Background

The findings of the Gillborn and Gipps (1996) review of achievement that students from some minority ethnic groups, namely, those of African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin, have been consistently underachieving in school in relation to their peers, came as no surprise to these communities. They had been expressing concerns about the education of their children for many years and had been struggling, sometimes with the help of supplementary and complementary schools, and often with very limited resources, to help raise the educational attainment of their children.

This project describes what some schools were doing to facilitate success for minority ethnic groups and to consider how far these might be transferable between different schools with different intakes and in different contexts. These schools were identified as successful in raising the attainment of all children or of particular ethnic groups within them.

Key Findings

- A common feature of the case study schools was the strong and determined lead on equal opportunities given by the headteacher.
- Effective schools listened to and learnt from students and their parents and tried to see things from the students' point of view.
- They created careful links with local communities.
- Effective schools tried to understand and work with the 'whole child'.
- They had clear procedures for responding to racist bullying and racist harassment.
- They worked on strategies for preventing exclusion.
- There were high expectations of both teachers and students and clear systems for targeting, tracking and monitoring of individual student progress.
- Monitoring by ethnicity enabled schools to see whether all groups were achieving equally; to identify unexpected shortcomings in provision and to target specific areas for attention. Monitoring also raised wider questions about setting, banding and exclusion processes.
Methodology

Altogether the researchers visited 11 primary and 18 secondary schools. These were selected using the OFSTED data base and with additional information from LEAs, educationalists, local communities and parents. It was decided not to include girls' schools because research has indicated under-achievement of boys as a particular concern. Selective entry grammar schools were also excluded.

The criteria used for selection were schools with over 10 percent of students from at least one of the following minority ethnic group backgrounds: Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Pakistani; and which were shown to be:

a. attaining at or above national average GCSE A*-C results or point scores, or, for primary schools, at or above national average results for National Curriculum Assessments at KS1 or KS2; or

b. although not reaching national average levels of attainment could be seen to be steadily improving; or

c. showing 'much better than like' performance for their intake in relation to numbers of students eligible for free school meals (as an indicator of the socio-economic status of the family), English as an additional language numbers, and levels of attendance.

Of the schools visited, 3 primary and 2 secondary schools were selected for the case studies. Selecting the primary schools for more detailed study after the initial visit was relatively easy as national average attainment levels were high and the small numbers of pupils involved made it possible quickly to assess how far minority ethnic group pupils were proportionately represented in these numbers. The picture for secondary schools was more complex. Either the schools did not monitor examination results by ethnicity, or, for those that did, "League Table" results masked substantial under-achievement by some minority ethnic groups within what were, on the surface, apparently successful schools.

In addition to the 5 detailed case studies, 2 further secondary schools received extra visits in order to focus on provision for Gypsy Traveller students and refugee students.

The final report draws on exemplar materials from 9 primary schools and 12 secondary schools in total.

Data was collected through semi-structured as well as open-ended interviews with Heads, senior management, subject and class teachers, support teachers and classroom assistants, parents and students. Relevant LEA personnel were also interviewed. School Development Plans, policy documents and monitoring records were collected and analysed. The researchers also observed classes, attended after-school activities, staff meetings, a parents' meeting, a governors' meeting, and a staff INSET. In addition, four focus group meetings were carried out, three with parents and one with head teachers and an LEA Advisor for Refugees, all from the three main ethnic groups. These focus groups acted as a forum for discussing the questions arising from initial findings and to elicit new perspectives and questions for investigation.

Main Findings

Interviews with parents from the focus group meetings, and with parents and students across all the schools which were involved in the study, highlighted the range and breadth of concerns which they
held. There were concerns about racism, about low expectations of minority group children, about stereotyping and lack of respect for parents and for students. African-Caribbean parents and students in particular raised issues about unfair practices of teachers. There were problems about poor communication, lack of understanding and missed opportunities for effective partnership between parents and schools.

Effective schools in the study overcame these problems in a number of ways. Successful practice included the following.

