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Tackling Educational Disadvantage

10 Features of Effective Schools - "STAR" CASE STUDIES PAPER

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Acknowledgements

LEARNING LEADERS
A Strategy For Teacher
Professional Learning

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Introduction

1.   This effective practice paper complements the work that is on-going within the Department of Education (DE) to identify and capture the policies, programmes and interventions currently being deployed within schools to help reduce educational disadvantage. The findings outlined here align with one of the department's key policies "Every School a Good School" (ESaGS) (published in 2009). ESaGS principles continue to be relevant today and one of the challenges within it is to turn policy into action - *"action that supports teachers in the classroom; that acknowledges and celebrates good practice where it exists in our schools; and that is fearless in championing the educational and other needs of young people".*

2.   This paper also embraces the vision of *"Learning Leaders – A Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning"* (published in 2016) which is that "every teacher is a learning leader, accomplished in working collaboratively with all partners in the interests of children and young people". It also encompasses the overall aim of Learning Leaders, which is "to empower the teaching profession to strengthen its professionalism and expertise to meet the challenging educational needs of young people in the 21st century". Key areas of focus within the Strategy include building leadership capacity in our schools, enhancing teacher professional learning and developing and disseminating good practice, with the overall aim of improving pupil outcomes.

3.   As part of researching the issues associated with educational disadvantage, DE officials visited eight post-primary schools in 2017/18 and have been working with them since then on the development of these case studies. The schools selected were chosen based on the criteria that they were producing good or improving results (at level 2) whilst operating in very challenging circumstances including a high percentage of Free School Meal Entitled (FSME) pupils. The objective was to identify and better understand the features that contribute to those schools' success.

4.   Every school selected differed in terms of intake, location and the range of challenges they faced. Each school leader emphasised different aspects of their school's culture and practices. They were asked to record examples of their practice in a STAR format – Situation, Task, Action, Result. The list of common features found are consistent with ESaGS as well as other research available on characteristics of effective schools. We hope that communicating these examples of effective practice will be helpful to other schools facing similar challenges and circumstances.

5.   The 10 key features identified were:

     1.   Strong, committed and visible leadership

     2.   Committed teachers and staff

     3.   High expectations of and aspirations for all pupils

     4.   Effective pastoral care and positive behavioural management

     5.   Broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on literacy and numeracy

     6.   Skilled use of data to track pupil performance

     7.   Cross-phase links to support transition and to identify, apply and share best practice

     8.   Effective use of outside interventions

     9.   Good links with parents, communities and employers

     10.   A well-informed and skilled Board of Governors committed to supporting the school.

6.   Where schools exhibit these key features, the likelihood of achieving success is significantly increased.

1. Strong, committed and visible leadership

The Learning Leaders Strategy seeks to strengthen support and professional learning for school leaders and equip staff with the necessary skills to meet the needs of their pupils. It also encourages the use of innovative practice and learning drawn from research in order to effect improvement and develop 'next' practice. The schools focussed upon in this paper are continuously striving to develop and improve. They use evidence-based research to inform their approach to teaching and learning and they repeatedly question why they are doing things. The leaders of these schools attribute much of their success to committed, well-qualified staff to whom they are willing to delegate leadership responsibility.

They apply a range of approaches to the recruitment of well-qualified teachers, such as "teach and appoint"; they are committed to encouraging further professional development of staff; and understand the value of having a highly motivated teaching team. The schools seek and find opportunities to build capacity of teachers and middle leadership, even with a scarcity of funding for external professional development, for example, through collaborating with other effective/highly effective schools to access best practice, or through senior school leaders providing leadership coaching to middle management.

Case Study 1.1: Teach and Appoint

Situation	**Malone College, Belfast** had an inspection in January 2014 where the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) reported: "The effectiveness of the learning and teaching observed during the inspection varies, with two-thirds good or better and one-third requiring improvement."
Task	The school acknowledged that there was a need to strategically focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning at all levels within the school. It was essential to review all existing structures to identify if aspects of current practice could be improved.
Action	An example of an action taken by Malone College involved introducing a teaching element to the recruitment process for permanent appointments. The process involved a more in-depth insight into the potential learning experiences in the classroom for the students. All shortlisted candidates undertook a single lesson "teach" with current pupils. The "teach" was observed and evaluated by the interview panel as part of the recruitment process.

Result	As a result of this action and a whole-school focus on improving the quality of the teaching and learning: *"Most of the learning and teaching observed during the follow-up inspection was good or better"* (Education Training Inspection, January 2016).
	At the time of writing the case study, the school was in the inspection follow-up process. April 2017 is the most recent report (see below).
	The April 2017 ETI follow-up inspection visit reported that *"the senior leadership team is committed to providing extensive, well-targeted professional development opportunities for staff. Action-based research continues to be used effectively in order to review what constitutes high quality learning and teaching; this is underpinned by the use of a range of assessment data, which informs decisions around the curricular offer and the planning for individual needs. Consequently, there has been an improvement in the quality of the pupils' learning experiences, which was good or better in almost all of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection process."*
	www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/follow-up-inspection-malone-integrated-college-belfast-126-0294.pdf

Case Study 1.2: ETI Associate Assessor

Situation	**St Kevin's College*, Lisnaskea** found that serving as an Associate Assessor (AA) for the ETI was very beneficial, as it enabled them to visit a wide range of other schools, which provided a rich source of new ideas for them to consider implementing within their own school. There were 2 staff that served as AAs in St Kevin's College at Post Primary Level.
Task	Utilise knowledge and insight of effective practice gained through the AA role in a range of schools across Northern Ireland.
Action	New ideas were brought back into the school to address school improvement in areas including assessment, learning and teaching, leadership development and professional development of teachers. One idea that was implemented was using Self-Evaluation Tools to monitor and review the quality of pastoral care and learning and teaching across the school. This was especially important to ensure consistency in terms of planning, teaching, learning, assessment and pastoral care between staff joining the new St Kevin's College from the 2 previous schools. From its Self-Evaluation, the college implemented a certified professional development scheme with outside agencies to support School Development Planning.

