Making the Difference

Ethnicity and Achievement in Bristol Schools

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**Foreword**

This report has been commissioned by Bristol Education Attainment Partnership (BEAP) from the Graduate School of Education at Bristol University to contribute to the journey of improvement in an important aspect of education in the city, and strengthen shared aspirations for the future. It provides strong evidence about current attainment of BME learners, highlights effective practice and provides a framework for further developing practice to ensure that all schools and settings make a difference in closing gaps in achievement.

A team from the Graduate School, led by Professor Leon Tikly, carried out the research upon which the report is based. I would like to thank the team and all those who have contributed to the report.

Marie-Annick Gournet  
Chair, BEAP  
June 2012
Bristol Education Attainment Partnership

BEAP is a joint enterprise of CYPS in Bristol City Council and the Legacy Commission. Members include school and Further Education leaders, community leaders, members of the Legacy Commission and senior officers in CYPS. The Chair is Dr Marie-Annick Gournet, Director of Widening Participation at UWE. Its role is to:

- Provide support and challenge to all those engaged in delivering the programme of action, including schools, Local Authority services, partner organisations, communities and young people
- Strengthen engagement and confidence in this programme of action across the city
- Develop innovative and creative approaches to unlocking the potential of young people in the city
- Monitor and review data relating to BME students’ performance such as attainment, exclusion, racist incidents, attendance and identify follow up actions
- Operate as an enquiry group dealing with key areas of concern, current or historical, affecting schools and attainment of BME young people
**Introduction: Aims and Scope**

This report is aimed at parents, teachers, school leaders, LA Children’s Services staff, community organisations, and all those who have an interest in raising achievement in Bristol schools. The issues identified in the report are intended to stimulate dialogue between schools, local partners and the wider community. We hope it will act as an impetus and a reference point for sharing successful practice to tackle the attainment gap in schools.

The population in Bristol, as in other major cities in the UK, is increasingly culturally diverse. Bristol has long established Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities but there has been a growth in the numbers of recently arrived learners from different parts of the world. Evidence suggests that whereas learners from some BME backgrounds achieve very highly, others perform less well compared to City and national averages. Evidence also suggests however, that whilst there remain significant barriers to achievement, some Bristol schools are ‘making the difference’ in closing the attainment gap.

The aim of the report is to profile the attainment of BME learners in Bristol and to identify successful practice used by local schools for raising the attainment of those groups most at risk of underachieving. The report presents:

- The most up to date evidence concerning attainment across the city, highlighting where progress has been made and where more needs to be done to narrow the gaps in attainment.
- Evidence from Bristol and other parts of the UK concerning the challenges to achievement facing specific groups.
- A model of successful practice, with examples from Bristol schools of interventions that make a difference in raising expectations and outcomes for all.

The team undertook a statistical analysis of the performance data for different groups in Bristol schools and compared this to the national average to identify important attainment issues. Interviews were conducted with key personnel in the Local Authority and with community representatives to develop a picture of the challenges to achievement facing some groups of learners. The team then visited a sample of early years, primary and secondary schools that have been successful in closing the attainment gap for these groups. Drawing on the experiences of Head teachers, classroom educators, teaching assistants, support staff, parents and learners the team identified the range of strategies that these schools use to make a difference and developed this into a model of successful practice. Importantly, programmes shown to be effective for any one ethnic group or socio-economic group tend to be effective for others as well.

**Limitations**

The team recognise that there are other examples of successful practices in Bristol schools and education settings that are not covered in this report. It is not therefore intended to be a definitive guide but we hope that by highlighting some examples we can help facilitate further discussion and sharing of information and ideas.

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1 Using Raiseonline data, schools were selected on the basis that they had relatively large proportions of BME learners and had demonstrated success in narrowing the gap in achievement between groups at risk of underachieving and all learners. 2 early years, 2 primary and 2 secondary schools were visited.
Executive Summary

Bristol’s changing demography

The number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) learners attending Bristol’s state-funded schools has grown in recent years as newer arrivals, particularly from Somalia and Eastern Europe, join the City’s established African/Caribbean and Asian heritage communities. The 2012 School Census shows that nearly a third (32%) of learners are from BME groups, compared with 25% five years ago. The BME communities are not distributed evenly across the City but are concentrated in the central and eastern wards. Young people from BME backgrounds are more likely to live in income deprived households, although this does vary between groups. For example, 60% of Somali heritage young people are eligible for free school meals compared with 8% of young people of Indian heritage.

Ethnicity and attainment

Overall, educational standards in the City have been consistently improving at each Key Stage over the last five years, following a period of persistently low attainment. For example, half of Bristol’s sixteen year olds attending state-funded schools achieved 5A*-C grades including GCSE English and Maths in 2011, compared with a third five years ago. However whilst the results for most ethnic groups have improved over this period, improvement rates vary and inequalities in educational outcomes remain at each Key Stage. The attainment of some BME groups is above average for Bristol, for example Indian and Chinese heritage pupils. When compared with the attainment of these groups nationally, however, there is some evidence of relative underachievement e.g. Indian pupils’ GCSE performance and Chinese pupils’ Key Stage 2 performance in 2011. Groups at particular risk of underachieving, however, are Somali, White Eastern European, Pakistani, Black Caribbean, White/Black Caribbean, Gypsy /Roma and Traveller learners.

- Somali heritage learners are among the lowest attaining groups at each Key Stage. While a lot more needs to be done to close the gaps, progress is being made. Rates of improvement for Somali learners are higher than average so the gaps are gradually narrowing year-on-year.

- The results for Eastern European heritage boys in particular are below average at each Key Stage. Results for girls are better at Key Stage 1 and 2, but they also remain below average at Key Stage 4. Apart from boys’ Key Stage 2 results last year, the rate of improvement at each Key Stage for Eastern European learners is higher than average so the gaps are gradually closing.

- Black Caribbean heritage learners’ results are variable across Key Stages with results at Key Stage 1 close to average. However performance is below average at Key Stage 2 and the gap widens at Key Stage 4 where Black Caribbean boys and girls are the lowest attaining groups. Year-on-year improvements are evident but the improvement rate is below average so the gap is not closing. Part of the reason is that the progress made from KS1 to KS2 and from KS2 to KS4 is below average, particularly in Maths.

- White/Black Caribbean heritage boys’ results are below average at each Key Stage. While improvements have been made, the rate of improvement is variable and progress between Key Stages remains below average so gaps are not narrowing. However, White/Black Caribbean girls’ results are average and above.
- Pakistani heritage boys are among the lowest attainers on entry to school. Their results improve by the end of Key Stage 1, particularly in Reading and Maths where progress is above average. Performance at Key Stages 2 and 4 remain below average but rates of improvement are above average and the gaps are closing year-on-year. For example Pakistani boys’ 5A*-C results including English and Maths have improved from 18% in 2007 to 41% in 2011.

- Pakistani girls’ results are close to average in Reading and Writing at Key Stage 1 but below in Maths. As with boys’, Pakistani girls’ results are below average at Key Stages 2 and 4 but rates of improvement are above average and the gaps are closing. For example Pakistani girls’ 5A*-C results including English and Maths have improved from 23% in 2007 to 46% in 2011.

- The attainment of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller learners remains a particular concern as very few achieve the expected standard at the end of each Key Stage. Disruptions to education are clearly an issue with attendance rates less than 80% on average.

The majority of Bristol learners stay on in education post-16 (88%), although there are ethnic group variations in the type and length of courses followed which will have an impact on the numbers subsequently entering Higher Education. For example, Black Caribbean boys and girls and White/Black Caribbean boys were more likely than average to be enrolled on shorter courses at FE colleges rather than the two-year Level 3 courses required for HE entry.

For students entered for Level 3 qualifications, the average point score per exam entry was 207 points, equivalent to an A level grade C. Variations were evident between groups with White Other girls, Chinese girls and Indian boys achieving Grade B on average and Somali boys and girls, Pakistani girls, Bangladeshi girls and White European boys achieving Grade D/E on average.

**Factors Affecting Achievement**

It is important to focus on the factors affecting the performance of BME groups at risk of underachieving, to help understand how the attainment gap can be closed. Achievement and underachievement are the result of multiple factors related to levels of social deprivation and gender as well as to ethnic background. Barriers to achievement that particularly impact on BME groups at risk of underachieving arise from an interaction between the home, community, and school contexts and often also affect many White British heritage learners. Improvements in the attainment of some BME groups suggest that schools in Bristol are increasingly aware of the issues involved and are acting on these. By the same token, the persistence of inequalities in educational outcomes suggests that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the barriers to achievement facing some groups, and to develop take up of strategies that schools can use to overcome these barriers.

There is a correlation between levels of deprivation and low educational attainment which affects all groups to a greater or lesser degree: socio-economic attainment gaps are much bigger than ethnic group differences. The percentage of Bristol learners eligible for free school meals achieving Level 4 and above in English at the end of KS2 in 2011 was 67% compared with 84% for those not eligible. At
KS4, the percentage of Bristol learners eligible for free school meals achieving 5 or more A*-C grades including GCSE English and Maths in 2011 was 29% compared with 55% for those not eligible.

Ethnic groups with the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged learners e.g. Somali and Black Caribbean learners are therefore disproportionately affected in terms of challenges to achievement. In 2011, 28% of White British learners eligible for free school meals achieved 5 or more A*-C grades including English and Maths compared with 53% of those not eligible. White British learners eligible for free school meals therefore represent a significant “at risk of underachievement” group together with the BME groups already referred to, they face many of the same issues, and will also benefit from similar types of intervention as BME pupils.

There have been a growing number of newly arrived learners over the last five years. The majority of these have been from Somalia and from Eastern Europe. Both the Somalis and Eastern Europeans along with Gypsy/Roma and Travellers represent transient and mobile groups. As a consequence, some Bristol schools have high levels of pupil mobility with over a third of pupils each year joining other than at the beginning of the school year. Mobility disrupts pupil progress and can have additional resource implications for schools to effectively induct newly arrived pupils. Dealing with learners arriving throughout the year, who have experienced disruptions to their education and socioeconomic disadvantage is especially demanding.

Young people’s educational aspirations and those of their parents influence their educational attainment and later life outcomes. 11-14 is a key age range, when young people move from idealistic to more realistic ambitions. Learners of Black Caribbean, Somali and Pakistani heritage have higher than average levels of educational aspirations. Groups with low aspirations include White British learners eligible for free school meals and learners of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller heritage.

