998 to 2003 preceded a drop in 2004, although, even then, they remained above the national average. It took four years to return to the 2003 level. The current executive principal, who started in April 2004, considers John Cabot to have been a coasting school at that point:

“I came in April, and by that September, my view was that the job I’d been appointed to was not the job I thought it was. There was a lot of hype around campus about innovation and lots of projects taking place, which was true. But they weren’t having impact. And I felt the teaching and learning was very complacent. I felt the leadership wasn’t challenging and everybody was happy and cosy in their environment. So, I resolved to take the bull by the horns and see whether I could bring Cabot to be an outstanding school.”

Figure 16: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*–C grades at GCSE at John Cabot Academy, compared with local authority and national figures, 1998–08

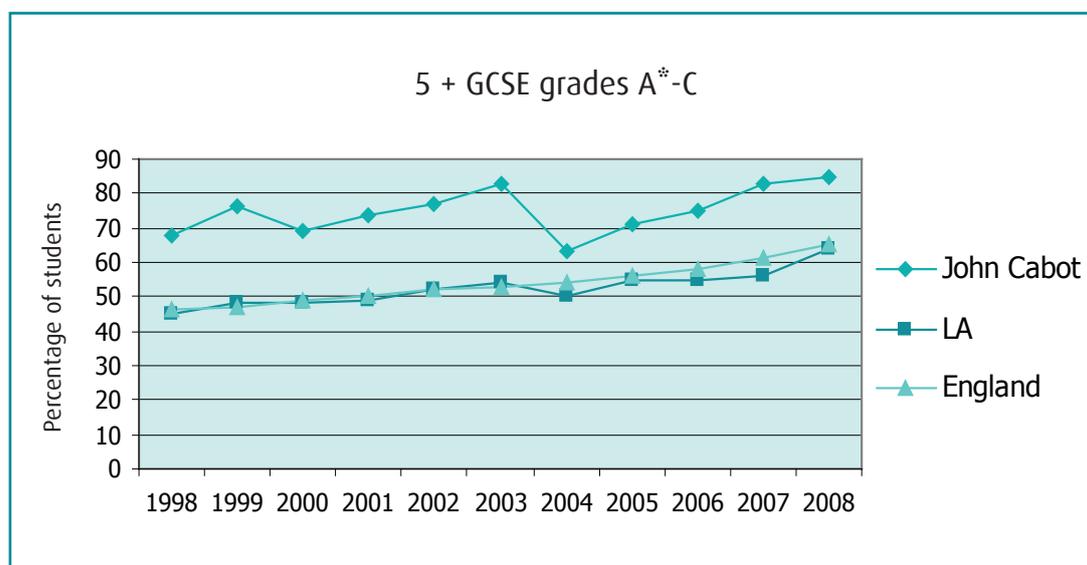
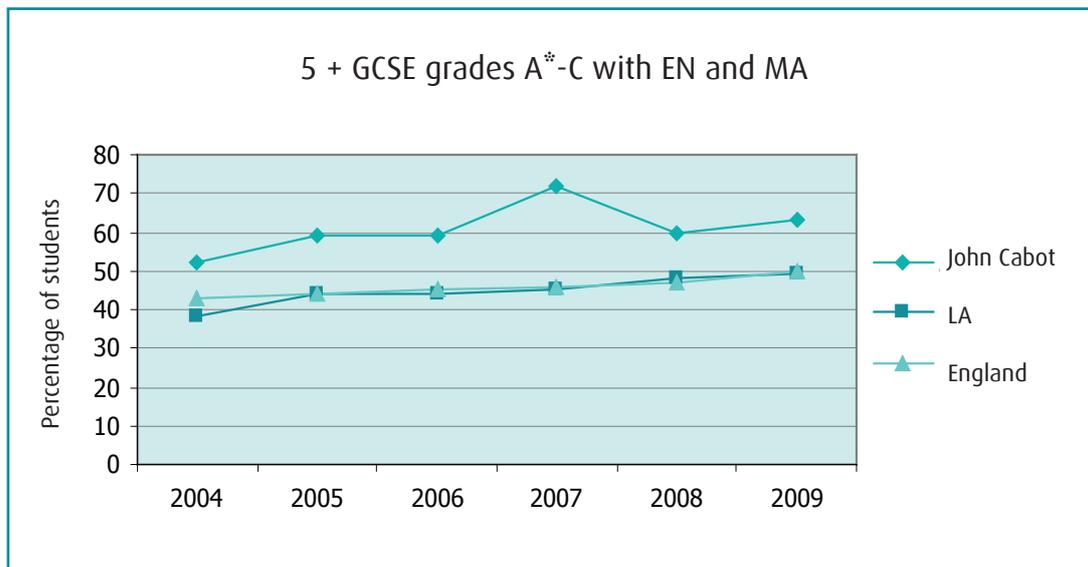


Figure 17: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE in English and mathematics at John Cabot Academy, compared with local authority and national figures, 2004-09



3.4.5.3. Since the executive principal's arrival, GCSE results have steadily improved (Figures 16 and 17). John Cabot's status as a school that performs beyond expectations is stronger and clearer in some areas than others – raising once more the varying ways in which it is possible to define and achieve performance beyond expectations. Although advantaged by the additional resources surrounding its foundation and by an intake of students that is above the national average on indicators of child poverty and special educational needs, the school is still outstanding in other respects, as confirmed by its 2009 Ofsted report, which ranks it 'outstanding' (the highest grade) in almost all categories. The meaning of performing above expectations within John Cabot goes beyond a definition of academic scores and standards to also focus on the development of the whole child, continual improvement of teaching and learning and commitment to curriculum innovation – as evidenced in the Cabot competency curriculum the school has developed with others in the Cabot federation.

3.4.6. Central Technology College

3.4.6.1. One of the most innovative ways to raise standards and narrow achievement gaps pioneered by the English educational system has been the creation of federations or partnerships between schools, especially where one partner has been underperforming. Central Technology College in Gloucester is involved in one such strategic partnership. Like Grange Secondary and Cabot Academy, Central Technology College raises questions about the definition of performance beyond expectations, and about the respective responsibility for the transformation in results of the underperforming school and the external partner respectively.

3.4.6.2. This 400-student school for boys has higher than average proportions of students from low-income families and from ethnic minority groups who do not speak English at home. It also operates within an academic selective system for secondary education in which 30 per cent of students at age 11 enter the county's grammar schools, and are thereby excluded from Central's student population.

3.4.6.3. Some 10 years ago, Central Technology College was riding high. The school had closed the gap between the number of its students achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE and the national average from 32 per cent in 1996 to just 8 per cent in 2000 – the closest it had ever been (Figures 18 and 19). Apart from being the most improved school in Gloucestershire, it was also picked out by the Department for Education and Employment as the second most improved boys' school in the country.

Figure 18: Percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE at Central Technology College, compared with local authority and national figures, 1996-08

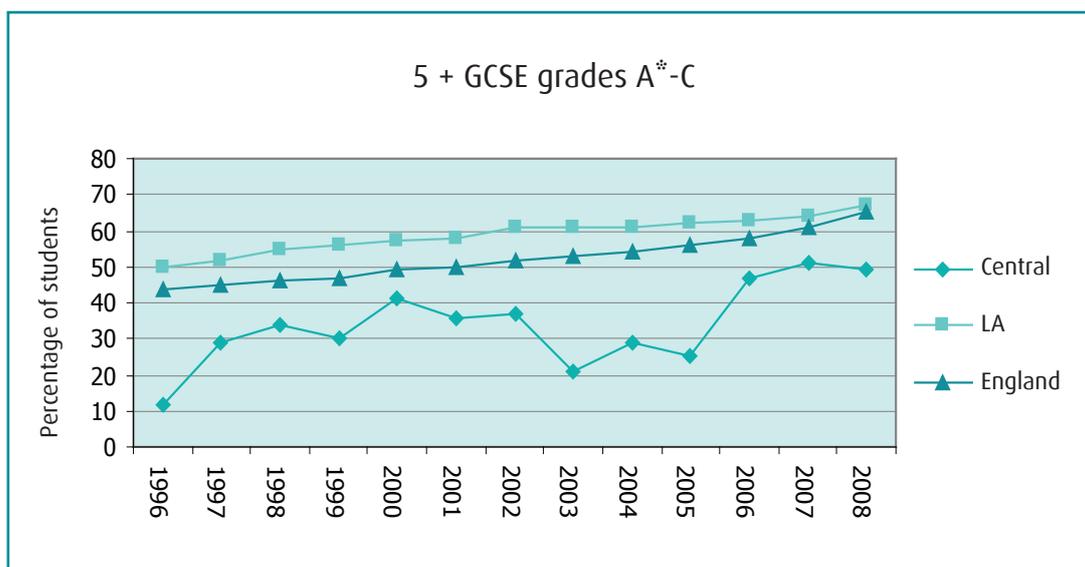
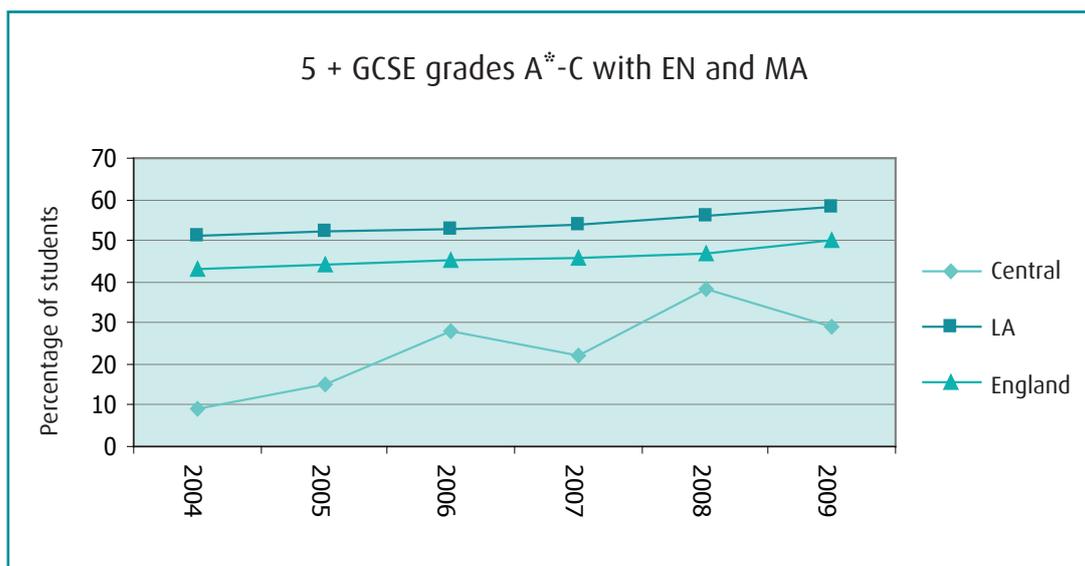


Figure 19: Percentage of 16-year-olds achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE in English and mathematics at Central Technology College, compared with local authority and national figures, 2004-09



3.4.6.4. Central's improvements were not sustained, however, and results declined over the next three years. The school had limited capacity because of its small intake so the local authority planned to close Central altogether, along with a local girls' school, to form a brand-new coeducational school. Both school communities approved the idea and proposals went forward to the schools' adjudicator. However, political control of Gloucestershire Council changed in 2005, and these plans were withdrawn in order to retain single-sex schools. Instead, £750,000 was earmarked for an external contractor to improve Central. This contract was awarded to the Ninestiles Consortium, a federation of schools in Birmingham.

3.4.6.5. The period from 2003 to 2008 is what marks Central out as performing beyond expectations. The blow to withdraw plans for amalgamation initially hit the school very hard and was demoralising for students and staff. As Figure 18 shows, Central nonetheless achieved a two-year period of improvement in 2003 and 2004. However, in March 2006, 10 weeks after entering a strategic partnership with Ninestiles, Central was inspected by Ofsted, which judged that it had significant weaknesses and gave it a notice to improve. By 2007, Ofsted stated that Central was a good school again and that it had been transformed. The following year, Central reduced the gap for the new GCSE benchmark including English and mathematics to nine per cent below the national average. This was clearly performance beyond expectations.

3.4.6.6. Like Grange Secondary School, after improving impressively with a run of ever better results, Central became part of a wider agenda to develop new academies. In July 2009, the secretary of state appointed an external consultant to advise him about schools in Gloucestershire with GCSE results below the floor target of 30 per cent of students achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including in English and mathematics. Initially, based on its 2008 results, Central was not included in this review. However, when 29 per cent of the students at the school achieved 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including in mathematics and English in August 2009, the school was added to the list.

3.4.6.7. The consultant's report, published in September 2009, did not discuss the impact on Central of Gloucester's grammar schools, which select the top 30 per cent of the ability range at age 11, leaving Central to meet a floor target of 30 per cent of students achieving these grades at GCSE with only 70 per cent of the full ability range to work with. According to the school's performance tables for 2009, there were 76 students in the Year 11 cohort. Therefore each individual student was equivalent to 1.3 per cent in the statistics and the 1 per cent shortfall on the National Challenge targets that triggered the external review of the authority's schools was therefore accounted for at Central by the performance of less than 1 student in 2 subjects.

3.4.6.8. The report of the external consultant nonetheless recommended that Central should be closed and amalgamated with another school, in which just 19 per cent of students achieved the GCSE benchmark, to form a new academy. Despite substantial local protests, the closure of Central was confirmed. The case of Central Technology College raises questions again about how performance beyond or beneath expectations can and should be defined and about whose definitions should prevail.

3.4.7. West Oaks North-East Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre

3.4.7.1. West Oaks North-East Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC) operates on three sites and provides support for local mainstream schools in the city of Leeds. The main site, West Oaks School, which includes a long-established base in a local high school, is a specialist technology college. All 132 students (aged 2-19) who attend the SILC have a statement of special educational needs. These statements cover a wide range of conditions, including profound and complex disabilities as well as various behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A large proportion of students (over 40 per cent) have psychological conditions identified on the autistic spectrum. Students with predominately behavioural, emotional and social difficulties attend school on two sites: Oakwood Lane for primary-age children and Beckett Park for secondary. The SILC provides outreach support to children who still remain in (or have returned to) mainstream education. The centre has taken on most of these extra responsibilities at the request of the local authority, which recognises the expertise and contribution of West Oaks staff.

3.4.7.2. The centre's 2007 Ofsted report awarded it the top grade, 'outstanding'. The inspectors' report judged the school to be 'extremely effective' in ensuring that pupils make 'outstanding progress' in 'catching up to nationally expected standards'. The report judged monitoring and tracking to be 'outstanding' although the 2009 inspectors' report, which took place after our study, was slightly less favourable in this respect. Importantly, inspectors recorded that children 'love coming to school', 'enjoy their lessons' and are taught by staff with 'high expectations for their progress'. Pupils 'thrive' in this atmosphere, feel safe and have strong personal outcomes – a judgement with which the ensuing 2009 report concurred.

3.4.7.3. West Oaks was the first special school to attain specialist status on its own. This demonstrates the attitude throughout the school of seeking what is best for the children in its care and providing them with opportunities that other children experience in mainstream schools. In some ways, the process of preparing and monitoring detailed statements of each student's needs makes it easier to verify that West Oaks performs beyond expectations. Many of the students at West Oaks will never attain Key Stage 1 targets, let alone level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2, so it is not possible to rely on standardised attainment results as a basis for determining the school's performance record. However, internal monitoring of children's progress and the application of internal assessment for learning indicate there have been significant improvements in children's achievement and overall development, which clearly point to performance beyond expectations.

3.4.8. Kanes Hill Primary School

3.4.8.1. Kanes Hill is one of three extraordinary primary schools included in this study. The school serves a socio-economically disadvantaged housing estate in the suburbs of Southampton. The estate, from which the school draws all its students, consists of largely council-owned rented housing with some owner-occupied former council properties as well. There are high levels of poverty on the estate, and many single-parent families. The school is in the top five per cent of the most deprived areas in the country. Over three-quarters of the children at Kanes Hill live in overcrowded houses and 56 per cent have identified special educational needs.

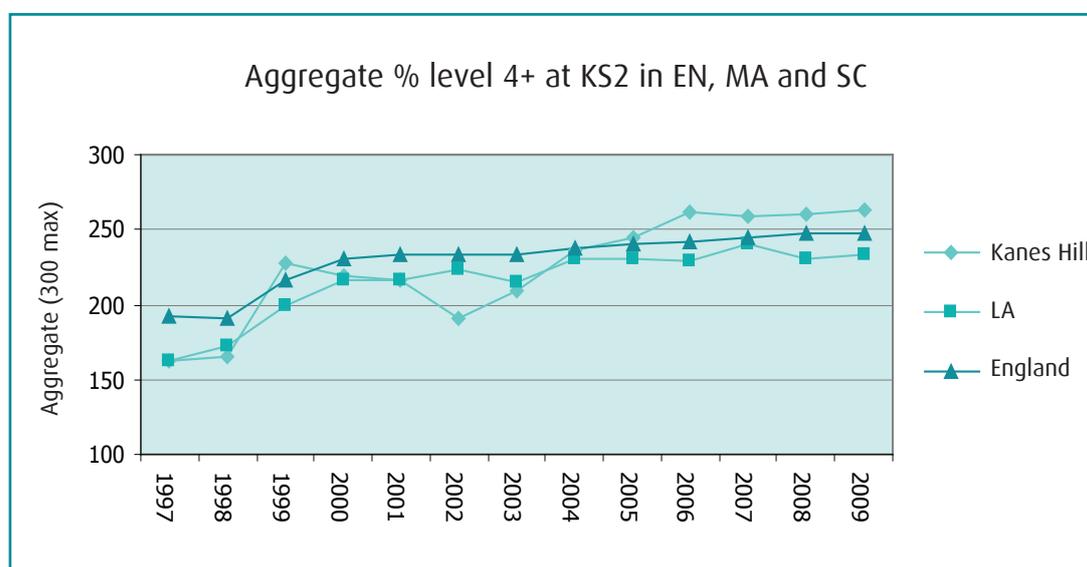
3.4.8.2. In 1997, Kanes Hill Primary School was struggling. Its test scores at the end of Key Stage 2 put the school in the bottom five per cent nationally. Students were unruly and frequently misbehaved. Teachers worked in a culture of individualism and Key Stage 1 teachers had no idea what children were expected to learn by the end of Key Stage 2. When the national test results were shared among the whole staff, the overwhelming attitude was that “you can’t expect kids from round here to do that”. These attitudes stemmed from a belief that it was unfair to force children to sit tests when they were doomed to perform badly. Years of poor performance had resulted in low expectations shared by everyone in the school community: teachers, children and parents.

3.4.8.3. Today, Kanes Hill is an outstanding school. National test results have improved dramatically since 1997. For the last three years, the school has appeared in the top two per cent of schools on contextual value-added achievement. Ofsted inspection reports in 2005 and 2008 confirm that while children start school with very low levels of literacy, numeracy and social skills, by the time they leave at age 11, they have all made exceptional progress in academic and personal development.

3.4.8.4. Kanes Hill’s improvements are not confined to measurable academic progress. Students’ attitudes to school have been transformed, as have teachers’ attitudes towards their students. Teachers describe their students as brilliant learners – always co-operative and willing to learn. Kanes Hill is also a strong professional learning community. All non-teaching staff have opportunities to learn in the workplace and almost all have gained national vocational qualifications. Three have moved on to a foundation degree.

3.4.8.5. Working with the same children, from the same estate, at the same school, Kanes Hill’s teachers have transformed their school from being one of the worst performing in the country, with poor behaviour, low expectations and dismal results, to a school that has raised its measured achievement scores and engaged its students intensively in the life and learning of their school (Figure 20). Meanwhile, the headteacher and staff believe the school has not performed beyond expectations but merely achieved what the children deserve by enabling them to demonstrate their capabilities.

Figure 20: Aggregate achievement at level 4+ for students at Kanes Hill Primary School at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, compared with local authority and national trends, 1997–09



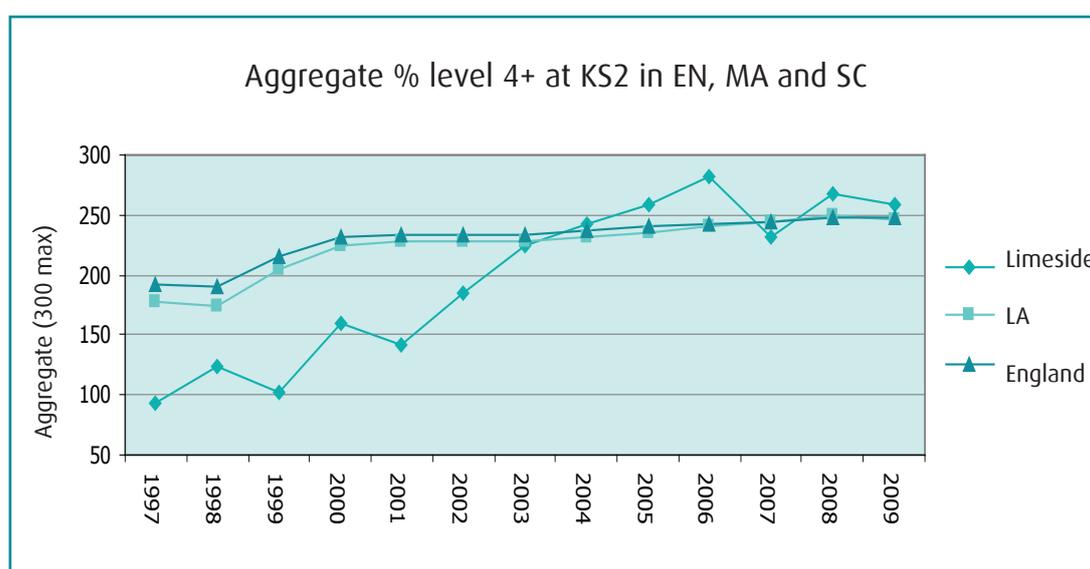
3.4.9. Limeside Primary School

3.4.9.1. Limeside Primary School in Oldham is set in an area of significant social and economic deprivation, which has had problems with poor-quality social housing, racism, high unemployment and low aspirations. A high number of students are eligible for free school meals and more than a quarter have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of the school's families live on the Limeside housing estate in rented accommodation.

