

50 websites for school improvement



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National Foundation for Educational Research

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

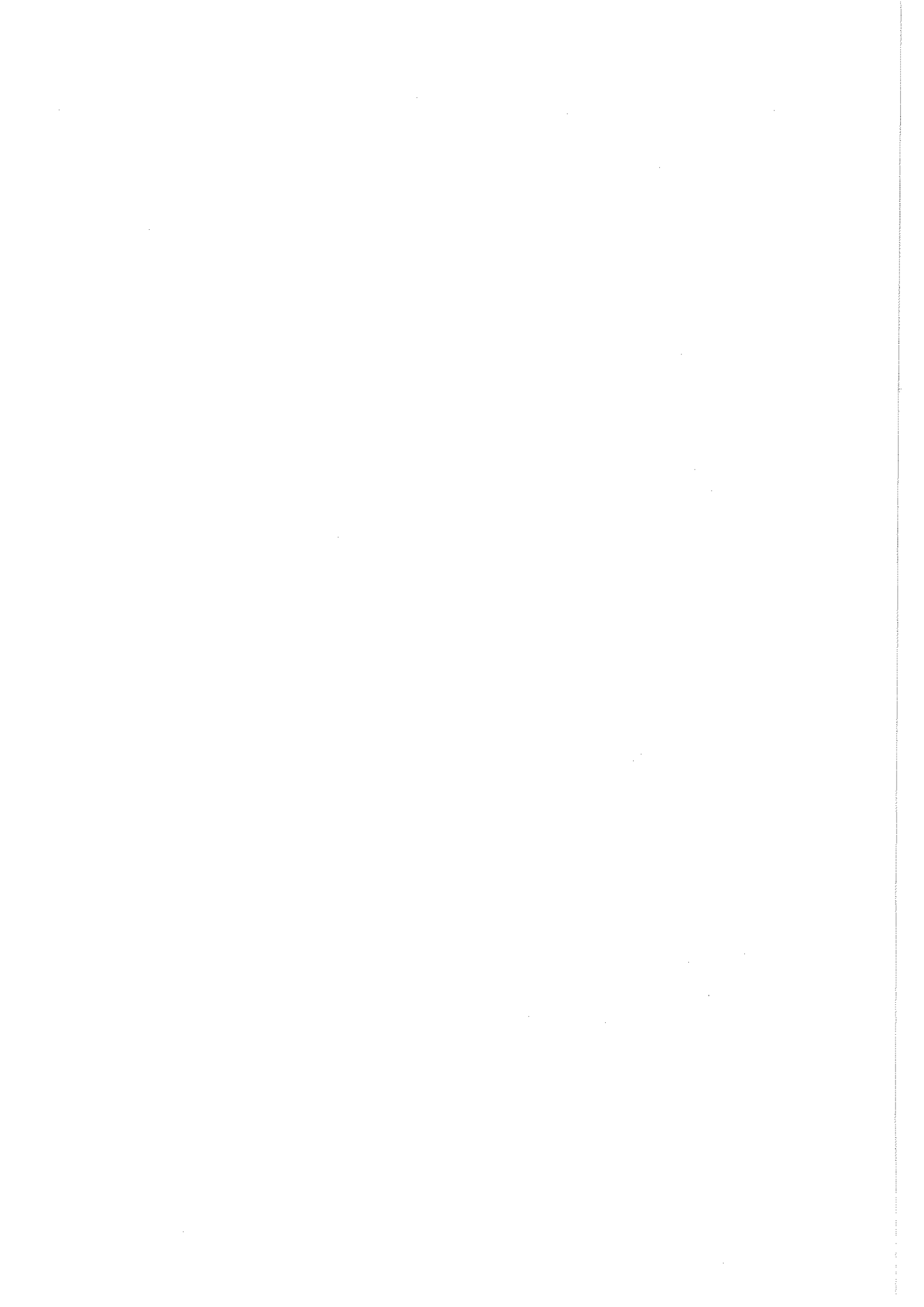


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50 Websites for school improvement: alphabetical list

1. American Educational Research Association (AERA) <http://www.aera.net>
2. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) <http://www.bbc.co.uk>
3. British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) <http://www.becta.org.uk>
4. British Educational Research Association (BERA) <http://www.bera.ac.uk>
5. Campaign for Learning <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk>
6. Canterbury Christ Church University College <http://www.cant.ac.uk/>
7. Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh <http://www.ed.ac.uk/ces/>
8. Channel 4 Television <http://www.channel4.com>
9. Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE) <http://www.cidree.org>
10. Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Northern Ireland <http://www.ccea.org.uk>
11. Current Educational Research in the UK (CERUK) <http://www.ceruk.ac.uk/ceruk/>
12. Curriculum, Evaluation and Management Centre, University of Durham <http://www.cemcentre.org/>
13. Curriculum On-line <http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk>
14. Department for Education and Skills (DfES) <http://www.dfes.gov.uk>
15. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) <http://www.esrc.ac.uk>
16. Education Extra <http://www.educationextra.org.uk>
17. Education Guardian <http://education.guardian.co.uk>
18. Education Management Information Exchange, NFER <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/>
19. The Education Network (TEN) <http://www.ten.info/>
20. European Educational Research Association (EERA) <http://www.eera.ac.uk>
21. Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk>
22. General Teaching Council for England <http://www.gtce.org.uk>

23. General Teaching Council for Wales <http://www.gtcw.org.uk>
24. Institute of Education, University of London
<http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/index.html>
25. Learning and Teaching, Scotland <http://www.ltsotland.com>
26. Local Education Authorities (various)
27. Local Government Association <http://www.lga.gov.uk>
28. London School of Economics and Political Science <http://www.lse.ac.uk/>
29. National Association of Educational Inspectors,
Advisers and Consultants (NAEIAC)
<http://62.73.166.138/naeiac/flash/welcome.asp?show=flash>
30. National College for School Leadership (NCSL) <http://www.ncsl.org.uk>
31. National Curriculum On-line <http://www.nc.uk.net>
32. National Educational Research Forum (NERF) <http://www.nerf-uk.org>
33. National Foundation for Educational Research <http://www.nfer.ac.uk>
34. National Grid for Learning (NGfL) <http://www.ngfl.gov.uk>
35. Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk>
36. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) <http://www.oecd.org>
37. Parents Information Network (PIN) <http://www.pin.org.uk>
38. Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales <http://www.accac.org.uk>
39. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) <http://www.qca.org.uk/>
40. Scottish Centre for Research in Education (SCRE) <http://www.scre.ac.uk>
41. Specialist Schools Trust <http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk>
42. The Standards Site <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk>
43. Teacher Net <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk>
44. Teacher Training Agency <http://www.tta.gov.uk>
45. Teaching and Learning Research Programme (ESRC) <http://www.tlrp.org>
46. Times Educational Supplement <http://www.tes.co.uk>
47. University of Bath <http://www.bath.ac.uk/>
48. University of Durham <http://www.dur.ac.uk/>
49. University of Leeds <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/>
50. The Virtual Staff College <http://www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk>

1 Introduction and user guide

1.1 Introduction

The number of websites relevant to the area of school improvement has been expanding at a rapid rate in the last few years, so much so that it is now very difficult to make sense of, and to be able to act upon, the vast amount of information available. A recent attempt to search the World Wide Web, using a popular search engine and the search term 'school improvement', led to the identification of over six million web pages: even when the enquiry was limited to the United Kingdom, over 400,000 sites were identified.

How does the busy educational professional (or interested parent) find their way through this mass of school improvement-related websites, some of which contain extremely useful advice and resources, while others are largely useless and irrelevant? This report aims to assist in this task, to help with the process of identifying useful school improvement websites and to make some brief suggestions as to how these can be used.

Details are provided of what are, in our opinion, 50 of the most useful websites for individuals concerned with school improvement matters, be they headteachers, teachers, inspectors, classroom assistants, governors, parents or researchers. The websites mainly cover England and Wales, though there are some relating to Scotland, Northern Ireland and the international community.

1.2 Defining school improvement

The list of websites and the accompanying section notes have been compiled by researchers who have been working on a range of school improvement projects at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). We have found, during the course of these evaluations, that websites provided for schools, teachers and researchers, by a range of different types of organisations, have been playing an increasingly important role in terms of informing school improvement processes.

The NFER projects have taken many forms, from the investigation of student performance at an individual school, through to assessment of all the schools in one LEA and to evaluations of particular national policy initiatives. Hence, throughout this report, the term 'school improvement' is used in its broadest sense, relating not only to limited areas such as the use of school performance data and school development planning, but also to wider topics such as the curriculum, the provision of educational resources, the impact of policies for sharing good practice, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching and learning and school management issues.

It is acknowledged that some commentators would wish to distinguish between 'school improvement' and 'school effectiveness'. There are a number of variations in the use of the term school effectiveness, but usually the central question being dealt with is 'how well is our school doing?'. Of course school performance can be measured in a variety of ways and can be related to many different things, but the common denominator in definitions of school effectiveness is some form of measurement or indication of how a school is performing. With respect to the term school improvement, the essential question for the school, put simply, is usually 'what can we do to improve our performance in the future?'.

In some contexts this is a useful distinction – measuring school effectiveness is based upon *accessing* information and school improvement involves acting upon that information – but in the context of looking at what the information contained in educational websites could contribute to these processes, the distinction is often blurred. Some major websites, for example those of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), provide data on monitoring and assessment, along with information and ideas about either the content of the curriculum or strategies for effective teaching and learning, or for sharing good practice. The coexistence of these two forms of data – one form covering the question of 'how you are doing' and the other covering the question of 'what you can do to improve' – demonstrates the link between school effectiveness and school improvement.

1.3 Using these websites

Accessing, evaluating and making use of the data and the resources contained in these websites takes time and effort. Teachers and other educational professionals do not have the luxury of unlimited time to investigate these sources, to adapt them to their needs and to turn them into useful classroom or school-level tools. This report aims to facilitate the task of investigation and to save some of the time that may be required, particularly in terms of identifying appropriate web sources.

It is suggested that, broadly speaking, the list of websites, along with the more detailed section notes, could be used in one of three ways, dependent upon the amount of time available and what the reader wishes to achieve:

- **Browsing** The report can be used as a surfer's guide to school improvement. Reading through it should provide a good impression of the range of organisations offering relevant information and some indication of what detailed resources and ideas are available for school improvers via the Internet. This should also provide a useful indication of what is currently happening in terms of educational policy developments and the impact of these upon schools, teachers and learners.
- **Selective action** If the enquirer has a clear purpose, or is interested in a particular dimension of school improvement, then a selective approach to the contents of the report would be more appropriate and the report has been structured to aid such an approach (see below). It may be, for example, that the enquirer is particularly interested in finding out about how value-added data are used for school improvement (Section 2), seeks an update on developments in school leadership

(Section 5), needs examples of lesson plans (Section 3), or wishes to look at an evaluation of the impact of a particular form of ICT on teaching and learning (Section 6).

- **In-depth action** A few enquirers may wish to progress further than this, but they will need to allow time for in-depth investigations. Individuals interested in the full range of school improvement websites may wish not only to read the report and to look at all or the majority of the recommended websites, but also to follow up additional links and to pursue the research items mentioned in more depth. In-service education and training (INSET) time or study days might be required for this depth of involvement and activity.

There are numerous possibilities and it is worth thinking carefully about what information is needed and what actions may result from accessing this information, before investing time in investigating the websites further.

1.4 Structure of the report

The section headings used in this report reflect some of the key dimensions of school improvement processes, though there will always be some overlap. Brief details of the contents of each section are set out below so that readers with particular interests and requirements can access relevant ideas and information directly.

- **Monitoring and assessment** As indicated above, a starting point for school improvement processes is to have some indication of how a school (or a student cohort within a school) is performing – and this usually means making use of test and examinations data. Section 2 selects some key examples of websites that provide or assist with the use of such data. These include the electronic versions of the performance tables provided by the DfES and the Ofsted reports database.
- **Curriculum and resources** To improve test and examination results (along with the more qualitative aspects of the student experience) it is clearly important to have a detailed understanding of the curriculum and of the various schemes of work that are in existence. In addition, it is also useful to have a variety of sources of new ideas for lesson plans, project work, homework and so on. The provision of such resources, in electronic format, has expanded rapidly in recent years and Section 3 points the reader to some key curriculum and resource websites, including TeacherNet, National Curriculum On-line and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's web pages. The broadcast and print media have increasingly been recognising the importance of the Internet as a supportive medium for the purposes of educating and involving their audiences and some key examples of media-based information provision that may be useful to schools, teachers and students are also provided.
- **Sharing good practice** As well as the sharing out of schemes of work and ideas for lessons, schools are also being encouraged to share good practice via the 'school diversity' and 'partnerships' agendas. Section 4 identifies a selection of websites that seek to help educational professionals in the tasks of finding and sharing examples of good practice.

