



## **14-19 reforms: QCA Centre Research Study, commentary on the baseline of evidence 2007-2008**

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## Executive summary

### 1. Introduction to the baseline report on 14-19 reforms, England 2007/08

The 14-19 Reform Programme is being introduced across England from 2008/09. This report forms part of a baseline of evidence on the existing situation for 14 to 19 year-olds. In future years, this baseline can be used to help identify changes over time.

### 2. The baseline of evidence

The findings in this report come from a year-long study of 45 institutions involved in delivering 14-19 education and training. These 45 case studies are representative of the range of relevant institutions in England, including schools, colleges, special projects, and the private sector. All have agreed to continue as part of the ongoing evaluation until 2013/14.

The baseline of evidence includes interviews with students in years 11 and 12, governors, staff, parents/carers and partners, and surveys of staff and students, official statistics, and documents from each centre.

Findings are presented in relation to four key objectives of the reforms – increasing student enjoyment, achievement, participation, and preparation for citizenship.

### 3. Knowledge of the reforms

Most of the staff reported being aware of the 14-19 Reform Programme. There was less awareness among the governors. The focus of both groups was almost exclusively on the diplomas, KS3 changes, and on KS5 changes rather than other parts of the reforms (such as the International Baccalaureate). There was little evidence among students and parents of awareness of the reforms. Staff in a substantial proportion of institutions were uninterested in or unconcerned by the reforms.

Some centres felt that they already offered a full rich curriculum and pedagogy. Some had more pressing problems, such as imminent closure, or felt that they faced other specific issues such as drugs, or poor basic skills. A proportion of centres, mostly with high rates of student attainment, felt that the reforms were irrelevant to them. Many of the remaining institutions saw the reforms, especially the diploma, as most relevant to their lowest attaining or disengaged students. Other than specialist FE colleges, FE colleges were generally more aware of, engaged in, and supportive of the reforms than other institutions.

A substantial proportion of school leaders were concerned about public, employer and HE reactions to the reforms, and welcomed a chance to 'wait and see'.

Policy reforms are only one driver for, or pressure on, change. Some parents were unaware or conservative about change, whereas new principals sometimes drove strongly for change.

#### 4. Enjoyment

Enjoyment is of importance to students who present it in two ways – as the fun they have in school/college, and as the satisfaction they gain from mastering a topic. Just over a half of young people felt that they enjoyed school or college.

Most adults and many students believe there is a link between enjoyment and learning. However, the data show no statistical link between attainment and student reports of enjoying education. In general, enjoyment of learning tends to be promoted by factors such as successful and varied social relationships, small classes, variation of pedagogy and location, and students having some autonomy and control of their learning. Enjoyment tends to be inhibited by perceived lack of respect or concern by teaching staff and passive pedagogy. A large number of factors appear not related to enjoyment. These include curriculum range, and staff priorities for new qualifications or vocational routes.

For some disengaged and disaffected students, a work or college environment appears to restore enjoyment and enthusiasm, where more adult relationships between staff and students are in evidence.

#### 5. Achievement

Increased achievement was frequently seen as the end point for the reforms. Most students and many adults saw achievement in terms of qualifications as key to a future opportunity for learning or earning. Many adults, especially parents and carers, took a wider view of achievement, including preparation for the future, increased confidence, and aspiration.

Most students (around 70%) feel well prepared for work, and handling their future finance, relationships and health, and more than 70% try their best. These achievements, as opposed to attainment and aspiration, are largely unrelated to student background and the institution attended.

Some of the same cultural factors that promote enjoyment of education, such as student autonomy, also promote achievement in terms of student preparedness for the future. In addition, students receiving clear advice and guidance report greater preparedness. Even for students from non-professional backgrounds, attending institutions with other students from professional backgrounds is associated with raised occupational aspirations.

#### 6. Participation

A key aim for the reforms is that young people continue in formal learning until at least age 17, and that their post-compulsory pathways are not heavily stratified by social and economic origin.

Just over 50% of students report that their education so far has encouraged them to learn more. Nearly 60% of students want to continue education at age 16 or 18 (for either year 11 or 12). The strongest predictors of enthusiasm for more learning are the largely same as those for enjoyment and achievement – including clear guidance,

student autonomy, variety in lesson delivery and, most crucially, contact with other students on a variety of programmes and courses.

In general, less than 50% of students reported receiving clear and appropriate guidance about their possible futures. Many students and some adults explained that student choices were heavily restricted by curriculum pathways and timetabling. Some students reported no choice at all.

## 7. Citizenship

Citizenship is both a curricular aim, and something that many students wish to see more generally in everyday educational interaction. However, a minority of students see anything unrelated to course qualifications as a distraction.

Many students are unconvinced of the reality of their capacity to influence their education or institution via representative processes. Student participation in voluntary activities such as elections or public service is low – 25% to 35%.

Once background factors are adjusted for, students report more citizenship activity in independent schools and FE colleges than in maintained schools. The likely determinants of attitudes and behaviours of citizenship include control of one's own learning, respect from teachers, individual attention, opportunities for discussion in a range of lessons, contact with students on other programmes, and guidance for the future.

## 8. Possible implications for evaluation, policy and practice

It will be difficult to be precise about the direct impact of the reforms over time. This is because they are over-lapping, multiple and interacting with other social, economic and educational changes.

Some of the objectives of the reform face difficult hurdles. Attainment, and anything that follows from that such as participation, is already heavily stratified by student background. The introduction of diplomas in itself, for example, is unlikely to overcome this. On the other hand, several of the objectives, including reported preparedness for the future and enjoyment, are already un-stratified by student background. This should make future advances simpler to achieve.

Contact between students of different backgrounds, programmes, and with varied aspirations should be facilitated by - for example - allocation of places, timetabling, communal activities, and delivery off-site. Staff giving priority to the development of their own skills and expertise is associated with elevated student reports of many outcomes. Independent, wider-than-institution, and proactive guidance is important.

For the four key outcomes of the reforms, some of the most likely indicators, or drivers of success include: successful social relationships and encouragement for students to reach their own decisions, small classes, specialist teachers, student control of learning and variety in lesson delivery.

## **1. Introduction to the baseline report on 14-19 reforms, England 2007/08**

### **The reform process**

Recent education reform is intended to build a stronger economy and a more just society. The agenda of Every Child Matters suggests that education and training is not just about building a better educated and skilled workforce, but also equipping learners to achieve a secure and fulfilling personal and social life as responsive citizens. Reform of 14-19 education and training is suggested to be a vital element within the big picture of education as a whole. This phase is a crucial period for young people from which much in future life will follow, and where disengagement or failure to achieve potential can have calamitous effects. The reforms focus on key concerns related to this phase which have been identified for some decades; disaffection and disengagement pre-16, low participation rates post-16, inadequate basic skills, particularly in English and Maths, failure to stretch the most gifted and talented and lack of parity between academic and vocational education.

The 14-19 reforms have been developed with the overarching aim that this phase of education should result in learners who enjoy learning, achieve their potential, want to progress further in education or training, and are confident and responsible citizens. The policy strands to achieve these aims aspire to embed far reaching change in curricula, pedagogy and qualifications, expanding young people's choices and the support they receive in making them.

2007-2008 is a highly significant year in terms of these developments. It precedes the full implementation of the national reforms. This report, commissioned by the QCA, presents a baseline of evidence about 14-19 education and training gathered during 2007-2008. It is the first phase of a six year project to create a comprehensive picture of the education and training of 14-19 year olds within a sample of 52 educational centres in the academic years 2007-2013, in order to assess the progress and impact of the 14-19 reform programme. The project is a significant long term investment on the part of QCA to assemble a unique collection of evidence as part of its overall strategy of monitoring and evaluation. The priority given to sustaining contact and research with centres through a six year period of far reaching change is the distinctive and compelling feature of the study in its entirety.