3.4.9.2. In 1999 the school was in a shabby building and had reached a low point with appalling results, apparently uncontrollable children, overwhelmed teachers and a poor community reputation. A series of very critical inspections resulted in the school being placed in special measures in 2000.

3.4.9.3. In the past decade, under its previous and current headteachers, Limeside has experienced a steady and sustained improvement. Test scores are now well above the national average (Figure 21) and the 2007 Ofsted inspection report judged the school to be 'outstanding'. The school was part of a Bridging Communities Award in 2008.

Figure 21: Aggregate achievement at level 4+ for students at Limeside Primary School at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, compared with local authority and national trends, 1997–09



3.4.9.4. The former head of Limeside was responsible for getting the school out of special measures by 2002. A large number of teachers left the school and experienced staff were brought in to support improvements in teaching and learning. A new behaviour strategy was introduced, focusing on positive reinforcement. The current headteacher (previously the deputy) has made further improvements to the school building, restructured roles, introduced sweeping changes to the curriculum, refocused staff and students, and connected the school more strongly to its community. Change at Limeside is about improving learning and not just raising test results. Most important of all, because the school has performed beyond expectations, after being labelled as badly behaved, low achieving and having low aspirations, the students have now been transformed and love learning and coming to school.

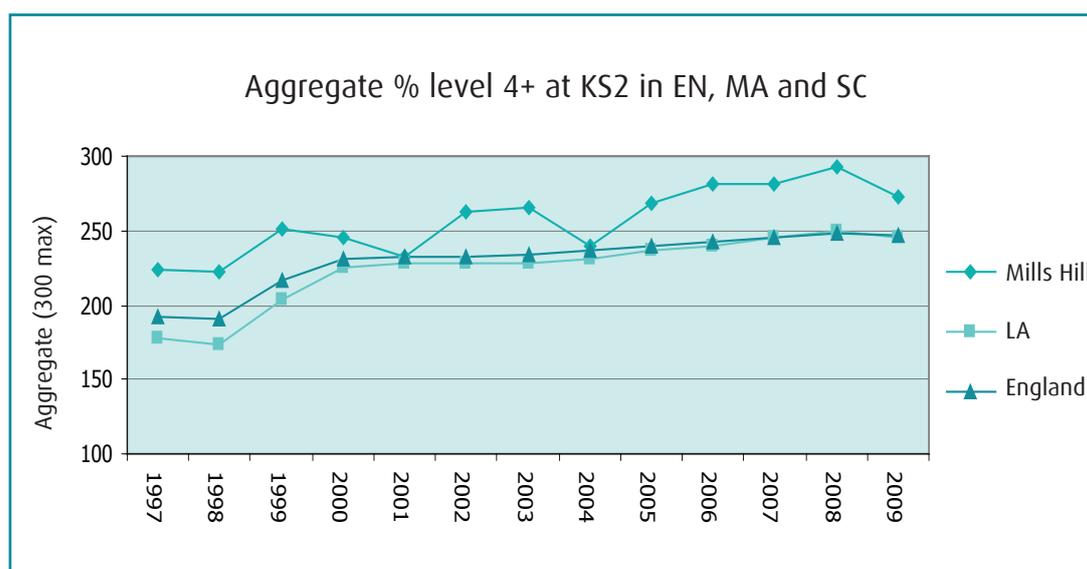
3.4.10. Mills Hill Primary School

3.4.10.1. The third primary school and final education case study is Mills Hill, a large primary school in the centre of Oldham. Not all instances of underperformance are ones of serious failure, which plunge institutions into the very lowest reaches of their sector and threaten them with elimination or extinction. Some organisations may have a number of factors such as generous resourcing, a successful history or an amenable clientele in their favour, but they perform less well than might be expected in these circumstances. Instead of doing a lot with a little, they do much less with quite a lot. In education, these kinds of organisations are known as cruising or coasting schools¹⁶.

3.4.10.2. Mills Hill is an example of school improvement taking place under a new head working almost exclusively with the existing staff base. When the current head began in spring 2004, he felt it was necessary to reassess critically the teaching and learning that took place at the school. He triggered change by initiating a local authority inspection, which judged Mills Hill to be causing concern.

3.4.10.3. Capitalising on the apprehension resulting from the critical evaluation, in 2004-05, the head and staff undertook a process of pedagogical transformation focused primarily on implementing the principles of co-operative learning. Results picked up again and performance has surpassed previous high levels to exceed expectations (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Aggregate achievement at level 4 for students at Mills Hill Primary School at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, compared with local authority and national trends, 1997-09



3.4.10.4. In 2008, a hard federation was formed between Mills Hill and Medlock Valley schools with a shared leadership structure and unchanged teaching staff. Medlock Valley had performed below its floor targets for student achievement for eight years. In July 2009, Medlock Valley's SATs results were above its floor targets for the first time.

3.4.10.5. There are several lessons to be learned from Mills Hill about how to improve a coasting school or organisation under new leadership but with some existing staff, and how to secure improvement in measured achievement through pedagogically driven change that enriches students' learning.

4 Leading beyond expectations

“Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world.”

Nelson Mandela, inaugural speech, 1994

4.1. Having identified the different forms of performance beyond expectations and the clear indicators for it according to one or more of these criteria, it is time to examine the reasons for performance beyond expectations, the factors that explain it, and how these factors manifest themselves in business, sport and education.

4.2. Education literature

4.2.1. We are not the first to ask these questions about performance beyond expectations. The literature of school effectiveness and improvement has, from time to time, explained not just the general factors that make most schools effective, but also the interesting outliers of highly effective or innovative practice that are different from the norm¹⁷. In 1977, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate identified and described 10 good schools where there was a safe and orderly environment for learning, classroom management was effective, and headteachers exercised strong leadership¹⁸. More recently, Chris James and his colleagues studied 18 very effective primary schools in challenging circumstances in Wales. They found these schools were led by high-functioning and personally well-integrated leaders who showed immense dedication towards their work and their communities but not at the expense of burning themselves out. They were courageous in the face of challenges and achieved high staff retention and stability over time in their own leadership, thereby building trust in and with their local communities¹⁹. Ofsted’s report on 12 outstanding secondary schools²⁰ echoes and enlarges on these themes. The authors argue that consistently outstanding secondary schools have clear values and high expectations whatever the circumstances; are characterised by excellence in teaching and learning; put people first – students, staff and communities; and have effective leadership that is well distributed. The headteachers and teachers in some of the cases described by Ofsted show relentless attention to detail in reaching and attaining improvement targets and in maintaining the self-belief that underpins that effort. Rudd and colleagues echoed many of these findings in their study of 20 specialist schools that were high performers in achieving value-added GCSE results. Quality of leadership, personalised learning and matching reform agendas to students’ needs were the three general approaches that explained performance beyond expectations²¹. In 1991 the British Society for the Advancement of Science and the Royal Society established an independent National Commission on Education to investigate 11 highly effective schools in deprived areas that were succeeding against the odds. Common features that emerge from this study are: an irresistible optimism in each school, a pride in the school displayed by the local community, a can-do culture within each school and a unity of purpose. These schools were wary of being described as successful because they were continuously striving to improve²².

4.2.2. Most of the research on performance beyond expectations in education tends to concentrate on schools that do well in challenging circumstances, especially after they have turned around²³. The research concentrates less on high-performing schools in other circumstances, or on schools such as special schools that perform well with different populations of students. Sometimes the agencies that identify and describe high-performing schools are the same ones that judged them in the first place, creating a risk of reinforcing the criteria that underpin official judgement. In many reports, descriptions are rather brief, leaving unclear what strong or distributed leadership actually is or exactly how a target culture works, for example. The literature on high performance tends to be separated from the research on innovative schools and how they can be sustained (by doing things differently through next practice as well as through best practice)²⁴. Compared with schools, research on local authorities that perform above expectations is far less common than in the United States or Canada, leaving a gap in understanding of the wider professional communities

and administrative contexts in which many schools have to operate²⁵. Last, there is little or no systematic cross-checking of the practice of performance beyond expectations in education with that in other sectors – missing an opportunity to investigate how performance might be improved even further by exchanging understandings across these sectors²⁶. This study moves beyond these limitations in the existing literature.

4.2.3. The quality of leadership is integral to performing beyond expectations. In education, although the overall effects of leadership on student achievement are small, they are statistically significant and nonetheless the second most impactful within-school influence on student achievement after teaching²⁷. A growing body of research is eliciting the key leadership variables that specifically influence student learning and achievement²⁸. Foremost among these is the influence that principals and other leaders have on the other adults in the school who more directly affect student learning and achievement. In education, performance beyond expectations seems to be most likely when leaders lead with and through others²⁹. This energises the whole community in supporting improvement, and builds sustainable capacity, which can remain once key leaders at the top have left³⁰.

4.2.4. The impact of leadership overall, and of leading through others, seems to be especially important in schools in challenging circumstances that are facing turnaround situations and achieving or have already achieved high performance. Most of the differences between schools of highest and lower levels of student achievement can be attributed to different degrees of leadership distribution. High-performing schools have relatively high levels of influence from all sources of leadership, while low-performing schools have low levels of influence and limited leadership distribution³¹. Leithwood, Mascall and Strauss show that most successful heads draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices: building vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation, and managing the teaching and learning programme³². Successful turnaround leaders, it is claimed, often reflect styles of what McGregor and Burns first called transformational leadership³³, have ‘entrepreneurial instinct’, and are ‘leaders of change’. They are optimistic, enthusiastic and confident, achievement-oriented, capable of challenging work, tough-minded, hands-on, courageous and persistent, flexible, and lead by example³⁴.

4.2.5. In all this, however, while there are modest overall statistical associations regarding leadership effects, and clear evidence that the most effective school leadership is exercised through and with others, it is also clear that effective leaders in challenging circumstances have to draw on a wider repertoire of strategies than their colleagues³⁵; that a school’s unique cultural circumstances and prior history of change may have a profound influence on the kinds of strategies that might be successfully adopted³⁶; and that many of the details of what exactly is meant by terms like distributed leadership or leadership through others – be this distribution of responsibilities, dispersion and diffusion of innovation and initiative, or radical democratic empowerment – is often ignored or avoided³⁷. Just how school leaders who help their organisations perform above expectations can and do lead through others, and how they reconcile this with their own influential personas, still requires a lot of investigation and explanation.

4.3. Business literature³⁸

4.3.1. In the business field, this study is by no means the only one concerned with leadership beyond expectations. Among several texts concerned with performing beyond expectations, Bernard Bass’s *Leading Beyond Expectations* argues that leading organisations that perform beyond expectations hold and pursue a deep moral purpose³⁹. However, Bass soon leaves behind the general question of performing beyond expectations to explore and extol the virtues and values of transformational leadership – a subject on which he has become a leading authority.

4.3.2. In *High Performance Leadership*, Graham Winter describes four key areas of energy associated with high performance:

- mental energy – the mix of knowledge, creativity and problem-solving capabilities
- physical energy – the energy within the body and its capacity to do things at speed and over time
- emotional energy – the capacity to handle emotional demands
- relationship energy – the extent and quality of relationships and networks⁴⁰

Winter argues that high-performance leaders tend to have high levels of energy within each of these four

areas. Studies of high performance or peak performance are relevant to the research being reported here, but this is not always performance beyond expectations compared with past performance, surrounding circumstances or better-placed peers, for example.

4.3.3. Most of the business literature on high-performing organisations tends to concentrate on single cases – the single-case method being the staple diet of MBAs⁴¹. Insiders, corporate leaders and enthusiasts write hagiographies of their own companies telling stories of stellar success, ascent from lowly origins or triumphs over adversity. Alternatively, journalists write exposés of the underbelly of favourite brands, making it difficult for researchers to gain access and build trust in the interest of more balanced appraisals. Cross-case studies are much less common and many of them rely on data in the public domain such as financial performance information, accounts by consultants who have worked for or with the companies they describe, or the testimonies of CEOs at the top. There are, however, some important and well-known exceptions.

4.3.4. Working with an extensive budget, Tom Peters interviewed leading executives in 43 of the Fortune 500 list of top companies (many of whom had been top clients with McKinsey Consultants, for whom Peters worked at the time) to discern how the soft processes of human organisations produced strong results. In his classic, co-authored text, *In Search of Excellence*, Peters and his colleague Bob Waterman picked out eight elements of excellence that explained excellent performance concerned with action, customers, people, values, focus, innovation and leadership. These factors combined centralised values with localised responsibility and autonomy for realising them⁴².

4.3.5. Jim Collins is the leading author of firsthand, data-driven studies of high-performing, long-lasting organisations. In *Built to Last*, Collins matched companies, sector by sector, with higher and lower performance records over long periods of time to determine what it takes to succeed over the long haul⁴³. Long-lasting corporations, Collins found, are values-driven rather than profits-driven and focus more on the company itself, not the product or service it offers. In *Good to Great*, Collins used a similar methodology to distinguish merely good companies from truly excellent ones⁴⁴. Here, Collins and his team suggest that corporations that become great focus on what they do best instead of spreading themselves thinly across multiple arenas. In successful corporations, the leader's role is to 'get the right people on the bus' and create a corporate climate that privileges passion for the work and the organisation. While charismatic leaders often reign over the most successful companies, what ultimately matters is what Collins calls 'level 5 leadership': being humble about one's own contributions and sharing credit where it is due, yet also being fiercely proud of the work one does.

4.3.6. Collins's US-based research has been replicated in Europe. The Enduring Success Project found that great companies focus on their assets and capabilities instead of broadening the scope of their work; they know when to diversify; they are able to keep a range of suppliers and customers as their base; they do not repeat past failures; and they rarely tackle big changes⁴⁵. In contrast to Collins's findings, the European study found that while great companies often have strong corporate cultures, so too do many others. Corporate cultures, therefore, cannot be the defining principle of enduring success. Even so, cultural factors and especially the presence of toxic cultures appear to be a key factor in failing organisations requiring turnaround.

4.3.7. In the aftermath of Enron, and the wake of the global economic collapse, business literature has turned to investigating more values-driven aspects of corporate organisations, including both the means and the ends of performing beyond expectations⁴⁶. In their widely cited study of 'humanistic companies' or 'firms of endearment', Sisodia and colleagues suggest that 'endearing companies tend to be enduring companies'⁴⁷. These companies

'seek to maximize their value to society as a whole, not just to their shareholders. They are the ultimate value creators. They create emotional value, experiential value, social value, and of course, financial value. People who interact with such companies feel safe, secure and pleased in their dealings. They enjoy working with or for the company, buying from it, investing in it, and having it as a neighbour.'⁴⁸

4.3.8. Firms of endearment have a genuine passion for customers and customer experience and they empower employees to maximise this. They hire people who can be passionate about the company and the values it stands for, providing them with good training, offering employee compensation packages above the industry standard, and securing high rates of staff retention as a result. Firms of endearment view suppliers

as true partners and encourage them to collaborate in moving their companies forward – partly to profit from the partnership but also to ensure the partner benefits beyond the services provided. Their cultures are resistant to short-term, incidental pressures, but can adapt quickly when needed. As a result, they are typically the innovators and breakers of conventional rules within their industries.

4.3.9. Sisodia and colleagues note that firms of endearment ‘returned 1,026 percent for investors over the 10 years ending 30 June 2006, compared to 122 percent for the S&P 500’⁴⁹. ‘Earn a share of the customer’s heart and she will gladly offer you a bigger share of her wallet,’ they claim⁵⁰. However, while there are more positive than negative associations between companies that practise corporate social responsibility and their financial performance, including on stock market returns, the evidence is not consistent on this score⁵¹. Moreover, companies that possess these qualities are not always as long lasting as they first seem. The performance of many of the ‘excellent’ companies identified by Peters and Waterman⁵² later plummeted – some of them quite quickly – and in [How the Mighty Fall](#), Jim Collins acknowledged that a number of the outstanding companies he had identified in his previous books had not endured⁵³.

4.3.10. Many businesses that are more explicitly values-driven use corporate social responsibility and performance not to replace or in some ways ethically offset corporate financial performance but to enhance or move beyond it. Christine Arena investigates businesses she defines as high purpose. A high-purpose company, she argues,

‘uses its greatest strengths to build social and economic value, to raise hope, and to extinguish despair. It exists to make a real and lasting contribution to society and considers profits a means to this end. Unlike the goals of traditional profit-driven enterprises, the charitable goals of high-purpose companies are so deeply ingrained in the genetic code of the organisations that they drive innovation, stimulate growth and efficiency, and define corporate culture’⁵⁴.

4.3.11. High-purpose or humanistic companies use their social responsibility to drive their financial performance, not merely to mollify customers and critics. For them, doing good works means doing good work, and vice versa, although even here, strong values and ethical purposes do not guarantee higher performance⁵⁵. However, research on purpose-driven companies raises important questions about outcomes above the bottom line, using processes that also draw a clear ethical line. Increasingly, the business field refers here to what is called the triple bottom line, one that is economic, social and environmental⁵⁶. It is evident in the idea of balanced scorecards of organisational performance, which have percolated through to the public and non-profit sectors⁵⁷. This stimulates reflection about what performance beyond expectations means and how it should be defined.

4.3.12. Turnaround practice in education and the public sector generally often tries to replicate what are believed to be standard and/or effective turnaround practices in the private sector⁵⁸. Most corporate turnarounds commence with a short period of replacement – removing and replacing key leaders – followed by retrenchment or repositioning to ensure immediate survival and then eventual renewal⁵⁹. These three-phase understandings of turnaround have already been applied in the educational field⁶⁰, and in all sectors, a strong line of work organises prescriptive measures for intervention in a developmental sequence too⁶¹. However, recent research suggests that while most turnarounds require an initial change of leadership, this is not always necessary. A change in the current leader’s ‘assumptions and mental models’ may be sufficient⁶².

4.3.13. While investors and shareholders often feel an urgent need to employ dramatic turnaround strategies when a business seems to be failing, the literature on the success of such turnarounds is not convincing⁶³. Whether turnaround is defined as a shift from bottom to top quartiles of segment profitability within one year, or simply a rapid improvement sufficient to re-establish viability⁶⁴, the evidence suggests that few companies actually achieve a successful turnaround⁶⁵. The corporate turnaround literature is awash with ideas and prescriptions for change⁶⁶, but there is little hard research evidence pointing to what actually works⁶⁷.

4.3.14. There are at least six reasons for the unconvincing evidence about the success of fast corporate turnarounds:

1. **Research limitations of the management field.** The close, even tight employment, training and consultancy relationships between corporations and business school faculty make it difficult to undertake critical investigative and comparative research of companies that are also commercial consultancy clients, employers of the university's interns and graduates, and source material for the MBA single-case method. Management research therefore tends to rely on secondary sources that maintain a distance from the current inside workings of corporations, or it collects data from top-level leaders or around agreed agendas that align with the existing management priorities of participating companies.
2. **Overwhelming scope of the challenge.** Ultimately, management 'needs to change financial targets, metrics, customer focus, levels of productivity, culture, and internal processes to sufficiently improve profitability' – no mean feat!⁶⁸
3. **Overestimating the severity and longevity of the problem.** Shareholders can develop tunnel vision about short-term returns, and panic when one disappointing quarter feels like the start of a precipitous decline. A quarterly dip may not always be an indicator of more serious or endemic performance difficulties, though. It could be a statistical anomaly, an unusual season in the sector, a reflection of a wider sector trend, or a short-term effect of leadership turnover or of the temporary disruption caused by implementation of an organisational change. Misreading short-term blips as long-term dips can create what Yossi Sheffi calls the bullwhip effect – reacting to what is actually a temporary shortfall in performance or demand by firing leaders, switching suppliers, escalating targets, selling off assets or closing down entire sections of the operation⁶⁹.
4. **Underestimating internal capacity.** Even in genuinely underperforming organisations, we have seen that removing entire layers of staff or eliminating existing leadership is not always desirable or necessary. In *Change Without Pain*, Eric Abrahamson advises against the turnaround tendency 'to obliterate the past to create the future'⁷⁰. This, he says, leads to wild swings of the pendulum, increased employee burnout and loss of collective expertise and memory. Instead, Abrahamson proposes creative recombination of existing capacity – 'reusing, redeploying and recombining' people and teams in novel ways that are more productive for everyone⁷¹.
5. **Indulging in abrasive or antisocial psychopathology.** Manuel Kets de Vries, the acclaimed international expert on the clinical psychiatry of leadership, describes how many leadership actions and orientations replay the scripts of childhood, which, if negative or harmful, can 'create a dizzying merry-go-round that takes affected leaders into a self-destructive cycle of repetition'⁷². Turnaround scenarios sometimes attract leadership types with disturbing and destructive dispositions – especially 'abrasives' and 'antisocials'. De Vries describes how famous 'self-styled turnaround artists' with what he calls 'abrasive' dispositions, may well double shareholder value within a little over a year by radical downsizing, massive layoffs, institutionalised staff turnover, and extreme overworking of staff, but the toxic and bullying organisational cultures that result breed fear and fraud as well as failure to achieve long-term sustainability⁷³. 'Antisocials' (or, in their extreme form, sociopaths), cynically exploit the organisations they lead and also turn upside down, for their own personal gain. Plagiarism, theft and deceit as well as lack of transparency are habitual to them. One of their favoured change tactics, de Vries points out, is radical restructuring, since the resulting chaos disguises their dysfunctional leadership: 'Failure at the top goes unnoticed while the process of restructuring creates the illusion of a strong, creative hand at the helm'⁷⁴. In the end, abrasives and antisocials can ruin the organisations for which they have been responsible.
6. **Disconnecting quick wins from sustainable development.** One of the key tensions of all organisational change is connecting short-term gains to long-term success. In their investigation of four decades of financial data from over 1,000 companies, Dodd and Favarro found that 'the stock market doesn't seem to value the ability to produce consecutive uninterrupted runs of positive earnings results'⁷⁵. Indeed, slightly more sporadic performers do better in the long term. Sustainable success does not privilege short-term heroic targets, quarterly returns and instant turnarounds above all else. The authors' results show that 'the market rewarded companies that were better than average at achieving both short-term earnings and long-term economic profits'⁷⁶. These companies were able to reconcile 'today and tomorrow'. John Kotter, one of the first advocates of quick wins, conceded that short-term measurable improvements are valuable because they vindicate sacrifice, build confidence, provide opportunities

for celebration, increase credibility among stakeholders and neutralise cynics and resisters⁷⁷. However, Kotter warns, quick wins should not be of any kind or come at any cost. They must ‘make sure that visible results lend sufficient credibility to the (long-term) transformation effort’⁷⁸. Failed short-term turnaround efforts often fail to grasp this fundamental fact.

