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PRIMARY SCHOOLS RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY: BARRIERS AND POSSIBILITIES

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and Stephanie Thomson

A report for the Cambridge Primary Review Trust

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This is one of a series of research reports commissioned by the Cambridge Primary Review Trust (CPRT), a not-for-profit company established in December 2012 with the aim of consolidating and building on the evidence, findings and principles of the Cambridge Primary Review.

Cambridge Primary Review Trust is supported by Pearson Education, based at the University of York and chaired by Professor Robin Alexander.

A briefing summarising key issues from this report is also available. The report and briefing may be downloaded from the Trust's website: www.cprtrust.org.uk. The website also provides information and other reports in this series, and about the many publications of the Cambridge Primary Review.

We want this report to contribute to the debate about the future of primary education, so we would welcome readers' comments on anything it contains. Please write to: administrator@cprtrust.org.uk. The report contributes to the Trust's research programme, which includes both funded research projects and this series of specially-commissioned research reviews relating to the Trust's eight priorities.

This report relates to CPRT priorities 1 and 3, Equity and Community:

Equity. *Tackle the continuing challenge of social and educational disadvantage, and find practical ways to help schools to close the overlapping gaps in social equity and educational attainment.*
Community. *Promote community engagement and cohesion through school-community links and a community curriculum that supplements and enriches the national curriculum, and by developing communal values in school and classroom.*

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PRIMARY SCHOOLS RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY: BARRIERS AND POSSIBILITIES

Introduction

Currently there is much concern in England – as in many other European countries – about the impact of changing demographics on the social fabric of the country and, in particular, on public services such as education. In addition to concerns about population growth and the changing age structure of the population, attention has been focused especially on patterns of migration. One analysis, for instance, argues that:

> The official population projections suggest that an additional 2.3 million births between 2008 and 2033 will result from migration. Adding direct migration to this and assuming that all of the additional children are educated in state schools, the total costs of their schooling would be almost £195 billion over a 25 year period. (Migration Watch UK, 2010: 1)

If such analyses are correct (and they are, of course, highly contested), they have implications not just for the funding of the system or for the pressure on school places (Migration Watch UK, 2015), but also for the capacity of schools and their teachers to respond effectively to what often seems to be an increasingly diverse population of learners.

In this report, we put these current concerns into a broader context. The population of England is already diverse in multiple ways – ethnically, linguistically, culturally and socially. And, of course, the primary school system has long had to respond to demographic change – not just inward migration, but within-country migration and population growth. Likewise, schools themselves have always had to find ways of educating children from very different backgrounds in the same institution and in the same classroom. Indeed, the most apparently homogeneous classroom is in fact diverse simply because no two children are identical in educational terms. The most overt markers of difference, such as ethnicity or social class, are simply indicators of the underlying diversity that characterises schools and classrooms. Rapid changes in patterns of diversity, whether they are attributable to migration, population growth, gentrification or any other cause, are important because they present immediate challenges – and opportunities – to schools and the school system. However, the presence or absence of such changes does not alter the fundamental task of schools to educate children who are different one from another.

In this review we analyse the current state of affairs in the English primary school system in respect of this task. We take into account both underlying population diversity and the impacts of recent changes, and consider the actions that schools themselves can take and the national policy context which hinders or facilitates their efforts. In doing so, we ask three key questions:

- How effective is the English primary school system in responding to pupil diversity?
- What are the barriers to progress?
- What needs to happen to move the system forward?

We assume that 'progress' in this sense includes but is by no means limited to improvements in educational attainments. Crucial as these are, there are other important educational outcomes, such as lifelong engagement with learning, personal and social development, and health and well-being. We also assume that these outcomes should be distributed equitably across the pupil population, but that educational equity is multi-dimensional (Raffo, 2014) and cannot be measured simply by looking at what national statistics say about the achievements of different groups. This view leads us to argue that recent national policies have limited opportunities to use diversity to stimulate efforts to develop more effective practices in the field. At the same time, we draw attention to promising developments that could be used to guide future actions.

1 - THE EARLIER REPORT

Our analysis builds on an earlier report, commissioned by the Cambridge Primary Review, analysing the situation as we saw it in the latter years of the 1997-2010 Labour governments (Ainscow, Conteh, Dyson, and Gallanaugh, 2010). In that report, we noted that the ways in which differences between children are understood, the ways they are explained, and the policy responses that are then deemed appropriate, change over time. This means that at different times and in different contexts attention is paid to this or that form of difference; that these forms of difference are understood and explained in particular ways; and that implications for policy and practice flow from these constructions. Rather than merely reporting the apparent differences in the primary population, therefore, we concluded that it is necessary to analyse the ways in which difference is constructed.

In exploring this approach, we noted that much of what was known at that time about diversity in the primary population came not from scholarly research, but from official statistics and the analyses of these statistics. The outcomes of these analyses were used more or less directly to inform policy. We went on to explain that at a time when government policy was focused on raising standards of attainment, it had become possible to relate the demographics of the pupil population to levels of attainment. As a result, diversity was understood primarily in relation to attainment. Meanwhile, a succession of government analyses and policy pronouncements had documented how some groups do better than others, and set out the interventions that are to be targeted at these groups to bring their attainments to the level of their more favoured peers.

As a consequence of the importance attached to raising standards of attainment, the official categorisations of difference were, we argued, never neutral. Belonging to a particular ethnic group, or coming from a particular social background, or, even, having a particular gender, is seen to have a value insofar as it inhibits or facilitates the achievement of particular outcomes. Characteristics with a negative value are cast as obstacles to be overcome through policy and practice interventions. Given the tendency for poor outcomes to be associated with particular clusters of characteristics, and for these clusters to be distributed unevenly in geographical terms, this means that particular groups of learners, in particular places, are likely to be seen as overwhelmed by negative characteristics – as are the schools that serve them.

We also recognised how the particular constructions of difference that inform official statistics and policy had helpfully directed attention towards low achieving or vulnerable groups who might otherwise be overlooked. At the same time, however, they offer an impoverished understanding of difference. In particular, they reinforce either/or categorisations and ignore the complexities of children's lives; they tend to overlook the resources to which those differences give children access; and they overlook the role of the child as agent, making sense of and acting within their worlds.

As an alternative to this, we went on to illustrate how the work of critical researchers was pointing to very different constructions of difference – not in terms of fixed and evaluative categories - but of much more fluid constructions that are negotiated in particular contexts. So, what children 'are' and how they are 'different' from each other cannot be read off from a list of characteristics. Instead, difference emerges from the interactions amongst children, and between them and their teachers, as they work together in particular educational contexts, on particular tasks and priorities. Moreover, each child plays a part in shaping the way that their distinctive and shared characteristics come to be understood.

We concluded that national policy has much to do in building the capacity of schools and teachers to respond to diversity. This involves supporting the development of school leaders who are concerned with diversity and know how to develop their schools in this respect; creating structures so that teachers have access to what practice actually looks like when it is being done differently; conceptualising teacher development in terms other than simply learning how to implement centrally-mandated practices; and finding processes whereby teachers can be enabled to think through their shared experiences so that they can help one another to articulate what they currently do and define what they might like to do.

Our earlier report was one of several that informed the deliberations and conclusions of the Cambridge Primary Review in this area. The evidence is brought together in Alexander (2010), chapter 8, 'Diversity and equity'.

2 - THE CURRENT SITUATION

Before moving on to update our previous analysis, we provide a summary of significant changes that have occurred in the pupil population – and, crucially, that have been monitored through national statistics – since 2005. In so doing we keep a particular eye on London, where there is evidence of significant improvement in pupil outcomes, some of which has been explained in terms of the ways in which schools have responded to increased diversity within the pupil population (Blanden et al., 2015; Burgess, 2014)

Changes in numbers of primary school children, 2005-2015

The number of primary-school children has grown since 2005 and continues to grow. Numbers decreased slightly between 2005 and 2010 but since then have grown every year. Figure 1 shows the trend over this period for full-time equivalent (FTE) pupil numbers in state primary schools.
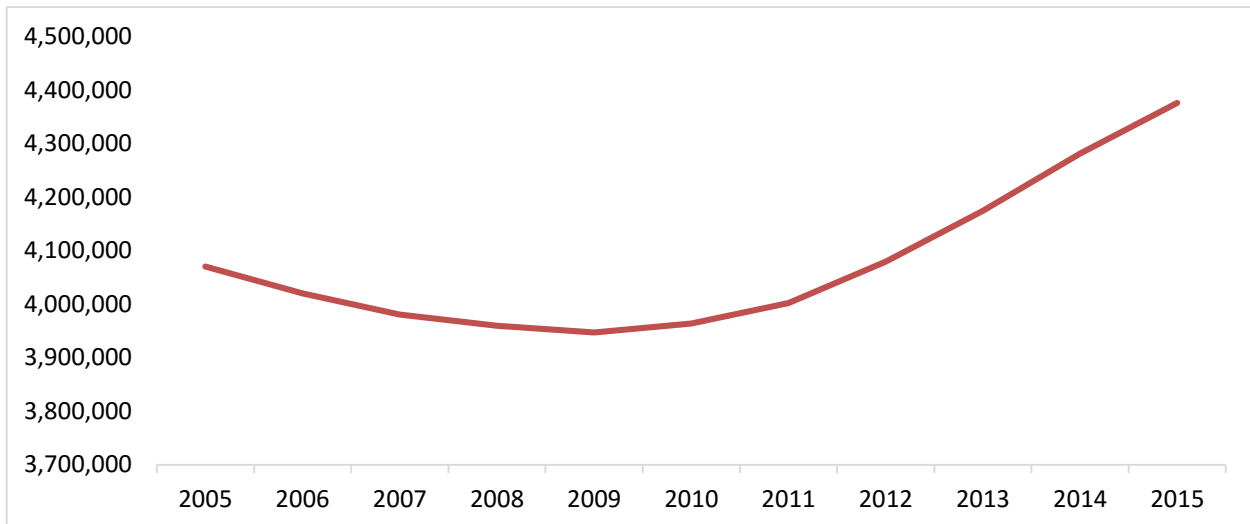
Figure 1: Primary pupil numbers, 2005-2015. Source: Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics data 2015 (DfE SFR 16/2015)

This growth, however, has not been evenly distributed in all parts of England. The biggest growth has taken place in outer London (up 19.7%) and the smallest in the north east of England (where the 2015 figure is only just larger than that from 2005 – leading to growth of under 1% overall). Other regions have seen growth of around 3-11%. Outer London's large growth in numbers can be partly explained by noting that numbers there have grown consistently since 2005; something only seen there and in inner London. However, whilst inner London's growth between 2010 and 2015 was in line with the national average (in percentage terms), outer London's pupil numbers continued to grow rapidly.[1]

Some local authorities (LAs) in outer London have seen particularly marked increases in their primary numbers over this period – for example in Barking and Dagenham, numbers increased by 41% between 2005 and 2015. Large increases were also seen in areas near to London, such as Reading, Peterborough and Slough. By contrast, some local authorities saw a drop in numbers over this period.