*Note: St Kevin's College was formed through an amalgamation of St Comhghall's College, Lisnaskea and St Eugene's College, Roslea in September 2017.

Action (continued)	A key focus for the college's School Development Plan is focussing equally on **ethos** and **relationships** as much as **academic outcomes**. When measuring outcomes, the college said "we measure what we value and not just value what we can measure".
Result	A better informed School Development Plan was created which had a sharper focus on targets and actions through extensive self-evaluation to identify progress and areas for development. The college and governors believe that if self-evaluation is restricted to academic standards, then how representative is it of the broader aims listed in the College's aims or encapsulated in its mission statement? The college's self-evaluation framework therefore focuses on the following key areas – 1. Does the self-evaluation identify how well the department/area serves its learners? 2. How does the department/college compare with the best schools, and the best comparable schools? 3. Is the self-evaluation integral to the key management systems? 4. Is the department's/college's self-evaluation based on a good range of telling evidence? 5. Does self-evaluation and planning involve key people in the college and seek the views of parents, learners and external advisers and agencies? 6. Does self-evaluation lead to action to achieve the department's/area's longer term goals for development? As a result, the college's Self-Evaluation is now based on first hand evidence. It is concise and is easy to adapt as the college changes. The statements in the Self-Evaluation are now evaluative and none are purely descriptive.

2.   Committed teachers and staff

The schools visited recognise the essential contribution made by committed staff to achieving the key successes of a school; and acknowledge the role of management in motivating staff in this process. They appropriately focus on improving teaching and learning, and consider this to be a key driver for school improvement. Staff development is a high priority for all of the schools.

Teachers demonstrate their commitment to the school and its pupils. They have high expectations of both themselves and their pupils, and genuinely care about the pupils they teach.

The school principals interviewed spoke of the commitment their teachers demonstrate regularly, for example: researching new and innovative ways to improve lessons; striving to improve both their own performance and that of their pupils; sharing best practice with colleagues, and recognising the potential of this for improving outcomes.

Case Study 2.1: Consistent Learning Experiences

Situation	**Malone College, Belfast** is an 11-19 grant-maintained integrated post-primary school situated in south-west Belfast. At the time of writing the case study, the school had an intake of over 600 pupils including 57% FSME and 26 different nationalities. The school was in the inspection follow-up process.
Task	• To establish a more consistent understanding of quality learning and teaching, leading to visible improvement across the whole school; • To begin to build a culture of reflection, self, peer and pupil evaluation and professional growth leading to improvement; and • To effect improvement without investing financially and by using, as far as possible, existing school systems.
Action	**Evaluative** ETI inspection report statement (2014)[1] was used as a baseline to establish a school target for 2015: *"The effectiveness of the learning and teaching observed during the inspection varies, with two-thirds good or better and one-third requiring improvement".* School target February 2015: 100% of teaching is 'Good' or better.

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1   ETI 2014: https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/ publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/post-primary- inspection-malone-integrated-college.pdf

Action (continued)	**Research-informed** School leadership devised a whole-school learning and teaching policy, informed by research and proven effective practice, and based around a four-phase lesson structure: 1. Overview; 2. Input; 3. Process of new knowledge and skills; and 4. Plenary. The policy outlined clear expectations and guidance on practice for the classroom environment, relationships, planning and assessment for learning, informed by the work of Hughes and Potter, authors of 'Tweak to Transform.'[2] **Collegial and evaluative** To embed the expectations of the learning and teaching policy into school practice, the school focussed on each lesson phase for one term. Using a series of key questions from a checklist for each of the lesson phases, teachers self-evaluated, and trusted colleagues and pupils also evaluated their experiences in lessons at the beginning of the term. **Collegial, research-informed and inquiry-based** During the term, school leadership provided reading material, on-line resources, and other opportunities to source effective practice, and teachers researched, shared and experimented with each of the four phases, using some or all of: - daily email, eg 'Starter of the Day'; - learning and teaching notice board in the staff room; - internal termly learning bulletin; - all meetings, had some focussed discussion on the lesson phase being improved; - trusted colleague observations, focussing solely on the lesson phase being improved; - sharing of websites, links and other resources informally; and - informal conversations, including with classroom assistants.

2   Hughes, M and D. Potter, D (2002) **Tweak to Transform. Improving Teaching: A Practical Handbook for School Leaders**. Network Educational Press.

Action (continued)	As the work progressed, it became less directed by leadership: teachers saw incremental improvements in classroom practice; they grew in confidence and discussed and shared more regularly, in formal and informal situations. **Re-evaluation and review** Lessons were re-evaluated at the end of each period of focus using the same key questions and the same approaches. At the end of each phase, a school development day was used to review and baseline for the next phase. Lessons were further evaluated by leadership through PRSD at the midpoint and at the end of the year. Key findings were drawn out and shared at whole school level.
Result	Written teacher evaluations, Senior Leadership Team conversations with teachers and PRSD observations and review meetings indicated changes in teachers' thinking and behaviour. Almost all teachers, ie over 90%: 1. had improved some aspect(s) of their teaching; 2. believed that they could continue to improve their teaching and knew how to do so; 3. were developing in their understanding of quality learning and teaching; 4. were changing the language they use around learning and teaching, with a greater focus on learning and improvement; 5. saw the value of consulting the learners about the learning in order to inform planning, and were doing so; 6. had higher expectations of and for themselves and the learners; 7. expected learning and teaching to be a priority in whole school development; 8. were observing colleagues within and beyond school in order to learn and improve; 9. were engaging in self-directed learning via professional reading and on-line resources, including social media; and 10. were volunteering their ideas to each other and to the whole staff.