Teacher expectations influence pupils’ future attainment and are important because they can impact on the educational aspirations of learners. They are significant because they can influence the outcome of key processes in schools: the targets that teachers set for individual pupils, the ability groups that learners are assigned to in different subjects, and the examination tier for which they are entered at the end of key stage four are all determined by teacher expectations of how learners will perform. If a learner is from a group that performs less well on average than learners from other groups, this can sometimes lead to lower teacher expectations regardless of an individual’s ability and potential to perform. Existing research indicates that teachers tend to have lower expectations of certain groups, including learners of Black Caribbean, mixed, Pakistani, Somali, and Gypsy/Roma and Traveller heritage.

Linked to low expectations can be a lack of engagement between schools and parents. In the case of some groups this can reinforce differences in understanding and expectation concerning the processes and outcomes of schooling. For those parents who have been educated in another country, unfamiliarity with the English education system can mean that they do not know what should be expected in terms of achievement, in terms of interaction with the school, how schools expect parents to support their children’s education at home, and how to access extra support where needed. Some BME parents who have been through the British education system as pupils may themselves have had negative experiences, encountering racism, low expectations and a lack of opportunity. This may mean that school genuinely intimidates them, even though they care about their child’s education.
All BME groups would be supported better if there were more credible and positive mentors for them. A key issue is the low numbers of BME teachers. Only 4.4% of teachers in Bristol schools are from BME backgrounds. A lack of positive role models has also been identified as a factor in the underachievement of White British learners who are eligible for free school meals.

Making the Difference: A Model of Successful Practice for Closing the Attainment Gap in Bristol Schools

We highlight what some Bristol schools are doing to make a difference in raising the attainment of groups at risk of underachieving. We present a model based on seven key areas of successful practice in Bristol schools that each contribute to high expectations and attainment for all. Each area is outlined in the report and examples are provided. Many of the areas of successful practice outlined are important not only for raising the achievement of BME learners at risk of underachieving but other ‘at risk’ groups too including, for example, white British learners who are eligible for free school meals. The areas are summarised below:
Developing Leadership for Raising Attainment
The leadership team develops a shared vision and values around high expectations and achievement for all, with an absolute belief that all pupils can and will achieve. The role played by the head teacher in leading this vision is crucial: the head will support staff to realize that vision, and challenge underperformance and low expectations. Head teachers and senior managers take ownership of the issues and lead by example. Members of the school community are actively involved in creating the vision through ongoing consultation and dialogue. Leadership is distributed across the school community.

Ethos and Values
These are underpinned by an ethos of high expectations, achievement for all and zero tolerance for underachievement. School leaders and teachers show emotional intelligence, a respect for rights and awareness of diversity in how they interact and respond to pupils and their parents. They also see these as necessary competencies for learners to value as part of their overall development. The school is dedicated to the wellbeing of learners. It is a safe environment for all learners to learn free from all bullying and racism, and where cultural assumptions and stereotypes are challenged. Although learners are recognised as coming from diverse cultural backgrounds they are acknowledged as individuals with specific experiences and needs.

Supporting Pupils’ Learning
Schools aim to understand pupils’ learning needs: there is a focus on how pupils learn, and what they need to enable them to learn. This may include practical strategies, for example, by providing language support, using a variety of teaching methods, and working with parents on how they can support their children’s learning at home. Staff have high expectations of learners and help foster aspirations: learners work with positive role models including role models from minority ethnic backgrounds, who demonstrate that ethnicity is not a barrier to achievement. Learners are encouraged to identify and consider how they can work towards their long-term goals, to be determined, and to commit to being the best that they can be.

An Inclusive and Relevant Curriculum
Schools that make a difference ensure that learners from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds are able to engage with the curriculum: they consider what is needed for learners to be able to do so. National curriculum objectives are implemented in a way that meets the needs of learners in the school. Schemes of work are designed to engage learners through the use of appropriate topics and examples in a way that ensures the curriculum is relevant to their lives. There are opportunities for learners to use ideas and subjects that they are already familiar with, in ways which they are comfortable with, and learn using appropriate methods.

Communicating With and Engaging Parents
Schools committed to high expectations and achievement for all display an intrinsic level of engagement with parents. Head teachers are proactive in engaging all parents and carers including those who may not be fluent in English, who may be unfamiliar with the English educational system or who may be disengaged due to their own prior, negative experiences of schooling. Schools clearly communicate expectations about parental involvement and information about progress and targets, parents’ evenings, and other ways in which parents can support their child’s learning. Schools monitor attendance at parents’ evenings and devise strategies to ensure attendance of parents of
learners from all backgrounds. Early Years settings, nurseries and primary schools have a particularly crucial role in initiating parental engagement at the outset of the journey through the school system.

**Using Data to Raise Achievement and Challenge Expectations**
The school makes excellent use of data to set challenging targets and to raise achievement for all. Senior leaders interpret data from Raise on-line to understand the performance of different groups of learners in their school compared to that of all schools nationally and to make use of evidence from the data to target interventions aimed at closing the attainment gap. Senior leaders track progress in closing the attainment gap through continuous use of assessment data. Senior staff and subject leaders use assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies across different areas of the curriculum, how these strategies impact on different groups of learners, and to challenge expectations based on stereotypes where these exist. Teachers make use of data to set challenging individual targets and to raise learner and parental expectations.

**A Learning Organisation**
Schools that make a difference continuously monitor their environment. They are responsive to changes in the demographic profile of their learners and are willing to try new initiatives that have potential to make a difference in closing the attainment gap. Staff members in these organisations engage in dialogue with parents to enable them to develop understanding of the backgrounds and experiences of learners, expectations of learning and of the school. INSET is focused on supporting initiatives and strategies to close the attainment gap and to meet identified learning needs supported by evidence from an analysis of performance data. Staff and departmental meetings, forms of peer review and activities that engage with feedback from parents and learners are seen as opportunities for professional learning.
Diversity in Bristol’s schools

While current population estimates show that around 18% of Bristol residents are now from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, a rise of four percentage points over the last five years, schools have become increasingly diverse at a much faster rate than the population as a whole.

The 2012 School Census shows that 32% of the fifty thousand pupils attending Bristol’s state-funded schools are from BME groups (i.e. groups other than White British), compared with 25% of pupils five years ago (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Percentage of pupils from each ethnic group attending Bristol state-funded schools 2007-2012
The distribution of learners by age is a contributing factor to the rise in the overall number of BME learners: 37% of learners in Primary school Reception classes (five year olds) are from BME communities compared with 29% in Secondary school Year 11 (fifteen year olds). The demographic changes are associated with an increase in the number of young families from overseas settling in Bristol, particularly from Somalia and Eastern Europe in recent years, and higher birth rates for some groups.

Somali heritage learners now form the largest BME group at 4.9% of the school population (compared with 2.9% five years ago), followed by White/Black Caribbean dual heritage at 3.2% (compared with 2.8% five years ago), Pakistani heritage pupils at 3.1% (compared with 2.7% five years ago), Black Caribbean heritage at 2.2% (compared with 2.2% five years ago), Eastern European at 2.2% (compared with 0.8% five years ago) and Indian heritage at 2.1% (compared with 1.7% five years ago).

BME communities are not evenly distributed across the City. The three central wards Ashley, Easton and Lawrence Hill have the highest concentration of BME learners overall, although there are differences between groups and the latest statistics highlight some demographic shift, with BME communities settling in areas beyond the inner city, including: Lockleaze, Bedminster, Windmill Hill, St George, Frome Vale and Hillfields (Figs. 2-4).

A consequence of this uneven distribution is that some schools have a much higher proportion of BME pupils than other schools. For example, 23 out of Bristol’s 105 state-funded primary schools have over 50% BME pupils while 13 schools have less than 10%. Of the 20 state-funded secondary schools, 3 have over 50% BME pupils while 3 have less than 10%.

**Fig. 2 Distribution of Somali heritage learners attending Bristol schools by home location (2011)**

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Fig. 3 Distribution of Pakistani heritage learners attending Bristol schools by home location

Fig. 4 Distribution of Black Caribbean heritage learners attending Bristol schools by home location

Levels of social deprivation

Levels of social deprivation in BME communities in Bristol are generally quite high, but this varies widely between groups. For example, high percentages of Somali heritage learners (60%) and black Caribbean heritage learners (38%) are eligible for free school meals, compared with 8% of Indian heritage learners, and 21% of white British learners.

The Income Deprivation Affecting Learners Index (IDACI) is a measure of the proportion of learners age 0-15 living in income deprived households, based on home postcodes. Again this shows wide variations between groups with a much higher proportion of BME learners on average living in those areas of the City with the highest concentration of income deprived households (Fig. 5).

![Fig. 5 Percentage of Bristol children attending state-funded schools living in the 20% most deprived wards nationally for Income Deprivation Affecting Children (2011)](image-url)
Ethnicity and attainment in Bristol Schools

The following sections compare the performance of pupils from the largest ethnic communities at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5/post-16. Note the results for groups with very small numbers of pupils at the end of the Key Stage (less than 10 pupils) are not shown in the charts as performance can differ greatly from year-to-year based on variations in the results for just a few learners.

Data sources are Bristol Learners’ Services Information and Analysis Team for the Bristol school’s data and the Department for Education (DfE) for the national data.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Fig. 6 shows the percentage of learners with a “good level of development”\(^2\) at the end of the EYFS (learners age five) in 2011. As Fig. 6 shows, overall 57% of Bristol learners achieved a good level of development, close to the national average (59%). However, there were significant differences between groups, with on average girls doing better than boys. Less than 40% Somali heritage boys and girls and less than 40% of Pakistani, Eastern European and Black Caribbean heritage boys achieved a good level of development compared with c70% of White UK, White Other, Black African (excluding Somali) and Indian girls.

Fig. 6 Percentage of Bristol children achieving “a good level of development” at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage 2011 by ethnic group and gender

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\(^2\)“good level of development” is a Department For Education (DfE) performance indicator defined as a child who has achieved a score of 6 or more points in all 7 scales of the Personal, Social, Emotional (PSE) and Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) areas of learning and scored 78 points or more across all 13 scales of the EYFS Profile.
Fig. 7 compares attainment trends over the last four years for those groups most at risk of underachieving (Somali, Pakistani, Black Caribbean, White/Black Caribbean and Eastern European heritage learners). As Fig. 7 shows, the overall rate of improvement for at risk groups is above average and gaps are gradually closing for most groups. However, although Black Caribbean, Somali and Pakistani boys’ attainment and Somali girls’ attainment has improved, the rate of improvement for these groups is variable, so there is still a lot to be done.