4.3.15. The business literature stretching across cases that have been studied firsthand offers important insights for other sectors about the value of purpose, passion and collaborative partnerships in producing positive performance outcomes. It also raises questions about the nature of those outcomes themselves. But not all aspects of business practice transfer easily into the public sector⁷⁹. In general, the public sector has less freedom in hiring and firing staff – in getting the right people on and off the bus⁸⁰. It must change with the people it has, not the people it wants. Political interests frequently intrude into and sometimes undermine the practicalities of performance. Leadership succession often rests outside the organisation – in other people’s hands⁸¹. Last, outcome measures and targets such as waiting times for hospital patients or test scores in schools are more open to professional and political dispute than shareholder value or profits and losses.

4.3.16. Although discussions based on secondary sources have addressed the commonalities and differences between organisations in the public and private sectors – especially in relation to the reasons for exceptional performance, or the best strategies for turnaround – there is significant need for firsthand investigation of performance beyond expectations in the public and private sectors undertaken at the same time, in relation to the same questions. This is what our study seeks to do.

4.4. Sport literature

4.4.1. Studies of organisations that perform above expectations in sport mirror those of business in usually taking the form of single cases of remarkable success. Harvard business professor, Rosabeth Moss Kanter is one of the very few to investigate all three sectors in her examination of how corporations, sports teams and public-sector organisations can rise in self-reinforcing upward spirals of increasing confidence, or descend into doom-loops of decline⁸². The most significant cross-case study in sport, though, is by New Zealand professors Gilson and colleagues in their examination of a dozen peak-performing sporting organisations⁸³. Investigating ‘peak performers’ (some of them not necessarily above expectations, given their opulent levels of resourcing), the authors drew a number of key conclusions about the importance of purpose, tradition, passion, teamwork, trust, personal stability and organisational sustainability. These findings have been reinforced and further developed in a meta-analysis for this project by Alan Boyle of eight individual published case studies of sporting excellence⁸⁴. These draw from cross-case studies of Kanter and Gilson and colleagues and from other investigations of individual sporting organisations⁸⁵.

4.4.2. Gilson and his colleagues argue that peak performance begins with a compelling purpose that turns inspirational dreams into aspirational, but achievable, challenges, which focus the organisation on specific actions. The inspirational dream often emerges from the history and traditions of the organisation. It is promoted by historic rather than heroic leadership. For US women’s soccer, it was the recognition and success for women’s sport worldwide; for the All Blacks, it was to inspire the New Zealand nation with their rugby achievements:

‘By sharing the dream widely, peak performing organisations inspire confidence and belief in their own greatness, and sustain and enlarge the horizon of business possibilities. Clients buy more than a game, more than a product. They experience the aura of association. The dream both sustains and is sustained by peak performance and winning. Through celebration of achievements, [peak performing organisations] make magic for all involved.’⁸⁶

4.4.3. Peak-performing organisations promote psychological integration of individuals and collective integration of the team. People take a personal interest in each other so they can alleviate the effects of any external issues that might impair an individual. These harmonious relationships provide a calm, mutually supportive environment, which is important to achieve peak performance under pressure. Information is shared freely. If somebody has a good idea, they are encouraged to follow it through even when the idea falls outside their particular area. There are high levels of trust and considerable autonomy in the development of people and the cultivation of their skills⁸⁷. Everyone shares the success and the deepest reward is intrinsically being part of the best. Collective strength in relationships fosters inner strength of personality – not just the skills of emotional intelligence, but the coherence of emotional integration:

'If... we feel safe in our relationships, healthy, financially secure, and at one with our inner selves, this enables mental clarity, which is essential for focus and peak performance.'⁸⁸

4.4.4. Gilson and his colleagues contend that the key to peak-performing organisations is inspirational players, on and off the field, among formal leaders and others besides. Inspirational players are powerful people with powerful ideas. They live the dream, make it happen for the team and inspire others to exceed their personal best.

'Inspirational players... provide a benchmark for others to emulate and succeed. They also recruit, mentor and develop people, providing for succession within the organisation... There is a clear preference across all [peak-performing organisations] for promoting internally and growing people within the organisation, but this is balanced by careful recruitment to sustain the organisation's energy and capacity.'⁸⁹

4.4.5. Personal development and team development in contexts of active trust, autonomy, support and challenge benefit from and contribute to distributed leadership and collective responsibility among the many as well as leadership development and succession from within⁹⁰. This is balanced by some injections of innovation and new energy from without. Indeed, increasing success and escalating confidence attract other inspirational players who may be selected and recruited to sustain their own and the organisation's success.

4.4.6. While attempts to improve performance by changing the manager or buying star players can sometimes produce short lifts in performance, long-term commitments to internal development and external recruitment produce more sustainable improvements when these are linked to autonomous yet interconnected play, which everyone enjoys and engages in together in a shared experience of intense immersion or flow⁹¹. In sport as in business, simply changing the coach, manager or top executive is unlikely to lead to lasting improvements. The sustainable development of leaders and teams over time is also made possible by shrewd and solid business models and strategies of careful investment and financial probity (for instance, spending modest amounts of money on the best physiotherapists to develop the whole team, rather than exorbitant amounts on a single star player who may or may not mesh with that team). When we consider what we have to learn about leadership and performance beyond expectations from sport, it is not just coaching and teamwork that sport can contribute to our understanding of leadership and exceptional performance elsewhere, but the whole approach to sustainable improvement and peak performance off and on the field.

4.4.7. In sport, the timescale required for turnaround and then sustained improvement is critical. The eight case studies of sports organisations that performed beyond expectations in this review show a period of between 3 and 11 years of turnaround and then development into being peak performers⁹². Sustained peak performance with significant elements of flow depends on building relationships, developing trust, attracting and keeping leaders and players with deep ties to the organisation, creating academies or farm organisations to bring on and nurture youngsters in the organisation, and so on. Some short-term measures are also necessary to steady the ship and stop it leaking – such as financial reorganisation or signing one or two twilight players at cut-price rates who might still produce interim strong performances and serve as mentors for upcoming talent. But authentic and enduring success does not come about with instant solutions or miraculous changes of manager. This is one of the most powerful lessons from the literature on organisational change in competitive team sport.

4.7. Leadership literature

4.7.1. To lead with confidence and outpace all competitors, leaders have to make better, faster decisions. Exceptional leaders set challenging targets within the context of strong relationships and support for those who work with or for them, to meet their high expectations. Leaders who perform beyond expectations inspire people they work with to have high expectations, set and model high expectations for themselves, and develop distributed commitment to and responsibility for meeting those expectations among inspirational players in the community. In organisations that perform beyond expectations, all people exceed their personal expectations. This is the cultural norm and those who cannot exist within such an environment soon depart. Performance beyond expectations is not an isolated occurrence or a transient event – setting and meeting high expectations reflects authentic and sustainable achievement, not quick-fix lifts in performance, sudden spikes in achievement scores or statistical manipulations of results.

4.7.2. Leaders who perform beyond expectations develop a lot of their talent from within while recruiting sufficiently from without. They build loyalty and attachment to their organisations, invest a high degree of trust and discretion in their personnel, and create challenging yet engaging environments of collective achievement and flow. The strength of their relationships and their readiness to take risks are paradoxically underpinned by the solidity and financial probity of their structural foundations.

4.7.3. To perform beyond expectations is to defy probability, defeat the odds and undo the self-fulfilling prophecies that limit aspirations. Exceeding expectations means going beyond the very idea of expectation itself so that hope triumphs over it. In the words of Robert Browning,

“Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?”

4.7.4. In the existing literature and research of performance beyond expectations in business, sport and education, it is clear that leadership is an integral factor and perhaps the most significant of all. The important question now is not, therefore, whether the effect of leadership on organisational performance matters but rather what type of leadership matters. The leadership literature is replete with different definitions, interpretations and versions of ‘good’ or ‘effective’ leadership practice. It is preoccupied with different labels for leadership. It has a tendency to use a range of adjectives to describe different forms of leadership with little empirical justification, without much clarity in delineating different types, or in the absence of defensible distinctions between analysis and advocacy. Bill Mulford, for example, is concerned about what he calls ‘adjectival leadership’:

“While we know that leadership does not automatically take on a new meaning simply when a new adjective precedes the term, there remains a predominant view that the right leadership style, if found, practised and implemented, in a strong unequivocal manner, will make all the difference.”⁹³

4.7.5. Mulford identifies a trend that represents a moving ‘well away from the exclusivity of the one-size-fits-all, charismatic, heroic model’ towards other, more complex understandings of leadership⁹⁴. He reviews four of these understandings, which are paradoxically all ‘adjectival’ forms of leadership: instructional, transformational, distributed and sustainable leadership. Many others can be added to this list including inspirational, strategic, moral and ethical, passionate, constructivist, creative and courageous leadership⁹⁵.

4.7.6. Many of these leadership ideas have their origins in fields and literatures other than education. Often, they are driven by an orientation towards prescription and advocacy that is itself driven by the prior commitment to a particular understanding of leadership. In addition, much of the contemporary debate about leadership tends to adopt polarised positions creating straw opponents against which preferred models can be advanced. Leadership can either be transformational or transactional, autocratic or democratic, centralised or distributed.

4.7.7. In *Experience and Education*, North America’s most significant educational philosopher, John Dewey, argued against such ‘dualistic thinking’. ‘Mankind,’ he said, ‘likes to think in terms of extreme opposites... It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of Either/Ors between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities.’⁹⁶ In his classic text *Democracy and Education*, Dewey argued instead that most apparent opposites worked together when learning and education was at its best. For instance, in relation to the arguments about whether schools should concentrate on work or play, Dewey pointed out that ‘play and industry are by no means antithetical to one another as is often assumed’⁹⁷. Most play involved hard work and constant attention, and the best work felt like play. The same was true of other common oppositions such as interest and discipline, progressivism and conservatism, experience and theory or thinking, labour and leisure, and the individual and the world. The same is true of the common oppositions of leadership.

4.7.8. If, for some authors, leadership is ultimately a matter of style, for others, it is an aggregate of skill sets, standards or competencies. There is a tendency in frameworks of leadership standards and competencies to pinpoint particular attributes and measurable outcomes that are seen as applying to leadership performance in all times and places. These ‘laundry lists’⁹⁸ often overlook how effective leadership attributes can vary depending on the situation from one kind of school or institution to the next⁹⁹, on the context in which the schools find themselves¹⁰⁰, on the level of performance a school or institution has already reached¹⁰¹, and on how they can and do evolve over time within and across individuals through the processes of leadership development and leadership succession¹⁰².

4.7.9. Some writers argue that leadership and effective leadership especially depend not just on situational differences or evolutions over time, but on people's higher level capacities to integrate different characteristics, competencies and capabilities into a unified whole. Just as integration is one of the highest order characteristics of psychosocial development, personal and organisational integration in leadership constitutes a high level of development, also increasing people's capacity to exercise different skills and express different leadership qualities as appropriate, but within a unified whole that defines the core of the person expressing and exercising these things¹⁰³.

4.7.10. Daft and Lengel point to the dangers of 'leadership fission', of splitting leadership and performance into discrete and unconnected elements¹⁰⁴. They advocate for an alternative they call 'leadership fusion' – the coming together of different inner qualities and capabilities within the organisation or individual within a single story or narrative of leadership. Such fusion, they claim, 'unlocks powerful forces' that are to be found in the 'yearning for meaningful work', in the 'desire to contribute', in 'dreams', 'creative potential' and 'courage'¹⁰⁵. Leadership fusion, they say, is about 'joining, coming together, creative connection and partnerships'¹⁰⁶.

4.7.11. This study also addresses the issue of leadership fusion but in a different way than that proposed by Daft and Lengel. For the originators of the concept, leadership fusion is an inner integration of personal capabilities and dispositions comprising heart, integrity, vision, mindfulness, courage and communication. It is a normative, narrative and almost spiritual quest. Fusion leadership is advocated as much as analysed. It is based on a survey of literature and an exploration of stories and examples from personal experience and the world of leadership that are real but not rigorously evidence-based. By contrast, our own arrival at the idea of fusion leadership comes from our detailed, rigorous and unique bottom-up analysis of 18 organisations that perform beyond expectations in relation to previous performance, context and conditions of support, and comparable performance among peers with similar characteristics.

4.8. Conclusion

4.8.1. The existing literature and, as we shall see, the evidence-base from 18 organisations in three sectors, show that leadership of performance beyond expectations is integrated, not fragmented. It is a fusion of complex qualities, not the expression of a single style. It is as much a mythological narrative journey as a logical set or sequence of elements. And, we will learn, it is an expression and embodiment of the paradoxes that make up extraordinary leadership practice everywhere: heroic and humble, charismatic and traditional, long term and short term, emotionally inspirational and technically effective, and remarkable and unremarkable.

4.8.2. Our study adds to the existing understanding of leadership of performance beyond expectations on several counts. First, it is a contemporary study based on a wealth of firsthand case study data from multiple sites. Second, it has looked at leadership of performance beyond expectations across three sectors – sport, business and education. Third, it does not apply ideas in a hierarchical way from other sectors such as business to the education field, but treats the education sector with equal dignity and respect compared with the other two sectors as a vital source of learning about leadership of performance beyond expectations from which others can also benefit. Let us turn now to the study itself to ask what leadership is like in organisations that perform beyond expectations. The next section presents the evidence and an explanation of just how these remarkable organisations have secured astonishing levels of success over sustained periods of time in terms of a 15-factor model of leadership of performance beyond expectations: the F15s of performing beyond expectations.

5 The F15s of performing beyond expectations

5.1. To lead an organisation far beyond expectations is to be engaged in an epic narrative. This extraordinary leadership projects and pursues an arduous and uncharted journey in a quest to attain a greater good. It identifies and adopts clear and often unexplored pathways and is able to measure progress along the way. Leadership beyond expectations is dedicated to holding everyone together to harness the collective commitment, capability and responsibility of the team and the community to achieve remarkably high levels of engagement and impact. Last, leadership of performance beyond expectations has particular ways of driving and steering people to peak levels of performance far beyond what they once thought possible.

5.2. This section charts the journey that organisations performing beyond expectations undertake and the factors that comprise it. It does so by describing and defining 15 key factors of performing beyond expectations, clustered into 4 distinct aspects of this journey:

- destinations and departures
- progress and pathways
- culture and collaboration
- drive and direction

5.3. The items in the F15 framework of performance beyond expectations all commence with or prominently feature one letter – F. This alphabetical orientation is a pedagogical device to present the findings of the research in a memorable and accessible way. It uses synonyms or shifts of vocabulary to illustrate evidence-based concepts that were initially often assigned different titles. For example ‘meaningful metrics’ became ‘fair and fast tracking’ while ‘sustainable growth’ became ‘feasible growth’. The categories drove the titles and their pedagogical vocabulary – not vice versa. The elements of the framework should be regarded not as isolated, independent variables but as a set of interrelated principles. The framework is a meal more than a menu, and definitely not a mandate. It is intended to be illustrative rather than definitive and illuminative rather than prescriptive.

5.4. The overall argument is illustrated with key examples from the case studies, representing sport, business and education in each instance. All statements in quotation marks are direct quotations from the case study interviews. The following is an advanced organiser of the framework for understanding organisations that perform beyond expectations.

F1: The fantastic dream – these organisations aspire to and articulate an improbable, collectively held fantasy or dream that is bolder and more challenging than a plan or even a vision.

F2: The fear – these organisations often face failure, ridicule, humiliation and even extinction in a way that galvanises a commitment to change.

F3: The fight – the impossible dream and improbable challenge produce a response of fight to overcome or circumvent obstacles, instead of flight to avoid them.

F4: Fundamental futures – these organisations create an inspiring future by connecting with the fundamental meaning of a classic and honourable past through the inspiring symbolic narratives of leaders and the collective memories of long-serving leaders and staff who remember the best of what they have been before.

F5: Firm foundations – these organisations build firm foundations. The seemingly sudden and spectacular impact of heroic leadership and meteoric success is often underpinned by years of foundation building by others in halting previous decline, developing better business models, building new relationships and creating new infrastructures of financial, physical and human resources.

F6: Fortitude – these organisations depend on leaders who have inner reserves of strength and resilience that enable them to bounce back from adversity, undertake dangerous tasks or dirty work before anyone else is prepared to do it, and persevere despite opposition and setbacks.

F7: Counter flow – these organisations are prepared to run against the mainstream, and to move ahead not by going with the flow but against or around it.

F8: Fast and fair tracking – these organisations use indicators and targets of progress and performance that are personally meaningful, publicly shared and demonstrably fair measures of what leaders and followers are trying to achieve.

F9: Feasible growth – these organisations pay prudent attention to sustainable growth rates that do not compromise the future by improving or expanding too quickly in the present.

F10: High fidelity – these organisations have a deep faith in and faithfulness to their colleagues and the people they serve, and a higher purpose greater than any one of them.

F11: Fraternity – these organisations build and sustain four kinds of community: communities of recruitment, communities of service to customers or clients, communities of professional practice within the current organisation, and communities of support that surround them.

F12: Flair, flow and flexibility – these organisations engage a talented team in which risk and creativity are valued and members participate and play in interchangeable roles and positions.

F13: Fallibility – these organisations are confident but not overconfident; they make and acknowledge mistakes and expect others to make mistakes also. They have the humility to know they are not infallible.

F14: Friendly rivalry – these organisations combine competition with collaboration through ‘co-opetition’ or collaborative edge; they recognise that their success partly rests on the success of others; and they have a sense of social justice in providing service to less fortunate neighbours.

F15: Fusion leadership – these organisations invest in leadership and followership that raise and rally the performance of the organisation by lifting up its members morally, emotionally and spiritually through a combination and progression of leadership styles and strategies.

5.5. Destinations and departures

5.5.1. Leaders of organisations that perform beyond expectations are able to make a clear, compelling and challenging connection between an obscure, underestimated or unwanted point of departure and a passionately desired destination or dream. This inspiring future is coherently related to the best of people's past in a way that reminds them where they came from, what they must recover, and how this is connected to what lies ahead. This journey from origin to destination is made in the face of and also ironically energised by an apparently insurmountable challenge or opposing force that includes the haunting spectre of failure in the recent past and the daunting prospect or fear of further failures ahead. Four factors comprise this connection between departures and destinations:

- the fantastic dream
- the fear
- the fight
- fundamental futures

5.5.2. F1: the fantastic dream

Organisations that perform beyond expectations aspire to and articulate an improbable, collectively held dream that is bolder and more challenging than a plan or even a vision. Martin Luther King had a dream, not a strategic plan – still less a set of key performance indicators.

- Fiat Auto wanted to come back from almost nothing, and become a world leader by introducing small, energy-efficient cars to a still sceptical market. CEO Sergio Marchionne's dream for the future of Fiat was far bigger than just continuing to exist. He wanted Fiat to become one of the five or six best-quality auto manufacturers in Europe within five to six years. Fiat and Marchionne determined that they would impose small cars on the market using the move towards energy efficiency as their opportunity and ally. Indeed, this endeared them to the US Obama administration, and opened up the opportunity for merging with Chrysler.
- For M&S, the dream was to recapture and recreate its core values of quality, price and product, and turn a traditional retail organisation into a stylish sector leader in environmental sustainability. The dream was to regain its £1 billion profit margin and once again be seen as the leading retailer.
- Cricket Australia became determined to install cricket at the core of Australian identity by making it Australia's favourite sport (as well as recapturing the Ashes). It was therefore necessary to connect cricket to everything – gender equity, indigenous communities and increasing diversity. This involved grasping in turn that not only are participants sometimes future players or the families of future players; they are also potential consumers. A cricket participant in Australia is three times more likely than a non-participant to be a cricket consumer. Even a retired participant is one-and-a-half times more likely to be a consumer than someone who has not been a participant at all. Everyone in Australia became part of the dream.
- In Tower Hamlets, the dream was to demonstrate that poverty should be no excuse for failure at school. An elected member of Tower Hamlets described how the "shared vision is about having ambition and nurturing the aspirations of our young people. Although the levels of deprivation might be high, that's no excuse for low attainment."
- At Limeside Primary School, once a stable staff base had been established, effort was invested in creating a shared school vision. The whole staff attended a training day out of school where they wrote down what they would like to see in their dream school. All staff who were interviewed talked about how important this was for them, the school and the children. The assistant head said:

“It’s like walking through this place and seeing and hearing everything you’re going to do, it would be happening in your dream and in many ways that has really begun to happen because we talked about it all the time, we use it all the time, constantly referred to it, but it’s now your ideas and your vision of what that vision will look like. The daring to take risks and I’m talking about children taking risks but also about the staff and the school as a whole taking risks and being creative and having new ideas and saying, “Right, we’ll go with them.”