- **School leadership and management** The implementation of school improvement processes is the concern of everyone working in and with a school, but headteachers and other school managers have a particular remit in this area. Section 5 selects some key websites that may assist with the managerial aspects of school improvement.
- **ICT and school improvement** Another potential dimension of school improvement worth special consideration is the contribution of information and communications technology (ICT). Considerable resources have been put into this area and research and evaluation on the impact of ICT in schools and classrooms, although somewhat limited to date, is now developing rapidly. Section 6 identifies some key websites (notably the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency's site) that may provide helpful information and guidance for those seeking to examine how the new technologies can contribute to school improvement.
- **Local education authorities** LEAs have a general remit to support school improvement processes in their areas. Many are now using websites and electronic data sources to assist in this process. There are some excellent examples of LEAs using the electronic media to inform school development processes and to share information and examples of good practice and some of these are identified in Section 7.
- **Research and evaluation** Section 8, the final substantive section of this report, is aimed at anyone who wishes to use research to inform school improvement processes. In the past, it is probably true to say that research and practice have not always been as closely linked as they should have been, but there have been some improvements recently, as the websites cited in this section show. Several national research organisations are mentioned, including the NFER and the Institute of Education at the University of London. Additionally, several large universities have teacher training functions and a more general interest in education for both practitioners and researchers. Some university departments have well-developed websites that may assist those involved in school improvement processes and selected examples of their work are presented in this section.
- Section 9 provides a **detailed list of useful websites**, with the URLs (Uniform Resource Locators) for useful individual web pages within each major site, is provided towards the end of the report. Readers wishing to browse the individual pages can *either* click on the hyperlink in the main text *or* go to the link in this alphabetical listing.
- Further reading suggestions are made in the **Further reading** section. This provides a list of references that may be useful for individuals or organisations wishing to look more closely into recent developments and issues relating to the ways in which the electronic media are being used to support school improvement.
- An **Appendix** gives an example of a table which can be compiled in order to pull together a variety of **public indicators of school performance** to provide a longitudinal overview of a school's effectiveness (more details about the sources of such indicators are given in Section 1).

1.5 Limitations

We hope that the information and ideas contained in these various websites will be helpful to educational professionals. It should be stressed, however, that the Internet is just one source of information for school improvers and this source has its limitations. Thus, several important caveats about the contents of this report need to be stressed from the outset.

1. School improvement is a very broad area and this report, out of necessity, is **selective** and can make no claims to be comprehensive in its coverage (the authors welcome any suggested additions, updates or comments from readers).
2. It should be stressed that the authors of this report are not ICT specialists, rather they are educational researchers, working mainly in the areas of school improvement and educational policy evaluation. Hence the report is written from a **non-technical** perspective. Readers interested in the more technical aspects of the use of the electronic media in schools and their communities should refer to more specialist sources, such as the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) website.
3. The bulk of the report does not directly cover the area of student use of ICT in classrooms (though Section 6 does touch upon this), rather it is primarily about electronic resources for **educational professionals** (of various roles) who are involved in some way with school improvement matters, e.g. headteachers, teachers, classroom assistants, governors, researchers, policy-makers and local education authority officers.
4. Although the websites featured have been included because at some point they have been useful to NFER school improvement researchers, it has not been possible, given time limitations, to make detailed **assessments** of the value or quality of all the detailed pages within these sites. (Inclusion of a web page in the report, therefore, does not necessarily constitute a recommendation relating to its quality and the NFER is not responsible for the content of external websites).
5. Electronic sources of information by their very nature can be changed, modified and updated very quickly. Some of the sources may go **out of date** or become obsolete very quickly – this is a feature of this type of information. Links may change, break or become outdated. (Though every effort has been made to ensure that the information given was correct at the time of writing.)

Despite these caveats, we hope that the report will be useful to a range of educational professionals, particularly those who have not yet had the time to explore and identify websites that may help them with their assessment, teaching, planning or research. (Teachers and school managers who are more experienced in working with such sources, such as Examinations officers, Assessment Managers or key stage heads, might find it more useful to look at some of the ‘advanced’ references provided in the bibliography.)

As indicated above, the notes presented in the various sections of this report do not by any means constitute a comprehensive summary of all the potential sources and uses of school improvement data. We hope, however, that it gives some idea of what is available in this area and how useful these developing forms of electronic data can be, when used judiciously, to individuals and institutions working in this area of education.

2 Monitoring and assessment

This chapter identifies some of the most useful websites for those who have responsibility for, or an interest in, monitoring and assessment in schools. The information sources identified here will be particularly relevant to headteachers, examinations and assessment officers, heads of year or key stage heads and other senior and middle managers. However, with the ongoing development of national pupil databases, performance management procedures and school self-evaluation processes, the relevance of these forms of data is widening and there is no reason why the websites and source reported on here should not be of use to a wider audience of educational professionals.

2.1 Public performance indicators

Many of the evaluations carried out at the NFER have required some sort of assessment of a school's progress or effectiveness (usually within the context of a particular policy or a programme, or an area, such as an LEA) and various data collection instruments have been devised to assist with this. One technique has been to collect performance data on a school from a variety of electronic sources. This has two main advantages: firstly it is a way of obtaining information quickly because the information has already been collected by other organisations and secondly, because the researchers do not need to trouble the school with a request for information, there is minimal disruption and less 'bureaucracy' for the school.

There are some drawbacks to this approach. The information is secondary and can be out of date and therefore would not be as useful primary data. In addition, the data are often in a standard format, so that common categories can be used and schools can be compared. It is possible, for example, to collect information on the authorised absence levels and the GCSE results of a school cohort, but it is more difficult to collect information on, say, internal suspensions or pupil mobility.

Having said this, a summary of the available public performance data, possibly over a period of three or more years, presented in a succinct, straightforward form, is a useful starting point for obtaining and recording a picture of how a school is doing. There is an advantage in having these data recorded in one place in a clear format (though headteachers would be very familiar with individual items of data, such as the proportion achieving five GCSEs passes at grades A*C, or the proportion of a year group achieving a particular key stage level).

NFER school improvement researchers have devised such an instrument and have found this very useful for a number of projects. A version of this for secondary schools is presented as an Appendix to this report – individual schools would have to make their own adaptations based upon precisely what kinds of data they would wish to collect. The electronic information used to complete this form, for one or more schools, comes from the following sources.

2.1.1 DfES school and college performance tables

An opening page, to be found at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/>, leads to four options or sets of performance tables for the most recently completed school year:

1. Primary school performance tables at
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/primary_02.shtml
2. Secondary school performance tables at
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/schools_02.shtml
3. Post-16 performance tables at
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/16to18_02.shtml
4. KS1-KS2 value added pilot at
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/vap_02.shtml

Consultations regarding the publication of School and College Performance Tables were completed in June 2003, so changes may be pending as regards the form and content of these tables (the Consultation Paper can be found at: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/docs/225_2.pdf). The KS1-KS2 value-added tables for 2002 contain the results of 495 primary schools who took part in a pilot study designed to look at how value added might be measured from key stage 1 to key stage 2. The BBC also provides versions of the school league tables on its education pages http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/league_tables/default.stm: these can be searched by postcode, school name or LEA.

After following the link to any of the full sets of DfES tables there is a menu signposting the way for further information: 'About these tables' is a short note for parents who may be thinking about a choice of school for their child: 'How to read these tables' is an extremely useful explanation of the symbols used, how the data were compiled and so on: this is certainly worth reading if the intention is to make use of the tables in any great detail.

There are two ways of searching for a **primary school**: the institution search and the postcode search. The institution search requires the name of the schools, a postcode and the name of the LEA; the postcode search requires a postcode and the number of miles for a radius within which you wish to locate schools. The name of a school alone will suffice, but if, for example, 'St Mary's' is used as a search term, the search results will give the full names of over 300 St Mary's Schools in many different parts of the country. Once the individual school has been located, e.g. St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Derby, it is possible to click on the name to access the school's performance tables.

Six pieces of information are provided (the example given is based on the 2002 tables).

1. **Basic details:** the school's address and telephone number, the age range and school type (e.g. voluntary aided).
2. **Background information:** total number of pupils, numbers on roll for the relevant cohort, numbers statemented, etc. – the details may vary according to what an LEA has provided.

3. **Key stage 2 test results:** the actual performance data, including the percentages of pupils achieving level 4 or above in English, mathematics and science.
4. **Improvement measure:** the achievements of pupils over a four-year period: the annual figure is the sum of the percentages of pupils achieving level 4 or above in the three core subjects. This indicator is limited in its usefulness because it does not take account of the prior attainment, or therefore of the 'value added', of a particular school cohort.
5. **Absence statistics:** authorised and unauthorised absences.
6. **Bar charts:** a visual representation of how the school has been doing over a four-year period, compared to the LEA and national averages.

The **secondary school** tables provide all of these pieces of information, with an additional section on KS2 to KS3 value added results. There are two improvement measures (2002 tables), based upon the percentage of the cohort achieving five or more good (A* to C) GCSE grades (or the GNVQ equivalent) and the percentage achieving no passes, over a four-year period. Again, these are 'raw', aggregated measures, so they have a limited usefulness in terms of looking at the value added or the 'distance travelled' for a particular year group.

The **school and college (post-16)** tables cover all Further Education (FE) Colleges and schools with sixth forms in England, but, partly because of recent changes in the assessment and qualifications system, they are not as detailed in their content as the school tables and 2002 tables have no historical comparisons. The most useful indicators are probably the average point score per student and the average point score per examination entry. Details are given for General Certificate of Education (GCE) and Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) Advanced levels.

All of these sets of tables are useful for developing a picture of how a school is doing and selected pieces of information can be very helpful for school improvement, planning and development purposes. School senior managers and governors, in order to set targets and to fulfil other responsibilities, will require more information than this on their school and they will seek to use other more detailed sources of information – possibly including LEA information on families, networks or clusters of schools and value-added data at the individual pupil level that has been generated by the school or by an external organisation.

The DfES's **Standards Site** <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk> is a good source of advice and guidance for those interested in the statistical aspects of school effectiveness and school improvement. In particular, school and LEA staff may wish to make use of the Autumn Package 2002 at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance/ap/?version=1>, which contains National Pupil Performance Data. The Interactive Autumn Package 2002 at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance/IAP/?version=1>, assists the analysis of a school's performance data. Details are given on this web page of how to obtain the Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) CD-ROM which replaces the Interactive Autumn Package in 2003. This CD-ROM, containing diagnostic and analytical software for looking at performance data, is sent to all schools in the autumn term.

There are two very useful links on the Data Management page on the Standards Site, <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schoolimprovement/sigoodpractice/509675/?version=1>, one to a document which offers practical examples and guidance on 'how to calculate subject residuals' and another which looks at the data management needs of Heads of Department, with a calendar summarising the various tasks required across the school year.

2.1.2 Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) website, <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk>, contains much information that is useful for school improvement purposes. The findings from external inspections (and the recommendations that arise from these), alongside findings from self-evaluative processes, have an important part to play in school planning processes. The website is organised on the basis of the groups or organisations that may need to access information relating to and arising from school and college inspections: parents, childcare providers, schools, colleges, LEAs and inspectors. There are three resources within the Ofsted website that are particularly worth mentioning here:

- the new inspections framework
- the publications list
- the school reports database.

The New Framework 2003 for inspecting schools

The new inspection framework, see

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3266>, effective from September 2003, incorporates a number of developments (see p.1 of the document), including:

- promotion of school self-evaluation
- evaluation of leadership and management at all levels in the school
- recognition of the increased diversification of the curriculum
- an increased focus on inclusivity
- greater account of the views of pupils
- recognition of provision beyond the school day (Ofsted, 2003:1).