The data constitute a source of evidence that can be further mined over time to support enquiry into 14-19 education and its outcomes in 2007-2008, and to provide a point of comparison in future years. Its significance is in part the wealth of data provided for policy makers and practitioners, and in part its flexibility to support many areas of enquiry.

Further detail about the nature of the evidence is given in Section 2 of the report. The findings are then presented. Section 3 discusses the knowledge of the reform programme in the centres. Sections 4 to 7 summarise the findings for specific reform objectives. Section 8 highlights some possible implications for policy, practice, and future monitoring. The report reveals in part the richness, diversity and significance of the full data set depicting 14-19 education in 2007-2008.

## **2. Creating the baseline of evidence**

If the intention of the reform programme is to develop an education system which includes and values every young person, then the research had to ensure that the voices of young people were clearly heard. It also had to capture the perspective of all those who have a role in turning policy into reality: offering every fourteen to nineteen year old the chance to enjoy learning, achieve, want to go on learning and be confident individuals and citizens, in whatever location or type of school or college they happen to be. However, not only individual and organisational perspectives were needed. The bigger picture across centres, including the achievements of young people, and governor and staff awareness of and engagement with reform, was also important.

### **The research**

To build a rich picture of the current experiences and achievements of young people, we selected a national sample of 52 organisations involved in its delivery – including 11-16, 11-18, and 13-18 schools, independent and special schools, special projects linked to pupil referral units, and general, specialist and sixth-form further education (FE) colleges. This report focuses on the evidence from 45 centres (not including the 7 special schools). The sample represents the range and frequency of educational organisations in England (from Edubase) in terms of size, intake, outcomes, denomination, and subject specialism. Locations varied from metropolitan to rural hamlets, and from economically privileged to some of the most deprived wards in England. Each centre has agreed to continue to provide evidence for a further five years, so that changes to the baseline can be tracked carefully.

Year 11 and year 12 students were interviewed in small groups, and those considered disaffected, disengaged or with learning disabilities were interviewed one-to-one. In all centres, young people were asked to discuss their opportunities to learn, their support to make choices, and their experience of teaching and learning. They were also asked about what was important to them in coming to school or college and if they had enjoyed it. In the groups, there was an opportunity for young people to write comments to ensure everyone had a chance to communicate anonymously. In total, 798 year 11 and year 12 students gave their views, including 98 who had special learning needs or disabilities and 82 who were considered disaffected or disengaged. The young people had much to say that was insightful about their learning and their wider experience at school or college.

Parents and carers of year 11 students were interviewed individually face-to-face or by telephone to gather their views on the experience of their children. Staff and governors were also interviewed individually and asked about the curriculum, teaching and learning, developments in collaboration, and future plans. Everyone was asked about their values in relation to 14-19 education. 67 parents/carers and 228 staff and governors were interviewed. Documents provided by each centre are a further source of information on the values, aims, resources and the curriculum offer in each of the organisations studied.

Learners and staff were also surveyed by questionnaire. The student survey of all year 11 and approximately 50% of year 12 had a response rate of 76%. There were individual responses from 2,700 year 11 and 2,200 year 12 students. The learner survey provides evidence on the process of choosing courses, preference for styles of teaching, enjoyment of education and future plans. The survey of teachers/lecturers had an overall response of around 20% of all staff on roll, 1130 individual responses. It provides



evidence on staff development, teacher workload, styles of teaching delivery, and development priorities.

The data have been analysed at two levels. At the organisational level, a report was provided to each centre, presenting a full range of evidence in relation to the school or college. At the national sample level, the interview data and survey data have been aggregated and analysed to discern patterns across the whole dataset. School/college and student-level records from Edubase, the National Pupil Database (NPD), and the Pupil-level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) were linked to survey data to analyse how the four intended outcomes are related to centre-level variables such as type of organisation or location and to student-level variables such as sex and socio-economic background.

Interview and survey data provide both a complement to each and a counterpoint, allowing comparison between the perceptions of learners, staff and parents/carers and the larger picture. Through case reports the analysis of the data is rich and deep, in terms of understanding how the detail of context interrelates with reform. The statistical analysis of survey data discerns patterns of experience and outcomes across centres, providing a wider picture.

Those using the data can therefore access a vivid picture of what 14-19 education looks like and how it is experienced in individual schools and colleges across England. Through the case reports users can adopt an in-depth, single organisation view, engaging with the highs and lows of the learner's experience, of parent/carer's concerns, of staff and governor's work, hopes and challenges, in a rich picture of an individual school or college. They can also look across centres, to see the whole, the range of perceptions, practice and outcomes. As such, the evidence base is a substantial and powerful data set which illuminates the diversity of 14-19 education in 2007-2008. The report begins the process of using the data productively to inform policy makers and practitioners supporting our young people.

### 3. Knowledge of the reforms

One of the areas to be tracked over time is awareness of the range of reforms, by staff, students and their families, and the responses to them. The reforms include changes to the national curriculum for secondary schools from September 2008, intended to make learning more personalised, and to A-level assessments, intended to encourage greater and fuller understanding and to reward very high attainment, and adding an extended project to develop independent learning and research skills. In 2010, new qualifications will be introduced for functional skills in English, Maths and ICT, and a level 2 in them will be required in order to gain a C grade in the relevant GCSE. GCSEs themselves will be revised to encourage extended writing and a greater variety of questions. Probably the most high profile element of the reforms has been the introduction of the Diploma. Each Diploma is vocationally sector-specific, devised with the expertise of employers and users, and includes the development of functional skills (as above) and of personal, learning and thinking skills. The first five Diplomas were started in September 2008 for approved institutions and partnerships. Further QCA-related reforms include a review of Key Stage 3, and a number of other initiatives to stretch and re-engage learners aged 11-19. In addition, there are concurrent initiatives such as Action on Access intended to widen participation to HE but through activities relevant to 11-19, and other curriculum and qualification innovations such as the International Baccalaureate and Pre-U.

Most centres were aware of this national agenda of reform for 11-19 provision, in the sense that one or more staff or governors of the organisation were up-to-date and knowledgeable, and a minority of these were acting as 'ambassadors' and pioneers. Some saw it as an extension of what they were already doing. As one teacher said, this 'ties in a little bit with the different courses that we now offer, to increase those grades, and really prove to people that we can achieve and we can deliver.' The reforms were also seen as fitting in with their existing priorities, with the 14-19 national agenda (and to a lesser extent for 11-13) providing the impetus for further change. When asked, unprompted, about drivers for change in 2007/08 and beyond, most responses referred to the new diplomas, and to reforms at KS3 and post 16. To what extent these responses were led by respondents' knowledge of the Centres study and its objectives is difficult to say. Certainly, few respondents touched on other areas of the whole reform package, either because they were not aware of them or did not see them as part of the project or indeed of the reform package.

Some centres and more often individuals within them such as students, parents and governors had very restricted ideas of the reforms – being more likely to discuss moves towards other curricular innovations such as adoption of the International Baccalaureate.

The centres' overall reactions to the 14-19 reforms were also mixed, and insofar as these were patterned they were in relation to perceived need. Only 50% of staff nationally saw the introduction of new qualifications as a priority for the coming year. Some were very positive about the diplomas, seeing them as solving a problem for their centre. One believed such an approach 'a system which has true parity of esteem... essential for changing a culture that is in a very... engrained in this country of too high levels of failure... and too high NEET groups'.