Leadership and Ethos

- A strong and determined lead on equal opportunities given by the headteacher. These headteachers had a clear vision about the kind of school they wanted to lead, gave clear direction to staff, and convinced members of senior management and the school's governing body of the importance of their approach.

- The headteachers had an understanding of, and empathised with, the political and social factors which affected the lives of their students. This understanding underpinned the practice of equality of opportunity.

- They listened to their staff and to parents, and established an ethos in which adults listened to and respected the students.

Relationships in Schools

- Effective schools listened to, and learnt from students and their parents, and tried to see things from the students' point of view. They were then willing to re-appraise and adapt school practices in the light of these.

- They created careful links with local communities, identifying and allocating staff to develop those links within the resources and different staff expertise available.

- They nurtured these links by providing help with interpreting and translation and by making the school a welcoming place for families from different cultures.

- One school provided space and opportunities for parents of Black children to meet and discuss issues and concerns which they could take up with staff.

- They tried to understand and work with the 'whole child'. To do this, they linked academic achievement with the mental and physical welfare of students by linking closely the pastoral and academic aspects of schooling. This involved setting up structures which enabled flexible deployment of staff to deal with issues which arose.

- They took seriously, and investigated carefully, grievances of students, especially grievances relating to racism and unfair treatment.

- In secondary schools, they understood the different kinds of pressures faced by adolescents from all groups and worked with this understanding. For example, one school let alienated Black students know that the source of their alienation from school was understood, that the school understood the pressures they faced, and let them know that unfairness would not be tolerated. They created structures of support for all disaffected and vulnerable students, including White students.
They had clear procedures for responding to racist bullying and racist harassment. These were known to all staff, including ancillary staff, and to students.

They had codes of behaviour which applied to both students and staff, and students knew both that they would be given a fair hearing and that each student's safety and well-being was important to the school.

They worked on strategies for preventing exclusion and provided clear written policies for dealing with negative behaviour constructively and with compassion.

**Expectations and Commitment**

High expectations were developed through structures of accountability for staff and through close monitoring of individual achievement.

There were high expectations of both teachers and students in terms of quality of homework set, quality of student presentation, quality of marking and feedback.

Students of all ethnic backgrounds and with all kinds of learning needs were treated as potential high achievers. No students were given up on.

There were clear systems for targeting, tracking and monitoring individual student progress.

Particular attention was paid to strategies for raising standards of literacy. Some schools had introduced systematic tracking and monitoring systems to raise standards of attainment in reading and had set up Year 7 language and study skills sessions.

Students in both primary and secondary schools were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by, for example, setting their own targets for achievement or in assessing their own progress.

There was high staff commitment to students with teachers providing lunch time and after school homework clubs and revision sessions. There was recognition that those students who were least motivated were those who needed most encouragement to attend these sessions.

Mentors from both the students' communities and from local business and professional groups were increasingly used to help encourage and motivate students. The best mentoring programmes were those which had clearly understood aims and objectives, were well structured and where the relationship between the mentor, the school and the student was clearly defined.

**Ethnic Monitoring**

In order to tackle under-performance, case study schools did not only monitor results by gender and ethnicity, but used the information from monitoring to raise questions about strategies to reverse under-achievement.

Monitoring by ethnicity enabled schools to see whether all groups were achieving equally; to identify unexpected shortcomings in provision; and to target specific areas for attention. Monitoring also raised wider questions about setting, banding and exclusion processes.
• Gender and ethnic monitoring were also able to show the differential performance of groups in different subject departments and the hidden differences within such categories as 'Black girls' or 'Black boys'.

Curriculum Enrichment

• Effective schools were sensitive to the identities of students and made efforts to include in the curriculum, their histories, languages, religions and cultures.

• Teachers in these schools drew on student identities to illustrate texts and/or complex concepts.

• One school encouraged positive inquiry, discussion and debate by allocating space in the curriculum for the histories of the largest cultural groups in the school.

• Secondary schools offered a broad range of modern languages including languages spoken in the local community.

• The use of the first language was encouraged for 'settling in' as well as for longer term learning.