Result (continued)	Pupil experiences and outcomes continue to improve: The January 2016 ETI follow-up inspection visit reported improvement in the quality of teaching: "Planning, learning, teaching and assessment have improved noticeably with 85% of the observed lessons evaluated as good or better, compared with 67% of the lessons observed at the time of the original inspection" (January 2014). ETI 2016: https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/follow-up-inspection-malone-integrated-college-belfast.pdf The April 2017 ETI follow-up inspection visit also reported improvement in the quality of teaching: "Action-based research continues to be used effectively in order to review what constitutes high quality learning and teaching; this is underpinned by the use of a range of assessment data, which informs decisions around the curricular offer and the planning for individual needs. Consequently, there has been an improvement in the quality of the pupils' learning experiences, which was good or better in almost all of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection process." ETI 2017: https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/follow-up-inspection-malone-integrated-college-belfast-126-0294.pdf

3.   High expectations of and aspirations for all pupils

The pupils in the schools visited are encouraged to achieve their best in the broadest sense: academically, personally, and socially. Staff have high expectations of both themselves and of the pupils they teach. The schools emphasise the importance of pupils striving to achieve at least 5 GCSEs including English and maths and this was consistently reinforced within the schools.

Strong teacher/pupil relationships allow these schools to inspire and motivate pupils particularly those who are perhaps not getting a high level of support or encouragement to aspire outside of school.

Case Study 3.1: Year 10 Options Process

Situation	**St Genevieve's High School, Belfast** is an all-ability school where the challenge was identified to provide all students, at KS 4, with opportunities to work to their preferred learning style; to choose subjects that matched both their interests and their careers aspirations, with the intended outcome of being able to achieve their potential at GCSE level and to enable progression into 6th Form or the world of work.
Task	A new "Year 10 Options Process" was designed to engage students and parents more effectively.
Action	• The process involved a fortnight of in-house information events for pupils, a curriculum information evening for parents and pupils, and an interview with each parent and their daughter to agree their curriculum choices. • Three new curriculum 'pathways' were created, each with a different mix of curriculum subjects with a mix of general and applied courses. See further information on the subject offering on the school's website: **https://www.stgenevieves.org.uk/ks4**. • The pathways were conceived as 'structural differentiation', matching the current practice of ability banding operating in KS 3, to ensure that all students can access and choose a subject of their choice. • Each pathway created has a different mix of subjects and has a different level of challenge, especially in terms of the rigour of the course, the commitment of students to self-directed learning, and the effective use of time outside class. • Students at KS 4 are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and realise that "you learn yourself".

Action (continued)	• Students' performance in Year 10 requires consideration as part of the process, and subject teacher recommendations will inform the offer made to students. All pupils followed courses in the core subjects of English, Mathematics, Religion and Learning for Life and Work.

• Pathway one pupils then select a number of 'traditional academic' subjects such as History, Geography, Business Studies and will have assessments based on examinations at the end of the two-year course. Because of the terminal examination format, these courses are considered by the school to be more challenging and require discipline and rigour in private study by the student outside school time. The target is for each student to achieve 8-10 GCSEs at A*-C. The core target destination for students in this pathway is a Higher Education (Degree Course).

• While there is some overlap with Pathway one courses, Pathway two includes 'applied' subjects which have a vocational focus such as Business Communication Systems, Moving Image Arts, Child Development, Health and Social Care. Assessments will involve coursework elements as well as final written tests. Some subjects are modular. The target is for each student to achieve 6-8 GCSEs at A*-C. The core target destination for students in this Pathway is Further Education (including Foundation Degree Course) and Higher Education (Degree Course).

• Pathway three is designed to give students more time and more structure in designated core subjects. Subjects will include Level 2 courses as well as GCSE courses. There will be a strong focus on developing broader skills sought by employers (eg communication skills, team work, problem solving and so on). The target is for students to achieve 6-8 GCSEs, or equivalent, at A*-C. The core target destination for each student in this Pathway is Further Education (Level 3 and Level 4 courses) or employment. |
| **Result** | As a result of a more tailored approach to learning interests, abilities and career aspirations, there is an improvement in pupils' attitudes and dispositions towards their learning, indicated by a range of pastoral indicators; there has also been a marked drop in student disapplication from subjects. The attainment of Year 12 pupils at the school has increased in recent years from 36% achieving 5 or more GCSEs A*-C (including equivalents) including Eng and Maths in 2013/14 to 58% in 2017/18. |

4. Effective pastoral care and positive behaviour management

The schools contributing to this paper consider pastoral care to be integral to the positive development and wellbeing of their pupils, and supporting them in achieving their potential. They fully recognise the diverse range of challenges and needs of their pupils, including the need for emotional support.

They employ strategies to improve the self-confidence of pupils, especially of lower performing pupils. They seek to address issues facing both students and their parents/carers, often through the provision of counselling to address issues such as anxiety, family problems and stress, and take steps to support pupils throughout their educational pathway.

They seek to understand pupils' views on teaching, their learning preferences and how they achieve. The schools recognise the impact of poor attendance on attainment outcomes and effectively and regularly communicate its importance to pupils and parents/carers. They utilise a range of methods to improve attendance, often including incentives for pupils.

The schools aim to promote positive pupil behaviour by creating effective relationships between teachers and pupils. They speak of creating positive learning environments by focussing appropriately on implementing consistently with equity and fairness the schools' policies such as positive behaviour and timekeeping.

Case Study 4.1: Mentoring of Year 8 pupils by Year 14

St Mary's College, Derry introduced a student leadership ambassador team made up of Year 14 pupils, which is involved in areas such as primary transition; it was given the title of 'Big Sister' programme.	
Situation	The challenge identified was to address the anxiety that many pupils face when moving to the 'big' school.
Task	The Big Sisters (a one-to-one mentoring programme) ensure that every pupil feels welcome and has a sense of belonging from their very first day at St Mary's. It also ensures that new pupils feel that they have someone who is looking out for them and supporting them every day. The Ambassador Team of Year 14 pupils who fulfil the role of 'big sisters' also benefit by developing their leadership and empathy skills.
Action	Every Year 8 pupil was assigned a Year 14 Big Sister, who would visit them three times per week to offer friendship and support. The Year 14 Ambassadors were trained for their role.

