



*Local Government Association*

# the key stage 3 national strategy: LEA and school perceptions

by Sarah Knight, Rhona McEune, Kerensa White  
and Adrian Woodthorpe  
National Foundation for Educational Research

## LGA educational research programme



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## Executive summary

This report provides an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy as perceived by local education authorities (LEAs) and schools. Its findings are based upon a survey of all LEAs in England, interviews with key personnel in four LEAs and case study work in a school selected from each of the four LEAs.

The strategy was well received by the LEAs and schools involved with this study. LEAs were using it to support and challenge schools and improve the quality of teaching and learning at key stage 3. For the schools it was an important component of the School Development Plan, a tool to improve teaching and learning in the classroom and, thereby, ultimately raise attainment.

On the whole, LEAs and schools felt well supported during the implementation of the strategy. Strategy materials were seen as good quality, useful resources. Consultants' work in schools was perceived as a key component of the successful implementation of the strategy.

LEAs and schools perceived that the strategy was making a significant contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning and had contributed to the improvement of lesson structures including the pace of lessons, the variety of teaching methods used and the focus on the learner. It had widened the debate surrounding teaching and learning methodologies.

The LEAs and schools agreed that the strategy was having a positive impact on pupils. Although many believed that the strategy would have an impact on attainment, it was too early to measure its effect.

LEAs and schools agreed that the most significant challenges for many schools in the implementation of the strategy related to: aspects of staffing; the recruitment of

quality consultants with relevant subject knowledge, classroom experience and the necessary interpersonal skills; the perceived shortage of time available to implement the strategy, especially training; gaining support from teaching staff and the active involvement of senior management; and the challenge of achieving coherence of approach across the school.

Although strengthening transition between key stages 2 and 3 was acknowledged by schools and LEAs as a key aim of the strategy, it was not perceived as a high priority for the present or for the future.

Many LEAs were optimistic about the future of the strategy believing that, given time to embed, it would lead to a change in the philosophy underpinning teaching and learning that would be self-sustaining.

Issues for consideration by LEAs and other key stakeholders raised by the research include:

- the way in which teachers' negative perceptions of the daunting quantity of materials may be improved
- the action which can be taken by LEAs to enable the support provided to schools by consultants to continue
- the means by which improvements in attainment can be monitored within and across schools such that the evidence is used formatively to support future teaching and learning
- the extent to which integrated, whole-school approaches should be emphasised in future training and support
- the management of the potentially negative impact on the success of the strategy of the perception that time and human resources in schools are too limited

- the means by which perceptions of the priority of transition from key stages 2 to 3 and progression within key stage 3 can be enhanced within the strategy
- the most effective means by which sustainable change can be embedded within schools
- the way in which the appropriate balance between central direction and local initiative is achieved.

# 1 About the project

## 1.1 Context

Launched in April 2001, the Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to 'transform the achievements of 11 to 14 year old pupils' (Morris, 2001). In July 2001, the former Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Estelle Morris explained:

*A major objective of our key stage 3 strategy is to ensure that secondary teachers are well placed to take forward the work already done in primary schools. There are many excellent teachers and many examples of good practice, but we all know that there is a long way to go before we have made the progress we need. That is why, earlier this year, we announced the introduction of a new strategy at key stage 3 to raise standards for all 11 to 14-year-olds.*

(Morris, 2001)

The strategy is based on four main principles:

- expectations: establishing high expectations for all pupils and setting challenging targets for them to achieve
- progression: strengthening the transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3 and ensuring progression in teaching and learning across key stage 3
- engagement: promoting approaches to teaching and learning that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation
- transformation: strengthening teaching and learning through a programme of professional development and practical support. (DfES, 2003)

There are five subject 'strands' to the policy: English; mathematics; science; information and communications technology (ICT); and

foundation subjects (FS). In addition to the subject strands, the strategy supports whole-school programmes, such as programmes to promote the learning of pupils who are working below national expectations. Support programmes to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance began in September 2003 (Centre for British Teachers, 2004). As part of the strategy, the Government has provided new frameworks for teaching, teaching materials for all subject strands and a professional development programme for teachers.

The strategy was piloted from September 2000, in 205 secondary schools, in 17 LEAs across England. The pilot began with the English and mathematics strands and was followed a year later by the national launch of both these strands. The nationwide roll-out of the science strand began in the summer term 2002. The introduction of the ICT and FS strands followed in September 2002 and the behaviour and attendance strand was launched in the autumn term 2003.

Previous quantitative and qualitative evaluations have focused on various aspects of the pilot of the strategy (Barnes *et al.*, 2003; National Union of Teachers, 2001; Ofsted 2002a and b; Stoll *et al.*, 2003). Findings from these evaluations have shown that, on the whole, most teachers responded well to the introduction of the strategy and valued the financial support, training and consultancy available (National Union of Teachers, 2001; Ofsted 2002a and b; Stoll *et al.*, 2003). Findings also suggest that the strategy was managed effectively by most of the pilot LEAs, who were generally making good use of the strategy to support schools, challenge pupils and improve teaching (Ofsted 2002a and b). There are also indications of positive reactions to the strategy from pupils who feel that their learning has been enhanced by clear objectives and enjoyable and active lessons (Stoll *et al.*, 2003).



However, the results of progress and optional tests of pupils in pilot schools have shown no strong patterns of impact on pupils' attainment (Ofsted 2002a).

Less positive findings have included concerns in pilot schools about over-prescriptive frameworks for teaching and a lack of clear methods for differentiating the curriculum for pupils with various levels of ability (Barnes *et al.*, 2003). Evaluations of the pilot of the strategy have also revealed concerns over the impact of implementing another government initiative on teachers' workload, finding the time and opportunity in schools for the dissemination of training, and the effect of staff recruitment and retention issues on the development of the strategy in schools (Barnes *et al.*, 2003; Stoll *et al.*, 2003).

In spring 2004, Ofsted published their evaluation of the third year of the key stage 3 strategy. It concluded that most schools were implementing key aspects of the strategy effectively and that teachers welcomed the training and other support provided. The findings indicated that the strategy was continuing to help improve teaching and was '...having an increasing effect, albeit uneven, on pupils' attainment in most schools' (Ofsted 2004). However, the full extent of the strategy's effect on results at the end of key stage 3 was not yet clear. The evaluation concluded that more work still needed to be done on the management of the strategy, to ensure a whole-school approach, and on issues such as assessment and transition.

This report is based on the study of LEA officers' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. The research was undertaken by the NFER for the Local Government Association between May 2003 and March 2004. Whereas most of the previous studies have evaluated the impact of the pilot on participating LEAs and schools, this research focuses on *perceptions* of the implementation and effectiveness of the strategy since the national roll-out.

## 1.2 Aims of the research

The overarching aim of the research was to undertake an independent, in-depth investigation of LEA officers' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. In particular the research sought to:

- document the perceived role of the LEAs in implementing the strategy and their priorities for supporting schools
- identify the key issues for LEAs and schools in implementing and managing the strategy
- explore different perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the strategy, including perceptions of its impact on teaching and learning within key stage 3
- examine different views on the future development and sustainability of the strategy.

## 1.3 Methods

### 1.3.1 Introduction

The research comprised a survey of 150 LEAs in England, in-depth interviews with LEA officers from four representative LEAs and a detailed case study in a secondary school, selected by the LEA, within each of the four LEAs. To investigate issues relating to the transition of pupils between key stages 2 and 3, interviews were also held with three teachers in primary partner schools. The fieldwork was conducted during the summer and autumn terms, 2003.

### 1.3.2 LEA survey

The LEA survey was designed to investigate the implementation and effectiveness of the strategy as perceived by LEA staff with designated responsibility for its implementation. The questionnaire comprised seven open-ended questions inviting comments on the following areas:

- the key issues for schools so far in the implementation of the strategy
- the priorities for the LEA as they supported schools in the implementation of the strategy
- any areas where the LEA thought schools needed further support in implementing the subject strands
- LEA perceptions, so far, of the overall effectiveness of the strategy
- which aspects or subject strands they perceived to have been most effective and the reasons why
- which aspects or subject strands they perceived to have been least effective and the reasons why
- any further comments.

The exclusive use of open-ended questions within the questionnaire was to enable respondents to respond freely about their perceptions of the implementation of the strategy in their LEA.

**Table 1 Responses to the LEA questionnaire survey**

Type of authority	No. of responses	% of LEA type responding
Unitary	33	51
Metropolitan	21	57
County	9	60
Outer London Borough	7	35
Inner London Borough	5	39
<b>N=75</b>		

The questionnaire was posted to the 150 LEAs in England and respondents were given four weeks in which to complete and return it to NFER. Of the 75 questionnaires returned (a response rate of 50 per cent) 33 were from unitary authorities, 21 from metropolitan authorities, nine from

county authorities and 12 from London Boroughs. Table 1 shows the achieved sample as a percentage of the type of LEA to which the questionnaire was distributed and indicates that the proportion of London Boroughs was slightly under-represented.

The format of the questionnaire enabled respondents to make as many comments as they wished in response to each question. Each comment was coded using a coding frame devised for each question with the result that the total number of comments made in response to each question exceeded the 75 questionnaires returned. Results are reported in terms of the percentage of LEAs making a particular comment.

The coding frame categorised comments of a similar nature but was sufficiently detailed to enable adequate differentiation between key messages. For example, comments relating to the retention, stability, mobility, and turnover of staff were grouped together as one category but were separated from comments relating specifically to the recruitment or identification of a strategy manager within a school. Similarly, comments relating to the perceived shortage of time for teachers in school to plan, disseminate, deliver cascade training, embed the process and spend time with consultants, were grouped together but separated from comments relating to the shortage of time or difficulties in releasing staff for strategy related activities outside school. Although this approach resulted in a loss of some precision when reporting LEA perceptions, it enabled more generic observations to be identified and reported.

Another purpose of the survey was to identify LEAs and schools for more in-depth research. To this end, LEAs were asked to provide contact details for LEA officers/advisors to be interviewed and to suggest schools for the case studies.