Leaders who perform beyond expectations are determined to succeed whatever the odds, but not simply to be top, best, world class or number 1. Rather, they have an inspiring and definable destination to reach for a compelling dream rather than a core purpose, still less a numerical indicator of superiority. Burnley Football Club’s motto in 2008-09 was ‘dare to dream’, which characterised and defined its improbable subsequent route to the premiership. In John Cabot Academy, the head had a dream to regenerate the local area by his school and other schools working together and is now the executive head of three schools, which jointly raise performance for young people and increase the aspirations of the community.

5.5.3. F2: the fear

The experience of success is often heightened by the emotional memory of a previous failure, or the fear of one that lies in wait. Organisations that perform above expectations often confront failure, humiliation and even extinction in a way that galvanises their commitment to change. An improbable dream begets an apparently impossible challenge. Most of our leaders at some time had faced a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. Many had looked failure and apparent disaster in the face.

- When Shoebuy.com, now the seventh largest internet shopping site, started up, it had to face many doubters. Who would want to buy shoes over the internet? Many industry analysts assumed that shoes represented a product that would not translate well online. Co-founder Scott Savitz initially laughed off the idea. Slowly, though, he started to see the sense in it. He said:

“I, like many others, did not like the concept of buying footwear over the internet, but the more I learned about it and felt I had an idea on how we could make it very scalable by creating this virtual model where we teamed up directly with the manufacturers, the more I liked it.”

- Whenever they are enticed, like other English football clubs, into financial overreach, the executives of Burnley Football Club, which had the smallest town population ever to be represented in the premier league, take a chastening look at the framed shirt of Ian Britton – the man who scored the winning goal in the last match of the 1986-87 football season, which rescued Burnley from being relegated to amateur obscurity forever.
- In the local authority of Walsall, the transition from working as an independent local authority to being taken over by a private company (Serco) instilled significant fear and a great deal of resentment. The heads, in particular, felt that this would mean a loss of autonomy for them and a move towards more top-down control. In the early days, even finding officers for Serco proved politically fraught as people were frightened of aligning with the enemy. The director of Walsall Council noted that there was “an air of threat” and “a general feeling of unease and uncertainty” which caused people to be fearful about their futures and their jobs.
- In Mills Hill Primary School, at the start of the 2001-02 academic year, the school witnessed the abrupt departure of its then long-standing and respected head, putting it through a period of significant leadership instability. With weak succession planning, Mills Hill experienced a void in strong headship and a significant dip in its performance. The fear was that this dip would continue and the school would continue to spiral downwards. There was a huge sense of apprehension that the school was in a downward trajectory that could not be halted.

Leading people through profound change does not occur without fear of failure, threat or the future. At some moment, many leaders, not just Shakespeare’s Henry V, will have experienced their own dark night of the

soul when they experienced self-doubt as they stared defeat in the face. What defines leaders who perform beyond expectations is not the absence of fear but how they deal with their fear and with the fears of those around them.

5.5.4. F3: the fight

The impossible dream and improbable challenge of surmounting failure or avoiding closure produce a response of fight to overcome or circumvent obstacles, instead of flight to retreat from them.

- Stuart Rose had his own ambitions to run M&S but financial speculator Philip Green wanted him out of the frame. When it was announced that Rose would be the next chairman of M&S, Green confronted Rose outside the Baker Street headquarters and grabbed him by his lapels. In one senior manager's words, "There was almost a literal fight for the company. The stories about Green grabbing Rose hit the headlines. Some called it a fight. No blows were exchanged but it was a real fight, a battle of wills." This physical fight symbolised the actual fight for the top position at M&S, which Stuart Rose eventually won.
- In 1996, Grange Secondary School scraped through its Ofsted inspection. Graeme Hollinshead, who would go on to become the school's headteacher, was frustrated with and despondent about the school. In his heart of hearts, he knew that it hadn't deserved to pass. And had four particular teachers not been absent that week, it might not have done so. Graeme took two weeks off school on sickness absence, then went to discuss his troubling feelings with a hospital consultant. The consultant listened patiently and then delivered his expert medical advice. This was northern England, not southern California, so his feedback was bracing and brutally direct: "He just advised me to get back in and sort it out," said Graeme, "which I did!"
- At Mills Hill, the head initiated a local authority inspection and the school was identified as a school causing concern, an outcome that created a stir in the school and even a sense of fear among staff. After having proved his ability to improve efficiencies in the school's management and administration, the headteacher capitalised on apprehension from the negative evaluation to build consensus among staff and other key stakeholders that the school was in need of real change. This was the start of the fight back.
- Any cricket fan with some knowledge of the international game knows the name Malcolm Speed. The silver-haired Speed is not just the former CEO of Cricket Australia, he also went on to become head of the International Cricket Council, the worldwide body for the governance of the sport. Speed took over Cricket Australia at a critical time in the late 1990s. There was pervasive "player unrest" and a "war over payments". A strike was threatened if players' contracts and salaries did not improve. The situation was very public and ugly. Australia had performed above expectations for a decade. Now it seemed destined for the kind of disruption that had dogged it years before when players were enticed by the higher salaries of glamorous private competitions and rebel tours of apartheid-era South Africa. Speed was not one to shy away from a challenge. In his 20 years as a top cricketer he had always preferred to "bowl uphill, into the wind" to make the ball swing about. In management, he was no different. Obstacles animated him. He revelled in resistance, and even ran towards it. This was just as well, because he would encounter a lot of it. Speed was a battle-hardened lawyer with prior experience of high-level sports administration for Basketball Australia. He was just the right leader at the right time not only to face down opposition, but also to negotiate a new media-driven business model for the organisation that would enable Cricket Australia to establish new relationships with and expectations for its board and players. In essence, Speed created an entirely new structure to redefine the operations and aspirations of Cricket Australia.

In our case studies, when leaders were faced with adversity, they were determined not to give in and demanded that this determination was shared by those who worked with them. Australia's loss of the Ashes to England in 2005 galvanised the entire nation and its cricket authority, Cricket Australia, to recover and not only defeat England, but also dramatically raise national participation levels, so cricket became Australia's most popular sport. After over 20 years of steady growth, Scott Bader faced commercial oblivion and financial meltdown, but its new CEO accepted the job precisely because the company was at the most vulnerable moment in its history. Stuart Rose took on the leadership of M&S during one of its stormiest periods partly because he "thrives on a good crisis". Graeme Hollinshead at Grange Secondary decided to get back in and sort it out. Christine Gilbert left her job in a leafy suburb to move to Tower Hamlets – then the worst-

performing local authority in England – to become its director of education. Leaders who perform beyond expectations deliberately seek out acute challenges and exceptional crises. They move towards the danger.

Leadership beyond expectations is not about fearlessness. It is about facing one's fears and doing what has to be done all the same. It is about fighting back, fending off superiors, beating untrodden paths, recovering, not backing down when your lapels have been grabbed, sorting it out and insisting your expectations are met.

For leaders who perform beyond expectations, crises are catalysts for change. At Grange Secondary School, the catalyst was a barely satisfactory inspection report. At Hull Kingston Rovers and Burnley Football Club, the turnaround was prompted by the imminent threat of oblivion or extinction. At Central Technology College, the threat of closure led the school to secure external support and work in a different way. At Scott Bader, a financial crisis meant that managers had to reconsider and redefine their core values in order to save the company. At Mills Hill Primary School, the new headteacher initiated an external local authority review when he felt the school was not achieving its potential. Leaders who perform beyond expectations capitalise on crises or even contrive them to galvanise the motivation and actions of people in the organisation.

5.5.5. F4: fundamental futures

Leadership beyond expectations creates an inspiring future by connecting with the fundamental meaning of a classic and honourable past. Leaders of and in organisations that perform beyond expectations know that sustainable progress in the future is often linked to close but not unquestioning connections to a treasured common history. Established organisations that perform beyond expectations (compared with new organisational types like internet companies) connect cutting-edge futures to a classic past. They bond change and tradition together; they connect the destination to the starting point. These bonds are partly stylistic and symbolic – epitomised by mythical stories or retro designs. They are also embodied in the motivations and memories of leaders who were once players, managers who came up through the ranks (even and especially if they went away to get a few years' experience elsewhere), leaders who arrived as deputies before they became the boss, and loyal servants who have dedicated their lives and careers to their organisation and now bear its collective memory.

- The voluntary dedication of time, effort and money by ordinary people from everywhere in County Kilkenny to support their local hurling team is recognised and appreciated by the players. And if they have the gifts that enable them to play for the county team, they understand their responsibility and obligation to do their best for themselves, their parish, Kilkenny and the sport of hurling itself. Manager Brian Cody explains:

“A huge part as well has been something which we try to instil, the deep appreciation of the opportunity that we have, and the opportunity that the players have. First of all, out of respect for the tradition that's there in Kilkenny hurling team and Kilkenny hurling's jersey. It's a tradition that's there for as long as the [Gaelic Athletic Association] is there. And their fathers and their grandfathers, I guess, have been touched by hurling all their lives. It's a huge honour and a huge responsibility for them to pass that on to people coming behind them.”

- Fiat Auto's Cinquecento (500) is both a small, energy-efficient car of the future and a retro reinvention of something that represented its heyday of 1960s' fashion among the young and trendy. A walk through Fiat's headquarters in Turin reveals that almost every office wall has stylish and dynamic pictures of Fiat's newest products, alongside grainy black and whites of the Cinquecento original.
- In Tower Hamlets, there is a sense of pride in and even a cachet about working in and for a community with a rich cultural history. A secondary teacher put it like this:

“There is something kind of sexy about the East End, isn't there? There's lots of history. And if you're working for one of those big city firms and you can say, “We're working with a school in the East End”, it's got quite a cachet to it. We do have an identity and we do have a proximity. We also get more than our fair share of publicity.”

Tower Hamlets has a distinct identity and way of working that has a special effect on people who work there. “It’s an addictive borough”, or, in Christine Gilbert’s words, “a very seductive area [that] just gets hold of you”. The East End’s past is rooted in rich cultures brought by waves of immigrant groups from the French Huguenots to exiled Jews and the wartime spirit of the white working class who were bombed out in the blitz. Reconnecting to this proud history enriches people’s commitment to the new narrative of aspiration, advocacy and togetherness that characterises the borough’s predominantly Bangladeshi population. When the borough’s chief executive Kevan Collins walks you around his neighbourhood, he proudly points to the brass foundry that made the Liberty Bell for the United States, the tiny synagogue that is tucked away in a corner of one of the country’s largest mosques, and the bustling modern street life of Bengali businesses and restaurants. He and the other members of the Tower Hamlets community understand that the current predominantly Bangladeshi population is not a departure from the borough’s rich history, but a dynamic addition to and profound enrichment of it:

“I think the Bengali community is very confident about itself. [They are] living in the borough with the most Black and minority ethnic councillors in the country; the average councillor being younger than anywhere else in the country. There’s a confidence and verve about, “We can do things”, and that’s important.”

Capitalism, the economist Joseph Schumpeter said, is a force of creative destruction. So amid all the innovation, drive, passion and enthusiasm, sustainable performance beyond expectations also requires forces of cohesion and stability to hold everything together. In the words of Marco Polo, “Without stones, there is no arch.” Performance beyond expectations doesn’t dramatically eradicate the past, but reconnects with and reinvents the best parts of it. In a policy environment often attracted to turnarounds that close down existing schools and open up replacements, or that insist on substituting existing leaders with supposedly better or brighter ones, our research indicates that organisations that perform above expectations value leadership stability. In the time that England’s cricket team had 15 captains, the superior performers at Cricket Australia had just 5. This kind of leadership stability is able to connect the inspiring future of the organisation to the collective memory of its past.

Symbolically, leaders of organisations that perform above expectations are skilled storytellers. They narrate powerful myths about the unlikely and humble origins of their companies – of M&S once being in a penny arcade, of Dogfish Head Craft Brewery having to canoe its products across the state line, of being ridiculed for believing that shoes would sell on the internet, and of being one of the most poorly resourced teams in football. They also know how to repress recent memories of failure by connecting the organisation’s inspiring future to the very best of its past – like the tiny Fiat 500 in which today’s middle-aged male buyer remembers his first romance; the classy brand of football that Burnley Football Club used to represent in the 1960s; the pride in wearing the shirt at Kilkenny Hurling; or the ubiquitous presence in all Cricket Australia’s ultra-modern event promotions of the nation’s iconic cricketer Don Bradman, about whom even Nelson Mandela on the day he was released from prison asked, “Is Don Bradman still alive?”

5.5.6. In summary, leaders who bring about performance beyond expectations have ambitious hopes and bold dreams that extend beyond the immediate task or crisis. Their passions precede their plans. They pursue their hopes and dreams from the most unlikely starting points and in the face of improbable odds and seemingly insuperable challenges. Leaders who perform beyond expectations are not fearless, but they know how to face their fears and even be inspired by them. Ridicule and refusals only make them redouble their efforts. They know how to struggle and how to fight back. Last, leaders whose organisations perform beyond expectations do not dismiss or deny the pasts of their organisations, but know how to use the best of that past as a platform for building a better future.

5.6. Progress and pathways

5.6.1. Leaders who perform beyond expectations have a profound belief in their ability to perform at the highest level, and achieve their dream, although they do not always possess this straightaway. They are ambitious for their organisation and demand stretching goals, which they expect to be reached. They are resolute in their determination to succeed and set high expectations for themselves and those who work with them. Yet the goals that are set are not about delivering targets imposed from elsewhere but about developing and demanding their own targets, on criteria that most people regard as relevant and

reasonable, in relationships where demands are made of people who are known and trusted, and often with their active collaboration.

5.6.2. Organisations that perform above expectations create firm foundations for the journey, clear yet creative pathways for forging ahead, feasible rates of progress that do not deplete resources imprudently or burn people out, determination and personal fortitude about moving forward, and confidence-building indicators that mark the accomplishment of intermediary goals and the motivating identification of future horizons. Five factors motivate progress and the routes by which it is achieved:

- firm foundations
- fortitude
- counterflow
- fast and fair tracking
- feasible growth

5.6.3. F5: firm foundations

The seemingly sudden and spectacular impact of high-profile leadership and meteoric success under apparently charismatic and even heroic leadership is often underpinned by years of foundation building by less obviously remarkable leaders in halting previous decline, developing better business models, building new relationships and creating new infrastructures of financial, physical and human resources.

- Christine Gilbert acknowledges the firm foundations on which she built:

“The Tower Hamlets heads really saw themselves, right across primary, secondary and special, as a cohesive family of schools. I didn’t create this; it was there when I went. They were a very strong, positive community of schools. And because my background was headship, it got me to first base quicker.”

The unsung heroine in Tower Hamlets was Anne Sofer, the first director of education. When she was appointed in 1990, as the local education authority (LEA) was created following the break-up of the Inner London Education Authority, only eight per cent of all students gained five or more A*-C grades at GCSE; within the Bangladeshi community, roughly half of the population, only four per cent achieved that benchmark. With over 400 pupils without school places and insufficient teachers to teach them, Sofer had to establish an LEA in chaotic conditions. Despite this, the improvement in test results from 1994 to 1997 during Anne Sofer’s leadership was identical to that from 1997 to 2000 under Christine Gilbert.

- In 2002, after the ITV digital crisis, the pull-out of media investment in English football and the loss of £6 million of income to its club, Burnley Football Club was in a “scramble for our lives”, “scrapping away” and “dealing with losses wherever we could”. The response had to be urgent and even a bit desperate. Incoming chief executive Dave Edmundson’s immediate rescue strategy was unobvious but effective:

“We mounted a major campaign called the 500 miles campaign and adopted the I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles) song by The Proclaimers. I walked to work (about 10 miles) in a walk up to Burnley campaign because it was getting people actually to walk up to watch the game, to come through the gates [to buy what are known as ‘walk-on’ tickets] because revenue on top of a season ticket made a difference.

Several people commented on how Edmundson was the one who did a lot to change how the club operates. He started things off – getting the club to look beyond the short term to longer term development – by raising money, streamlining the club’s communication systems (before he arrived, everyone had their own email or hotmail accounts) and starting to set performance targets (including borrowing a strategy from the Chicago Bulls of ringing a bell in the ticket office every time a new season ticket had been sold).”

- The previous headteacher at Kanes Hill had carefully laid the foundation for the improvement that was ultimately built on by the current head. The previous head had laid down a very solid platform in terms of curriculum, behaviour and assessment that was a firm foundation. This meant that more innovative, risk-taking activities could be initiated under the leadership of Sally Stanton. The same was also true at Limeside Primary School where the previous headteacher had taken the school out of special measures. At both schools, the path to performance beyond expectations had been carefully laid by previous leaders who had been in post for some time, knew the school and its context well and provided the springboard for exceptional performance.

Cricket Australia's inspirational CEO James Sutherland was preceded by the battling figure of Malcolm Speed who created the new business model that settled player unrest. Burnley Football Club's infectious manager, Owen Coyle, followed on from the more defensively minded but solid management style of Steven Cotterill. The leap in results at Central Technology College occurred shortly after the commencement of the Ninestiles partnership but an upward performance trajectory had already been in evidence for two years before that. Charismatic leadership is often only able to exert its effect by standing on the shoulders of unsung, yet quietly effective heroes who went before.

5.6.4. F6: fortitude

Going against the flow sometimes requires immense acts of personal courage, strength or fortitude. It calls on leaders to dig deep, to find something within themselves they may never have realised they had. Persistence, perseverance, relentless hard work and driving oneself and others forward are essential, at some point, to almost all leadership beyond expectations: "When you're going through Hell," Winston Churchill once advised, "keep going." Before there can be inspiration, the organisation may need a lot of perspiration and even a bit of desperation.

- Fiat Auto's boss, Sergio Marchionne, works at an astounding pace, even though his open-neck shirt and trademark sweater belie these emphases with an air of disarming informality. He sets an example by driving people little by little.
- At Scott Bader chemicals, managing director Phillip Bruce is a quiet but determined leader who is absolutely focused on what needs to be achieved and how this will be secured. He sets high standards for himself and others. He is not afraid to challenge or confront sacred cows such as the staff redundancies that were essential to economic survival yet anathema to all those who clung to the company's traditional co-operative values: "You have to have a very good reason to get rid of somebody, and to be honest, Phillip getting rid of 22, now in the UK, is a real first for Scott Bader to do it in the way that it's been done."
- The leaders of Tower Hamlets have refused to establish an academy that they feel would destroy the collaboration and mutual trust that exists between the schools and that contributes to their high performance. One of its nationally recognised secondary headteachers put it like this:

"We are currently resisting the position for an academy. An academy in our midst would be very difficult. I have yet to see any example where the selective improvement of one school or one type of school does anything other than move children around. If you argue with the [named policy figure in the former Labour government] of the world, what he will always say is something along the lines... "But surely it must be right to give communities and inner city areas the best provision – new schools with wonderful facilities?" Of course it is, but it doesn't have to be done in a way which is having an impact on another school."

- At John Cabot, a previous city technology college, the principal was as vehemently supportive of becoming an academy as Tower Hamlets leaders were in opposing them. He stood firm for the school to become an academy despite local resistance and a political backlash. He believed that academy status would benefit the school and was convinced this was the right decision. John Cabot became one of the first academies to open in the south-west of England and has been instrumental in supporting the development of three other academies in the area that are collectively contributing to community regeneration.

- The all-boys' school, Central Technology College, had seen its results plummet in 2005 after the council's plan to merge it with a local girls' school was called off at the last minute. But with persistence and determination, its results began to improve over the next two years, before, during and after a strategic partnership with the Ninestiles Consortium. The 2007 Ofsted report said 'the improvement since the last inspection has been outstanding' and its 2008 examination results made it the most improved school in the country. The head of mathematics said, "The leadership team are not afraid of recognising that something is not working and therefore it needs to be changed." Asked if she felt vulnerable after the ending of the strategic partnership, the head said, "No, I don't, because I know that I'm a good head, and I know what I'm doing. I'm learning all the time and we're far from the finished product."
- In Walsall, "The X factor is bravery. We're brave. We take chances. We don't sit still. We move forward."

Acting against precedent, scepticism and resistance requires courage, fortitude and great reserves of self-belief. Leaders who perform beyond expectations have setbacks and disappointments but know how to get over them. For Shoebuy.com, the collapse of the dotcom boom was potentially its darkest moment but because it had grown in a cautious way, and counter-intuitively refused venture capital compared with other companies that had overstretched themselves, it was able to survive. At M&S, the potential threat of takeover prompted Stuart Rose calmly and resolutely to resist the bids and play a waiting game, despite huge pressure from potential buyers. Graeme Hollinshead and Colin Bell at Grange Secondary School personally rounded up truants from the local park to begin to turn around the attendance record, and then redirected the curriculum to fit the visual arts in which the school's mainly Bangladeshi students were strong. Fiat's new CEO, Sergio Marchionne, made one of his first acts that of entering the factory workers' toilets, pronouncing them to be an unacceptable disgrace. Kanes Hill's headteacher appealed to her staff to rally round and help her when she realised she could no longer drive everything herself. Leaders who perform beyond expectations are not necessarily fearless, but they are courageous in spite and even because of that very fear.

5.6.5. F7: counterflow

The leaders of organisations that perform beyond expectations are prepared to go against the mainstream, and to move ahead not by going with the flow but by going against or around it. These leaders are courageous, creative and counter-intuitive. They welcome argument, disagreement and resistance. Improbability and opposition are their energising allies. Leaders who achieve beyond expectations know they have to breathe out when they are coming up for air. They accelerate through the corner, steer into the skid and take off against the wind. In times of crisis, scarcity or threat, they expand when others contract, challenge their superiors when they have to, make the first move instead of following the rest, and combine with competitors, instead of scrambling for shrinking resources against them.