Result	It has been working now for several years and the Year 8 and Year 14 pupils love it as do their parents. Teachers and pupils say that Year 8 pupils settle more quickly and there are fewer issues arising around friendship groups and pupils feeling isolated. Year 14 pupils can identify Year 8 pupils that need some additional support earlier than staff might and can refer them to the support network/appropriate member of staff. Year 14 pupils play a key role in the induction of Year 8 pupils and Year 8 pupils play a role in the farewell assembly for Year 14 pupils, as they take their leave at the end of the summer term.

Case Study 4.2: Positive Behaviour Incentives

Situation	**Newtownhamilton High School, Newtownhamilton** introduced a Positive Behaviour Policy which includes encouraging positive behaviour through applying a Merit System. Pupils earn merits through good behaviour, which they can cash in to receive various privileges or rewards. These merits also contribute points to the House System where 3 houses of Dorsey, Fane and Whitewater compete in various sporting and non-sporting competitions throughout the year with the winning house captain awarded a trophy on Prize Night.
Task	The aims of the Positive Behaviour Policy are: • to foster good behaviour in a positive way within an environment where pupils feel secure and free from emotional and physical harm; • to enable pupils to articulate their fears and concerns and be confident that they will receive a sympathetic and supportive response; • to create a calm and caring community where teachers teach and pupils learn; and • to recognise and respect the rights of each member of the school community.
Action	• The School Code of Conduct was reviewed and simplified following extensive consultation. • The rights, roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders were agreed with the aim of achieving a shared responsibility to promoting positive behaviour. • Training was delivered to staff both before and after the implementation of the new policy. The key aspects of this training focussed on prevention strategies and the importance of consistency in dealing with inappropriate behaviour through suggested intervention strategies. Training also included the use of SIMS to record and monitor pupil progress.

Result	• Greater emphasis is placed on promoting positive behaviour.
	• The Positive Behaviour Policy provides an agreed course of action amongst teachers, pupils and parents, which promotes effective teaching and learning, and respects the rights of all members of the school community.
	• There is a healthy balance between sanction and rewards which is fundamental and encourages everyone to implement the school Code of Conduct fairly and consistently.
	• Reduction in the number of after school detentions.
	• Increased value placed on the House System.

5. Broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on literacy and numeracy and wider enrichment activities

The schools visited offer a curriculum tailored to the needs of the pupils. Leaders and teachers are focussed on maintaining a broad, balanced and innovative curriculum offering. The schools visited recognise the merits of, and seek to provide, a wide curricular choice, with flexibility to deliver appropriate courses.

It is clear that the schools visited focus on literacy and numeracy as underpinning attainment across the curriculum and frequently speak of requiring every department within their school to contribute to improvements in these key areas.

Many of the schools recognise the benefits of a wide choice of extra-curricular activities, made available to all age groups. It is beneficial in promoting and developing emotional health and well-being, developing wider interests, interpersonal skills, team working and is complementary to the learning of subjects in the curriculum.

Case Study 5.1: Appropriate Curriculum Pathways

St Mary's College, Derry used to offer three distinct curriculum pathways, which addressed their pupils' individual needs and interests:

- the first was for pupils considered best suited to a vocational pathway;

- the second was for pupils considered best suited to a combination of academic and vocational courses and included GCSEs and A-levels, as well as BTECs and Occupational Studies;

- the third pathway was for pupils considered best suited to general academic courses.

Situation	Initially the school offered these three distinct pathways but the curriculum offer has continued to evolve and there is now much more flexibility. Each student can access a blend of subjects that is best suited to their individual learning needs, that will interest and challenge them. A customised programme post-16 has also been introduced to help prepare a separate group of students (who require specific learning support) for life beyond school, including continuing their education or becoming employed.
Task	As an all-ability school the school identified that the curriculum did not offer pathways where all pupils could achieve and progress. Many pupils were not motivated to achieve and did not feel that they were progressing; as a result, some became disengaged.

Action	• Pupil strengths and interests were mapped to a range of courses including A' levels, Applied A levels, BTECs and Occupational Studies.
	• Distinct pathways tailored to individual needs were introduced at Key Stages 4 and 5.
	• Clearer information and better guidance was provided regarding suitable option choices at Years 10 and 12. This process required a high level of involvement by staff and a closer look at pupil data in the pathway decision making process.
Result	The improvement in examination outcomes at all levels is significant, and while a number of programmes have been identified by the school as contributing to this, there is no doubt that the changes to the curriculum are a major factor.
	• Percentage of 5+ Grades A*-C at GCSE has improved from 79% in 2015 to 99% in 2018
	• Percentage of 5+ Grades A*-C including English & Maths improved from 59% in 2015 to 73% in 2018
	• Percentage achieving 2+ Grades A*- E at A' level improved from 98% in 2015 to 100% in 2018
	• Percentage achieving 3+ Grades A*- C at A' level improved from 48% in 2015 to 84% in 2018
	Pupil engagement in class has increased and discipline issues including suspensions have decreased. (Suspensions are down from 30 in 2015/16 to 6 in 2017/18).

Case Study 5.2: Small Group Tuition and Broad Access to School Library

(1) Small Group Tuition
St Dominic's High School, Belfast has increased its class sizes to create additional time in the timetable for teachers to provide extra literacy and numeracy support, and save money to enable retention of some former teachers to provide extra support for pupils.

Situation	Pupils with specific literacy and numeracy difficulties required one-on-one support.