### 1.3.3 LEA interviews

The LEAs to be interviewed were chosen from those returning questionnaires that provided follow-up details. The criteria for the choice of LEA for this purpose included:

- their geographical location, size, type and number of schools
- the adoption of specific approaches which the LEAs considered were proving successful to overcome challenges
- the priorities identified in supporting schools in the implementation of the strategy.
- four LEA key stage 3 strategy managers
- two English consultants
- one mathematics consultant
- one science consultant
- two inspectors
- two advisors
- one executive director
- one head of a secondary support team.

The four LEAs selected for further research, therefore, were intended to be illustrative of a range of approaches and priorities and to be broadly representative of LEAs in terms of location, type and size. The four LEAs selected were:

- Bradford (Metropolitan) situated in the Yorkshire and Humber region;
- Hertfordshire (County) situated in the East region;
- Southampton (Unitary) situated in the South East region;
- Sutton (London Borough) situated in the Greater London region.

Whereas it is acknowledged that there are limitations to an in-depth study of only four LEAs in terms of evaluating general perceptions of the effectiveness of the strategy, it was considered that the outcome of the interviews, when taken alongside the questionnaire survey, enabled meaningful observation and analyses to be made which are more generally transferable.

The interviews were intended to investigate how the LEA perceived its role in supporting schools. A total of 14 LEA personnel were interviewed as follows:

The data were collected through a written interview schedule, which explored common issues but also reflected the different roles within an LEA. The interviews were scheduled to last about 45 minutes and were conducted either by telephone or face-to-face, whichever was most convenient for the interviewee. Interviewees were assured that although the LEAs would be identified their responses were confidential and that no individual would be identified in the report.

To facilitate subsequent analysis, the interviews were recorded onto mini-disc. They were then transcribed into a common framework ready for further thematic analysis using a qualitative data software package.

The areas explored during the interview included:

- the interviewee's current role and how it corresponded to their role within the strategy
- the perceived management role of the LEA in implementing the strategy
- the support from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for LEAs and schools
- funding issues

- the role of the consultant and other issues specifically related to consultants, e.g. recruitment
- the key issues for schools and the LEA surrounding the implementation of the strategy
- the perceived effectiveness of the strategy overall, including its impact on teaching and learning and the challenges of transition from Year 6 to Year 7
- the arrangements and processes within the LEA and schools for monitoring and/or evaluating the implementation of the strategy
- views on the future sustainability of the strategy and any factors that would contribute to this
- any further comments the interviewee wished to make.

The LEA interview schedules were designed to collect data from the LEA perspective. It was equally important for schools to contribute their perceptions of the ways in which they felt the LEA supported them. This was achieved through case studies in schools.

#### 1.3.4. School case studies

The case-study schools were nominated by the LEAs and selected to provide data reflecting a variety of views about the implementation of the strategy.

A two-day visit was made to each school and a total of 36 school personnel involved in the implementation of the strategy were interviewed as follows:

- four headteachers
- one assistant headteacher
- four school strategy managers
- four key stage 3 co-ordinators

- 17 heads or deputy heads of subject departments
- three Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs)
- three primary teachers.

The school case-study interviews were designed to investigate different perspectives of the role of the LEA in supporting schools to implement the strands of the strategy together with its impact in the school. The sets of data were collected through a written interview schedule, which explored common issues but reflected the different roles within the school. The interviews were scheduled to last about 45 minutes and were conducted face-to-face in the school. Each interviewee was assured the information they provided would be treated in confidence and that no individual or school would be identified in the report. Interviews were recorded onto mini-disc and subsequently transcribed into a common framework ready for further thematic analysis using a qualitative data software package.

The areas explored during the interviews included:

- brief background details of the interviewee and their role in the school
- the challenge of implementing the strategy within the school
- the management of the strategy within the school
- the role of the LEA
- training issues
- managing the transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3
- the perceived effectiveness of the strategy in improving teaching and learning
- monitoring and evaluation

- views on the sustainability of the strategy
- an invitation to make any further comments.

### 1.3.5 Summary

Data relating to the perceptions of the effectiveness of the strategy were collected in three ways:

- a survey of 150 LEAs
- structured interviews with 14 LEA personnel from four LEAs
- case studies in four secondary schools
- structured interviews with three teachers in primary partner schools.

It is recognised that as a consequence of the comparatively small number of school case studies and LEA interviews conducted, there are limitations in the ability to generalise from the findings reported in this study. However, it is considered that when combined with the findings of the open-ended questionnaire survey sent to all LEAs, the

accumulated evidence collected by the methods described offers an adequate basis for more generally transferable analysis and evaluation.

## 1.4 Outline of report structure

The report that follows presents the main research findings. It is divided into four broad chapters:

**Chapter 2** presents key findings from the LEA survey. It reports LEA officers' perceptions of the key issues for schools in implementing the strategy, the role of the LEA in supporting schools, and the overall effectiveness of the strategy to date.

**Chapters 3 and 4** provide the main findings from the case-study phase of the research. Chapter 3 examines LEA perceptions of the strategy and Chapter 4 looks at the strategy from a school perspective.

**Chapter 5** provides a summary of the main findings from the research and identifies issues for consideration by LEAs and other key stakeholders.

## 2 The LEA survey

### 2.1 Introduction

As part of the evaluation of the key stage 3 strategy, a questionnaire was sent to all 150 LEAs in England. Its purpose was to investigate the implementation of the strategy from the perspective of the LEA and, in particular, to collect information relating to its perceived effectiveness and the ways in which the LEAs supported its implementation by the schools. Each LEA was asked to respond to the following questions.

- In your experience, what have been the key issues for schools in the implementation of the strategy so far?
- What have been the priorities in your authority for supporting schools in the implementation of the key stage 3 strategy?
- What further areas of support for schools do you think are still needed in implementing the subject strands?
- What are your perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the strategy so far?
- Which aspects or subject strands have been most effective and why?
- Which aspects or subject strands have been least effective and why?

In addition to the above, respondents were invited to add any further comments about the implementation of the strategy or its perceived effectiveness.

Responses were received from 75 of the 150 LEAs. Typically, the responses to each question were detailed and included a number of specific comments. Each comment was read and categorised by an experienced analyst using a coding frame constructed for that purpose.

### 2.2 Key issues for schools

The comments from the 75 LEA respondents in response to this question are categorised in Table 2.

**Table 2 LEA perceptions of the key issues for schools in the implementation of the key stage 3 strategy**

Key issues	No. of LEAs making comment	% of LEAs making comment
Staffing - resource issues	54	72
Communication, coherence and dissemination within schools	49	65
Time shortages	45	60
Overload and volume	30	40
Curriculum planning and teaching	29	39
Limited commitment of senior staff	17	23
Staffing and consultants' positive comments	12	16
Funding	11	15
Other comments	11	15

**N=75**

*A total of 75 LEAs gave at least one response to this question  
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100*

From the perspective of the LEA, the three most significant issues facing schools in the implementation of the strategy related to aspects of staffing, the challenge of achieving coherence of approach across the school and the perceived shortage of time available to meet the demands made by the strategy. Related to these was the perception of a general overload of the demands placed on schools in terms of the volume of materials and training requirements.

#### 2.2.1 Staffing

The most significant staffing issue facing schools was perceived to be the recruitment and retention of staff (27 per cent of LEAs).

When combined with comments highlighting the difficulty of identifying a suitably qualified member of school staff to lead the strategy (19 per cent of LEAs), those noting a perceived shortage of experienced staff in key subject areas to deliver the strategy (7 per cent of LEAs), those noting problems in obtaining supply cover for staff involved in other aspects of its implementation (13 per cent of LEAs) and other generally negative comments (13 per cent of LEAs), it is clear that the challenge of finding appropriate professional resources to implement the strategy was perceived as a major issue for most schools.

An additional issue for some schools was perceived to be the limited level of commitment to the strategy from the senior management (23 per cent of LEAs). This was perceived to be more noticeable in the early stages of the implementation process and more prevalent in selective schools. One respondent observed the strategy did not engage SLT/SMT early enough so the impetus for reform took longer than it should have done.

Many respondents noted that the staffing issues were interrelated. A high turnover of staff within a school, for example, had implications for training because new staff had to receive the training others had already undertaken. Difficulties finding supply cover were related to the ability of schools to release staff for such training. A number of LEAs reported that problems were more acute in some subject strands than in others; mathematics, ICT and science were specifically identified. One LEA commented that 'high turnover and teacher shortages mean that there are no teachers in some departments to implement the strategy'.

The difficulty some schools experienced in finding an experienced member of staff to be the key stage 3 strategy manager also impacted on the ability of the school to manage staff resource issues and to implement the strategy within the school.

These staffing issues were perceived to have implications for the sustainability of the strategy.

## 2.2.2 Time issues

Closely associated with the availability and management of human resources in schools was the perception of the limited availability of time resources. Respondents commented on the perceived shortage of time in school for the planning and management of the strategy, working with consultants, providing quality time to complete audits and action plans and for delivering cascade training. The tension for schools between releasing staff to attend training associated with the implementation of the strategy and wishing teachers to remain in the classroom to teach and raise standards, was perceived as a key issue. LEAs reported particular problems releasing senior school staff at critical times of the school year.

Demands on time resources made by the strategy included perceptions of an 'overload' represented by training requirements, the need to read the materials, the completion of sometimes complicated paperwork and the existence of other initiatives such as Excellence in Cities, the 14-19 agenda, and the Behaviour Improvement Programme.

## 2.2.3 Communication, coherence and dissemination

It was perceived that time and human resource constraints impacted on the ability of some schools to develop a coherent approach to the strategy. Effective communication and dissemination across the school and within departments influenced the success of the implementation of the strategy. Comments emphasising the need to ensure 'joined-up thinking' within the school, 'getting coherence', 'seeing the bigger picture', 'co-ordinating activity', 'communication' and 'staff working together' are illustrative of many of those made.