Strong armies win wars by copying the strategies of their rivals and overpowering the opposition; weak armies win wars by adopting unconventional strategies that their opponents do not expect. Leaders who perform beyond expectations do not merely want to be as good as the best by emulating their existing strategies for success. They aim to be better than the best and the rest by taking counter-intuitive steps that often seem to confound common practice and even common sense. This enables them not just to catch up with but to move aside from and ahead of the pack.

- When Stuart Rose decided that M&S would retrain all its staff to fit the company's new vision, thousands of M&S personnel from those on the shop floor to those in the boardroom were put in fleets of buses and taken to the International Convention Centre in Birmingham to hear an inspirational speaker talk about the future direction and purpose of M&S. This professional development, en masse, was hugely expensive but it enabled the company to re-energise and redirect itself by winning the hearts and minds of employees.
- At Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, the Dogfish way of creating "off-centered ales for off-centered people" is all about living life counter-intuitively, against the grain. Dogfish Head's employment of 'opposite-approach strategies' works to turn conventional industry practice on its head and circumvent the big three US beer companies' attempts at structured market domination. For instance, instead of adopting conventional push strategies of marketing, which advertise the product far and wide, Dogfish Head uses pull-marketing at craft (real ale) beer events and the like that devote time face to face with people and develop a cult following. "From the outset, it's still this fun, funky thing that people just gravitate to."

People gravitate towards things that are different. It's not just be different for difference's sake. It's be different because there's genuine intrinsic value in being different."

- In sport, newly promoted Burnley Football Club chose to attack when all its upstart predecessors had played safe and opted for defence – which gained them several surprise victories in the early season, and many lucrative wins in prestigious cup competitions against superior opposition.
- Grange Secondary School designed a creative curriculum that fitted the students instead of adopting the customary strategy of spending more time on standardisation and drill in the prescribed curriculum to drive performance numbers up. Indeed, all the schools and local authorities in our study kept on raising performance not by investing in quick-fix tactics to raise test scores of the kind that some peers had engaged in, but by developing an interdisciplinary curriculum, co-operative learning strategies and other pedagogical innovations to produce authentic success. John Cabot Academy's competency curriculum, developed to improve the Year 7 curriculum, does not follow the national curriculum. "We continue to work with the Year 7 [pupils] in a competency-based approach rather than saying we'll fit the Year 7 national curriculum to these Year 7 [pupils]," they said. Central Technology College redesigned courses to be more practical, IT-rich, and modularised so the learning was especially suited to its population of boys who had not gone to the selective school in the area. Mills Hill Primary School based its entire curriculum on the co-operative learning strategies of Spencer Kagan, and flew its staff across the Atlantic to undertake common training in the Kagan approach.
- Limeside Primary School does not teach the traditional national curriculum. The deputy recalls how the curriculum that was

"provided for these children with such huge problems wasn't suitable because they were trying to make the children fit the curriculum. But if you start from where the child is, what they want to find out about, what they want to learn, and you start personalising the curriculum and you make the curriculum fit the child, then you change things."

At Limeside, personalisation doesn't just mean customisation or individualisation of an existing curriculum – speeding it up or slowing it down. Personalisation is about connecting learning to children's lives and the ways they learn best. Children are taught to think about how they learn and what makes a good learner. Learning is celebrated by the use of the 'wizard learners' reward system. The school put a toy wizard up in the foyer and he became the model learner: a symbol of what learning is and how children could become a wizard learner. Wizard hats and cloaks have been purchased and anybody who has shown they are a wizard learner is dressed up in assembly to receive their certificate. There had been little or no celebration of children's achievements before the school went into special measures. The wizard learner is one of the many ways this has been turned around.

In times of crises, leaders who perform beyond expectations often do the exact opposite of what might be expected or anticipated. They are unconventional and counter-intuitive thinkers who know how to be imaginative and resourceful in adverse and volatile conditions. They have a remarkable ability to size up the situation carefully before taking bold steps to improve matters. They tend to be relentlessly optimistic even in the face of evidence that demonstrates the extent of the challenge or the unlikelihood of success. Like Burnley's operational director, Brendan Flood, they know how to go the other way in a critical meeting when the club's financial future and fundamental aspirations are at stake; or like Cricket Australia's former CEO Malcolm Speed, they can 'bowl uphill into the wind' when faced with resistance, and get more 'swing' that way.

Leaders who perform beyond expectations carefully select the opportunities for their organisations that secure the best results and refuse many opportunities that distract them from those purposes. At M&S, Stuart Rose expanded the food franchise Simply Food and reduced the retailing provision at a time when the company was in trouble because this created the revenue to reconfigure the retailing side of the business. In Walsall, the decision to outsource local authority services to a private provider ironically gave schools better support, greater autonomy and increased transparency, which lifted their performance. Serco's readiness to work with and reculture the existing local authority rather than simply take it all over or replace it was itself contrary to much private takeover practice.

5.6.6. F8: fast and fair tracking

Organisations that perform above expectations mark, monitor and manage their progress towards success. They use indicators and targets of progress and performance that are personally meaningful, publicly shared and demonstrably fair measures of what leaders and followers are trying to achieve. In a world of increasing technological sophistication, leaders who perform beyond expectations depend not just on their inspiring and motivating leadership but also on intelligent use and thoughtful interpretation of performance data. Organisations that perform beyond expectations are not simply data-driven. The metrics and targets they use are:

- meaningful to the people who use them
 - connected to the core purposes of the organisation
 - used with prudence rather than profligacy
 - integrated with professional judgement, rather than overriding it
 - employed within the context of valued relationships rather than imposed from afar
- Shoebuy’s adherence to the principle of scalability is made possible, in large part, through its powerful web-based infrastructure. Shoebuy.com is much more than a website. It is a sensitive instrument that continually tests and evaluates web dynamics, which permits complex analyses of real-time user interactions with the website. In effect, every person who accesses Shoebuy.com becomes a participant in a self-study of the organisation’s effectiveness. With over 6 million visitors regularly visiting the website each month, this translates into mountains of data, a reality that makes Shoebuy leaders’ mouths water. Scott Savitz describes himself as ‘metric obsessed’. He loves the challenge of making sense of the data, but the data is not an end in itself. Shoebuy collects all this user data and runs complex analytics to inform its business practices and increase the stickiness (ie, how long customers remain) of its site.
- When Sergio Marchionne arrived at Fiat and announced that the design-to-production process would have to accelerate from 4 years to a barely heard of period of 18 months and then 15 months, almost everyone thought it was impossible, but no one felt it was irrelevant. Achieving this extraordinary target was imperative if Fiat was going to survive. Achieving it without compromise to customer safety was more important still, as a core value of the company, and as something that would give it an edge on competitors where accelerations of production had sometimes come at a cost to basic considerations of safety.
- One of the reasons that Cricket Australia is able to punch above its weight is because of its ability to set, meet and even exceed demanding targets, which it sets for itself. Many of these targets, for team performance, revenue and increased participation, were set in a two-day retreat for the organisation in 2005 that established four-year targets for 2009. The resulting targets have not been imposed by one or two remote administrators from a distant office, but by the employees of Cricket Australia itself. These targets are then modified in consultation with the representatives of each state. They are not thrown at people like darts on a board, but developed with people “through really clear consultation.” Each year, they are reviewed at the annual retreat, and referred to and discussed at every board meeting.
- In West Oaks Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre, teachers employ a behaviour profiling system, which they developed themselves to identify priority areas for students’ progress. The assistant head notes:

“The behaviour profile is a unique system. It has categories of behaviour. The class teacher tests the pupils and scores each category. The category that comes out [with] the highest score is a priority area that the pupil needs to work on in terms of emotional development and behavioural skill development. We picked out three priority areas and we linked the profile directly to the [special education learning] materials. This way the children are getting a real personalised plan of work.

The behavioural profile is then added to individualised work on literacy, with the result that each child has a unique passport for learning, which combines behaviour and literacy targets as a whole, rather than as two disparate and unrelated goals. This passport is carefully constructed and monitored by staff, and shared with parents. In the words of the vice principal, “The passports are scrutinised continually, with targets set and monitored each half term.”

- In Kanes Hill School, teachers use data, targets and tracking to inform their teaching and learning approaches and to identify potential underperformance. Staff examined every single subject asking the same question, “What is it that we need to be doing?” as they moved the whole school towards better teaching and learning. All teachers are now involved in the annual development of the whole school’s operational targets. On receipt of inspection outcomes, staff create a three-year strategic plan with specific and measurable targets. While the head acknowledges that she could certainly create those targets herself and decide the goals, the planning process includes all teachers and staff. This collaborative effort ensures that goals are met, and has also led to a greater sense of teacher responsibility and ownership of whole-school goals. Headteacher Sally Stanton puts it like this:

“We’ll take [the results of the inspection] and then the staff will work around it, saying, “What are we going to all do to try to improve it?” I mean, we’ve all got responsibility to complete that target whether it’s in your subject, whether it’s in your classroom or whichever way. So everyone has got a part to play in this target. I think it’s nice because you feel you’ve actually made a difference because you were always involved in those targets so it works quite nicely to feel part of the school.”

At Fiat, Tower Hamlets Council, Cricket Australia and Kanes Hill, goals are established deliberately to be just out of reach to take people out of their comfort zone and extend their capability. Leaders who perform beyond expectations bring a sharp focus together with high motivation, disciplined innovation and a clear strategy in order to achieve their objectives. They understand that achieving exceptional performance is a combination of being willing to set a bold course, to develop people’s skills and capabilities, and to engage their collaborative involvement in setting and meeting demanding targets and in monitoring authentic progress towards them.

All the schools in our study relentlessly used assessment to track individual and collective progress and to produce feedback to support student learning. This tracking supported a curriculum that was developed to suit the students and the ways they learned best, rather than being used to push students through a curriculum and testing experience that was not engaging for them. The sports teams in our study also used player performance data in this way – to engage players in conversations about improving their performance rather than using data to browbeat them into improving. At Tower Hamlets Council, Kanes Hill and Cricket Australia, targets are shared among and developed by the community together. In Walsall, transparency of school-by-school performance data pulled schools out of their mutual isolation. At Shoebuy.com, real-time tracking data of consumer behaviour on the shopping site actually encourages staff to innovate and take risks because mistakes can be corrected in real time before they turn into catastrophes. In organisations that perform beyond expectations, measures are meaningful, targets are ambitious but fair, employees are very often involved in defining targets together, and all of this supports rather than distracts people from their core mission and compelling dream.

5.6.7. F9: feasible growth

Beyond the swift actions necessary to counter any initial crisis, organisations that perform beyond expectations don’t try to expand as quickly as possible and take off too fast. They are built on sustainable growth. They show practical and prudent attention to growth rates that do not compromise the future by improving or expanding too quickly in the present, at the cost of excessive investment, overreliance on imported stars or pushing staff to the point of burnout. They pay attention to the short term and long term together, without sacrificing one to the other.

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- It took more than 25 years for Burnley Football Club to fall from the top to the bottom of the English football league, and it took almost as long for it to recover its place in the top flight. This long recovery has been slow but far from steady. Burnley first had to battle to survive. In the face of fear and failure, it tested its mettle and showed it could fight. It drew on and revived the emotional capital of its community; rekindling passion, loyalty and working-class pride. Burnley reconnected with its golden years and started to imagine a better future. In time, the introduction of a more businesslike culture and structure into the club moved it beyond its volunteer-driven approach of make do and mend. Former chief executive Dave Edmundson set up new technical and information systems, chairman Barry Kilby made lifesaving investments, former manager Steve Cottrell brought more science and technical precision into the dressing room and operational director Brendan Flood developed a more target-driven culture of performance and staff motivation. And then Burnley Football Club dared to dream with an inspired new managerial appointment of an unknown Scotsman, Owen Coyle, who came from a tiny town north of the border to take Burnley back into the big league. Even then, the club would still not over-invest in what chief executive Paul Fletcher calls ‘the lemming race’ by spending exorbitant amounts on new players in the mid-season January transfer window in a gamble to gain the extra victories that might get the team into the end-of-season playoffs:

“Every year the Board is just trying to win the league. It’s almost like the Lemming Race. You start off with a Lemming Race and as you get to the end of the season a big golden eagle picks up three of the lemmings and carries you off to paradise. A couple of them go over the cliff. They don’t get back. Leeds United went over the cliff a few years ago. Sheffield Wednesday went over. Nottingham Forest! These were big clubs.”

- The standard practice of microbreweries in the 1990s was to “secure investment of around \$5 million... and [get] this really shiny, copper, beautiful system and put it in like a façade window at their brewery.” Most of those breweries did not survive. “Had [Dogfish Head] done that at the time, there’s no way we could have afforded to pay for it. So we scrapped it together.” Sam Calagione, Dogfish Head’s owner, doesn’t want “to be ashamed of the fact that we had to start on shitty dairy and canning equipment because our ethos was all about innovation... and innovation meant doing everything you could with limited resources to actually make something.”
- At Limeside Primary School it took time to secure sustainable growth. There were no quick fixes. The behaviour of the children was a lot more challenging than it had been anywhere the incoming seconded staff had worked before. It took two to three years for the expectations to filter through to reach the current standard. A nurture class took disruptive children out of the classroom and gave them one-to-one support. Misbehaving children in class could be removed and sent to an on-call teacher for 10 minutes until they calmed down. A playground bully system was set up and a wildlife garden established to make the environment less stark. Children were able to participate in a newly created school council. The headteacher established philosophy sessions and meditation periods to build mutual respect and settle children into the day. Staff speak of a bombardment of high expectations, of expecting the best from the children all the time. This included recognising every little achievement and making sure it was rewarded and telling the children, “We’re so proud of you for what you’ve done”, and giving the message, “You’re worth so much more than you think you’re worth.” A lot of the change was about building self-esteem and children celebrating their achievements. Once all those systems were put into place, the children became proud of themselves and wanted to achieve. In the words of the assessment co-ordinator, “It’s almost like brainwashing them into believing in themselves because it’s just constant, constant, constant. Deep down, they’re just being built up all the time. So over a period of time they believe in themselves.” All of this is urgent, persistent and effective, but none of the results of all this work happen overnight.
- The principal at West Oaks SILC understands that sustainability is not just about finding a successor. It depends on developing widespread capability and distributing responsibility throughout the entire culture of the school. In the principal’s words,

“We are now all clear about our roles. We all are willing to take risks. We’re all prepared and understand the roles for management and leadership so that if I leave the sustainability is there, ie, the programme, the infrastructure, the philosophy.

From the principal's point of view, sustainability includes knowing the difference between what needs to be changed and what doesn't need to be fixed: "If we've got an outstanding provision, why would I meddle with that? Maintaining that success when that individual leaves is the key to sustainability."

None of the organisations in this study that perform beyond expectations is a nine-day wonder. All emphasise the importance of sustainable growth. Dogfish Head Craft Brewery scrapped around for suitable start-up brewing equipment rather than investing heavily in flashy copper containers that would, like some of its competitors, put it in unsustainable debt. Chairman Barry Kilby of Burnley Football Club would not "bet the ranch" on ascending into the premiership or even on staying there at the risk of the club becoming overly indebted then sinking into relative oblivion as many of its peers and forebears have done. Shoebuy.com resisted lucrative offers of venture capital investment when it started up so it could retain control over its own purposes and growth rates. And all the schools and local authorities in this study raised achievement scores not by fabricating quick lifts by teaching to the test or working only on C-D borderline cases, but by authentically transforming teaching and learning and the depth of student engagement.

5.7. Culture and collaboration

5.7.1. Performing beyond expectations involves everyone in the organisation. It depends on engaging a talented team in which risk and creativity are valued, honest mistakes are acknowledged and tolerated, and members participate and play in interchangeable roles and positions. In organisations that exceed expectations, people have a deep faith in and faithfulness to their colleagues, the people they serve, and a higher purpose greater than any one of them. Such organisations are able to build and sustain communities of recruitment, communities of service to customers or clients, communities of professional practice within the organisation, and communities of support that surround them. Last, organisations that perform beyond expectations relate to their peers and even their opponents through creative and counter-intuitive combinations of competition and collaboration where success partly rests on the success of others and a sense of social justice inspires service to neighbours who are less fortunate. All this encompasses five further factors of performing beyond expectations:

- high fidelity
- fraternity
- flair, flow and flexibility
- fallibility
- friendly rivalry

5.7.2. F10: high fidelity

Leaders who perform beyond expectations keep people with them. Many of our organisations excelled and even turned themselves around, with long-standing staff members who had worked there for decades. Leaders who perform beyond expectations generate fierce loyalty through their ability to work hard and long to achieve what is wanted and to engage others in the quest. This loyalty or allegiance helps them to make quick and difficult decisions without losing support. This kind of loyalty or allegiance is not a matter of deference to those of higher rank, as one might find in a servant or a henchman. Nor is it about craven exchanges of services in return for past or future favours. In performance beyond expectations, rather, loyalty and allegiance are about knowing people, committing to them and caring for their lives. Leaders who perform beyond expectations actively build relationships and engender high levels of trust and loyalty among colleagues in order to take significant risks. They know their people and do not impose expectations from afar.

- Shoebuy's top leadership has made a habit of establishing personal connections with employees as well as customers. Starting with the CEO, Shoebuy leaders regularly build time into their busy schedules to connect with staff throughout the organisation. Leaders get to know their employees on a personal level, their family situations and lives outside work. Importantly, leaders also take the time to discuss

employees' professional goals and interests, working to shape staff roles and responsibilities to meet both the individual's and the company's goals. Trust in an organisation begins with relationships, something that Shoebuy leaders actively cultivate. At Shoebuy, leaders spoke about the importance of trust as the key to sustainability and maintaining high performance as an organisation. They talk about 'knowing your people'. Building healthy relationships means that staff members have been supported to move up through the organisational hierarchy. For instance, Nicole Cohen, a current vice president, began working in customer service part time during the night shift. She was working in another job full time but actively looking for something more challenging:

"Scott [Savitz] found out that I was looking and they were looking to create this position... so he presented me with the opportunity to... handle all of the site updates: the content, the imagery, the descriptions, all of the product information on the website... to just build the department from scratch."

"It is simply not the type of work environment where people can fade into the background, where staff can do the bare minimum without attracting attention. "We're all pretty close so if somebody is having a bad day, someone else usually knows about that", and "If you sit around and play solitaire on your computer, people are going to notice."

- Fidelity is sometimes all the stronger when it follows infidelity. Walsall leaders were glad to say they were proud to work in the borough again, after having lost that pride in the middle years of their careers. As one of their senior officers put it, "There was a time when I was embarrassed to say that I worked in Walsall. I don't feel that way anymore." The same was true at Limeside Primary School, on a council estate in Oldham. Here, the headteacher remarked, "The parents come and say to me, 'We used to feel embarrassed about saying that we were from Limeside and now we are very, very proud.'"
- It is passion for Hull Kingston Rovers that drives people like chairman Neil Huggell to focus their energy on waking up this sleeping giant of a club. Like most fans, Neil's loyalty to the club began in childhood. He grew up within half a mile of Craven Park, Hull Kingston Rovers' home ground. His primary school had links with the club and he started going to matches from the age of eight onwards:

"The most important influence on all this is passion for the club. I think that underpins the success we've achieved, having a core of people that have the club's interest at heart. It's a community club. It's not blind faith that makes you able to grow and to recover and rediscover success, but passion is fundamentally important in that process."

Head coach Justin Morgan recalls that passion when he first met Huggell and chief executive Paul Lakin. At the time, he was coach at Toulouse in France and was invited to visit Hull Kingston Rovers with a view to coaching them. It was driving from Manchester Airport to Hull with these two that convinced Justin this was a club with real commitment behind it and something he couldn't miss. And that was before he met the rest of the fans. Justin has never seen so many supporters as passionately devoted to their team as they are at Hull Kingston Rovers – all this on the second largest council estate in Europe; one of the most economically deprived areas of the country. It's an extraordinary allegiance that is strongly linked to the community. Hull Kingston Rovers is more than just a part of the community. In many ways it is the community:

"One of the strengths of the club is that it's very inclusive, very much got a community feel. Moving forward we want to market it through the community element and maintain the kind of inclusive feel where everyone's welcome and feels a part of the club."

5.7.3. F11: fraternity

Organisations that perform beyond expectations and their leaders care about, engage with and support the communities that have importance for them: the communities of origin from which they recruit their talent, the communities of practice of those who work for them, and the communities of support – of customers, clients and fans – where they are often physically located.

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- The Oldham race riots of 2001 had a significant impact on the ways in which Mills Hill reaches out to the surrounding community. The disturbances impelled staff to consider how they might improve connections with the growing ethnic minority community. Though Mills Hill does not have high numbers of cultural minority students, the school chose to seek out ways to create links outside the insulating walls of the school with global communities. In addition to this international work, Mills Hill maintains a partnership with another local school that is majority Bangladeshi and Pakistani through the project Oldham Linking. For the past three-and-a-half years it has run joint activities to build cross-cultural understanding. Mills Hill works with its community and as a community. All staff collaborate in teams. Team meetings focus on a variety of topics, such as understanding and using student data, discussing observations of students, sharing how particular lessons worked, talking about research articles, and brainstorming ways to improve practice. One key purpose of teaching teams has been the introduction of regular peer evaluations, which were instituted to enhance teaching and learning, and to induct newer teachers. A teaching assistant felt that “there’s always someone you can go to... Everybody is approachable. Nobody turns you away.”
 - The principle of fraternity is the very essence of the Scott Bader Commonwealth – a company, charity and business without external shareholders. Scott Bader’s governance structure helps to ensure that no one individual wields too much power at the expense of others. The members own the company and are the ultimate authority. They meet quarterly as do the various boards. The trustees have strong external representation and are not involved in the day-to-day running of the organisation. Trustees must agree any changes to the constitution and have powers to act in a crisis. The commonwealth board holds the shares of Scott Bader in trust. It has six elected directors and loses two each year. Any member can stand for election. Ernest Bader’s idea of a commonwealth wasn’t just that wealth was held in common; he was a visionary who wanted the entire world to work in a way that upheld his democratic values. The vision is that some wealth should go to the employees, some should go to good causes: the community, social activity and charity. The current managing director puts it like this:

“Ernest Bader’s vision was that we shouldn’t be damaging the world. We should be helping the world. We should be adding value to the world in everything we do, the products we make, the money we make. So basically there’s a group called the Commonwealth that is there to manage social development and charitable giving. We give away £140,000 a year, one per cent of group salary goes to charity. These values attract staff and create loyalty; there is a real sense of caring for the company, the community and the employees.”