All of these developments are relevant to school improvement planning, though the first item identified, linking inspection to self-evaluation, is perhaps the most significant in the present context: 'Ofsted recognises the importance of school self-evaluation as a continuous process that is complemented from time to time by external inspection' (Ofsted, 2003). School managers preparing for inspection under the new framework need to be aware that the inspection process should now take more account of self-evaluation data:

Schools have a range of internal processes for monitoring their own performance and evaluating the effectiveness of their work in raising achievement. Such monitoring and evaluation should contribute, directly or indirectly, to periodic updating of the school improvement plan ...[Ofsted, 2003:10, para.30].

To assist with this, school staff are required to complete a brief self-evaluation report (Form S4) which will help to focus the inspection in this respect and will act as a basis for discussion between the lead inspector and the headteacher (p.10, para.31). Once inspection reports using this new framework have been completed, school senior managers and governors will need to look carefully at Section 2: 'What should the school do to improve?'

Publications list

Ofsted's work these days is no longer restricted to inspecting schools. There are now also inspections of nurseries, colleges, teacher training providers and LEAs, along with evaluations of policy initiatives, such as Specialist Schools and the 'gifted and talented' strand of Excellence in Cities. This expansion of activities is reflected in a useful, growing publications list. The interested reader can click on the 'publications' tab and then search alphabetically or by year at <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/>. There are some helpful school improvement-related documents, sometimes focused upon a type of school, a subject, a school sector or particular pupil groups. Five examples of such documents are as follows:

1. *Good Assessment in Secondary Schools* (HMI 462) [online]. Available: <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3205> [19 August, 2003]. Includes documents providing guidance on assessment in 13 separate subject areas. Published in March 2003.
2. *National Curriculum Citizenship: Planning and Implementation 2002/03* (HMI 1606) [online]. Available: <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3312> [19 August, 2003]. Published July 2003.
3. *Supporting 14 to 19 Education: Evidence from the Work of 12 LEAs* (HMI 586) E-publication [online]. Available: <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/3329.pdf> [19 August, 2003]. Published July 2003.
4. *Specialist Schools: an Evaluation of Progress* (HMI 327) [online]. Available: <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/1191.pdf> [19 August, 2003]. Published October 2001.
5. *The Education of Six Year Olds in England, Denmark and Finland: an International Comparative Study* (HMI 1660) [online]. Available: <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3327> [19 August, 2003]. Published July 2003.

Reports database

Reports for primary and secondary schools, along with those for day care providers, pupils aged 2–5, 16+ institutions, independent schools, special schools and pupil referral units, can be accessed from the main reports page, to be found at <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/reports/>. The enquirer then has to follow five simple steps to reach the electronic version of the report:

1. click on a region of a map of England, e.g. East

2. click on a county in that region, e.g. Essex
3. click on the appropriate report category, e.g. Pupils aged 11-16
4. click on the name of the school in an alphabetical list of schools
5. click on the title to download the report.

It is also possible to search by postcode and the report index leads to reports for sixth form colleges, FE colleges, LEAs and so on. School senior managers will have access to the printed version of their latest inspection report. The electronic version, however, can be useful for school improvement in a number of ways: for example, for picking out particular elements of the school's performance (and including these in a summary sheet, see the example presented in the Appendix to this report) and for making comparison with the findings (and suggested action plans) from other schools.

There is some debate about the extent to which inspection processes actually contribute to school improvement. The inspection reports, even with an increased emphasis on internal school evaluation, are clearly based on a national framework with a number of set headings and in this respect cannot reflect all the detailed ins and outs of a particular school's characteristics, achievements and areas for development. But, as with the school performance tables, they provide an important starting point for educational professionals who wish to take an introductory look at how a school is doing. They are also very helpful for those who wish to seek out possible ideas for school planning and improvement strategies.

Individuals seeking information on school effectiveness might also wish to make use of PANDA (Performance and Assessment) Reports and the 'Autumn Package'. There are also a number of commercial packages that can help with assessing school effectiveness and planning for improvement. These include the following:

- The PIPS, YELLIS, MidYIS and ALIS packages (for primary pupils, middle year secondary, year 11 and A level students, respectively) offered by the Curriculum, Evaluation and Management Centre at the University of Durham, see <http://www.cemcentre.org/>.
- The NFER's PASS - Performance Analysis Service and Support – a service for primary schools offering analyses of pupils' performance in QCA optional tests in English and mathematics for years 3, 4 and 5, see <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/infoservices/PASS2003screen.pdf>.

National (and subject) examination results and trends can be used to set a context for school and cohort results. Such information can be obtained from the curriculum authorities for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (see next section).

The very latest statistical information, covering a range of educational contexts and institutions, can be found by checking the DfES's Statistical First Releases website <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/>.

3 Curriculum and resources

This section primarily identifies websites and electronic documents that may be of use to teachers in their day-to-day classroom work. The emphasis is on electronic materials and information that will be useful for individual teachers for lesson and course planning.

A useful and helpful starting point for the classroom teacher is *TeacherNet* at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk>. This is the government portal for educational professionals and is possibly the single useful source of electronic information for school improvement in general and lesson planning in particular. Registration with this site is not essential, but it does enable participants to receive customised mailings. There are five main 'pillars' on this website:

1. teaching and learning
2. management
3. professional development
4. research
5. education overviews.

The teaching and learning pillar is probably the most relevant area in terms of school improvement matters. At the time of writing, this contained over 2,000 lesson plan reviews, with all the plans evaluated by teachers and matched up to the National Curriculum and Schemes of Work. An example of the steps taken to find lesson plans on a particular subject/topic illustrates how useful and accessible this site is:

1. select subject: e.g. History
2. select key stage, e.g. key stage 3
3. click on *TeacherNet* Reviews to look at the scheme of work
4. select the Scheme of work unit from a drop-down menu, e.g. Elizabeth
5. click on Find results.

These steps can be completed in a minute or two, provided the teacher knows what he or she is looking for. Clicking on the 'Find results' button will produce a review list of resources and lesson plans appropriate to that scheme of work unit for the relevant age group. The example given above produced plans relating to:

- The Making of the United Kingdom
- Elizabeth I and her Reign
- The Spanish Armada.

The practitioner-reviewing process will undoubtedly help to ensure that there is a quality control feature in these resources, but teachers will clearly have to look at the materials in detail themselves before deciding on their suitability for their own classes.

TeacherNet also contains a section on 'Pay and Performance' which includes guidance relating to performance management (applicable from September 2000). The section on Management Tools contains links to 'Benchmarking Performance' information and to Ofsted's Performance and Assessment (PANDA) reports. Another useful aspect of the Management Tools area of the *TeacherNet* site is the ICT Advice section, which includes a free 'Ask an Expert' service, provided by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (see also Section 6). Each month a panel of experts answers questions, submitted via an online form, about a different aspect of the use of ICT in education, such as video conferencing. This is particularly helpful for new or under-experienced school-based ICT users.

TeacherNet also contains hyperlinks to National Curriculum On-line and Curriculum On-line portals/websites, currently to be found at <http://www.nc.uk.net> and <http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk> respectively. Many teachers will already be familiar with these valuable sites for information and resources. The main difference between the two sites is that the first primarily provides details of the content of the National Curriculum, whilst the second is primarily a large resource facility, though there are some overlaps.

The National Curriculum On-line site contains the full text of the National Curriculum for England for pupils aged 5 to 16, including programmes of study and attainment targets for each of the subject areas. A particularly important part of this website is the section entitled *National Curriculum in Action*, aimed primarily at teachers and school senior managers. This 'uses pupils' work to show what the national curriculum looks like in practice' and also provides assessment level descriptions for the main school subject areas. There is quick access to Qualifications and Curriculum Authority/DfES Schemes of Work. The latter are conveniently set out by subject – simply click on the appropriate subject title.

Curriculum On-line is described as 'The definitive catalogue of digital learning resources linked to the National Curriculum for England'. Some of the resources are free (and downloadable); others have to be purchased using e-learning credits (distributed initially to LEAs by the DfES). The types of resources available include:

- lesson plans
- CD-ROMs
- simulation software
- assessment materials
- online services
- interactive videos.

They are clearly organised, by key stage, then Year Group, then subject. Searches can be organised on the basis of programme of study, scheme of work or topic headings. There are large numbers of resources available so the user needs to be clear about what it is he or she is looking for. All the summaries arising from the searches provide details of the format of the resource (e.g. interactive resource, software, lesson plan, revision aid, collection, sound, text) and who the resource is for (e.g. teacher, learner or parent).

This may sound complicated, but the searches become easier as the user becomes more familiar with the process and the site contains a wealth of resources. Many of these are commercial, so subject teachers and heads of department will need to make decisions about the value for money of the items on offer, as well as about their educational usefulness.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority at <http://www.qca.org.uk> works 'with others to maintain and develop the school curriculum and associated assessments and to accredit and monitor qualifications in schools, colleges and at work'. There are many elements of the QCA website that have relevance to school improvement work, including the following:

- an overview diagram of the qualifications framework at http://www.qca.org.uk/nq/framework/?fp_clk
- details of qualification types and examination results: this section allows you 'to browse through the general, vocationally related and occupational sectors for information on specific qualification types, or subjects'. This can prove very useful, for example, if you wish to compare your own school's GCSE and A level subject grade distributions with those nationally (tables cover the period from 1992 onwards). See http://www.qca.org.uk/nq/subjects/?fp_clk
- details of the curriculum for various age groups:
 - Foundation Stage: <http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/foundation/>
 - 5-14: <http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/5-14/>
 - 14-19: <http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/14-19/>
- a Research and Statistics section at <http://www.qca.org.uk/rs/rer/>, including, for example, a report based on investigations into the 'dip' at key stage 3 see: http://www.qca.org.uk/rs/rer/ks3_dip_main.asp and an ongoing study of pupils' experiences and perspectives of the national curriculum at: http://www.qca.org.uk/rs/rer/pupils_perspectives.asp
- a searchable publications database, with many documents available in electronic format at <http://www.qcashop.org.uk/cgi-bin/qcashop>.

ACCAC, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (or Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm) is the National Assembly for Wales's principal advisory body on the curriculum, examinations and assessment at: <http://www.accac.org.uk/english.html> or <http://www.accac.org.uk/welsh.html>.

From the home page it is possible to access a variety of documents to do with qualifications <http://www.accac.org.uk/quals.html> and the curriculum http://www.accac.org.uk/schoolcurric/sch_curric_assess.htm, including the following:

- subject criteria
- the National Qualifications Framework
- an Introduction to the School Curriculum in Wales
- 2003 Statutory Assessments and Reporting Arrangements.

There is also a publications catalogue which includes the latest information on developments in the school curriculum in Wales at:

<http://www.accac.org.uk/publications/publications.html>.

CCEA is the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment <http://www.ccea.org.uk>. It was set up to provide advice on and support for what is taught in schools and colleges in Northern Ireland and how it is assessed. Information and a variety of types of publications, including examination results, can be accessed at <http://www.ccea.org.uk/info.htm> and the general publications list <http://www.ccea.org.uk/pubs.htm> includes a free, downloadable document entitled *Focus on Boys: Guidance on Improving Attainment, Particularly in Literacy* [online]. Available: <http://www.ccea.org.uk/focusboys.htm> [19 August, 2003].

The Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) <http://www.ltscotland.com/> website offers a catalogue of educational publications and software <http://www.ltscotland.com/softpub/> and also has a page of online resources at:

<http://www.ltscotland.com/softpub/onlineresources.asp>.

The General Teaching Council for England has an important developing brief for keeping teachers informed about research that may be helpful to their classroom work and which may assist in their decisions about which resources to use. The opening page of their website www.gtce.org.uk expresses the aims of the GTC:

- to provide a professional voice for teachers
- to support and uphold existing high standards of teaching
- to raise the status of teaching
- to listen to and work with teachers.

One very useful section of this website for classroom teachers is the 'Research of the Month' area. This provides an excellent series of research summaries on topics of direct interest to teachers and reflects the GTC's commitment to 'the principle that teaching should continue to develop as a more systematically evidence-informed profession'. The Research of the Month summaries are easy to access and can usually be easily related to classroom practice. Feedback on the issues raised is encouraged and researchers can suggest contributions to the website. Topics covered in recent months have included:

- transfer from the primary classroom
- the impact of study support
- positive alternatives to exclusion
- inside the literacy hour
- gender differences in achievement
- teaching and learning strategies in successful multi-ethnic schools
- improving learning through cognitive intervention

- raising standards through classroom assessment
- ICT for teaching and learning.