One LEA, representative of the views of many others, commented:

*Coverage of departments in the foundation subjects (FS) is an issue; there has been little evidence of cross-subject development in school, i.e. English or maths departments sharing training with the FS and other subjects.*

Another noted more positively.

*As the strategy has grown and impacted upon all teachers and as more systematic meetings were held with school strategy managers, schools have responded more positively to the strategy direction.*

### 2.2.4 Curriculum planning and teaching

Coping with change, and changes to teaching practice, was identified as an issue for some schools. With the introduction of the three-part lesson some teachers had had to change their approach to lessons and this created some problems for specific subject areas, like ICT. Respondents reported issues of ensuring a continued focus on cross-curricular numeracy and literacy. The transition of students between the key stages and the effective transfer of data and its use in target settings were also noted as issues for schools. The following comments are representative of others:

*Transition is also key in convincing teachers to build on the good practice/progress embedded in key stage 2 provision.*

*Schools are beginning to fully recognise the importance of assessment and how it informs the setting of learning and curricular targets for individual pupils and teaching groups.*

**Table 3 LEA priorities in providing support to schools**

Priorities	No. of LEAs making comment	% of LEAs making comment
Management and organisational structures	63	84
Quality of teaching and learning	49	65
Training and support to teachers	38	51
Appointment and use of consultants	33	44
Other	3	4
<b>N=75</b>		

*A total of 75 LEAs gave at least one response to this question  
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100*

## 2.3 The role of the LEA

### 2.3.1 LEA priorities in providing support to schools

The comments from the 75 LEA respondents, in response to the question asking them to identify their priorities in providing support to schools, were categorised into four main areas, as shown in Table 3.

#### Management and organisational structures

The most frequently reported priority of the LEAs was the establishment and maintenance of management and organisational structures. This included setting up links with schools and managing the flow of information to them (29 per cent of LEAs), helping schools with their whole-school planning (23 per cent of LEAs) and establishing communication between schools to share best practice (17 per cent of LEAs). The need for these structures to be flexible and differentiated (40 per cent of LEAs) so as to meet the needs of all schools (17 per cent of LEAs) was frequently stressed by the LEA respondents.

Encouraging the schools' senior management team, strategy steering groups and strategy manager to have a coherent approach to ensure consistent implementation across each school, was seen as a crucial role for LEAs and providing support for them to achieve this was a priority. Another frequently identified LEA priority in providing support schools to implement the strategy was to ensure clear communication channels both between the school and the LEA, and between schools.

#### Quality of teaching and learning

Within the LEA, priority for supporting schools in the quality of teaching and learning, helping schools to monitor and evaluate the impact of the strategy, and its success in raising attainment, were most frequently identified by the LEA respondents (32 per cent of LEAs). Another frequently identified means of supporting the quality of teaching and learning was to provide assistance in embedding the strategy within each school's development plan to achieve



greater coherence and consistency of approach across departments (27 per cent of LEAs). To better ensure the quality of teaching and learning, the provision of training and support for teachers as part of the implementation of the strategy was a priority for LEAs.

At a wider level, the priority of the LEA was to identify perceived underperformance across schools and between departments and to target support to such schools and departments in order for them to address the areas of underperformance (24 per cent of LEAs).

One respondent explained 'our priority has been to establish a consistent pedagogy which increases the level of challenge in all lessons in key stage 3.'

#### Consultants

The priorities for LEAs regarding consultants were their recruitment, retention and training. Some respondents were concerned about the availability of consultants and felt that consultants were being spread very thinly across the schools. For others, enhancing the quality of their training to improve their school-based consultancy work was a priority. Respondents considered that consultants needed to focus on teaching and learning through joint planning with schools to help implement the strategy successfully and needed to visit every secondary school in their LEA in order to support teachers.

#### 2.3.2 Further priorities for LEA support to schools in the subject strands

Table 4 presents the further areas of support that LEAs felt schools needed to implement the subject strands. The main priorities are the same as those identified as general LEA priorities; respondents' comments were very frequently prefixed by 'more' or 'continued'. It is of note, however, that for the subject strands the balance of perceived support needed is more on the quality of teaching and learning, and the training needed to enhance the skills of teachers, than on organisational and management issues.

**Table 4 Further priorities for LEA support to schools in the subject strands**

Further areas of support for schools:	No. of LEAs making comment	% of LEAs making comment
Quality of teaching and learning	55	73
Training and support for teachers	34	45
Management and organisational structures	27	36
Appointment and use of consultants	16	21
Other	35	47
<b>N=75</b>		

*A total of 75 LEAs gave at least one response to this question  
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100*

#### Quality of teaching and learning

There was a perceived need for more or continued emphasis on embedding the strategy in the whole school (49 per cent of LEAs). There was also a perceived need for more or continued emphasis on monitoring and evaluating the strategy's impact in schools and departments, including target setting, raising standards (28 per cent of LEAs) and the identification of underperformance (8 per cent of LEAs). Seven per cent of LEA respondents advocated the need for more school self evaluation and seven per cent advocated the need for more emphasis on Assessment for Learning.

Of those LEAs that considered further training was required (45 per cent of LEAs) particular emphasis was given to the needs of subject specialists and heads of department (16 per cent of LEAs) and school managers (nine per cent of LEAs). Four LEA respondents (five per cent) considered that less cascade training was needed.

#### Management and organisational structures

Management and organisational structures featured less significantly in the further support needed to implement the subject strands than training or the quality of teaching. Amongst those LEA respondents identifying management issues to be significant, some considered that more flexibility was needed in response to school

needs (12 per cent of LEAs) and others that more help and assistance with school planning was needed (11 per cent of LEAs).

Other comments (echoing concerns noted elsewhere) indicated that schools needed more time resources (17 per cent of LEAs), protection from initiative overload (11 per cent of LEAs) and help to assist transition between key stages (12 per cent of LEAs).

## 2.4 Perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the strategy

The LEA perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the key stage 3 strategy were categorised as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 Perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the strategy**

Perceptions of strategy	No. of LEAs making comment	% of LEAs making comment
Has improved teaching and learning	57	76
A positive impact on schools but with emphasis on its variability	26	35
Has improved staff commitment	25	33
Positive impact (non-specific)	14	19
Effective use of consultants	13	17
Support materials well received	12	16
Effectiveness limited by range of factors	7	9
Has improved communication between key stages	6	8
Has raised the profile of the key stage	6	8
Other	9	12

**N=75**

*A total of 75 LEAs gave at least one response to this question  
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100*

The overwhelming perception from the perspective of the LEAs is that the strategy has had a positive impact on schools, teachers and learning. The most frequently held perception was that it had improved lesson structures (55 per cent of LEAs) including the pace of lessons,

the variety of teaching methods used and the focus on the learner. Specific reference was made to the benefits of the 'three-part lesson' by nine (12 per cent) of LEAs. The strategy had also improved the overall focus of the school (27 per cent of LEAs), and encouraged reflective practice in teachers (24 per cent of LEAs).

Comments indicated that the improvement was, however, variable and depended upon factors such as the effectiveness of senior management support (other than the school strategy manager) (16 per cent), the effectiveness of the school strategy manager (nine per cent), and that it varied also between subjects (nine per cent).

A quarter of LEAs commented that staff commitment had improved.

One respondent represented the views of many others by commenting that improved effectiveness came from

*...involving pupils in their learning, getting greater cross-school co-operation, giving structure to teaching and learning and getting teachers thinking/talking about learning.*

Other typical comments were as follows:

*There is greater impact of the strategy in schools where there is a whole school focus to teaching and learning.*

*The strategy is most effective in schools where the SMT and strategy manager have a good grasp of the principles and provide strong support.*

*It is very effective when integrated into a whole school improvement agenda.*

*A lot of good ideas have been implemented e.g. better transition, mentoring, use of catch-up materials – focus on under-achieving pupils.*

*Teachers are receptive to support and value it.*

*Schools know where to get support and it is well-targeted.*

## 2.5 Perceptions of the most and least effective aspects or subject strands

LEAs were asked to identify those aspects of the strategy and the subject strands they felt were most or least effective and to give reasons why they thought this to be the case. Of the comments made in response to this question, most concentrated on identifying aspects of effectiveness and only a few gave reasons for the effectiveness.

### 2.5.1 Areas perceived to be most effective

Table 6 details the comments received in response to this question.

**Table 6** LEA perceptions of most effective aspects or strands

Most effective aspects or strands	No. of LEAs making comment	% of LEAs making comment
Quality of teaching and learning	39	52
Use of consultants	25	33
Support materials	24	32
Communication within schools	23	31
English strand	20	27
Foundation Strand	20	27
Training support (excluding materials)	18	24
Mathematics strand	18	24
Generally improved achievement/impact	14	19
ICT strand	8	11
Generally raised expectations	8	11
Science strand	6	8
Other (i.e. management/LEA/funding/co-operation between schools)	15	20

**N=75**

74 out of 75 LEAs gave at least one response to this question  
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100.

The most frequently reported effective aspect of the strategy was considered to be its impact on improving teaching and learning (52 per cent of LEAs). One quarter of

the LEAs commented that teaching and learning in the classroom had improved and a similar proportion specifically mentioned improvements to lesson planning and the adoption of the three-part lesson.

Another frequently identified effective aspect of the strategy was the quality of the support materials (32 per cent of LEAs). Related aspects include the perception that the support provided through training (25 per cent) and by consultants (33 per cent of LEAs) were most effective.

It was perceived that communication within schools, encompassing cross curriculum co-ordination, internal networking and shared working, had also been an effective outcome of the strategy (31 per cent of LEAs).

Regarding the subject strands, English, mathematics and the Foundation Strands were perceived to have been most effective parts of the strategy. The most frequent reason given for this was that they were the first to be introduced.

Typical comments included:

*Where a whole school approach to the Foundation Strand has been adopted (i.e. whole staff training and follow up in classes and departments) the impact has been great. Each strand and each facet has been successful in different contexts.*

*The training materials have been very well received because they have been easy to access and have provided practical ideas that teachers have been able to successfully implement.*

*The opportunity for teachers to talk about teaching (with a common language).*

*The focus of teaching and learning objectives and expected pupil outcome is revolutionising teaching.*

*The numeracy framework has fixed up maths teaching to be more exciting and inventive, [the] literacy framework [has] given English*

teachers a structure within which there is profitable debate on improved teaching and raising expectations.