The learning and development manager recalled, “One of the reasons that attracted me to this company was this common trust, common ownership. I fell in love with the ideals that Scott Bader has tried to uphold since its inception.” The director of human resources stressed:

“Our key principles are trust. People should trust us. We have honesty. You’ve got to be honest in your dealings. All of our employees should respect each other. We should be challenging each other but doing it in a respectful way.”

Even after some painful restructurings that were required to align Scott Bader with the realities of a global business environment, the director of human resources noted:

“Our retention levels are still high. Don’t get me wrong, we have staff turnover, and we need turnover to be healthy and to maintain that churn of new talent and the exit of those not so talented or who need to move on to the new challenge. But in terms of the vast majority of our customer relations, the people that dealt with you last year are probably still here so if you’re a customer phoning up again you’ll probably speak to the same person. And they will know about you. Those relationships are very, very strong.”

- In Walsall, data is now shared across all schools, decisions are discussed with all relevant parties, and processes have been streamlined. This transparency also formed one of the planks on which the relationship between the schools, in particular the headteachers, and Serco staff was built. Because

there was almost no student data available when Serco took over, it had a free hand in setting up new systems to deal with the data. In doing so, it was decided that data would be shared among schools, an unusual step to take since schools did not normally share student-level data with each other. “I agreed with schools that we would publish everyone’s data to everybody because I wanted transparency”, said a representative of Serco. Part of the reason for this transparency was to show how and why resources were being allocated to particular schools.

- After years of financial and commercial distraction and division along with drops in performance in the 1970s and 1980s, Australian cricket needed to get its team identity back. By 1984, the Australian Cricket Board (forerunner of Cricket Australia) was determined to build a winning national team. The National Cricket Academy was established in Adelaide in 1987 – later moving to warmer Brisbane to become the Centre for Excellence. It was the world leader in developing, coaching and mentoring young cricketing talent in possible preparation for performance in the national team. On the back of poor performance over a long period, it was said, “you’ve got to have something that gets the youth ready for the next level”, and “the Cricket Academy was established and the rest is history and we haven’t lost a whole lot for 10 years”.

“The purpose of the academy was to pool resources centrally to bring the very best cricketers into one location so they could start acting like a team, and be trained the same way by specialist coaches. All this was in support of the continuing plan to give the Australian selectors the direction they need to mature a succession plan for the next Australian team.”

The centre’s programme is highly personalised for every player. Batting, bowling and fielding coaches consult a video database on all players even before they arrive. They assess state-level performance data for every player. They also test the young players who come through the centre to assess their learning, personality and even emotional intelligence. The centre individualises a programme for every player – creating playing situations that will challenge and stretch them. Recruitment and player development are no longer left to luck or local initiative – they are managed with scrupulous and scientific attention down to the tiniest details of the process. Personalisation is important in the Centre for Excellence, but so is playing in a team context. Each group of around 20 goes through everything together. At the end of the programme, they usually go on an overseas tour to India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh. These processes enable Cricket Australia to choose its captains wisely. In Australian cricket, the captain is a long-term investment, not a short-term splurge – someone who is known intimately from an early age, comes up slowly through the ranks, is watched in interaction with others, and is then heavily invested in, even if he or she does not perform all that well at first. The team respects the captain because the captain has grown up with the team.

Leaders who perform beyond expectations build powerful teams that connect vertical and lateral leadership to produce much better results. The team knows exactly what it has to accomplish and is motivated by high degrees of internal collaboration. Cricket teams spend many hours off the field in the pavilion together where a long-standing captain with known presence is an invaluable asset. Shoebuy.com and Dogfish Head Craft Brewery pay great attention to the communities who work for them and not just the customers who buy from them. M&S brought all its employees into one national arena to re-vision the organisation at a single event. Scott Bader continues to draw on its co-operative foundation and legacy. The schools in our study have strong records in growing leaders from within so that teamwork brings tangible rewards as well as symbolic ones. In organisations that perform beyond expectations, people do not merely co-operate to complete tasks as teams but live and learn together as entire communities.

5.7.4. F12: flair, flow and flexibility

It is not just teams and teamwork that keep organisations that perform beyond expectations moving forward, but the vibrant nature of the teamwork itself. Organisations that perform beyond expectations have cultures of creativity and risk-taking. They allow and encourage workers to have freedom and flexibility to innovate and play. These changes in culture and creativity are facilitated by structural reorganisations that emphasise interchangeability, rotation and cross-cutting of roles and positions.

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- ‘Stick to what you’re good at’ is the guiding wisdom at Hull Kingston Rovers. The chairman’s view about this is very clear: Use your time wisely to get people with suitable skills, then leave them to do their job. Autonomy and responsibility go hand in hand at the club because they take care to get the right people in the right places. The most important position at the club is head coach and the club was meticulous in the search for the current coach. Justin Morgan had ambition, technical ability and vision. What he lacked in experience was compensated for by other qualities. Any appointment is a risk and his was no more so than others:

“They wanted me to take ownership of my own department. I remember the chairman saying to me, “You live and die by your own sword.” I said, “As long as I get to wield the sword then I don’t mind living and dying by it.” It was really difficult for them to give so much responsibility to somebody because the club was so desperate for success. That would have taken a lot of belief from the chairman on a personal level.”

The head coach puts responsibility on the players in the same way as the club puts responsibility on him. He encourages players to make their own decisions on the field; that’s what they’re trained to do. The attitude is that they can learn through hindsight whether the decision was good or not. Nobody will be blamed for a bad decision as long as they make one and take responsibility for it.

- Creativity and expressing yourself start early at Kilkenny Hurling. The club adopts an inclusive attitude to the development of hurling by trying to involve as many youngsters as possible in real games, stressing the enjoyment of the game rather than winning. Primary school teacher and minor hurling selector Brendan O’Sullivan stresses the importance of participation and involvement, “I always say to children in school that hurling is all about enjoying yourself.” Brendan applies a Jesuit philosophy when he recognises that a child will decide by the time he’s eight or nine what sport he wants to play for the enjoyment he got up to that time:

“We’ll try to be inclusive now in the games that are being developed. And we get to form games at the club where everyone plays. There are no subs. Twelve lads play. That’s it. They’re not sitting on a bench on a freezing morning hoping they might get on. I think that’s been a great innovation by the Gaelic Athletic Association. They realise that children should play the game and enjoy playing the game because the memories you have when you’re that age will always stay with you.”

- Nick Benz handles the accounts now at Dogfish Head Craft Brewery. Before coming to Dogfish, he explained, his engineering and finance backgrounds made him think in binaries:

“It took me probably 18 months of battles with CEO Sam [Calagione] over the stupidest little things to teach him that not everything has to be so crazy, all punk, anarchistic, chaotic, that there can be some order to what he does. But similarly there can be a hell of a lot less structure to the way that I think. We both came from very extreme positions and we both softened a bit off total chaos and total organisation to the point where we both respect and understand what each other brings to the table.”

Sam’s playful spirit is alive and well at Dogfish, and everyone we spoke to expressed a sense of energy and excitement for what they do. Staff creativity stems, in part, from the loosening of boundaries, from the simple encouragement to play and have fun in your work. Mariah Calagione calls the atmosphere at Dogfish “controlled chaos” because there is usually something happening that appears slightly out of control. She insists, though, that this is positive because it ensures that they maintain an off-centred edge. Yet this attitude is tempered and, ultimately, facilitated by structure and organisation.

- Professionalising the staff so it was technically proficient as well as innovative and updating the technology infrastructure were critical to the company’s ability to become truly viable and sustain its success. By recognising its limitations and bringing on other leaders – specialists who could carry the burden of running the organisation – Sam has been able to concentrate on what he does best:

“I am now able to focus more on the stuff that excites me about my work here than in the era when our company didn’t have the financial wherewithal to hire the kind of talented people whose skills complement my own. If I can say anything, it’s that in 14 years of business the thing I’ve done best, in terms of leadership, I’ve been able to find people who are really strong at the areas that I suck at so I can focus on the areas that I’m strong.”

- At West Oaks SILC, staff make the point that the principal engaged in and encouraged creative teaching. Teachers were required to find creative ways of engaging students, of supporting their learning, whether that was providing clear structures for students on the autistic spectrum, developing clear guidelines about behaviour and continuity of staff, or establishing cross-curricular links and working as a team – as well as making innovative use of technology. “There’s a willingness here to be creative,” the principal says. In the words of a head of department, “It is structured and it is planned very much, but there is also room for creativity within that.” A teacher echoed these sentiments: “Creative collaboration – that’s why we’re beyond expectations, through creative collaboration.”
- At John Cabot Academy, an essential component of performance beyond expectations is an environment of innovation and risk-taking. The 2007 Ofsted report commented, ‘Innovative developments are continuing to raise standards.’ The 2009 Ofsted report refers to the school’s competency-based curriculum as ‘an example of an innovation that has had an excellent impact on students’ attainment and progress’. Innovative learning calls for innovative teaching. Cabot’s staff members were given considerable autonomy to engage in risk-taking, innovation and creativity for the sake of enhancing the school’s performance. Innovations varied in their success and impact, and were modified or discontinued as needed. The director of the Cabot Learning Federation commented that at John Cabot, it is about “innovation with impact” and about “a strong leadership team, not just a person”. Some people viewed this environment of risk-taking as being an important motivator for taking or remaining in their jobs at the school.

Cabot’s culture of innovation kept it moving forward while attracting the best people to it and keeping them together. Grange Secondary School engaged its Bangladeshi students and renewed its staff by emphasising the arts and creativity – with the effect that many senior leadership team members were recruited from art and design subjects that, they felt, equipped them with big-picture thinking. Burnley Football Club secured promotion with a team of players who raised their game when they were encouraged to express themselves. Dogfish Head’s innovative spirit is expressed in its employees’ experiments with unusual ingredients and in their efforts to recreate historically ancient brewing recipes. Innovative website design and redesign involving many employees is at the heart of Shoebuy.com’s corporate culture. By necessity, so too are failures, mistakes and risk.

5.7.5. F13: fallibility

Organisations that perform beyond expectations and their leaders do not get too big for their boots. They are confident but not overconfident. They make and acknowledge mistakes and they expect those they lead to make mistakes too.

- Shoebuy.com leaders know they make mistakes. This allows them to respond to the mistakes quickly. For example, they are constantly testing what aspects of the website lead to actual sales. The results of these fine-grained tests allow them to make minor changes daily and weekly to enhance customers’ online shopping experience. Over time, these add up to major changes. As website alterations are regular and recurring, Shoebuy.com seeks to gradually improve the look and feel of the site without shocking loyal fans with sudden and massive design overhaul.
- While the players of the senior hurling team have always been local heroes in Kilkenny, international television coverage has turned them into major sports personalities, with similar media interest in Ireland to the premier league soccer stars in England, or major league baseball stars in the United States. Kilkenny Gaelic Athletic Association works hard with its players to help them keep their feet on the ground. Players are encouraged to acknowledge all their hurling achievements, but not to let it go to their heads. Modesty is a very important part of the team spirit in Kilkenny hurling. Manager Brian Cody stresses the players are:

“very, very grounded individuals... I constantly remind them, “If you lose track of where you’re coming from, or what you’re about, or what you’re representing, and if you think suddenly you’ve become above your station, it doesn’t lend itself to prolonged success or whatever.”

- The head of Kanes Hill faced a moment of self-doubt when she was confronted with a profusion of demands and expectations that she felt were all too much for one person. When she first became the school’s leader, she needed to run all aspects of the school. Eventually, though, trying to take on much of the burden herself led her very close to burnout. She began to get exhausted by constant interruptions and questions from staff, expecting all the answers from her. While they were, in her words, a “lovely staff” who “knew what we needed to do”, she realised they had simply “never been given permission to get on with it”. Eventually, at a staff meeting, she shared the pressures of the role with them and told them she could not keep being the only person in the building with the answers. The deputy head recalls how the head:

“was being called out to do so many things and she wanted to still be involved in school. It got to the point that she said, “I’m exhausted. I can’t carry on.” I think she realised that it was a time that she did have to trust us. So as the senior management team we were given even more responsibility.”

A teacher remembers how

“the head told us, “You know what we need to do in this school. You know what our resource is; you know what our vision is. Get on with it and don’t feel the need to keep coming to me. I trust you to get on with it and if there’s an issue come back and discuss it. I’m not going to blame you if things go wrong.”

The head sees this as a turning point in building a can-do culture for the children, a can-do culture for the staff, [and] a no-blame culture in both cases”.

For any organisation to be truly innovative, it must take risks – not the kind of risks that would jeopardise customer safety or students’ learning and wellbeing, but professional risks to explore new ways of working that might produce better results. Organisations that perform beyond expectations thrive on risk underpinned by trust, and on mistakes that are quickly corrected by diagnostic measurement and real-time feedback. These organisations and their leaders accept and also make honest mistakes. This makes them fallible, humble and human. It also makes them innovative and reflective learners. Many of the attempts by the staff of Dogfish Head Craft Brewery to use exotic woods for brewing barrels or inserting odd ingredients into new beers do not always initially succeed. Experimentation with Shoebuy.com’s website design can lead to error, but it also fuels innovation and success – and this climate of innovation and risk-taking is one of the key factors behind the company’s very high staff retention rates – among the strongest in the industry. The sports teams in this study do not drop players if they make one calamitous yet uncharacteristic error, and in Tower Hamlets and Walsall, schools are not threatened when they fall into failure but rise up again with the support of their peers. Expression and invention build commitment by engaging team members in regular experiences of highly engaging flow. Overlapping roles and expressive play also enable many people, not just an elite few, to see and take collective responsibility for the overall view of the organisation.

5.7.6. F14: friendly rivalry

Collaboration and competition are often seen as opposites. The gene is either selfish or co-operative. Competition makes us succeed to survive or be superior while co-operation harnesses our capacities to succeed together. Leaders and organisations that perform beyond expectations go beyond these ideological oppositions and creatively combine collaboration with competition.

- The owner of Dogfish Head Craft Brewery does not promote his own products to the exclusion of those marketed by other craft brewers. In many ways, he roots for the success of other smaller brewers that might typically be considered immediate competition. For instance, when Sam appeared on US

national television in 2008 to promote the book *He Said Beer, She Said Wine*, he showcased one beer from Dogfish and one from New Belgium Brewing. He believes his company's attempts to grow cannot come at the expense of its peers. The position that Dogfish occupies in the media spotlight enables it to combine competition and collaboration as a business strategy to counter the structured market domination of the big three US brewing corporations. Dogfish has recently partnered with a major competitor, Sierra Nevada Ales, to launch a new, alternative beer in order to promote the value of craft brewing in general, rather than pursuing win-lose competition with each other. Dogfish Head understands that the act of helping need not weaken the helper. Indeed, combining collaboration and competition positively impacts on performance while also increasing social value.

- Dan Markham in the business and media department of Cricket Australia calls this co-opetition, a concept promoted in some areas of the business literature¹⁰⁸. Cricket Australia collaborates with one of its leading adversaries (yet also its major media earner), India, in order to develop that opponent's capacity and competitiveness. It sleeps with its enemy, knowing how to separate yet also separately value both on-field competition and off-field collaboration:

“There's competition but there's co-opetition. There's co-operating with your competition to your benefit. From a media perspective, stronger contests, closer contests make more compelling viewing. No one wants to see a complete, one-sided, foregone conclusion of an event. It isn't of interest as a media event.”

- Collaboration is the natural way to work in Tower Hamlets. Trust is a condition for this to develop between schools and mutual respect is also needed to foster collaboration between schools and the local authority. “Our schools work very well together and they work really well with us. There is a real commitment to joint working and working through problems in a collaborative way.” If one school falls below threshold targets, the others in the authority rally round to help. At the same time, there is a competitive edge between the schools that is oddly also a collaborative edge¹⁰⁹. It is not the kind of competitiveness that leads to boasting about your school's accomplishments. It is more about competing with yourself to be as good as anyone else, to reaffirm self-confidence, and to egg each other on to higher and higher performance.

Leaders who perform beyond expectations know how to collaborate with competitors. In Fiat, each section head is also a member of another team, which requires constant collaboration even with immediate rivals. Cricket Australia invests heavily in developing communities and fostering political stability in one of its major competitors because almost 50 per cent of its income comes from the media revenue in that country. Dogfish Head Craft Brewery has launched its new ale in collaboration with a major competitor so they can promote their shared vision of micro-brewing together. Many of the schools in our study engaged in on-field friendly rivalry with their peers to push each other's performance higher, but not in win-lose competition where some schools would prosper at the expense of others. Leaders who perform beyond expectations practise friendly rivalry, promote co-opetition and possess a collaborative edge.

5.8. Drive and direction

5.8.1. F15: fusion leadership

Leadership beyond expectations is not just a choice between styles, or a bundle of skills and competencies. Leadership beyond expectations is a fusion of qualities, characteristics and behaviours – some of them apparent opposites. This fusion arises within individuals as a matter of personal integration and integrity; it emerges throughout communities as an achievement of collective capability; and it evolves over time as a means of securing progression and sustainability. Leadership beyond expectations is a combination of leadership that is charismatic and ordinary, autocratic and shared, top down and distributed – defying the opposites and extremes that often define the field. It is the strongest leaders, most comfortable in their own skins, who are eventually most able to let go of power and decisions to others. They are more likely to distribute than merely to delegate and still less to micromanage others' every action so as to deliver someone else's agenda. The complexity of fusion leadership is now illustrated in three extended examples of performing beyond expectations – one each from business, education and sport.

5.8.1.1. Leaders in organisations that perform above expectations raise and rally the organisation and its performance by leading from the front by example when they have to; lifting up everyone around them morally, emotionally and spiritually at every opportunity; and distributing leadership beyond them to ensure improvement is sustainable and not overly dependent on them. The key factor here is fusion leadership. It is both an integral ingredient of performing beyond expectations and also the orchestrating element of all the other factors that lends them cohesion and collective power.

5.8.2. Scott Bader Commonwealth

5.8.2.1. The first factor that changed the course of Scott Bader was the change of chairman of the group board. The old chair had been described as “a nice man but not really that pushy with the organisation”. An ex-ICI man with an ambitious outlook took over as chairman and was instrumental in selecting the current managing director who was headhunted from outside the company. The previous managing director had been an internal appointment; he had been head of human resources. At a time when the company’s profitability and basic viability were at stake, and when some employees in the Scott Bader Commonwealth even felt it was not the purpose (or even bottom line) of the company to make a profit, appointing executive leadership from within had simply perpetuated the business-as-usual approach and had not moved the company forward:

“A change in leadership was essential if the company was to survive. It was clear that Phillip coming in did actually completely revitalise the company and, yes, nearly all the executive team changed. There was one left from the previous executive. As a result, new energy was put into the business. I think if he hadn’t come in and made the changes that he’s made, we wouldn’t be here now. So, he’s made us survive really.”

5.8.2.2. For Scott Bader to survive, people and priorities had to change at the top, but even so, many of the staff below remained the same, customers experienced continuity in their relationships, and the company’s distinctive core values of co-operation, ethical service and charitable giving persisted and were protected. Fusion leadership at Scott Bader was able to combine both radical change and cultural continuity in ways that restored profitability while protecting the company’s basic brand of ethical integrity.

5.8.3. Grange Secondary School

5.8.3.1. The low point for Grange Secondary School was when it almost failed its external inspection in 1996. Together, the head and deputy head started to lead by example. They set down firm foundations for improvement by calming down student behaviour with a positive discipline strategy. “Behaviour was poor, morale was poor, and attendance was 84 per cent. Everything needed improving.” “In the press,” one senior leader recalled, “we were muck.” At first, Colin Bell and Graeme Hollinshead showed courage and fortitude by leading boldly and resolutely from the front. They took some of the worst-behaved students in the school into town and out to theme parks when they behaved well, even though their staff thought they were crazy:

“We used to do things like getting in our cars and rounding up the kids from the park. There was nothing we wouldn’t do. We’d go knocking on doors saying, “Why aren’t you in school?” The result was a climate characterised by calmness on the corridors, collective staff responsibility to care for children, willingness to listen to them and a capacity to understand the students and “where they were coming from”.