Composition of the population

Between 2005 and 2015, the percentage of the primary cohort who are minority ethnic (i.e. not classified as White British) rose from 19.3% to 30.4%. The largest increases have been in the percentage of Asian children and 'Any other White Background'. The biggest increase has been in outer London (up 17.8 pp), with the smallest increases in the north east and inner London (up 5.3 and 5.6 pp respectively), though inner London still has the highest percentage of the cohort classified as minority ethnic (81% in 2015).[2]

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[1] Source: Schools, Pupils and their characteristics data 2005-2015 – DCSF SFRs 42/2005, 38/2006, 30/2007, 09/2008, 08/2009, 09/2010, DfE SFR's 12/2011, 10/2012, 21/2013, 15/2014, 16/2015

[2] Source: Schools, Pupils and their characteristics data 2005-2015 – DCSF SFRs 42/2005, 38/2006, 30/2007, 09/2008, 08/2009, 09/2010, DfE SFR's 12/2011, 10/2012, 21/2013, 15/2014, 16/2015

Over the same period, the percentage of the cohort who speak English as an additional language (EAL) rose from 11.6% to 19.4%. The highest percentages of children with EAL are in inner and outer London, and outer London has again seen the biggest increase in EAL children (as a percentage of the cohort, up 15.2 pp).[2]

Between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of the primary cohort eligible for free school meals (FSM) was decreasing slightly. Between 2008 and 2011, it rose slightly, before stabilising until 2013 when it started to fall again (see Figure 2).
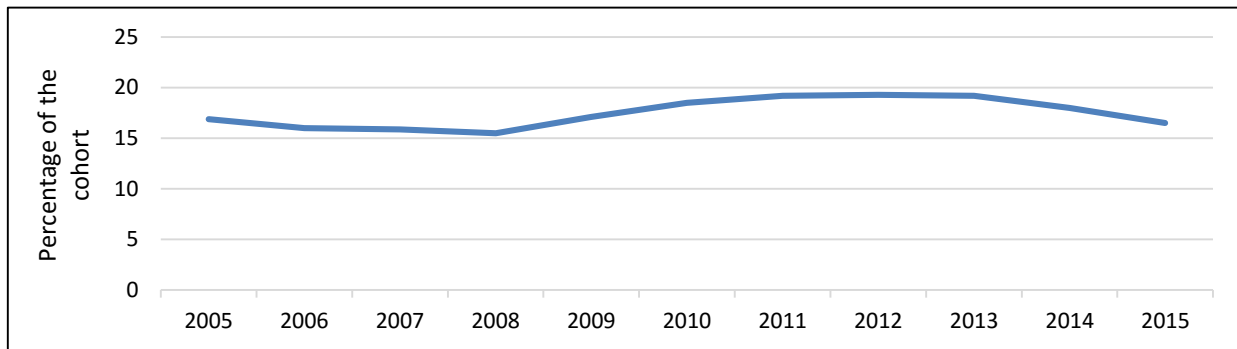

Figure 2: Percentage of primary children eligible for Free School Meals, 2005-2015. Source: Schools, Pupils and their characteristics data 2005-2015 – DCSF SFR08/2009 and DfE SFR's 16/2015

Between 2005 and 2015, the percentage of children on FSM dropped by 11.6pp in Inner London (the biggest decrease of any region). Despite this, Inner London still had the highest percentage of primary children on FSM in 2015 (at 26.4%), closely followed by the North East (with 22.1%). In 2005, 9 out the top 10 LAs with highest FSM percentages were in Inner London. By 2015, only 4 out of 10 were, with the others found in larger cities outside of London such as Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool or in large conurbations (Halton, Knowsley and Middlesbrough). This suggests a change to the distribution of poverty around England has occurred between 2005 and 2015.[2]

For the last 10 years, the percentage of the cohort registered as having a statement of special educational need (and latterly Education, Health and Care Plans) has been around 1.5%. The percentage of children with SEN and no statement rose between 2005 and 2010 but then fell every year after 2010 (see Figure 3). We see a particularly sharp drop in 2015, as School Action and School Action Plus were replaced by 'SEN Support' in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provisions in the Children and Families Act 2014. A slightly smaller percentage of the total SEN cohort now are in primary schools – an increased percentage of SEN children are in special schools and independent schools (though it is not possible to break down numbers in special schools and independent schools by age).

Changes to school numbers and class sizes

At the same time as pupil numbers have increased, numbers of primary schools have decreased, from 17,642 in 2005 to 16,766 in 2015 (see Figure 4). A particular casualty of falling school numbers is the middle school sector with overall numbers of such schools dropping from 345 in 2005 to 169 in 2015.

All Government Office Regions apart from inner London had a decrease in school numbers over this period. Interestingly, 21% of all Free Schools in England that accept primary-age pupils are in inner London. In some places, pupil numbers are rising fast but schools have been closed (e.g. Barking and Dagenham).[3]
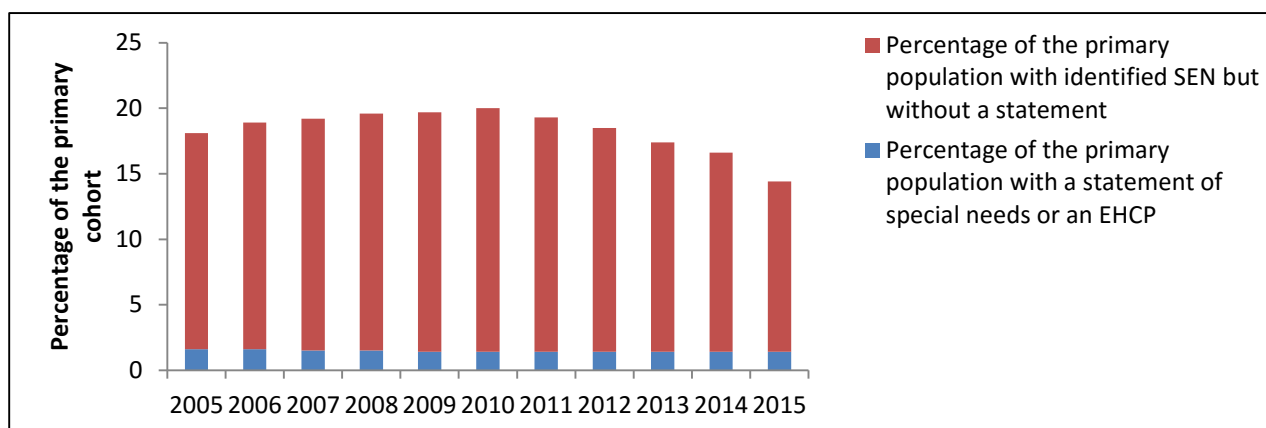
Figure 3: Percentage of the primary school population with Special Educational Needs, 2005-2015. Source: Special Educational Needs in England 2009 and 2015, DCSF SFR 14/2009 and DfE SFR 25/2015
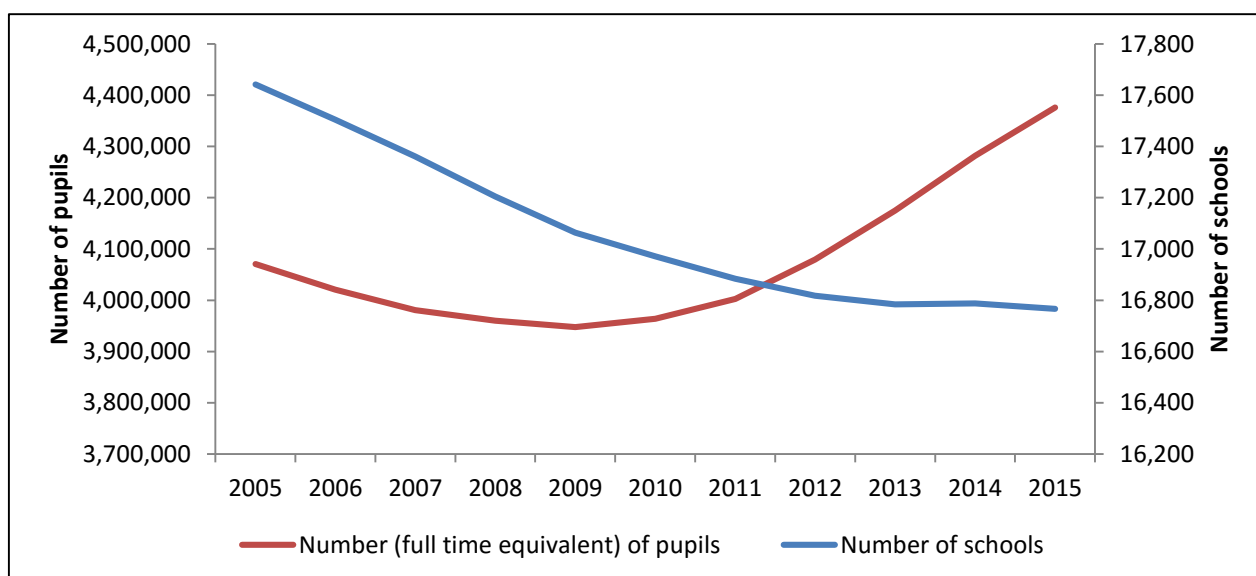
Figure 4: Pupil numbers and school numbers 2005-2015. Source: Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics data 2015 (DfE SFR 16/2015)

Despite this, the average class sizes at KS1 and KS2 have remained stable in England since 2005 with only slight increases in the KS1 class size (up 1.4) and virtually no change at KS2. There are virtually no regional differences in changes to class sizes.[4] The percentage of

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[3]   Source: Schools, Pupils and their characteristics data 2005-2015 – DCSF SFRs 42/2005, 38/2006, 30/2007, 09/2008, 08/2009, 09/2010, DfE SFR's 12/2011, 10/2012, 21/2013, 15/2014, 16/2015

children in large primary classes, however, has also decreased.[4] Table 1 shows the changes in the percentage of children in large classes by region. Inner London has the smallest percentage of children in large classes and Yorkshire has the highest.

	2005	2010	2015
England	15	12	12
North East	13	11	8
North West	17	13	15
Yorkshire and the Humber	18	15	16
East Midlands	20	14	15
West Midlands	15	11	12
East of England	14	10	11
Outer London	9	8	10
Inner London	3	3	2
South East	16	13	14
South West	18	14	13

Table 1: Percentage of children in large classes (31+ pupils), 2005-2015. Source: Schools, Pupils and their characteristics data 2005, 2010, 2015 – DCSF SFRs 42/2005, 09/2010, DfE SFR 16/2015

Predicted changes to pupil numbers

DfE calculates projected pupil numbers based on population estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and has projected that pupil numbers will continue to rise until 2023. Figure 5 shows the projected FTE numbers of children in state primary and nursery schools from 2016/17 until 2023/24.

Looking directly at the population projection data just for those of primary age (i.e. excluding nursery-aged children) in state-funded schools, we see a similar picture. Figure 6 shows a range of projected numbers – each derived from different assumptions about fertility and migration. High levels of migration or fertility are likely to lead to higher numbers of pupils than predicted in the DfE's main model (in Figure 5), but high migration makes less difference to predicted numbers than high fertility alone.

However, births to non-UK-born mothers have increased in England and the rates at which these occur are not even across England. London has the highest rate in 2015 (at 365 per 1,000 births) and the North East has the lowest (with 51 per 1,000 births). Areas that have seen the biggest change since 2010 (expressed as a percentage) include Yorkshire (14.2% change) and the South West (20.2% change).[5]

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[4]   There has been a slight increase in the percentage of children in large KS1 classes but a decrease in the percentage of children in large KS2 classes, leading to an overall decrease when the two stages are considered together.