The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) offers English and Welsh versions of its website http://www.gtcw.org.uk/welcome_main.html. The Council aims 'to provide an independent, representative and authoritative voice for the teaching profession in Wales'. It provides advice on teaching issues to the National Assembly for Wales. There are some helpful sections on professional development and publications.

The primary emphasis in the Teacher Training Agency's website <http://www.tta.gov.uk> is on providing information for aspiring teachers, teacher trainees and schools and other organisations involved in teacher training partnerships. The website, at the time of writing, has four divisions or sections:

1. about the TTA
2. in training
3. post training
4. providing training.

Under the last of these headings is a sub-section on supporting providers which in turn includes a section on research and evidence informed practice. Although this is primarily aimed at teacher training institutions, it contains information that may be useful to teachers looking to directly improve their classroom practice. The TTA, like the GTC, declares that it is active 'in supporting the Government in its drive to promote teaching as a research and evidence-informed profession'. A good deal of attention is given to the potential mutual benefits of research as a means for improving teaching and learning and raising standards:

The TTA works with a range of schools, Local Education Authorities and Higher Education Institutions and others to increase teachers' interest in and opportunities to engage with research and evidence at a local and national level (<http://www.tta.gov.uk>).

Some of the details of research can be found by navigating to the relevant pages listed on the sub-menu. A visit to the page on the school-based research consortia, for example, reveals details of one project focusing on secondary school disaffection (see the details about the Norwich-based consortium) and another looking at primary school literacy and numeracy (carried out by the Leeds-based consortium). Reports from these projects include sections on pupil and teacher impact.

Although there are a number of debates about the nature of the impact of homework and extra-curricular activities, there does seem to be a consensus that well-planned, meaningful, extra-curricular activities will enhance educational experiences and may well contribute to raising achievement within the school. *Education Extra* is a charity that supports out-of-school hours learning <http://www.educationextra.org.uk>. Their purpose is:

to enable schools to work with pupils, their families and the wider community to build an environment in which learning is extended beyond the formal school day, which encourages new ways of teaching and learning and which reflects the diversity of people's interests and needs (<http://www.educationextra.org.uk>).

Any teacher, teaching assistant or parent looking for out-of-hours learning ideas and resources would benefit from having a look at the list of projects supported by Education Extra at <http://www.educationextra.org.uk/projects/index.html>.

A number of newspapers and broadcasting organisations now contribute to the provision of resources for teachers and students. The *Times Educational Supplement* has a website that helps teachers keep up to date with the latest news in the world of education at <http://www.tes.co.uk>. This site also provides a forum for the exchange of teachers' views (registration required) at <http://www.tes.co.uk/staffroom/> and is a useful source of practical ideas and resources, via *TES Teacher* magazine <http://www.tes.co.uk/teacher/> and <http://www.tes.co.uk/teacher/primaryplus/index.asp> for *TES Primary Plus*. The latter contains downloadable lesson plans and worksheets. A password from the printed version of the TES is required and teachers will need to assess the suitability of these materials for their own particular ages, abilities and groups of pupils.

The *Education Guardian* <http://www.education.guardian.co.uk> is another good source of recent and developing educational news items. This has sections on e-learning and interactive guides containing, for example, some of the latest official information on primary and secondary schools.

The BBC site at <http://www.bbc.co.uk> has also considerably expanded its educational content in recent years. BBC News has an Education section, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/default.stm>, which is regularly updated and gives very good, in-depth coverage of some of the educational issues of the day at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/uk_systems/default.stm.

Channel 4 Television site, <http://www.channel4.com>, also offers educational resources via its *4Learning* website and resource brochure at <http://www.channel4.com/learning/index.html>. Students, teachers and parents may find the online homework help library, *Homework High*, useful, at <http://www.channel4.com/homework/index.jsp>. This offers assistance in six major subject areas: English, mathematics, science, geography, history and languages. The student can either ask a question and receive a quick response from an expert in the subject, or look in the library for answers to similar questions, e.g. mathematics at <http://www.channel4.com/homework/maths/index.jsp>.

These are some of the main electronic sources of information that may help educational professionals in their quest to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms. These sources are mainly, though not exclusively, to do with lesson resources. Many subject teachers, heads of year, key stage coordinators or heads of department, of course, will wish to make detailed use of national sources of information on attainment identified in the previous section.

4 Sharing good practice

The previous section identified a number of examples of websites which, amongst other things, provide lesson resources, or extra-curricular resources, for general use. It is not just the content of lessons or schemes of work that can be made available: information about practice, about styles and methods of teaching, with examples, can also be very useful. There are a developing number of websites which facilitate access to examples of good practice and to new ideas for teaching and learning strategies. Some of these exist under the aegis of particular initiatives, such as Beacon Schools, Specialist Schools, the Leading Edge Programme and Federations of schools and others have a more general origin, such as the case studies presented under the DfES's school improvement banner. There are also a number of LEA networks for sharing good practice (see Section 7).

An appropriate first point of reference is the School Improvement section of the Standards Site, which has been developed considerably in recent months. This DfES website, at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schoolimprovement/>, is aimed 'at assisting schools to raise standards by promoting and disseminating good practice'. At the time of writing there was an emphasis on help for schools facing challenging circumstances, but there were also a number of useful general resources, including information on a series of booklets giving practical guidance on Data Management at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schoolimprovement/sigoodpractice/509675/>. The first of these booklets, entitled *Releasing Potential, Raising Attainment: Managing Data in Secondary School*, can be downloaded. There are also a number of school case studies, categorised according to the particular areas tackled. These include, for example, teamwork, working with parents, sharing expertise and Advanced Skills Teachers and using data to inform teaching and learning. See: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schoolimprovement/sigoodpractice/sigpcases/>.

Since 1998 Beacon Schools have been allocated funding so that they can share their good practice with partner schools. The Beacon Schools website, <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/beaconschools/>, contains an Advanced Search facility which allows for searching by general area of work and then 'specific area of excellence'. Keywords, postcodes and LEAs can also be used. In addition, there is a resource index (eight pages of specific projects offered by named schools) and a case-study index.

A similar arrangement, but for the secondary school sector only, can be accessed via the website of the Specialist Schools Trust at <http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk>, though only schools affiliated to the Trust have direct access to the full details. At the time of writing there were over 2,000 designated Specialist Schools and there were ten specialisms that schools could apply for.

There is a new website for the network of affiliated schools (a password is needed for access) at <http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/schools/website.html>.

The aims of this website are ‘to highlight good practice in schools, inform about developments in education and support teaching staff in the classroom’. Contact details for the designated subject leaders for the various specialist subjects can be found at <http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/aboutus/SL/biogs.html> and there is a full, up-to-date, database of Specialist Schools at <http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/schools/index.cfm>. The school index is organised alphabetically and by specialism and can also be set out with schools listed by LEA. (Note that Specialist Schools will already be operating with a number of institutions that would have been identified as partners in their application for Specialist status). The Trust also plays an active role in promoting a number of projects designed to support various aspects of the work of Specialist Schools at <http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/activities/index.html>. These projects include the following:

- School Improvement Partnerships – Specialist Schools’ Support Programme at http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/activities/sssp_part.html: for Specialist Schools facing challenging circumstances or encountering barriers to achieving their targets;
- Training initiatives with major information technology (IT) Companies at http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/activities/it_training.html – collaborations with a number of major IT companies to help develop ICT training in schools and colleges.

The Beacon Schools initiative and the Specialist Schools programme have been central to the school diversity agenda. From September 2003 Leading Edge Schools have also been in operation. Leading Edge Schools, according to a DfES Press Release (2003/0128) quoting the School Standards Minister, ‘will cascade new and interesting approaches to teaching and learning throughout the system’ and these new approaches will include ‘teachers using websites to share their experiences of successful teaching practices’ (DfES, 2003). A list of schools featured in the Leading Edge Partnerships can be found via the Leading Edge home page at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/leadingedge/> and details about Federations, including an invitation to contribute examples of good practice, are available at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/federations/>.

Two other policy initiatives that encourage partnership working and the sharing of good practice are Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Education Action Zones (EAZs). EiC was introduced in three phases from March 1999 and covers 58 local authority areas, mainly in urban areas. It involves the allocation of additional resources for a combination of initiatives and ‘encourages schools to co-operate to raise standards’, see <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/excellence/>.

A menu tab leads to case studies of good practice from EiC schools and partnerships: the case studies cover topics such as Thinking Skills, Learning Mentors and work with Gifted and Talented students, see <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/excellence/goodpractice/>.

There are two types of Education Action Zones, Statutory and EiC-EAZs. Statutory EAZs are those established under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998: at

the time of writing there were 73 of these involving over 1,300 schools. EIC EAZs tend to be smaller than Statutory EAZs, operate in Excellence areas and typically involve a local secondary school and its associated primary schools. See http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eaz/zones_explained/.

There is a useful search facility in the EAZ section of the Standards Site: searches can be conducted using the Zone (or LEA) name, a region of the country and/or key words, such as 'Social Inclusion', 'PSHE', 'Classroom Assistants' or 'Transition and Transfers' at http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eaz/sharing_good_practice/.

Mention should also be made in this section of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, which have certainly encouraged the exchange of ideas and good practice between primary schools and teachers. Information about these can be found by following the relevant links on the Standards Site. The final report on the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy can be found at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/numeracy/>. Details of the National Literacy Strategy are at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/>: there are hyperlinks to the Framework for Teaching, 'a practical tool, offering teachers a reference point for day-to-day teaching', http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/teaching_resources/?y=0&t=0&f=1&nls=fw and literacy teaching resources, 'A selection of popular resources such as planning sheets, photocopiable masters and activity resources sheets', http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/teaching_resources/?nls=res. The DfES document entitled *Excellence and Enjoyment: a Strategy for Primary Schools* which sets out an overall strategy for primary schools, can be downloaded from the following page on the Standards Site:

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/about/?a=whole_article&art_id=10718

If ideas about learning strategies are required, rather than examples of good practice in teaching, then the Campaign for Learning website <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk> is a good place to start enquiries. This web page expresses the organisation's mission as being 'to stimulate learning that will sustain learning for life'. This includes the encouragement of learning processes in the broad contexts of the family and the workplace, as well as schools. The website contains some very useful ideas about new forms of learning in schools <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/campaigns/learningschools.htm>. Teachers and others interested in new forms of learning in the school would benefit from looking at the details arising from the *Learning to Learn in Schools* project at <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/projects/l2l.htm> and there is a publications and resources catalogue, <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/resources/resourcesindex.htm>, which includes summary details of a number of useful documents.

These are some of the most useful website resources for identifying and sharing ideas about, and examples of, good practice in teaching and learning. Many of the websites feature search mechanisms which facilitate brokerage of good practice between schools, reflecting the fact that there is much potential for the mutual benefits of sharing these strengths.

5 School leadership and management

All the websites featured in this report should have some relevance to school managers, but there are a number of websites that attempt to specifically address the needs of this particular group of educational professionals. The most useful of these is the National College for School Leadership at <http://www.ncsl.org.uk>. This contains a number of useful sub-sections, including the following:

- **Education updates:** news, consultations and a publications list at <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=edu-index>.
- **Managing your school:** a very useful practical site for school managers; it includes example policies (e.g. for behaviour, discipline, homework, marking and performance management) and essential documents (organised into categories which reflect the Ofsted framework) at <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=managing-index>.
- **Leadership development:** information about the Leadership Development Framework (LDF) and the NCSL's philosophy of 'distributed leadership' which is '*centred around the belief that schools should be supported in developing leaders at all levels*'. Five non-linear stages of school leadership are identified. These are: emergent leadership, established leadership, entry to headship, advanced leadership and consultant leadership, at <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=ldev-index>.
- **The Knowledge Pool:** <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=kpool-index>. This page contains useful, practical information on leadership and school improvement, with three developing sections:
 1. *Evidence Base*, drawing upon research to create an evidence base about successful school leadership
 2. *References and Bibliographies*, including 'School improvement' and 'Alternative views about school improvement' listings
 3. *Leadership Links Gateway*, comprehensive links to other sites.

The website also allows access to a list of completed, downloadable reports by the NCSL's research associates, see

<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageid=randd-associates-completed>.

Mention should also be made in this section of the Management area of *TeacherNet* at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/> (already referred to in Section 3). This includes the helpful A-Z of School Leadership and Management guide <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/> which, at the time of writing, was organised around the following four major categories:

1. curriculum and standards
2. home and community
3. organisation and management
4. pupil support.