Despite some concurrent press stories about the complexity of arrangements, the competitive nature of tendering to run a diploma, the difficulties of arranging partnerships in rural areas, and purported lack of recognition of the diploma by

employers and universities, these were minority elements in the accounts of adults. Some centres expressed reservations in terms of timescale, objectives, funding, feasibility and so on, and were prepared to 'wait and see'. These included examples that had, in their words, 'failed' with an initial bid for diploma provision. Attitudes to the complexity of tendering to run a diploma seemed, in some cases, to depend on the Gateway success or otherwise at the centre in question. Some respondents had been involved in piloting previous curricular initiatives, and found that it was often those in the second wave who had the most benefit, at least cost in terms of time and expenditure.

I think they've been waiting – and quite rightly so, really – to have a better understanding of what this diploma's going to be because when we went through the first Gateway there was very limited information, so you're writing a bid for something you don't actually know.

We don't want our learners to be all having a negative impact by putting them through something that we don't fully understand and we don't have all the infrastructures in place. For example, transport and protocols, etcetera.

Other adults were more apprehensive and expressed concern about the reactions of parents and the general public. Concerns included parity of esteem between the academic and the vocational route, the diploma scheme turning into a two tier system, able students being distracted from academic pathways, and the gradual withdrawal of other valued qualifications. There was some uncertainty about whether the focus on additional curriculum options was the most appropriate approach to raising participation and progression. Some would have preferred greater determination to improve mainstream core provision and outcomes.

Others saw it as a political agenda, not necessarily in the interest of the young people. Some adults raised apprehensions about the prospect of the reforms as they understood them, or perhaps misunderstood them.

It's an inappropriate - in many ways – halfway-house between if you're looking at Level 2 GCSE and BTEC first, if you don't get A Level or BTEC National. What's the point of making it in-between?... Why are we doing 14-19?... I know there are some people with national profiles who've said, "This is the way to go!", and it might work in [place name]... But why did it work there? In, say, [place name], it's because the achievement and attainment was appalling so something needed to happen.

Government-led reforms are only one of the reported pressures for change. An 'inspirational' principal and the professionalism of staff, wanting to do the best for the students, were sometimes seen as powerful drivers of change, coming from strong leadership that recognises 'if we are to survive we have to change.' Although the factors driving change here appear to be largely internal stemming from a principal's motivation and vision and the desire to meet parents' expectations and students needs, these changes were often seen 'in concert with national policy'. In some cases, the stressed staff and their governors sought some respite from the continuous changes introduced by such reforming principals.

Parents were also seen as strong drivers of change. In some centres, staff were under pressure to meet the expectations of parents and community. For example, offering non-

examination courses can be seen as counter-productive as ‘there’s always pressure to show you’re working well in measurable ways.’

Some independent, selective, specialist FE, or simply high-attaining centres were largely content with their current and planned provision. They were often knowledgeable about the reforms but uninterested otherwise. This was especially true of independent schools where parents were seen as ‘buying into the ethos of the school’ with a strong emphasis on the academic aspect of the curriculum. A Governor said of one aspect of the reforms:

I think to be quite honest it’s [the diploma scheme] not going to happen because ours are very academic schools and if anybody really wanted to do hair and beauty they would probably wouldn’t apply to one of our schools in the first place, so that’s what we’re hoping, because I cannot see how the diploma thing is going to work really.

Such centres reported a variety of local and regional partnerships in delivery, such as for Gifted and Talented Schemes, but were concerned about the level of reciprocation they could sustain. While able to offer their resources to a wider student audience, they did not feel that the parents who had chosen their institution would want their children then to have substantial parts of education delivered elsewhere in return. Most starkly, why would parents pay the school to have their child sent to another place where delivery to everyone else is free?

## 4. Enjoyment

### 4.1 Introduction

For some young people education so far had been an immensely enjoyable and rewarding experience, encapsulated in the comment of one student with learning difficulties who had ‘never been so happy’ as at her college. Many students spoke of the enjoyment and support gained from being a part of a community which had sustained them over their formative years. For others, perceptions about the physical environment, the culture of rules, child-teacher rather than adult relationships, and the pressures of teaching and learning had resulted in an experience which they ‘hated’.

Such enjoyment or otherwise could refer to having fun during the learning process. Or it could refer to the satisfaction felt when learning is successful even when difficult. The reforms highlight both kinds of enjoyment, and students regularly used the term in both ways. For them, ‘school’ or ‘college’ encompasses much more than just formal learning. Many young people stressed that time spent with friends, or with teachers outside the classroom, was at least as important to them as being taught or studying.

Students and their parents considered enjoyment to be important in several respects - as a good in itself, as the right of young people to enjoy the years of life they spend in education, and as a seemingly important condition for learning. Teachers who made lessons fun were much appreciated. Enjoyment was not always connected by students with learning, or with attainment. However, many students did make such a connection. Some gave several examples of how they did not enjoy lessons, and so ceased to engage with learning at all. When they did enjoy lessons, they generally tried harder, and found things easier to understand and remember.

### 4.2 The baseline evidence on enjoyment of learning

It is problematic to offer findings on the relationship of enjoyment to learning, as the latter is also difficult to define. The study had no measure of learning other than the perception of students, staff and parents. It is only feasible here to comment on the relationship between enjoyment and attainment in terms of qualification. These data provide no support for a statistical relationship between enjoyment and attainment. None of the staff mentioned prioritising enjoyment for students in the survey, and it was only occasionally raised as a priority issue in the interviews. Yet many young people, parents and staff believed that there *was* a connection between enjoyment and learning.

Although very few students report that education is a waste of time, only around half to two thirds of student seem to enjoy it (Table 4.1). Year 12 students are generally more positive than year 11, but the proportion of students enjoying their courses of study varies between institutions, from 23% in one to 72% in another. A minority of young people do not enjoy education at all. Some report disliking it very much.

Enjoyment is positively associated with students having a professional background, those not eligible for free school meals, not speaking English as a first language, and being female. Enjoying school or college was *not* related to the curriculum offer or the style and activities of teaching as reported by staff (although the students themselves often made this connection). Once background and school characteristics have been taken into account, year 11 students at maintained schools more often report enjoying their

education than those at independent schools (FE colleges were not involved as centres in the study for year 11).

**Table 4.1 – Percentage of students agreeing with each statement about enjoyment**

	Year 11	Year 12
Most lessons are interesting	38	60
School/college is mostly about gaining experiences	49	58
I enjoy school/college	44	65
Education was a waste of time	10	7

Source: student surveys

N=2700

N=2200

Students report finding lessons interesting when the classes are small, the teachers are specialist, they have some control over their own learning, and there is variation in delivery and activity. Students who enjoy education also tend to be those that can learn at their own pace, discuss their ideas in class, and who feel encouraged to make up their own mind. They more often report contact with students on other kinds of programmes (which might refer to social or pastoral activities, or to vertical organisations such as houses and competitions, or even cross-age tutoring), and in provision of visits and field trips. In discussion, by far the most common factor suggested by students as creating enjoyment was social relationships, with their friends. Enjoyment through successful social relationships was prized by both students and parents, as a valued end in its own right. However, it is also seen by some students and parents as a crucial aspect of learning.

Students often mentioned enjoyment of learning for its own sake as well as the social aspect of school, like making friends, as reasons for going to school. The strength of feeling about this is reflected in the comment from one student in a group of those disengaged from school, speaking of the small group of learners that worked together: 'I couldn't live without them'. For this group, and others like them, being taught in an environment other than school and with friends was critical in restoring enjoyment and, in their view, learning. There are many examples of students believing that the social aspect of learning, being able to work in groups, to talk with each other and to support each other was both enjoyable in itself and supportive of learning. One young person spoke about school:

I have enjoyed it as you make friends and have experiences which teach you things as well as achieving good grades.

