

London Challenge

London Challenge has continued to improve outcomes for pupils in London's primary and secondary schools at a faster rate than nationally. London's secondary schools continue to perform better than those in the rest of England. Programmes of support for schools are planned with experienced and credible London Challenge advisers using a shared and accurate audit of need. Excellent system leadership and pan-London networks of schools allow effective partnerships to be established between schools, enabling needs to be tackled quickly and progress to be accelerated.

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Executive summary

The London Challenge school improvement programme was established in 2003 to improve outcomes in low-performing secondary schools in the capital.¹ Primary schools were included in the scheme from 2008. The programme uses independent, experienced education experts, known as London Challenge advisers, to identify need and broker support for underperforming schools. The advisers are supported by a small administrative team based in the Department for Education (DfE). The cost of the support and the services brokered comes directly from the DfE and is spent as the adviser directs. Many of these advisers are also National or Local Leaders of Education.²

London secondary schools have continued to improve and the average attainment of pupils in London secondary schools is above the national average. After the summer examinations in 2010, only four London secondary schools (about 1%) now remain below the floor target. Primary schools that have become partners with London Challenge are also improving rapidly, despite the relatively recent start to their programmes. The contextual value-added measures of the participating schools, taken all together, have risen significantly from below average in 2008 to above average in 2010. This represents real gains in achievement for the pupils in these schools; they have not just narrowed this gap but, on average, their achievement on this measure now exceeds the average achievement nationally. Four factors have been common to both the primary and secondary schools.

First, from the beginning of London Challenge, London schools have received clear, consistent leadership from the team leaders appointed by the DfE. Their message has been the pressing need to improve educational standards and the sense of professional duty incumbent on teachers to do this for London children. Over time, that message of commitment and encouragement has been repeated consistently by the London Challenge leadership team. These endeavours have reinforced a clear sense of moral purpose among teachers and school leaders to close attainment gaps between London and the rest of the country. The staff in almost every school that contributed to this survey expressed their commitment to London children, not simply to those in their own school. Their sense of pride in being part of a city-wide education service, irrespective of whether they were receiving or providing support, was a fundamental characteristic of London City Challenge.

¹ Ofsted first reported on the London Challenge initiative from 2003 to 2006. It found that London schools had improved dramatically and that there was much to celebrate. The programme continued to develop within London and began working with primary as well as secondary schools. The model was extended in 2008 to two additional 'City Challenge' programmes in Manchester and the Black Country. The more generalised 'National Challenge' programme was also introduced by the then Government in 2008 to all English secondary schools whose standards were below the floor target.

² National Leaders of Education are outstanding school leaders who, with their own staff, use their skills and experience to support other schools. They work to increase the leadership capacity of other schools to help raise standards. Local Leaders of Education work similarly, at a more local level. For further information, see: www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/professional-development/national-leaders-of-education.htm.

Second, following the audit of need conducted by London Challenge advisers, the programmes of support for schools that require improvement have been managed by experienced and credible advisers. Monitoring of the programme has been done through a school improvement partnership board established for each school receiving support, usually chaired by the adviser, and attended by school governors, school leaders and their mentors, and local authority representatives. They have ensured that the programmes have been rooted securely in an accurate audit of the needs of individual schools. The London Leadership Strategy (coordinated jointly by the managers of London Challenge and by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services) has provided the pool of 'system leaders', current headteachers, that can be called upon by the London Challenge advisers to mentor a target school's headteacher.³ These leaders are matched carefully to a particular school, often through a core group of such leaders, to ensure that a good working relationship is rapidly established with the school's headteacher. This matching of partners under the leadership of the London Challenge advisers has been a critical early step in brokering good support.

Third, once the actual needs of a school have been identified and support for the leadership has been set up, the main work of helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school begins. This may be through local authority advisory staff or externally brokered consultants. Recently, however, substantial improvements have been achieved through effective partnerships with so-called 'teaching schools'. Teaching schools provide extended coaching and practical activities on their own site to groups of teachers from several schools that need support and are within easy travelling distance. The training provided includes separate courses to improve teaching from being predominantly satisfactory to securely good – the 'Improving teacher programme' – and 'From good to outstanding'. Participants and providers with whom discussions were held during the survey were unanimous in their appreciation of the positive impact that this approach was having on raising standards in both the host and participant schools.

