

Schools and communities

Directors' and head teachers'
summary 7 September 2010

Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services



'It takes a whole village to raise a child' (African Proverb)

Schools should be engines of social mobility. They should provide the knowledge, and the tools, to enable talented young people to overcome accidents of birth and an inheritance of disadvantage in order to enjoy greater opportunities

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, July 2010

Within the theme of Schools and Communities there are three priorities:

- closing the gap in educational achievement and improving emotional resilience for children and young people with additional needs
- ensuring children and young people make sustained progress and remain fully engaged through all transitions between key stages
- strengthening family wellbeing and community cohesion through the role of schools and extended services.



What do we know?

- the quality of leadership at all levels is a crucial factor in improving results and the impact of services for children and young people, their families and local communities
- improving and sustaining the emotional resilience of children and young people is important both in its own right and as a contribution to raising achievement
- success is most evident when schools and services work in partnership with parents, carers and communities to support high aspirations and improved results for all
- while universal services benefit all children, some children may require additional services and more focused early interventions to support learning. Schools and services should:
 - build strong home-school links
 - use the relevant data to inform the development of preventative interventions which match the needs of their local area.

Parental involvement in a child's schooling is a more powerful force than any other family background indicator such as social class or family size... and contributes to 10 per cent or more of variation in educational achievement... (Desforges 03)

More specific key messages

Closing the gap in educational achievement and improving emotional resilience for children with additional needs

Children's services should be driven by the determination to:

- address barriers to learning
- support the emotional wellbeing of children and young people
- recognise parents and carers as equal and essential partners in raising achievement
- meet individual needs and local circumstances
- build on the strengths and interests of children and young people
- identify additional needs and intervene early to address them.

There should be strong partnerships between schools and other services:

- underpinned by high aspirations for all children, their parents and carers, and local communities
- facilitated by the use of the common assessment framework (CAF) to enable the provision of better services by people working together.

Strong strategic leadership and clear aims, informed by evidence of what works locally, are required to:

- guide schools and services in developing their own tailored approaches
- embed new initiatives to support teaching and learning for all children and young people and to improve the curriculum and environment.

Children and young people with 'additional needs' do not form a homogenous, stable or clearly-defined group. Factors including health, economic circumstances, housing, parental education are equally important in raising educational achievement.

Effective implementation includes:

- using a variety of staff with diverse professional backgrounds in multi-agency interventions, with a range of tested approaches
- giving children and parents access to a trusted and dependable adult e.g. mentor/health visitor.

Ensuring sustained progress and engagement through transition between key stages

The majority of children and young people make successful transitions between key stages. However, transition is a challenge for all depending on the amount of change that is involved.

Children and young people from vulnerable groups are more likely to experience transition difficulties, especially those from economically deprived backgrounds and children with special educational needs.

The ability to cope with change is related to the level of support children receive both from their families and their schools in adjusting to their new environment.

Effective transition practice and initiatives:

- improve social and academic results for all children and young people
- are preventative and particularly beneficial for those most at risk of experiencing difficulties during transition
- promote good communication between everyone involved
- provide induction into the new environment before transition
- balance continuity in curriculum, environment, friendship groups and routines with positive opportunities for change.

Successful practice should:

- focus on the whole child
- implement a range of universal and focused transition initiatives including providing information and induction programmes for families, visits to new settings, curriculum-bridging, school-linking, and buddy/mentoring schemes
- help children and young people to develop the skills needed to help them cope with transition in the future.

Strengthening family wellbeing and community cohesion in schools and extended services

Children's services should:

- link schools into a wider strategy for securing community cohesion and family wellbeing by promoting co-operation between all service providers
- ensure that parents, carers and community groups fully participate in decision making about what services should be provided by extended schools, so that services are appropriate and meet the real needs of the community
- encourage sustainable long-term provision that combines well with existing services. The benefits of short-term projects are quickly eroded.

Clear communication underpins trusting relationships between families, support agencies and the wider community. Staff must have the skills and local knowledge to develop positive relationships with diverse groups holding different values and expectations.

Parental support for learning, at home, is the most successful way of raising their children's achievement, so schools should:

- focus on partnership with parents and carers
- provide targeted preventative support during early years and at transition points to make significant differences to children's learning and aspirations.

Strategic leaders have an important role in encouraging school engagement in family wellbeing and community cohesion by:

- sharing good practice
- providing support and training to motivate schools that have made less progress in providing extended services.

What do you want to do next?