Task	Prior to the current financial difficulties nationwide, the school employed additional staff to deliver literacy and numeracy support but due to funding challenges in recent years, the school has needed to use their existing staff resources to deliver this support. The initiative has been successful and also enabled subject teachers to provide subject-specific support, particularly at A Level. As a result of the savings it has been possible to retain a number of the former teachers to deliver additional support in specific subject areas.
Action	Class sizes changed so that support for the most part could be provided in-house.
Result	Savings were made while at the same time maintaining continuity in quality of the pupil learning experience. The school believes the quality of the support provided is highly effective and is reflected in the outcomes in public examinations, being significantly above the NI average.

(2)	**Broad Access to School Library**
Action	All pupils have access to the school library from 7.30 am until 6pm every weekday. Evening Study is open to pupils from Year 11 onwards until 9pm every Monday and Tuesday between September and June. After Easter, this extends to include Wednesday and Thursday. The Library is also open between 3pm and 9pm every Sunday after Easter. It is very well attended and provides a quiet space for pupils to work.
Result	Since its introduction about eight years ago, the school has observed an exponential increase in pupil performance. It provides a homely, happy atmosphere where pupils can work individually and also with support for one another. The senior leadership team take responsibility for facilitating this provision and there are no associated costs except for heating and light.

Case Study 5.3: Post-16 Enrichment Programme

St Mary's College, Derry offers a full and varied enrichment programme for post-16 pupils, ranging from core curriculum PE to school orchestra and youth leadership opportunities.	
Situation	The College has traditionally recognised that wider pupil enrichment opportunities are a vital aspect of Post-16 learning. In 2017 the College reviewed the enrichment provision to provide improved cohesion across the areas delivered, more relevance for pupils' future pathways and, where possible, suitable accreditation.
Task	Develop the enrichment programme over the three year period of the School Development Plan to increase opportunities for pupils to develop new skills, broaden their experience of life, grow in self-confidence, contribute to their community and become more independent.

Action	The college provides a full and very broad range of enrichment opportunities to post-16 pupils, in addition to careers guidance, work placement, core RE and PE. Enrichment opportunities include: • A study Skills Programme • Year 13 retreat and Youth Alpha • Young Enterprise Programme • Pre-entrepreneurs with our Entrepreneur in Residence • World Host Training • Rotary Youth Leadership • Michaela and Hope Camp volunteers • Sporting events • The John Paul II Award for service to both parish and community • The Big Sisters Programme providing support for incoming Year 8 pupils • The President's Award (Duke of Ed) • The Student Leadership Team and Ambassadors Programme • Primary School Links, • Charity work and volunteering with local organisations • The School Council, • Mock Trials/Public Speaking • School Choir and Orchestra • Educational visits and trips • The BTYSTE and Young Innovators • Dementia awareness training • The Human Library Project which aims to try to reduce prejudice and make people more accepting of others
Result	Pupils develop skills in a wide range of areas, meet new people and make new friends. Pupils develop their leadership and communication skills, their ability to work as part of a team and develop their own initiative. Pupils' self-worth and confidence increases. Pupils develop a very strong sense of empathy and compassion and have a much better appreciation of the difference they can make to the lives of others.

6.   Skilled use of data to track pupil performance

The schools visited presented examples of where data is being used to monitor pupils' progress in the context of robust target setting. These schools can pinpoint where pupils are not progressing as expected and explain the interventions being applied to provide the extra support they need.

It is clear that teachers in these schools are skilful in using data to identify pupil need and target appropriate support. They share data and intervention strategies well across the school.

Schools recognise the importance of ensuring that all pupils reach their full potential, and have the means of identifying when early intervention is necessary to help them achieve this.

They have established mechanisms that allow underperforming pupils to be given additional support, often through providing a tailored curriculum to meet their particular needs.

Case Study 6.1: Targeted Performance Monitoring by Senior Staff

Malone College, Belfast began having weekly senior staff meetings to monitor performance data for up to 15 underperforming pupils who were falling behind in English and maths (2016/17 AY).	
Situation	Malone College sought to raise achievements at GCSE in English and maths. As a school, they were aware of the importance of these core subjects for pupils going forward in their education and employment.
Task	The department Heads for English and maths collaborated to identify pupils who were underperforming in both subjects and who would benefit from targeted intervention. The pupils were selected using both quantitative and qualitative data.
Action	• Management facilitated time for formal discussions between both English and maths Heads of Departments. This time was initially used to identify common pupils to target.
	• Thereafter, these meetings were an opportunity for the Heads of Department to discuss the progress of targeted pupils (as gleaned from weekly class teacher reports) and identify action points for the forthcoming week.
	• The respective Heads of Department used registration time to discuss the aforementioned progress (or lack thereof) on a one to one basis with the targeted pupils.

Action (continued)	• Raising the profile of these pupils was very important and this was achieved by:
	– a highly visible information board in the staffroom which was updated on a weekly basis;
	– the allocation of an Senior Leadership Team member to each pupil for additional mentoring;
	– the opportunity for parental involvement by way of an initial information evening and regular updates throughout the year; and
	– additional interventions when required by other key staff members such as the attendance officer, Vice Principal and Principal.
	• Finally, the targeted pupils were encouraged to make the most of the programme by creating their own personal contracts and actively participating in mentoring meetings.
Result	48% of targeted pupils achieved Grade C in both English and maths in 2017. The programme was deemed a success and is now embedded within the college.

Case Study 6.2: Traffic Light Monitoring System

Situation	**St Kevin's College, Lisnaskea** identified the need to further improve attainment and reduce under-achievement in literacy and numeracy.
Task	To support raising attainment in literacy and numeracy.
Action	The college introduced –
	• more robust testing using a series of assessment tools including CAT4, PTE, PTM and PASS testing;
	• a traffic light-based monitoring system to display the performance of each pupil in each subject, so the school could physically and visually communicate pupils' performance against targets to all school staff; and
	• additional intervention in cases of repeated under-performance, triggered through the traffic light-based monitoring system.
Result	Staff were better informed and could set pupil targets and utilise formative as well as summative assessment. 5+ GCSE Grades A*-C inc English & maths has improved from approximately 60% to 90% in 3 years.