[5]   Births in England and Wales by Parents' Country of Birth, 2014. ONS Statistical Bulletin, available here: http://goo.gl/WhQRcN

London also has the highest rate of long-term international net migration at 34.5 per 1,000 people, with the North East having the lowest of the English regions at 9.4 per 1,000 people. However, long term international net migration has decreased in London since 2010 (down 15.9 %) but increased in Yorkshire, the North West and the North East.[6]
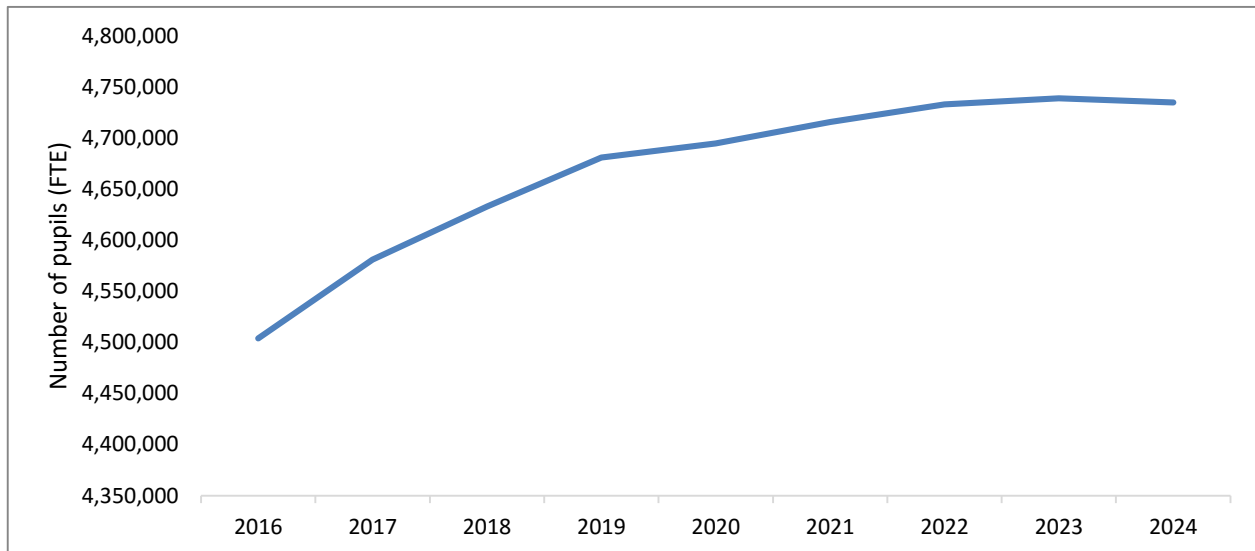
Figure 5: Predicted numbers of children in primary schools, 2016-2024. Source: National Pupil Projections - Future Trends in Pupil Numbers July 2015, DfE SFR 24/2015
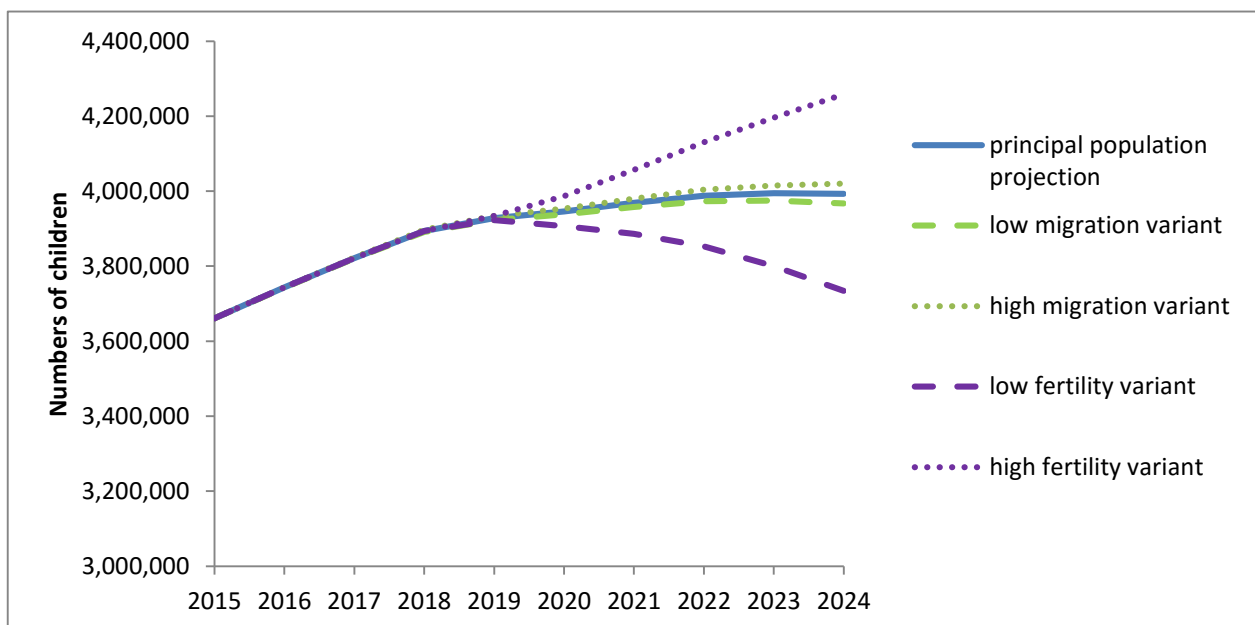

Figure 6: Projected primary-age pupil numbers, 2016-2024. Source: National Pupil Projections - Future Trends in Pupil Numbers July 2015, DfE SFR 24/2015

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[6]   Authors calculations from ONS Migration Indicators Tool, 2014 available here: http://goo.gl/lZfcDu

Some implications

What these analyses suggest is a primary age population that is changing – in some respects, quite dramatically – but the patterns of change are complex. The numbers of children are increasing, while the numbers of schools are falling. The proportion of children from ethic minority backgrounds is increasing, as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language. On the other hand, the proportion entitled to free school meals is stable, while that of children identified as having SEN has fallen. However, the pattern of change looks different in different places and sometimes – as in the case of SEN – what looks like population change is more likely to be the result of changes in policy and measurement criteria.

Overall, there is enough in these figures to suggest that pressures are building up in the primary school system, but less to suggest that the system as a whole is in crisis. Whilst this is true overall, however, the regional variations mean that the stresses differ across the system, and there is good reason to believe that they may be acute in particular places. The task for schools of responding to diversity remains the same, but in some places may need to be undertaken under highly challenging circumstances. The task for policy makers is both to build the capacity of the system to respond to changing demographics before a crisis point is reached, and to support those schools and groups of schools that may already be in difficulties. It is to policy, therefore, that we now turn.

3 - THE CHANGING POLICY CONTEXT

In addition to the changes in the pupil profile in primary schools, the period since our original report has also seen many changes in education policy. Many of these followed from the return of the Coalition Government in 2010 and then of a Conservative majority government in 2015. Some of these changes have been self-avowedly radical in their intent. In particular, the document which embodies the most significant of these – the White Paper, *The importance of teaching* (Department for Education, 2010) – declares itself to be about a process of 'whole-system reform' that 'encompasses both profound structural change and rigorous attention to standards' so that 'education can be transformed' (p.7).

The reality is that policy post-2010 has largely followed the direction laid down by the Labour governments from 1997 onwards, and the Conservative governments before them. The processes of opening the school system up to market forces, diversifying types of schools (and school governance), laying down curriculum guidelines from the centre, assessing pupils' attainments, and holding schools to account for those attainments have continued, though the detail of how these are to be achieved has changed.

Autonomy and innovation

A significant change in relation to responses to diversity is the promise in the 2010 White Paper to create 'a school system which encourages a greater degree of autonomy and innovation' (Department for Education, 2010: 10). In curriculum terms, DfE claims that this has meant a move away from a centrally prescribed curriculum in which there is 'too much that is not essential knowledge, and too much prescription about how to teach' (loc.cit), with

schools regaining greater control over what to teach and how to teach it. The detail specified by the National Curriculum has been reduced, in the non-core subjects at least, and the previous model of improving pedagogy by imposing 'national strategies', delivered and enforced by 'field forces' of centrally employed workers, has been abandoned. To this extent, schools have gained some freedom to adapt their practices to the characteristics of their individual populations rather than being constrained by central prescription.

However, such gains have been qualified. If the scope of the National Curriculum has been reduced overall, the prescription of 'essential knowledge' in the 'core' subjects of English, mathematics and science has, if anything, been extended and tightened, with what some critics have seen as a reversion to rather traditional notions of what counts as 'essential' (Vasagar and Shepherd, 2011). Similarly, although schools in principle have freedom to determine their own pedagogical approaches, Ofsted continues to be highly active in determining what counts as good practice, and continues to make increasing demands on schools to perform to its own definition of ever-higher standards.

To complicate matters, the national assessments in the primary phase have also been refocused. A 'simple test of pupils' ability to decode words' (Department for Education, 2010: 11) for 6 year olds, and a spelling, punctuation and grammar test at Key Stage 2 have been introduced, amidst fears that they foist inappropriate targets on children and reduce schools' capacity to respond to the diversity of their populations (UKLA, 2012; Rosen, 2015). At the same time, new 'reception baseline' assessments are being introduced and there are indications that the reintroduction of national testing at the end of Key Stage 1 is being considered (Morgan, 2015). In other words, schools' and teachers' autonomy in responding to diversity is severely constrained by an enhanced – and arguably narrower – focus on assessment.

The claimed move towards greater school autonomy has also been evident in the removal of a range of non-curricular requirements. The *Every Child Matters* agenda (DfES, 2003), which required schools to share responsibility with other agencies for a range of non-educational outcomes for children, was quietly sidelined when the Coalition Government took office in 2010 – a move symbolised by the renaming of the 'Department for Children, Schools and Families' as the 'Department for Education'. This was accompanied by the abandonment of the extended schools initiative requiring schools to offer non-educational services to children, families and communities, and the downgrading of the duty placed on schools to foster 'community cohesion' (see DfE, 2011a).

These and similar moves freed schools from a series of responsibilities that went beyond their core teaching and learning purposes, and to that extent might be seen as enabling them to devote more energy and resource to responding to diversity. However, these responsibilities were focused precisely on responding to the diversity of school populations in the first place, and brought with them, to a greater or lesser extent, additional resources and national and local support infrastructures. For instance, the Extended Schools Remodelling Advisers who helped schools network with each other and with other service providers in most local authorities seem largely to have disappeared as the extended schools and services initiatives of the 2000s came to an end.

New school types

A further major strand in the move towards school autonomy has been the rapid expansion of the academies programme and the introduction of free schools. This diversification of school type and the establishment of schools outside the control of local authorities is nothing new. However, the focus has changed from an attempt to replace struggling schools serving disadvantaged populations, towards increasing the autonomy of schools that are already doing well and setting up new schools in areas where the existing schools may already be doing well. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this report to review the impacts of these complex programmes in full, it is clear that they have implications for the capacity of the primary school system as a whole to respond to diversity. As the Academies Commission points out, for instance, the original aim of the (more substantial) academies programme was;

> ….to address entrenched failure in schools with low performance, most particularly, schools located in the most disadvantaged parts of the country (Husbands, Gilbert, Francis, and Wigdortz, 2013: 4).

However, there is little evidence that this aim has been achieved, nor that academy status in itself guarantees good outcomes for all pupils. Moreover, the Commission argues, there are concerns that the programme exacerbates inequities in the system by giving academies access to favourable funding arrangements and enabling them to manipulate admissions to their advantage (ibid: 7-8). Similarly, the National Audit Office (2013) question the extent to which the free schools programme represents the best use of limited resources for the benefit of the schools system as a whole.

