# Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network

# Final report

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

NFER was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE, formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)) to conduct an independent evaluation of the national pilot of the **Schools Linking Network** (SLN). The evaluation was focused on three key objectives:

1. To collect data on the *types of school linking* activities taking place in LAs and to evaluate the *processes* (at LA and school level) that are administering and supporting the school linking

2. To measure the *impact* and *outcomes* of school linking at different levels (i.e. on pupils, schools, staff, and local communities)

3. To consider the *sustainability* and *cost-effectiveness* of school linking beyond the pilot phase.

## Key findings

- Local authorities (LAs) played a critical role in supporting the SLN programme schools. This included auditing local needs and cohesion issues and agreeing on priorities, then linking schools and providing three days training and support.

- Overall, the programme was successfully implemented across most of the schools. However, LAs and schools faced some issues around matching link partners (with some schools not being able to link with the type of school they originally envisaged).

- Most LAs and schools were planning to continue linking activities into the future.

- School linking can have a positive impact on many aspects of pupils' skills, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours, particularly their respect for others, their self-confidence and their self-efficacy, as well as broadening the social groups with whom pupils interact.

- There is mixed evidence for the programme's impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding, their willingness to express their opinions, and perceptions of school and wider community climate (e.g. perceptions of the incidence of bullying).

- The programme is more likely to have an impact if there is sustained involvement (two or more link visits) of pupils in the programme, and impact beyond those pupils directly involved in linking activities is likely to necessitate a deliberate and sustained dissemination effort within the school.

- There is evidence that school and local authority staff also benefit from involvement in the intervention.

## Background

In 2007, to support the implementation of the duty on schools to promote community cohesion, funding was provided by the DCSF, in partnership with the Pears Foundation, to launch a national school linking programme in England, overseen by the Schools Linking Network (SLN). SLN developed from a model of local school linking which was originally established in Bradford in 2001 and Tower Hamlets in 2006, and aims to "*facilitate links between schools in England to help children and young people explore their identity, celebrate diversity and develop dialogue*". School linking brings schools in different communities together in the belief that, under the right conditions, increased contact between school children from diverse backgrounds and neighbourhoods can have a positive impact on attitudes and '*reduce mutual prejudice and wariness between groups of children based on cultural, religious, or ethnic differences*'. In this way, school linking can contribute to strengthening integration and cohesion at the local level.

The national pilot evaluated by NFER was designed to extend the linking programme beyond Bradford and Tower Hamlets, and to allow other local authorities (LAs) to establish similar programmes in their area. To date, around 40 LAs have been working with SLN. The latter provide a ready-made model, resources, support and training to the LAs, who then design and administer the programme in a way that is locally relevant for their schools and communities. SLN also operates a National Gateway to allow schools to link directly and independently of their LA, and works with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who are seeking to establish local linking initiatives.

## Research Methods

The evaluation was based on a *two-stage, quasi-experimental research design*. During the **first 'pre' phase**, NFER collected baseline evidence from pupils and schools in order to measure pupils' prior attitudes towards, and experiences of, cohesion and integration, as well as schools' policies towards cohesion and their plans for school linking. This baseline data was then used in the **second 'post' phase**, to measure the types of changes that had taken place and the impact of school linking. **Quantitative and qualitative evidence** was collected in each phase, though the quantitative strand of the evaluation is based on secondary school pupils only.

### Quantitative

- A **two-sweep survey** of pupil knowledge, attitudes, experiences, and behaviours before and after participating in school linking activities. The survey was administered to pupils who were participating in the linking activities, as well as those who were not. In addition, the survey was also administered in a matched comparison group of schools *not* participating in SLN. A sample of 3902 pupils responding to both the pre- and post-surveys was achieved – 1536 from SLN programme schools and 2366 from comparison schools.

### Qualitative

- Eight **case-study clusters**, six drawn from LAs that had recently signed up to SLN through the LA-based route, one made up of schools drawn from the Gateway-based route, and one using schools participating in school linking via the NGO route. In each case study, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers who were involved in school linking, members of the school's senior management team, and, where applicable, the local organisers (i.e. strategic manager and the operations manager in the LA or NGO). In addition, focus groups were conducted with a selection of pupils who were participating in the linking activities.

## Findings

### Types and processes of school linking (at LA and school level)

- All three types or models of school linking – Partnership, Gateway and NGO – can develop effective practices, but the evaluation found that the Partnership model (between SLN and LAs) was more successful in this respect than the other two models. LAs and their staff and, in turn, schools and school staff, appreciated the level of support provided by the Partnership model throughout the linking process and, in particular, the access to expert training and resources.

- The Partnership model was the most common approach to school linking but, in reality, it comprised a myriad of practices and processes on the ground. This is because LAs and schools adapt the SLN partnership model to fit their particular contexts and circumstances.

- There are three interrelated stages of the linking process – start up, running, and maintenance and sustainability – and each of these stages has key challenges.

### Impact and outcomes of school linking

- School linking is a new, complex and challenging area. The practice and processes of school linking are still emerging through the national pilot.

- The key determinant of the impact and outcomes of school linking for pupils is the intensity of the school linking experience. The survey evidence showed that linking had greater impact where pupils linked with pupils from their partner school two or more times during the year.

- The evaluation uncovered primarily positive outcomes for pupils, schools and LAs. This was due to linking being carefully planned, conducted and reviewed. However, there were a small number of examples of negative outcomes, where linking was less carefully thought through and merely reinforced existing attitudes and stereotypes about particular groups in society.

- There is evidence that school linking can impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours, particularly those concerning self-confidence and self-efficacy. However, the picture is mixed about the impact of school linking on particular aspects and attributes, such as their willingness to express opinions and perceptions of school and community climate.

- There is evidence that involvement in school linking can have an impact on participating LA and school staff in terms of their CPD, opportunities for self-

reflection, and learning about their pupils through observation of them interacting with pupils from partner schools and their attitudes.

- The impact and outcomes of school linking are greater where the co-ordination role is shared at both LA and school level.

## Sustainability and cost-effectiveness of school linking

- There is an interrelationship between cost-effectiveness and sustainability. The sustainability of school linking going forward is dependent on its cost-effectiveness, and vice-versa, for LAs, schools and funders.

- The pilot phase of SLN was viewed as highly cost-effective by participating LAs and schools, both primary and secondary, in relation to its impact and outcomes achieved.