### 2.5.2 Areas perceived to be least effective

The comments from LEAs included those for which a perceived lack of effectiveness, and the reasons for lack of effectiveness, overlapped, e.g. communication within the school. The most frequent comments are listed in Table 7. The large number of 'other' comments are spread widely across 26 separate categories of the coding frame and form no general pattern.

**Table 7 LEA perceptions of least effective aspects and strands**

Least effective aspects or strands	No. of LEAs making comment	% of LEAs making comment
Communication within school	25	33
Commitment/effectiveness of more senior staff	22	29
Time shortages/overload	15	20
Timing/sequencing of introduction	13	17
ICT strand	10	16
Staffing shortages	9	13
Foundation Strand	8	12
Numeracy	8	11
English strand	8	11
Booster/catch-up/SEN/ special schools	8	11
Literacy strand	7	9
Materials – lateness	7	9
Materials – unsuitability/quality	5	7
Materials – too many	2	3
Other	57	76

**N=75**

*71 out of 75 LEAs gave at least one response to this question  
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100.*

The aspect of the strategy perceived to be least effective was in facilitating improved communication within the school encompassing cross curriculum co-ordination, internal networking and shared working. It is of note, however, that a similar proportion of

LEAs (see Table 7) considered this to be the most effective area of improvement.

Consistent with earlier responses, some respondents felt that the strategy was less effective than it could be because senior staff or subject leaders were resisting change. Perceived time shortages and overload on teachers were also reasons given why the strategy lacked effectiveness, as were the lateness and suitability of materials. Some noted that the timing and sequencing of the introduction of the strands had caused difficulties.

ICT was felt to be the least effective strand (16 per cent of LEAs). The following comments are illustrative of LEA officers' perceptions of why ICT was least effective:

*ICT was not made a timetabling/staffing priority.*

*They [the teachers] would prefer ICT to be a cross-curricular strand instead of a discrete subject.*

*ICT [is] slower to move because of hardware, timetabling and staffing issues.*

## 2.6 Other comments

The final question offered LEA respondents the opportunity to add any further issues they wished to raise. The 179 comments covered a wide range of issues, which in general, reinforced earlier responses. Twenty-one out of 75 LEA officers did not respond to this question. The most frequent response was that the strategy needed a longer period to become firmly embedded within schools (20 per cent of LEAs).

## 2.7 Summary of key findings

- The overall perception from the LEA survey is that the strategy was being well received in schools and that it was making a significant improvement to teaching and learning. It had

contributed to the improvement of lesson structures including the pace of lessons, the variety of teaching methods used and the focus on the learner.

- From the perspective of the LEA, the three most significant issues facing schools in the implementation of the key stage 3 strategy related to aspects of staffing, the perceived shortage of time available to meet the demands made by the strategy and the challenge of achieving coherence of approach across the school. Related to these was the perception of a general overload of the demands placed on schools in terms of the volume of materials and training requirements. Staffing issues were perceived to have implications for the sustainability of the strategy.
- The most frequently reported priority of the LEAs was the establishment and maintenance of management and organisational structures. Encouraging the schools' senior management teams, strategy steering groups and strategy managers to have a coherent approach to ensure consistent implementation across a school was a crucial role. Another frequently identified LEA priority was to ensure clear communication channels within schools and between the school and the LEA.
- The use of consultants was perceived to be successful. The immediate priorities for LEAs regarding consultants were their recruitment, retention and training. In the future it was anticipated that the priority would be to maximise their impact in schools.
- It was perceived that the support materials were of good quality although there were some reservations about the timeliness of their availability.
- The LEA priority for supporting schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the future included helping to embed the strategy within the school's development plan to achieve greater coherence and consistency of approach across departments, and helping to monitor and evaluate the impact of the strategy and its success in raising attainment. At a wider level, the priority was to identify perceived underperformance across schools and between departments and to target support to such schools and departments in order for them to address the areas of underperformance.

## 3 Case study findings: the LEA perspective

This chapter presents the main findings from the case study interviews with LEA personnel. It discusses LEAs' perceptions of:

- the implementation and management of the strategy
- the overall effectiveness of the strategy
- the future development of the strategy.

### 3.1 The implementation and management of the strategy

#### 3.1.1 Main aims and priorities

Interviewees reported two main priorities in relation to the key stage 3 strategy: to tackle underachievement and raise levels of attainment, and to improve the quality of teaching and learning at key stage 3. One LEA officer explained: 'we want to target groups of schools that we've identified as causing concern. We're also targeting some departments within schools, where the school in general isn't causing us concern but the departments might be'.

Another interviewee commented, 'we want to improve teaching and learning across the whole key stage, so that it is far more engaging, so that kids don't switch off and become bored'.

Other priorities mentioned by a small number of interviewees included narrowing the gap between the high attaining and high achieving schools and the underperforming schools, improving the quality of subject leadership at key stage 3, and enhancing transition between key stages 2 and 3.

#### 3.1.2 Support from DfES

LEAs had received various forms of support from the DfES during the implementation of the strategy, including financial support,

support from regional and senior directors, regional networks and strategy materials.

#### Financial support

The amount of funding received in relation to the key stage 3 strategy varied according to the size of the authority. Each authority retained a sum of money for the management of the strategy, which covered venue costs for training, management time, consultants' salaries and the 'necessary equipment they need to do the job' such as laptops and mobile phones. Each authority also received funding to distribute to schools to implement the strategy. The total amount of money each school received varied depending on the perceived level of need. Schools were given a general grant to include cover for teachers and school strategy managers to attend training. In addition to this, intervention grants were available for LEAs to channel funding into the schools in most need of additional support. One LEA strategy manager explained: 'we targeted low attaining schools and particularly those with pupils stuck at level 4, that is pupils who come in, in Year 7 at level 4 and are still at level 4 in Year 9. And of course that should never happen'.

Most interviewees felt that the amount of funding received to implement the strategy was reasonable, and liked the flexibility of being able to channel resources into their priority schools or departments.

#### Regional and senior director support

LEAs had contact with a regional director from each of the strategy strands. The directors were largely seen as having a monitoring role, although they also provided support and guidance and shared information and examples of good practice with strategy teams. The regional directors met with strategy managers once a term. 'They monitor how we have implemented

the strategy, what our successes are, where we see any barriers'. In two authorities, interviewees also reported that support was available for strategy managers from senior directors.

Views on the usefulness of support provided by regional directors varied. A number of interviewees reported that they had good working relationships with their regional directors and that there was a 'human side to their support'. In general, directors were seen as being most effective in LEAs when they were able 'to challenge as well as support' strategy teams. In the words of one interviewee, 'what we don't welcome is people who come with a message on high and they are really no support and are just there to monitor'. Another interviewee was concerned about a perceived inconsistency across the strands in 'how or what they support'. This interviewee stated:

*Some of the strands heavily monitor. There is a little bit of dictation. I think sometimes they forget... that LEAs are also autonomous. I think there should perhaps be some code of practice a bit like the LEA/school relationship where the support is in proportion to the need. When you have got a good LEA like us... sometimes we get overkill. As a good authority I think we are over monitored and sometimes I want to say 'lay off'.*

### **Regional network meetings**

Strategy managers in each of the LEAs mentioned that they had attended regional network meetings. The meetings provided an opportunity for regional directors to feed back national messages and present new materials and for strategy managers to network with colleagues in other LEAs and share effective practice. In general, the opportunity to meet with other strategy managers was warmly received, as illustrated by one interviewee: 'it's a very, very important way of coming back to the centre of the strategy and seeing how others are getting on. [We get a] huge benefit from the informal links'. Another interviewee welcomed what

she saw as a move away from the 'death by content' of earlier meetings, where new materials were presented in detail, towards '...a chance to network with other colleagues and see what other LEAs are doing'.

### **Materials and guidance**

LEAs had received a large amount of materials on different aspects of the strategy. On the whole, the materials were well received and felt to be of good quality, as one consultant explained: 'as a teacher of 21 years, I can say there are some fantastic materials in there. There are some really good ways to help pupils learn and to inspire teachers to do something a little bit different'. A strategy manager stated 'they are very useful at teacher level and strategy manager level, and in fact we are disseminating those materials across our advisory service and division because they are useful to all of us'.

Other forms of support mentioned by one or two interviewees included annual training dates, training for consultants and a termly letter from the national director, which provided information on each of the strands.

### **3.1.3 LEA roles and responsibilities**

Interviewees perceived the role of the LEA as strategically to manage the implementation of the key stage 3 strategy and to provide training, support and direction to schools. In two authorities, interviewees also viewed the role of the LEA as a 'filter' between the government strategy and schools: 'it's down to us to take what the strategy offers, and help our schools by filtering and proposing things to them'. Similarly, another interviewee noted, 'there are masses of materials. We know teachers and SMT can feel overwhelmed. One of our key roles is to mediate this material'.

In each LEA a key stage 3 strategy manager had been appointed with responsibilities for the strategic development and overall direction of the strategy. In three of the four case study LEAs, strategy managers also had additional posts (for example as inspectors or advisors) or areas of responsibility within

their authority. In most LEAs, senior consultants or advisors were appointed as management leads for each of the strategy strands and were responsible for line-managing a number of consultants. The actual number of consultants in each authority varied, largely depending on the size of the LEA. The largest authority had the equivalent of 20 full time consultants; the smallest had five consultancy posts, although only three consultants had been appointed. The consultants were seen as having an operational role, described by one strategy manager as the 'front line troops'. Their varied role involved going into schools to work with and support individual class teachers, heads of department and/or whole departments. A consultant explained:

*We are ambassadors of the key stage 3 strategy, so a lot of the materials we use for training we try to get implemented within the schools. The materials contain ideas about lesson planning and curriculum planning. It's very much classroom based.*

A strategy manager emphasised the importance of the consultants' role as a 'critical friend'. 'They are about support, but they're not supporting anyone unless they are being firm and challenging them – not only showing [teachers] their strengths but also showing them where they could develop'.