Fourth, schools that have improved and left the 'Keys to success' programme of London Challenge have developed robust systems to track pupils' progress and provide effective intervention for pupils at risk of underachievement.⁴ Using data to evaluate the effectiveness of school provision and particular programmes of intervention has become embedded in these improving schools. The systems have worked without external support, giving schools the information they need to respond quickly to pupils' underachievement.

³ The London Leadership Strategy was set up to meet three key objectives in 'Vision for London 2008–2011'. These were: dealing with underperformance and raising standards; creating many more good and great schools; closing attainment gaps.

⁴ A 'Key to success' school had low standards, was below a floor target, or was in an Ofsted category of concern (that is, it was deemed to require special measures or had a notice to improve).

Key findings

- Since the introduction of London Challenge, secondary schools in London have performed better and improved at a faster rate than schools in the rest of England in terms of their examination results.
- The primary schools in London Challenge since 2008 are improving faster than those in the rest of England. The contribution of London Challenge to this improvement is evident in data on pupils' progress since 2008.
- At their most recent inspection, 30% of London's local authority controlled secondary schools were judged to be outstanding, reflecting the positive impact of London Challenge. This compares with 17.5% for the rest of England. Of the 34 academies in London that have been inspected, eight have been judged to be outstanding (24%), with 22% of all inspected academies (84) judged outstanding.
- Only 2.4% of London's secondary schools are currently judged by Ofsted to be inadequate, compared with 4.1% in the rest of England, and 9% of London academies. Across England, 9.5% of academies that have been inspected have been judged to be inadequate.
- The leaders of London Challenge have motivated London teachers to think beyond their intrinsic sense of duty to serve pupils well within their own school and to extend that commitment to serving all London's pupils well. This has encouraged successful collaboration between London school leaders and teachers across schools. This is a key driver for improvement.
- London Challenge has deployed its support strategically. London Challenge advisers have successfully established school improvement partnership boards for schools causing concern, ensured an accurate audit of needs and brokered the resources necessary to meet those needs. They chair regular school partnership boards that monitor and review progress.
- Networks of experienced school leaders from the London Challenge Leadership Strategy, coordinated by London Challenge, provide much of the expertise to tackle the development needs within supported schools and drive improvements in progress. A key strength of these leaders is their skill in matching people and schools, creating a sense of mutual trust. The leaders of the schools that contributed to the survey stated positively that the support is implemented with them and not imposed on them.
- Improvements as a result of schools' involvement in London Challenge are sustained once the support ends because the schools continue to participate in development programmes for teachers.
- These improved schools have also embedded the use of performance data to track pupils' progress and steer intervention and have secured the quality of teaching.

Recommendations

The Department for Education should:

- apply the lessons gained from London Challenge in driving school improvement across other regions, noting in particular the success of partnerships between schools and the use of current practitioners as effective agents of support
- ensure that the expertise and knowledge of how to sustain school improvement in London are applied in future regional and national school improvement strategies.

The national context

1. The London Challenge strategy, 'Transforming London Secondary Schools', was launched on 12 May 2003. The strategy involved a range of work and had three main aims:

- to transform key London boroughs
- to provide support for schools to break the link between disadvantage and low attainment
- to provide a better deal for London pupils, teachers, leaders and schools.

City Challenge was an expansion of London Challenge: to provide support over three years from 2008; to improve outcomes for young people in the Black Country and Greater Manchester, and to continue support for London Challenge.

2. The National Challenge programme was launched in June 2008 as a major initiative to improve standards in all secondary schools where results, based on 2007 results, were below the floor target. It was planned as a three-year programme of support to secure higher standards. The aim was that by 2011 at least 30% of pupils in every secondary school would gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. This was the floor target for secondary schools. In City Challenge areas, the City Challenge programme supported the delivery of the National Challenge programme. Schools involved in the programme were allocated a National Challenge adviser who helped to tailor a programme of interventions to meet the needs of a particular school. The number of secondary schools falling below the floor target has reduced from 631 in 2007 to 270 in 2009.⁵
3. One of the strands of the early London Challenge programme was to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers. This survey found no particular concern among headteachers now about recruitment. They believed that, in

⁵ Figures provided by the Department for Education.

part, this reflected the current economic situation but also the reputation for the quality of teaching in London that had become established in the teacher training community. Twelve London secondary schools are teacher training schools themselves, 'growing their own,' as they put it.⁶