Together, these two programmes channel funding in ways that are not driven by educational disadvantage or some other measure of educational need. As a result, they reduce the level of funding that is available elsewhere throughout the system and, in particular, divert it away from local authorities and the schools that remain within their control. Moreover, the manipulation of admissions alleged by the Academies Commission suggests that these initiatives may be contributing more directly to social segregation by effectively selecting 'easy-to-teach' pupils into favourably funded schools. As with other reforms badged as movements towards greater school autonomy, any gain in this direction comes at a price.

Funding

The contentious nature of academies and free schools is inevitably bound up with the issue of equity in educational funding and, related to that, with the role of local authorities in supporting schools. The national austerity programmes introduced in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis have, of course, had significant impacts on all public services and constrained their capacity to deploy their resources to tackle disadvantage (National Audit Office, 2014).

Primary schools have been exempt from budget cuts *per se*, but they have not been spared from increasing costs, nor from the impacts of cuts on other services with which they work and from which their pupils benefit. It is difficult to quantify the additional demands such cuts might generate within schools, but some head teachers in the most deprived areas currently see themselves as engaged in a continuous battle against disadvantage (see, for

instance, Heath, 2015). Moreover, cuts have impacted on the education budget as a whole, even if the schools budget has been protected.

The reduction of the duties imposed on schools, as we noted above, has been accompanied by a reduction (or at least a redistribution) of the funding which supported schools in discharging these duties. The effects on schools appear to have been variable, but the majority, as we shall see below, have been forced to rely on the pupil premium to back-fill the losses they have sustained elsewhere. Moreover, there has been a triple blow for local authorities: the disappearance of central initiatives has reduced their ability to 'top-slice' funding to maintain a local infrastructure; the cuts outside the schools budget have reduced their capacity; and the expansion of academies and free schools has drawn funding away from them and their services. It is also the case that funding cuts have not impacted on all local authorities equally, and the greatest impacts have been felt in the most deprived areas (Hastings et al., 2013: 4).

There seem to be two implications from these analyses. First, although the overall schools budget may have been protected, this does not mean that the resources individual schools can call on to meet the demands created by pupil diversity have remained the same as prior to 2010, nor that those demands themselves have remained the same. Whilst the situation is complex and some schools may find their position unchanged or even improved, others will undoubtedly be losers. Second, the capacity of local authorities to provide services to children and families and to offer support and leadership to the school system has been eroded. As Hastings et al. point out, changes in the resources available to local authorities mean that they are having to reposition themselves in a number of ways – by reducing some services and 'outsourcing' others, by encouraging citizens to take greater responsibilities for their own well-being, by refocusing available resources on the most disadvantaged, and by emphasising economic growth as a means of raising income (Hastings et al., 2013: 4).

This translates into encouraging schools to make their own arrangements for meeting the challenges they face, whilst dealing with an increasingly diverse range of agencies and groups involved in delivering what were previously local-authority led services. To this extent, the school autonomy promised by central government in effect means that schools are on their own in responding to diversity, supported by whatever networks they can put together, but supported by local authorities and their services even less than before.

Fragmentation and segregation

This situation has led to considerable concern in recent years about the increasing fragmentation of the school system (see, for instance, Blunkett, 2014; Glatter, 2014; House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2015). Given the continually declining role of local authorities, schools of different types and in different contexts find themselves in very different situations in terms of accountability and support. They may still work closely with the local authority and with the local 'family of schools'. However, they may be supported by an academy chain that is geographically widely distributed and where the quality of that support may be variable. Equally, they may find themselves somewhat isolated, with only the Secretary of State and their Regional Schools Commissioner to look to – neither of whom is in a position to offer ongoing support. It may well be that some schools will be able not simply to survive in such circumstances, but also to develop effective responses to diversity.

However, there is no guarantee that this will be the case and it is difficult to see how the Secretary of State or anyone else in the system can ensure that *all* schools develop such responses.

Connected to the fragmentation of the school system is an issue we have hinted at above – that is the pattern of social segregation in schools. It is clear that schools reflect the significant levels of social segregation which exist in many areas of the country, and that the diversification of school type means that schools are more likely to reflect than counteract this tendency (Gorard, 2014; 2015). Given that the social segregation of areas has an ethnic dimension, it is also the case that schools to varying degrees reflect and reproduce these ethnic divisions (Demos Integration Hub, 2015).

This is not, of course, a new phenomenon and the community cohesion responsibilities of schools, introduced under Labour governments, sought to address the issues raised by such segregation (DCSF, 2007). However, the situation has begun to change in recent years. Partly, this is because of recent patterns of migration bringing concentrations of new immigrants to some areas, and partly it is because of growing concerns about supposed links between the concentrations of children from minority groups in particular places and schools and processes of political radicalisation. These concerns erupted most notably in the so-called Trojan Horse affair in Birmingham (Clarke, 2014), where the Secretary of State (at the time, Michael Gove) came to believe that members of minority groups were working to control the governance of schools and that this might result in the schools being used inappropriately to reinforce minority values – with a consequent danger of radicalisation.

Although the Trojan Horse affair is complex and its interpretation highly contested, it represents an ongoing construction of ethnic diversity, particularly in the school system, as problematic. Increasingly, the project of 'state multiculturalism' which seeks to create a society based on the acceptance of differing views and values is seen as having failed, and instead emphasis is placed on establishing and reinforcing a 'British identity' based on distinctively British values (Cameron, 2011). In turn, this means that schools are required to play their part in teaching such values (DfE, 2014). Whilst the values in question include 'mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' (DfE, 2014: 5), it is also the case that promoting them 'means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values' (loc. cit.). Put another way, it is the job of schools not to promote and celebrate differences in their populations so much as to set limits to the extent to which such differences are tolerated.

Summary

Overall, then, the policy context since our last report may not have changed as radically as is sometimes claimed (not least by policy makers themselves) but it has certainly been reshaped in important ways. Schools have indeed gained more autonomy in the sense that they are subject to fewer central initiatives. However, they have also lost the support and other resources that went with those initiatives. Moreover, their autonomy is strictly limited, and where government seeks to control schools, it is sometimes in support of what some might regard as rather limited views of curriculum, pedagogy and values. At the same time, schools' autonomy *vis à vis* local authorities has further eroded their capacity to offer support and

leadership. The schools system is arguably a more fragmented one, in which substantial social segregation is reflected and reproduced. There are undoubtedly opportunities for schools to respond to the diversity of their populations in effective and creative ways. However, there are also many constraints on schools and a worrying absence of leadership and support. Much depends on what individual head teachers choose to do – and what their accountability systems will allow them to do.

Within this overall policy context there is another significant factor, the Pupil Premium. Given its importance in relation to the way that the English education system responds to learner diversity, it is necessary to consider it in some detail.

4 - THE PUPIL PREMIUM

There is one aspect of diversity that has received at least as much attention since 2010 as it did under the previous Labour governments. That is the issue of social disadvantage and its relationship to educational outcomes. A succession of policy statements has made it clear that tackling the issue of disadvantage in education is a government priority, starting with the 2010 White Paper. In his foreword, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, declared that:

> No country that wishes to be considered world class can afford to allow children from poorer families to fail as a matter of course. For far too long we have tolerated the moral outrage of an accepted correlation between wealth and achievement at school; the soft bigotry of low expectations. (Department for Education, 2010: 4)

'That is why,' he continued:

> The Pupil Premium lies at the heart of our reform programme: £2.5 billion of extra money by 2014–15 that will follow poorer children directly to the school they attend. While we won't tell schools how to spend this money, there will be clear transparency requirements to ensure it is spent on improving the life chances of our poorest young people. (loc. cit.)

Government rhetoric surrounding the Pupil Premium may sometimes give the impression of a radical departure. The reality, of course, is that targeting funding at disadvantaged pupils is a deeply entrenched practice in the English school system, and the development of a national system for achieving this is an essential precursor for the planned introduction of a national schools funding formula (Roberts, 2015) rather than a marker of a new commitment to equity. Nonetheless, it is probably true to say that, alongside the reform of special educational needs procedures (see Department for Education, 2011b), the attempt to tackle educational disadvantage through the Pupil Premium, is the major contribution of the post-2010 governments' attempts to address diversity.

A single-strand strategy

The focus of the strategy adopted by these governments is significant. In contrast to the multiple, centrally directed interventions of the Labour years, the Pupil Premium has

effectively become the dominant approach. In line with the overall policy approach this emphasises the autonomy of schools and an aversion to central direction – 'We won't,' as David Cameron says, 'tell schools what to do'. However, as with other aspects of policy, the Pupil Premium has in fact proved somewhat more ambiguous in its implementation.

The Pupil Premium was introduced in 2011 to provide schools with funding in respect of pupils who were registered as eligible for free school meals, or who had been looked after for 6 months or longer (DfE, 2015). Whilst various details of the policy have changed, it has remained in broadly the same form, with a rise in per-pupil funding from £400 in 2011 to £1,320 (for primary schools) in 2015-16. In addition, a parallel early years premium was introduced in 2015 in respect of 3 and 4 year olds who are looked after or whose parents are on specified benefits. Although the funding calculations are complex, in broad terms providers receive just over £300 for each eligible child who takes up their full entitlement of state-funded early education (DfE, 2014 (updated 2015)). In contrast to many previous funding initiatives, which may have been top-sliced by local authorities or have come with detailed specification of the provision they were intended to fund, the pupil premium is 'paid to schools as they are best placed to assess what additional provision their pupils need' (DfE, 2015).

This does not mean, however, that government surrenders control of the funding completely. Instead of specifying the provision that is to be made, the premium policy relies on accountability for outcomes. Specifically:

> Ofsted inspections report on how schools' use of the funding affects the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils. We also hold schools to account through performance tables, which include data on:
> - the attainment of the pupils who attract the funding
> - the progress made by these pupils
> - the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers (loc. cit.).

In addition to these accountability mechanisms, schools are offered guidance as to the kinds of practices and provision that are likely to be effective in raising pupils' attainments in the form of a 'teaching and learning toolkit'. This lists interventions and grades them on their effectiveness, their value for money and the strength of the evaluative research evidence they have generated (Higgins et al., 2014). This evidence base is in turn being extended through a series of evaluations commissioned by the Education Endowment Foundation (https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/).

Tackling disadvantage

On the face of it, the Pupil Premium appears to mark a major commitment to tackling disadvantage on the part of government, and to provide schools with substantial funding through which they can develop their own responses to diversity. However, things are not quite what they seem for a number of reasons.

New money, old money. Although the funding allocated to schools through the Pupil Premium is by no means negligible, it is far from clear that this is 'new' money that increases

schools' capacity to act. Given the complex funding situation we outlined earlier, including the loss of income streams, the erosion of local authority services, and the failure of school budgets to rise in line with costs, it would appear that, in many cases, Pupil Premium funding simply compensates schools for what they have lost and for the additional demands they face. Certainly, in an early evaluation (Carpenter et al., 2013) in which one of us (Dyson) was involved, we found that many schools were using Premium funding to back-fill the gaps in their budgets. That situation seems, if anything, to have grown worse. The National Audit Office reported recently that:

> Other real-terms reductions in school funding mean the Pupil Premium has not always increased school budgets' (National Audit Office, 2015: 7),

Meanwhile some heads are now beginning to argue that the Pupil Premium should be rolled up into schools' overall budgets to enable them to respond to the financial pressures they are experiencing (Wiggins, 2015).