The exact nature of the role could vary considerably according to the needs of the school, as one consultant explained:

*It depends really on staffing situations; whether the head of department is experienced or not and whether the department is fully staffed. If a department is made up with a lot of overseas staff or supply staff then you've got to give an awful lot of support. If the department is more established with a lot of experienced staff, it's a case of developing new approaches to teaching within the department.*

### **3.1.4 Methods of implementation**

The case study authorities had broadly followed the strategy's implementation model, starting with the launch of the English and maths strands, then the science, ICT and foundation subject strands. One of the case study authorities had been involved in the pilot of the strategy, which ran from April 2000 to March 2002. During the pilot, one consultant worked within each strand and a total of 14 schools were involved. Each strand had a year's pilot and then was launched:

*We just followed the strategy's implementation, roll-out and launch model. We didn't do anything different although we did have the advantage of during the pilot time all the school strategy managers from the pilot schools were a strategic group, a reference group and a focus for us in terms of monitoring the pilot and in terms of future developments.*

In all case study LEAs, the initial launch began with central training for teachers and strategy managers. Schools were given funding to support the implementation of the strategy, which they were able to use flexibly to support a range of activities including summer schools and booster classes. Schools were also offered consultancy and further training activities.

The amount of funding, training and consultancy support received varied between schools and authorities. In most authorities, each secondary school had access to all the training programmes and received consultancy support. Each consultant worked with teachers in every school, although the actual amount of time they spent in school varied according to the level of need. This model could not be sustained in the largest LEA, which instead had a rolling programme of consultancy support. In this authority, each consultant worked with approximately ten schools per year. The rolling programme meant that all of the consultants would work with each of the schools, at some point.



### 3.1.5 Monitoring and evaluation

Each LEA had arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate the strategy. In most cases, this involved the collation of oral/informal feedback from teachers and members of the school management team. Strategy managers reported that they had visited schools, to talk with members of staff and see the type of work taking place for themselves. In one LEA, the strategy manager had also interviewed pupils to find out what impact the strategy was having on them. Consultants met regularly with individual teachers and heads of department to review progress and discuss further areas of support. In some LEAs, a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation system was in place. For example, in one LEA consultants used 'support programmes', which contained details of areas that a department within a school needed to develop and a range of success criteria against which progress could be measured. In this LEA, consultants reviewed, on an on-going basis and at the end of the school year, the extent to which the objectives and success criteria had been met. If they wished, line managers could access the support programmes, which were kept electronically on a shared computer network area, and monitor the work that was taking place.

Several interviewees also mentioned that the strategy was monitored at a national level by regional directors, shadowing consultants on visits to schools and discussing progress with strategy teams.

In each of the case study LEAs, the strategy was also monitored, more indirectly, as part of authorities' normal cycle of monitoring and evaluation (e.g. through supported self-evaluations, inspections and annual reviews of school data) and as part of external HMI, Ofsted or DfES evaluations and inspections.

Other methods of evaluating the strategy mentioned by a small number of interviewees included via feedback from other support teams working in the schools and as part of schools' own performance management.

### 3.1.6 Key issues in the implementation of the strategy

Interviewees were asked about the key issues in relation to the implementation of the strategy. The key issues were perceived to be the recruitment and retention of quality consultants; gaining support from senior school management and teaching staff; the experience of a department; the number of strategy materials; and the dissemination of training.

#### The recruitment of quality consultants

The recruitment of quality consultants was perceived to be a key issue in the implementation of the strategy. In the words of one strategy manager: 'having a band of very good consultants enables the strategy to work well across a range of areas'. Most LEAs had experienced difficulties in recruiting consultants; poor pay (particularly in relation to teaching salaries) and a lack of clear career progression were felt to be to blame. One strategy manager explained: 'we have had to actively go out to try and persuade people, before we put national adverts in, for them to even consider the role of a consultant'. Interviewees in one authority, where two consultancy posts remained available, emphasised the difficulty of finding quality candidates: 'we have been very careful only to recruit the best. We could have appointed but we won't appoint somebody who isn't very good'. Another interviewee in the same authority agreed: 'getting the right people to be consultants, that's the only thing that's held us back. We don't lack for ideas or enthusiasm – it's just the bodies to do it'.

The 'right people' for the consultancy role were perceived to be experienced and effective classroom practitioners with excellent interpersonal skills, as one LEA officer explained:

*They need to be able to communicate well with other adults and teachers. They also need the ability to take teachers along with them, without telling teachers what*

*to do. If you tell teachers what to do, it raises their hackles. You do it through example and sensitivity. They are very advanced personal and professional skills.*

LEAs also felt it was important to appoint people who were 'keen and knowledgeable about pedagogy' and had 'intensive subject knowledge' as consultants needed to be able to command respect in these areas when they were in schools.

All four of the consultants interviewed as part of the research were experienced teachers who had worked as heads of department prior to taking up the consultancy role. These consultants felt that their school management experience was useful to their current role, in terms of helping people plan and manage change, however they perceived the most important skill to be the ability to 'get on with people'.

#### **Gaining support from senior school management and teaching staff**

A number of interviewees felt that the strategy had been implemented most effectively where 'the senior team are fully on board and the heads of department and staff want to be involved'. Another consultant agreed: 'if the head of department is co-operative and willing to move forward then there aren't really any issues. Not all of them are like that though!'

#### **The experience of a department**

The level of teaching experience within a department or school was also perceived to be a key factor in the implementation of the strategy. Consultants reported that it could be quite difficult to implement the strategy in schools where departments were not fully staffed, or had a lot of inexperienced staff: 'I think this is because some of these teachers are having quite a difficult time already. It can be difficult for them to see the whole picture of the strategy'.

#### **The number of strategy materials**

On the whole, strategy materials were perceived to be of good quality and were

seen by many interviewees as useful resources for LEAs and teachers. However, concerns were raised that due to the 'sheer number of materials' heads of department might not be able to take all the ideas on board or have the time to implement them. Most interviewees however, believed that there were plans to reduce the number of new materials being produced, and that this would enable LEAs and schools to consolidate and build on the materials they already had.

#### **The dissemination of training**

The manner in which training was disseminated was a key issue for many interviewees. It was felt that the 'cascade model' of training (where a teacher attends training and then disseminates the ideas presented, to colleagues) had implications for the effective implementation of the strategy. Concerns were raised that this approach relied on whoever attended the training being able to influence other staff. Several interviewees noted that schools often sent inexperienced staff that did not have 'the clout to get things moving in the department'. The best way of ensuring effective dissemination was felt to be if two teachers attended the training: 'it has more impact than when just one person goes'. However, interviewees recognised that this would not be possible in schools already struggling to find appropriate cover to release one teacher.

Time was also a factor in the effective dissemination of training, as one interviewee explained: 'the worry I have is when they go back into school, management aren't able, for all sorts of reasons, to find time to allow dissemination of that message across the school, or even across the department'. A consultant agreed, 'a lot of the schools haven't got an approach that works for feedback within the department and teachers only get five minutes at the end of a department meeting to say what they have found out on a whole day's course'.

Other key factors in the implementation of the strategy were felt to be: the low political profile

of the strategy (which could make it difficult for LEAs to engage headteachers), and a high staff turnover in underperforming schools (which meant that developed skills or practices could be lost when teachers moved on).

### **3.2 LEA perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the strategy**

All of the interviewees perceived the strategy to have had a positive impact on the schools involved. In particular, the strategy was seen as being effective in 'getting people thinking about teaching and learning again'. One interviewee explained: 'in the staffroom [teachers] have pedagogical discussions, which they did not have before. Departments are starting to talk to other departments because they have similar materials, and they are talking the same language now'. As a result, most interviewees felt that the quality of teaching and learning in schools had improved, as one interviewee noted: 'in some schools it has made a huge difference to teaching... teachers are trying to make their lessons more interesting for students... and more student-orientated'.

Most interviewees attributed many of the positive effects of the strategy to the quality of the consultancy in schools: 'if the consultants are poor or not committed... then nothing works'. LEAs felt that they had been able to appoint some 'terrific individuals, right out of the classroom' who (via the provision of resources, ideas and practical demonstrations) were able to give some teachers the confidence and enthusiasm to try new ways of teaching.

The aspects of the strategy which 'directly effect the classroom' such as three-part lessons and frameworks with teaching objectives were also generally perceived as contributing to the overall effectiveness of the strategy:

*Having a three-part lesson that you actually plan towards – teachers thinking about what they want children to learn, thinking about objectives, sharing those with the pupils and then at the end of the lesson reviewing progress against those objectives, these are the things that are most important and are the things that really make a difference to the classroom. That kind of planning makes [the subject] more enjoyable, useful and better for the children and more interactive and enjoyable for the teachers. Where you see lessons where they have planned to that degree it's terrific what you see in the classroom.*

A small number of interviewees, however, were more sceptical about the impact of these aspects of the strategy and felt that the use of starters and keywords, for example, represented only a superficial change in teaching style. However, these aspects were perceived as an important starting point in affecting change and these interviewees believed that the strategy would have an impact in the long-term. One consultant explained:

*I see it as a long-term strategy rather than a short-term one... if you are talking about changing people's teaching and learning philosophy, any improvement in secondary schools isn't a short-term issue, it takes three, four or five years to embed.*

Only a minority of interviewees felt that the strategy had had an impact on attainment, although again, most interviewees perceived that given time to embed, it would have an impact in the future. Where the strategy was perceived as having an impact on attainment, strategy managers reported 'steady improvements' in Ofsted reports, 'raw data' and key stage 3 English and mathematics results. One interviewee stated, 'it's a modest improvement and we still have a long way to go... but there is real evidence that we are having an impact in these areas'.

### 3.3 LEA perceptions on the future of the strategy

Almost all of those interviewed felt that involvement in the key stage 3 strategy had been a positive experience and commented that they would like to see the strategy continue in the future.