Provision for Specific Groups

• Bilingual support staff had a clear role in alerting teachers to concerns about bilingual children, and care was taken to distinguish language needs from special educational needs.

• "Contracts" between Section 11 teams and mainstream staff were found to be useful for defining more clearly their ways of working effectively together.

• There were special 'induction' and intensive language and literacy programmes for Beginners in English.

• One school worked closely with the LEA Traveller Education Services in order to understand and meet the specific needs of Gypsy Traveller students.

• Similarly, schools sought the help and support of a range of services, for example, LEA Language and Learning Support Services and community organisations for refugees in order to learn about and meet the diverse needs of refugee students.

• Schools which showed commitment to equality of opportunity for minority ethnic group students seemed also to embrace the needs of White students. Those that took a 'colour-blind' approach were likely to overlook important factors affecting the quality of experience of minority group students.

• The particular history and relationship to the education system of African-Caribbean communities was recognised and this was taken into account in considering the education and welfare of these students.

• Minority ethnic group headteachers, teachers and governors played an important role in the process of changing school cultures and in ensuring that issues which affected minority group students were raised and addressed.

Implications of the study

Leadership

• The training of headteachers needs to include a substantial element in which issues of diversity, racism, the language demands of the curriculum,
and the broader needs of diverse school populations are dealt with in a coherent and systematic way. These issues should also be an essential element of governor training. The framework for continuing professional development being developed by the TTA offers the chance for such a coherent approach. There is a need for consultation in schools and in higher education to include these issues at all levels.

Relationships in schools

- Issues of race and ethnicity need to be included as a compulsory element of initial teacher education as well as forming part of teachers' continuing professional development.
- Experienced practitioners also need space individually to reassess their practice and update their acquaintance with research.
- Teachers also need to be given skills training on how to talk to students, how to mediate between them and between groups, and how to enable students to listen and engage in constructive debate.

Effective Strategies for Raising Standards

- Schools need to build into their structures, systems of accountability which help to counter any tendencies toward low academic expectations of minority ethnic group students.

- It would be helpful in evaluating schools' relative performance if some way could be found of tying the national OFSTED data base on National Curriculum Assessments or GCSE attainment to data on the presence of substantial ethnic groups at the school cohort level.
- Ethnic monitoring needs to be incorporated into the routine practices of schools. Rather than reinforcing stereotypes, the results of ethnic monitoring help to break down crude assumptions and raise questions about practice for further investigation.
- National data needs to be collected on the following by ethnic background, including Gypsy Traveller students. The data should be used by schools and departments in their setting of targets for improvement:
  - National Curriculum Assessments
  - GCSE and GNVQ results
  - banding and setting placements
  - option choices
  - SEN referrals
  - exclusions
  - attendance

Specific Provision

- Opportunities need to be created for Section 11 language support teachers to take specialist training courses and accreditation. Also for headteacher training to include the effective use and deployment of Section 11 staff while this source of funding is continued.
- There is a need for a focus on strategies for supporting the needs of bilingual learners to be explicitly included in TTA arrangements for ITT course accreditation, as well as in the National Literacy Strategy training programme.
- Schools need In-service training to
educate them about the educational needs of refugee students and assistance to set up support systems for these students.

• In-service training is necessary to educate teachers about the educational needs of Gypsy Traveller students and to help them devise curricula that are more inclusive of Gypsy Traveller cultures. Heads and top managers in schools need to give a lead in creating an ethos which encourages the attendance of children from this ethnic group.

• Teachers need to develop an understanding of the specific issues which have historically affected the education of African-Caribbean students. They also need to devise whole school strategies which are geared towards overcoming the 'blocks' to academic attainment, as well as the problem of early 'drop-out' and exclusion.

• There is an urgent need to investigate the experience of transition to secondary school of minority ethnic group students and to monitor the academic progress of high achieving primary students when they transfer to secondary school.

• The TTA drive to recruit teachers from minority ethnic groups needs to include explicit forms of monitoring their professional development.

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