- LA and school staff believe that for school linking to be effective and sustainable there is a need for money to support the whole process of school linking, i.e. to pay for coordination of links at local/LA level, CPD training and support for schools, the school coordinator's time, monitoring and evaluation and post-link activities.

- There is evidence from the evaluation that collecting and using monitoring and evaluation evidence can assist with issues of sustainability and funding at LA and school level, both within and across LAs and schools.

- The chances for the sustainability of school linking at school and LA level can be improved if conscious attempts are made to embed the learning and outcomes across the school curriculum and to link the learning to other LA programmes and initiatives.

- The majority of LAs and schools involved in the evaluation had plans to continue their involvement in school linking beyond the pilot phase in 2010/11 and had already secured funding and staffing to enable this to happen.

# Recommendations

**Types and processes of school linking**

1. **Review the differing types or models of school linking**: Consider in more detail the particular strengths and weaknesses of the Partnership, Gateway and NGO models of school linking in relation to the changing context of policy and practice. There should be a particular focus on the diverse ways in which LAs operate the Partnership model.

2. **Manage the expectations of LAs and schools about the focus of school linking**: some LAs and schools, driven by the particular local context and lack of ethnic and cultural diversity, have begun to broaden the focus of school linking to incorporate further aspects such as religious/interfaith and socio-economic/class. There is a need to manage such expectations and decide the extent to which such broadening, particularly the

religious/interfaith dimension, should be a feature of all school linking going forward.[1]

3. **Address the challenge of recruiting more schools, particularly secondary schools, and making links across neighbouring LAs**: Much of the current school linking involves primary rather than secondary schools and takes place within, rather than across, neighbouring LAs. With the issues addressed by school linking of particular relevance to older pupils there is a need to address the question of how more secondary schools could be encouraged to participate in school linking. Also, with neighbouring LAs providing greater diversity of contexts and schools there is a need to explore the potential to set up school linking across neighbouring LAs.

4. **Focus on improving the processes of school linking**: The evaluation outcomes underline the importance for effective school linking of having linking processes that cover pre-linking, linking and post-linking activities. There is a need to use the learning from the evaluation to focus on improving these processes.

**Impact and outcomes of school linking**

5. **Give more thought to impact and outcomes**: Though the importance of impact and outcomes is articulated through SLN's CPD training and support, it is clear that this is not always translated through into actual practice on the ground. There is therefore a need for those involved in school linking to give greater thought to what the desired impact and outcomes of such linking are, particularly for pupils, schools and communities, and decide how they can best be achieved in practice.

6. **Improve the collection of monitoring and evaluation data, and explore how it can be used for greater impact**: The evaluation underlines how the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation can be used to promote school linking to wider audiences, within and across schools and LAs. It suggests the need to explore how such sources can be used for greater impact at national, local and school level.

**Cost-effectiveness and sustainability of school linking**

7. **Explore the cost effectiveness of different types and processes of school linking against impact and outcomes:** The outcomes of the evaluation highlight how those involved in the SLN pilot phase view school linking as highly cost-effective. There is a need to explore the cost-effectiveness of the different types of school linking (Partnership, Gateway and NGO) and of the

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[1] Interestingly, since this evaluation was completed the Schools Linking Network (SLN) has begun working closely with the Three Faiths Forum to establish a national model for interfaith linking as part of the schools linking programme going forward.

particular processes (pre-linking, linking and post-linking) going forward against impact and outcomes.

8. **Address the uncertainties about the sustainability of school linking going forward:** It is imperative to address the uncertainties that LAs and schools already involved in school linking have going forward about their ability to continue being involved in such activities beyond 2010/11. There is a danger that if these uncertainties continue then the experiences and momentum of school linking built up during the pilot phase will be dissipated and lost, making it difficult to retain existing links in LAs and schools and attract new ones.

**Evaluation of and research on school linking**

9. **Make full use of the strengthened evidence base**: The evaluation strengthens the evidence base concerning the types, processes and practices of school linking at LA, school and pupil level. It provides considerable food for thought and action for future policy and practice at all levels - SLN staff, LA staff, school leaders and teachers, and children and young people.

10. **Look to take the evaluation design further**: Look to follow-up the pupils and school and LA staff who participated in the SLN pilot phase at a later point to gauge the extent of any on-going impact of school linking on pupils, schools and LAs, and to assess the extent of sustainability.

## Final Word

In an evaluation of this nature, it is fitting that the last word should go to those most closely involved in the processes and practices of school linking.

> *'If the teachers are on board and enthusiastic, they completely make the project, they make it happen'.* (LA strategic manager)

> *'The CPD is essential. It's been a fabulous opportunity for staff to network and to share their experiences and that has been one of the biggest learning points in the whole project because they have been able to share their experiences and inspire colleagues'.* (LA operational manager)

> *'I think a lot of them* [our pupils] *have developed an awareness of other cultures and people from other backgrounds. Again, we're a very white school and most of our influences are European, so it was healthy for them to mix with people with different backgrounds and values.'* (School Linking Coordinator)

# Chapter 1  Introduction

NFER was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE, formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)) to evaluate the **Schools Linking Network** (SLN) and its contribution towards strengthening integration and cohesion within schools and communities.

Integration and cohesion have been an area of key concern for politicians and policy makers over the past decade. Interest in this area was first prompted in 2001 by the violent disturbances in Oldham and other areas in Northern England cities in May of that year, but continued throughout the decade, following the London terrorist bombings in 2005 and as immigration increased beyond expectations. These events heightened awareness of the racial, ethnic and religious segregation in some towns and cities, and led to a series of policy initiatives at national and local level. The overwhelming aim of these initiatives, was to try to bring the diverse communities of Britain together and to combat extremism developing among young people and communities (see Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007 and DCLG, 2010). Many of these initiatives signalled the key role of schools education, and local authorities (LAs) in assisting in this process. Indeed, in 2007 the then government introduced a new duty on schools to promote community cohesion (DCSF, 2007), and since 2008 Ofsted have reported on schools' contribution to building cohesion as part of their inspection process (Ofsted, 2010).

## 1.1  Schools Linking Network (SLN)

In 2007, to support the implementation of the duty on schools, funding was provided by the DCSF, in partnership with the Pears Foundation, to launch a national school linking programme in England, overseen by  SLN.  SLN developed from a model of local school linking originally established in Bradford in 2001 and Tower Hamlets in 2006, and aims to "*facilitate links between schools in England to help children and young people explore their identity, celebrate diversity and develop dialogue*". School linking brings schools in different communities together in the belief that, under the right conditions, increased contact between school children from diverse backgrounds and neighbourhoods can have a positive impact on attitudes and '*reduce mutual prejudice and wariness between groups of children based on cultural, religious, or ethnic differences*' (Raw, 2006: 9). In this way, school linking can contribute to strengthening integration and cohesion at the local level.