4. Currently, there are 377 secondary schools under local authority control in London. Since London Challenge began in 2003, some 286 secondary schools have been involved in the programme, either supporting schools (74) or receiving support themselves (212). Schools providing support for others say that their own provision and outcomes have improved as a result; this symbiotic effect lies behind the overall higher performance of London schools. Providing support improves the provider as well as the receiver. Currently, 190 London secondary schools are actively engaged in London Challenge work, 142 of whom are receiving support. Of these, 37 are 'Keys to success' schools. They receive support, with additional resources brokered by the London Challenge adviser, to help them release staff for training and mentoring. Other schools are involved indirectly, for example by attending conferences and seminars led by London Challenge.
5. The resources for supporting underperforming schools come directly from the DfE, but are 'in kind', not direct cash to the supported school; in effect, they are vouchers that can be spent only at the direction of the London Challenge adviser. The amount is not allocated by formula, but by audit of need and therefore varies with the scale of the need identified. Typically, between £30,000 and £50,000 is required, mainly for supply cover for teachers and managers who are engaged in training programmes.
6. As the programme has matured, a wider vision of school improvement in London has resulted in the London Leadership Strategy. This is coordinated by London Challenge managers and the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. Twenty nine of the 190 schools actively engaged with London Challenge have chosen to participate in the National College's programmes such as 'Good to great' (a reference to Ofsted's inspection categories) or are sources of consultant leadership. The rest have chosen the 'Gaining ground' programme for moving from 'satisfactory' to 'good' (a further reference to Ofsted's inspection judgements) or the 'Improving Sixth Form' programme. These schools use their existing resources to support training partnerships, with mentoring from National and Local Leaders of Education and training programmes at 'teaching schools'. London Challenge leaders have oversight of all these school improvement programmes, not just those targeting

⁶ As centres of excellence for training, teacher 'training schools' act as experts in adult learning and the transfer of skills, and provide a venue for high-quality professional development. It is expected that they will contribute to supporting the whole school workforce through providing a balance of training programmes that are personalised, relevant and contribute to teaching and learning. The Training School programme is managed jointly by the DfE and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).

weaker schools. The leaders ensure the best match between supported and supporting schools. That strategic deployment of support is a key reason why overall outcomes are improving across London in all categories of schools. Other programmes also exist, such as for middle leaders ('Leading from the middle') and for teachers who would like to move from 'good' to 'outstanding' (the 'Outstanding Teacher Programme'); there is also an 'Improving Teacher Programme'. All these are supported by the National College but all are available to London Challenge advisers, as necessary, in setting up programmes of school support.

7. Clear evidence for the positive impact of the work of London Challenge, at all levels, can be seen in the proportions of secondary schools that Ofsted has currently judged as 'outstanding' at their most recent inspection. For London local authority controlled schools, this is 30% of the 377 schools; for the rest of England's local authority controlled schools, it is 17.5%. Only 2.4% of London secondary schools are inadequate, compared with 4.1% in the rest of England and 9.5% of academies.
8. Since 2008, 296 primary schools have been included in the primary strand of London Challenge, as well as 16 special schools and pupil referral units.⁷ The London Challenge for primary schools covers a wide range of schools, but the principal work is with 124 'Keys to success' schools. There are also programmes (unfunded apart from the central coordination costs of the London Challenge leadership team) to move 75 good schools to outstanding, under the premise that increasing the proportion of outstanding schools will improve overall performance ('growing from the top') and ensure that there is capacity to support weaker schools in the future. A further 59 schools are included in the Intensifying Support Programme, part of the National Strategies' programmes.
9. In addition to London Challenge, a wider-reaching community of experienced school leaders is engaged in the London Leadership Strategy. This programme is supported by training from the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. Groups of headteachers can be called upon by London Challenge, local authorities or schools to help to improve school leadership, at all levels, by mentoring or through support from temporary executive headteachers. The London Leadership Strategy works with successful schools as well as those who are in the London Challenge programme. It has helped to prepare future school leaders, with a view to improving the recruitment of headteachers. It works alongside new headteachers in a mentoring capacity. Some of the headteachers who first received London Challenge support were mentored by their colleagues from the London Leadership Strategy and have now become mentors themselves.
10. The primary London Challenge used lessons learnt from the secondary programme in terms of identifying schools for support. Initially, in this

⁷ These 296 primary schools have been used to calculate the overall progress measures.

programme, the London Challenge team received referrals from local authorities about schools that were causing concern. The London Challenge team also monitors the performance data of individual schools and uses these to take action, even if no other information about a school has been received.