7. Cross-phase links to support transition and to identify, apply and share best practice

The Learning Leaders Strategy encourages and promotes collaboration and sharing of best practice through professional learning communities. The schools visited work collaboratively with other schools in a range of different ways. They collaborate in teaching provision and after-school clubs to ensure that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Collaboration is evident between primary and post-primary schools with, for example, a focus on reducing anxiety associated with pupil transition between Year 7 and Year 8.

Schools value engagement in formal collaborative links, for example, as members of: Area Learning Communities; Extended Schools Clusters or through the Shared Education Programme. Collaborative working is regarded as being very useful in providing a forum for sharing ideas, good practice and providing support for staff and pupils. This work is widely recognised in the schools visited as helping to develop better community relations.

Case Study 7.1: Collaboration for Transition

Situation	**Hazelwood College, Belfast** has developed links with feeder primary schools for Literacy and Numeracy, facilitating primary school visits for staff, holding joint events, providing support, sharing ideas and good practice. Through this collaboration enabling teachers to make meaningful connections with one another, the school wanted to showcase how it is benefitting pupils in the transition phase and is informing KS 3 teaching and learning, for example, they have re-thought KS 3 mathematical endeavours.
Task	Hazelwood College staff wanted to observe pedagogy underpinning the delivery of literacy and numeracy in the KS 2 curriculum, to help better inform the structure of lessons in KS 3. Specifically they wanted to: • develop a more detailed understanding of the Key Stage 2 literacy and numeracy curriculum, along with resources and teaching strategies; • to observe literacy and numeracy lessons at Key Stage 2; and • to bridge the gaps in delivery of numeracy at the transition stage.
Action	*"Both primary and secondary teachers are likely to be more effective if they are familiar with the mathematics curriculum and teaching methods outside of their age-phase"* - (Education Endowment Foundation - Improving Mathematics in Key Stages 2 and 3).

Action (continued)	A cross phase placement was arranged for the Maths Head of Department and one specialist English teacher to go to selected feeder primary schools. This time was used to observe pedagogy, team teach, work with pupils and gather evidence on pupils' attitudes to maths and English. Dedicated time was set aside to meet with the Head of KS 2, and literacy and numeracy coordinators to discuss pedagogy, identify strategies, resources and forms of assessment. Valuable time was allocated for staff during school development days to align schemes of work to minimise duplication between the key stages. Aligning programmes of KS 3 study with the findings from the placements was a priority. Form time in KS 3 was restructured to incorporate active delivery of literacy and numeracy, for example, via the initiative 'RockStars' and whole-school Literacy 'Hot Topics'. This work was consolidated with a KS 3 practical 'Literacy Numeracy Team Building' programme, which further enhances the transition process. The programme includes a dimension of outdoor education and digital literacy. Pupil Voice is now used to inform areas for further development through pupil questionnaires, pupil focus groups and gaining parental reflections at parent teacher meetings. The Primary 7 pupils from the feeder primary schools now visit Hazelwood College to engage in mathematics lessons which act as a stretch and challenge function to consolidate their Primary 7 topics, as well as participating in Library Workshops. Staff deliver Primary 6 Parents' Information Sessions on the KS 3 Curriculum to outline the transition process, using case studies of past primary school pupils. Prioritising literacy and numeracy at KS 3, through applying a whole-school and cross phase approach means that staff take ownership, regardless of their subject specialism. Staff use a diverse range of strategies to stimulate pupil interest in meaningful literacy and numeracy experiences to help pupils achieve their full potential in each subject. A portable class set of digital tablets containing tailored banks of high quality questions, is an example of one of these strategies utilised by staff.
Result	• The collaboration with primary schools has built staff capacity in using literacy and numeracy strategies for better pupil outcomes at KS 3. Staff identify value added progress by using the college's tailored SIMS Assessment tracking and GL Assessment data. Pupils complete CAT 4, PTE and PTM in Term 1 and PTE and PTM in Term 3. • Evidence gathered through pupil voice questionnaires suggest that the preferred learning styles of Year 7 pupils is in line with the conceptual learning model embedded in the KS 3 maths programme. • KS 3 pupils answered over 105,000 maths questions correctly on the Mathletics World Maths Day Task.

Result (continued)	• At a CCEA Show Case Event, Hazelwood College staff facilitated Effective Mathematics Practice at KS 3, focussing on using bar modelling to master mathematics.
	• 86% of KS 3 pupils accessed the library to avail of cross-curricular literacy materials.
	• The principal's <u>voluntary</u> Key Stage 3 Literacy Numeracy Challenge received entries from 74% of the pupils.
	• Joint cluster training took place for area learning community primary and post primary teachers, focussing on literacy and numeracy transition.
	• Head of Maths has become an ambassador for a classroom app providing banks of maths questions.

8. Effective use of outside interventions

In the schools visited, there is a well-established network of external agencies that they report working effectively with to provide a range of valuable and necessary interventions to support their pupils.