The national pilot was designed to extend the linking programme beyond Bradford and Tower Hamlets, and to allow other LAs to establish similar programmes in their area. To date, around 40 LAs have been working with SLN, who provide a ready-made model, resources, support and training to the LAs, who then design and administer the programme in a way that is locally relevant for their schools and

communities. SLN also operates a National Gateway to allow schools to link directly and independently of their LA, and works with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who are seeking to establish local linking initiatives. Further details about the precise nature of the model, resources, support and training available to LAs, and via LAs to their schools, are provided below in Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2. This sets out what was intended to happen in the LA-based school linking model from the perspective of SLN. It is helpful to provide this detail at the start of this evaluation report because it enables the reader to compare what was intended/planned to happen in LAs and their schools during the national pilot and what actually happened in practice, as evidenced in this report.

The school linking model devised by SLN has been successfully established in Bradford since 2002. An internal evaluation, commissioned by SLN in 2005-6 (Raw 2006), found evidence that where the school linking model was thoughtfully introduced as part of curriculum it could assist the development of pupils' critical thinking skills and emotional literacy. In other words, pupils were able to re-evaluate their attitudes to difference, become more open to learning about other cultures and to begin to challenge racist assumptions and stereotypes. The evaluation also reported that pupils involved in the linking activities gained confidence in meeting other people, and were able to work in teams for a common goal, reflect positively on their experiences and communicate these using a range of media.

It took three years working closely with schools, the Council and partner organisations in Bradford and then again in Tower Hamlets for SLN to establish a sustainable model of schools linking that met the broader aims of community cohesion across those districts and which was a good fit with the curriculum.

The DCSF brief for SLN for the national pilot was to work with 40 more LAs evenly spread across England, beyond Bradford and Tower Hamlets, to develop local school linking over three years. The brief also asked SLN to operate a web-based support strand, alongside the LA-based model, for individual schools to set up links independently anywhere in the country. This web-based support became known as the 'Gateway model' of school linking. The functioning of the LA model is described below. Unlike the LA model, there was no existing evidence going into the pilot to say that a web-based, Gateway model would be effective. However, in the interests of equity and fairness, DCSF felt that it was important to give all schools in England access to opportunities to find a link school as this was a recommended way of contributing to community cohesion. It was recognised that the web-based, or Gateway, route would necessarily be less well supported than the LA model.

### 1.1.1 SLN support for LAs

The LA-based model of school linking offered to LAs and their schools by SLN comprised the following core components:

- Discussion with the head of Children and Young People (CYP) services and cohesion lead for the district to establish context and needs for each district.

- Selection of a lead officer in the LA who would have strategic oversight of the SLN pilot.
- Appointment of an officer to lead the operation of the SLN pilot programme in the LA with 20 schools.
- Completion of a detailed LA audit (See Appendix 8.10 for a completed exemplar audit form)[2].
- Attendance on a three-day course in SLN's Bradford base of both the strategic lead and the newly appointed officer from the LA.
- The course covered:
  - Using an LA audit to map an effective pilot programme, including establishing a local steering group to ensure joined-up thinking between education priorities and other cohesion issues
  - Exploring a broad definition of identity, diversity, equality and community
  - School recruitment processes
  - Training in content and delivery of three days continuing professional development (CPD) for the teachers who would lead the school linking projects
  - Visit to at least one pair of linked schools to observe practice and talk to staff and pupils involved
  - Learning to work with local partner organisations, e.g. galleries and museums, to explore local heritage and stories
  - Practical guidance on successful linking events based on a range of examples and themes
  - Evaluation processes
  - Use of the SLN web-based resource bank for classroom practice to support learning from the linking experiences – using reflective practice. This last being probably the most important part of the entire process
  - Recording, disseminating and establishing a sustainable local implementation.

On agreement of participation in the SLN national pilot programme, each LA was offered central government funding to contribute to the Operations post (£15k) plus supply cover and running costs for each of the 20 schools (at £1200 per school = £24k). This works out at between £30-£60 costs per pupil involved in the year-long programme in the start-up year. The expectation is that this cost per pupil decreases in subsequent years with LA and school staff using their experience to broaden access to the programme for more pupils. This funding to LAs was only deployed on evidence of the completion of: appointment of appropriate staff in the LA; LA staff attendance at the SLN three-day training course; recruitment of schools to the programme; and, receipt by SLN of detailed year's action plan from LA.

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[2] It should be noted that some of the details on the exemplar LA Audit Form have been changed in order to preserve the anonymity of the LA that completed the form. It is presented as an appendix in this report to highlight the level of detail that goes into the form and its importance as a tool for initial and on-going dialogue and planning both between SLN and the LA as well as between the LA and its schools.

Following the three-day SLN course, the LA officers went away and planned the programme in their LA. This included recruiting 20 schools representing a cross section of the local population and with a range of different objectives linked in pairs or clusters, with an agreement that they would send a lead teacher to attend the three days of CPD throughout the following school year and operate the programme within their classes and in partnership with the link school.

The LA officers were invited back to SLN late in the autumn term to a review day to share their experiences of the start-up phase of the pilot programme in their areas. SLN advisers also visited each LA at least once, usually to observe and give feedback of the first CPD day with the schools, sometimes to assist in the delivery of the launch day in each area. This was normally late September/early October. LA officers then sent a report of progress to SLN at the end of each term and a final report in the summer, including their own evaluation of the programme and intentions for the following year (when there would be no more government funding available and the local council and schools were expected to continue to fund the work). An annual SLN network event was also held in July where LAs and schools came to share the learning of the year across the country.

## 1.1.2 SLN support to schools via LAs

SLN also provided support to schools via LA staff involved in the national pilot. The support to schools mirrored the support provided by SLN direct to LAs and their staff. The first step was for schools to audit their own community and develop a needs analysis and therefore be clear what they want and require the outcomes to be from a linking project with another school – this would not be the same for all. For instance, a school with a very diverse population may not initially see any benefits to a link with a school with a less diverse population. However, through exploration it may become clear that some pupils would benefit from broader experience of different places in England and two schools may come together to explore national heritage from very different starting points in order to come to a shared understanding.