There is also a full, developing, quick reference A-Z index which covers topics as diverse as admissions, the Connexions service, mentoring, preparation for an Ofsted inspection and the Standards Fund.

The London Leadership Centre features within the Institute of Education's website at http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=2768&2768_0=5873. The LLC site includes links to information about training programmes for middle managers and school leaders and a number of useful publications.

The National Association of Educational Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (NAEIAC) is a professional association representing over 3,500 individuals with these roles. Their website, <http://62.73.166.138/naeiac/flash/welcome.asp?show=flash>, is described as 'The voice of school-college improvement professionals'. A username and password are required to browse the full site, but there are some public sections, including a list of reference documents at <http://62.73.166.138/naeiac/main/document.asp?type=reference>.

6 ICT and school improvement

A key factor in the attempt to raise standards in schools has been the increased provision and use of ICT facilities. Huge resources have been allocated to schools for hardware and software, more and more schools are adopting forms of virtual or e-learning and teacher trainees are now expected to have a certain level of ICT competence upon entry to the profession. A recent survey of schools (the Curriculum Online baseline survey), published on the Becta Research website at: http://www.becta.org.uk/page_documents/research/col.pdf produced some interesting key findings:

- the average ratio of computers to pupils in primary schools was 1 to 8.0, while in secondary schools it was 1 to 5.2
- most secondary schools (84 per cent) had a broadband Internet connection, but only a fifth (22 per cent) of primary schools had this type of connection.
- nearly all secondary schools (96 per cent) and seven in ten (69 per cent) primary schools had support from professional ICT technicians
- the majority of school and subject respondents felt that teachers were 'quite confident' in their use of ICT
- the ways in which ICT was used in lessons varied according to key stage and subject but use of the Internet, word-processing and subject-specific software were the most commonly mentioned uses.

It cannot be assumed that there is a direct link between the increased usage of ICT and school improvement. Indeed, there is a body of literature that is critical of this kind of straightforward assumption (see, for example, Davis, 1997). However, there do seem to be signs that more research and evaluation on the impact of ICT is being carried out and that, consequently, our understanding of the contribution of ICT to school improvement-related processes and outcomes can and will be developed further in the not-too-distant future.

For example, there are now a number of good-quality evaluations which have looked at the possible or potential contribution of ICT to raised attainment (e.g. the ImpaCT2 study, see below), or at examples of good practice in terms of ICT use (e.g. Cunningham *et al.*, 2003; Harris and Kington, 2002). Details of some of these evaluations are given in the bibliography.

The aim of this section is not to examine research studies such as these, interesting though they are, rather it is to provide a few pointers to websites that might be useful in terms of giving practical (and critical) advice and guidance on how ICT can contribute to school improvement processes. As has already been indicated, this is not easy, because to date few links appear to have been made between the ICT research community, on the one hand, and school improvement/school effectiveness evaluators on the other (see Rudd, 2002).

A very useful starting point is the website provided by Becta (British Educational and Communications Technology Agency) at <http://www.becta.org.uk/index.cfm>. This is a well-organised, clearly-presented, practically-focused site, with excellent content and links, though not all of them directly related to school improvement matters. Becta's aim is to:

... support the Government and national organisations in the use and development of ICT in education to raise standards, widen access, improve skills and encourage effective practice.

The 'ICT Research' page of the site at <http://www.becta.org.uk/research/index.cfm> is very useful for teachers and assistants thinking about how they might introduce new technologies into learning processes. Some assessments of the benefits and challenges of using new technology may already have been carried out and these may help with the avoidance of particular pitfalls: e.g. a literature review of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in education. See http://www.becta.org.uk/page_documents/research/VLE_report.pdf.

There is another helpful section entitled 'What the Research Says' at <http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=1&id=546> and contains short briefing papers on clearly-identified topics aimed at teachers, ICT co-ordinators and school managers. For example, at the time of writing, there were papers on the following topics (with plans for further papers on 'Effective ICT Pedagogy' in each of the core subjects and 'Whole School Development and ICT').

1. ICT and reducing teacher workloads
2. Teacher continuing professional development
3. Portable ICT devices in teaching and learning
4. Virtual Learning Environments in teaching and learning
5. ICT and motivation
6. Network technologies in teaching and learning
7. Interactive whiteboards
8. Video conferencing in teaching and learning
9. Strategic leadership and management of ICT in schools
10. ICT and initial teacher training
11. Barriers to the use of ICT in teaching.

There is also a 'Research Portal' containing links to other sources of research organisations at <http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=3&id=557> and publications at <http://www.becta.org.uk/research/display.cfm?section=1>.

Anyone with a query about using ICT for school improvement which is not addressed in any of these websites can always make a new, direct enquiry via the Becta research network at <http://www.becta.org.uk/research/display.cfm?section=2>.

This was set up in the summer of 2001 and 'seeks to encourage the exchange of information between all those with an interest in research on ICT in education, in order to inform the national agenda and professional practice'. Members of this Network have some very lively and informed discussions: membership is free and open to anyone with an interest in research in ICT and education (there is an on-line membership form).

The National Grid for Learning <http://www.ngfl.gov.uk> describes itself as 'the gateway to educational resources on the Internet'. The site has also provided something of a national model and a central link for local grids for learning (see Section 7). The NGfL website has several useful, practical features:

- a central directory of schools, with links to each school's website <http://www.ngfl.gov.uk/schoolsites/index.jsp?sec=31&cat=601&clear=y>
- a feature on the Becta/Guardian UK Education website awards 2002 <http://www.ngfl.gov.uk/features.jsp?sec=32&cat=99&clear=y>
- a very powerful and useful three-fold search facility, located clearly on the home page that can seek out resources dependent upon: *What* you are seeking, *Where* you are, or *Who* you are. The 'what' search for lesson plans and worksheets, for example, produced 181 records or sources of information.

Parents (or teachers) seeking advice about ICT hardware and software would benefit from looking at the Parents Information Network website at <http://www.pin.org.uk>. PIN, established in 1994, is an independent organisation which offers advice to parents on the selection of 'digital learning resources'. The site includes a section which considers the issue of 'How to recognise quality websites' at <http://www.pin.org.uk/guidance/qualityWebsites.htm>, with 'Ten questions parents should ask themselves about websites'. There are also evaluations of software products and websites, declared to have been 'Tried and tested by teachers, parents and children' at <http://mpro52.red.net:8080/parinfonwk/dbsearch.htm> and advice on how computers can support homework at <http://www.pin.org.uk/homework/index.htm>.

The possible links between ICT use and (potentially-improved) attainment levels constitute an area of school improvement which is under researched. However, some very useful evaluations have taken place. An example is the *ImpaCT2* study, carried out in 60 schools by teams of researchers from the University of Nottingham, the Open University, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Leicester, between 1999 and 2002 (Harrison *et al.*, 2002). According to the research summary notes on the Becta website (at <http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=1&id=539>), this study was:

... one of the most comprehensive investigations into the impact of information and communications technology (ICT) on educational attainment so far conducted in the United Kingdom.

The full report and various strand/summary reports of this study can be downloaded at <http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=1&id=539>. Clearly, more studies of this quality and scale are needed in order for us to develop further our understanding of the links between the new technologies, attainment and school improvement.

7 Local Education Authorities

This section identifies and briefly describes two types of websites: (a) those that are provided by Local Education Authorities for the benefit of schools and others; and (b) those that may be of use to LEAs themselves. Typically, the first type is a home page for some kind of good practice network, with the LEA acting as a coordinator or facilitator and the second is a general information source for LEA officers and council members. An example of the former would be the Kirklees *EdNet* site (see below) and an example of the latter would be the Education section of the Local Government Association's website.

For the purposes of this report, the research team selected four websites which they felt represented good examples of the ways in which such information can be used by LEAs to support schools. These are just selected examples: there are many other excellent, informative LEA websites. As well as informing schools and the wider community of the services they provide, LEA websites are used as a support mechanism to schools through providing resources, consultancy and guidance to teachers and school management.

Many local authorities have their own education department website as an auxiliary to the main council site. Usually, all information related to education, ranging from early years right through to adult education and lifelong learning is posted here. The main ways in which LEA-provided website materials can support schools appear to be as follows:

- resources for school improvement
- education networks
- classroom resources
- support for lifelong learning.

Many LEA websites include a number of downloadable documents. For example, in order to allow schools a higher degree of autonomy and to give them a standardised format, downloadable documents for school self review, self evaluation or internal management are often available. The Portsmouth School Improvement Service at <http://web.portsmouth.biblio.net/> is one of many LEA education departments which has such a facility on their website. The Autumn Package is available for downloading, as well as a Portsmouth School Self Review Summary Sheet at <http://web.portsmouth.biblio.net/Leadership/leadership.htm>. In addition, to support teachers in the management of their subject, the service has built up collections of documents called the 'Subject Manager' files, located at <http://web.portsmouth.biblio.net/Leadership/leadership.htm#Subject%20manager%20Files>

In addition to this, there are also many resources which teachers can download to help them with school and classroom management. For example, Dorset County Council offers a 'Resources to support classroom practice' page at

<http://www.dorset-cc.gov.uk/corporatehome/Educ/EducationSes/EducationSES-LDUY-4QULPB.nsf/6cadf4da179fc19500256663004afece/894dfea8c181314000256b8a003e7a3d?OpenDocument> and there are pages for individual subjects.

LEA websites are also used as a way of presenting local and national policy information. Schools, teachers and parents can download LEA and school policy documents such as the Education Development Plan, curriculum statements, Personal and Social Health Education (PSHE) guidelines and codes of practice. The website for the Kirklees LEA, <http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/community/education-learning/schools.shtml> provides an example of this: it includes behaviour, discipline and anti-bullying guidelines. There is also a resource, *EdNet*, developed by Kirklees School Effectiveness Service, at <http://www.kirklees-ednet.org.uk/>, which is designed to provide information and resources *for* schools which have been developed *by* schools in the Kirklees area (some sections are password protected). For teachers there is a training and advice site and there is also a list of Beacon and Specialist Schools in the area.

Many LEAs now have their own local grid for learning. These are designed in a similar way to, and linked to, the National Grid for Learning (see Section 6). These networks are usually designed for whole community and lifelong learning use and include support for teachers, students, adult learners, parents and governors. Essex County Council, for example, has the Essex Grid for Learning, see <http://www.e-gfl.org/>. There is a Curriculum Resources area, a lively Teaching and Learning area, a section entitled the 'Main Staffroom', with notices for teachers and an area for parents and carers which contains picture links to a whole range of local and national sources of information. This is a good example of how a local website can be used to support teachers and learners in a variety of practical ways, with particularly well thought out links.

There are also a number of websites that provide school improvement-related information *for* LEAs in particular, but which may also be useful for other interested parties. The Local Government Association website, <http://www.lga.gov.uk>, which has a link to a section on Education at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/OurWork.asp?1Section=59&ccat=61>, is an example of this. Though not usually addressing school improvement issues directly, the various elements of this section are very useful in terms of assisting with the process of keeping up to date with policy changes. There is access to Key Briefings, including Parliamentary Briefings, LGA discussion papers and a variety of other papers at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/OurWork.asp?1section=59&ccat=371>. There are also links to the LGA Educational Research Programme at <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/lga.asp>, where there are summaries of recently completed research projects. A particularly relevant example is the report by Derrington (2000) on *The LEA Contribution to School Improvement: a Role Worth Fighting For*, the summary of which can be accessed at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/OurWork.asp?1section=59&ccat=372>.

There is also a link from the LGA website to the Education Management Information Exchange service at the NFER at <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/>. EMIE provides a very comprehensive range of information services to local authority staff and others working in the field of education. Registration is required to gain full access to the information, but many elements are available free to all, including a series of reports at

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/report_index.asp on current areas of interest or concern. The following examples give an indication of the range and relevance of these reports:

- MOTT, G. (2002). *Children on the Move: Helping High Mobility Schools and their Pupils* (EMIE Report No.68) [online]. Available: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=85 [19 August, 2003].
- MORTON, R. (2002). *Hellos and Handcuffs: LEA Support for Teacher and Headteacher Recruitment and Retention* (EMIE Report No. 67) [online]. Available: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=84 [19 August, 2003].
- ARNOLD, R. (2002). *The School Improvers: Survey of LEA Advisory, Inspection and School Improvement Services* (EMIE Report 65) [online]. Available: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=82 [19 August, 2003].
- WHITBOURN, S., MITCHELL, K. and MORRIS, R. (2000). *What is the LEA for? An Analysis of the Functions and Roles of the Local Education Authority* [online]. Available: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=18 [19 August, 2003].
- LEE, B. and SCANLON, M. (1999). *Survey of LEA Research, Statistics and Information Activities* [online]. Available: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=23 [19 August, 2003].
- ARNOLD, R. (1998). *Target Setting: School and LEA in Partnership* [online]. Available: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=29 [19 August, 2003].