Fig. 8 compares the 2011 EYFS performance of learners in Bristol with the national average by ethnic group and gender. As there is no national data published on the performance of White Eastern European heritage learners, data from Birmingham LA have been used in place of national data for this group. Birmingham is an appropriate comparator as it has one of the largest numbers of White Eastern European learners of any city outside London. While the percentage of Bristol learners achieving a good level of development is similar to or above the national averages for some groups, there are gaps of more than ten percentage points below the average in the proportion of Somali boys (-13%), Somali girls (-18%), Black Caribbean boys (-12%), Indian boys (-12%) and Pakistani boys (-11%) achieving the standard.

**Fig. 7** Trends in the percentage of learners (separated by gender) achieving a good level of development at the end of the EYFS for groups most at risk of underachieving
Birmingham LA data used in place of national data for White Eastern European learners.

Trends in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage: Boys from ethnic groups most at risk of underachieving

Fig. 8 Percentage of children attending Bristol's state funded schools achieving a "good level of development" at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage compared with the England* average 2011

* Birmingham LA data used in place of national data for White Eastern European learners.
**Key Stage 1**

Figs. 9-11 show the percentage of learners achieving Level 2 and above in Reading, Writing and Maths at the end of KS1 in 2011, by ethnic group and gender.

On average, 83% of learners achieved L2 and above in Reading (compared with 85% nationally), 79% in Writing (81% nationally) and 88% in Maths (90% nationally). Girls performed better than boys, particularly in Reading and Writing. There were significant variations between ethnic groups. In Reading, Somali boys and girls, Pakistani girls, White/Black Caribbean boys and White Eastern European boys had below average attainment. This pattern was also evident in Writing with the addition of Pakistani and Black Caribbean boys. Differences between groups were less marked in Maths, although again Somali boys and girls and Pakistani girls’ attainment was below average.

![Fig. 9 Percentage of Bristol children attending state-funded schools achieving Level 2 and above in Reading at the end of Key Stage 1 2011 by ethnic group and gender](image-url)
Fig. 10 Percentage of Bristol children attending state-funded Primary schools achieving Level 2 and above in Writing at the end of Key Stage 1 2011 by ethnic group and gender

Fig. 11 Percentage of Bristol children attending state-funded Primary schools achieving Level 2 and above in Maths at the end of Key Stage 1 2011 by ethnic group and gender
Fig. 12 compares attainment trends over the last five years for those groups most at risk of underachieving in Reading (Somali, Pakistani, Black Caribbean, White/Black Caribbean and Eastern European learners). The rate of improvement for most of the at risk groups is above average and gaps have closed or are closing. The exceptions are Somali and Pakistani girls and White Eastern European boys (in 2011) where rates of improvement are more variable and gaps are not closing.

Fig. 12 Trends in the percentage of learners achieving Level 2 and above at the end of KS1 in reading for groups most at risk of underachieving.
Fig. 13 compares the 2011 KS1 performance of Bristol learners in Reading with the national average by ethnic group and gender. As there is no national data published on the performance of White Eastern European heritage learners, data from Birmingham LA have been used in place of national data for this group. Birmingham is an appropriate comparator as it has one of the largest numbers of White Eastern European learners of any city outside London. The percentage of learners achieving Level 2 and above in Reading is the same as, or slightly above, the national average for most groups. However, there is a gap of ten percentage points in the proportion of Pakistani girls and Indian Boys achieving the standard.

* Birmingham LA data used in place of national data for White Eastern European learners.
Key Stage 2

Fig. 14 shows the percentage of learners achieving Level 4 and above in both English and Maths at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011, by ethnic group and gender. Overall, 73% of learners achieved L4 and above in English and Maths (compared with 74% nationally). Girls performed better than boys (76% compared with 69%) and as with the earlier key stages, there were significant variations between ethnic groups. Less than 60% of Somali Boys and girls, Black African boys, Black Caribbean boys, White/Black Caribbean boys and White Eastern European boys achieved Level 4 and above in English and Maths compared with over 75% of Bangladeshi, Indian and White UK girls.

![Fig. 14 Percentage of Bristol children attending state-funded schools achieving Level 4 and above in English & Maths at the end of KS2 2011 by ethnic group and gender](image)

Fig. 15 compares attainment trends over the last five years for those groups most at risk of underachieving. As Fig. 15 shows, while improvement rates vary from year-to-year, overall the gaps are closing for most at risk groups, the exceptions being Somali boys and girls and Black Caribbean boys where improvement rates are not currently sufficient to close the gaps.
Fig. 15 Trends in the percentage of learners achieving L4 and above at the end of KS2 in both English and Maths for groups most at risk of underachieving

Trends in the proportion of children achieving Level 4 and above in English and maths at the end of Key Stage 2: Girls from ethnic groups most at risk of underachieving

Trends in the proportion of children achieving Level 4 and above in English and maths at the end of Key Stage 2: Boys from ethnic groups most at risk of underachieving
Fig. 16 compares the 2011 KS2 performance of Bristol learners in English and Maths with the national average by ethnic group and gender. As there is no national data published on the performance of White Eastern European heritage learners, data from Birmingham LA have been used in place of national data for this group. Birmingham is an appropriate comparator as it has one of the largest numbers of White Eastern European learners of any city outside London.

The proportion of learners achieving Level 4 and above in English and Maths is above the average for Eastern European learners (+20%) but below the average for Somali boys (-17%), Somali girls (-14%), Black African (excluding Somali) boys (-16%), Black Caribbean boys (-15%), Indian boys (-14%), Chinese girls (-14%), Bangladeshi boys (-12%) and Chinese boys (-12%).

* Birmingham LA data used in place of national data for White Eastern European learners

**Key Stage1 to Key Stage 2 progress**

In addition to the attainment measures at the end of Key Stage 2, the DfE also publishes progress measures. These measures show whether learners have achieved the “expected progress” in English and Maths (defined as at least two levels of progress between KS1 and KS2 e.g. Level 2 at the end of KS1 to Level 4 at the end of KS2). However, this measure is a relatively crude indicator because attainment within levels can be quite wide. For example a child that just achieved Level 2 at the end of KS1 (Level 2c) who went on to achieve Level 4c at the end of KS2 would be counted as making the
same progress as a child who was more established at KS1 (Level 2a) but who also achieved Level 4c at the end of KS2.

The DfE also publish another progress measure between KS1 and KS2 known as value-added (VA). This compares each child’s progress with the progress made by learners nationally with the same starting point. Learners with a score of around 100 are making similar progress to other learners with the same starting point. Scores above 100 represent above average progress and scores less than 100 below average progress.

Fig. 17 shows the percentage of Bristol learners making “expected progress” in English and Maths in 2011 and Fig. 18 shows the VA scores by ethnic group and gender.

As Fig. 17 shows, overall 88% of Bristol learners made expected progress in English (compared with 84% nationally) and 86% made expected progress in Maths (compared with 83% nationally). However, there are differences between groups with a below average percentage of Black Caribbean boys and Bangladeshi boys making expected progress in English and a below average percentage of Black Caribbean boys and girls, White/Black Caribbean boys, Black African boys and Pakistani boys making expected progress in Maths.

These differences are also evident in the overall value-added scores (Fig. 18) where the scores for Black Caribbean boys and girls, White/Black Caribbean boys and Pakistani boys are slightly below average (although this difference is not statistically significant).
Fig. 18 Pupil progress between KS1 and KS2 (value-added scores) for children attending Bristol’s state-funded primary schools by ethnic group and gender 2011

Note: When the number of children in each group is taken into account, all groups are within the national average range value-added scores.
**Key Stage 4**

Fig. 19 shows the percentage of learners achieving 5 or more A*-C grades including GCSE English and Maths at the end of KS4 in 2011, by ethnic group and gender. Overall, 50% of learners achieved 5A*-C including English and Maths (compared with 58% nationally). Girls performed better than boys (52% compared with 48.5%).

As with the earlier key stages, there were significant variations between ethnic groups with less than 40% of Black Caribbean boys and girls, Somali boys and girls, White/Black Caribbean boys and White Eastern European boys achieving the standard.

![Fig. 19 Percentage of Bristol students attending state-funded schools achieving  5 or more A*-C grades including GCSE English and Maths in 2011 by ethnic group and gender](image)

Fig. 20 compares attainment trends over the last five years for those groups most at risk of underachieving. As Fig. 20 shows, while gaps remain the improvement rate for most at risk groups is above average and the gaps are gradually closing. The exception is Black Caribbean learners’ performance which remains a particular concern.
Fig. 20 Trends in the percentage of learners achieving 5 or more A*-C grades including GCSE English and Maths for groups most at risk of underachieving

Trends in the proportion of students achieving 5A*-C including English & Maths at the end of Key Stage 4: Girls from ethnic groups most at risk of underachieving

Trends in the proportion of students achieving 5A*-C grades including English and maths at the end of Key Stage 4: Boys from ethnic groups most at risk of underachieving
Fig. 21 compares the 2011 5A*-C including English and Maths performance of Bristol learners with the national average by ethnic group and gender. As there is no national data published on the performance of White Eastern European heritage learners, data from Birmingham LA have been used in place of national data for these groups. Birmingham is an appropriate comparator as it has one of the largest numbers of White Eastern European learners of any city outside London.

While results are above the national average for some groups, for example Black African boys and girls (excluding Somali), White/Black Caribbean girls and Bangladeshi boys, they remain below average for other groups, particularly Black Caribbean girls (-28%), Black Caribbean Boys (-20%) and Indian girls (-25%).

* Birmingham LA data used in place of national data for White Eastern European learners

Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 progress

The DfE publish KS2 to KS4 progress measures for English and Maths which compare the National Curriculum levels learners achieve at the end of KS2 with the GCSE grades they achieve at the end of KS4. As with the KS1 to KS2 progress measure, it is a measure of “expected progress.” For example, a child achieving Level 4 at the end of KS2 would need to achieve a Grade C or above at GCSE to have made “expected progress.”