SLN's experience from working with schools in Bradford and Tower Hamlets is that schools often do not think deeply about the purpose of linking before wanting to try it and only begin to reflect on these more fundamental pedagogical issues once they have embarked on a link – this is experiential learning for the staff as well as the pupils. In order to assist schools in this process, SLN provides an outline of CPD for the LAs to deliver to schools with the LAs encouraged to include local relevant information. Figure 1.1 below shows the key components of the three-day CPD programme for schools.

**Figure 1.1: SLN CPD Programme for Schools**

| CPD 1/ Planning | Identity work/Begin Reflection | Exchange information | Reflect on information exchange | Meeting 1 at a neutral venue | Reflect on 1st meeting |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| CPD 2/ Planning | Identity work/ Exchange information/ Reflect | Meeting 2 class visit | Reflect on 2nd meeting | Meeting 3 class visit | Reflect on 3rd meeting |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| CPD 3/ Planning | Identity work/ Exchange information/ Reflect | Meeting 4 class visit/neutral venue | Reflect on 4th meeting | Celebration Event | SMT plan next year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*C*
*P*
*D*

*CPD Day 1* is in the autumn term and covers introducing the idea of the project to the school; establishing space in the curriculum for preparation work based on four key questions: **Who am I? Who are we? Where do we live? and How do we all live together?**; planning and exchanging introductory information about each other, planning effective linking days – usually in a neutral visit in the first instance - and introducing the importance of reflective practice. SLN recommends that a reflection session is held soon after each linking meeting. The course also covers baseline assessment.

*CPD Day 2* is early in the spring term and brings the teachers back to reflect on the successes and lessons of the term 1 work and plan together with their link teacher for the rest of the year's work. At CPD day 2, teachers are asked to familiarise themselves more with the SLN website and resources so that they could return to the key questions and consider how they want to develop work around these. They are also asked to record their work on web pages and provide feedback on how successful the lessons were. It is at this point in the year also that the controversial issues work normally begins with an input on tools and techniques for this.

*CPD Day 3* is in the summer term and provides a final opportunity for the teachers to meet and reflect on the journey of the year, plan for hand over to new teachers and for continuation of the work with their own classes in the future. This is often combined with a celebration event where pupils from all the 20 schools gather to share the learning from their work. These events take place in most LAs sometime in late June, early July.

For Gateway model schools – i.e. schools that register for school linking independently on the SLN website - there is access to one day only of funded CPD

direct with SLN trainers. However, in this model there is no local support network but rather telephone or email support available from SLN.

It should be noted that one of the key aims of the national pilot of SLN was to learn from the pilot experience at every level in order to inform any subsequent expansion/national roll out of the SLN programme across further LAs and regions. This included learning more about:

- Which method of school recruitment is the most effective in LAs, depending on local circumstances. For example, in some areas LAs need to choose schools more carefully in order to ensure productive matches, whereas in other areas this is a less critical factor

- How local issues concerning community cohesion are played out and understood and the best way for schools to engage with these

- The extent of teacher skills and confidence in tackling sensitive and controversial issues concerning community cohesion

- The levels of commitment of school leaders and governors to issues of diversity and equality.

This evaluation was carried out with a range of LAs and their schools across England during their pilot year of working with SLN. The purpose of the pilot programme in each area was to apply the SLN model to each individual context, and learn and adapt the model to fit along the way. This evaluation, in part, assesses how well the LAs and schools were successful in this objective. This evaluation investigates pilot programmes in seven of the 40 LAs involved in the LA-based model and in one pair of schools involved in the Gateway model of school linking.

## 1.2 Aims and objectives of the study

NFER was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE, formerly DCSF) to conduct an independent evaluation of the national pilot. This evaluation was focused on three key objectives:

1. To collect data on the *types of school linking* activities taking place in LAs and to evaluate the *processes* (at LA and school level) that are administering and supporting the school linking

2. To measure the *impact* and *outcomes* of school linking at different levels (i.e. on pupils, schools, staff, and local communities)

3. To consider the *sustainability* and *cost-effectiveness* of school linking beyond the pilot phase.

To meet these objectives, fieldwork was conducted in schools between October 2009 and July 2010. The results of this evaluation are presented in this report.

## 1.3    Research design and methods

The evaluation was based on a *two-stage, quasi-experimental research design*. During the **first 'pre' phase**, NFER collected baseline evidence from pupils and schools in order to measure pupils' prior attitudes towards, and experiences of, cohesion and integration, as well as schools' policies towards cohesion and their plans for school linking. This baseline data was then used in the **second 'post' phase**, to measure the types of changes that had taken place and the impact of school linking.

**Quantitative and qualitative evidence** was collected in each phase (see Figure 1.2). It should be noted that the quantitative strand of the evaluation is based on secondary school pupils only, while the qualitative strand is based on both secondary and primary school pupils. This selection was made deliberately. Based on evidence and advice from those involved in surveys of pupils concerning sensitive and controversial issues, such as community cohesion, it was deemed that the topics of this evaluation concerning issues such as cohesion, equality and diversity were too difficult to capture from primary school aged pupils through a quantitative survey instrument. There would be a need to detail explanations of key terms and concepts (both verbal and written) both before and throughout the administration of the survey instruments and this would undermine both the quantity and quality of the data collected from pupils of this age. Given this, the decision was taken to collect the quantitative data solely from pupils in secondary schools. With more time available to collect evidence, and with the support of the research team in person in schools to explain concepts and terms, it was deemed possible to include primary school pupils, along with their secondary school counterparts, in the qualitative strand of the evaluation.