Learning itself, particularly active learning, support for individual needs, a good physical environment and studying the options of choice were all also suggested to be factors which were important to enjoyment. Overall, there was an appreciation of innovation, preparation and variety in learning activities. For example:

Like in English one time, we were doing poetry and we had a poem, and we had to do freeze frames for it, like for the poem. And we got to dress up and then we had to do a freeze frame to represent the whole poem, which was good. So you understood how people were feeling, like they might have been feeling in that poem and how they might have stood and things.

Many students did not like the classic style of lesson:

He just stands at the blackboard, or the whiteboard...and just writing on the board...

A large number of other factors were mentioned by small numbers suggesting that in part, the conditions which create enjoyment relate strongly to individual preference. The experiences which were widely perceived to undermine enjoyment were passive pedagogy, such as listening to a teacher for lengthy periods, copying, note taking, and having to sit still for a prolonged period. The connection between active learning and enjoyment and passive learning and lack of enjoyment was widely but not universally made by students.

Like, sometimes, teachers think it's a good idea for you to sit silently in class, and to only listen to them... but I think it's good for to be able to talk between yourselves and... not, like, obviously about the subject. But to be able to sit there in silence for an hour lesson just looking at a whiteboard, it does give you a headache.

One difficulty in interpreting the data is untangling stories involving enjoyment, attainment, and understanding. The student below explains that passive teaching, which might be seen as duller by many students, can actually be more effective in supporting attainment:

I have had two lessons and you ask one person did a role play and the other person copied from the book. The person you were studying from the book and with the help of the teacher, not just the book, you'd come up with far greater knowledge, but the role play would have more understanding.

Learning is an individual and inner experience the effects of which may not be apparent externally. If the students are taken to be young adults, it could be argued that their own assessment of learning should be taken seriously, and their perceived connection between enjoyment and learning accepted. Given that the data provide no support for a relationship between enjoyment and attainment, a key implication is that learning might even be decoupled from attainment, and that therefore initiatives to increase enjoyment may increase the quality of learning, but not necessarily raise standards as measured by accredited outcomes. Otherwise, if enjoyment is related to learning, a key question is why this does not show up in attainment measures?

It is possible that, for those for whom school or college had become an unpleasant experience, enjoyment might be enhanced by change in a few key elements. The physical environment could allow a greater sense of space and freedom, enabling students to move around, to go outside a classroom and not to feel trapped within a school room or boundary. The relationship between students and those supporting learning could move towards one perceived as between equal adults and based on mutual respect. As one disengaged young man put it, 'I think it's all really about trust, and freedom as well'. Pedagogy could become more active and related to some recognisable part of the learner's world. For some students, further education colleges or a work-based environment provided these elements more often than schools. Centre-level variables in the survey, such as the range of curriculum offer, introducing new qualifications, and staff encouraging vocational routes, in themselves, make little difference in explaining patterns of enjoyment. The restoration of enjoyment and learning evident in the accounts of some students, to whom school does not appeal, appears related less to the range and

nature of the qualifications offered and more to the experience of different cultures outside school.



## 5. Achievement

### 5.1 Introduction

Whatever other outcomes are suggested at 14-19, the achievement of young people in terms of attaining qualifications is a primary aim - for the students and their families, for the schools and colleges, and for central and local government. Indeed some of the other outcomes examined in this report, such as enjoyment or participation, are identified as important by many respondents because these may, in turn, lead to greater attainment. In policy documents, sometimes including those of QCA, achievement is regularly presented in terms of the attainment of accredited outcomes. Most schools and colleges reinforce the emphasis on test scores through regimes of target setting, and mentoring students at a grade borderline. When considering a range of possible priorities for their teaching, staff overwhelmingly selected 'good exam results' (96%) and 'raise student aspirations' (98%) in preference to others such as preparing young people for work, increasing their applications to higher education, or their welfare. Staff and governors reported being under an obligation to achieve the best possible examination results, in order to satisfy a range of stakeholders - central Government, local community, and parents.

Some young people, parents and staff extended the concept of achievement to include other personal, social and intellectual accomplishments, including confidence about the future.

Many centres provided evidence of public celebration and rewards for a range of types of achievement - sporting, artistic, performance, social (service to the school or wider community) or personal (attendance, making an effort). Such achievements are perceived to reinforce a sense of self-worth, which it is hoped may lead to higher examination grades or to confidence in seeking employment. Adults' reported aspirations for student achievement were frequently more far sighted than attainment or qualifications, citing future careers and 'the wider development of the whole person', such as being confident and meaningful citizens.

For me the outcome here wasn't that this kid got three Ds and he should have done better; but the important thing that he'd gone away and got a job. He stood every chance of keeping in gainful employment and becoming a viable member of society doing what he wanted to do. He wasn't ever going to university, but then that's true of over half the kids in the country. He's done something useful, and he's turned his life around.

However, others looked beyond qualifications more perhaps as a pragmatic necessity than from a vision of a fully rounded education:

I'm pleased to say that the principal and all the managers have agreed... that they weren't that bothered about the bits of paper; they wanted employable skills, which they deemed as polite, arrive on time, reasonably dressed, treat the customers with respect, as basic as that.

Some adult respondents spoke about achievement in terms of having a positive attitude, battling against difficult circumstances - 'the children who have to struggle, but still exceed what they originally thought they can do' - inspiring others to achieve.

I want to look at that end of learners and make sure that they feel valued and recognised for doing what they're doing.

Some parents valued self-confidence:

I can't say how pleased I am for having a daughter who wasn't confident at all, who left this school a changed person. It changed her character and gave her a feeling that she could achieve.

These wider interpretations of achievement are less often cited directly by students, although they may say that they enjoy taking part in performance, or are proud of personal sporting achievements and having a positive role in school life. Nevertheless, it is clear that young people's perceptions of their capability for future learning and employment are largely based upon their 14-19 achievements as expressed in qualifications. Academic achievement, qualifications and 'getting the grades' were among the values commonly cited, whatever type of programme the student was on. As some young people point out, there is a trail of grades from Key Stage 3 onwards, each of which gives access to the next stage of education or to a wished-for area of employment. Though learning was valued for itself by some, academic attainment was rarely valued in and of itself, but as a gateway to being able to do what they want in the future - further or higher education or employment.

Grades are very important as they enable us to get further in our careers.

Because if you haven't got school you won't have no chance getting in college... and if you're going college it's to do college and a better chance of getting a job.

### *5.2 The baseline evidence on achievement*

Perceived failure may result in falling student numbers, with a resulting loss of income and staffing capacity, and status for the school or college. Several centres out of our baseline 45 were under threat of merger or outright closure. Staff perceived that being officially labelled as 'failing' in terms of student results could lead to long-term sickness of staff, or of staff leaving and not being replaced. The resulting use of supply teachers can produce classroom situations where it is difficult for students to achieve, which in turn depresses examination results further. Some other centres, which were under threat, reported that they were over-using Teach First staff with consequent high turnover and distortion of staff priorities. One group of students has had six different teachers for GCSE maths, and none at time of our visit. Phasing out schools over five years, or merely labelling institutions as problematic, can therefore be harmful to those students who remain in them.

Some young people report being under considerable pressure to succeed. Many of the year 12 students who have recently started A/AS level programmes have a heavy academic workload, and are afraid of not fulfilling their own aspirations and those of teachers and parents. Year 11 students who were disengaged from school sometimes revealed that the pressure of school life had led them to judge themselves as incapable of learning and achieving. However, some of them have benefited from an alternative, less pressured, education, to the extent that they are now committed to achieving some level of qualification at KS4.

In keeping with previous research, levels of attainment at 14-19 are strongly related both to individuals' prior attainment and to their personal and social background (including the occupation of their parents). Higher levels of self-reported attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 come from students who are not eligible for free school meals and whose parent(s) have a professional occupation. It is not clear to what extent the reforms can alter this long-term social stratification in educational outcomes.