The EMIE website also contains a very useful list of educational acronyms, see <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/acronyms.asp>.

The Education Network (TEN) at <http://www.ten.info> is a relatively new independent body 'set up to support local education authorities (LEAs) in their work of raising education standards'. It is a password-protected subscription site, so access is limited, though around 90 per cent of LEAs subscribe to it. The Policy Briefings page, http://www.ten.info/policy.taf?function=list&_UserReference=2AF41BC6541646CAC2DBB519&head=2, provides an up-to-date list of papers for subscribers and a selection of older briefings is kept as a 'Public Archive', available to all enquirers. A publications page lists priced publications and a few freely-available web documents, see http://www.ten.info/pubsearch1.taf?function=search&_UserReference=2AF41BC6541646CAC2DBB519&head=2.

During the course of 2003 TEN has been working with ConfEd (the Confederation of Education Service Managers) and the Virtual Staff College (VSC), via their conference programmes, to promote a focus on school improvement.

The Virtual Staff College, <http://www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk>, was launched in 1999 and is owned by ConfEd. It offers help with professional development to education managers and advisers. The VSC does not itself offer professional development, but performs quality assurance and information-providing functions, through working with a network of other organisations. Professional development covers many areas of education, but one of the strands of the framework presented is 'Improving Standards', see <http://www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk/newpage1.htm>.

8 Research and evaluation

Several references have already been made to websites containing research and evaluation material relating to school improvement: see, for example, the brief comments on the General Teaching Council's 'Research of the Month' feature and the Teacher Training Agency's School-based research consortia in Section 3.

This section presents details of the websites of national research organisations, or universities, which present research findings or summaries which may assist school improvement processes. A good starting point is the information provided by the Economic and Social Research Council, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk>. 'Knowledge, Communication and Learning' is one of the ESRC's seven thematic priorities. Education is also partially embraced by some of the other six priorities, which are as follows:

- Economic Performance and Development
- Environment and Human Behaviour
- Governance and Citizenship
- Lifecourse, Lifestyles and Health
- Social Stability and Exclusion
- Work and Organisations.

Some of the latest research on teaching and learning is being carried out under the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, see <http://www.tlrp.org>, a programme managed by the ESRC. The projects featured in this programme are at different stages of completion and have been organised into a number of categories, see <http://www.tlrp.org/proj/index.html>, including the following:

- Early Years
- Primary Education
- Secondary Education
- Across School Phases
- Further and Post-16 Education.

Most, though not all, of the school improvement-related projects appear to be in the cross-phase category. Three examples (with links to individual project summaries) are as follows:

1. Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning
<http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase1/phase1dsept.html>
2. Improving the Effectiveness of Pupil Groups in Classrooms
<http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2a.html>

3. Lessons for Learning: Using research study lessons to innovate
<http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/rtfdudley.htm>.

The research conducted as part of this programme should be useful to practitioners and these pages certainly appear to constitute an excellent current and potential source of new ideas for school improvers.

A key objective of the National Educational Research Forum, see <http://www.nerf-uk.org/>, is to provide 'strategic direction' for educational research at a national level. It has a remit 'to raise the quality, profile and impact of educational research'. The 'Resources and useful links' page, <http://www.nerf-uk.org/resources.html>, very helpfully brings together a number of information sources and there is a sub category of 'Information for practitioners'.

Our own organisation, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), carries out large numbers of evaluations for a range of different sponsors and organisations, see <http://www.nfer.ac.uk>. Many of these have a strong school improvement element. Interested parties are advised to take a look at the *What's New* page at <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/whatsnew/whatsnew.asp> and to search, using key words, the *Current Research* page at http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/current_proj.asp. (See also the references to CERUK, below and EMIE, in Section 7).

CERUK is a database, sponsored by the NFER, the DfES and the EPPI-Centre, 'that seeks to include all recently completed and ongoing [educational] research in the United Kingdom'. It can be accessed, for example, via the NFER library information services page http://www.nfer.ac.uk/infoservices/information_services.asp and can be searched by key word or author, with specified start and end dates. At the time of writing a search for 'school improvement' items produced a list of 66 records. This developing resource is particularly useful for finding out about the latest and ongoing research on a particular school-related topic.

A number of the larger universities, especially those which are teacher training providers, have websites that are helpful to individuals and organisations interested in school improvement. Sometimes the academic department covering 'Education' is linked to an educational research centre: these centres can produce some very useful research findings and summaries. Selected examples are given below.

The Institute of Education at the University of London has been in existence for over 100 years and is internationally renowned for its school improvement work, see <http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/index.html>. Some navigation through the research centres identified within the Institute's pages leads to the home page for the International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre (ISEIC) at http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=480&480_0=447. The purpose of ISEIC is 'to engage in an interdependent approach to research, teaching, consultancy and dissemination which deepens knowledge and understanding of School Effectiveness and School Improvement ...'. From this page, in turn, there is a link to the contact details of the National School Improvement Network at http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=480&480_0=1631, a network for

sharing ideas and offering support in school improvement matters (a membership fee is required).

From the Institute's website there is a link to the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre (the EPPI Centre), which is part of the Social Science Research Unit (SSRU). The Centre was established in 1993 'to address the need for a systematic approach to the organisation and review of evidence-based work on social interventions', see <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx>. Social interventions include educational initiatives and policies. Within the EPPI Centre website there is access to the Research Evidence in Education Library (REEL), the home site of the Centre for Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice in Education at <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx?page=/reel/intro.htm>. The vision of this Centre is 'to be a centralised resource for people wishing to undertake systematic reviews of research in education and those wishing to use reviews to inform policy and practice'. Further details of how the Centre works and about its Review Groups can be found at <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx?page=/reel/about.htm>.

The London School of Economics and Political Sciences (LSE) has two research centres that may be of interest to school improvement researchers and practitioners. The Centre for Educational Research, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/CER/>, provides a list of research staff and snapshots of current and recently completed research at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/CER/research.htm>. Individuals with a particular interest in the economic aspects of education may also wish to take a look at the website for the Centre for the Economics of Education (CEE): this centre works in partnership with the Institute of Education, but is based at the LSE, <http://cee.lse.ac.uk/>.

The Centre for Educational Sociology (CES) at the University of Edinburgh conducts multi-disciplinary research on education, training, the youth labour market and transitions to adulthood. Details of conferences, seminars and papers are given on the 'CES News' page <http://www.ed.ac.uk/ces/>. There are a number of downloadable papers, including two recent briefing papers on measuring performance in education at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/ces/Briefings.htm>. CES staff have also conducted (and continue to work on) the highly-regarded 'Home International' projects, which compare the 14-19 education and training systems of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Scottish Council for Research in Education, based at the University of Glasgow, provides details of recent research reports, briefing papers and project news, <http://www.scre.ac.uk>.

At the University of Leeds School of Education, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk>, there are a number of academic teams and research centres. See <http://education.leeds.ac.uk/research/index.htm>. Additionally, the Leeds University Library is home to the British Education Index at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/bei/>. This Index is a key resource for those interested in education generally and school improvement specifically: it consists of four collections:

- British Education Internet Resource Catalogue
- Education Conference Programmes

- Education Conference Listings
- *Education-line*.

The last of these, *Education-line* at <http://brs.leeds.ac.uk/~beiwww/el.htm>, is particularly useful. It consists of 'a freely accessible database of the full text of conference papers, working papers and electronic literature which supports educational research, policy and practice'.

Canterbury Christ Church University College, <http://www.cant.ac.uk>, includes the Centre for Educational Research (CER) at <http://education.cant.ac.uk/centre-for-educational-research/projects/index.htm>, within which there is a group looking at 'Educational leadership and school improvement', see <http://education.cant.ac.uk/centre-for-educational-research/groupings/5/>.

The University of Bath website at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/> provides details of their research groups, see <http://www.bath.ac.uk/education/groups/>. School effectiveness and improvement is part of the 'Education, Policy, Innovation and Change group' and current educational projects, see <http://www.bath.ac.uk/education/projects/>.

The University of Durham <http://www.dur.ac.uk> is the base for the Curriculum, Evaluation and Management (CEM) Centre (see Section 2). It also has a web page detailing the School of Education's research activities, <http://www.dur.ac.uk/education/research/main1.htm>.

There are also three research associations that may be useful to individuals involved in, or seeking information on, school improvement, though time would be required to investigate these, to identify the relevant Special Interest Groups and to sift out the practical relevance and implications of some of the research items featured.

1. The **British Educational Research Association** <http://www.bera.ac.uk>. BERA's home page includes links to publications, conference and events, other web links and Special Interest Groups (SIGs). There is a Special Interest Group for 'School Improvement' and another that addresses issues to do with 'New Technologies in Education' at <http://www.bera.ac.uk/sigs/siglist.php>, but these can only be accessed by BERA members.
2. BERA and other national research associations in European countries are linked in to the **European Educational Research Association** at <http://www.eera.ac.uk>. EERA aims to foster the exchange of ideas between European researchers and to encourage collaboration. To assist with these aims, there are several 'Networks', listed at <http://www.eera.ac.uk/special.html>, many of which cover areas which are relevant to school improvement issues (most noticeably, Network 11 – Quality Assurance and School Effectiveness). Conference papers from both BERA and ECER can usually be accessed via the *Education-line* service provided by the University of Leeds (see above).
3. The **American Educational Research Association** at <http://www.aera.net>. The most relevant areas of the AERA website for school improvement-related resources are the Publications section, <http://www.aera.net/pubs>, which includes full

electronic access to the journal *Educational Researcher* and the Resources section, <http://www.aera.net/resource>. There is also a list of over 100 Special Interest Groups at <http://www.aera.net/sigs/siglst.htm> and their associated websites. The most relevant of these appear to be the 'School Effectiveness and School Improvement' and 'School Indicators and Profiles' groups.

The Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE), <http://www.cidree.org>, conducts projects and holds seminars and conferences on school improvement-related topics. Details of ongoing projects and activities can be found at <http://www.cidree.org/activities.html> and the publications list at <http://www.cidree.org/publications.html> includes free downloadable papers on, for example, raising the effectiveness of citizenship education and collaboration on cross-curricular themes.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) website, <http://www.oecd.org>, has links to an education section which gives details of recent and ongoing international projects. For example, a report entitled *Networks of Innovation: Towards New Models for Managing Schools and Systems* is summarised at <http://oecdpublications.gfi-nb.com/cgi-bin/OECDBookShop.storefront/EN/product/962003041P1>. The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) is conducting some very interesting work under the heading of 'Schooling for Tomorrow': see the summary of the 'Six OECD Schooling Scenarios' for the future at http://www.oecd.org/document/10/0,2340,en_2649_34521_2078922_1_1_1_1,00.html. It seems appropriate that a source about future schooling scenarios should be the last web page reference in this report.

Conclusion

It is worth reiterating, as a concluding comment, that the Internet constitutes just one source of information for school improvement: but, it is also clear from this outline of the contents and uses of 50 school improvement-related websites, that more and more relevant information is being provided and that the quality of this information is improving. The forms and the contents of the websites will change. More use is likely to be made in the near future, for example, of audio and video items and wireless and broadband technology will increase the frequency and speed of access to information. We hope to be able to update this report at some future point, so as to reflect these new developments and to include selected new sources of information. In the meantime, we hope that this selection of websites provides some useful pointers for all those who are involved or interested in school improvement.

9 List of websites and individual web pages (with hyperlinks)

American Educational Research Association (AERA) <http://www.aera.net>
<http://www.aera.net/pubs>, publications, including the journal Educational Researcher
<http://www.aera.net/resource>, resources section
<http://www.aera.net/sigs/siglst.htm>, a list of over a hundred Special Interest Groups.

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) <http://www.bbc.co.uk>
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/league_tables/default.stm, school 'league tables'
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/default.stm>, education news page
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/uk_systems/default.stm, current issues in education.