**Figure 1.2:    Research design for the evaluation**
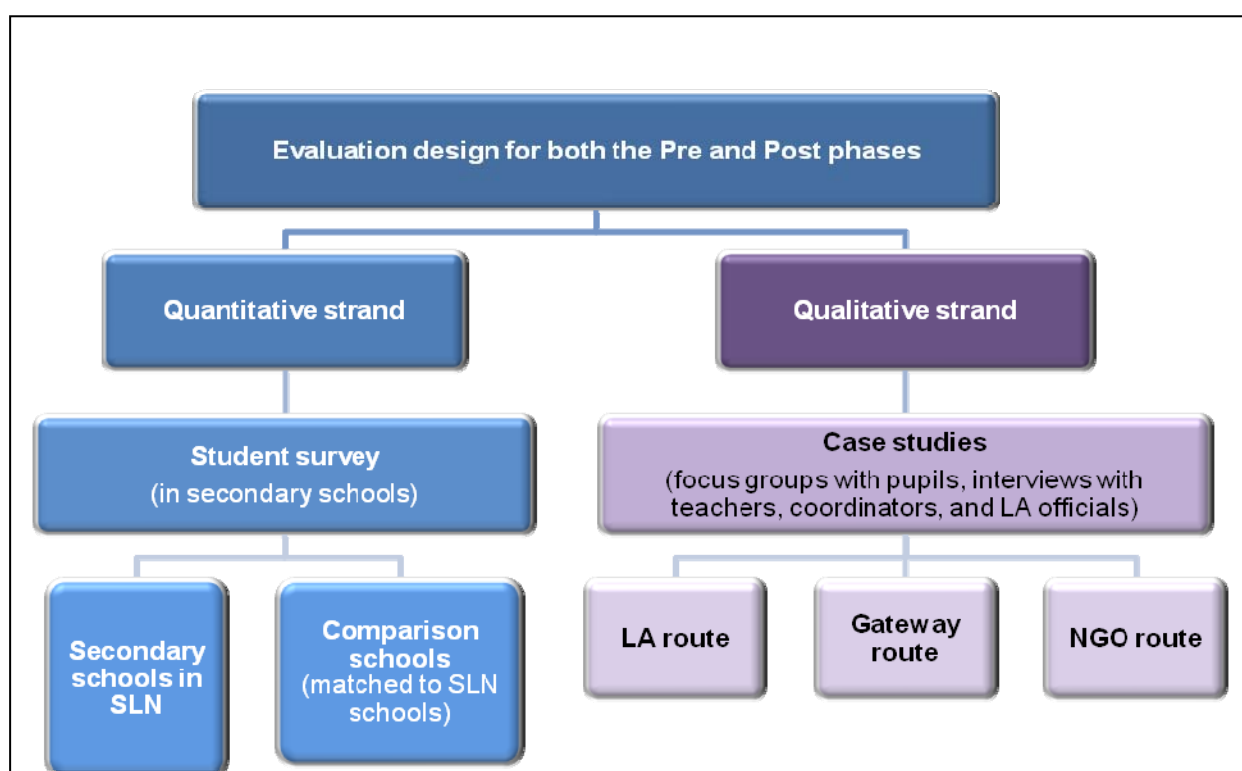
The **quantitative strand** involved a two-sweep survey of pupil knowledge, attitudes, experiences, and behaviours before and after participating in school linking activities. To ensure that any changes could be explained by linking rather than by school characteristics. The survey was administered to pupils who were participating in the linking activities, as well as those who were not. In addition, the survey was also administered in a matched comparison group of schools *not* participating in SLN. The pupils in the comparison group served as a control group, against which the results in the SLN schools could be compared and the effects of linking (rather than contextual effects) could be identified. Table 1.1 shows the pre- and post-intervention survey response rates for both SLN programme schools and comparison schools.

### Table 1.1: School-level response rates

| Round | Type | No. of schools contacted | No. of schools which completed the survey | Response rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Round 1 – pre-intervention | Intervention sample | 36 | 17 | 47% |
| | Comparison sample | 120 | 27 | 22.5% |
| Round 2 – post-intervention | Intervention sample | 17 | 15 | 88% |
| | Comparison sample | 27 | 23 | 85% |

Pupils were surveyed before and after the SLN programme period. A sample of 3902 pupils responding to both the pre- and post-surveys was achieved – 1536 from SLN programme schools and 2366 from comparison schools. Among the 1536 pupils from SLN schools, 455 reported that they had been directly involved in school linking activities. All subsequent analysis reported here was based on this sample of 3902 pupils. Details of responses to each and both surveys are given below in Table 1.2.

### Table 1.2: Survey responses

| | *Surveyed pre-intervention* | *Surveyed post-intervention* | *Surveyed both times* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Pupils in SLN programme schools* | 2282 | 1620 | 1536 |
| *Pupils in comparison schools* | 3690 | 2502 | 2366 |
| **Total** | **5972** | **4122** | **3902** |

The **qualitative strand** involved eight case-study clusters, six drawn from LAs that had recently signed up to SLN through the LA-based route, one made up of schools drawn from the Gateway-based route, and one using schools participating in school linking via the NGO route (see Figure 1.2 above). In each case study, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers who were involved in school linking,

members of the school's senior management team, and, where applicable, the local organisers (i.e. strategic manager and the operations manager in the LA or NGO). In addition, focus groups were conducted with a selection of pupils who were participating in the linking activities.

In conclusion, these two strands provided robust data to enable crucial insights to be drawn about the impact of school linking and its potential to contribute to fostering integration and cohesion.

## 1.4   Structure of the report

After this brief introduction, **Chapter 2** describes how the impact and outcomes of school linking have been measured. **Chapter 3** looks at how school linking activities were implemented and managed by LAs and schools. **Chapter 4** describes pupils' experiences and views of school linking, and **Chapter 5** summarises the impact and outcomes of the school linking work. Finally, **Chapter 6** contains conclusions and recommendations going forward. The report also contains an Executive Summary. Finally, there are also a number of appendices that provide background and more detailed information about the evaluation in terms of methodology and details about data collection and analysis undertaken. They include further details about the factor analyses of the survey data and the results of the analyses undertaken using multilevel modelling, as well as in relation to pupil responses and factor scores.

# Chapter 2   Measuring the impact and outcomes of school linking

In this chapter we describe the evaluation framework that was developed to measure the impact and outcomes of school linking and to assess its contribution towards strengthening integration and cohesion within communities. This was an especially challenging task. In 2008, Dyson and Gallannaugh conducted a scoping review of research on the role of schools in promoting local integration and cohesion, and they concluded that:

- Overall, the research literature in this field is limited in extent, uneven in coverage and (apparently) variable in quality. It provides plenty of ideas for action, but much less by way of robust understanding or evidence of outcomes... Perhaps most significant, it actually has very little to say about *community* cohesion as opposed to *pupils*' behaviours and attitudes (Dyson and Gallannaugh, 2008: 28)

- The lack of research on the impact on communities and local cohesion is perhaps not surprising; the concepts are complex and often contested. Furthermore, identifying a robust and reliable set of predictors and indicators has proved challenging (Ratcliffe et al, 2008 and Demack et al, 2010: 17).