In the short-term, the majority of interviewees highlighted the need for time to consolidate materials and allow the changes in practice to embed. One interviewee acknowledged: 'it needs to be paced. In order to see an impact on results, the strategy needs to be sustained. We need to keep up the support and give it time'.

During the next couple of years, most interviewees expected the government's financial support to continue and for the strategy to remain central to their authority's school improvement agenda. During this period, two strategy managers perceived that the regional directors' role would be phased out and that the strategy would be 'more locally driven and managed'.

In the longer-term, strategy managers in two authorities envisaged their role as, 'in one sense, to write ourselves out of the script, so that schools do collaborative training together, and the school day allows time for refreshing and coaching to be embedded into daily practice'.

There was a general consensus amongst interviewees, that government funding would cease in the long-term and that, in the words of one strategy manager, schools would need to be 'weaned off a dependency on consultancy'. Many interviewees hoped that a 'residue of key knowledge and consultancy skills' would still be available to schools: 'I don't see a future where there is not a body of knowledge, who can bring a critical eye, not an Ofsted eye, but a pedagogical eye to schools... as a critical friend'.

Interviewees' views differed as to the long-term sustainability of the strategy without continued funding. A small group of interviewees questioned whether it would be possible to sustain the strategy at all, without financial support, as one interviewee explained: 'as soon as the consultants are taken away and there is no money to attend training, I have a horrible feeling people will drift back into old, secure, inappropriate ways'. Several interviewees felt that the only way the strategy could be sustained was if the consultants were 'kept on board'. Other issues, perceived as affecting the sustainability of the strategy included, high staff turnover (which meant that improved practice could be lost when teachers moved on) and the introduction of 'yet more initiatives' which could change schools' priorities.

Other interviewees were more optimistic about the future, perceiving that in some schools, staff development opportunities had resulted in a philosophical change, as far as teaching and learning was concerned. These interviewees felt that the strategy would 'be self-sustaining because teachers and pupils will have raised their expectations of what's achievable'.

### 3.4 Summary of key findings

- The strategy was well received by LEAs who were making use of it to support and challenge schools and improve the quality of teaching and learning at key stage 3.
- On the whole, LEAs felt supported during the implementation of the strategy. The amount of financial support available was generally felt to be reasonable and the flexible way in which the funding could be used, was well received. The opportunity to meet with other strategy managers to share ideas and practice, as part of organised regional network meetings, was also

perceived to be beneficial. Strategy materials were seen as good quality, useful resources, although the quantity of materials produced could be overwhelming. Support was also available from regional and senior directors, although views on the usefulness of this support differed.

- The role of the LEA was seen as managing the implementation of the strategy and providing training, consultancy support and direction to schools. The consultants' work in schools was seen as a key component of the successful implementation of the strategy and schools were felt to both value and have benefited from the quality of this support. Most LEAs had, however, experienced difficulties in recruiting consultants; poor pay and lack of career progression were felt to be to blame.
- LEAs identified a number of key issues in the implementation of the strategy, including: the recruitment of quality consultants, with in-depth subject knowledge and excellent interpersonal skills; active involvement and support from senior management; and time and opportunity in schools for the dissemination of training by teachers to

colleagues. Staffing difficulties, such as issues of recruitment and retention were also identified as disrupting continuity and affecting the implementation of the strategy.

- On the whole, teachers were felt to have responded well to the introduction of the strategy. The strategy was perceived as a positive experience for the schools involved and many felt that the quality of teaching and learning had improved. Most interviewees considered it too early to comment on the strategy's impact on pupils' attainment, although many believed that the strategy would have an impact, if given time to embed.
- Almost all of the interviewees wanted and expected the strategy to continue in the immediate future. Many people, however, mentioned the need for a period of consolidation of work to date within schools. Views were mixed as to the long-term sustainability of the strategy without continued financial support. However, many were optimistic about the future believing that, given time to embed, the strategy would lead to a change in the philosophy underpinning teaching and learning that would be self-sustaining.

## 4 Case-study findings: the school perspective

This chapter presents the main findings from the case study interviews with school personnel. It discusses schools' perceptions of:

- the implementation and management of the key stage 3 strategy
- the overall effectiveness of the strategy
- the future development of the strategy.

### 4.1 The implementation and management of the strategy

#### 4.1.1 Main aims and priorities

The study showed that all the headteachers and teachers who were interviewed were aware of the principal aims of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and viewed it as an important component of their School Development Plan (SDP). All interviewees, irrespective of their role, perceived the key aim of the strategy as improving teaching and learning within the classroom. The role of the interviewee did, however, influence the way in which this aim was discussed. For example, headteachers tended to perceive this aim of the strategy in broad terms of improving general classroom practice. Key stage 3 strategy managers were more likely to talk in terms of improvements to the quality of the learning experience within the classroom, and teachers tended to discuss the more practical aspects of the strategy that aimed to improve teaching and learning, such as lesson planning, using objectives and giving structure to lessons.

Raising attainment and improving the performance of pupils at key stage 3, was the second most commonly quoted aim of the strategy. Closely linked to this was the perception of several teachers that the

strategy aimed to address the '...perceived lag or step back' in pupil attainment that can occur between key stage 2 and key stage 3.

Other aims mentioned by a small number of interviewees included: improving transition between key stage 2 and key stage 3; providing a consistent approach across the country for teaching and learning in key stage 3; and addressing the perception of key stage 3 as a 'weak area in secondary schools' through 'beefing it up' and '...making it a little bit more purposeful'.

#### 4.1.2 Support from the LEA

Most interviewees perceived the role of the LEA as to share good practice and provide support and guidance to schools. Headteachers also tended to view the LEA's role as overseeing the implementation and operation of the strategy, as one headteacher explained, *'the LEA has been a bit like the conductor of the orchestra - driving the pace'*.

Schools had received various forms of support from their LEA during the implementation of the strategy, including financial support, training, and support from consultants.

#### Financial support

LEAs received funding to distribute to schools to implement the strategy. The amount of money each school received varied, usually according to the perceived level of need (see section 3.1.2). Knowledge of the amount of financial support received was evident amongst key stage 3 strategy managers and headteachers in all schools, though this knowledge was sometimes basic. Most were aware of the overall figure of funding received, whereas teachers' knowledge of financial matters tended to be more mixed - some knew the amount

received by their individual departments, others felt unable to comment at all on any aspect of financial support.

On the whole, however, most interviewees felt that their school had benefited from the financial support allocated for the strategy. Many commented that the amount received was reasonable and that it had been distributed fairly to schools and individual departments, on the basis of need. One teacher commented, 'it's brilliant that they've ploughed money into modern foreign languages. It's allowed us to buy things and promote teaching and learning for the right reasons'. Several other teachers also explained that the funding had allowed them to buy materials and resources such as revision guides, resource packs and ICT equipment, as well as covering supply costs for teachers to attend training.

Interviewees in two schools felt that they had not gained as much financially, as their schools were not in challenging circumstances. One headteacher explained, 'we are a cusp school and we will lose out to those schools with far more challenging circumstances than us, but you are left in a situation where you know you can fly even further if you could put more in'. Another teacher however, preferred that more financial support went to more disadvantaged schools: 'we're a fantastic school who gets good results, I'd rather the resources go to other schools that need them'.

The opportunity to bid for extra funding was well received and many interviewees liked the flexibility to channel resources into the areas or departments that they felt would benefit most. One school had successfully bid for extra consultant time and another had received funding to develop schemes of work.

Only one interviewee, however, mentioned that their LEA had given them helpful advice on financial matters, rather than just simple instructions about funding and

curriculum bidding. The interviewee stated that 'they made sure we were aware of the money the department was entitled to... and getting it spent in the year so we didn't lose any'.

### **Training**

In each school the initial launch of the strategy, as a whole, began with central training for school strategy managers and nominated members of school staff. In most schools, the headteacher or the school strategy manager attended the initial launches on national training, whilst the heads of department attended the training for their relevant subject strands. In all four case study schools, heads and deputy heads of department attended any subsequent training. Interviewees in one school felt this arrangement worked well because it gave teachers first hand experience of the training, which they could then cascade to other members of their department and implement within the school.

The majority of the training was very well received. Interviewees commented on the comprehensive, well-structured and practical nature of the courses, as well as the inspiring resources provided by the LEA. One teacher explained: '...often you come away from a course thinking this is more stuff I've got to do, whereas with these courses you come away thinking this is what I can do'.

Most teachers and strategy managers also stated that they had benefited from the LEA organised meetings with other teachers as this had given them an opportunity to network and exchange ideas.

However, despite the majority of positive comments, it was not possible to meet the needs of every teacher. For example, the opportunity to network at the expense of going through materials in more detail was not always appreciated, as one strategy manager explained:

*The way some of the sessions have been presented has been very unhelpful in that we don't get taken through the folders. I think that is because the person who is in charge thinks that we should use the time to network with each other. That is quite useful, but if you take the folders away you never get a chance to see what's inside really.*

Other teachers disliked the fact that they missed lessons as a result of attending training during school time. One teacher felt that *'...it would be better to pass us the resources, rather than take us out of lessons, because that is causing us more hassle... the fact [is] we have to cover all the time and miss lessons which we plan'*.

#### **Consultant support**

LEAs also provided schools with consultants to help support the implementation of the strategy. Interviewees viewed the consultants as having a varied role, which included disseminating information, sharing good practice and providing support and practical advice to individual teachers and whole departments. The role of the consultants was well received by the majority of teachers who particularly welcomed receiving practical advice that they could implement, almost immediately. One teacher explained: *'the consultant is positive and practical, and she realises what is realistic. She's a breath of fresh air'*. Similarly, a school strategy manager in another LEA commented:

*One example of some excellent INSET was the literacy consultant who came into school to talk about literacy across the curriculum and in one and a half hours she had alerted staff to the different key issues. Even if you just took a small amount away from that session you would implement it because it was practical strategies. It was very, very helpful.*

A few respondents appreciated the fact that the consultants brought a new perspective into the school, as one teacher explained,

*'the consultants are very good because they can give you a broader view... it is their job, they are full of ideas and new strategies'. A headteacher in another LEA also welcomed this; 'it's been useful, as it has exposed our staff to more points of view.'*

Other teachers liked the individual level of support consultants provided and the way they helped teachers deal with the particular problems they were facing. For example, one mathematics teacher commented, *'I had a problem with one group and the consultant saw me working with them and suggested some strategies'*.