A range of student-reported outcomes is summarised in Table 5.1, and these show considerable similarity between the views of year 11 and the post-compulsory year 12. Aspiration for a professional/managerial occupation is heavily influenced by student family background factors, in the same way as student attainment. Students following largely vocational programmes aspire to achieve vocational qualifications and enter skilled trades, in some centres planning to work with family or adult friends. This outcome is to be valued in that they are ready for the world of work and wish to be qualified for it. However, in terms of equity, their perceived lack of 'professional' ambition might also be judged as poverty of aspiration - a result of inequity of opportunity perhaps. An expected outcome of the 14-19 reforms would be an extension of the range of eventual occupations considered by all students.

**Table 5.1 – Percentage of students agreeing with statements relating to achievements**

	Year 11	Year 12
Want a professional occupation	56	54
I try my best	72	75
Prepared for world of work	58	62
Prepared for future relationships	67	71
Prepared to handle my own money	70	71
Prepared to handle my own health	78	79

Source: student surveys

N=2700

N=2200

The same proportion of students of all kinds, on any course, with any prior experience, at all types of institutions, report trying their best. There is almost no 'school-effect'. Over time, we could seek improvement in the overall percentage but could hardly make this 'soft' outcome more equitable than it is at present. Of course, students do not always report that their efforts are recognised:

When I actually went for an interview at [agricultural college] and got my place... I showed my Head of House and... she actually turned round and said that it's a load of rubbish, there's no point doing it, 'cos I ain't going to get nowhere in life 'cos I never come to school... I might as well just drop all my dreams and just be a bum, basically, live off Social. Which really put me down.

Every lesson 'you are all gonna fail' and then he might set you an assignment to write and he will say 'hand my at the end of' ..... and then you are handing in your work 'so let's see what is worth laughing on this paper'. You do not want to hear that you have done your best you expect a teacher to behave like a teacher and not criticize you and tell you that 'you are gonna fail'.

The remaining four outcomes in Table 5.1 show a common pattern. Almost none of the variation in student preparedness for future life is related to their background or to

centre-level factors. The same proportion of students of all kinds, on any course, at all types of institutions, report being prepared to handle their work, relationships, finance and health. One might be tempted to dismiss this high level of preparedness as 'bravado' on the part of students if it was not for the clear differences in this preparedness for students with different individual experiences of the quality of education. In general, students receiving guidance on employment and their futures report being better prepared. Students already involved in learning delivered at work report being better prepared for the world of work.

Some young people receive more individualised help to succeed. These are often those perceived by teachers as gifted and talented, near a grade borderline, or in danger of not achieving qualifications at all. Students who are in danger of disengagement are also more likely to be offered vocationally based programmes, including extended work placements, and many respond positively to this strategy. Several students in further education colleges say that discussions with tutors and support staff are the first occasion when they have been offered personalised attention in an adult fashion in relation to their learning and career aspirations. Where students feel that their teacher shows insight and interest in their individual progress, they more often aspire to succeed, regardless of the nature of the subject. Similarly, more students whose teachers make their subject exciting, or make it relevant to their daily lives through engagement in class discussion, also aspire to succeed in that subject. As one parent put it: 'I think it's just giving them an enthusiasm and interest for the subject really... if they can do that, then a lot of it will follow.'

## 6. Participation

### 6.1 Introduction

Previous research has shown that participation in education for young people aged from 14 to 19 becomes increasingly stratified by student background and everything associated with that, such as higher average levels of prior attainment. A key aim for the reforms is that more young people will participate in education and training, continuing to receive structured learning opportunities until at least 17 and preferably longer. Participation is intended to be widened to the groups least likely to participate at present - not simply to increase opportunities for the 'usual suspects'. This implies the development of systems which can support young people to continue to achieve, whatever their learning preferences and future employment intentions. Young people should enjoy learning to the extent that they are encouraged to continue, perhaps partly as a passport to future employment, and disengaged young people could be re-motivated by meaningful choices and educational experiences. The report considers both the intentions of young people and the systems which may influence their intentions. It does not engage with the debate on the differential cultural value accorded to continuation in education and training by individuals and groups who may or may not share views on the primacy of education.

### 6.2 The baseline evidence on participation and progression

Only around half of students report that their education so far has encouraged them to learn more, and between a half and two-thirds wish to continue in education or training at the next 'break' aged 16 or 18 (Table 6.1). Few students reported restrictions of any kind in their choices at age 14 or 16, although, of course, they may not be aware of anything not on offer to them. Year 12 students are slightly more positive about future participation outcomes than year 11, and students from professional backgrounds, those not eligible for free school meals, and girls, are more likely to report being encouraged to learn, and to want to continue at age 16 or 18. Once such student background is accounted for, those at independent schools report more encouragement to learn, and desire to continue post-16 or 18, followed by those at FE colleges (for year 12) and schools in charge of their own admissions, than those at local authority comprehensives.

**Table 6.1 – Percentage of students agreeing with each statement about participation**

	Year 11	Year 12
Restricted in choice at 14 or 16	19	17
School/college has encouraged me to learn more	51	57
Future plans to continue in education at 16/18	55	66

Source: student surveys

N=2700

N=2200

The biggest influence on the last two outcomes in Table 6.1 comes from student reports of their experiences of education so far – especially encouragement to think for oneself and the quality of guidance on offer. Having been encouraged to learn more and intending to continue at age 16 or 18 are both associated with the quality of guidance for the future, student autonomy, and being encouraged by teachers to make up their own minds. In addition experience of contact with students in other programmes, or of learning delivered at college (while attending school) or in a work environment, is associated with continuation in education at the next key moment. One reason could be that, via such contacts the students become aware of the range of possibilities. For some,

the impact of treating the students differently and in a more adult way is even greater off-site, when they are deemed to have 'failed' at school. According to one adult:

We find that, it never ceases to amaze me, they are completely different creatures down at [project name]. I've heard, I think, one young lady, she came from [school name] and apparently from all accounts, she was a bit of a horror, you know, and she's absolutely perfect at [project name]. She behaves herself. She does as she's asked. And when you ask her why, she says it's the way she's spoken to. She feels that sometimes teachers don't speak to her with the respect that she deserves.

All young people had some view of their 'future' and the options available to them. Hardly any respondents (less than 1%) considered they would be without employment when they left education, suggesting more optimism than the national figure of over 10% of young people not in education, employment, or training in 2007. Although 10% of students in year 11 considered they would take a relatively unskilled job, this figure drops to 6% for year 12 respondents.

For students intending to progress beyond 18, specific career intentions were less evident than aspirations towards subject qualifications. Among students focused on 'academic' subjects, some career-specific decisions were being deferred until university, as when a young person considered that at university he could 'pick a career', or in case of another 'I would go to university, work hard and get a good degree, hopefully. And then go off into the big world'. A number of students balked at university because they 'didn't want to get into debt', 'it costs too much money', even when they described themselves as 'clever'. For others determined to get to university, some felt they were trailblazing a path into higher education, as when a young person said 'None of my family have ever made it to university and I know that my parents would be so proud...so I'm really looking forward to that'.

Some young people had an uncertain grip on their future, finding it frightening to think about, or having possibly unrealistic goals. For a number of them, future planning beyond 16 was 'scary'. Career planning was sometimes secondary to studying in environments where they felt secure. Not all students based their aspirations upon preferred course or career options, preferring to remain in the same school post-16 because it was familiar or convenient. Conversely, for some students, the intention to study somewhere rather than something else was the prime motivator - to meet 'new friends', broaden horizons, or disassociate themselves from negative school experiences.