The DfE also publish a KS2 to KS4 value-added (VA) score. This is based on an overall point score calculated from a student’s best eight subject results at the end of KS4 including English and Maths. It compares each student’s results with the results achieved by students nationally with the same KS2 starting point. Students with a score of around 1000 are making similar progress to other students nationally. Scores above 1000 represent above average progress and scores less than 1000 below average progress.
Figs. 22 and 23 show the percentage of Bristol students making “expected progress” in English and Maths between KS2 and KS4. Fig. 24 shows the VA scores by ethnic group and gender.
As Figs. 22 and 23 show, on average 69% of Bristol students made expected progress in English (compared with 72% nationally) and 56% made expected progress in Maths (65% nationally). A higher percentage of girls (76%) than boys (62%) made expected progress in English. The percentages making expected progress in Maths was the same for boys and girls (56%). Variations were evident between ethnic groups. For example, in English 60% or less of Pakistani, White UK, White/Black Caribbean and White Other boys made expected progress compared with 90% of Black African (excluding Somali) pupils.

There is evidence to show that some groups with below average attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2, made above average progress and are closing the gaps by the time they reached the end of KS4 e.g. White Eastern European girls and boys and Somali girls. In Maths, less than 40% of Black Caribbean boys and girls and White/Black Caribbean boys were making expected progress. This together with below average progress in English for these groups contributes to the widening gap in 5A*-C including English and Maths performance.

Fig. 24 shows the KS2 to KS4 value-added (VA) scores for each group. This is based on students’ best eight subject results including English and Maths. A score of 1000 represents similar progress to other students nationally. The overall VA score for Bristol was 994, below the national average. As Fig. 24 shows, the main contributing factor is the below average scores for White UK learners, who are the largest group numerically. So while the GCSE attainment for White UK learners is slightly above average, when their KS2 results are taken into account, their results would have been expected to be even higher. The White/Black Caribbean boys’ VA score is below average as too is the Black Caribbean boys’ score, although not statistically significantly so.

There are a number of groups whose scores are significantly above average which shows that progress is being made in closing the gaps at the end of KS4. These include White Eastern European girls and boys, Somali girls and Pakistani girls.
Post-16

Fig. 25 shows the post-16 destinations of last year’s Y11 learners who attended Bristol’s state funded schools. As Fig. 25 shows, the majority of learners (88%) remained in education: 40% remained at school and 48% began a course at Further Education College.

Of those remaining in education Black Caribbean boys and girls, White/Black Caribbean boys and Indian boys were more likely than average to start at FE College rather than stay on at school. Black Caribbean boys and girls and White/Black Caribbean boys were more likely to be enrolled on one year courses, including GCSE re-sits following their below average performance in the examinations at the end of KS4.

White UK boys were comparatively less likely to remain in education (83%), with 10% starting apprenticeships or entering employment (compared with 6% on average).

Unemployment was highest for White UK boys (7%), followed by White UK girls and Black Caribbean girls (6%), Black Caribbean boys, Somali boys and White Other boys (5%).

Fig. 26 shows the A/AS and equivalent results for Bristol students completing courses at school or the City of Bristol College in 2011, as the average point score per examination entry. The results shown are Level 3 qualifications required for entry into Higher Education. However it is important to note that Bristol young people also achieved a range of other post-16 vocational qualifications thus improving their career options and opportunities for further education and training.
The A level Grade and equivalent points system is based on 300 points for an A* grade, 270 for an A, 240 for a B, 210 for a C, 180 for a D and 150 for an E. As shown in Fig. 26, on average, Bristol learners achieved 207 points per exam entry (equivalent to an A level grade C), slightly lower than the national average for state-funded schools and colleges (213 points). There were variations between groups with White Other girls, Chinese girls and Indian boys achieving Grade B on average and Somali boys and girls, Pakistani girls, Bangladeshi girls and White European boys achieving Grade D/E on average.

Gypsy/Roma and Traveller learners

While the number of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller learners attending state funded schools in Bristol is relatively small (160 in January 2012) there are concerns about their educational attainment. An associated factor is low school attendance rates - less than 80% on average compared with over 90% for other groups.

The number in each end of Key Stage cohort is usually less than ten, so averaging results over more than one year gives a better idea of overall performance (Fig. 27).

As Fig. 27 shows, just 22% of the Gypsy/Roma and Traveller girls and none of the boys achieved a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. At Key Stage 1 just 30% of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller girls achieved Level 2 or above in Reading, Writing and Maths and none of the boys achieved Level 2 or above in Reading or Writing. At Key Stage 2 just 8% of girls and none of the boys achieved Level 4 in English and Maths. At Key Stage 4 there were only three students recorded as Gypsy/Roma and Traveller taking GCSEs. Of these two achieved 5A*-C including English and Maths.
Fig. 27 Attainment of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller learners attending Bristol state funded schools (2009-2011 three year average results).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gypsy/Roma and Traveller</th>
<th>All Bristol pupils</th>
<th>Gypsy/Roma and Traveller</th>
<th>All Bristol pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EYFS Achieving a good level of development</strong></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS1 L2+ Reading</strong></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS1 L2+ Writing</strong></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS1 L2+ Maths</strong></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS2 L4+ in English and Maths</strong></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em><em>KS4 5+A</em>-C including English and Maths</em>*</td>
<td>Only one girl in the cohort. This girl achieved the standard</td>
<td>Only two boys in the cohort, one of which achieved the standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors Affecting Achievement

This section draws on the existing evidence base to outline the factors affecting the achievement of BME learners. This provides a context for discussing successful practice in Bristol schools in the next section. Achievement and underachievement are the result of multiple factors related to levels of social deprivation and gender as well as to ethnic background. Barriers to achievement arise from an interaction between the home, community, and school contexts. These include levels of educational aspiration and support for learning in the home, and in-school factors. It is important to note that many of the barriers to achievement do not only relate to BME groups: they also affect learners from majority groups.

Improvements in the attainment of some BME groups suggest that schools in Bristol are increasingly aware of and are acting on many of the issues. By the same token, the persistence of inequalities in educational outcomes suggests that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the barriers facing some groups, and to develop uptake of strategies that schools can use to overcome these barriers.

Social Deprivation

There is a correlation between levels of deprivation and low educational attainment which affects all groups to a greater or lesser degree. Socio-economic attainment gaps are much bigger than ethnic group differences (Strand, 2008; National Union of Teachers, 2010). As the Cambridge Primary Education Review published in 2009 noted “poverty creates terrible gaps, ones that open early and get harder to close as the years go by”. For example, the percentage of Bristol learners eligible for free school meals achieving Level 4 and above in English at the end of KS2 in 2011 was 67%, compared with 84% for those not eligible. At KS4, the percentage of Bristol learners eligible for free school meals achieving 5 or more A*-C grades including GCSE English and Maths in 2011 was 29%, compared with 55% for those not eligible.

Ethnic groups with the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged learners (such as Somali and Black Caribbean groups, see Fig. 5) are therefore disproportionately affected in terms of challenges to achievement. It is also important to recognise that although the proportion of White British learners eligible for free school meals is lower than for some other groups, because there are more White British learners in the Bristol population, the number of White British learners eligible for free school meals is in fact the highest of any group. In 2011, 28% of White British learners eligible for free school meals achieved 5 or more A*-C grades including English and Maths compared with 53% of those not eligible. White British learners eligible for free school meals therefore represent a significant “at risk of underachievement” group together with the BME groups already referred to. Although learners from BME groups are the focus of this report it is clear that White British learners who are eligible for free school meals share many of the barriers to achievement experienced by other groups, and benefit from similar interventions.

Reducing social inequalities would undoubtedly contribute to reducing education inequalities. However, this is not the whole picture. Many pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve good results. This leads to an examination of the social and institutional factors that may be contributing to success and we discuss these in the next section.

Newly Arrived Learners

There have been a growing number of newly arrived learners over the last five years. The majority of these have been from Somalia and from Eastern Europe. The increase in the Somali population is largely made up of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing civil war in Somalia. As a group it has been
disproportionately composed of women and learners, as husbands and fathers may have either stayed at home to fight in the war or already been killed in the conflict. Latterly Somali migrants who have already obtained refugee and citizen status elsewhere within Europe before travelling on to the UK have joined this initial group of refugees and asylum seekers. As a consequence of their experiences many Somali refugees and asylum seekers have experienced forms of stress related to their experiences as refugees. They have frequently faced social and occupational downgrading upon their arrival and many are located in disadvantaged, inner city neighbourhoods. They are also often faced with negative representations of their homeland, and of themselves as asylum seekers and refugees (ICoCo, 2009). There has been a significant increase in the numbers of economic migrants from Eastern Europe, in particular from Poland. Many of these migrants have arrived in Bristol and the South West to seek employment in areas such the health service, care services, cleaning, agriculture, catering and tourism and transport (Anglo Polish Society, 2007).

Both the Somalis and Eastern Europeans along with Gypsy/Roma and Travellers represent transient and mobile groups. As a consequence, some Bristol schools have high levels of pupil mobility with over a third of pupils each year joining other than at the beginning of the school year. Mobility disrupts pupil progress (Demie et al, 2010; Gibbons and Telhaj, 2007) and can have additional resource implications for schools to effectively induct newly arrived pupils. Dealing with a steady trickle of newcomers from insecure and disadvantaged backgrounds is especially demanding (Ofsted, 2002).

**Educational Aspirations**

Young people’s educational aspirations and those of their parents influence their educational attainment and later life outcomes. 11-14 is a key age range, when young people move from idealistic to more realistic ambitions. Young people are more likely to achieve positive outcomes when they develop ambitious, achievable aspirations, combined with the self-esteem, self-efficacy, information and inspiration they need to persevere towards their goals (Cabinet Office, 2008; National Union of Teachers, 2010).