Leadership and management

11. For a school to be supported by London Challenge, some form of external identification is required. Originally, this was from the then Department for Children, Schools and Families. The schools were identified by their low performance data or because Ofsted had designated them as being subject to special measures or requiring a notice to improve.
12. As the programme has gained momentum and achieved success, referrals also come from local authorities, with the intention that support may be set up before standards drop too far or the school slips into one of Ofsted's categories of concern. The strategic leadership of London Challenge now has extensive contacts with many schools, as well as very comprehensive data on school performance, staff turnover and attendance. London Challenge leaders continue to take the initiative when evidence indicates that a school is struggling, and they make the necessary contacts with local authorities, school leaders and governing bodies. The London-wide awareness of school performance, coupled with good local intelligence, allows an active, evidence-based intervention, irrespective of a school's location, status or circumstances. This awareness also gives credibility and assurance to a school that receives support, because its leadership knows that the London Challenge leaders have access to a huge range of expertise and practical support.
13. This expertise and practical support include:
 - detailed knowledge about the expertise and skills of individual leaders in education who might mentor the headteacher of the target school
 - knowledge of the strengths of different kinds of training provision in a range of schools, local authorities and private contractors that might provide support
 - analytical skills and the necessary expertise with data, together with administrative back-up to examine school performance data forensically
 - leadership skills to manage the often disparate members of the school improvement partnership board
 - successful experience of improving their own and other schools in the past.

Finally, the leadership has the financial clout to get things started quickly, putting teachers in touch with training, and leaders in touch with mentors, without delay. Resources, usually in the form of funding for supply cover, facilitate the release of teachers and time for meetings.

14. The networks that the London Challenge advisers have established give them a wide menu of resources to draw upon in setting up a programme of support. As the networks have matured, additional capacity has been developed, primarily through working with the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services in training headteachers as National and Local Leaders of Education. The core teams of these headteachers meet the London Challenge leadership regularly to consider the best way to support a school causing concern. They play a key role in matching leaders to individual schools.
15. The main function of a London Challenge adviser is to act as a catalyst to bring about swift improvements in underperforming schools. Identifying these weaker schools is a critical function of London Challenge leaders, using performance data as their main source of evidence. Local authorities may draw attention to schools at risk of underachievement before test results are publicly available. London Challenge leaders take the initiative to intervene, making direct contact with a school and its governing body.
16. The circumstances in each individual school are different. Therefore, a critical strength of the adviser's role is the ability to understand circumstances quickly and establish bespoke solutions. At the start of the programme in 2003, advisers took the lead role in driving through improvements by chairing school improvement partnership boards. Almost all the original 85 schools that had received such support had a board which comprised the headteacher, a school governor, the London Challenge adviser, a local authority officer and, sometimes, the partner National or Local Leader of Education. (The latter are serving headteachers of nearby schools, usually not in the same local authority.)
17. As the process has become more mature, London Challenge advisers may not necessarily chair such school improvement partnership boards if they are confident that other members will provide the necessary drive and impetus. School governors are always part of these boards. Headteachers to whom inspectors spoke during this survey were unanimous in their view that a crucial factor in the success of the London Challenge programme was the direct intervention from and the initiative taken by London Challenge advisers to support a school. Because the individual advisers demonstrated empathy as well as a strong insistence on ensuring that standards improved, the headteachers spoke very highly of their ability to motivate and the impact that they had. Many of the advisers had been headteachers themselves, before fulfilling successful roles as senior local or national advisers, directors and deputy directors of children's services, senior education consultants or Her Majesty's Inspectors.
18. The improvement partnership board ratifies a programme of support that is drawn up by the London Challenge adviser with the school itself. That programme is tailored to the most pressing needs at the school and is funded primarily from London Challenge itself, although local authorities are expected to add additional resources as necessary. Most of the resource is devoted to

training for teachers since, more often than not, the root cause of underperformance has been weak teaching. Schools have resources to pay for supply staff, allowing teachers to attend extensive off-site training in 'teaching schools'. In turn, the teaching schools are funded to allow their own teachers to provide the training. Inspectors found some examples of more traditional consultancy work, involving on-site coaching, but these examples were not as long-lasting nor as time-consuming as the off-site programmes and, crucially, did not include the element of reflection and debate about pedagogy with peers from other schools.