This chapter describes in brief how this challenge was tackled in this evaluation, and lists the variables and indicators that have been taken into account in the analysis.

## 2.1   What are local integration and cohesion and how can school linking contribute to fostering it?

In recent years, local integration and cohesion have been principally referred to with the term "community cohesion", a concept that came to be widely used in policy debates after the 2001 Cantle Report on the disturbances in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley in May of that year (Home Office, 2001). What this term has meant has shifted over the past decade (see Ratcliffe et al, 2008), but in their *Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion*, the Department for Education (formerly the DCSF) defined community cohesion as:

> *… working towards a society in which there is a **common vision** and **sense of belonging** by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar **life opportunities** are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community.…*

Cohesion is therefore about how to avoid the corrosive effects of intolerance and harassment: how to build a mutual civility among different groups, and to ensure respect for diversity alongside a commitment to common and shared bonds (DCSF, 2007).

Recent research has indicated that a number of complex and inter-related factors contribute towards creating cohesion in local communities (see Laurence and Heath, 2008; Demack et al, 2010; Letki, 2008). Insights were also drawn from the literature on education for citizenship at school, which shed light on the relationship between schools, social capital, and building civic communities (see, for example, Whiteley, 2005; Keating *et al*, 2009).

Drawing on these literatures, we hypothesised that cohesion levels among pupils would be influenced by a range of individual-level, school-level, and local-level factors. The possible variables are summarised below in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1:    Variables influencing integration and cohesion**

| Level of analysis | Possible variables |
|---|---|
| Individual level | **Background variables** (e.g. sex, socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion, age, attitudes towards school and learning)<br><br>**Experience of diversity** (e.g. Contact / friendship with other ethnic groups)<br><br>**Experience of discrimination**<br><br>**Attitudes towards diversity and equality** (e.g. openness / tolerance)<br><br>**Levels of pupil participation and efficacy** (e.g. feeling of empowerment to change school/ local/ wider community; Participation in extra-curricular activities)<br><br>**Attitudes and ties to their community/ communities** (e.g. trust in friendships and relationships with teachers/ parents;)<br><br>**Level of deprivation**<br><br>**Citizenship type** (e.g. active, social justice, passive) |
| School level | **Level of diversity** (e.g. % EAL)<br><br>**Level of deprivation** (e.g. % FSM)<br><br>**School climate** (e.g. Levels of democracy and tolerance, incidence of discrimination and bullying) |
| Community-level | **Atmosphere in local area/ community "climate"**<br><br>**Deprivation in local area**<br><br>**Diversity in local area** |

However, while these factors have to be taken into account in the data analysis and interpretation, school linking is not designed to impact upon all of these variables (for example, school linking is not designed to change the level of deprivation in the community). Instead, SLN has developed a school linking initiative that aims to:

- Develop and deepen children and young people's knowledge and understanding of identity/ies, diversity, equality and community

- Develop skills of enquiry, critical thinking, reflection and communication

- Develop trust, empathy, awareness and respect

- Provide opportunities for children and young people to meet, build new relationships, work together, and contribute to the wider community

- Provide opportunities for adults, who work with children and young people, to share good practice, increase understanding of the issues of identity and community in their districts and to broaden perspectives (http://www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk/community_cohesion/what_is_it.aspx).

These aims are underpinned by Intergroup Contact Theory[3] and the premise that, under the right conditions, increased contact between school children from diverse backgrounds and neighbourhoods can have a positive impact on children and young people's attitudes, skills, knowledge, understanding, and experience of their own community and others.

The work is defined by a move away from 'multiculturalism', which has been criticised for accentuating difference, towards developing ways of living positively together: understanding diversity both for the richness it brings, but also acknowledging the tensions and complexities that have to be grappled with in order to find ways to live peacefully together, as seen from local, national and increasingly global perspectives.

Based on these stated aims, and on discussions with the SLN team, we developed a list of ways in which school linking could contribute to fostering integration and cohesion at different levels: the pupil-level; the school-level; teacher-level; and the LA-level. The SLN model is designed to be embedded locally and to have impact at all four levels. However, it is recognised that such impact takes time and may not be fully visible in the early stages of implementation and delivery. These possible areas of impact became the outcomes of interest in this evaluation and are listed in Table 2.2.

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[3] See Allport, 1954 and Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006.

**Table 2.2:** School linking and cohesion: impacts areas at different levels

| Level of analysis | Possible areas of impact |
|---|---|
| **Pupil-level** | • Knowledge and understanding of identity/ies, diversity, equality and community<br><br>• Attitudes/ Dispositions: i.e. To develop trust, empathy, awareness and respect for others in the community<br><br>• Self-belief, skills, and behaviours (such as team work and intercultural communication)<br><br>• Individual level/ experience of integration and cohesion |
| **School-level** | • Curriculum<br><br>• School ethos<br><br>• Whole school activities and policies for towards integration and cohesion |
| **School staff-level** | • Teaching practice<br><br>• Professional development and network building<br><br>• Awareness of local integration and cohesion policies and the specific issues in their school and their local area |
| **LA level** | • Strategic planning of school linking and local integration and cohesion policies<br><br>• Awareness of local integration and cohesion policies and specific issues in their schools and their local area |

## 2.2 Measuring the impact of school linking on cohesion

Having identified the areas and levels of interest, we then set about identifying a set of indicators that would reflect changes in these areas. The resultant indicators are described below in Table 2.3. These were developed in consultation with SLN, to ensure that these indicators reflected the intended aims and outcomes of school linking. Indicators were also drawn from the latest literature on citizenship and inter-cultural education, which have long been concerned with examining the relationship between young people and their political, social, civic, ethnic, religious, and school communities (see, for example, Hess, 2009; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Janmaat, 2010).