Parents are the most important influence on learners’ aspirations. However, young people and their parents are also influenced by the people and places where they live. Young people in deprived neighbourhoods with a sense of isolation from broader opportunities and of economic decline are less likely to develop ambitious, achievable aspirations. However deprived communities are not all the same. Young people in some very deprived communities have high aspirations. This is true for many BME communities. For example, Black Caribbean pupils and their parents have been found, when compared to the White British population, to have higher educational aspirations and a more positive attitude to school, along with a stronger academic self-concept. They are also more likely to pro-actively engage in planning for their future (Strand, 2011). This is despite their experience of low teacher expectations and other barriers that often prevent these aspirations from being translated into high educational attainment (Byfield, 2008; Duckworth et al, 2009; Strand, 2011; Yosso, 2005). Within the Somali community high aspirations are exemplified in the growing number of community supported initiatives to improve aspirations and outcomes for Somali heritage learners, including supplementary schools, madrassas and homework clubs (Demie et al, 2007; Harris, 2004; Mohamoud, 2011). Learners of Pakistani heritage are also found to have higher than average educational aspirations, although they too are at risk of underachieving (Richardson and Wood, 2004).
In Bristol as elsewhere, White British boys who are eligible for free school meals have the lowest aspirations and make the least progress at key stage four compared to other groups as measured by their KS2 to KS4 value-added scores. Their educational attainment is also failing to improve at the rates of most other ethnic groups (Wilson et al, 2006). Another group with low educational aspirations are learners of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller heritage. High levels of non-attendance, disaffection and school drop-out rates are associated with low aspirations for formal schooling amongst this group (Derrington and Kendall, 2007; Law & Sann, 2011).

**Teacher Expectations**

Research undertaken in the UK (see for example Strand, 2011) and internationally (e.g. van den Bergh et al, 2010) shows that teacher expectations based on stereotypical assumptions can have a significant negative impact on the educational achievement of some ethnic groups. Teacher expectations are important because they can influence the outcome of key processes in schools that have a bearing on future outcomes. For example, the targets that teachers set for individual pupils, the ability groups that learners are assigned to in different subjects, and the examination tier for which they are entered at the end of Key Stage Four are all determined by teacher expectations of how learners will perform. These expectations are often based on the academic track record of the child. However, if a learner is from a group that performs less well on average than learners from other groups, this can sometimes lead to lower teacher expectations for that pupil, regardless of their individual ability and potential to perform.

Low expectations can also be reinforced by stereotypical views concerning the aspirations and backgrounds of different groups of learners. For example, Black Caribbean heritage learners are often more likely than learners from other groups to experience low teacher expectations. This may be linked to teacher perceptions of fragmented home backgrounds, low parental educational aspirations and a negative view of the influence of Black street cultures on learner aspirations (Tikly et al, 2006). This is despite evidence that the aspirations of Black Caribbean parents and the level of peer group support for learning is on average higher than that for other groups including many learners from White British backgrounds (Strand, 2011). The upshot is that Black Caribbean learners are disproportionately over-represented in the lower streamed teaching groups and examination entries (Strand, 2012), and those taught by less experienced members of staff (Rollock and Gillborn, 2010).

Learners from mixed White/Black Caribbean backgrounds often experience similar levels of teacher expectations to those experienced by their Black Caribbean peers. This has similar negative consequences for their representation in ability streams and examination tiers. These low expectations can be compounded by negative perceptions relating to their mixed heritage. It is sometimes assumed, for example, that mixed heritage learners experience confusion over their identities. Evidence suggests however, that many White/Black Caribbean mixed heritage learners have a positive sense of their mixed identities at home. Rather the problem lies in a lack of understanding and recognition of mixed identities by teachers, and that they remain largely invisible as a group in the curriculum, in school policy and in the data collected by schools (Tikly et al, 2005).

Low teacher expectations of Black Caribbean and White/Black Caribbean heritage pupils are also affected by perceptions of challenging behaviour, particularly on the part of young Black (including White/Black Caribbean) males on the part of teachers. There is agreement in the literature that Black Caribbean heritage learners have the most conflict with teachers although there are differing views as to the causes of this behaviour (see Strand, 2011; 2012). Some argue that the root cause
lies in the influence of discourses associated with Black, anti-academic street cultures from outside the school. Here ‘acting White’ and ‘acting Black’ are held in opposition to one another. Whereas ‘acting White’ is associated with doing well at school ‘acting Black’ necessarily implies not doing well. Others argue, however, that the root cause lies in negative teacher stereotypes of Black behaviours in a context where Black masculine identities are often associated in the popular media with violence and gun crime. It is likely that both explanations have some impact and feed off each other in a cycle of negative reinforcement (see for example Tikly et al, 2006; Strand, 2011; 2012). Indeed, some teachers express anxiety at having to discipline young black males whilst many Black pupils and their parents feel that schools are inconsistent in applying behaviour management policies. At times teachers fail to intervene early enough to avert problems at the risk of appearing racist whilst at other times they are perceived to single out young Black males for unfair punishment (Ochieng, 2010). In the case of White/ Black Caribbean learners, pressures to identify as either ‘Black’ or ‘White’ in the context of the sometimes highly racially polarised environments prevalent in some school playgrounds and classrooms can lead to the adoption of extreme behaviours associated with anti-academic Black street cultures. A consequence is that Black (including mixed heritage) males are the group most likely to be excluded from school (Tikly et al, 2006; Law & Sann, 2011; Parson et al, 2005).

Other groups can experience low teacher expectations. For example, there is evidence that teachers all too frequently give up on Somali pupils (Cardiff Children’s and Young People’s Partnership, 2008). Even though parents generally have high aspirations, school does not always provide Somali pupils with the support, the incentive, or the opportunity to excel. As a representative from the Somali Educational Development Society of Bristol (SEDSOB) commented, some Somali pupils feel that “no one at school cares what their outcome is, whether they do well or badly, and if it doesn’t matter to anyone else, why should it matter to them?”

A lack of understanding on the part of the school about cultural issues can result in misinterpretation of pupil behaviour, leading to clashes between pupils and teachers. For example, the Somali population have frequently arrived in England with little or no English and Somali continues to be the language used predominantly in the home. In this context the use of Somali needs to be understood as important for promoting a positive cultural identity. For many Somali girls in particular, school is often the only social outlet. The use of Somali in school, however, can lead to negative perceptions on the part of teachers of Somali girls as over talkative and vocal with each other in their mother-tongue and this can fuel negative expectations (Cardiff Learners and Young People’s Partnership, 2008).

Pakistani learners also often experience low teacher expectations linked to a stereotypical and erroneous view of low Pakistani parental expectations (Richardson and Wood, 2004). On the other hand, low teacher expectations of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller learners tend to reinforce low educational aspirations and expectations of the formal education system and a sense of cultural dissonance between traveller communities and the school (Derrington and Kendal, 2007; Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008).

In the next section we show how successful schools in Bristol make use of performance data to challenge stereotypical assumptions and to raise expectations for all learners.
**Language, Literacy and Numeracy**

Undoubtedly English as an Additional Language (EAL) creates a potential barrier to achievement – and many pupils in Bristol (18% of primary school pupils in 2012) do not have English as their first language, although they are fluent in their home language. For pupils, it means that without additional support they may not be able to access the curriculum: as a representative from SEDSOB put it, “*if they don’t understand the language, how can they understand the content?*” EAL pupils need to translate before they can engage with curriculum content: this means that they have a much greater workload to achieve the same results as a native English speaker. This may result in EAL pupils working slowly, and dropping further and further behind in class. Language barriers, therefore, may make it hard for a pupil to make progress: alternatively language barriers may mask the need for support due to specific special educational needs.

Parental language skills may also create a barrier to educational achievement. Parents with EAL may not be able to provide support for homework. They may find it hard or intimidating to communicate with schools, to express their opinions about their child’s education, and to understand what is happening in the school.

It has been suggested, however, that not speaking English at home is a short-lived disadvantage, which many African and Asian students usually overcome by the time of secondary schooling (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007). Attainment in Reading, Writing and Numeracy at primary school is strongly associated with later achievement and outcomes (Sodha and Margo 2010). BME pupils who arrive at school with little or no English require their learning of English to be nurtured and supported. This, however, needs to be undertaken in the context of a developmentally appropriate curriculum that provides them with the cognitive skills necessary for them to make progress. The need for basic skills in language, literacy and numeracy affects many groups at risk of underachieving besides EAL learners including, for example, White British and Black Caribbean boys. A representative from the Black Communities Education Support Group (BCESG) commented that “*young people talk of being bored by the curriculum as it does not reflect them in any positive way*”. A reluctance to engage with the curriculum is further manifested where learners perceive the curriculum to be irrelevant to their needs.

**Need for parental engagement**

Linked to low aspirations and low expectations can be low levels of engagement between schools and parents. In the case of some groups this can reinforce differences in understanding and expectation concerning the processes and outcomes of schooling. For those parents who have been educated in another country, low levels of familiarity with the English education system may mean that they do not know what should be expected in terms of achievement, in terms of interaction with the school, how parents are expected to support their learners’ education at home, and how to access extra support where needed. For example, some Somali parents have expectations based on prior experience in Somalia and this can potentially lead to misunderstandings. In Somalia, for instance, pupils progress to the next year of schooling on the basis of having passed an end of year examination whereas in the UK context, moving up to the next year is automatic (Demie, Lewis, & McLean, 2007; Harris, 2004). Other areas where misunderstandings and differences in expectations might occur are in relation to the use of corporal punishment and the role of parents in supporting learners’ learning in the home. A representative from SEDSOB described how, due to language and cultural barriers, “*parents can find it hard to express their opinions directly to the school...*
learners are coming out of Year 11 with few or no GCSEs, and the parents don’t like this but feel unable to challenge the school”.

Some BME parents who have been through the British education system as pupils may have had traumatic experiences, encountering racism, low expectations and a lack of opportunity. This may mean that school genuinely intimidates them, even though they care about their child’s education. Tikly et al (2006) highlighted the difficulties that schools face in engaging black parents. According to a representative from the Black Communities Education Support Group (BCESG), “Black parents will not attend a parents evening in a school but have turned out in their hundreds in the past to discuss the educational needs of their learners”: low levels of parental engagement with school may not be because parents are not interested in their children’s education, but is more about their own experiences of school. Furthermore, parents in this position may find themselves ill-equipped to support their child through the education system which failed them. With regard to the Gypsy/Roma and Traveller group low levels of engagement between schools and parents can reinforce the perception on the part of parents that schools are unsupportive of their lifestyles and that teachers hold low expectations of their children (Law & Sann, 2011).