19. London Challenge advisers make sure they always empower school leaders to make tough decisions. Headteachers receiving support from consultant leaders and direction from London Challenge advisers, as described above, had been enabled to build internal capacity for further improvement. Advisers are seen as experts who know how to fix the problem and are therefore also accepted as directors of the solutions. Headteachers particularly valued being included in the network of supporting schools, brokered by the London Challenge advisers. The initial contact by advisers, although potentially difficult, had actually set headteachers at ease, and enabled relationships to be built swiftly. This helped the schools to retain the sense that each supported school was still in control of its destiny. The leadership skills within the London Challenge adviser team are such that advisers, in almost all cases, can quickly establish effective partnerships with the staff of the supported school. Middle leaders, once they became partners with colleagues in provider schools, also said that their anxieties had been swiftly overcome, because they felt they were genuine partners in the process of school improvement. It was being 'done with them, not to them'.
20. Six of the 85 early 'Keys to success' underperforming schools have become outstanding schools, and are now providing support in other schools. Headteachers of schools receiving London Challenge support recognised that their partnership with National or Local Leaders of Education really was support, not accountability (that was the role of the London Challenge adviser). This approach encouraged and eventually embedded a 'will to improve' in school leaders and they could see that others had managed to do so from similar starting points. An important tool in convincing an otherwise sceptical headteacher was the 'family of schools' booklet; this grouped together similar schools in similar contexts. Headteachers could therefore compare how some of the schools were achieving much better than their own. These comparative data were always backed up by a firm focus on improving standards of attainment, not simply relative progress.
21. Because considerable experience, skills and knowledge of how to bring about school improvement now exist within the cadre of headteachers that provides the leadership and teacher training, the community of 'system leaders' available through the London Leadership Strategy contributes greatly to auditing need and matching partners to schools in need. Schools receiving support quickly recognise that it comes from effective practitioners; they also find opportunities

quickly to contribute to that community themselves, once their own improvement is underway. Over time, the impact of local authority consultancy has diminished as authorities reduce their capacity for direct support for their schools and is replaced by this pan-London network of National and Local Leaders of Education, and associated teaching and training schools.

22. London Challenge advisers may also commission commercial educational consultancy and providers of support, commensurate with the audit of need at a particular school. In this survey, the schools receiving such support had varying views of its effectiveness compared with the consistently positive impact of working in partnership with other schools. It is rare for supported schools to receive direct financial resources for capital or staffing. The school improvement partnership board directs where resources should be spent and monitors the effectiveness of the provision.
23. An important consequence of the London Challenge initiative is that supported schools become influenced by the rigour and high expectations of the colleagues who are providing the support. As a result, teachers and their leaders begin to understand their own importance and value in providing effective education to London children. That sense of moral purpose is commonly present across the teaching profession and in individual schools, but it is not often expressed in terms of commitment and loyalty to a region as a whole. Teachers during the survey said that they were proud to be London teachers and had come to that belief through their training and through meeting other teachers and leaders in the programmes brokered by London Challenge. That same sense of commitment to London was also present in the core teams of headteachers who worked alongside supported school headteachers across London.
24. Twenty former London Challenge schools have become academies. In five of the six academies visited for this survey, the change in designation appears to have separated them from the networks of support that they once enjoyed. Since 2006, three of these five have improved in terms of their overall effectiveness, as judged by Ofsted. Their commitment to school improvement has become much narrower in its reach, limited – in most of the cases that inspectors encountered directly – to other academies. This risks leading to separate networks of expertise. However, the sixth academy, a recent phase 3 academy, maintained its firm commitment to the ‘commonwealth of schools’, as the headteacher put it, and was continuing with its programme as a ‘teaching school’ to support local authority colleagues.
25. Although structural solutions to improvement, such as federation, becoming a ‘trust’ school, executive headship, or closure followed by re-opening as a new school occurred, these changes did not feature as major aspects in the thinking of the headteachers consulted during this survey. Those who had made these structural changes still considered that the key drivers behind school improvement were:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - better use of data to track pupils' progress
 - the resultant timely interventions for individual pupils
 - more flexible approaches to the curriculum.
26. Some headteachers expressed frustration in relation to continuing support from their own local authority. This was either because the authority was losing the capacity to provide expert support as more schools chose an alternative status or because of conflicting agendas in relation to school admissions, selection and falling rolls. These issues were much more common for secondary headteachers than for their primary counterparts. One further reason for the success of London Challenge was that its support came without local strings attached and without conflicts of interest.