Interviewees in most schools also appreciated the supportive nature of consultants who came into school to *'assist rather than to monitor'*. Indeed in the only school where interviewees reported initially having a difficult relationship with consultants, this was felt to stem from consultants taking on more of an inspection role. The school strategy manager explained, *'because they were working with inspectors, their perception of themselves was more like an inspector. I feel the strategy would have fallen flat if this was allowed to continue'*. The school raised this issue with the LEA who, with the help of the school strategy manager was able to *'build bridges between the consultants and the school'*.

In general, most respondents felt that they had received sufficient support from the LEA in implementing and managing the strategy. Headteachers and school strategy managers tended to talk in terms of support received from the LEA strategy management team as a whole; described by one headteacher as *'superb'* and a *'beacon of hope'*. Teachers, however, were much more likely to single out the *'outstanding work of the consultants'* and their provision of *'exceptional support and advice'*.

When asked if they required any further support from their LEA, a number of interviewees commented that they would



like to see more consultants in schools, although many accepted that this would place impossible demands on LEA resources. Others stated they would like more time to network with other teachers and look through strategy materials; more twilight sessions to counteract the impact of releasing staff for training; more specific training on booster materials, cross-curricular literacy and ways of motivating and engaging pupils; and fewer strategy materials.

#### **4.1.3 School roles and responsibilities**

In each school, the headteacher had delegated day-to-day responsibility for the management of the strategy to a school key stage 3 strategy manager, who took the lead in coordinating the implementation of the strategy within the school. Schools had typically appointed members of their senior management team as strategy managers. In the case study schools, two school strategy managers were deputy headteachers, one was an assistant headteacher and another was a head of department. Staff movement in one school, however, had meant that since the strategy began, three different teachers had been appointed internally for the role of school key stage 3 strategy manager. The headteacher of this school felt that the stimulating role of school strategy manager and the tremendous amount of professional development received, had encouraged teachers to look for other challenges and had made them very attractive candidates to other schools.

In two schools, responsibility for the management of the strategy within specific subjects was then filtered down to key stage 3 co-ordinators. Co-ordinators were usually heads of departments who, with support from the school strategy managers, led their subject team through the implementation of the strategy. This management structure was felt to have worked well, as one headteacher explained the school strategy manager 'worked very hard with the nominated key stage 3 co-ordinators to

make sure they viewed themselves as a team and that they had the support and clout within their faculties to drive things through'.

In other schools, there were less clearly defined strategy roles and school strategy managers tended to filter responsibility within specific subject areas to heads of departments and other staff who were willing to take the strategy on board. As supportive and active heads were in post in these schools, this approach was felt to have worked well.

#### **4.1.4 Methods of implementation**

The case study schools had implemented the different strategy strands in the same order as the national roll-out: the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, then ICT and foundation subjects. However, one school was located in a pilot LEA and, as an associate school, had implemented the English and mathematics strand a year ahead of the other case study schools.

All schools received funding, materials, training and consultancy to support the implementation of the strategy [see section 4.1.2]. In each school, the initial launch of the strategy had begun with central training for strategy managers and teachers. Heads of department and/or other nominated teachers had attended subsequent training from which they had identified aspects of the strategy that they felt could most benefit their school. One strategy manager explained: 'we have a vision for our school, the key stage 3 strategy has got loads of great bits in it, so [our approach has been] what can we use from it that is going to help our school?'.

In two schools, new heads of department saw the strategy as a 'helpful method' to restructure their departments. These teachers had carried out an audit and identified the professional development needs of their departments, as suggested in part of the strategy. Other schools had carried out departmental audits in core

subject areas and analysed Year 7 pupil attainment data in order to identify areas in need of improvement and to set clear targets for departments to achieve. Individual teachers also spoke of implementing aspects of the strategy teaching frameworks and materials into their classroom practice. Several teachers explained that they had used the strategy's Literacy Progress Units (LPUs) and booster materials with underachieving pupils. Others mentioned working with consultants to implement a range of practices including approaches to planning and structuring lessons, defining objectives, using pupil data and setting targets.

Although improving transition was recognised as one of the key aims of the strategy there was little evidence of transition work, which specifically resulted from the strategy, taking place in the case study schools. A small minority of interviewees in the secondary schools did, however, mention using the strategy's 'transition bridging units' to help smooth the curriculum transition process and 'springboard' materials as a 'boost' for pupils coming into Year 7 who were in need of additional support. There was a low level of awareness of the main aims of the key stage 3 strategy amongst the three primary teachers, who participated in the research. Current transition arrangements were perceived to have been introduced before the implementation of the strategy and none of the primary teachers felt there had been any recent changes to transition work that they could attribute to the strategy. However, most interviewees from secondary schools and their primary partners spoke positively about the existing links between schools and the programmes in place to improve transition between key stages 2 and 3.

#### **4.1.5 Key issues in the implementation of the strategy**

Interviewees were asked about the key issues in relation to the implementation of the strategy. The key issues were perceived

to be the recruitment of quality consultants with relevant experience, gaining support of senior school management and teaching staff, the number of strategy materials, and finding time to disseminate training.

#### **The recruitment of quality consultants**

In general, most teachers spoke positively about the consultants they had worked with. However, problems had arisen where it had been difficult for the authority to recruit consultants in certain subject areas. In these instances, a number of interviewees felt that some consultants had been appointed without the necessary, relevant subject knowledge to advise teachers, with any authority, on aspects of the strategy. A number of respondents also felt that it was important for consultants to have been good practitioners before taking up their current post, as one teacher explained: 'consultants have to be very good classroom practitioners, otherwise they have no kudos at all'. Several interviewees also stated that consultants needed to be effective communicators, approachable, diplomatic and able to work with people with different levels of teaching experience and ability.

#### **Gaining support from senior school management and teaching staff**

An initial lack of support for the strategy amongst some teachers was recognised by interviewees as a key issue in the implementation of the strategy. One teacher commented, 'there was the perception of it involving a lot of work and something that was being forced upon us. I was wary; it took me a while to understand that everything is voluntary'. Others commented on a general fatigue amongst some teachers in having to implement yet another initiative: 'there is a tendency to think, "Oh! Another change! Another new wheel to invent!" and that does create a culture of inertia, which is something you have to overcome'.

#### **The number of strategy materials**

Although, most teachers felt that some very good materials had been produced, the sheer

volume of materials given to teachers to support the implementation of the strategy was a cause of concern for some interviewees. One teacher explained, 'you just about get comfortable with something, and they throw something else at you'. Several interviewees felt that there needed to be a period of consolidation, to give teachers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the materials already produced, without being distracted by any more.

#### **Finding time to disseminate training**

Teachers explained that in order to implement the strategy successfully, time needed to be allocated to disseminate training to colleagues. One interviewee explained: 'you can go yourself, or send a colleague [on training], get very enthused and then come back and have to wait till a department meeting a month later to discuss your ideas, when the impetus has gone'.

Other key issues, identified by a minority of teachers as affecting the implementation of the strategy, included weak school leadership and high staff turnover.

## **4.2 School perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the strategy**

The majority of interviewees perceived the strategy as having a positive effect on teaching and learning in a variety of subject areas within their school. Several respondents felt that the strategy was particularly effective in English and mathematics, as the strategy had been operating in these subjects for longer; others identified the strategy as working particularly well in science, geography or ICT.

For many interviewees, the strategy had been effective in improving classroom practices, which now included three-part lessons, differentiating activities, the sharing of objectives with pupils, and a wide

range of teaching and learning styles so that pupils remained engaged and motivated. One school strategy manager commented:

*If nothing else, it has made us think about the crucial aspects of teaching and learning. In 20 years of teaching it is the first time I've come across so much focus on what we do in the classroom. It's opened up whole new discussions and debates with teachers talking about teaching and learning. I know there are other debates going on but I think the key stage 3 strategy has the opportunity of pulling everything together.*

A number of teachers were impressed with the training, guidance and consultant support they had received which they felt had led to effective professional development. One teacher remarked that the strategy had brought enjoyment to teaching.

Many interviewees also believed that, due to changes in teaching, pupils' attitudes had improved and they were more motivated within the classroom. Several teachers commented that their pupils were now more active learners who enjoyed participating within class. However, despite this perceived positive impact on pupils, very few interviewees felt that these changes were reflected in key stage 3 results. One teacher explained, 'key stage 3 results are going up, they haven't suddenly gone "wow!". But I think [the strategy] is going to help raise them... it's just too early to tell'. A headteacher, in another school agreed: 'it hasn't delivered massive jumps. I do believe in the end it will, because anything that is generating discussion about what you are doing in the classroom will, and there are very good ideas in the strategy'.

Transition activities as part of the key stage 3 strategy were something that several schools felt needed more work. Interviewees explained that the continuity between key stage 2 and key stage 3 was

not as fluid as they would want, as one school strategy manager explained: 'I think that at the moment the weakness is the teaching link. I don't think we talk enough to primary staff about what they are actually teaching and what aspects of the curriculum are already covered'.

In terms of continuity between key stage 3 and key stage 4, several teachers felt there was a natural progression in terms of curriculum content. Many had adopted aspects of the strategy such as the three-part lessons and pupil centred learning and applied them to their key stage 4 classes.

Only a very small number of respondents were sceptical of the overall effectiveness of the strategy, with some perceiving that it had only been effective in certain subjects and others stating that the amount of time needed to attend training meant that too much teaching time had been lost.

### **4.3 School perceptions on the future sustainability of the strategy**

The majority of interviewees perceived that involvement in the key stage 3 strategy had been a positive experience for their school. Many hoped that several aspects of the strategy, such as the teaching and learning principles and the cross-curricular literacy and numeracy work, would continue in the future.