Positive Role Models

All BME groups would be supported better if staff were more confident and positive in dealing with diversity. A key issue is the low numbers of BME teachers (ICoCo, 2009). Only 4.4% of Bristol’s teachers were BME in March 2008, up slightly from 3.7% in the previous year. Just 1.79% of teachers were Black or Black British with just one Somali. This means that pupils may not have strong, positive BME role models. Numbers of BME governors, on the other hand, have been increasing as a result of a positive action initiative. As BCESG put it, “These young people desperately need to see Black adults breaking into the teaching profession’s mainstream because without that the image of an ‘educated person’ remains a white person”: without this type of role model pupils have little encouragement to believe that they can do well themselves. A lack of positive role models has also been identified as a factor in the underachievement of White British learners who are eligible for free school meals (National Union of Teachers, 2010). The issue, however, involves more than increasing the numbers of BME staff: it is important not to oversimplify the issue of role models. Just because a role model is from a similar cultural background as the learner, does not necessarily mean that he/she can identify with the experiences or needs of learners from that background. A teacher or mentor does not necessarily have to come from the same ethnic background as a learner to act as a suitable role model (Maylor, 2009) and a priority is to ensure that all members of staff are positive and confident in engaging with diversity. Nonetheless, the availability and use of appropriate, ethnically relevant mentors allows BME adults to share their experiences and perspectives.
Making the Difference: a Model of Successful Practice for Closing the Attainment Gap in Bristol Schools

In this section we highlight what some Bristol schools are doing to make a difference in raising the attainment of groups at risk of underachieving. We present a model based on seven key areas of successful practice that each contribute to high expectations and attainment for all. Each area is outlined. A range of examples have been chosen from early years, primary and secondary schools to illustrate each area. These are not intended to provide a ‘tick list’ but to provide an indication of the approach taken by successful schools and to illustrate elements of their inclusive practice: the examples given are underpinned by the whole philosophy and approach of each individual school. Many of the areas of successful practice outlined are important not only for raising the achievement of BME learners at risk of underachieving but other ‘at risk’ groups too including, for example, white British learners who are eligible for free school meals.

Figure 28: A model of successful practice for Bristol schools

The model is adapted from Rashid and Tikly (2010). This model in turn draws on a synthesis of successful practice from the wider literature. It is important to remember that the content of the model presented in the current report arises from and relates specifically to Bristol schools. Further, it is drawn from visits to a sample of schools in Bristol, and as such is not intended to be a comprehensive representation of every single aspect of successful practice.
Schools do not exist in isolation and surrounding the model of the school are two concentric circles. The inner circle represents the local context. The Local Authority along with other types of partnerships including, for example, school clusters, religious trusts and federations of academy schools can provide an important context for sharing successful practice, supporting and challenging schools within the partnership to realise high expectations and achievement for all. The outer circle represents the national policy context. Schools must implement the national curriculum, although they enjoy some flexibility in determining how curriculum objectives and targets are achieved. Schools also receive funding according to national formulae weighted to take account of different kinds of disadvantage, and may qualify for the pupil premium. Further, schools operate within a national legislative framework including the Race Relations Amendment Act (2001) which places a legal duty on schools to monitor the achievement of different groups and to close the attainment gap.

**Developing Leadership for Raising Attainment**

In schools that succeed in raising attainment and narrowing the achievement gap, the leadership team develops a shared vision and values around high expectations and achievement for all, with an absolute belief that all pupils can and will achieve. The role played by the head teacher in leading this vision is crucial: the head will support staff to realise that vision, and challenge underperformance and low expectations. Head teachers and senior managers take ownership of the issues and lead by example. Policies and plans incorporate high expectations and achievement for all and there are action plans for implementing policies. The leadership team monitors and evaluates their effectiveness and provides feedback to staff. Head teachers also have a critical role to play in recruiting staff that can implement the vision and put school policy into practice.

Members of the school community are actively involved in creating the vision through on-going consultation and dialogue. Leadership is distributed across the school community. Senior teachers with responsibility for specific areas of teaching and learning, subject, pastoral and Key Stage leaders ensure that issues relating to closing the achievement gap are central to their area of expertise. Classroom teachers exercise leadership in ensuring that the curriculum is accessible to different individuals and groups of learners and in assessing progress. Teaching assistants and support staff exercise leadership through making resources available to support learning and providing an interface with the community. Governors have a leadership role in ensuring that the school is held to account and that the expectations of all sections of the school community are realised in school policy and practice. Parents demonstrate leadership in finding ways to proactively support their child’s learning. Learners themselves take responsibility and leadership over their own learning.

**Leadership for learning**

Sarah Allen, the Head at Whitehall Primary, attributes the school’s success in raising achievement for all learners and narrowing the attainment gap to a hands-on approach focusing on achievement for all. When she took up her post two years ago she had a very clear vision that the learners deserve only the very best teaching. She communicated this clearly to teachers and parents, and focused her energies on raising teaching standards throughout the school. Sarah spends a lot of time with classroom teachers going through learners’ books and helping teachers identify areas of weakness in learners’ work and to set realistic and challenging targets for individuals. This degree of scrutiny of teachers’ work relies on having good working relationships based on trust and high expectations. In the early days of her headship it also involved taking firm action to manage underperformance. Sarah is accessible and on hand to offer advice and encouragement. She spends a good proportion
of her day walking around the school, in and out of classrooms, talking to teachers, pupils and teaching assistants and engaging parents. She also encourages governors to be involved in very hands-on ways, such as listening to learners read, and leading a review of Reading in the school. She has focused on developing strong leadership in the key areas of Literacy, Maths and PSHE. She works closely with these leaders in supporting pupil learning and ensures that they have plenty of non-contact time to fully engage with their leadership roles.

**Distributed leadership**

Toni Glazzard, Head of Rosemary Early Years Centre has focused on developing leadership at all levels to raise achievement. Toni values emotional intelligence and the ability to listen and to reach out to different sections of the school community: but what does this look like in practice? Toni describes her own style of leadership as being open, democratic and based on reciprocity. This creates an environment of trust in which teachers and parents feel able to raise issues affecting pupils’ learning. Staff are encouraged to develop leadership in relation to implementing the curriculum, and to different areas of policy and practice. Staff meet and talk at the end of each day about key issues affecting their practice. Toni makes a point of ensuring that staff have input into these discussions, and that staff know their contributions are valued. Parents are encouraged to take a leading role in their children’s learning through processes of induction and ongoing communication and support from the school, and through involvement in school trips and activities. Parents also take a leading role in parent and child play groups: these are organized through the school with the assistance of parent governors.

**Pastoral leadership in action**

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple has a clear pastoral support structure with five houses (one for Year 7, and four vertical houses for Years 8-11). One of the heads of house is a black teacher, who monitors the progress of BME pupils and evaluates the impact of actions taken to improve their outcomes. She uses her experiences, leadership skills, and insight of what it is like to come from a BME background, to support and develop rapport with the pupils. She recognises and understands cultural values, and aims to deal with issues so that they do not escalate through lack of understanding of diverse learner backgrounds. She works with colleagues to develop cultural competencies so the whole school can be inclusive and responsive to learners’ needs.

**Ethos and Values**

Schools that make a difference are underpinned by an ethos of high expectations, achievement for all and zero tolerance for underachievement. Diversity is celebrated and recognised as a resource for learning and as a means to support cohesion, rather than as a barrier to it. School leaders and teachers show emotional intelligence, a respect for rights and awareness of diversity in how they interact and respond to pupils and their parents. They also see these as necessary competencies for learners to value as part of their overall development. The school is dedicated to the wellbeing of learners. It is a safe environment for all learners to learn free from all bullying and racism, and where cultural assumptions and stereotypes are challenged. Although learners are recognised as coming from diverse cultural backgrounds they are acknowledged as individuals with specific experiences and needs.

**Challenging assumptions**

At St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre staff engage in Continuing Professional Development aimed at challenging stereotypical assumptions around different cultural groups. At a recent training session, the staff were asked to divide themselves into self-chosen groups within the
diverse staff composition, which included for example: over 50’s, Christians, unmarried people, Muslims, Somalis, single parents, northerners, etc. The staff discussed the stereotypes that were attributed to each group. Discussion moved on to individuals; considering how it made them feel to be considered as a part of that group, including the perception of fitting with the group’s stereotype. This type of activity supports the development of emotional intelligence; recognising that we all hold assumptions, exploring how it feels to be associated with such assumptions and how our behaviours are sometimes linked to the assumptions we hold. The session encouraged self-reflection; making explicit the expectation barriers staff sometime hold for different groups. This then enables staff to begin to overcome these expectations and break down the barriers. As well as showing how staff can learn from each other the exercise also highlighted how parental assumptions about a ‘teacher’ grouping can create barriers to engagement.

**Induction programmes**

Both St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre and Rosemary Early Years Centre highlight the importance of the induction programme for parents and learners in drawing attention to the school’s underlying philosophy. From the time of a family’s first contact with their child’s potential future school, and from the moment a parent walks through the entrance to ask for application forms, the schools ensure that families feel welcomed and respected. Both schools utilise staff members and parents to act as interpreters when necessary during the application and settling in process. At Rosemary Early Years Centre the Head teacher meets with each family individually to talk about the school and its ethos and values. This is also a chance for the Head to learn about the family circumstances, and to identify early interventions targeting the child’s learning needs and social circumstances. Each child is assigned a Key Person who conducts home visits accompanied by an interpreter where necessary. These visits are used as an opportunity to highlight the importance of the relationship between home and school, and the reciprocal nature of this relationship. Staff at St Paul’s take a photo of the Key Person and leave it with the family. This underlines the consistency of support the family will receive and encourages the child’s feelings of security and attachment around the school.

**A holistic approach**

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School is explicit in its strongly Christian ethos and values, and the caring nurturing approach to pupils is underpinned by the pastoral system. Staff consider the “whole child” – the emotional and social as well as the academic. If a pupil has had a bad lesson, for example, the teacher of that lesson will email the teacher of the next lesson alerting them to this so they know that the pupil might need a little extra support and care. Through mentoring, learners are supported to develop long-term goals, and plan what they need to do in order to achieve. High aspirations are explicitly encouraged, and through the use of positive role models (including BME teachers in the school, as well as a range of other individuals) learners are shown that they can be successful.