Teaching and learning

27. In addition to bespoke support for school leaders and managers, London Challenge also brokers professional development for teachers in the supported schools. These programmes are the engine room of school improvement, as they secure better provision in the classroom. There are two approaches to this work.
28. First, advisory staff, either full-time local authority staff or those working as Advanced Skills Teachers⁸ in other authority schools, may be part of a school improvement package. The London Challenge advisers may insist that this is one way for the local authority to contribute resources to the school. This approach sends local authority consultants to the school to work alongside teachers, providing advice and guidance. Essentially, the support work is taking place inside the supported school. It involves lesson observations and feedback to teachers, demonstration lessons taught by the consultant teacher, help with assessing the levels of pupils' work, and formal input to groups of staff at in-service training sessions. Sometimes Advanced Skills Teachers demonstrate good practice. There may be some opportunities for the teacher who is being supported to visit other settings or to observe other staff within her or his own school. There is also a centrally directed Advanced Skills Teachers programme, and other expertise such as that for inclusion or English as an additional language, brokered by London Challenge advisers.
29. A second approach develops a school as a 'teaching school'. This development had its origins at Ravens Wood School in Bromley in 1999 as part of its response to high staff turnover and the impact that this was having on pupils'

⁸ Advanced Skills Teachers are those who are judged, through external assessment, to have demonstrated excellent classroom practice. Their role is to support colleagues in their own and other schools to develop their practice. For further information, see: www.teachernet.gov.uk/professionaldevelopment/ast/.

achievement. The school used a 'coaching triads' model of professional development and by 2004 it was providing training to teachers from 58 schools, some of whom were in the early London Challenge programme. London Challenge advisers are able to use their resources to enrol teachers on one of the programmes. Twelve secondary 'teaching schools' and nine primary ones are in London, with a further 10 primary 'facilitation' schools at an earlier stage of accreditation. This is quite different from the first approach, because the principal training is done at the host school, provided by host school teachers to a group of around 15 or so teachers from the schools being supported. A teacher in the supported school is trained as an in-house mentor, whose role is to help the trainee develop her or his new skills further between training sessions, when she or he is 'back home' in their own school. The model has been taken up by other schools nationally. The scale of these training programmes is impressive. For example, over 600 primary teachers have already participated in the 'Improving Teacher Programme' since the primary London Challenge started in 2008.

30. Inspectors spoke to staff in four of the teaching schools that were sources of teacher development, as well as to schools receiving such development. Three of the four were judged by Ofsted to be 'outstanding' – one of the usual requirements for becoming a teaching school. The training programmes provided by training schools are not limited to schools causing concern. They include opportunities for teachers to improve their skills at two levels. The 'Improving Teacher Programme' aims to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good. The 'Outstanding Teacher Programme' helps teachers to understand what makes a lesson, or series of lessons, outstanding. Both programmes require substantial commitments of time, typically 10 days in a term. In a London Challenge school, funds are available to pay for supply cover to release staff to attend courses. Funds are also available for the host schools to give their own staff time to work on the programmes.
31. Teachers on these programmes universally welcomed their impact on the quality of their teaching. School managers could point to measurable improvements in the quality of the teaching, with consequent improvements in outcomes for pupils. Providers also noted that the quality of their own teaching had improved further. This was the primary reason why teaching schools wanted to continue with this work: they recognised that their own staff and pupils benefited. They were careful to monitor the time teachers spent out of lessons and the potential disruption to classes caused by course participants practising their new (or re-discovered) skills in the host school's classrooms.
32. Participants at all levels considered that this intensive approach – learning, discussion, practical exercise and live teaching – was much more effective than a more traditional model of continuing professional development by attending a

course of instruction.⁹ Working with teachers from other schools with similar challenges, outside the confines of their home school, enabled frank discussions of strengths and weaknesses in their own teaching, free from concerns about performance management or the disapproval of peers. In particular, a high proportion of time was dedicated to reflecting on and reviewing their own teaching, and their understanding of pedagogy. This taught teachers to become reflective practitioners and they began to share that skill with their colleagues at their home school, under the guidance of the school mentor. This sharing continues with the 'coaching triads' model, in which the lead teacher works with two colleagues to demonstrate an element of teaching while being observed and then observes her or his colleagues 'having a go' themselves. The process of sharing itself reinforces the training received by the 'lead' teacher and boosts confidence as well as expertise. The teachers whom inspectors met who had participated were very satisfied with the quality of training and said that they felt refreshed and professionally motivated in their jobs.