How will you ensure that the importance of closing the gap in achievement of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people is understood as a priority, and the links between that and effective transition, family wellbeing and community cohesion are recognised and addressed in your local area?

Q1 What is your vision for the schools in your local area? What are your aspirations for the children who attend them? What impact do you want to have?

For example: The majority of schools offer extended services specifically geared to the community in which they are located. Schools work in genuine partnership with parents, carers and the community to support high aspirations and raising achievement. Children and young people are confident as they move between key stages and feel well-supported by their families, their schools and the community.

Q2 What would the results and impact be if you could see or experience them?

For example: The majority of parents are demonstrably involved in their children's education (e.g. ensure attendance and homework completed, attend parents evenings). More children and young people in your local area, including those with additional needs, are achieving better educational results, and demonstrate lower anxiety and higher levels of wellbeing. A variety of high quality support is available to families at all times and additionally at key transitions. Good communication exists both between schools, children and young people, families and the community and within schools. Schools are involved in sustainable schemes to develop and strengthen links with families and the local community.

Q3 And how can you measure them?

The indicators for measuring results and impact emerge from descriptions of the experience. Appropriate indicators from the National Indicators Set, can be selected, for example

- NI 72-102 personal, social and emotional development, and communication language and literacy; achievement gaps
- N1 50 emotional health of children
- NI 52 take-up of school lunches
- NI 69 children who have experienced bullying

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment

Other measures specific to your local area should be defined so that you will be able to see whether you are achieving your defined impact, to what extent your plans need amendment and to provide feedback to your local communities.

Q4 Where are you now? How are you currently doing on the most important measures?

The web-based C4EO Progress Mapping tool will provide relevant data on the indicators and you may also be able to use your own local data to create data curves/charts in order to analyse and compare performance with other authorities.

Q5 Who are the partners for improvement? Who from local Children's services and the Local Strategic Partnership should be at the table?

A very broad range of partners have a role to play in providing better and fairer services for children and young people, including:

- children and young people (with and without additional needs)
- parents and carers
- head teachers and virtual school heads; teaching, child care and support staff
- managers working strategically, as well as professional staff delivering services including children's services, child care, youth services, healthcare, policing and voluntary organisations
- local community leaders.

Q6 What really works to improve the results and impact that you want?

C4EO's in-depth research review provides some evidence for what works. This evidence can be used to support the achievement of the results and impact you have identified. You may choose to undertake a 'turning the curve' exercise on the measures where Improvement is needed. This is an exercise from the OBA toolkit which facilitates partnership working.

www.c4eo.org.uk/obatoolkit/default.aspx

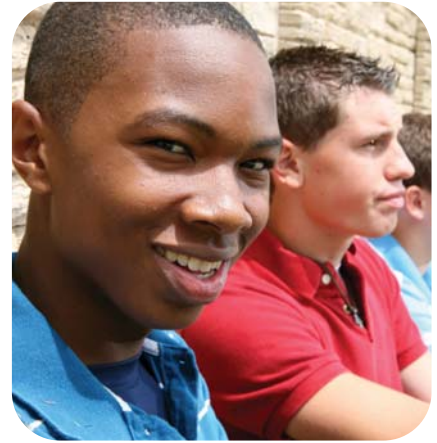
This will enable you to identify which partners/agencies should be involved. C4EO sector specialists are also available from C4EO to support this work on request.

Q7 What do you propose to do next?

Create your vision and strategy; draw up an action plan and monitor progress on selected indicators. A report card format can be used which is clear and simple for you and your partners and provides a framework for monitoring progress against your impact. (This is available in the OBA toolkit on the C4EO website.) In addition, examples of replicable good practice in these areas can be found under Validated Local Practice on the C4EO website.

Who has the information you need?

- children and young people (with and without additional needs)
- parents and carers
- school leaders (Head teachers, principals) and leaders of extended services in schools, school and service teachers/staff, school governors
- community leaders and voluntary organisations
- children's services strategic managers
- local authorities and education staff
- national policy makers.



Directors' summaries

This summary is a concise and accessible overview of C4EO's current work in this theme for directors of children's services and those working at this level in schools and children's services partnerships, such as head teachers and virtual school heads.

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to download full and in-depth versions.

How can C4EO support your vision?

C4EO offers wide-ranging support, including:

- validated local practice
- knowledge workshops
- sector specialists providing tailored support
- knowledge and research reviews including key messages from research.

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to access full information.