For students who were planning to attend college, there was positive anticipation, frequently grounded in concrete occupational ambitions. Among the range cited by those at and/or intending to go to college were 'Child Care', 'Hairdressing', 'Engineering', 'the Army', the 'Police', the 'Fire Service', 'Sports', 'Electrical', 'Plumbing', 'Construction/Building', 'Bricklaying', 'BTEC', 'running the family business', 'Motor Vehicles', and 'Foundation' courses pre-University, for example in Art, Youth, Health, Social and Community Services. 'Marriage' was included as an intention in the medium term; others referred to 'living' or 'working abroad'. These aspirations are rather different to the professional and higher education aspirations dominant in schools with clusters of students from professional backgrounds.

These expectations of college were echoed among students who attended college post-16. They valued it for providing applied learning opportunities for employment on and

off-campus that did not replicate school, and for being ‘treated like adults’. A young person describes ‘a lot of job offers...Companies from [place] ring up and tell the college what kinds of job they are looking for’. For some students the prospect of combining work with college life was appealing, in part as preparation for adult life, as when a young person comments: ‘So I can get my head around working and waking up...in the morning and going to college as well...and then get a proper job’.

Some young people’s confidence in their choices and future pathways are negatively affected by the variability of information advice and guidance, their relationships with staff and prior success in learning. Young people’s views of what constitutes ‘realistic’ occupational ambition provide important insights at the start of reforms. Young people’s sense of what was achievable varied considerably, evident, for example, in conversations among disengaged students, as when two young people in year 11 describe their intentions; one to become ‘either a mechanic or a formula 1 racing car driver’ and the other: ‘[Because] I’m just thick [I’m] going to [work at a major supermarket]’.

In general, staff saw their key priority as the encouragement of students to continue studying (Table 6.2). Staff in different centres may have envisaged different kinds of participation for their students, and so specific priorities such as HE or vocational routes appear less frequently.

**Table 6.2 – Percentage of staff agreeing with each statement about priorities**

	National sample
Encourage work-based training	40
Encourage vocational routes	57
Increase numbers going to HE	59
Encourage students to continue study	91

Source: Staff survey

N=1130

### *6.3 The baseline evidence on information, advice and guidance*

Appreciation of supportive guidance was widespread. There were mixed views among young people about its quality, with around 40% of young people reporting that they had received clear guidance about employment, and around 55% about their future learning. These averages, however, mask considerable variation in satisfaction between individual institutions.

The majority view was that information, advice and guidance at age 14 had limitations, not least because young people felt they had less understanding of its implications than at 16. They described a variety of choice mechanisms to assist them and their parents or carers, including written booklets, options evenings, and subject ‘taster’ sessions. Helpful support from teachers was welcomed and acknowledged positively. Yet, there was some concern that making curriculum choices sometimes seemed a perfunctory exercise, influenced by organisational demands or by teachers ‘selling their subject’:

It seemed teachers were too fussed about timetabling and how many students were going to do each subject, rather than why we want to do subjects and how they will help with our future career plans.

Some young people reported feeling pressured to take up certain subject options rather than others. Or they were conscious of being restricted or routed to certain pathways,

especially those that are work-related. Young people valued opportunities to talk with students who had taken particular subjects, which were facilitated formally by staff in some organisations. At 14, students generally chose subjects they liked or felt they were good at, although some institutions offered very little choice at all. Young people with learning difficulties reported satisfaction with the level of support given, but guidance was considered weaker by disengaged learners. One young person notes: 'I didn't have any guidance because I didn't get a choice'.

Overall, the quality of guidance at 16 was considered better than at 14. The main exception was some young people reporting less encouragement if they decided to exit an 11-18 school at 16, suggesting that their school may not advise them fairly about out-of-school opportunities. Notably, in the FE sector there were positive comments about the consistency of support given to young people, including those with learning difficulties and those previously disengaged. Otherwise, there is no clear difference between types of institution in provision of guidance, and most students report favourable impressions:

Yeah, they try to get you to go to it because they're advertising it whereas if it was just left to me I probably wouldn't have picked up on the day, I probably would have missed it.

For some young people, there was more appreciation of internal than external guidance. The Connexions Service was integrated fully in some schools' programmes, and in most College provision. One student describes:

there's a careers office that's upstairs and they've got a careers advisor up there and she's really nice, like she, like if you go to her, she's there all the time and if you've got any questions, just go straight to her.

But this level of integration was inconsistent, especially among schools deemed 'successful'. Some staff and students suggested that the service is more applicable for young people taking work-related courses or intending to leave education in the near future.

Family influences were strong in some instances, sometimes to pursue professional careers in the footsteps of family members, or aspirations that were considered 'solid', described by a young person as follows:

I was pretty determined that what I was gonna do is physiotherapy but it is not my passion ...Certain people around you influence what choices you make and she [parent] didn't want me to do anything ...to do with dancing ...she thinks of it just as a hobby and not something you should take seriously...because even if I did get where I want to be it would be short-lived.

Our findings suggest it is important to continue with staff development programmes related to the quality of teachers' approaches to learning. These may help overcome limitations and barriers to young people's aspirations. Young people link their engagement in learning, their choice of pathway, and their motivation to learn to the quality of their educational experiences, and to relationships of care, respect, and feeling valued.



## 7. Citizenship

### 7.1 Introduction

The 14-19 reforms are intended to help create 'learners who are confident and responsible citizens'. But what does this entail? Citizenship is a contested concept, involving debates about the rights, responsibilities and nature of being a British citizen. Here, we consider citizenship in terms of the skills and attitudes required for democracy, including confidence in expressing a point of view, debating that view, appreciating the views of others, and as responsibility for one's own future. These may develop as part of a range of educational experiences - in Citizenship lessons, or linked to Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE), as part of other subjects, informal activities for enhancing students' involvement in community activities, on and off-site and as activities designed to enable students' voices to be heard and to encourage responsible action. 'How to work bank accounts', and organise work conferences, trips to an African country, and a youth parliament are among the range of activities cited in one example.

A number of institutions use accreditation awards that make civic and community engagement part of assessed curricula such as ASDAN, or encourage involvement in other schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. More commonly, schools and colleges have introduced various mechanisms for developing students' capacity to express their own views and engage in decision-making, such as Student Councils, representation on governing bodies, and student surveys to inform organisational planning and processes.

Many young people and some adults expressed enthusiastic views about the importance of young people having a voice, and how that voice might contribute to responsible action in and beyond education settings. And several adults saw citizenship as central to education, and as much more than an abstract concept limited to a formal citizenship curriculum.

Student perceptions about the future included their capacity to look forward to the world of work, handle their own money, and manage health and personal relationships (see Section 5 on achievement). They also discussed contributions to charity events in the organisation, the local community, international fund-raising, visits or projects. The idea of citizenship as preparation for life comes through in views expressed by adults and young people, especially about whole school or college approaches. As one young person puts it, these should 'make sure people know more about the world and become better human beings'. Young people and adults refer to positive relationships between students and staff, as helping young people to become mature and independent.

### 7.2 The baseline evidence on citizenship

Four possible self-reported outcomes relevant to the preparation of citizens appear in Table 7.1. The scores are all quite low, and we would expect the reforms, if successful, to have an impact on these and similar indicators. Years 11 and 12 are similar here except in respect of how much control they report they have in their own learning. Year 12 students are somewhat more positive about their autonomy. There appears to be little pattern in the background of students who report having enough of a say in their learning. The other three outcomes in Table 5 have a common pattern, with only a minority of students in each year group reporting participation in these voluntary

activities. Students with professional parents, and girls, are more likely to report public activities such as voting or public service.