33. The model appears to provide one solution to the longstanding difficulties of how to share good practice among schools. Good schools, or aspiring satisfactory schools, buy into the training programmes set up by London Challenge using their own, not external, funding. For example, 75 good primary schools are engaged in the 'Good To Great' programme without substantial external funding. This works well for weaker schools because the intervention from London Challenge makes it happen and provides the resources, even if the weaker schools do not have the leadership capacity to realise what needs to be done or the drive or moral purpose to devote so much resource (both time and money) to improving the quality of teaching.
34. Teachers on the 'Outstanding Teacher Programme' in the teaching schools, both primary and secondary, noted that it involved serious debate and shared reflection with colleagues about what led to outstanding teaching. It was not an externally imposed programme with pre-defined models or rigid guidance. A notable feature of the approach was the lack of subject-specific input; the focus was on what made teaching outstanding rather than on developing subject knowledge, although Ofsted has reported elsewhere on the importance of a teacher's good subject knowledge as well as generic teaching skills.¹⁰
35. An analysis of Ofsted judgements on the quality of teaching in secondary schools since 2006 is shown in the annex to this report. Because 286 London schools are, or have been, part of London Challenge, their contribution to this overall analysis has been substantial. It shows that the quality of teaching in London secondary schools has been higher than for the rest of England; there is more good or outstanding teaching taking place.

⁹ *Good professional development in schools: how does leadership contribute?* (080254), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080254.

¹⁰ *Improving primary teachers' subject knowledge across the curriculum* (070252), Ofsted, 2009; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070252.

Achievement and standards

36. Of the 85 original London Challenge schools, 20 have become academies and four have closed. Of the remaining 61 schools, 23 continued with London Challenge support from 2008, because all except one were performing below the floor target in 2008. By 2009, only six of these remained below the floor target. Taking London schools as a whole, 15 of them (4%) were below the floor target in 2009, compared with 10% of the rest of the schools in England. A further check on how some of the remaining 61 schools have fared when inspected by Ofsted is complicated by changes since 2006 to the frequency with which schools are inspected and a change to the inspection criteria in 2009. However, looking at 44 of those schools now and comparing them with the inspection judgements made about them in 2007/08 shows that 21 have stayed the same, 17 have improved and five have declined.
37. The 20 former London Challenge schools became 21 academies (one precursor school split to become two separate academies). Of those 21 schools, 19 have been inspected: three were judged to be inadequate, six were satisfactory, eight were good and two were outstanding. Of the 19 with current inspection judgements, 14 had relevant historical inspection data but this must be treated with caution, since forming an academy often involves the closure of the precursor school or the merging of schools. Two of the schools have declined in terms of their overall effectiveness, as judged by Ofsted, three have stayed the same and nine have improved. The sample is too small to make detailed comparisons with other schools, other London schools or the rest of England's academies (182), many of which (117) have not yet been inspected for the first time.
38. The unvalidated 2010 data for GCSE results shows that two of the 21 academies where the precursor schools were in London Challenge did not achieve the floor target. There are 51 academies in London altogether.
39. Current (2010) school data show continuing improvement in the performance of all London's secondary schools over time. London secondary schools outperform the rest of England on important indicators such as the proportion of pupils gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. Only four of the 377 London secondary schools in local authority control remain below the floor target in 2010 – about 1% of London schools. Nine of the 377 are in an Ofsted category of concern (2.4%).

Notes

In 2006, 85 secondary schools in London had been involved in London Challenge. Many of these were identified as 'Keys to success' schools that appeared to be significantly underperforming. All London secondary schools were associated with city-wide activities that included a strong drive to recruit and retain teachers in London, backed up by clear messages of support from the senior London Challenge advisers.

Inspectors' main activity during this survey centred on contacting 22 of the original 85 schools to see where they had reached in their school improvement journey. Two seminars took place for five primary and five secondary schools currently involved in London Challenge. The two seminars explored the main features of effective support and partnerships with the aim of understanding the motivations behind supporting partnerships. Meetings and telephone conversations were held with officials at the Department for Education, senior leaders of London Challenge, and representatives of the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services in order to better understand the strategic organisation of the programme.