5.8.3.2. Most leaders who perform beyond expectations find ways to lift people’s spirits and raise their hopes. Until the mid-1990s, Grange had been managed by ‘nice’ people but “there was no initiative at all”. The senior leadership team had isolated itself on “the top corridor” where one of them “even used to crochet most of the day”. The atmosphere “felt lax”. One teacher recalled how senior leaders “never set foot in my classroom”. Then, “all of sudden we got a deputy head, Colin Bell, who’s got vision, who’s got experience of other things”. “He had been deputy head of a very challenging school in Manchester and was rather streetwise as well – very unlike the two heads that we had previously.” Bell was “not tied to the social history of the school and was like a breath of fresh air”. Hollinshead, Bell’s deputy and then successor, recalled how Bell “brought tremendous charisma. He was inspirational. He certainly got people doing things.” One of

his strengths was that he was a “very, very good people person”. One teacher, now a senior leader, vividly remembers her very first contact with the school as a supply teacher, when Bell was in charge of supply teacher appointments and coverage:

“He was asking me a lot of questions and explaining about this new senior leadership team and how they were trying to create a team of people who would come in on supply. He asked would I be willing to come in and do different subjects, etc, etc. I said that I would. But at the time I was thinking, “Why are you asking me all this because I’m only coming in for one day?” Anyway, I did my day. And there was just something about the place that made you feel welcome. Maybe it was the fact that the guy took the time to sit down and have the conversation. Now people who come here on supply say there is definitely an ethos of being welcome in the school, which I think is about valuing people from a supply teacher coming in for one day, to the cleaning staff, the kitchen staff and the pupils. I think everybody feels that they belong to the school and that their contribution matters.”

5.8.3.3. When he became head, Bell met the governing body responsible for the school and set out his vision. He had plans and brought them to the governing body, and at a time when the percentage of A*-C grades was minimal, he was able to look to the future and say, “Well in two or three years’ time, this is what I want and to get that vision across to everybody and working for it.”

5.8.3.4. Courageous leadership from the front had been followed by inspiring and visionary leadership that motivated everyone else. This was amplified by the creative leadership that redesigned the curriculum around visual and creative arts to suit the predominantly Bangladeshi learners, and this in turn attracted resources for the school to become a leading visual arts college. Performing beyond expectations involves more than raising people’s hopes. Indeed, if hopes are not fulfilled or are actively dashed, then cynicism can sink to an even lower level. Eventually, the power of hope is when its promise shows evidence of fulfilment in action. When the promise of better times becomes evident even in small increments of concrete improvement, this can generate upward spirals of further hope and increased confidence that even greater improvements are possible:

‘You went from being a teacher at the school that was the worst performing to someone who was working in a reasonable work environment with good facilities, with students who were improving and this was being recognised. I think all that has a very positive impact on you and encourages you to keep on going.’

5.8.3.5. Eventually, the leadership responsibility for improvement became widely distributed. Graeme Hollinshead tried all the time to distribute the leadership and develop teamwork. The team comprised everyone – teachers, learning mentors, teaching assistants and support staff. Union representatives were always involved early when new directions were being taken. The business manager was complimentary about how everyone would rally round when someone had a problem, how Graeme knew how to delegate, and how he “lets you get on with it”. By building a culture of trust, warmth and loyalty, distributed leadership at Grange Secondary turned into collective responsibility. Graeme Hollinshead observed that “the head can’t do everything. He’s got to have key people in key positions who are accountable no matter what they do.” With this collective, distributed responsibility, the head did not always have to be in school, but could be outside advocating for it, and gathering other ideas and insights that could support it. So Hollinshead “goes off all over the place”. Gilly McMullen, his successor, pointed out, “He’s out of school all the time” but “it’s just business as normal. When he’s not here you would not notice.”

5.8.3.6. At Grange Secondary School, therefore, leadership was not one thing or another forever – it was courageous, inspirational, charismatic, creative, distributed and sustainable – sometimes in sequence, often in combination – in a fusion of approaches and emphases that improvement demanded.

5.8.4. Cricket Australia

5.8.4.1. In Cricket Australia, the unofficial chief key performance indicator is to win the Ashes against England and keep winning them. The unexpected loss of the Ashes in 2005, and the obligation of having to witness England's euphoria in recapturing them, after years of Australian dominance, was viewed as a devastating defeat. "When we lost the Ashes," one executive said, "it was like we lost the war." One of the directors was in England at the time the Ashes had been conceded when he came across some of Australia's players:

"One of them was crying. I said, "Look it's a game." He said, "Oh, it's so devastating. I just want to get back [at them]." We'd just got to get back. What the English didn't realise was that from that moment, we worked to beat them. When they came out here 18 months later, we beat them 5-0."

The loss of the Ashes aroused the courageous battling spirit of the team and the nation: "It had the most amazing galvanising effect on cricket in the country." "It just generated this interest. The whole country wanted to get on board and say, 'We're going to win it back. We're all going to do it together.'"

5.8.4.2. Australia has won the Ashes in 9 out of the 11 last occasions. But this has not come easily or in the absence of crisis. We have seen how CEO Malcolm Speed had to 'bowl uphill into the wind' to settle player unrest in an era of increasing competition of salaries and media exposure from other professional sports. Speed knew that haranguing players about their national loyalties would no longer be enough. Speed's pragmatic, upfront style enabled him to develop the new media-driven business model for the organisation that would use revenue from India's media income to settle player contracts while expecting new levels of professionalism from them in turn. In essence, Speed's battling and pragmatic approach created an entirely new structure to redefine the operations and aspirations of Cricket Australia.

5.8.4.3. One of Speed's last acts was to recruit his successor, James Sutherland. Still only in his 30s when he arrived, Sutherland was regarded by Speed as "an outstanding young man" who had "grown into the job very well". Employees of Cricket Australia felt "fortunate" to have a "business-minded CEO" who could take the organisation to the next level. Sutherland was frequently referred to in almost reverential terms as an impressive and inspiring leader who gave his all for the organisation and its people. Employees regarded him as "exceptional", "a class act" whose "motto is busy" and who "never sleeps". Sutherland brought Damian Bown to Cricket Australia to head the new game development department. Bown recalls his first impressions:

"I remember walking out of these offices saying, "I think this is the place I'm meant to be working." There's just something about that meeting that really captured my imagination about the vision for the future."

5.8.4.4. Sutherland developed the business strategy established by Speed internationally. He inspired the young managers all around him. He set strategic directions and built up the new game development department, which pushed hard for greater participation in cricket and to secure commitments to improving entry-level programming for young cricketers. The Ashes loss "was the best thing that ever happened to participation. Losing to the English tripled the participation the following year. It made them all get involved."

5.8.4.5. Making cricket into Australia's favourite sport was the prime goal of the Sutherland era. It meant connecting cricket to everything – gender equity, indigenous communities and increasing diversity. That involved grasping the idea that participants sometimes may become future players or the families of future players. Growing cricket relentlessly from below has meant expanding it into schools, onto the beach and across streets and communities. Street cricket and beach cricket have been significant developments in Cricket Australia. So, too, has women's cricket. Projects have been undertaken in drought-ridden communities to use cricket as a strategy of public engagement and renewal of hope. There is higher participation in cricket among the public, and the sport attracts more revenue than any other in Australia, except swimming in Olympic years.

5.8.4.6. From battling and courageous leadership, through inspirational leadership, Cricket Australia now exemplifies distributed and inclusive leadership not only throughout the formal organisation but also across the entire country. It has benefitted not from one style or another, but from many, simultaneously and in sequence, which cannot be captured by any list, long or short, of aggregated leadership competencies.

5.8.5. Summary

5.8.5.1. Leadership beyond expectations is a drama developed across time and space, rather than a skill set for all seasons. Leaders and leadership are not always consistently the same. Their approach can and does vary. Serco's managing director knew how to challenge and confront Walsall's headteachers about poor performance, but was the first in the country to fulfil a duty of care to them and provide them with their own personal support services to help them through the borough's and their own challenging crises. Burnley's Brendan Flood is self-avowedly autocratic at first until he trusts his team enough to devolve authority to them. Fiat's Sergio Marchionne may be relaxed in much of his dress and manner, but he is ruthless and relentless about eliminating waste. Cricket Australia's gutsy, can-do Malcolm Speed was followed by inspirational and inclusive James Sutherland. Shoebuy began inventively and imaginatively, but grew steadily and sustainably, yet still with innovation always in mind. The head of Kanes Hill Primary School inspired everyone from the front until her exhaustion brought forth the rest. The leadership team at Grange Secondary School began the improvement process through courageous example, then through personally inspiring others, and finally through distributing leadership to such an extent that the absence of leaders from the building was scarcely noticed.

5.8.5.2. Leadership beyond expectations cannot be timelessly categorised in a single style, described by one adjective, or captured in a long list of competencies. The essence of leadership beyond expectations, rather, is its capacity to shift and flex over time, as the organisation evolves and the circumstances require. Leadership beyond expectations is a story narrated over time, rather than a style or a checklist. It is to be found in the capacity to fuse many leadership styles and components together into an integrated and self-assured whole that can lift people up, bring them together and connect them to something greater than themselves to serve a common good. Fusion leadership is more than a repertoire of complementary skills; it is the psychological integration of a personality and a community combined with the knowledge, empathy and strategic capability to know what parts of one's leadership are the right ones, for the right time and the challenges at that moment.

6 Five fallacies of change and turnaround

6.1. Sometimes, in understanding what something is, it can be helpful to make clear just what it is not. This prevents misunderstandings, or vague claims leading to premature consensus, which unravels as soon as different interpretations unfold in practice. This penultimate section contrasts the project's overall findings with five common fallacies concerning leadership and change practices that are allegedly transferable from other sectors, such as business and sport, in the pursuit of higher standards and stronger performance.

6.2. Our findings on performance beyond expectations have revealed key contrasts with five common fallacies that are challenged by evidence across the three sectors we investigated. These five fallacies concern the (non)-transferability of improvement, turnaround and leadership strategies from business and sport to education:

- the fallacy of speed
- the fallacy of substitution
- the fallacy of numbers
- the fallacy of standardisation
- the fallacy of competition

6.3. The fallacy of speed: effective turnarounds can and should be quick

6.3.1. In business, turnaround strategies are typically very fast as profitability and viability depend on quick results. Most corporate turnarounds are not successful, however, especially in the longer term. As we have seen, getting the right people to commit to improving results in an organisation is not so easy in the public sector where union contracts and seniority rules pull organisations towards seeking solutions that will work with existing staff. At the same time, we have seen that businesses that exceed expectations over time, including those that never require turnaround, largely enjoy high rates of staff retention. They concentrate on long-term improvement as well as making the immediate changes that build confidence and enable them to survive. The temptation to change everyone and everything almost instantaneously may be one reason why many turnaround efforts in business eventually fail. Turnarounds are typically slower in sport than in business and take at least three years.

6.3.2. Quick wins that yield immediate returns on profits in business include selling off unprofitable portions of the company such as M&S's financial services and parts of its foreign operations or, in Fiat's case, persuading partners like General Motors to buy out of unprofitable collaborative alliances. Other quick wins in all sectors can enhance confidence and remove distractions, though the impact on performance may be less immediate. Fiat's consolidation of its platforms (modular systems of engine parts, interior dashboards or driving mirrors, for example) reduced waste and increased efficiency. Burnley Football Club's streamlined email system did the same. Cricket Australia's settlement of player disputes over wages and conditions enabled it to refocus on core issues of player performance. Similar measures were evident in all the turnaround schools, which calmed down student behaviour before turning attention to improving teaching and learning. Uncovering and sweating hidden and unused assets can also enhance capacity and provide an emotional and financial boost – such as Kanes Hill's discovery of an unclaimed special education budget, or John Cabot's sale of some property assets it did not need, and of curriculum materials it was able to market. Relocating players and workers in positions that are more suited to them, as at Burnley and Fiat, or reallocating students to courses where interest and achievement are likely to be higher, as at Grange Secondary or Central Technology College, can also yield some quick, if not instant, returns.

6.3.3. These immediate and relatively short-term wins are real but there should be no illusions that they represent immediate or miraculous improvements in the quality of work, in the team's consistently better performance on the field, or in genuine transformations in the nature and quality of teaching and learning in school. A key question is whether quick wins or apparently fast turnarounds reflect real improvements in core practice and its results. Quick wins may merely be false recoveries. In the 1980s, this occurred during the John Bond management era at Burnley Football Club when Bond imported a team of ageing stars from his former club who began with a string of stellar results, only for their energy and commitment to give out by mid-season when one of their key players became injured. At M&S, newly hired signature designers produced two good seasons of improved sales, but then the designers used their success to move away from the company, to which they had no prior loyalty, to bigger opportunities elsewhere. Quick wins may also carry a questionable ethical cost. These include the threats to customer safety posed by accelerated production schedules and targets in parts of the auto industry (though not at Fiat itself); the premier ship football club that rested its entire first team against a top side just a few days before playing Burnley to increase the chances of beating its relegation zone rival; the school (Grange Secondary) that scraped through its inspection report in the 1990s partly by making adjustments to its own teaching team during the week of the inspection when four less talented staff members were coincidentally on sickness absence for the week; the primary school that, at its lowest ebb, moved its best teachers into the top year (Key Stage 2) to produce the appearance of significant measurable growth from Key Stage 1, even though it is younger children in the foundation years of their development who are most in need of the best teachers available; and the educational organisation that was ready to acknowledge it had to make some quick wins in the earliest stages of turnaround but was less prepared to divulge what these were.

6.3.4. Almost every organisation across all three sectors in this study that had gone through some kind of turnaround claimed it took several years to see results that reflected real improvement in the quality of the organisation's people and their practices. It took more than 20 years for Burnley Football Club to rebound from 92nd to being in the top 20 of English football. Hull Kingston Rovers spent more than a dozen years achieving the same kind of feat. The benefits of Cricket Australia's investment in its National Cricket Academy, which developed young cricketing talent in the 1980s, were not really evident in results until a decade later. Notwithstanding its false recovery, M&S spent seven years completing its financial turnaround from its low point in 2000. Shoebuy.com and Dogfish Head Craft Brewery carefully monitor their growth and expansion rates so they do not overextend themselves and then fall flat on their face like many of their start-up sector competitors. The vast majority of educational organisations took pride in saying how improvements in their results had been mainly steady, but real, as they reflected changes in actual practice. We were told that the engagement, self-esteem, self-belief and trust of students and their parents are not built in a day or even a year; it often takes two to three years before they bear fruit across an entire school or local authority. At some point, a spike in results is sometimes seen, when all these emotional and professional investments reach a critical state of quality and capacity. Later spikes seem to result from authentic and sustainable investments in changes of beliefs and practice coalescing at a critical point; early spikes are more likely to be false recoveries or the consequence of more ethically questionable or less practice-related interventions.

6.3.5. When schools are required to make fast turnarounds, they may not only be being asked to emulate practices in a non-comparable sector, but also be basing their turnaround strategies on practices that do not characterise the best or most sustainable representatives of that sector.

6.4. The fallacy of substitution: effective turnarounds require wholesale changes of leadership and staff

6.4.1. Wholesale replacement of leadership, staff and entire organisations is a common turnaround preference within sport and business, and increasingly in education. In sport, although changes of manager can produce quick and temporary lifts as motivation is revived, players try to impress their new boss, and those who were out of favour have the opportunity of a fresh start; these effects only last a few games before performance sinks again. False recoveries following leadership regime change or the hiring of star designers are equally common in business. In education, removing the head, the governing body or even the entire school's existence are increasingly common features in the United States' 'Race To The Top' policy and its antecedents, and in England of responding to schools that fail to meet their floor targets quickly enough under the National Challenge, are officially hard to change, or, for these or other reasons, are expected to give way to new academies.

6.4.2. In this study the sports organisations that performed beyond expectations were characterised by high leadership stability in the context of deeper and more lasting efforts to change. England has had far lower leadership stability in the crucial area of the captaincy than its generally more successful cricketing rival, Australia, and Burnley Football Club, even before its promotion, had a series of the longest serving managers in its division.

6.4.3. Replacement of top-level leadership did characterise the strategies of M&S, Fiat and Scott Bader at times of turnaround. However, even in these cases, inspirational CEO Stuart Rose had worked at M&S's food division earlier in his career, several of Fiat's management team of 23 had been recruited and redeployed from geographically far-flung or organisationally unusual parts of the company, and while Scott Bader changed its managing director and some of its staff, many of the historic staff remained to perpetuate collective memory and long-standing customer relations. In these ways, outside energy and innovation were not complete substitutes for insider loyalties and attachments, but a way of complementing and sometimes challenging (but not eliminating) those loyalties. Dogfish Head Craft Brewery had to find some managerially proficient people in areas like finance, but still maintained its cadre of staff with quirky qualities and innovative edge. Shoebuy.com has continued over many years to develop its people from within and still has one of the highest rates of staff retention in the industry.

6.4.4. Interestingly, in education, the highest performing jurisdictions on international tests of student achievement – Finland, Alberta and Singapore – are characterised by high stability of political leadership rather than being driven by the short-term pressures, targets and anxieties defined by the next election. In the schools, many turnaround heads began as senior leaders or deputies within the schools they were now trying to change and knew their school's people and its history. In almost every case of turnaround, some staff did leave, but not most of them, and not immediately either. The schools were able to find ways to branch out, but not by completely tearing up their roots.

6.4.5. One type of school that often starts out with new top-level leadership is the academy. This report is not an appraisal of academies or their international parallels such as charter schools or free schools, but academies did emerge as an issue in four of the nine education cases. The head of John Cabot wanted to convert the school into an academy to strengthen its existing record, extend it further and work with other schools to support the community. Tower Hamlets, by contrast, felt the existing culture and improvement record of its schools was so strong, it had no need for academies. Despite their clear improvement records acknowledged by Ofsted reports and other indicators, two of the secondary schools in the study were controversially converted into academies, in one instance as a response to a wider social cohesion agenda, and in the other, after the school concerned failed to meet its 30 per cent floor target by the percentage equivalent of less than one student. The issue at stake is not about the merits of academies in general, nor about whether substituting existing schools and their staff is right or wrong in principle. It is about whether and when, in any instance, replacing old schools, leaders and staff with new schools, leaders and staff is the right turnaround strategy and the best decision for that community, made with the special interests and inclusion of and trust among that community in mind, and conducted fairly and publicly on transparent and justified criteria.

6.4.6. Resorting to a change of manager whenever things go badly may follow common professional sports practices, but not the best of those practices. And assuming that a school can go from zero to hero in a year or less, particularly by replacing many or most of the key staff, is to emulate turnaround strategies in business and sport that most commonly fail rather than more sustainable ones in organisations that truly perform above expectations and succeed.

6.4.7. These are not arguments for managerial and leadership regimes to endure as long as possible, even when the rules of work and the world have changed, when managers have become ineffective, when they have 'lost the dressing room' or when leaders become very ill. The challenge is to find the right leaders for the right problems at the right time, and to stick with the choice when it begins to show evidence of success that may not always be immediately evident in measurable results.

6.5. The fallacy of numbers: tough targets and bottom lines matter most

6.5.1. Business and sporting organisations that perform above expectations are voracious users and consumers of data as a basis for improving personal and organisational performance. The data of victories and defeats, and profits and losses are the unarguable evidence of success and survival in sport and business. They are compelling and meaningful, and cannot be manipulated – at least not for long, as the collapse of Enron indicated. However, the best business and sporting organisations collect data on much more than this bottom line, as a foundation for bottom-line and then high-watermark success.

6.5.2. Businesses that perform beyond expectations collect evidence on balanced scorecards, and include measures of corporate social responsibility, customer satisfaction, internet stickiness and staff retention, to name just a few. Sporting organisations that perform beyond expectations collect data on player performance, participation rates, financial stability, supporter preferences and community needs that are connected to their core purposes. Turning the biggest profit, maximising shareholder value and gaining the most wins possible are not valued at any price if they compromise financial sustainability, control of core purposes, reputation or corporate social responsibility. Moreover, performance measures and targets are discussed and processed within a valued and respectful relationship of personal consideration, knowledge and even inspiration between leaders and the led. Wherever possible, targets are shared and developed together as a professional community, but even when the targets are imposed, it is essential they are set within the context of trusting and valued relationships. Performing beyond expectations may mean knowing your numbers, but not without knowing your people.

6.5.3. Patterns of performance measurement in state education diverge disconcertingly from those in organisations that perform beyond expectations in business and sport. Measurement, in the form of tested achievement, is not always seen as valid or meaningful, or reflective of the kinds of learning that educators know are important for life-long success in today's world. Pushing for the very highest test scores possible often distracts attention from other valued goals and outcomes. Standardised test scores do not provide teachers with real-time data that can help them to help their students. The introduction of detailed systems of student progress management into many of our educational sites helps data serve teachers and students in real time when it follows a curriculum that is fitted to and engages all the learners – the more practical and technology focused curriculum for boys at Central Technology College, the visual and kinaesthetic learning for Bangladeshi students at Grange Secondary, the sophisticated use of assessment for learning with special education students at West Oaks, the 'wizard learners' who can learn how to learn at Limeside, and the interdisciplinary competency-based curriculum at John Cabot. These educational sites do not constantly drive students on to pass the next test or examination within a curriculum that may be poorly suited to them. They ensure that management of progress follows learning that matters with the particular kinds of students in front of them.

6.5.4. In general, secondary school educators accept the importance of students achieving grades A*–C in their GCSE examination results because they are passports to success for students themselves. Educators such as many of those at Grange Secondary and Central Technology College become disillusioned as evidenced in comments by Grange's headteacher on national media, when what counts as an A*–C grade is governmentally altered with high stakes attached in the middle of a school year, and moves schools from being award-winning performers on Ofsted inspection reports and prior measures of examination and testing success, to items that appear on publicised lists of the lowest ranking schools in the nation.

6.5.5. The educational organisations in our study that performed above expectations managed to lift themselves above restricted measurements that do not reflect best sport and business practice. They attained necessary and often strikingly improved test and examination results by also concentrating on deeper core purposes and processes in teaching, learning, student voice, parental engagement, curriculum innovation and child wellbeing, which were expressed in some areas of the Labour government's policy Every Child Matters. But they did much of this despite the parallel pressures to meet floor targets and other targets of tested student performance, in order to avoid external intervention. They collected and interpreted a wide array of data and processed this together rather than relying on tested achievement alone.