Even insofar as the Pupil Premium constitutes new money, it in fact represents only a small proportion of schools' budgets. In 2013, when the premium was worth £623 per pupil, we calculated that it constituted on average around 3.8% of primary schools' incomes. Not surprisingly, most schools reported that they could not fund all of their provision for children they regarded as disadvantaged out of the premium alone. Whilst the proportional value of the premium may have increased as the sums allocated per pupil have risen, it nonetheless remains a small part of the funding available to schools.

Defining diversity. Pupil Premium funding is allocated on principles that are deeply embedded in attempts to recognise disadvantage in English schools. Some measure of family income – often, as here, entitlement to free school meals – is used as an indicator of levels of disadvantage in school populations and forms the basis for the allocation of additional funds. The difference with Pupil Premium is that there is considerable ambiguity as to whether entitlement to free school meals and looked-after status were simply the basis for the allocation of funds which schools could use as they thought appropriate, or whether they were also the basis for the targeting of provision. This ambiguity is captured neatly in Ofsted's first report on the use of the premium:

> Schools are free to spend the Pupil Premium as they see fit. However they are responsible for how they use the additional funding to support pupils from low income families and the other target groups. New measures will be included in the performance tables that will capture the achievement of those deprived pupils covered by the Pupil Premium (Ofsted, 2012: 7).

Ofsted then recommend that:

> School leaders, including governing bodies, should ensure that Pupil Premium funding is not simply absorbed into mainstream budgets, but instead is carefully targeted at the designated children. They should be able to identify clearly how the money is being spent (Ofsted, 2012: 6).

In other words, although schools are notionally 'free to spend the Pupil Premium as they see fit' they will be held to account for whether they spend it on specified groups of pupils, and for the impact of their spending on the 'achievements' of those pupils.

The early evaluation showed that the problem for many schools was that their established understandings of which pupils needed additional support were much broader than the new focus on pupils attracting Pupil Premium (Carpenter et al., 2013). As heads complained, entitlement to free school meals is a crude socio-economic indicator, partly because some families do not claim their entitlement, and partly because families may remain just above the entitlement threshold whilst being materially little better off than those falling below the threshold. Across the school population as a whole, in fact, free school meals entitlement is as good an indicator of socio-economic as it is practicable to construct (Sutherland et al., 2015a; 2015b) but this does not, of course, mean that variations in rates of claiming at individual school level will not have significant effects on funding. More importantly, heads reported that many pupils entitled to free school meals were doing well educationally, whilst other pupils were in greater need. As a result, schools came under pressure either to refocus their provision on eligible pupils or, at the very least, to ensure that those pupils were well represented in whatever form of provision they decided to make. It seems likely, therefore, that the effect was to narrow the targeting of provision. Moreover, the criterion of eligibility promoted by the Pupil Premium is an economic one (entitlement to free school meals) over which head teachers have no control. In effect, therefore, the educational judgement of head teachers was replaced by a centrally-imposed economic criterion as to who needed additional provision. In this sense, far from empowering head teachers, pupil premium has disempowered them and removed educational considerations from the definition of disadvantage.

Determining provision. This loss of head teacher autonomy is also evident in the way in which decisions about appropriate provision have come to be made under the influence of the Pupil Premium. Two factors have been at work here. First, Pupil Premium is allocated to schools individually and, as we have explained, has come to be seen in respect of provision for individual children. Whilst schools in England have long managed their own budgets, the Pupil Premium effectively replaced a set of funding streams which encouraged or required schools to work collaboratively. For instance, the various extended services initiatives of the New Labour period had begun to expect schools to work in clusters to make joint provision, to collaborate with external services that were often area-based, and to work within a framework of collaborative provision led by local authorities (Cummings, Dyson, Jones, Laing, and Todd, 2011). Pupil Premium, however, offers no funding for collaborative provision, and no opportunity for local authorities to 'top slice' available funding to support central provision and leadership. In effect, therefore, schools were encouraged to use the funding on their own provision and for targeted pupils within their own populations. Whatever the merits of this approach, it focused schools' attention on the issues that presented themselves 'within' their own practices and populations, and made it more difficult for them to consider cross-population issues that emerged 'between' schools in local systems, or issues that emerged 'beyond' schools in families and communities (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, and West, 2012a).

The second factor reinforced the first. As we have seen, despite claims that the Pupil Premium placed decisions in the hands of head teachers, those decisions were in fact tightly constrained by an accountability process which pre-empted what heads might decide, and by the formulation of a list of 'approved' interventions. It is not simply that heads were expected to spend the funding on targeted pupils, but that they were also told to 'avoid spending it on activities that have little impact on achievement for their disadvantaged pupils, and spend it in ways known to be most effective' (Ofsted, 2012: 6).

Moreover, Ofsted are clear that their focus on Pupil Premium is indeed reshaping head teachers' behaviour:

> Ofsted's increased focus on this issue in all inspections is making a difference. In each report, we now include a commentary on the attainment and progress of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and evaluate how this compares with other pupils. Head teachers know that their schools will not receive a positive judgement unless they demonstrate that they are focused on improving outcomes for pupils eligible for the pupil premium. (Ofsted, 2014: 4).

It would appear that what has actually been achieved, therefore, is a narrowing of schools' responses to diversity. In our evaluation many heads were clear that their response to diversity was wider than that demanded by Ofsted, not only in the range of pupils for whom they sought to provide, but also in the kinds and aims of the provision they made (Carpenter et al., 2013). In particular, they were often aiming their provision at tackling some of the factors they believed to lie behind low achievement rather than simply deploying short-term interventions to raise measured attainment. So they were focusing on work with parents, or on self-esteem, or on broadening pupils' extra-curricular experiences. Far from enabling them to extend these approaches, the Pupil Premium – or, more accurately, the accountability measures associated with the Pupil Premium – was causing them to reconsider whether they could continue with this broad-based approach or whether they needed to narrow their provision to the 'approved' interventions.

In this context, it is significant that Sir John Dunford, formerly the Government's Pupil Premium champion, has recently argued that the premium is not enough in itself to tackle educational disadvantage. Whilst acknowledging its achievements in its current form, he argues:

> The Pupil Premium alone cannot solve the problems created by poverty; other government policies need to support the needs of the disadvantaged, too. Increasing social mobility cannot be left solely to schools (Dunford, 2015: 21).

Dunford highlights the tension between the avowed aims of the Pupil Premium and the direction of other aspects of policy. He points specifically to social and welfare policies which seem to exacerbate disadvantage on the one hand, and other aspects of education policy (of the kind we have noted above) that make it more difficult for disadvantaged pupils to succeed. He might also, of course, have mentioned the replacement of disadvantage-oriented education policies developed under the Labour governments by the single-strand, tightly-focused approach of the premium.

School creativity. Although schools have come under significant pressure to narrow the focus of their provision as a result of the Pupil Premium, the evidence is that some of them have found ways to manage this pressure creatively. Instead of abandoning their existing understandings of and responses to diversity, they have managed to account for their use of Pupil Premium funding in ways which satisfy Ofsted, whilst maintaining a wide range of provision (Carpenter et al., 2013). Our evaluation suggested that they are able to do this because, as we noted above, although the Pupil Premium offers substantial and increasing funding, it actually constitutes only a small proportion of the funding and other resources available to schools. By pooling it with their other funds and resources, schools are able to sustain many forms of provision. They can then identify within their overall provision a group of pupils and a set of interventions which Pupil Premium – however notionally – supports. This is, of course, easier for schools that are adequately resourced and becomes more problematic for schools where budgets are under pressure. A more recent evaluation also seems to suggest that some schools continue to resist the pressure to narrow their approach to educational disadvantage and that these are precisely the ones that are most successful at raising attainments (Macleod, Sharp, Bernardinelli, Skipp, and Higgins, 2015).

As a consequence, it would appear that the Pupil Premium has not radically changed provision in all schools, and is, in some cases at least, compatible with wide-ranging responses to diversity. The issue is that sustaining such responses requires considerable insight and confidence on the part of head teachers and is made more rather than less difficult by the criteria for and conditions attached to Pupil Premium funding.

Narrowing the focus

There are some reasons to believe that, in its own terms at least, the Pupil Premium may well have done something to improve the responses of primary schools to the diversity of their populations. Ofsted claims that:

> The Pupil Premium is making a difference in many schools. Overall, school leaders are spending Pupil Premium funding more effectively, tracking the progress of eligible pupils more closely and reporting outcomes more precisely than before (Ofsted, 2014: 4).

Perhaps more reliably, given Ofsted's role in shaping how the Pupil Premium should be interpreted, the National Audit Office's review notes a narrowing of the attainment gap following its introduction, most markedly in primary schools (National Audit Office, 2015: 10).

Nonetheless, it is clear that the Pupil Premium conforms closely to the direction of travel that we have noted elsewhere in post-2010 education policy. It offers schools a level of autonomy, which ought, in principle, enable them to formulate imaginative responses to diversity. In practice, however, the autonomy actually available is severely constrained. Moreover, the requirements placed on schools narrow the definition of diversity and the breadth of responses that schools can make. A more intensive focus on pupils who register their entitlement to free school meals is bought at the cost of a loss of capacity to focus on other groups, just as a focus on raising attainment compromises the ability of schools to address

other outcomes and other disadvantaging factors in children's lives. The availability of targeted funding appears to enhance the resources available to school, but in reality many schools find they have less rather than more at their disposal. In the meantime, the diversion of funding into the Pupil Premium and away from the previous array of central initiatives has the effect of reducing the external support available to schools and turns the issue of disadvantage from one which is dealt with collaboratively as a socio-educational concern, to one which has to be tackled by each school individually as simply a matter of classroom practice.

Put simply, the Pupil Premium offers no encouragement for schools to respond to pupils from non-poor or marginally poor families who experience difficulties or have untapped potential. It supports no interventions other than those which can be shown to have an immediate impact upon attainment, and it demonstrates no interest in a wider range of educational outcomes, in terms, for instance, of personal development, health, or longer-term engagement with learning. The consequences of this are not at all surprising. Anecdotally, it would appear that teachers now commonly refer to 'pupil premium pupils', as though such a group could be defined meaningfully, when in fact it consists of no more than a highly diverse aggregation of individuals whose only common feature is that they have claimed free school meals. It also appears to be common that schools target these pupils for short-term 'interventions', often implemented outside the ordinary classroom, and typically focusing narrowly on attainment targets. Whilst the Pupil Premium is by no means the only contributory factor to these developments, it is difficult to see that it has done anything other than narrow the ways in which schools understand and respond to diversity.[7]

Bearing all of this in mind, in what follows we look more closely at what has been happening as far as bilingual learners in primary schools are concerned.

5 - THE CASE OF BILINGUAL LEARNERS

As we saw earlier, there has been a rise over recent years in the numbers of learners in schools for whom English is an additional language. Responding to such learners is, therefore, a pressing issue for the primary school system. In our 2010 report, however, we argued that a blanket classification of 'ethnic minority' or 'EAL learner' tended to present children who may in reality differ greatly in their cultural or linguistic backgrounds as a discrete group with shared characteristics and the same learning needs. We also suggested that the achievement agenda generally defined this group by the deficit factor of 'not' having English language skills, and thus failed to promote learning from home language skills and the range of educational, cultural and social experiences brought to the classroom by bilingual and multilingual pupils. However, we also acknowledged that, although a classification such as children with EAL can be problematic in its scope and identify, it did succeed in giving an explicit focus for the attention and the funding of policy makers and practitioners.