**Table 2.3:   Evaluation framework to examine the impact of school linking on local integration and cohesion**

| Level of analysis | Possible areas of impact | Indicators |
|---|---|---|
| **Pupil-level** | • **Knowledge and understanding** of identity/ies, diversity, equality and community | • Knowledge and understanding of themselves and their community<br>• Knowledge and understanding of other cultures, communities etc. |
| | • **Attitudes/ Dispositions:** i.e. To develop trust, empathy, awareness and respect for others in the community | • Attitudes towards diversity, equality, immigration, human rights etc<br>• Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures<br>• Awareness of diversity, discrimination, etc<br>• Respect for others  / respect for the rights of others<br>• Trust<br>• Openness to different opinions |
| | • **To develop self-belief, skills, and behaviours** (such as team work and intercultural communication) | • Ability to work together with others  (indicator of team work)<br>• Ability to talk about similarities and differences between people and places (indicator of intercultural communication)<br>• Critical thinking  and reflection<br>• Personal efficacy<br>• Confidence and willingness to identify and combat prejudice<br>• Inter-personal skills and confidence (e.g. learning how to meet new people and get along with them; learning how to cope in strange and new situations) |
| | • **Pupil perceptions and experience of integration and cohesion** | • School climate (incl. experience of bulling/ discrimination)<br>• Neighbourhood climate (incl. experience of bullying/ discrimination) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **School-level** | • **Curriculum** | • Evidence of increased planning and coverage of identity/ diversity issues in the curriculum |
| | • **School ethos** | • Support from senior leaders, teaching colleagues |
| | | • Democratic and tolerant school climate |
| | • **Whole school activities and policies** for towards integration and cohesion | • Dissemination of learning from school |
| | | • Increased planning for sustaining SLP and/or other integration and cohesion strategies in school development plan |
| | | • linking from SLP staff to other colleagues, and linking between SLP and other integration and cohesion strategies |
| **School staff-level** | • **Teaching practice** | • New teaching skills |
| | | • Evidence of increased planning and coverage of identity/ diversity issues in the curriculum |
| | • **Professional development and network building** | • Opportunity to link with other teaching professionals and share good practice |
| | • **Awareness of integration and cohesion policies and the specific issues in their school and their local area** | • Increased awareness of national and local cohesion policies for education (and more broadly) |
| | | • Development of appropriate integration and cohesion policies that reflect a knowledge of, and interest in, the needs of the school and local communities |
| **LA level** | • **Strategic planning of school linking and cohesion policies** | • Development of strategies for sustaining SLP beyond the pilot year |
| | • **Awareness of integration and cohesion policies and the specific issues in their schools and their local area** | • Increased awareness of national and local integration and cohesion policies for education (and more broadly) |
| | | • Development of appropriate integration and cohesion policies for their schools, that reflect a knowledge of, and interest in, the needs of the school and local communities |

Particular attention was paid to considering how we could measure integration and cohesion at the local level. One of the key challenges was to develop indicators that would reflect children and young people's experiences; the vast majority of the existing indicators have relied on data from adults or LAs (such as reports of race-related incidents recorded by police officers). Among the adult population, one of the main indicators has been responses to the question:

> *"to what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area* [within 15/20 minute walking distance] *is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?"*

The response options are: definitely agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, definitely disagree, or don't know (see Home Office Citizenship Survey 2005)**.** This indicator has been critiqued by Ratcliffe et al (2008: 54) for being too broad, too vague, and too reductive. For example, the term 'background' is a catch-all term that could be interpreted in a number of ways, which makes causal linking and robust interpretation difficult.

As a result, we tried to develop a more holistic measure of children and young people's experiences of their school and their communities. To do so, we drew on the latest research on integration and citizenship education and identified a series of additional indicators of the relationship between children and young people and their communities. This research produced two useful concepts and corresponding sets of indicators. The first is **"school climate",** a concept that is widely used in the citizenship education literature, to denote

> *"the impressions, beliefs, and expectations held by members of the school community about their school as a learning environment, their associated behaviour, and the symbols and institutions that represent the patterned expressions of the behaviour"* (Homana et al., 2005: 2).

Schools are one of the main communities that children and young people experience, and the school community may not overlap with their local community; we therefore deemed it important to include a measure of their experiences in school as well as outside of school.

This concept has been measured in a variety of ways, but for the purposes of this evaluation, we focused on the following:

- The extent to which teachers discuss discrimination with pupils
- Pupil perceptions of unfair treatment by teachers (either personally experienced or witnessed)
- The level of bullying in the schools (either personally experienced or witnessed bullying in last 12 months)
- Opportunities for pupil participation in classroom discussions and school decisions (that, is the democratic climate)

- Pupil perceptions of the level of segregation within the school (that is, the extent to which different groups (racial, ethnic, religious or other) in the school "get on").

The second concept that emerged we termed "**neighbourhood climate**" to echo the concept of school climate and to denote a broad understanding of neighbourhood experience. Again, we sought to include multiple indicators of this concept, including:

- Pupils' ties to their community (friends, relatives, and opportunities for participation)
- Pupil perceptions of unfair treatment outside school
- Trust of people in proximal social/ civic institutions
- Trust in different racial, ethnic, religious or socio-economic groups
- Pupil perceptions of the level of segregation within their neighbourhood (that is, the extent to which different groups (racial, ethnic, religious, socio-economic or other) in their neighbourhood "get on").

Combined, these indicators provide a multi-faceted understanding of children and young people's experiences of their school and local communities.

## 2.3   Summary

In this chapter we have described the evaluation framework for this study in brief. In the process, we have identified the outcomes of interest, the variables that may influence these outcomes, and the indicators of change. The key points are summarised below in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1:   Over-arching analytical framework for this evaluation**



Inputs → Contexts → Outcomes

**Background variables**

**Pupil-level factors**:
*a) which cannot be influenced by linking – e.g. age, sex, class, ethnicity*
*b) which* **may** *be influenced by linking: prior knowledge, attitudes, dispositions and skills, exposure to diversity*

**School-level factors**:
e.g. the demographics of the school population such as % FSM, % White British

**Community level** :
e.g. IDACI, level of diversity

**Context variables**

<u>Not</u> **participating in school linking**

**Taking part in school linking**

**Outcomes**

**For pupils**: knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, beliefs, perceptions of local integration and cohesion

**For teachers**: teaching practice, profesional development and networks, awareness of integration and cohesion issues

**For schools**: curriculum, school ethos, school policies for integration and cohesion

**For LAs**: awareness of and planning for integration and cohesion issues

# Chapter 3  Implementation and management of the Schools Linking Network

## Key findings

- LAs played a critical role in supporting the SLN programme in schools. This included auditing local needs and cohesion issues and agreeing on priorities, then approaching and initially linking schools, providing three days training and support, and taking care of practicalities such as collating a list of possible neutral venues for linking activities, which freed schools to concentrate on other aspects of the programme.

- Overall, the programme was successfully implemented across most of the schools. However, LAs and schools faced some issues around matching link partners (with some schools not being able to link with the type of school they originally envisaged). Also, some inter-school links broke down often as a result of staff changes.