Several teachers felt that the teaching and learning principles of the strategy were already embedded within departments and were therefore sustainable. One school strategy manager stated: 'it's embedded ...and is what we fundamentally think teaching and learning is all about. It will carry on, whether the strategy remains or not, this school will use it as a strategy for [Years] 7 to 11'.

Others felt that although the strategy could be sustained, certain criteria would have to

be fulfilled. Some teachers felt that it was now essential to have a period of stability to allow time to embed the strategy and reinforce ideas. Others perceived that LEA support in terms of finance, training, quality consultancy and provision of resources would help maintain a driving force for the strategy. As one school strategy manager questioned, 'who is going to keep the focus on teaching and learning if the LEA is not doing it? If there's no training and support... it will be difficult'. Interviewees also felt it was important that high-calibre LEA personnel stayed in post to give the strategy a stability that would contribute to its sustainability. Other teachers perceived that the future of the strategy was dependent on continued support from the school management team. One interviewee commented:

*People will stop at a certain level, if leadership of heads of departments and the leadership team stop talking about teaching and learning. Without that impetus and keeping it high, then something else comes along to take that attention, whatever that may be.*

As well as a supportive leadership team, several interviewees felt that enthusiastic staff who believed in the strategy were essential for its future sustainability. One teacher commented, 'you need staff to be motivated by it and want to push it forward'.

Only a few teachers were less optimistic about the future sustainability of the strategy, perceiving that it would be watered down over time and eventually replaced by something else.

### **4.4 Summary of key findings**

On the whole, the strategy was well received by schools, who perceived it as an important component of the School Development Plan, and as a tool to improve teaching and learning in the classroom and ultimately raise attainment at key stage 3.

- The strategy was overseen by a key stage 3 strategy manager in all schools, however, involvement had filtered down to all interviewees.
- In general, schools felt supported during the implementation of the strategy. Although most headteachers and school strategy managers recognised support from the whole LEA strategy team, the majority of interviewees referred to and particularly appreciated the support and training provided by consultants.
- Schools identified several key issues in the implementation of the strategy, including recruiting quality consultants with relevant subject knowledge and classroom experience, gaining support for the strategy from teaching staff, and finding time and opportunity to disseminate training to colleagues.
- The majority of school personnel perceived the overall strategy to be effective as they felt it had improved teaching and learning in key stage 3 and had widened the debate surrounding teaching and learning methodologies.
- Most schools also perceived the strategy to have had a positive impact on pupils, although this was yet to be reflected in key stage 3 results.
- Those teachers who felt that the strategy was sustainable, felt that a period of stability was essential to allow them time to embed the strategy and reinforce its principles and ideas.

## 5 Summary and issues for consideration

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise the standards achieved by 11- to 14-year-olds in secondary schools, in England, by transforming approaches to teaching and learning. It supports five curricular strands: English, mathematics, science, ICT and Foundation Subjects. In 2001, the first year of the strategy, the English and mathematics strands were introduced. The other strands were introduced from 2002.

This report provides an evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy as perceived by LEAs and schools. Its findings are based upon a survey of all LEAs in England, interviews with key personnel in four LEAs to explore further their role in implementing the strategy, and case study work in a school selected from each of the four LEAs. The case studies were designed to explore, in detail, the perceived impact of the initiative on teaching and learning, any perceived impediments to its success, the ways in which any issues may have been resolved and views on the future of the strategy.

### **The reception of the strategy**

The strategy was well received by LEAs who were making use of it to support and challenge schools and improve the quality of teaching and learning at key stage 3. The LEA perception that the strategy was being well received in schools was confirmed by the case studies.

The schools perceived the strategy as an important component of the School Development Plan, a tool to improve teaching and learning in the classroom and, thereby, ultimately raise attainment at key stage 3.

### **Support for the implementation of the strategy**

On the whole, LEAs felt supported during the implementation of the strategy. The

amount of financial support available was generally felt to be reasonable, and the flexible way in which the funding could be used was well received. The opportunity to meet with other LEA strategy managers to share ideas and practice, as part of organised regional network meetings, was also perceived to be beneficial. Support was also available from regional and senior directors, although views on the usefulness of this support differed. Strategy materials were seen as good quality, useful resources although there were some reservations about their overwhelming quantity and the timeliness with which they were delivered. An issue for consideration is the way in which teachers' negative perceptions of the daunting quantity of materials may be improved. Enabling teachers to identify and access materials, and relevant parts of materials, electronically may be one way of facilitating this and may also address perceived time shortages for maximising the use of the materials. Another approach may be to rationalise the materials available by a process of review and prioritisation.

Schools also felt supported during the implementation of the strategy. Although most headteachers and school strategy managers recognised support from the whole LEA strategy team, the majority of interviewees referred to and particularly appreciated the support and training provided by consultants. The LEAs and schools saw the consultants' work in schools as a key component of the successful implementation of the strategy. Recognising the key role of the consultants, problems with recruitment and retention, and the large investment already made in the development of the resource - an issue for consideration is the action that can be taken by LEAs to enable this valued support to schools to continue.

### **The impact of the strategy on teaching and learning**

The LEA perception is that, on the whole, teachers have responded well to the introduction of the strategy, which was perceived as a positive experience for the schools involved. They perceived that the strategy was making a significant contribution to the improvement to teaching and learning and had assisted in the improvement of lesson structures including the pace of lessons, the variety of teaching methods used and the focus on the learner.

The case studies confirmed that the strategy had filtered down to all staff interviewed in the schools. The majority of school staff perceived the overall strategy to be effective as they felt it had improved teaching and learning in key stage 3 and had widened the debate surrounding teaching and learning methodologies.

The LEAs and schools agreed that although the strategy was having a positive impact on pupils, it was too early to comment on its impact on attainment, although many believed that the strategy would have an impact in key stage 3 results if given time to embed. An issue for consideration is the means by which improvements in attainment can be monitored within and across schools such that the evidence is used formatively to support future teaching and learning.

Although schools and LEAs have similar perceptions of the key purposes of the strategy, there is evidence to suggest that there are differences of perception regarding the strategy's role to enhance the consistency of whole-school and cross-curricular coherence at key stage 3. It would appear that schools' perceptions of the strategy are more focussed on its contributions to best practice, support and guidance within the strands as a means of improving teaching and learning; the LEA perceptions would appear to give more emphasis to integrated, whole-school approaches to teaching and learning. This may be an outcome of the phased introduction of the strands and the

availability of time and human resources within schools. An issue for consideration, however, is the extent to which integrated, whole-school approaches should be emphasised in future training and support.

### **Implementation issues**

The role of the LEA was perceived by LEAs and schools to be one of implementation through the establishment and maintenance of management and organisational structures including the provision of training, consultancy support and direction to schools. Encouraging the schools' senior management teams, strategy steering groups and strategy managers to have a coherent approach to ensuring consistent implementation across the school, was deemed a crucial role for LEAs. Another frequently identified LEA priority was to ensure clear communication channels between the school and the LEA and within schools.

LEAs and schools agreed that the most significant challenges for many schools in the implementation of key stage 3 strategy related to aspects of staffing, the recruitment of quality consultants with relevant subject knowledge, classroom experience and the necessary interpersonal skills. The perceived shortage of time available to implement the strategy (especially training), gaining support from teaching staff and the active involvement of senior management, and the challenge of achieving coherence of approach across the school, were also key challenges. An issue for consideration is the potentially negative impact on the success of the strategy of the perception that time and human resources are too limited. This is part of a wider issue encompassing workforce reforms, the pace of change and the introduction of national initiatives, the co-ordination of national strategies and continuing professional development.

### **Transition**

Although a strengthened transition between key stages 2 and 3 was acknowledged by schools and LEAs as a key aim of the strategy,

it was not perceived as a high priority for the present or for the future. The evidence to suggest that the strategy had contributed significantly to improving transition arrangements was limited. Similarly, ensuring progression in teaching and learning across key stage 3 was not identified as a priority for schools and LEAs

Progression is one of the four main principles of the strategy and if it is fully to be realised, an issue for consideration is the means by which perceptions of its priority within the strategy can be enhanced.

#### **Perceptions of the future of the strategy**

The LEA priorities for the future included helping schools to embed the strategy within each School Development Plan to achieve greater coherence and consistency of approach across departments, helping to monitor and evaluate the impact of the strategy and its success in raising attainment and helping to maximise the impact of consultants. At a wider level, the priority was to identify perceived underperformance across schools and between departments and to target support to such schools

and departments in order for the underperformance to be addressed.

Many LEAs and schools mentioned the need for a period of consolidation within schools; a period of stability was perceived to be essential to allow schools to embed the strategy and to reinforce its principles.

Almost all of the LEA interviewees wanted and expected the strategy to continue in the immediate future although views were mixed as to the long-term sustainability of the strategy without continued financial support. Staffing difficulties, such as issues of recruitment and retention, were perceived as disrupting the continuity of the strategy and to have significant implications for its sustainability. However, many LEAs were optimistic about the future believing that, given time to embed, the strategy would lead to a change in the philosophy underpinning teaching and learning that would be self-sustaining. An issue for consideration is the most effective means by which sustainable change can be embedded within schools and the appropriate balance between central direction and local initiative.



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*Mark Cunningham, Sue Harris, Kirstin Kerr and Rhona McEune*

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Published in 2003

ISBN 1 903880 48 3

Price: £8.50

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Published in 2003

ISBN 1 903880 59 9

Price: £8.00

**School Attendance and the Prosecution of Parents: Perspectives from Education Welfare Service Management** (LGA Research Report 43)

*Sally Kendall, Richard White and Kay Kinder*

This research is the first stage of a three phase study and provides an overview of the prosecution process within LEAs from interviews with 122 Principal Education Welfare Officers (PEWOs) or equivalent, and data on prosecutions provided by nearly 100 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) between September 2001 and July 2002. It gives an in-depth study examining the effects and effectiveness of prosecuting parents as a strategy to combat non-school attendance.

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