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[7]   Further analysis of the impact of the Pupil Premium is provided in another report in this series: Pickett and Vanderbloemen (2015), pp 18-19.

Changes in funding

Returning to the example of EAL and bilingual learners as a specific case in this review is timely. This group which was previously identified for policy, intervention and funding purposes is no longer explicitly defined within the single funding umbrella framework of Pupil Premium. At the time of our earlier Cambridge Primary Review report, funding for pupils with EAL was ring fenced within the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). This funding was mainly used by local authorities to provide advisory support for schools and to fund centralised teams with enhanced, practitioner knowledge of the diversity of the local pupil population. For example, NALDIC (the national subject association for EAL) cited DCSF figures for 2008 indicating that EMAG was the main source of funding for over 3,500 specialist EAL and EMA teachers, and over 3000 dedicated EMA support assistants (NALDIC, 2010). The removal of this funding has resulted in the reduction, and in many cases cessation, of centralised EAL services and an assumption that schools themselves will provide any necessary support structures for pupils with EAL and for the teaching staff working with them.

Migration and new pupil arrivals

At the same time as these changes in funding and the availability of resources have taken place, the primary school population has, as we suggested earlier, also changed. This is not simply a matter of an overall increase in the numbers of children from ethnic minority backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language. Our previous CPR report mainly considered educational diversity in terms of pupils living in settled, urban communities, where home languages other than English were supported in second and third generation migrant families. However, in the last decade this has changed, not least because of economic migration from countries in Eastern Europe following the extension of the EU (European Union) in 2004. Arnot et al. (2014) indicate that although the migration immediately following 2004, tended to be of single adults, by 2010 the children of these adults were joining them from their home countries. This migration has been more widespread geographically than much previous urban migration and has, for the first time, affected numerous schools situated in rural and semi-rural locations.

In comparison to the expertise that is held by many city schools, rural schools who receive pupils from migrant families tend to be less experienced in working with children with EAL (Statham, 2008; Mehmedbegovic, 2011). Such schools may not be aware that the effective inclusion of pupils with EAL needs in a school community goes beyond the obvious skills of English language learning, to a more holistic learning of the structural, social and cultural expectations which underlie any educational system (Hopwood, 2012; Phoenix, 2010; Ryan and Sales, 2010; Sime, 2010). Analysis by Strand et al. (2015) of the National Pupil Database for 2013 indicates that higher achievement is seen among pupils with EAL in London compared to other regions. One possible explanation for this is that, on a general level, teacher expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with EAL predominately resides in city schools.

Our previous CPR report suggested that a 'have English/not have English' dichotomy presented too simplistic a picture of the complexity of the lives of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language. Recent patterns of

migration likewise show that understanding differences in migration requires an awareness of the diversity of prior educational experience. Many of the pupils currently joining English primary schools may have already experienced education in their home countries and in other 'transition' countries, and may have had periods of interruption to their schooling. Understanding the impact of this on the educational lives of pupils will become increasingly significant as the focus of migration shifts from the economic migrants of Eastern Europe to the mounting, and currently unresolved, questions of large scale refugee migration from war-torn countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

Impact of policy changes

The consequence of these changes is that schools are facing a range of unfamiliar demands at a time when specialist personnel and protected funding have been disappearing. Schools do, of course, have access to funding in the form of the Pupil Premium. However, the match between the criteria through which that funding is allocated and the needs of the minority ethnic and EAL populations is far from perfect. The economic rather than educational nature of those criteria mean that schools do not gain access to funding for those populations unless children also come from low income families who are claiming the appropriate benefits. In practice, many families do not meet these criteria, particularly, for instance, in the case of Eastern European families where parents tend to hold full time employment, albeit probably low paid and below their skill level (Arnot et al., 2014, Tereshchenko and Archer, 2014). Even where families might meet the criteria, they will not necessarily make the necessary claims, given their unfamiliarity with the country and, in many cases, their own limited skills in English. Moreover, even where claims are eventually made, it is likely that there will be a significant time lag between the arrival of the child in school and the school gaining access to additional funding. Consequently, it is likely that such pupils will not trigger pupil premium resources at the early, and arguably most important, stage of joining a school community.

6 - OVERVIEW AND EMERGING POSSIBILITIES

As we have explained, the current state of affairs in respect of the primary school system's capacity to respond to diversity is a decidedly mixed one. Compared to the situation a decade ago, it is undoubtedly the case that schools enjoy an enhanced level of autonomy to determine their own responses in that they are less beholden to central initiatives, less constrained by detailed curriculum and pedagogical guidance, and more likely to be operating independently of local authority oversight. Yet this autonomy is ambiguous, at best. Central direction may be more targeted, but it is no less powerful and is also more narrowly conceptualised. Accountability requirements are as powerful as ever and again are based on a narrow conceptualisation of the purposes of education.

If some external constraints have disappeared, then so too have the supports that went with them. Schools are more likely to be working on their own or as parts of chains, federations and other networks that may or may not offer effective support. Moreover, if school budgets have been protected – at least relative to the cuts experienced by many other public services – they have nonetheless failed to keep pace with rising costs, while the distribution of

'additional' funding for tackling disadvantage does not match well the educational needs to which schools actually have to respond.

In our previous CPR report, we gave a similarly critical account of a situation which shared many features of the current state of affairs, albeit with some important differences, particularly in terms of the role played by central government in directing (and supporting) schools' responses to diversity. At the same time, however, we reported that some individual schools and non-governmental initiatives were finding ways to develop responses to diversity that went beyond those that were officially sponsored. The same continues to be true at the present time. As we noted in respect of the Pupil Premium, some schools are able to manage the constraints under which they operate and take advantage of those increases in autonomy that are on offer in order to find new ways of working. For the most part, such efforts slip under the radar because they stem from creative responses in particular institutions. Occasionally, however, they come to our attention because they are more formalised or because our own research brings us in contact with them.

For instance, whilst the Department for Education pursues what is arguably a narrow conceptualisation of the purposes of education, Public Health England is seeking to promote a wider view of education and, particularly, to develop the contribution schools can make to the health and well-being of their pupils. A recent report (Lavis and Robson, 2015) not only offers schools guidance on how they can play this wider role but presents examples of primary schools that are currently doing so. Whilst their practices may hark back to the earlier centrally-funded initiatives – such as the healthy schools programme (Arthur et al., 2011) and SEAL (Humphrey et al., 2008) – they indicate that the efforts of schools are by no means entirely dependent on central direction. Similarly, although the centrally-driven Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) and Extended Schools (DfES, 2005) initiatives are distant memories, there is evidence that some schools and groups of schools still seek to play a wider role in the lives of their pupils, of their pupils' families and of local communities (Dyson, Kerr, Raffo, Wigelsworth, and Wellings, 2012).

There are, moreover, developments that do not owe their origins to past governmental initiatives. Despite the policy focus over many years on attainment outcomes, many schools continue to work within a framework of explicit values in relation to how they respond to diversity. Some of them have formalized their commitment through the Rights Respecting Schools Award developed by UNICEF (see http://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/). Schools can apply to register for this award and over a number of years work through three levels, gathering evidence that demonstrates they have embedded children's rights in the practice and the ethos of the school. The Award grew out of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf) which, in 1989, became the first international legally binding agreement to acknowledge and identify children as individuals with equal rights. Article 29 presents the goal of education as a process of the full development of the potential of each individual set within their cultural and family background. It also emphasises how education should enable children to learn to respect and value others. The Award, therefore, recognizes the efforts of schools to develop a perspective which sees education as more than input and academic output; rather it includes the educational context and the processes that lead to achievement across a wide range of outcomes. The main features of the Award programme are designed to support schools in

listening to children, and in enabling children to express the concerns and successes they encounter in education. It involves schools in developing a culture within which all children are equally respected and valued, and where the importance of engaging parents and local communities in education is acknowledged.

An initial evaluation of the impact of the Rights Respecting Schools Award on 19 schools in the south- east of England was undertaken by Sebba and Robinson (2010). They found that pupils in schools with an explicit rights respecting ethos expressed positive attitudes towards their peers with disabilities, with emotional and behavioural difficulties and from different ethnic, religious groups. Their data suggest that the pupils are beginning to challenge external stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, and that the positive ethos of these schools had also had a positive impact on pupil attendance and engagement with learning.

What all of these developments indicate is that there are primary schools which, despite the disappearance of central government initiatives, continue to find creative and principled ways of responding to diversity. Whilst they necessarily satisfy somewhat narrow national requirements in terms of curriculum and outcomes, and whilst they work within the funding framework common to all schools, they understand education to be about more than measured attainment and have a broad view of how their pupils live and what they need to develop into successful adults. This broader view leads them to address a wider range of factors that disadvantage their pupils than prior attainments and cognitive skills. It may also lead some schools to develop a view of education which is about processes rather than outcomes alone, and which therefore sees diversity in terms of respect and recognition rather than as a barrier to achievement.

The problem with such developments is that, within a fragmented system, they too are isolated. Much depends on the values and creativity of individual heads and particular governing bodies, and on access to initiatives which no longer have a national mandate. Whilst they point us towards new possibilities for using the space available within current national policy, the key question is how these possibilities might be conceptualised and taken forward in a coherent and comprehensive form. This leads us to argue that significant policy changes are needed to facilitate such efforts.

7 - RETHINKING THE TASK

We believe that there is now a need for radical new thinking regarding how English primary schools can be supported in developing their capacity for responding to learner diversity. Underpinning our proposals is the belief that differences can act as a catalyst for innovation in ways that have the potential to benefit all pupils, whatever their personal characteristics and home circumstances. We are also committed to drawing on effective practices that are there in our schools.

In our earlier CPR report we drew attention to what was, at the time, new research in England that was offering some promising suggestions as to how to move forward. Significantly, two studies involved university researchers in working collaboratively with practitioners.

The first study, 'Learning without Limits', examined ways of teaching that are free from pre-determined assumptions about the abilities of pupils within a class (Hart, 2003; Hart, Dixon, Drummond and McIntyre, 2004). The researchers worked closely with a group of teachers who had rejected ideas of fixed ability, in order to study their practice. They started from the belief that constraints are placed on children's learning by ability-focused practices that lead young children to define themselves in comparison to their peers.

The researchers argued that the notion of ability as inborn intelligence has come to be seen as 'a natural way of talking about children' that summarises their perceived differences. The teachers involved in the study based their practices on a different perspective, one that is based on a belief that things can change and be changed for the better, recognizing that whatever a child's present attainments and characteristics, given the right conditions, everybody's capacity for learning can be enhanced. Approaching their work with this mind-set, the teachers involved in the study were seen to analyse gaps between their aspirations for children and what was actually happening.