British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
<http://www.becta.org.uk>
<http://www.becta.org.uk/index.cfm>, Becta home page
<http://www.becta.org.uk/research/index.cfm>, ICT Research page
http://www.becta.org.uk/page_documents/research/VLE_report.pdf, literature review of Virtual Learning Environments
<http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=1&id=546>, short briefing papers on 'What the Research Says'
<http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=3&id=557>, ICT 'Research Portal'
<http://www.becta.org.uk/research/display.cfm?section=1>, publications list
http://www.becta.org.uk/page_documents/research/col.pdf, survey of schools' ICT use
<http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=1&id=539>, ImpaCT report.

British Educational Research Association (BERA) <http://www.bera.ac.uk>
<http://www.bera.ac.uk/sigs/siglist.php>, list of Special Interest Groups.

Campaign for Learning <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk>
<http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/campaigns/learningschools.htm>, events, projects and publications about new forms of learning in schools
<http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/projects/l2l.htm>, the Learning to Learn in Schools project
<http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/resources/resourcesindex.htm> publications and resources centre.

Canterbury Christ Church University College <http://www.cant.ac.uk/>
<http://education.cant.ac.uk/centre-for-educational-research/projects/index.htm>, the Centre for Educational Research (CER)
<http://education.cant.ac.uk/centre-for-educational-research/groupings/5/>, 'Educational leadership and school improvement' Research Group.

Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh <http://www.ed.ac.uk/ces/>
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/ces/Briefings.htm>, downloadable briefing papers with key research findings.

Channel 4 Television <http://www.channel4.com>
<http://www.channel4.com/learning/index.html>, home page for 4Learning website
<http://www.channel4.com/homework/index.jsp>, online help with homework
<http://www.channel4.com/homework/maths/index.jsp>, maths homework help.

Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE) <http://www.cidree.org>
<http://www.cidree.org/activities.html>, list of projects and activities
<http://www.cidree.org/publications.html>, publications list.

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Northern Ireland <http://www.ccea.org.uk>
<http://www.ccea.org.uk/info.htm>, information and publication types
<http://www.ccea.org.uk/pubs.htm>, list of general publications
<http://www.ccea.org.uk/focusboys.htm>, document on raising boys' attainment.

Current Educational Research in the UK (CERUK)
<http://www.ceruk.ac.uk/ceruk/>, searchable database of recent and ongoing educational research.

Curriculum, Evaluation and Management Centre (CEM), University of Durham
<http://www.cemcentre.org/>
<http://www.cemcentre.org/about/default.asp>, further details about the centre and primary pupil performance service.

Curriculum On-line <http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk>.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) <http://www.dfes.gov.uk>
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/primary_02.shtml, primary performance tables
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/schools_02.shtml, secondary performance tables
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/16to18_02.shtml, post-16 performance tables
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/vap_02.shtml, value-added pilot tables
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/>, Statistical First Releases
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/numeracy/>, report on the Implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.
[See also The Standards Site]

Economic and Social Research Council <http://www.esrc.ac.uk>.
[See also Teaching and Learning Research Programme]

Education Extra <http://www.educationextra.org.uk>, support for out-of-hours learning
<http://www.educationextra.org.uk/projects/index.html>, summaries of out-of-hours projects.

Education Guardian <http://education.guardian.co.uk>

Education Management Information Exchange, NFER <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/>.
http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/report_index.asp, reports on current areas of interest

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=85, report on high mobility schools

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=84, report on support for teacher and headteacher recruitment and retention

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=82, survey of LEA Advisory, Inspection and School Improvement Services

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=18, report on the functions and roles of the Local Education Authority

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=23, survey of LEA Research, Statistics and Information Activities

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/reports_template.asp?Report=29, report on school and LEA target setting.

<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/publications/acronyms.asp>, list of educational acronyms.

The Education Network (TEN) <http://www.ten.info/>

http://www.ten.info/policy.taf?function=list&_UserReference=2AF41BC6541646CAC2DBB519&head=2, Policy Briefings page

http://www.ten.info/pubsearch1.taf?function=search&_UserReference=2AF41BC6541646CAC2DBB519&head=2, publications page.

European Educational Research Association (EERA) <http://www.eera.ac.uk>

<http://www.eera.ac.uk/special.html>.

Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk>

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx>, introduction to the EPPI Centre

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx?page=/reel/intro.htm>, introduction to the Research Evidence in Education Library

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx?page=/reel/about.htm>, details of the EPPI Centre's work in education.

[See also Institute of Education, University of London.]

General Teaching Council for England <http://www.gtce.org.uk>

<http://www.gtce.org.uk/news/2010.asp>.

General Teaching Council for Wales <http://www.gtcw.org.uk>

http://www.gtcw.org.uk/welcome_main.html

http://www.gtcw.org.uk/frames_side.html.

Institute of Education, University of London <http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk>

<http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/index.html>, the Institute of Education's home page

http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=480&480_0=447, the International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre

http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=480&480_0=1631, the National School Improvement Network

http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=2768&2768_0=5873, London Leadership Centre

<http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=3314>, Centre for the Economics of Education.

[See also Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre]

Learning and Teaching, Scotland <http://www.ltscotland.com/>

<http://www.ltscotland.com/softpub/>, catalogue of publications and software

<http://www.ltscotland.com/softpub/onlineresources.asp>, online resources.

Local Education Authorities (selected examples)

<http://web.portsmouth.biblio.net/>, Portsmouth School Improvement Service

<http://web.portsmouth.biblio.net/Leadership/leadership.htm>, school self-review sheet

<http://web.portsmouth.biblio.net/Leadership/leadership.htm#Subject%20manager%20Files>, collections of documents for subject managers.

<http://www.dorset-cc.gov.uk/CorporateHome/CorporateHome-RJPE-45SK5S.nsf>, Dorset County Council main website

<http://www.dorset-cc.gov.uk/corporatehome/Educ/EducationSes/EducationSES-LDUY-4QULPB.nsf/6cadf4da179fc19500256663004afece/894dfea8c181314000256b8a003e7a3d?OpenDocument>, resources to support classroom practice.

<http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/community/education-learning/schools.shtml>, Kirklees LEA

<http://www.kirklees-ednet.org.uk/>, EdNet, resources provided by local (Kirklees) schools.

<http://www.e-gfl.org/>, the Essex Grid for Learning.

Local Government Association <http://www.lga.gov.uk>

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/OurWork.asp?1Section59&ccat=61>, LGA work on Education

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/OurWork.asp?1section=59&ccat=371>, briefings, discussion papers, conference and seminar papers

<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/lga.asp>, summaries of recently completed research projects

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/OurWork.asp?lsection=59&ccat=371>, summaries of recently completed research projects within the LGA/NFER Educational Research Programme

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/OurWork.asp?lsection=59&ccat=372>, summary of report on the LEA contribution to school improvement.

London School of Economics and Political Science <http://www.lse.ac.uk/>
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/CER/>, homepage of the Centre for Educational Research
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/CER/research.htm>, snapshots of current and recently completed research
<http://cee.lse.ac.uk/>, the Centre for the Economics of Education.

National Association of Educational Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (NAEIAC)
<http://62.73.166.138/naeiac/flash/welcome.asp?show=flash>, introductory page
<http://62.73.166.138/naeiac/main/document.asp?type=reference>, reference list.

National College for School Leadership <http://www.ncsl.org.uk>
<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=edu-index>, updates, consultations, publications
<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=managing-index>, examples of school policies and documents
<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=kpool-index>, leadership evidence base, bibliography and links
<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=ldev-index>, types of school leadership
<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageid=randd-associates-completed>, list of completed reports by the NCSL's research associates.

National Curriculum On-line <http://www.nc.uk.net>.

National Educational Research Forum (NERF) <http://www.nerf-uk.org>
<http://www.nerf-uk.org/resources.html>, resources and links page.

National Foundation for Educational Research <http://www.nfer.ac.uk>

National Grid for Learning <http://www.ngfl.gov.uk>
<http://www.ngfl.gov.uk/schoolsites/index.jsp?sec=31&cat=601&clear=y>, central directory of school websites
<http://www.ngfl.gov.uk/features.jsp?sec=32&cat=99&clear=y>, award-winning school websites.

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) <http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk>
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3266>, New Inspection Framework
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/>
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3205>
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3312>
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/3329.pdf>
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/1191.pdf>
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3327>
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=1245>, Ofsted publications
<http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk/reports/>.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

<http://www.oecd.org>

<http://oecdpublications.gfi-nb.com/cgi-bin/OECDBookShop.storefront/EN/product/962003041P1>,

summary of report on Networks of Innovation and New Models for Managing Schools

http://www.oecd.org/document/10/0,2340,en_2649_34521_2078922_1_1_1_1,00.html,

summary of the 'Six OECD Schooling Scenarios' for the future.

Parents Information Network <http://www.pin.org.uk>

<http://www.pin.org.uk/guidance/qualityWebsites.htm>, how to recognise quality websites

<http://fmpro52.red.net:8080/parinfonwk/dbsearch.htm>, evaluations of software and websites

<http://www.pin.org.uk/homework/index.htm>, how computers can support homework.

Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales

<http://www.accac.org.uk>

<http://www.accac.org.uk/quals.html>, documents to do with qualifications

http://www.accac.org.uk/schoolcurric/sch_curric_assess.htm, curriculum documents

<http://www.accac.org.uk/publications/publications.html>, publications catalogue.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority <http://www.qca.org.uk/>

http://www.qca.org.uk/nq/framework/?fp_clk, chart of the qualifications framework

http://www.qca.org.uk/nq/subjects/?fp_clk, information on specific qualification types or subjects

<http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/foundation/>, Foundation Stage Curriculum

<http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/5-14/>, 5–14 Curriculum

<http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/14-19/>, 14–19 Curriculum

<http://www.qca.org.uk/rs/rer/>, research and statistics area

http://www.qca.org.uk/rs/rer/ks3_dip_main.asp, report on the 'dip' at key stage 3

http://www.qca.org.uk/rs/rer/pupils_perspectives.asp, study of pupils' perspectives on the national curriculum

<http://www.qcashop.org.uk/cgi-bin/qcashop>, searchable publications database.

Scottish Centre for Research in Education (SCRE) <http://www.scre.ac.uk>

Specialist Schools Trust <http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk>

<http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/schools/website.html>, the network of affiliated schools

<http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/aboutus/SL/biogs.html>, list of Specialist subject leaders

<http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/schools/index.cfm>, database of Specialist Schools

<http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/activities/index.html>, details of specific Trust projects

http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/activities/sssp_part.html, school improvement

Partnerships for Specialist Schools facing challenging circumstances

http://www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk/activities/it_training.html, training initiatives with major ICT companies.

The Standards Site <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk>

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance/ap/?version=1>, Autumn Package 2002

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance/IAP/?version=1>, Interactive Autumn Package 2002

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance/pat/>, Pupil Achievement Tracker software

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schoolimprovement/>, school improvement area of the Standards Site

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schoolimprovement/sigoodpractice/509675/>, practical guidance on data management

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schoolimprovement/sigoodpractice/sigpcases/>, school improvement case studies

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/beaconschools/>, DfES Beacon Schools website

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/leadingedge/>, details of Leading Edge Partnerships

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/federations/>, details about Federations of schools

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/excellence/>, information about Excellence in Cities

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/excellence/goodpractice/>, EiC good practice case studies

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eaz/zones_explained/, explanation of EAZs

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eaz/sharing_good_practice/, EAZ case studies

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ts/>, information on target setting, including case studies

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/>, details of the National Literacy Strategy

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/teaching_resources/?y=0&t=0&f=1&nls=fw, National Literacy Strategy framework for teaching

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/teaching_resources/?nls=res, National Literacy Strategy resources

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/about/?a=whole_article&art_id=10718, Excellence and Enjoyment – A Strategy for Primary Schools.

Teacher Net <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk>

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/>, TeacherNet Management area

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/>, A to Z of School Leadership.

Teacher Training Agency <http://www.tta.gov.uk>

<http://www.tta.gov.uk/teaching/ict/index.htm>.

Teaching and Learning Research Programme (ESRC) <http://www.tlrp.org>

<http://www.tlrp.org/proj/index.html>, index of project categories

<http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase1/phase1dsept.html>, project about consulting pupils

<http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2a.html>, project about pupil groups in classrooms

<http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/rtdudley.htm>, project about ‘research study lessons’.