**A rights respecting school**

Whitehall Primary School is part of the national Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) initiative under the auspices of UNICEF UK. The school started this in September 2011, and although it is early days the impact so far has been positive. In this initiative pupils play an active role in their school becoming rights-respecting. The RRSA provides a framework for pupil participation based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Adults are encouraged to work with learners in an inclusive way to ensure their views are heard and valued in decision making which affects them. There is recognition of the emerging capacities of learners to play an increasingly informed
and active role in the life of the school. In a rights-respecting school, participation runs like a thread through all aspects of school life. For learners, knowing that they have the right to be heard in decisions which affect them boosts not only their sense of security but also their self-confidence. This opens the way to developing and applying the skills, language and concepts that allow them to realise their rights and to advocate for the rights of learners everywhere. In Whitehall there is a steering group for the initiative made up of learners from different year groups. One Year Six steering group member explained how they are currently developing a playground charter based on the recognition of the right for all learners to be allowed to play in the playground free of bullying or interference but also on the responsibility to ensure that others also enjoy the same rights.

Supporting Pupils’ Learning

Schools that make a difference aim to understand pupils’ learning needs: there is a focus on how pupils learn, and what they need to enable them to learn. Schools encourage pupils to think of themselves as learners, to understand the ways in which they interact and learn, and how they can develop their own capacity to learn. This may include practical strategies, for example, by providing language support, using a variety of teaching methods, and working with parents on how they can support their children’s learning at home. Schools also aim to support and develop learners’ motivation to succeed. Staff have high expectations of learners and help foster aspirations: learners work with positive role models including role models from minority ethnic backgrounds, who demonstrate that ethnicity is not a barrier to achievement. Learners are encouraged to identify and consider how they can work towards their long-term goals, to be determined, and to commit to being the best that they can be.

EAL support at Whitehall

At Whitehall Primary, the school makes use of language support assistants to respond to the needs of newly arrived learners. The school focuses on the early years because this is the time when they can make the biggest impact and provide an important point of contact with parents. For example, the school has recently welcomed newly arrived Roma learners into the early years, with Roma parents who do not speak English. The school has a lead in EAL but all teachers are trained in supporting EAL learners. Older newly arrived learners are taken out of class for short periods and given one to one support with an EAL specialist. This is typically for only short, 20 minute periods, however, and EAL learners spend most of their time in mainstream classes where they benefit from the highly structured approach to teaching Reading and Writing targeted at all learners. Curriculum guidance such as ‘Racing into English’ for EAL learners and a phonics programme, ‘Letters and Sounds’, for KS1 and also learners new to English, are used to help support EAL learners.

A focus on reading

St Barnabas Church of England Primary School is a lead school within the Local Authority for the ‘Every Child a Reader’ programme. The programme is used in many schools across the authority, and consists of three waves of intervention. What distinguishes the approach at St Barnabas is that they have a thorough and relentless approach to implementing interventions, which leads to positive outcomes for all learners, including EAL learners. Wave one of ‘Every Child a Reader’ focuses on quality mainstream teaching. All teachers are trained in teaching high quality phonic lessons across all Key Stages, in supporting EAL learners and in using running records to continuously monitor the achievement of all learners on a weekly basis. Wave two is ‘Better Reading Partners’ and here learners who are below average and need a boost with their reading are paired up with parents and volunteers from the local community. Wave three, ‘Reading Recovery’ is an intensive one to one
programme for learners who show early signs of low reading. The Reading Recovery teacher initially assesses learners in reception using ‘running records’. Reading Recovery is a preventative measure, designed to overcome literacy difficulties that might otherwise lead to learners with special educational needs. ‘Every Child a Reader’ is targeted at all learners although EAL learners benefit in particular from the highly structured approach. There is a parallel programme in numeracy called ‘Every Child Counts’.

**Support for writing**

Whitehall Primary School has been using the ‘Talk for Writing’ approach for over three years, leading to learners developing and inventing their own writing (both fiction and non-fiction). The approach works well with all learners but is considered especially effective with those who struggle with writing, who are under confident in language and who are easily switched off. It has been found to be particularly effective for boys. The approach starts by encouraging learners to become immersed in a particular text. They learn the text off by heart and are then encouraged to play with the stories themselves. The learners then write down their version of the story. The approach helps learners to structure their writing, using actions to help them develop the appropriate language for the type of text – this helps EAL learners in particular.

**English language support at Bristol Brunel Academy**

Bristol Brunel Academy has a large English as an Additional Language (EAL) support team. The team includes staff with specialisms in a range of subjects, including English, Maths, Science, Humanities, and Modern Foreign Languages. For pupils who struggle with the English language, there are parallel classes where the syllabus is the same but topics are covered in different ways. Pupils might be taught using visual or practical methods, ensuring simple language is used. In English, there are currently four EAL pupils working on a parallel curriculum, studying Romeo and Juliet (as the main class is doing) – but doing more audio work, developing understanding of the text through filling in missing words, and so on. In the main classes, these students could fall further and further behind. With the parallel curriculum, they are able to keep up with the topic and rejoin the main class at a later date once their English language skills have developed. The EAL team also run a special Year 10/11 option, to replace one GCSE option, for pupils who have been in the country for less than 2 years. This looks at the English school system, the English school culture and how the curriculum works. The focus is on language and literacy, which has a knock-on effect across other subjects, and means that the pupils are developing skills without being withdrawn from their main timetable.

**Mentoring at St Mary Redcliffe**

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple runs a specific after-school intervention programme for Year 10 BME learners, called ‘Going for Gold’. This programme is run by BME teachers who provide positive role models for the young people. The programme focuses on issues such as self-esteem, articulating thoughts and feelings, expectations, learning styles, dealing with prejudice, aspirations and goal setting, and being proud of their ethnicity. Learners produce a portfolio of work over the 15-week course, including a case study of a significant and inspirational BME person. The programme aims to support learners to develop skills for both academic achievement and for life. The school also buys in the services of a Black male mentor. He provides a positive role model not only for BME learners but for learners from all backgrounds who require additional support and motivation. He focuses on issues such as self-esteem and motivation, in one-to-one sessions and small group work. The school suggests that this work acts as a safety net, and helps learners to get back on track with their
An Inclusive and Relevant Curriculum

Schools that make a difference ensure that learners from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds are able to engage with the curriculum: they consider what is needed for learners to be able to do so. National Curriculum objectives are implemented in a way that meets the needs of learners in the school. Schemes of work are designed to engage learners through the use of appropriate topics and examples in a way that ensures the curriculum is relevant to their lives. There are opportunities for learners to use ideas and subjects that they are already familiar with, in ways which they are comfortable with, and learn using appropriate methods.

Curriculum workshops

Both St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre and Rosemary Early Years Centre organise regular curriculum meetings with translators for parents and carers, to support their pupils’ learning. They have been established to provide an opportunity for respecting each other’s knowledge and reciprocal learning between home and school communities; allowing the school and parents to engage and share their knowledge and views on issues such as family expectations of childhood, emotional well-being, building learning power, and conflict resolution. On-going curriculum workshops are run looking at subject areas such as numeracy and literacy, these workshops begin with the space and opportunity for parents to explain what the subject means to them. Such shared learning is an essential part of the workshops’ success: for many BME families from countries such as Somalia the English educational system with scaffolded learning, multi-agency approaches, and belief in play as a learning opportunity is unfamiliar. Therefore parents need to be supported to develop their own learning skills, and to share their own experiences and perspectives in order for both home and school to collectively best support the learners’ learning. St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre also run sessions with families on developing dispositions for lifelong learning, exploring what being a resilient, resourceful, reflective and reciprocal learner looks like, and what this means for parents and for their learners. This has been particularly interesting when looking across different communities and cultures at families beliefs about young learners’ learning. Use of mobile phone texts to parents on the day of the workshop as well as prior notice has greatly increased attendance rates, particularly among fathers and male carers.

A culturally relevant curriculum

More than 85% of learners at St Barnabas Church of England Primary School are from BME backgrounds, including significant numbers of Somali, Black Caribbean, mixed heritage and Pakistani heritage learners. The school has developed a socially, culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum to diversity in the school community. This involved a high level of investment in the initial stages in time and resources. The school transformed existing schemes of work, making them more relevant to the experiences and backgrounds of learners. For example, the new geography curriculum includes schemes of work that focus on Somalia, Pakistan and the Caribbean. Members of the community are involved in shaping new syllabi and learning materials and providing a source of local expertise. The curriculum makes use of local resources including museums and places of interest that demonstrate the positive impact of BME communities locally and globally.

An engaging curriculum

Whitehall Primary School has focused on making the curriculum interesting and engaging for all learners. According to the Head teacher, the curriculum was ‘boring as boring could be’ when she
first arrived. Teachers worked collaboratively to develop a thematic curriculum which was high quality and intended to motivate learners: lessons aren’t boring at Whitehall. Learners talk, they engage, they participate. Additionally, there is emphasis on learners having time to work on their own quietly in order to practice what they have learnt. Thus, although they are expected to learn in a fun way, they are also expected to get their heads down and to work hard. The curriculum is also designed to provide a context for learners’ writing. For example, when the learners studied rain forests there was scope to bring in and study a range of different kinds of texts including stories from the Amazon but also making use of a range of media. The curriculum themes are altered depending on the needs and interests of the class, for example, through introducing topics like dinosaurs, pirates and space the curriculum was made more ‘boy friendly’.

Communicating With and Engaging Parents
Schools committed to high expectations and achievement for all display an intrinsic level of engagement with parents. Head teachers are proactive in engaging all parents and carers in the activities of the school including those who may not be fluent in English, who may be unfamiliar with the English educational system or who may be disengaged due to their own prior, negative experiences of schooling. Schools clearly communicate expectations about parental involvement and information about learners’ progress and targets, parent’s evenings and other ways in which parents can support their child’s learning. Schools monitor attendance at parent’s evenings and devise strategies to ensure attendance of parents of learners from all backgrounds. Early Years settings, nurseries and primary schools have a particularly crucial role in initiating parental engagement. They provide a foundation of expectation amongst parents and schools for a learning partnership that can continue throughout the educational journey. Such engagement recognises that the raising of educational attainment requires partnerships and does not under-estimate the commitment of parents to their child’s education. For these partnerships to be successful they have to be built upon respect and reciprocity, where learning is both a two-way and on-going process. Schools see parental and community engagement as an integral and essential component of their work, rather than as a way in which to resolve issues after they have arisen. Engagement at this level requires schools and teachers to co-construct learning; where they openly share their knowledge and expertise around how learners learn best whilst simultaneously learning from learners and their carers about the individual experiences, interests and abilities that they bring to, and which act upon, the learning context.