**Table 7.1 – Percentage of students agreeing with each statement about citizenship**

	Year 11	Year 12
Enough of a say in my own learning	35	55
Volunteered to help charity or local organisation	25	30
Voted in school/college elections	38	35
Would vote in election this week	44	46

Source: student surveys

N=2700

N=2200

Note: The extent of opportunity to vote in elections is unknown

Overall, 92% of staff report making the development of good citizens a priority. Centres in which more staff report a priority of developing citizenship actually have students less likely to participate in the activities in Table 7.1. In schools where more of the staff are concerned with developing their own skills, students tend to vote more. One possible interpretation of this result, and others like it, is that staff priorities are set by a hierarchy of concerns, with priority going to areas of weakness rather than immediately leading to areas of strength. This would have implications for our consideration of the staff interviews, where we are generally unable to relate the reported staff actions and priorities to the actions and responses of students.

The major influences on preparation for citizenship involvement apparently come from student experiences of education. Predictably, students who report feeling in control are also more likely to report being allowed to work at their own pace, with individual attention, time to discuss with others, contact with students on other programmes, in smaller well-equipped classes, and where there is a variety of settings such as trips and visits. Students are more likely to vote, or want to vote, in elections where they can work at their own pace, in small classes, receive individual attention from staff, have contact with students on other programmes, and appropriate receive guidance on their future (see also Section 5 on achievement).

Many staff consider information, advice and guidance to be an important aspect of citizenship-focused support. Students who are most enthusiastic about these kinds of support are not always confident about their futures. This is not an argument against support, which is valued by many young people. Instead it points to the possible limits of existing internal and external support frameworks and/or to ‘employment’ guidance being focused upon those who are felt to need it most in the short term. Work-related opportunities are highly valued in helping young people think concretely about their future employment and training. In general, confidence appears to grow for school students who experience off-site college experiences. Opportunities to learn in a college, and with different adults, appear to be the spurs to increased confidence and personal forward planning into college. By year 12, students at school or college with experiences of learning off-site in work situations begin to express more confidence about the world of work.

Young people report opportunities to debate and discuss in subjects other than formal citizenship-related lessons. They see these as contributing to the overall development of their skills in thinking, communicating, and decision-making, and enhancing personal maturity. For many, such learning opportunities are as dependent upon individual

teachers' approaches as they are upon the subject(s). Unsurprisingly perhaps, some politically focused issues are seen as uninteresting or marginal to the core purposes of 'getting by' at school or college in order to achieve a successful 'life'. And not all students value active participation in the classroom, preferring 'chalk-and-talk' lessons. Such students were not disengaged from school; rather, it seems that they see anything other than 'traditional' lessons as diversionary or unnecessary. In contrast, some young people greatly valued the opportunity to develop their views on society and relationships. In one centre, students of different levels of attainment spoke enthusiastically about religious education because it gave a rare opportunity to develop their own thinking and attitudes. One student who was presented to us as disaffected explained:

It's really good. You can change people's opinions on things. So if they see Religious Studies, that's all religious stuff, but it's not, it's to do with the community. It's really changed my opinion on things.

There is repeated reference by adults to giving young people a voice. But there was some uncertainty among young people about the extent to which this capacity to influence decisions is 'real', with more emphasis on 'having a say' than upon meeting their own needs or influencing organisational decisions. For many students, and some adults, the importance of representation and decision-making was peripheral. Adults do refer to the importance of allowing students a form of participation that is citizenship-focused. But it is not clear how real this desire for conversation is. As one governor puts it: 'we have got to engage with young people themselves...putting learning entitlements into young peoples' speak'. Although intended to enhance engagement, this sounds like a decidedly one-way conversation.

Once some adjustment has been made for different student intakes, community schools are generally associated with students reporting lower professional aspiration post-16, less confidence in future relationships, less encouragement to continue learning, less of a say in their own learning, and fewer students planning to vote in elections. Independent schools and FE colleges are generally associated with higher reports of these outcomes, with other maintained schools somewhere in between. On the other hand, community schools are associated with more concern about school as an experience, more reported enjoyment, and greater participation in past school elections (perhaps because their schools were more likely to hold elections). Other things being equal, independent schools are associated with lower values in all these outcomes. Is something genuinely occurring in independent schools that is somewhat less so in FE colleges, somewhat less again in schools in charge of their own admissions, and so on? And how does this relate to the finding that students in community schools tend to report more enjoyment.

Citizenship in action, as exemplified in interactions between students and staff, may be as important as formal pedagogy and principles for the development of citizenship behaviour, such as voting and public service. As previous studies have attested, our student accounts suggest these apparent institutional differences could be based on something like the relationship between the staff and students, and a feeling of being treated more as a young adult in some colleges and independent schools. Perhaps, students in the more autonomous situations are emphasising enjoyment as satisfaction in learning, and so a desire to continue, whereas others are describing the importance of schools as societies associated with contact with their peers.

For example, a student in a comprehensive school says:

Some teachers don't respect you and wonder why you cause so much trouble... The teachers say we want respect from you but they don't normally show it to us. They're the teacher they're always right, we're the kid and we don't know what we are going on about.

Whereas, a year 12 student in an Academy says:

It's not intimidating because people are actually here to learn. When we were at school people just wanted to leave and get it over and done with

And a student in a specialist FE college says:

Everyone in my [old] school wants to quit sixth form, loads of them are coming here as well. Cos they've heard such good things about it; and no-one likes the... like, the teachers at 6th form, and it's more laid back here... the teachers are more sort of friendly, do you know what I mean?

Another in a more general FE college says:

Teachers are much, they respect you more, talk to you like, not like you're a little kid, treat you with a bit of respect, give you a bit of leeway if you're like that with them, if you do what they do, they'll be alright with you.

Citizenship provision was clearly more developed in some organisations than others. Related activities, such as those in Table 7.1, remain concentrated among relatively few even in active cases. Some parents considered that the drive for successful attainment ought to supersede all other educational purposes. Young people were more divided than adults about whether schools and colleges were successful in promoting or achieving citizenship. There are uncertainties in students' perceptions about their capacity to influence decisions in the organisations they study. For other students, achievements that could not be measured by assessment were not worth doing, and like some parents, they were more likely to equate achievement with attainment, deferring consideration of education as preparation for life until after the immediacy of exam success.

## 8. Possible implications for evaluation, policy and practice

The 14-19 reforms are multi-faceted, including changes to practice, curriculum and policy. They are part of further overlapping changes to policy and practice in secondary and further education for England, include a traditional break at age 16, and face barriers such as testing and league tables encouraging competition rather than collaboration between institutions. The interventions do not have a clear start. Nor can their implementation be tightly controlled. What we can present here is anyway based on a snapshot picture for one only year. There is also a danger of reactivity among the selected centres, which might have been more aware of the reforms partly through agreeing to take part in the evaluation. Despite these cautions, there are some interesting tentative implications from the descriptive data here that may be of relevance to the success, or otherwise, of the 2008/09 reforms.

### *8.1 Relative lack of stratification by student background*

We are used to patterns of participation and attainment in education being heavily stratified by student background factors such as prior attainment, sex, ethnicity and parental occupation. In standard school effectiveness studies, around 80% of the difference between institutions is attributed to the nature of the student intake. In our evaluation so far, an important finding is how little patterning by student intake and school/college characteristics there is in the variables representing the four themes selected as outcomes – student enjoyment of learning, achievement, participation, and preparation for citizenship. The outcomes where students reported trying their best, having enough say in their own learning, being prepared to handle their own money, health, and future relationships, restrictions on their curriculum choice, and education being a waste of time, were all largely unrelated to student background, and to the different types of institutions students attend. In traditional terms we could say that there is no ‘school effect’ on these outcomes.