Case Study 8.1: Support for Emotional and Mental Health Needs

Situation	**Coleraine College, Coleraine** draws upon a range of sources of support for the emotional and mental health needs of pupils including: a Family Works funded counsellor that visits one day a week and who provides support mainly for anxiety, stress and family related problems; an EA Youth Worker; the Education Welfare Service and Social Services.
Task	There has been an increasing number of pupils presenting with a range of complex and sometimes serious emotional needs and mental health problems that arise both inside and outside school. These pupils need an extra layer of support to help them cope with school and sometimes life in general.
Action	The school has the services of a Family Works counsellor who attends school once a week and meets with pupils through a referral system. The vice-principal for pastoral care and the pastoral team will spend significant amounts of time mentoring and supporting pupils, and liaising closely with parents (including home visits if necessary) and external agencies including Educational Psychology and Education Welfare Officers, to try and meet their needs. The school also draws on support from local charities such as Praxis Care.
	Coleraine College has also recently embarked on whole school training for all staff on restorative practice to help pupils mend fractured relationships. Funding from the Extended Schools programme has also allowed the school to run more after school sporting clubs and societies as well as a winter breakfast club which all help to improve the wellbeing of pupils. This year a Staff Wellbeing Scheme is being piloted to cater for and look after the physical and mental wellbeing of staff.
Result	Pupils and parents are very aware of all the help and advice that they can avail of in school and know there is a listening and empathetic support structure in place. This was recognised in the ETI report of October 2017 which stated: *"The arrangements for the care, welfare and support of the pupils remain a strength of the provision and the school supports well those pupils who are at risk of becoming marginalised through disaffection with the education system...".*

9. Good links with parents, communities and employers

Many of the schools referred to in this report place high importance on their school being seen to be part of the community they serve. The schools consider themselves to be approachable and report that parents willingly engage with them.

They place great importance on the contacts between parents and staff, and seek ways to encourage parents to develop a close relationship with the school.

Many of the schools ensure that they regularly update and maintain effective online communication tools such as: the school website, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Some schools mention parent apps they use as being very useful communication tools. Such platforms provide an important link between home and school and appear to play an increasingly important role in cultivating and supporting a positive perception of the school among parents and the community.

A number of the schools visited told us that they make their premises available for use by community groups; this is a means of building relationships and improving awareness of the school in the community.

A number of the schools referred to the effective partnerships they have established with the local business community. This can be beneficial for enabling pupils to avail of important advice and guidance regarding potential job opportunities as well as providing the motivation that some pupils needed to inform their future career paths.

Case Study 9.1: Parental Involvement in Early Intervention

Situation	**St Dominic's High School, Belfast** tracks the performance of every pupil in the school four times per year and meets the parents of any pupils falling below their potential.
Task	To involve parents more fully in their children's education as well as providing support for parents who are finding it difficult to persuade their children to study in the evenings.
Action	Performance is monitored through regular tracking reports throughout the school year and results in modules sat externally. After each tracking exam, the Senior Leadership Team in consultation with the Year Head draws up a list of students who are underperforming. Tripartite meetings are organised to discuss the pupil's progress and to set targets for improvement. Pupils who are identified as underperforming attend weekly mentoring with the Year Head or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. They have a mentoring support sheet which is signed on a weekly basis by their Mentor.

Action (continued)	Parents whose children were not performing to their potential were kept fully informed by the school enabling them to act in a pro-active, timely manner. Parents are advised to monitor the daughters' work and encouraged to advise their daughters to attend the school's evening study. Evening study is on until 9 pm twice a week all year and four nights per week and on Sundays in the exam season.
	All of the above contribute to the school's high performance.
Result	Increased engagement of parents and pupils with both groups understanding their role and taking responsibility. Consistent high performance by pupils at all levels.

Case Study 9.2: Community Ambassadors

Situation	**Malone College, Belfast** is an 11-19 grant-maintained integrated post-primary school serving a very wide catchment area that spans South and West Belfast and draws pupils from up to 50 primary schools. This makes it challenging to maintain an effective close relationship with parents and their respective communities. The school needed to improve its enrolment figures and to make an impact on the catchment communities.
Task	As part of the school's public relations (PR) strategy, it was decided to appoint "community ambassadors". These are upstanding members of different communities who are committed to making the school and the local area a more positive place to learn and dedicated to creating opportunities for young people to achieve and have careers. The ambassadors comprise former pupils who have succeeded in the business world, community representatives from various religious backgrounds and educationalists who support the school and its vision. Their role is to engage with pupils, parents and the local community to help support initiatives and to improve the communication between the school and its stakeholders.
	The "community ambassadors" play an integral role in promoting the good name of Malone College and supporting the positive work of the staff and pupils. The initiative led to the setting-up of homework clubs, work placements, volunteering projects and built strong positive relationships.
Action	Ambassadors would:
	• meet with community representatives and politicians ensuring Malone College's profile was raised;

Action (continued)	• aim to influence policy makers;
	• act as invited guests to present awards at celebration events;
	• speak at assemblies, raising the self-esteem of the students;
	• be the eyes and ears in the community to keep the school informed regarding key areas for improvement; and
	• use their expertise in any areas required to enhance pupil learning.
Result	The result of the involvement of the ambassadors in improving links with the communities and parents has been excellent and has added to the effectiveness of the school's PR strategy. The image of the school in the community has improved and the impact of the community links was cited as a strength in the ETI inspection report 2017 - *"...there are well-established community links and outreach programmes which are effective in utilising a variety of innovative techniques that are helping to improve outcomes for those pupils at risk of not achieving."* The school is now viewed positively in the local area and has improved its Year 8 enrolment number.

Case Study 9.3: Regular Performance Reports to Parents

Situation	**St Kevin's College, Lisnaskea** identified the need to address pupil underperformance and involve parents more closely in supporting attainment.
Task	To get parents more involved in pupil learning.
Action	The college –
	• introduced a new testing and reporting system;
	• provides each pupil with a learning log which tracks their progress in each subject;
	• sends six performance reports to parents each year containing data from the school's traffic light-based monitoring system (these are in addition to the two reports previously sent to parents throughout the year); and
	• meets parents for a discussion in cases of pupil underperformance.
Result	Pupils have taken more responsibility for their learning, parents are better informed and more involved in the interventions required.