The second study, 'Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools', also pointed to the importance of inquiry as a stimulus for changing practices. It involved schools in exploring ways of developing inclusion in their own contexts using processes of collaborative inquiry, carried out in collaboration with university researchers (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2004; Ainscow et al., 2003; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006). Significantly, this process took place in the context of the then Government's extensive efforts to improve standards in public education, as measured by test and examination scores. This had involved the creation of an educational 'market-place', coupled with an emphasis on policies fostering greater diversity between types of school. Despite this apparently unfavourable national policy context, what was noted in the schools that participated in the study was neither the crushing of inclusion by the so-called standards agenda, nor the rejection of the standards agenda in favour of a radical, inclusive alternative. In most of the schools involved, the two agendas remained intertwined. Indeed, the focus on attainment appeared to prompt some teachers to examine issues in relation to the achievements and participation of marginalised groups that they had previously overlooked. Likewise, the concern with inclusion tended to shape the way the school responded to the imperative to raise standards.

Our earlier report argued that, together, the findings of these two studies provide reasons for optimism. They suggest that more inclusive approaches can emerge from a study of the existing practice of teachers, set within the internal social dynamics of schools. They also show that it is possible to intervene in these dynamics in order to open up new possibilities for moving practice forward.

A different way of thinking

In the period following these two studies, our own programme of research has continued to explore what needs to be done to foster greater equity within the English education system (see Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and West, 2012b, for a summary). We link the findings of this research to evidence from other parts of the world in order to propose a different approach to responding to learner diversity (see, for example, the special edition of *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, January 2016, on using inquiry-based approaches for equitable school

improvement). As we indicated at the start of this report, our approach is based on the principle of equity, which we take to involve a concern with inclusion and fairness, as proposed by OECD (2012).

The approach we are suggesting is informed by the following ideas that have emerged from our analysis of development in the English education system over the last ten years or so (see Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and Kerr, 2015):

- Diversity can act as the catalyst for innovations that can improve the work of primary schools
- Policy needs to provide the context in which such innovations are encouraged
- Despite the perverseness of current national policy, there are lots of examples of new developments
- These developments are led from within schools, and include cooperation between schools and partners in their wider communities
- Such initiatives require area coordination, suggesting new roles and responsibilities for local authorities

The developments that have occurred in London and, to differing extents, other urban contexts in England over the last 15 years, illustrate the potential of this approach to use learner diversity as a stimulus for innovation (e.g. Ainscow, 2015; Barrs et al., 2014; Claeys et al., 2014; Greaves, Macmillan and Sibieta, 2014; Hutchings et al., 2012; Kidson and Norris, 2014). There is also further support for this internationally. For example, a recent report from OECD (2016), argues that reducing the number of low-performing pupils is not only a goal in its own right but also an effective way to improve an education system's overall performance. It also shows that the degree to which advantaged and disadvantaged pupils attend the same school is more strongly related to smaller proportions of low performers in a school system than to larger proportions of top performers. These findings suggest that systems that distribute both educational resources and pupils more equitably across schools benefit low performers without undermining better-performing pupils.

An ecology of equity

Our concern regarding the dangers associated with much of current policy and practice have led us to propose that responding to learner diversity should be viewed in relation to an 'ecology of equity' (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and West, 2012a). By this we mean that the extent to which pupils' experiences and outcomes are equitable is not dependent only on the educational practices of their schools. Instead, it depends on a whole range of interacting processes that reach into the school from outside. These include the demographics of the areas served by schools, the histories and cultures of the populations who send (or fail to send) their children to the school, and the economic realities faced by those populations.

This suggests that in responding to pupil diversity it is necessary to address three interlinked sets of factors that bear on the learning of children. These relate to: *within-school factors* to do with existing policies and practices; *between-school factors* that arise from the characteristics of local school systems; and *beyond-school factors*, including the demographics, economics, cultures and histories of local areas. In the following sections we consider each of these in turn

in order to develop our argument as to what needs to happen in order to strengthen primary schools' capacity for responding to pupil diversity.

Within-school factors

As we suggested above, the current primary school system is fragmented. The provision available to support schools' development is incoherent and patchy, whilst central direction and accountability mechanisms focus schools on only a narrow range of educational tasks. However, we have also suggested that some schools find their own way through this fragmented system in order to develop creative responses to diversity.

Taking this observation a step further, our research suggests that 'schools know more than they use' (Ainscow et al., 2012a). This means that the starting point for strengthening the capacity of a school to respond to learner diversity should be with the sharing of existing practices through collaboration amongst staff and through joint practice development. Our research also shows that this can be stimulated through an engagement with the views of different stakeholders, bringing together the expertise of practitioners, the insights of pupils and families, and the knowledge of academic researchers in ways that challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, not least in respect to vulnerable groups of learners (Ainscow et al., 2012a). This can also stimulate new thinking, and encourage experimentation with alternative ways of working.

The evidence needed to create this stimulation can take many forms and involves a variety of techniques. What is common is the way it creates 'interruptions' in the busy day of teachers that lead to the sharing of practices and the generation of new ways of working. Much of our own work involves us in collaborating with teams of staff within schools in order to learn more about how to make this work within current policy contexts (Ainscow et al., 2016).

In terms of evidence, the obvious starting point is with the statistical information available in schools regarding attendance, behaviour and pupil progress. In recent years the extent and sophistication of such data have improved, so much so that the progress of groups and individuals can now be tracked in considerable detail, giving a much greater sense of the value that a school is adding to its pupils. If necessary, further relevant statistical material can be collected through questionnaire surveys of the views of pupils, staff members and, where relevant, parents and carers. However, statistical information alone tells us very little. What brings such data to life is when 'insiders' start to scrutinise and ask questions together as to their significance, bringing their detailed experiences and knowledge to bear on the process of interpretation.

At the heart of the processes in schools where changes in practice do occur is the development of a common language with which colleagues can talk to one another and, indeed, to themselves, about detailed aspects of their practice (Huberman, 1993). Without such a language teachers find it very difficult to experiment with new possibilities. We have found that the use of evidence to study teaching within a school can help in generating such a language of practice (Ainscow et al., 2003). This, in turn, can help to foster the development of practices that are more effective in reaching hard to reach learners (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006). Particularly powerful techniques in this respect involve the use of mutual lesson

observation, sometimes through video recordings, and evidence collected from pupils about teaching and learning arrangements within a school.

An effective approach for introducing these techniques is lesson study, a systematic procedure for the development of teaching that is well established in Japan and some other Asian countries (Lewis et al., 2006). The goal of lesson study is to improve the effectiveness of the experiences that teachers provide for all of their pupils. The focus is on a particular lesson or activity, which is then used as the basis for gathering evidence on the quality of experience that pupils receive. These lessons are called research lessons and are used to examine the responsiveness of pupils to the planned activities. Central to the strategy is the idea of engaging with the views of students. Our research suggests that it is this factor, more than anything else that makes the difference as far as responding to learner diversity is concerned (Messiou and Ainscow, 2015).

The introduction of such approaches points to the importance of forms of leadership that encourage colleagues to challenge one another's assumptions about the capabilities of particular pupils. We know that some schools are characterised by 'inclusive cultures' (Dyson, Howes and Roberts, 2004). Within such schools, there is some degree of consensus amongst adults around values of respect for difference and a commitment to offering all pupils access to learning opportunities. This consensus may not be total and does not necessarily remove all tensions or contradictions in practice. On the other hand, there is likely to be a high level of staff collaboration and joint problem solving, and similar values and commitments may extend into the pupil body, and into parent and other community stakeholders in the school. The implication is that senior staff have to provide effective leadership by addressing these challenges in a way that helps to create a climate within which teacher professional learning can take place (Riehl, 2000).

Between school factors

Moving beyond what happens within individual schools, our research suggests that the fragmentation of the school system can be reduced by collaboration between schools. Most experience relates to collaboration between differently performing schools, where the evidence is that this can reduce polarisation within education systems, to the particular benefit of learners who are performing relatively poorly (Ainscow, 2010; Ainscow and Howes, 2007; Ainscow and West, 2006; Ainscow et al., 2005; Muijs et al., 2011). It does this by both transferring existing knowledge and, more importantly, generating context-specific new knowledge.

In terms of schools working in highly disadvantaged contexts, evidence from City Challenge in London and Greater Manchester suggests that school-to-school partnerships of various kinds can be a powerful means of fostering improvements (Ainscow, 2015; Barrs et al, 2014; Claeys et al., 2014; Greaves, Macmillan and Sibieta, 2014; Hutchings et al., 2012; Kidson and Norris, 2014). Most notably, we have seen how they led to striking improvements in the performance of some schools facing the most challenging circumstances. Significantly, we found that such collaborative arrangements can have a positive impact on the learning of pupils in all of the participating schools.

This is an important finding in that it draws attention to a way of strengthening relatively low performing schools that can, at the same time, help to foster wider improvements in the system. It also offers a convincing argument as to why relatively strong schools should support other schools. Put simply, the evidence is that by helping others you help yourself.

Having said all of that, it is important to stress that it is often difficult for schools to cooperate, particularly in a policy context within which competition remains as a major driver. In addition, robust evidence as to the impact on pupil progress of such strategies is still rather limited (Croft, 2015). Meanwhile, there are other difficulties that need to be addressed. For example: school partnerships can lead to lots of nonproductive time, as members of staff spend periods out of school; they might simply be a fad that goes well when led by skilled and enthusiastic advocates but then fades when spread more widely; schools involved in working collaboratively may collude with one another to reinforce mediocrity and low expectations; those schools that most need help may choose not to get involved; and some head teachers may become 'empire builders', who deter others from getting involved (Ainscow, 2015). On the other hand, research points to the sorts of factors that make school partnerships effective (Ainscow and Howes, 2007).

Beyond school factors

Our research has also led us to conclude that closing the gap in outcomes – of all kinds – between those from more and less advantaged backgrounds will only happen when what happens to children outside as well as inside schools changes (Ainscow et al., 2012a). This means ensuring that all children receive effective support from their families and communities, which in turn means ensuring that schools can build on the resources offered by schools and families, and support the extension of those resources.

In this respect, the continued development of schools' work with families and communities, which we noted earlier, is encouraging. In particular, we have seen important examples of what can happen when what schools do is aligned in a coherent strategy with the efforts of other local players – employers, community groups, universities and public services. This does not necessarily mean schools doing more, but it does imply partnerships beyond the school, where partners multiply the impacts of each other's efforts.

With this argument in mind, we are currently promoting (with the support of Save the Children) the development of 'children's communities'. These are area-based initiatives modelled partly on the Harlem Children's Zone in the USA, but also drawing on the long history of place-based initiatives in this country (Dyson and Kerr, 2013; Dyson, Kerr, Raffo, Wigelsworth, and Wellings, 2012; Kerr, Dyson, and Raffo, 2014). This work is attempting to improve outcomes for children and young people in areas of disadvantage through approaches that are characterised as being 'doubly holistic'. That is to say, they seek to develop coordinated efforts to tackle the factors that disadvantage children and enhance the factors that support them, across all aspects of their lives, and across their life spans, from conception through to adulthood.

In common with many other area initiatives, children's communities involve a wide range of partners working together in a co-ordinated manner. Schools are key to these partnerships

and may be their principal drivers. However, in contrast to the extended schools initiatives of the Labour years, this is not simply about enlisting other agencies and organisations in support of a school-centred agenda. Children's communities are aimed at improving a wide range of outcomes for children and young people, including but not restricted to educational outcomes – much less, narrowly-conceived attainment outcomes. Health and well-being, personal and social development, thriving in the early years, and employment outcomes are as important as how well children do in school. This arises not from a down-grading of attainment so much as from a recognition that all outcomes for children and young people are inter-related, and the factors which promote or inhibit one outcome are very likely to be the factors which promote or inhibit outcomes as a whole. As a result, their focus is the population of the area rather than the population of schools per se, and they may be led by non-educational organisations, such as housing associations or regeneration partnerships. Moreover, in contrast to previous initiatives, they are envisaged as being long-term, thinking in terms of a ten-year time horizon, and they are committed to acting strategically, basing their actions of a deep analysis of the area's underlying problems and possibilities.