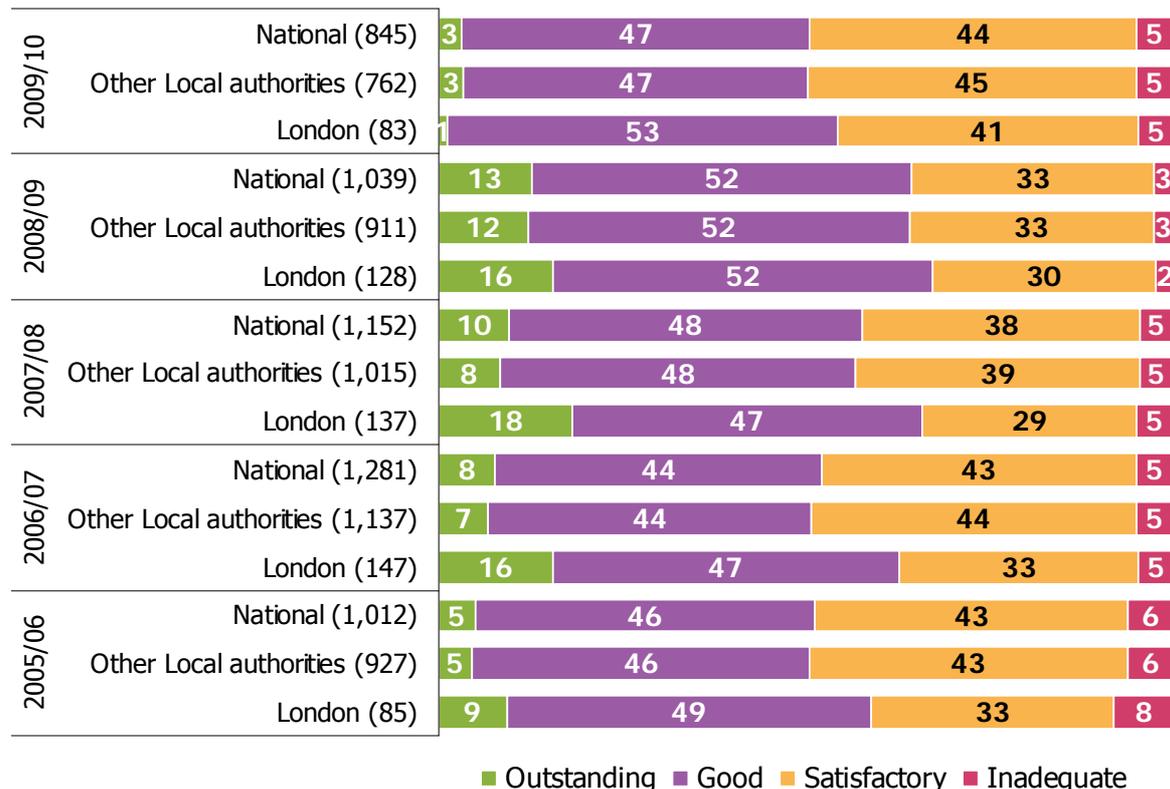
Inspectors also visited three pairs of schools in both the primary and secondary phases: three were currently providing support and three were receiving such support. Inspectors met headteachers and senior school leaders, teachers and pupils, and evaluated the impact of the training and support programmes.

Inspectors also telephoned headteachers of a further five secondary schools and three primary schools that were active participants in the London Leadership Strategy, and a primary and secondary headteacher who were receiving support.

Annex

Quality of teaching data

Figure 1. Quality of teaching in London secondary schools compared to the national profile



In all the academic years shown in Figure 1, there is a high proportion of good and outstanding teaching in London, maintaining the difference that Ofsted reported in 2006. In 2009/10, Ofsted 'raised the bar' in making its inspection judgements; inspectors also visited a higher proportion of schools that had been judged to be satisfactory at their previous inspection. This reduced the number of inspections of schools that had previously been judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding' schools and so the sample is skewed. This is why the proportion of good or outstanding teaching across the samples appears to drop in the academic year 2009/10 compared to 2008/09.

Progress data for London Challenge primary schools

Primary school data was analysed, year by year, to look for the impact of the primary phase of London Challenge that began in 2008.

To isolate these schools from others, and to try to eliminate factors such as school context, pupils' prior attainment and pupil characteristics, the group of London primary schools was treated as if it were a 'local authority', and the algorithms Ofsted uses to compare local authorities were used in this instance to see how this artificially created subset was performing.

These data use the average point score of pupils in each school as the primary performance measure. They therefore include pupils of all abilities and starting points, and include the progress they make, without presumption about a final threshold level or 'expected' levels of progress.

The national average progress measure in every year is 100. From below-average in 2007, these same schools now ensure above-average progress. The data in Table 1 below show unequivocal evidence of the relative improvement in the progress of the pupils in these schools, where the only different factor in these schools compared with others is their participation in the primary phase of London Challenge. The confidence interval for these figures is 0.2. Essentially that means that up to and including 2009, these pupils made significantly less than average progress; they are now making the same progress as other pupils nationally.

Table 1: Progress measures 2007 - 2010

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of pupils	6036	6424	6193	6126
Progress measure	99.683	99.566	99.341	100.14