Times Educational Supplement <http://www.tes.co.uk>
<http://www.tes.co.uk/staffroom/>, forum for teacher discussions
<http://www.tes.co.uk/teacher/>, TES Teacher magazine
<http://www.tes.co.uk/teacher/primaryplus/index.asp>, TES Primary Plus resources.

University of Bath <http://www.bath.ac.uk/>
<http://www.bath.ac.uk/education/groups/>, details of research groups
<http://www.bath.ac.uk/education/projects/>, details of research projects.

University of Durham <http://www.dur.ac.uk/>
<http://www.dur.ac.uk/education/research/main1.htm>, research activities in the School of Education.
[See also Curriculum, Evaluation and Management (CEM) Centre]

University of Leeds <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/>
<http://education.leeds.ac.uk/research/index.htm>, academic teams and research centres
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/bei/>, the British Education Index
<http://brs.leeds.ac.uk/~beiwww/el.htm>, *Education-line* publications database.

The Virtual Staff College <http://www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk>
<http://www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk/newpage1.htm>, details of how the VSC operates.

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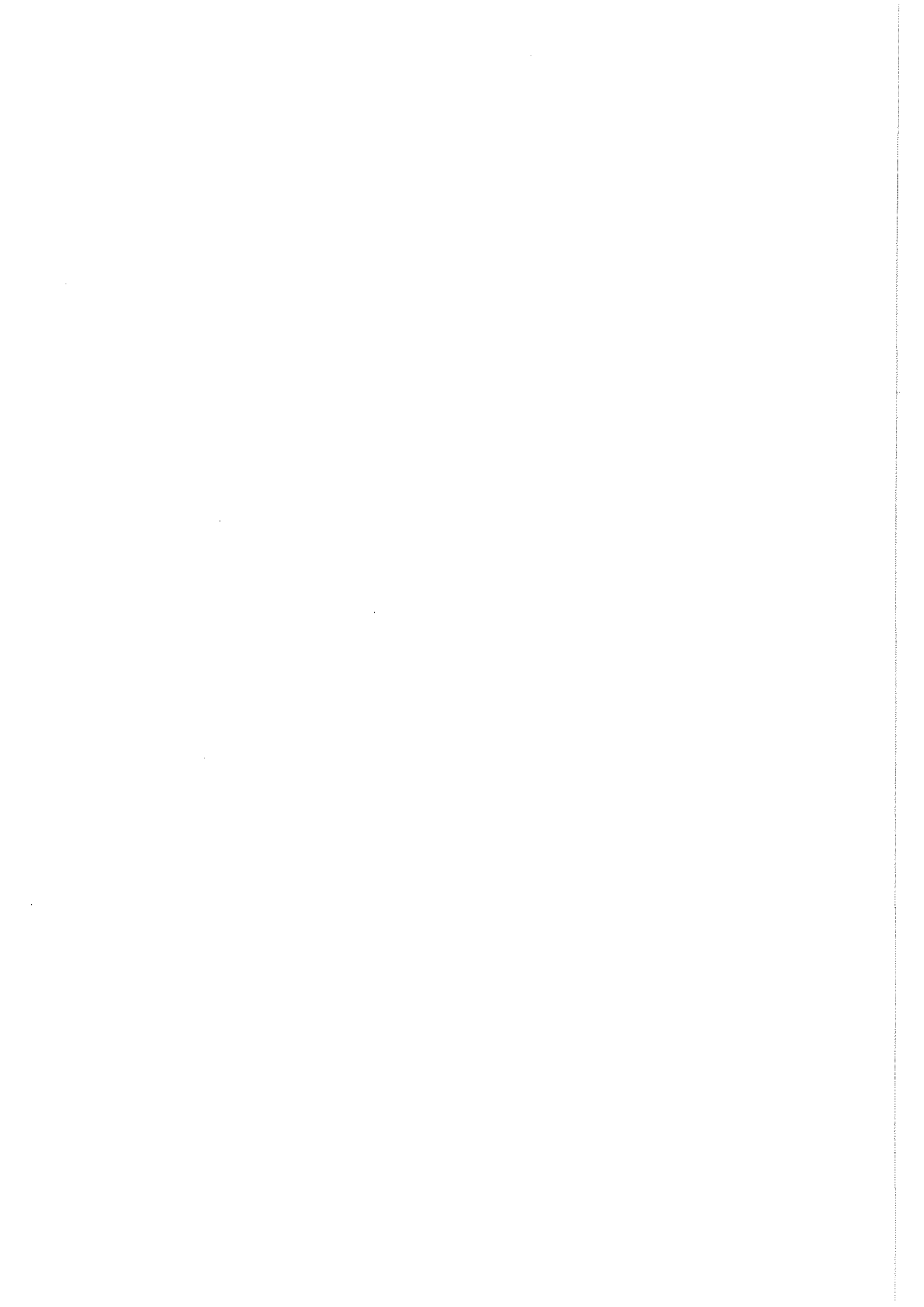
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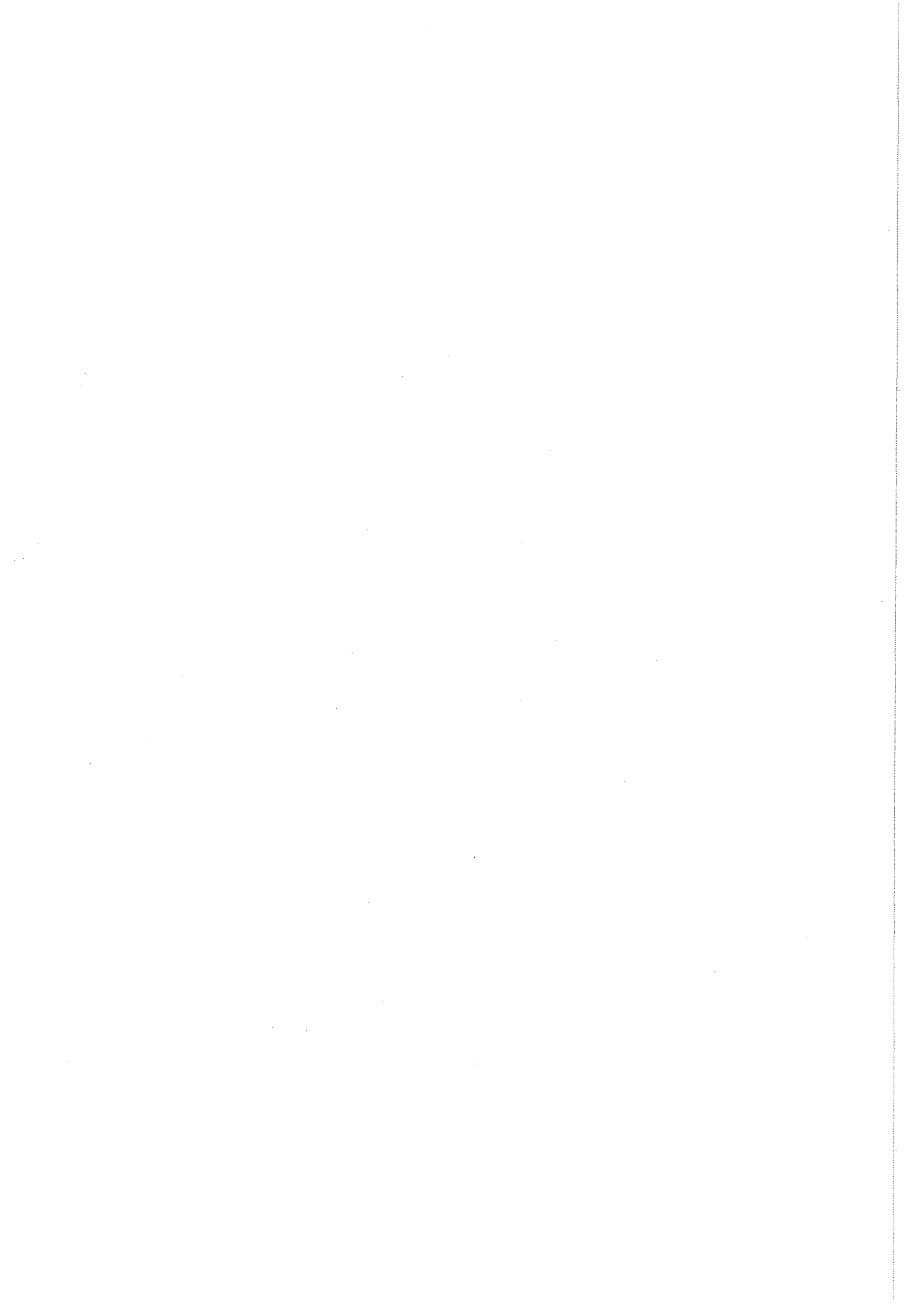
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Appendix: Public indicators of school performance

'Public' Indicators of School Effectiveness: School Summary Table				
Name of School:				
Region/LEA				
<i>(1) From the Secondary School Performance Tables (Year 11, 2002)</i>				
Comprehensive or selective (COMP, MOD, NON SEL, SEL)				
Mixed or single sex				
Type of Specialist School (A, L, S or T)				
Number of pupils on school roll				
Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements				
Percentage of pupils with SEN without statements				
Authorised absence (%)				
Unauthorised absence (%)				
GCSE/GNVQ Results 2002				
% obtaining 5 or more A*-Cs (national average 51.5 %)				
% obtaining 5 or more A*-Gs (national average 88.9%)				
% obtaining no passes(national average 5.5 %)				
Average point score per 15 year old (national average 34.7)				
Does the school offer GNVQs (at 14-16 or at 16-18)?				
Four Year progression (GCSE/GNVQ Results):	1999	2000	2001	2002
% obtaining 5 or more A*-Cs				
% obtaining at least 1 pass (100% - % gaining no passes)				
Value Added Measures (numbers based around 100)				
KS2 to KS3 (top quarter: ≥ 101.0 ; lowest quarter ≤ 98.9)				
LEA average (XX)				
KS3 to GCSE /GNVQ (top quarter: ≥ 100.5 ; lowest quarter ≤ 97.0)				
LEA average (XX)				
<i>(2) From the School and College (16-18) Performance Tables (if applicable)</i>				
16-18 Year-old students on roll:				
Comb. GCE / VCE average point score per student (nat. ave. 254.5)				
(LEA ave. XX)				
Comb. A/AS/GNVQ average point score per entry (nat. ave. 76.0)				
(LEA ave. XX)				

(3) From Ofsted Reports Database:	
Date of Inspection	
No of Exclusions (previous year): fixed	
No of Exclusions (previous year): permanent	
Quality of Teaching (three categories):	Very good or better
	Satisfactory or better
	Less than satisfactory
Pupil/Teacher Ratio:	
(4) Data from Other Sources (NFER Register of Schools)	
Catchment area/socio-econ. context (inner city/urban/mixed/rural)	
% Eligible for Free School Meals	
% English as an Additional Language (EAL)	
Length of time as a Specialist School/Affiliated to SS Trust?	
Is it a Beacon School/Involved in other initiatives (e.g. EiC)?	







50 websites for school improvement

Could you do with some help in devising new lesson plans, drawing up a work scheme, or identifying examples of good practice in literacy or numeracy teaching? Perhaps you would appreciate some ideas about using value-added data, going beyond school 'league tables', or using new forms of technology such as electronic whiteboards or video-conferencing? Help is at hand, because there are now many websites that can assist with all of these tasks and more.

But how do you locate the specific information you need within the huge, rapidly developing mass of school improvement information that is now available on the internet? This report will help by:

- ◆ identifying 50 of the most useful school improvement-related websites
- ◆ categorising these sites in terms of different aspects of school improvement
- ◆ explaining how the information contained in these sites can help.

Aimed at educational professionals of various types (classroom assistants, teachers, governors, LEA officers, school senior managers), along with interested parents, the report explains the relevance of the websites in non-technical terms and the list of hyperlinks assists quick access to the individually identified web pages.

This unique report goes considerably beyond the usual 'list of useful links'. For example, to assist with decisions about the relevance and suitability of the websites, it is divided into a number of sections, reflecting some of the main dimensions or areas of school improvement work, such as monitoring and assessment, curriculum and resources, ICT and identifying and sharing good practice.

There is coverage and commentary on all the key websites related to school improvement, including those provided by the Department for Education and Skills, the Standards Site, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the General Teaching Council, the Teacher Training Agency, the National College for School Leadership and many more besides.

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