Looked at the other way, the factors which are largely unrelated to any of the four outcomes include the country of origin of the student, their prior attainment scores, the overall school results of the students’ institution, its (numeric) range of curriculum offer, ethnic mix, denomination, economic region, and local index of deprivation. Other factors unrelated to the outcomes are the centre-level views of staff relating to the introduction of new qualifications, their encouragement of vocational routes, their style and activities of teaching, sources of stress, barriers to partnerships, and their reported prioritisation of exam results.

Such ‘neutral’ findings suggest a reasonably fair distribution of these outcomes between students and their educational establishments. If these early findings are accepted as reasonable, then they illustrate how much more there is to 14-19 education than exam-based attainment, and they suggest that, to be successful, the 2008 reforms do not need to overcome all of the stratified barriers that more narrowly-focused ‘school improvement’ faces. Enjoyment of education as reported, for example, already depends very little on student origin and type of institution attended. This is good news and should mean that the reforms (other than those referring directly to attainment in standardised tests) face an easier task in some respects.

### *8.2 The importance of contact with other students*

Whatever the causal model is, parental occupation and all that may stem from it remains a key determinant of attainment and aspiration. But, as outlined above, our findings suggest that the type of institution a student attends has less to do with other 14-19 outcomes than previous research might indicate. What appears to matter slightly more are mixed student intakes in schools and colleges, opportunities for young people to have contact with each other even when on different programmes in the same institution, and a variety of educational experiences through partnership delivery. This mixing between, within and across centres is positively related to occupational aspirations, plans for participation, and confident and responsible citizenship – whatever the student’s own background. This baseline evidence suggests that anything that can be done to reduce institutional isolation by ability, religion, geography, housing quality, isolation, or curricular specialisation is likely to help create a sounder basis for the 14-19 reforms.

### *8.3 Staff priorities*

Once student background and mix are accounted for, the remaining centre-level determinants of 14-19 outcomes generally relate to the reported priorities of the teaching staff. To some extent, staff priorities directed to specific outcomes are inversely related to the measured level of that outcome. For example, schools with a higher percentage of staff prioritising the development of good citizens may have students less likely to vote in an election. Staff priority to encouraging further study is not associated with students reporting wanting to continue. Other priorities, such as generic and study skills, narrowing the gap in attainment, and raising aspiration are also negatively associated with outcomes.

On the other hand, a staff priority to their own development and the development of other teachers in their care is positively associated with student preparedness for work, likely participation in elections, and post-16 study. Insofar as a potential lever is identifiable here it must be that encouraging staff to see themselves as developing their own teaching and career skills may have direct positive benefits for students, and more directly than a focus on specific issues of attainment and equity.

Another plausible explanation for these kinds of results is that staff priorities are set by needs. They are responsive rather than instrumental, at this stage. So, citizenship may be prioritised in centres of greatest need, and post-16 participation prioritised in schools where this is currently low. Centres without such pressures may have staff able to consider wider issues such as their own development. If true, this finding also has implications for the in-depth data. Those who are most enthusiastic about prioritising an area of 14-19 development might do so because progress in this area is objectively poor for their institution, even where the respondents believe that their priority is leading to improvement (that may not yet show up in other indicators). One example is the attitudes of adults to the reforms (see Section 3). Other than institutions faced with closure, which tend to have other understandable priorities, the most enthusiastic responses tended to be in centres where low scores and non-attendance were prominent (and vice versa).

### *8.4 Information and guidance*

Guidance about future employment or future learning opportunities, in its broadest sense, is considered important by adults and young people alike, but varies in quality and consistency at key transition points. The need for impartiality and coherence feature

largely in the data, with 11-18 schools most marked as concentrating on internal post-16 arrangements. Those students reporting good guidance report being better prepared for their futures in terms of handling their health, personal relationships and money, and in terms of the future world of work. Guidance is also positively related to students being encouraged to want to learn more, education being about important experiences, and to preparation for citizenship. Of course, the confidence that students portray over money and health might be illusory. However, it is difficult to imagine how else outcomes such as these could be assessed other than by self-report. There is at least a *prime facie* case that guidance is useful and makes a difference even when student intake and centre-level factors are accounted for. There is also some evidence that it should be varied in timing and mode of delivery, to include area partnership co-operation, an opportunity to meet students who have made a choice, and perhaps trial experience periods.

### *8.5 Mutual respect*

Respect emerges as a factor between students and students (on different courses) and students and staff. While the roles, activities and preferences of different actors in education differ there is a plea from students for parity of esteem between them. This includes appropriate guidance (see above) and a sense of autonomy for the learner. Being encouraged by teachers to make up their own minds, being treated like adults, and being allowed to work at their own pace are related to students wanting to learn, finding lessons interesting, enjoying education more generally, and a willingness to vote. Unsurprisingly, the same factors are related to students reporting having enough of a say in their own learning. The importance of this is illustrated by students who are educated 'otherwise' or who have moved between sectors or types of institutions. Both students and staff report examples of engagement and enthusiasm by students who had previously been disengaged from school, but then felt transformed in a college or work environment.

### *8.6 Variety in teaching and learning*

There have been various theories in popular use for education trying to relate kinds of teaching to kinds of learners, and promoting variation in delivery. Such ideas emerged in the evidence with many students able to recite what 'kind' of learner they were. However, this made little apparent difference to their preferences. A minority preferred traditional 'chalk and talk' lessons overall, but most wanted variety because it engaged and 'surprised' them, and because learning activities are there to excite as well as deliver information.

Having enough chances for discussion, learning in small groups, and variation in lesson delivery (including practical work and field trips) are positively related to being prepared for the world of work, for handling health issues, and the importance of experiences at school. Students find lessons interesting, enjoy education more generally, and report having enough of a say in their own education, when the classes are small, they can discuss their ideas in class, the teachers are appropriately specialist, and there is variation in delivery and activity. The same kinds of students are more likely to vote in school elections. The same kinds of outcomes are also positively associated with students reporting contact with students on other courses or programmes (which might refer to social or pastoral activities, or to vertical organisation of houses and competitions, or simply being in a small institution). These students are more likely to continue in education. One reason could be that they become aware of the range of possibilities

open to them. This is perhaps the best single indicator of positive outcomes in our student reports.

### *8.7 The future*

As these centres are tracked over future years, it will be useful to assess how far the proportion of young people who enjoy school or college increases or decreases, and whether this retains its lack of relationship with official attainment scores. It will be important to track collaborative engagements among providers of information, advice and guidance, and the growth of independence of their advice. For the reasons described in the case reports, partnerships are valuable but sometimes difficult in areas of greatest need (such as for small rural schools). Progress in overcoming barriers, such as the current competitive evaluation of individual institutions, must be tracked. Positive progress in provision for 14-19 year olds would also be indicated by an increase in:

- An approach to young people's progress and aspirations which regards them as individual young adults.
- Understanding of citizenship issues, and the confidence, knowledge and skills to communicate ideas, engage in decision-making, and work with others in and beyond their schools and colleges.
- Awareness among students that their views mattered, and why and how this is so, including reports of real student empowerment in appropriate areas.
- Subject teaching which is perceived as exciting and relevant to the young person's stage in life.
- Valuing of, and access to, a range of achievements and aspirations for future study and work, even where these are non-assessed.

Also of interest, but perhaps distorted by these institutions' participation in the evaluation, will be growth in knowledge of and involvement in the reforms.

This study confirms that achievement, encompassing not only attainment but also wider development, is evaluated in ways other than by standard examination results, and that different types of achievement are valued by the 14-19 stakeholder groups. In this context, at the heart of the concept of educational achievement is the demonstration by young people of their capacity for future learning, and for occupying a role in society which is meaningful and satisfying.