Living Newsletter
Rosemary Early Years Centre and St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre both deliver a weekly Living Newsletter. These schools have pupils and parents with English as an Additional Language (EAL), as well as staff which represent their community. They utilise a Somali member of staff to deliver the school’s newsletter orally. This allows not only for information within the newsletter to be shared and understood, but also demonstrates how the school values and respects the parents and their community.

Forest schools and experiences
Rosemary Early Years Centre regularly engages in Forest School activities with learners. Through the involvement of the learners’ carers another opportunity to extend the school’s cultural competency is opened up as they share aspects of their cultural lives and personal histories in a natural, unforced way, discussing what the forest means for them. These may include happy times, such as barbeques, or more traumatic times, such as using the forest as a place of refuge as people fled Civil War.
People also have the opportunity to share skills and knowledge through this kind of experience, such as building different types of shelter. Through the use of the centre’s outdoor wet-weather clothing and the sharing of experiences, the Forest School activities provide an equalising situation for all where everyone is able to participate. The use of open-ended learning situations recognises that the ‘forest’ environment is meaningful to all of them but in many different ways. Similarly St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre learners and parents enjoy ‘Forest Experience’ together. This is often a targeted activity, the focus of which is to develop relationships and communication within the most vulnerable families. Texting to encourage carer engagement and participation has been successful, particularly with male carers.

**Providing space**
St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre provide, and promote the importance of creating, a neutral and positive space within the school environment for parents. The school provides the physical space, in the form of a room that is for the use of all and any of the parents. The school leadership and staff identify target groups from their data and experience that they see not engaging so fully with the school. This is also supported through having staff members that are representative of the local community. They then encourage use of the space by groups, both on their own and with members of the school staff; to ‘hang out’ and find out what is going on, to see what issues arise and how the community or school and community together might be able to engage successfully in addressing any problems. Through consideration of who the school felt they were not engaging fully with, the space allowed an Asian Women’s Support Group to be set up. This then led to a developing awareness of issues which were pertinent to this group, and allowed the school to engage successfully with the group around these issues. They also put great emphasis on providing a visualised space when working in partnership with parents/carers and other providers. This is a space where no one has the right answer and anyone can ‘wonder’ together to come up with creative solutions. They articulate the absence of hierarchy when coming together and aim to defuse the power associated with roles and responsibilities.

**Community learning champions**
St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre provides in-house training for parents and other members of the community. They have their own NVQ assessor and train parents in qualifications from Level 1 to Level 3. Last year a Somali parent was supported on a GTP after she began voluntary work with St Paul’s Nursery and Children’s Centre. Families’ achievements are celebrated, and highlighted as community learning champions, acting as role models within the learning community.

**Parent workshops**
Many parents of newly arrived learners are unfamiliar with how the English education system works. They are concerned about whether their children are achieving learning targets appropriate for their age. St Barnabas Church of England Primary School provides special workshops for parents of newly arrived learners to explain to parents how the curriculum and assessment work. It provides a basis for engaging with parents’ pre-conceptions and expectations about education. It also provides an opportunity to assist parents in interpreting data relating to their child’s progress and targets and to provide information about how they can more effectively support their child’s learning at home.

**EAL keyworkers**
At Bristol Brunel Academy, the EAL office is situated by the reception desk. This means that as soon as EAL parents enter the school, the EAL team are available as their first point of contact. Four interpreters, all of whom speak Somali and a variety of other languages, work as part of the team, so
families are supported through interpretation services. This means that parents can express their thoughts and ask questions more confidently in their own language, and their engagement with their child’s education is not limited by familiarity with the English language. Members of the EAL team act as key workers for parents of EAL pupils (who are usually, but not exclusively, EAL themselves). This means that parents do not have to approach several different members of staff to find out about their child’s education, and can develop a relationship with the key worker who has an overview of the pupil’s progress in each subject.

Using Data to Raise Achievement and Challenge Expectations
Schools that make a difference make excellent use of data to set challenging targets and to raise achievement for all. Senior leaders interpret data from Raise on-line to understand the performance of different groups of learners in their school compared to that of all schools nationally and to make use of evidence from the data to target interventions aimed at closing the attainment gap. Senior leaders track progress in closing the attainment gap through continuous use of assessment data. Senior staff and subject leaders use assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies across different areas of the curriculum, how these strategies impact on different groups of learners, and to challenge expectations based on stereotypes where these exist. Teachers make use of data to set challenging individual targets and to raise learner and parental expectations. Learners are assigned to groups and sets on the basis of a review of individual progress and overall potential. School performance data and learner targets are made accessible to parents and learners. The use of data is reflected in the organisational approach to school improvement. The school improvement cycle shows how schools audit (assess their existing strengths and consider priorities); identify short-term and long-term goals; develop a specific plan of how they will reach those goals; monitor progress towards those goals; and evaluate whether goals have been achieved, and what their new priorities are.

Invisible learners and invisible families
At St Pauls Nursery School and Children’s Centre tracking of achievement is fully embedded; for example, staff monitor the progress of learners by ethnicity, gender, free school meals, SEN, workless households, and enhanced provision. Individual learners are also targeted. For example, ‘invisible learners’ are identified in a variety of ways, one of which is as simple as asking the Key People to name their group of learners. Quite often an invisible child is one they find hard to remember, or is last to be named. The school’s assessment data is then drawn upon to identify the progress of these individuals. Learners identified initially were often those who were quiet and achieving but not excelling, they could be nonverbal learners perhaps. By becoming the focus of staff and having their individual attainment needs recognised and focussed upon, their attainment improved and they were no longer invisible. The staff now periodically consider who their invisible learners are and act upon this. They are currently extending this approach to ‘Invisible families’; making a tally each time they engage with a family so they can see which ones have been relatively invisible, and then pro-actively focussing upon engaging in dialogue with them.

Use of data for target setting
The expectation at Whitehall Primary School is that all learners should achieve at least level 4 or 5 by the end of Year 6. This requires setting challenging individual targets for all learners that have the effect of narrowing the attainment gap between different groups of learners. Each year group also has targets. Targets for individual learners are reviewed three times a year. The tracking is very rigorous: teachers record pupil progress on a termly basis and enter this into the school tracker. The
head teacher takes a day each term with the Deputy to go through the analysis sheets. The teachers are then expected to set realistic but challenging targets for the year group and for each learner. Where there are weaknesses the teachers identify suitable interventions for each child or for groups of learners. The head teacher meets with individual teachers and looks at books regularly to review individual learner progress, where there are concerns. Although this is time consuming it is considered essential to ensure that the learners do well. The process provides an opportunity not only to review the progress of learners and the success of targeted interventions but can signpost other things, such as when a teacher is experiencing problems or finding it difficult to teach an individual or a particular group of learners.

**Intervention planning**

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School uses ongoing attainment data to identify individuals who are in need of extra support. This enables support and intervention to be directed to particular achievement cohorts, according to the needs of the students. Other groups, such as BME cohorts, Free School Meals (FSM) and so on are also monitored in the background, but this does not restrict how the school supports the achievement cohorts: there is a clear recognition that BME pupils are not all the same. The school has particular strengths in identifying and trying to close any gaps in achievement, and through the process of working out how to close those gaps the needs of all pupils are addressed. Needs are recognised through use of data: this is why ‘Going for Gold’ was put in place and why mentoring services have been bought in (see Supporting Pupils’ Learning). Good communication between teachers supports the use of data: if a teacher has a concern about a particular pupil they will send an achievement alert to the assistant head with responsibility for achievement. The school has specific plans of action to respond to such alerts, depending on the particular need of the pupil, with clear routes of who would work with the pupil and what types of interventions or support they would receive.

**A Learning Organisation**

Schools that make a difference continuously monitor their environment. As learning organisations, they are responsive to changes in the demographic profile of their learners and are willing to try new initiatives that have potential to make a difference in closing the attainment gap. Staff members in these organisations are open to development and change and committed to continuous improvement. They are encouraged to think of themselves as learners. They engage in dialogue with parents to enable them to develop understanding of the backgrounds and experiences of learners, expectations of learning and of the school. They are given the opportunity, freedom and resource to experiment and develop their practice. INSET is focused on supporting initiatives and strategies to close the attainment gap and to meet specific identified learning needs supported by evidence from an analysis of performance data. Staff and departmental meetings, forms of peer review and activities that engage with feedback from parents and learners are seen as opportunities for professional learning. Professional development is not just about “being told how to teach”: it is about creating opportunities to engage with different approaches and perspectives and using evidence to consider how these can positively impact on practice.

**Learning communities**

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School use a “learning communities” model of INSET. Professional development is supported by work in small cross-curricular groups, facilitated by a lead teacher, and focuses on successful practice in teaching and learning. An INSET session will result in each teacher following a plan of action for their practice, which will then carry through to the following
session. The humanities department has historically high BME attainment, so was asked to share their successful practice around teaching strategies for BME pupils via the school’s Humanities Specialism. Staff discussed these approaches, and realised that they were actually talking about good teaching and learning approaches generally, which have subsequently been incorporated into the learning communities model.

**Cultural questions – a safe space**

Bristol Brunel Academy has a growing number of pupils of Somali descent. Staff on the EAL team recognised that in order to support Somali pupils and families well they needed to understand more about the Somali culture. The EAL team arranged a group session with Somali members of staff, for those teachers and support workers who wanted to come along, in which they could ask questions about Somali culture. Because it was a small group, not a formal whole-school session, it was a safe space for staff to ask questions about things they really wanted to know, without worrying about what other people thought of them.

**Learning with parents**

St Paul’s Nursery School and Children’s Centre are passionate about being seen by their community as a learning organisation. They recognise that the school and notions of ‘schoolness’ are, in themselves, a barrier for many pupils, families and their communities; particularly the Black Caribbean community. They believe that they do not know best about everything and ensure that anyone, and everyone, who walks through the school door knows that the school wants to hear what they have to say and to learn from them. This is illustrated through the sharing of personal histories, discrimination and difficulties that families have faced up to that point, and by the school confidently asserting that it is families and learners which provide them with the knowledge and skills that they need to be life-long learners, and which enables them to support the learners and their families to become life-long learners too.

**Every staff meeting a training session**

At Whitehall Primary School staff development is focused on identifying areas for intervention arising from the thrice-yearly analysis of data and responding to these. For example, it was observed that there was a problem with the teaching of division in the school and so a special INSET was organised around that. However, training is not confined to INSET days and according to the Head teacher, ‘every staff meeting is a training session’, where teachers are encouraged to share successful practice.
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