6.5.6. It is time for the education sector to devise clearer and broader indicators of the kinds of performance that teachers and also many parents value, rather than remaining captive to test score data that, to them, have little meaning by themselves. Wellbeing indicators may be part of this, as might the indicators of 21st-century skills being developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. But this report has demonstrated the power of shared, rather than imposed, targets in increasing school success. Often, it is the data that morally driven communities select or develop and then use for themselves that is most important and compelling – just as in the business and sporting organisations in our study. Providing teachers, schools and local authorities with onsite technical and professional support to develop their own indicators, which mesh with the values of their practice, offers a better direction forward than imposing an even larger array of indicators on teachers and leaders from afar and on high.

6.6. The fallacy of standardisation: standardisation and prescription yield better results

6.6.1. England has been emerging from years of standardisation and prescription in educational reform. Standardised performances and measures of it have characterised much business practice as judgement and discretion have increasingly been taken away from frontline office and service employees in banking, airline services and other organisations¹¹¹. But organisations in business and sport that surpass the average and perform beyond expectations are far from standardised. Flexibility, creativity, innovation, risk, autonomy and discretionary judgement are their hallmarks, provided this fits the dream or the mission, does not undermine the team and still secures results. People are not locked into scripted roles but can and do play in multiple roles and positions.

6.6.2. High-performing educational systems such as those in Finland and Alberta possess these same elements of innovation and autonomy¹¹². This happens in England's schools that perform beyond expectations too, when teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors take part together in common tasks that serve a greater good. They roll their sleeves up and go the extra mile even if this falls outside their usual jurisdiction. Mediocre sporting, business and educational practice are defined by standardisation and prescription. It is, as Michael Barber once put it, simply what gets you from being awful to adequate rather than good to great¹¹³. Performance beyond expectations embraces innovation, autonomy, creativity, flexibility and risk – the essence of 21st-century knowledge economy aspirations.

6.7. The fallacy of competition: high-stakes competition raises standards and improves results

6.7.1 Public and private sectors have historically taken different approaches to competition. This is changing. Many private sector practices have been introduced into the management of public organisations – standards, performance targets, quality control, data-driven decision-making, market competition, outsourcing of services, customer satisfaction and so forth.

6.7.2. The arguments for increased competition in education based on transparent indicators of performance are that such competition is consistent with business practice, maintains or increases pressure to raise standards, appeals to parent consumers and electors, builds confidence in the public system and keeps the middle class within it. Opponents of market-based strategies of inter-school competition point to increasing inequities between wealthier choosers and poorer non-choosers, and a lack of any consistent impact on narrowing achievement gaps.

6.7.3. In business and sport, organisations that perform beyond expectations collaborate as well as compete. They embrace co-opetition. Organisations that perform beyond expectations collaborate with competitors out of moral commitment as well as strategic opportunity. They have collaborative edge. Cricket Australia's investment in India, Burnley Football Club's collaboration in local community development with its arch-rival Blackburn Rovers, and Dogfish Head Craft Brewery's joint launch of a new alternative ale all demonstrate how collaboration and competition can work effectively together. This has a positive impact on performance and increases social value.

6.7.4. In education, England has been a world leader in promoting schools working with schools, and strong schools helping weaker partners in order to raise achievement – as, for instance, in the project Raising Achievement, Transforming Learning of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, and the National Leaders of Education programme, instituted by the National College. Central School improved results largely with its existing staff and leadership, given the help of a higher performing partner. John Cabot Academy uses its expertise to assist struggling schools in nearby Bristol. Mills Hill Primary School is highly engaged with diversity issues with schools in its local authority, even though there is much less diversity within its school than within those of its peers. The schools of Tower Hamlets and Walsall also collaborate with an added twist of friendly rivalry in order to promote the greater good of their communities. Schools and their leaders have more to gain by working together with an edge of friendly rivalry, rather than prospering at the expense of their neighbours. It is vital that this collaborative ethic, with its decisive impact on student achievement, persists in the coming years, even when resources become more scarce.

6.8. Summary

It is time to challenge market and management fallacies in business and sport. The fallacies of leadership, turnaround, results, standardisation and competition have led to transplantations of principles and practices from the worlds of business and sport, based on inaccurate understandings of those sectors, especially of how the higher performers in them actually operate. In challenging these fallacies from the evidence-base of a unique and unprecedented study, this research sets out new possibilities for leadership and change in education.

7 Implications for school leaders

“The future needs a big kiss.”

U2

7.1. This research and the F15 framework carry important implications for school leaders. These are guidelines for school leaders to consider, given the leadership and improvement challenges of their time and place, rather than a checklist of things that leaders must do or features they must have.

7.2. **The first thing is to have, develop and articulate an inspiring dream** for and with your people. This requires persistence and planning but cannot be replaced by these more rational and specific activities. A dream is not defined by a number or position, either explicitly or implicitly. The first question is, ‘What do you want to be?’ How to become the best you can is also an important question, but a secondary one.

7.3. **Leading beyond expectations calls for great and inspiring storytelling** by yourself and those around you. It includes myths of where you came from, epics about the obstacles you have surmounted, acknowledgements of the ancestors who inspired and paved the way for the quest that is yours to pursue, and exhortations to reach the future that lies ahead.

7.4. As an incoming leader of a struggling organisation pause before **succumbing to the temptation to sweep aside everyone and everything with a new broom**. That usually leads only to false recovery. Don’t just populate the organisation by importing people who are already loyal to you. Rather, wherever you can, mix external ideas with internal capacities and loyalties that can be recombined in more productive ways. As the head of Grange Secondary pointed out, when a school and its community are changing all the time, something needs to be a stable anchor.

7.5. **Leadership of performance beyond expectations is not fearless leadership**. Be afraid sometimes, by all means. But, do not be so petrified that you cannot act. Mainly, stay calm and focused. Occasionally, it will be right to feel and express rightful moral outrage, but never to be outrageous. It is not whether you have fear, but how you respond to it that will determine your success.

7.6. **Use failure as an opportunity to galvanise yourself and your community** to turn around, get back, sort it out and manage problems. Leaders who perform beyond expectations relish the challenges that setbacks pose and redouble their efforts in response.

7.7. How far do you create the foundations for others to succeed? **Leaders who perform beyond expectations put down firm foundations** within the organisation and create a strong platform for others to excel. This is essential but often undramatic and unglamorous work. It may involve removing political infighting, creating decent facilities and a proper resource base, calming down behaviour or establishing a basis of transparency. This means more than simply distributing leadership. Leaders who perform beyond expectations deliberately set the stage for others to take the lead, when this is what is best for the organisation at the time.

7.8. **Invest in the long term**. Effective teams and new leaders take many years to develop – as our sporting organisations demonstrate. Most authentic growth is relentless but steady and sustainable. Like bamboo, only after years of cultivation do sudden spurts in growth begin to show above the surface. Early spikes in results are often fabrications or false recoveries. Later spikes are more usually reflective of sustainable investment. Trust and self-belief rarely come about by instant conversion. Look for confidence-boosting quick wins by all means, but do not make ethical compromises to achieve them and do not be misled into believing they reflect miraculous changes in core practices and effectiveness.

7.9. **Surprise people**. Sometimes, do the exact opposite of what others expect if it will achieve the right results. Collaborate with your competitors, teach meditation to challenging working-class children, transform the entire curriculum, praise those who oppose you, embrace the oncoming wind that gives you more swing, go the other way.

7.10. **Decide what you value, then determine together how you will measure it.** Leaders who perform beyond expectations care about numbers, metrics, targets and indicators as ways to monitor and motivate performance. But the authenticity of the activity being pursued and the quality of relationships among people pursuing them have greater importance than the achievement of a target, the crossing of a numerical boundary or compliance with a bureaucratic requirement. Know what you value first, then find ways to measure it rather than allowing yourself to be driven to distraction by other people's measurement criteria. Develop shared but ambitious targets wherever possible rather than merely responding to ones imposed by others. And never make demands of people you do not know.

7.11. **Get the best out of your teams.** Understand that, like Australian captains, some teams and their leaders will get off to a bad start. If people have been performing poorly in one role, find a better role for them rather than removing them from the team altogether. Like Sam Calagione at Dogfish Head, know and accept your weaknesses, and appoint people around you who can compensate for them. Encourage interplay and interchange of roles and positions. Show that nothing is beneath you so that others will learn it is not beneath them either. Leaders and others who perform beyond expectations roll up their sleeves and get stuck in, sometimes irrespective of their role or position. Don't elevate your stars too much, but don't eradicate them either. The way to get to the top of the pile is not by removing the pile! Virtuoso teams consist of strong people working under leaders who are not threatened by the performance of their stars and who are comfortable in their own skin¹¹⁴.

7.12. **Collaborate with your competitors.** Leaders who perform beyond expectations sponsor co-opetition. Investing in the competition can actually result in better performance in your own organisation. Neither collaboration nor competition should be ends in themselves, but means that are creatively combined to serve the greater good of one's own school and other schools within and beyond the immediate community.

7.13. **Do not try to take on or conform to a single leadership style** that you have seen in someone else or read about in the literature – be this transformational, instructional, creative, distributed, inspirational or systemic. Avoid, also, setting up and choosing between polarised extremes of leadership: autocratic or distributed, charismatic or bureaucratic, traditional or innovative. Leadership of performance beyond expectations is not a fission of competencies but a fusion of qualities and characteristics within yourself, across your community and over time.

7.14. **Develop yourself and be yourself.** If you are no good to yourself, you will be little use to anyone else. It is the strongest leaders who are eventually most able to let go of power and give decisions to others. Leaders who perform beyond expectations are often hybrid leaders – a mixture of styles and combination of opposites¹¹⁵. They are personally integrated – often outwardly dynamic and enthusiastic, but inwardly at ease with themselves. They are charismatic, humble, utterly extraordinary, yet also nothing special.

7.15. **Leaders who perform beyond expectations have inspiring dreams**, but are not idle dreamers. Although their eyes look up, their feet are always on the ground. They experience fear, like most other mortals, but are not overwhelmed by it. They know how to fight, not in aggressive competition or self-defence, but for a cause that is greater than them. They lead from the front when they have to, but lead from behind whenever they can. They can lift and inspire those around them, but also know how to let go once everyone is able to lead themselves. Leaders who perform beyond expectations have a proper sense of urgency but they do not deplete their own and others' resources and energy by expanding and changing too fast. Leaders who perform beyond expectations make intelligent use of data and statistics but they are never dazzled or dominated by them. Leaders who perform beyond expectations know how to run against the grain and 'bowl uphill into the wind'.

7.16. In the end, leaders who perform beyond expectations fit the characterisation made by Leonardo da Vinci: 'People of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things.' Yet, it is equally true that performing beyond expectations depends not on one leader, in one moment, with one style. Leaders who perform beyond expectations exhibit leadership fusion of many skills, styles and people. Nicolo Machiavelli wrote, 'The first method for estimating the intelligence of a ruler is to look at the men he has around him.' Maria Montessori also reminded us that a good leader is like a good teacher. The greatest sign of success for a teacher, she said, is to be able to say 'the children are now working as if I did not exist'. This is what leadership beyond expectations ultimately means: when we are extinguished, the good works and the good work should still go on. Our life's work as leaders is to create that lasting legacy.

Appendix 1: Coding framework

This is the coding framework we used for the case study data, which afforded cross-sector analysis:

1. Role

2. Description – title

- How long in role?
- How long in the school overall?
- What does the role entail?
- Has the role changed?

3. What attracted you to this school?

- Challenge
- Children/students
- Atmosphere
- School reputation

4. Would the role still attractive to you now?

- Yes
- No

Performance beyond expectations journey

5. Description of school

6. School characteristics

- Leadership
- Behaviour
- Curriculum
- Staff
- Communication
- Student demographics
- Community/family demographics

7. School history

- Milestones/stages
- Special measures
- Good Ofsted
- Change of staff
- Curriculum changes
- New building
- Change to academy
- Movement to specialist school

8. Turning points

— Highs/lows – causes

- External factors
- Internal factors

9. Organisation performance beyond expectations

— Is perception correct?

- Yes
- No

10. What does PBE mean to you?

11. What does PBE mean to this organisation?

12. Benchmarks for performance beyond expectations

- SATs/GCSE or other academic results
- CVA (contextual value-added) rates
- Attendance rates
- Local reputation
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Behaviour
- Ofsted
- Parents
- Students
- Other

13. Major ways it is performance beyond expectations?

14. How does it do this?

- Staff
- Extra support for students
- Curriculum
- High aspirations for students
- Leadership
- Behaviour policy
- Climate/ethos
- Instructional approach
- Student leadership
- School-community relationships
- Outside networks/partnerships
- Innovation/risk-taking

15. Concrete things done to attain performance beyond expectations

- Staff training
- Support for students
- Outside support for the school (federation, partners, school improvement partner)
- Behaviour policy
- Staff changes (including new staff, such as teaching assistants)
- Curriculum changes
- Other
- Leadership change
- Collaboration/plc

16. Decline/slump

- What was it like?
- Causes
- How did they pull out of slump?
- How have they managed to stay out over time?

17. Sustainability

- Plans to sustain PBE in the future
- Will organisation continue to be PBE?
- How will you gauge performance in five years?
 - Results
 - Local reputation
 - Behaviour
 - Attendance
 - Recognition: specialist status, leading edge
 - Ofsted

18. Goals, aspirations

19. Contributions to performance beyond expectations

- You
- Others

20. Secret of success

- Focus
- Ethos
- Staff
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Behaviour
- Staff dedication
- Vision
- Other
- Students

21. What are the main benefits to you of working here?

- Rewarding
- Challenging
- ICT (information and communications technology)
- Working with other staff
- Growth
- Other

22. What have you learned or gained most?

23. Other

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

- Can you tell me about your role in the organisation and whether this role has changed in any way since you joined?
- What attracted you to the organisation? Would the same things attract you now? How you think it has developed and changed over time?
- What do you think have been the major milestones in its development? Its major stages of development? Significant turning points? I wonder if you could sketch something that would characterise how the organisation has moved and changed and perhaps mark on it key stages or turning points?
- What has been its main high and main low? What caused these (external factors, etc)?
- The reason we are studying this organisation is that we believe there are signs that it performs above expectations (PBE) compared to organisations like it.
 - Do you think this perception is correct? What evidence do you have for this?
 - What does PBE actually mean to you?
 - What does PBE mean in this organisation (eg, What points of comparison with others would you use to benchmark your performance against others?)
 - What are the major ways it performs beyond expectations (PBE)? How, in your view, does it do this?
 - Can you identify some clear indicators that provide evidence of PBE? Why do you think it performed like this?
 - What are some concrete things you have specifically done to attain PBE?
- Can you recall, or have you been told about times when the organisation experienced a significant decline or slump (more than a dip) in performance? Can you talk about that period, what it was like, and what, in your view caused it?
- Could you talk about how the organisation pulled out of the slump? How has it managed to stay turned around over time?
- What plans are there to sustain PBE in the future and what is your opinion of these?
 - Do you think it will continue to PBE? What is being done to ensure it sustains performance? How will you gauge its performance in five years' time? What are its goals and aspirations as a PBE organisation?
 - What contributions, in your opinion, do you and the people of the organisation in which you work, make to PBE? What is the real secret, in your view, of its success?
- Is there anything else about your organisation's record of and reasons for PBE – any information, questions, or concerns you might have – that have not been raised yet and that you feel should now be raised?
- Who else do you think it would be important to interview who could help us understand how and why this organisation performs beyond expectations?
- Are there any documents or printed data you think would be helpful for us to look at that would enrich our understanding of PBE here?
- What have been the main benefits to you of working here? What have you learned or gained most?
- What do you think people in other sectors could learn from your experience?

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Footnotes

Chapter one - Introduction

1. The review process is still incomplete for Fiat Auto, so findings reported here about this case are drawn from public domain information.
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Chapter two - Criteria of performing beyond expectations

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Chapter three - Case study descriptions and indicators

5. Sources for the Fiat case study as presented here comprise: Marchionne, S, 2008, Fiat's extreme makeover, *Harvard Business Review*, 86(12), 45-48; Whitlock, C & Mufson, S, May 2009, Fiat's new prospects dazzle Italy: formerly struggling automaker aims to be world's third-largest, *Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/05/16//AR2009051602319.html; Castelli, C Massimo, F & Giunta, A, 2008, *The Competitive Repositioning of the Automotive District of Turin: Innovation, Internationalisation and the Role of ICT*, Milan, Milan University; Barry, C, 10 May 2009, Reborn Fiat shakes up Italian stereotype, Associated Press, www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30671999/; Marchionne, S, May 2008, Speech by the Chief Executive of Fiat: Sergio Marchionne, conferment of honorary degree in industrial engineering and management conducted at the Politecnico Di Torino, Italy; Pauly, D, 13 May 2009, Fiat plus Opel plus Chrysler is one crazy idea, *Bloomberg News*, www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aqsutjkl1tCs&refer=columnist_pauly;Autoshow-update_1:Fiat_brand_hopes_for_7_pct_Europe_mkt_share,15_September_2009,Reuters,http://in.reuters.com/article/id/INLF42189420090915; Reguly, E, 27 November 2009, Transatlantic man, *Globe and Mail*, www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-magazine/transatlantic-man/article1379600/?cmpid=tgc;PRLog,Success_for_Fiat_group_in_the_UK,8_September_2009,http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/fiat_spa/index.html; Torello, A, 18 June 2007, Resurgent Fiat sets sights higher, *New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2007/06/18/business/worldbusiness/18iht-fiat.4.6196852.html; Taylor III, A, 22 April 2010, The Sergio way, *CNNMoney*, http://money.cnn.com/2010/04/22/autos/chrysler_FIAT_plan.fortune/index.htm; Espinoza, J, 15 June 2009, Rating agencies not impressed with Fiat, *Forbes*, www.forbes.com/2009/06/15/fiat-moodys-sandp-markets-equity-ratings.html; Boudette, N, 13 May 2009, Fiat can boost Chrysler stake by making engines in US, *Wall Street Journal*, <http://www.wallstreetjournal.com>; Boudette, N E, 20 April 2010, Chrysler remains work in progress, *Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704671904575194943313552202.html>; Recovery at Fiat: the miracle of Turin, 26 April 2008, *The Economist*, www.economist.com/. Information of various sorts, but especially in relation to the Lancia video advertising campaign involving leading political and media figures, is available on the Fiat website at www.FIAT.com. The Ernest Hemingway quote is from Hemingway, E, 1926, *The Sun Also Rises*, New York, Scribners.

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12. Data used for this case story came from recorded interviews with chairman of the club, Neil Hudgell; head coach, Justin Morgan; director of finance, Neil Armitage; football manager, Sarah Smith; former marketing manager, Simon Mowbray; stadium manager, Rhys Mobley; and lifelong supporter, Charlotte Nicols. Former player, referee and rugby league expert Gary Boyd gave us advice. The Hull Kingston Rovers' website is at www.hullkr.co.uk. For a potted history of rugby league see Baker, A, 20 August 1995, 100 years of rugby league: from the great divide to the super era, *Independent*, www.independent.co.uk/sport/100-years-of-rugby-league-from-the-great-divide-to-the-super-era-1597130.html. The rugby football league official website is www.therfl.co.uk/. The European super League official website is www.superleague.co.uk/. A history of the development of rugby and rugby league can be found at: Napit.co.uk, 2010, The history of rugby league, www.napit.co.uk/viewus/infobank/rugby/superleague/history.php; Fagan, S, 2004, The rugby divide of 1895, www.rl1895.com/rugby-divide.htm; and Talk Rugby League, 2008, History of rugby league, www.talkrugbyleague.co.uk/guides/rugby-league_history.html.
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and players from the current senior hurling team, Derek Lyng and Derek Tyrell. We gained insights from these written sources: Czikszenmihalyi, M, 1997, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*, New York, Basic Books; Humphries, T, 5 October 2003, Sticks and thrones, *Observer Sport Monthly*, www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2003/oct/05/features.sportmonthly1; King, S J, 1996, *A History of Hurling*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan; Ofeire, M, 8 September 2008, Kilkenny hurling team 2008, possibly the best team in the world, *Bleacher Report*, www.bleacherreport.com/articles/55202; Ó hEithir, B, 2006, *Over the Bar: A Personal Relationship with the Gaelic Athletic Association*, Dublin, Collins; Walsh, D, 7 September 2008, Kilkenny scale new heights with stunning win, *The Times*, www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/sport/more_sport/article4698372.ece. We gathered other information from the official Ireland Gaelic Athletic Association website: www.gaa.ie/.

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Chapter four - Leading beyond expectations

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 85. In addition to the cases available and drawn on from Kanter, [Confidence](#), and Gilmore & Gilson, [Finding form](#), the remaining cases are documented in detail in Charlton, J, 1996, [Jack Charlton: The Autobiography](#), London, Transworld Publishers; Dalglish, K, 1996, [Dalglish: My Autobiography](#), London, Hodder & Stoughton; Dijkman, J, 2004, [Lessons from Ferrari](#), Kengray, South Africa, SAICA; Lewis, M, 2004, [Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game](#), New York, W. W. Norton & Company; and Shilbury, D & Hooper, G, 1999, Great expectations: from Port Adelaide to port power – a club in transition, [Sport Management Review](#), 2, 83–109.
 86. Gilson et al., [Peak Performance](#), 382.
 87. See Kellett, P, 1999, [Organisational leadership: lessons from professional coaches](#), [Sport Management Review](#), 2, 150–171.
 88. Gilson et al., [Peak Performance](#), 388.
 89. Gilson et al., [Peak Performance](#), 370, 383.
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 91. On the concept of flow, see Csikszentmihalyi, [Finding Flow](#).
 92. For the sources for these cases, see note 84.
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