Case Study 9.4: School's Link with Conor House Fold

Situation	**St Genevieve's High School, Belfast** engaged in an intergenerational project through an established 15 year partnership with the residents of nearby Conor House Fold.
Task	The initiative has sought to promote the mutual benefits of a link between the generations. It brings together the residents and pupils through engagement in a variety of after school activities. The residents are already regular attendees at school and community events and services. Strong relationships have been developed with the warden of the Fold and the staff of Ark Housing Association over the years. Health and Social Care has become an integral and popular part of the KS 5 curriculum in St Genevieve's, with large class numbers at Level 2 and A Level. A Level candidates are required to complete a period of work experience during the course and with such large numbers, the department and the work experience co-ordinator found it difficult to find placements for all students. It was decided to approach the warden of the Fold and Ark Housing to see if placements could be found for some students. Permission was granted for the students to complete their work experience in the Fold, shadowing the warden and scheme facilitator. In addition, Level 2 candidates must complete a module entitled 'Therapeutic Activities' and the Fold provided an environment conducive to completing this module.
Action	• With regard to the Level 2 Health and Social Care pupils, the class teachers liaised with the warden, setting up after school sessions with the residents. Each session was based upon a creative and therapeutic activity based on arts and crafts with the residents in Conor House. • The work experience for A Level students had 2 major strands: communication and patient care. The students were able to observe how the warden and other care professionals communicated with the residents in a respectful and caring manner, promoting dignity and professionalism, focussing on the individuals' personal needs. The nature of communication varied depending on whether the patient had hearing difficulties, Alzheimer's, cancer, mobility difficulties etc. A great deal was learnt by the students.
Result	For Level 2 students, taking part in this activity enabled the pupils to gain first-hand experience of working with service users in the Health and Social Care sector. They used their experience to complete the Unit 4 and Unit 9 parts of their Cambridge Technical coursework. For example, they evaluated the communication skills that they used when carrying out the activity. They discussed the advantages and disadvantages of carrying out such an activity for service users and they completed a risk assessment. On a more personal level, the students built on their own communication skills, gained confidence and a sense of achievement on completion of the activity.

Result (continued)	Having drawn on their experience in the Fold for various aspects of their coursework, all students gained a Level 2 qualification in Health and Social Care. 23 of 26 course candidates were awarded a Level 2 Distinction, with the remaining 3 being awarded a Merit. This facilitated progression for students wishing to continue with this subject at KS 5 and 50% of the AS class were students from the Level 2 course.
	Level 3 students gained concrete, practical and valuable experience in the local health and social care sector, enhancing their interpersonal and communication skills through working with the service users in the Fold and liaising with the Health Care Professionals working in that environment. This first-hand experience enabled students to have a real insight into the Health and Social Care sector which they could draw upon in their A Level coursework. The practices they encountered formed a valid source of knowledge which they could refer to in their examination. 100% of the A level candidature attained grades A*-E. Work Experience links have now been established with the Housing Association which runs the Fold.
	Overall, the school's links with the Fold have been strengthened and the delivery of both Level 2 and A Level Health and Social Care has been enhanced. This has been a valuable development as the achievement of the girls in this subject has been phenomenal as can be seen from the results above. Both aspects of this project with the Health and Social Care students have been mutually beneficial. The increased social interaction with younger members of the local community has helped to combat loneliness in the case of the residents and raised student self-esteem through the creation of a sense of achievement.
	Emotional benefits were also evident in the relationships developed between the residents and students. Reminiscing activities facilitated this alongside the production of small gift items for residents' family members. The production of these gifts meant that the students engaged very closely with the residents and the activity allowed the maintenance and co-ordination of fine motor skills, often an issue for senior citizens. Some of the A level students regularly joined the residents for afternoon tea with other younger students after their link project was completed, resulting in the strengthening of relationships between the residents and students. Pupils also gained organisational skills as they had to plan and prepare for the weekly link. Long may the partnership continue!

10. A well-informed and skilled Board of Governors committed to supporting the school

Many of the schools visited referred to the support they received from their boards of governors. They recognised the valuable contribution of governors in giving strategic direction to the school and in providing practical support and reasonable challenge. Schools reported that governors tend to be appropriately pupil focussed and regularly challenge the school on teaching methods and outcomes.

Case Study 10.1: Challenge from the Board of Governors

St Mary's College, Derry has a board of governors that is very pupil focussed and will challenge the teaching staff on their methods and outcomes.	
Situation	The Board of Governors plays a key role in identifying the priorities in the School Development Plan. They are very well informed about every aspect of school life and closely monitor progress in the areas identified as priorities. The Board members have a range of expertise that supports various aspects of the school, including Learning Support, Computing and Digital Technology ICT, Business and Entrepreneurship and Finance.
	The Board receives termly updates on progress towards targets in the School Development Plan and also receives reports from individual Heads of Department including Heads of Maths, English, Science and SEN. In this way middle leaders report directly to the Board about their methods, strategies and outcomes.
Task	Members of the Board of Governors wanted to be even more directly involved in informing the strategic direction of the school. The staff wanted to ensure that the Governors had good knowledge of all they were doing and wanted to share their success with them. The Board wanted to understand the challenges teachers face and offer support as appropriate but also provide challenge when needed.
Action	• The Board of Governors undertook a series of workshops to engage in consultation with the school on the new School Development Plan 2018-21 and help identify priorities in line with the strategic direction of the school.
	• The Board familiarised themselves with the Inspection Self-Evaluation Framework (ISEF) for schools, and how it is used in the management of the school.

Action (continued)	• All Departments and coordinators send written reports to the Board of Governors.
	• Individual members of the Board of Governors work alongside middle leaders sharing their expertise in areas such as SEN, IT and Computing.
	• Key middle leaders report in person to board meetings.
	• The Chairperson frequently attends key school events including results' day and prizegivings and uses these opportunities to address staff, parents and pupils on behalf of the Board of Governors.
Result	The Board of Governors is better informed about the School Development Plan priority areas and members are better equipped to provide support and challenge as appropriate, contributing in a very meaningful way to the work of the school.
	There is a good sense of openness between staff and governors and staff are very clear that they are accountable to the board for the work they do. Middle leaders appreciate the opportunity to report directly to the Board of Governors about the progress they are making in their Departments.