Children's communities, however, are simply one of a range of initiatives that are emerging internationally to link schools and other agencies in area-based action. In the absence of co-ordination by central government, the idea of what is known in the USA as 'collective impact' (Kania and Kramer, 2011), is beginning to gain traction. In other words, the complex problems that beset schools in common with all public services in the context of diversity, inequality and disadvantage are seen as demanding multi-strand responses at local levels. As the capacity of local authorities to provide such co-ordination declines, it is local institutions, such as schools, which have to take on wider roles and offer local leadership.

Implications for governance and the role of schools

The notion of collective impact reminds us that all of this has major implications for the various key stakeholders within education systems. In particular, teachers, especially those in senior positions, have to see themselves as having a wider responsibility for all children, not just those that attend their own schools. They also have to develop patterns of internal organisation that enable them to have the flexibility to cooperate with other schools and with stakeholders beyond the school gate.

It means, too, that there have to be effective arrangements to coordinate partnership working. This is one of the most worrying aspects of the current policy context, with its emphasis on school autonomy and the development of new governance structures that can discourage schools from working with others in their local community. Put bluntly, in many areas of the country no one organisation seems to have the overall picture that would enable them to orchestrate more collaborative ways of working amongst schools and with community stakeholders, and step in when things go wrong.

The authors of an influential McKinsey report, having analysed 'how the world's most improved school systems keep getting better', express their surprise at the critical role that what they call the 'mediating layer' plays between school delivery and central government (Barber, Chijioke, and Mourshed, 2010). This leads them to conclude that sustaining

improvements in the longer term requires 'integration and intermediation' across each level of the system, 'from the classroom to the superintendent or minister's office'.

The authors of the report go on to suggest that the specific functions the mediating layer plays are: providing targeted support to schools; acting as a buffer between central government and the schools, while interpreting and communicating the improvement objectives in order to manage any resistance to change; and enhancing the collaborative exchange between schools, by facilitating the sharing of best practices, helping them to support each other, share learning, and standardise practices. We would add that, in a system which takes seriously the 'beyond school' aspects of its work, the mediating layer would also need to link schools with other agencies and organisations involved with children, families and communities, and would support them in developing strategic, long-term approaches.

Within this context, our experience suggests that local authority staff can have an important role to play, not least in acting as the conscience of the system - making sure that all children and young people are getting a fair deal within an increasingly diverse system of education (Hargreaves and Ainscow, 2015). In order to do this, they need to know the big picture about what is happening in their communities, identifying priorities for action and brokering collaboration. This requires significant structural and cultural change, with local authorities moving away from a command and control perspective, towards one of enabling and facilitating collaborative action.

This also requires new thinking, practices and relationships. Drawing on the ideas of Fielding and Moss (2011), it means that the role of the local authority should become that of:

> ….a leader and facilitator of the development of a local educational project, a shared and democratic exploration of the meaning and practice of education and the potential of the school (Fielding and Moss, 2011: 125).

The plan for such a project should, we suggest, be formulated in partnership with practitioners, as well as with community representatives. In this way, it takes on the thinking of the 'Fourth Way', as suggested by Hargreaves and Shirley (2009):

> Community organisation in education goes far beyond parent involvement and its traditional one-on-one deals between individual parents and the educators who serve their children. It is about mobilising entire communities and public networks to agitate for significant reform. When fully realised, it is about changing the power dynamics of an entire city by creating new civic capacity for previously disenfranchised populations. (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009: 59)

We have experienced many situations where local authority colleagues have found the changes this implies to be deeply challenging, particularly during times of reducing budgets. However, we have also experienced other situations where local authority colleagues place themselves at the heart of developments that are led by schools and by local partnerships, seeing this as a way in which the traditional responsibility of local authorities for their areas can best be discharged in current conditions. We remain committed, therefore, to the view that local coordination – the presence of an effective 'mediating layer' – is vital.

Implications for national policy

Clearly, what we are proposing here implies a radical rethink of national education policy. We have no quarrel with the proposition that schools – including primary schools – should be committed to improving the measured attainments of their pupils and that they should be held to account for their outcomes in this respect. We support also the propositions that a properly constituted inspection system is essential, and that schools should enjoy a high degree of autonomy in formulating their own responses to diversity. Where we part company with the direction of current policy, however, is in the narrowing of the purposes of education – and hence of the focus of accountability mechanisms – and in the creation of a system in which schools are divided one from another, from other local agencies, and from any co-ordinating steer from central government in respect of their wider roles.

We therefore suggest that in order to create the conditions that will enable this new thinking to be implemented there is a need for a three-pronged approach to national policy, as follows:

1. A clear specification of the purposes of education, which must go well beyond a narrow focus on attainment, as measured by test scores. The framework of educational aims proposed by the Cambridge Primary Review and adopted by the Cambridge Primary Review Trust and many of its Schools Alliance partners provides a well evidenced and argued way forward (Alexander, 2010, chapter 12, and http://cprtrust.org.uk/about_cprt/aims/). This implies the development of accountability mechanisms that are also clearly specified and precisely focused, but which are built on the assumption that education is about more than passing tests.[8] It also implies the development of funding mechanisms which target resources where they are most needed, without imposing undue constraints on local decision-making.

2. The creation of space in which those who are closest to children and their communities can make decisions about how best they can all be educated in a way that is relevant – and, crucially, in which they can explore new ways of working in a disciplined manner, but without fearing for the consequences if outcomes are not immediately improved.

3. The development of an intermediary layer capable of interpreting national purposes at local level, of promoting the networking of schools with each other and with other agencies, and also, we would suggest, able to learn from creative developments at local level and feed them back into national policy.

Our view is that an approach of this kind would create the conditions in which primary schools might begin to develop new and more effective responses to diversity. However, in themselves, they would not ensure that such responses were equitable. The final implication,

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8   At the time of going to press, the House of Commons Education Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the purposes and quality of education in England. The Cambridge Primary Review Trust has submitted a statement to this inquiry arguing in similar terms to ourselves and reiterating the practical as well as ethical and cultural value of the CPR aims framework, which has now been adopted by many schools. (Alexander, 2016, http://goo.gl/dgFYae)

therefore, is that national policy would itself have to be based on and make explicit the values of equity and inclusion on which our own review is premised.

It has become fashionable amongst policy-makers to set the developments of recent times against the supposedly ill-thought-out and failed approaches embodied most obviously in the Plowden report (Central Advisory Council for Education (England), 1967). It is certainly the case that the education system has learned much in the past half century about the challenges of making 'child-centred' pedagogy effective, the disadvantages of a lack of a national curriculum framework, and the limitations of local authorities acting as both leaders and providers of schooling. However, tackling these problems and limitations has, in our view, involved the abandonment of many of the achievements of the pre-1988 settlement. Now is the right time for policy-makers and the public to revisit the issue of 'children and their primary schools'. In a diverse, unequal and divided society, the issue is of crucial importance.

Implications for research

It is fitting that a review of research should conclude with a brief consideration of where research on primary schooling and diversity might most usefully go in future. Again, there have been many positive developments in recent years – from the commitment to policy evaluation of the Labour years, to the efforts to develop methodological capacity – particularly in relation to quantitative approaches – in the research community, and to equally substantial efforts to develop an evidence base of 'what works' that is both robust and readily accessible to schools. None of these developments has been problem-free, but it is difficult to believe that the research community is not now better placed than it was to support (and to critique, where appropriate) the work of the school system.

However, our thoughts on where policy and practice might now go have two further implications for research. First, a broader understanding of the nature of diversity and of the purposes of education implies a need for the development of research methodologies and designs that are capable of encompassing this breadth. A focus on 'what works' or on the evaluation of policy initiatives is much more complex where outcomes are multiple, processes are important, and initiatives are multi-strand and liable to develop over time. It may be that some of the apparent (but often illusory) certainty of currently fashionable research approaches has to be sacrificed in order to come to terms with the complexity and inherent uncertainty of the world of practice. As Pawson and Tilley famously put it, we may need to stop asking, 'What works?' and instead ask 'What works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?' (Pawson and Tilley, 2004: 2)

Second, in a situation where local exploration and experimentation in responding to diversity are crucial, we may need more research that is engaged – and engaged in a particular way. Research which seeks to tell schools and teachers what to do is indeed engaged, and is as important as research that is concerned with critique or with the consideration of underlying educational and social issues. However, in complex situations, researchers may not be in a position to legislate on the basis of unequivocal evidence. A more appropriate role may be for researchers to work with practitioners to support, evaluate and, ultimately, to learn from their endeavours.

We referred earlier to our own work with school inquiry teams. Our work on children's communities likewise involves partnerships with practitioners where the balance between researcher expertise and practitioner knowledge is not tipped in favour of the researchers. There are many forms in which researcher-practitioner partnerships can develop, and the principles or working in this way are not new. What matters at the current time is that these approaches come to be valued both by practitioners and by researchers themselves, but also by those who commission and/or reward researchers, and by policy-makers who may – or at least should – learn from research.

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Companion research volume. The original 28 research surveys, revised and re-edited with commentaries. Alexander, R.J. *et al* (ed) (2010), *The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys*, Routledge. 856 pp. Obtainable through normal commercial channels. http://cprtrust.org.uk/cpr/cpr-publications/companion-research-volume/ .

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3. Goswami, U. (February 2015), *Children's Cognitive Development and Learning.*
4. Pickett, K. and Vanderbloemen, L. (September 2015), *Mind the Gap: tackling social and educational Inequality*
5. Bourn, D., Hunt, F., Blum, N. and Lawson, H., (February 2016), *Primary education for sustainability, global understanding and citizenship.*
6. Jopling, M., and Vincent, S. (April 2016), *Vulnerable children: needs and provision in the primary phase*.
7. Burnett, C. (*June 2016), *The digital age and its implications for learning and teaching in the primary school.*
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10. Hall, K. and Øzerk, K. (*September 2016), *Autonomy, accountability and quality assurance in primary education: England and other countries.*

11. McNamara, O., Murray, J. and Phillips, R. (*July 2016), *How should primary teachers be trained? Policy and evidence.*

12. Hogan, D., Kwek, D. and Renshaw, P. (*TBC 2016), *Research on teaching: what do we know and how should we act?*

* Expected date and provisional title.

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Primary Colours

Alexander, R.J. (ed) (June 2015), *Primary Colours: Westminster postcards from the Cambridge Primary Review Trust.* An edited collection of CPRT blogs published between July 2014 and June 2015. View/download at http://cprtrust.org.uk/about_cprt/cprt-publications/.

Primary Curriculum 2014 (CPRT with Pearson)

Primary Curriculum 2014: developing an outstanding curriculum in your school. 86-page Illustrated handbook to support the introduction of the new national curriculum. Contributions from Pearson, CPRT and eleven of the subject associations. Published by Pearson. http://cprtrust.org.uk/about_cprt/cprt-publications/

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The Cambridge Primary Review Trust is the successor to the Cambridge Primary Review (2006-12). It aims to extend and build upon the Review to advance the cause of high quality primary education for all. It is supported by Pearson Education, based at the University of York, and chaired by Professor Robin Alexander.

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