- Most LAs and schools were planning to continue linking activities into the future.

## 3.1  Introduction

This chapter explores the implementation and management of the SLN programme across three main phases:

- Network start up – getting involved in the network and/making links with other schools

- Network running and maintenance

- Network sustainability.

It does so from two differing viewpoints of those involved with  SLN. The first perspective is that of the LAs tasked with starting up the local networks. The second perspective is that of the schools and school staff who responded to the approaches, largely though not exclusively from LAs, to take part in school linking. Together these two perspectives provide a broad overview of the issues, challenges and successes in the implementation and management of school linking through the pilot programme of  SLN.

## 3.2  Implementation and management at the local authority (LA) level

LA staff played an important role at all three of the main phases of school linking – engaging schools in the network, supporting school linking and sustaining the

network into the future. The following sections explore the role LAs played in relation to each of these phases as part of SLN and highlight particular examples of effective practice developed to overcome any issues or challenges encountered.

It is worth noting that one of the areas visited in this evaluation was a link using the Gateway model (i.e. where schools set up links with other schools across England independently and where no such LA support was available). This meant that such schools could not benefit from the types of support described in this chapter.

### 3.2.1 Network start-up

The research revealed that, at the start-up phase, LA staff played a critical role in establishing effective partnerships between schools. In particular, the following aspects were of importance in ensuring the successful initial organisation of the SLN programme:

- Recruiting an appropriate range of schools to the network

- Matching schools, using a range of criteria, in order to establish effective linking partnerships

- Gaining support and commitment from school leaders and ensuring, as far as possible, that teachers who are committed to the value of integration and cohesion were assigned to lead the programme in their school

- Providing clear details of what will be expected of schools throughout the year of linking and of support to sustain the programme beyond the pilot.

These are explored in further detail below.

The main method for **recruiting schools to the network** employed by LAs was to contact all primary and/or secondary schools in their authority and to ask them to complete an 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) form. Schools used this form to outline their existing approaches to integration and cohesion, what they hoped to achieve from the programme, their ideas on which pupils would be involved and the topics they planned to cover. LAs hoped that this approach would enable them to set up effective links between diverse schools, including ethnically diverse schools:

> '*It was around diversity, so we were trying to link more diverse schools with mainly white schools.*' (LA strategic manager)

Also, the information contained in the EOI forms was used by the LAs to match schools, alongside local knowledge about school characteristics, challenges and needs in terms of community cohesion:

> '*It really was about meeting their needs and meeting the needs of their school development plan, and following advice from colleagues. We didn't want to match together schools where the head teachers didn't get on or anything like that, so we were quite grateful for the local knowledge.*' (LA operational manager)

However, several authorities found that this approach did not allow them to attract a sufficient diversity of schools to the network. In particular, some LAs reported that they were not able to attract sufficient secondary and ethnically more diverse schools. As one operational manager commented:

> *'Generally, we found it was more mono-cultural. We did have schools that had diverse ethnic minority populations, but overall it was the mainly white British schools that registered'.* (LA operational manager)

It is worth noting that of the seven LAs involved in the research, two had not recruited any secondary schools to their network. Another LA had recruited three, while others managed to involve between four and six secondary schools.

Many LAs commented on struggling to involve secondary schools, largely as a result of other priorities and insufficient project funding, as one strategic manager explained:

> *'The only challenge was [that] we didn't have secondary involvement, but I think money wasn't attractive to them. I always find primary schools have a can do attitude; secondary colleagues have so much on that, unless there is a big monetary carrot to dangle, they are not interested really.'* (LA strategic manager)

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**Effective practice in recruiting schools**

One LA identified a short list of schools based on known characteristics of the schools, capacity to take on the project and relevance to existing work taking place within the school. This enabled the authority to attract a more diverse range of schools into the network. Another solution adopted by some LAs was to set up links with schools in neighbouring authorities to get access to a broader selection of schools. This allowed for more tailored links between schools. However, in some cases, as a consequence it meant that pupils had to travel further to visit their partner schools and it required more time to coordinate activities with other LAs.

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LAs also played a role in **setting up linking partnerships** between schools involved in the network. It was particularly effective in those authorities which:

- were able to draw on a large and diverse pool of schools
- could draw on local knowledge about the characteristics of local schools
- had collected information about the aims and objectives of the schools involved in the network.

> **Effective practice in partnership linking of schools**
>
> One LA used the information in the Expression of Interest (EOI) form and the assistance of a steering group to set up effective links between schools. '*After the EOI we narrowed it down to certain schools and we had on cards data on schools' percentage of pupils registered as EAL (English as an additional language), BME (Black and minority ethnic) pupils, FSM (free school meals)*". Also included was what the schools had requested. *"Some of them specifically requested a particular type of school. For example, a largely white British school might say "We would like to be linked with a school that is more ethnically diverse". And we took what we knew and the steering group matched them*'. The steering group consisted of people with a lot of local knowledge of schools, including the senior school improvement manager and the head of inclusion.

In contrast, there were some LAs where links were not as effective. This was mainly a result of a lack of diversity of schools in the areas and/or involved in the network. In one instance, for example, a LA strategic manager reported:

> '*Recently, we have asked for expressions of interest for the second year of the programme, and I have almost had only all-white schools coming forward wanting to link with a school with greater ethnic diversity*'.

One of the key lessons learned by LA staff was the need to ensure that they **engaged schools and teachers in the linking process** that were committed to the value of integration and cohesion from the start of the work. As one interviewee commented:

> '*I've learnt that it's really important to work with teachers that are keen to take part. If you have the teachers that are just right, then you know it's going to work. But when you get someone resistant to taking part then you can have problems*'. (LA operational manager)

LA staff with good knowledge of local schools played an important role in making links with such teachers and ensuring that they were committed to the process. Engaging such teachers was presented as a critical success factor:

> '*If the teachers are on board and enthusiastic, they completely make the project, they make it happen*'. (LA strategic manager)

Another important role of LA staff, who had received three days training from SLN, at the start of the programme was to **provide clear guidance to schools on the nature and structure of the SLN programme** and the year ahead, including key dates, the main aims and objectives of the linking programme and what would be expected of schools, teachers and pupils.

> '*It is important to explain, from the beginning what it is about, the rationale for the project, the background as well and detailing what activities there are*

*going to be, and also what learning outcomes we are planning to achieve by the end of the project'.* (LA operational manager)

### 3.2.2  Network running and maintenance

After the links had been set up between schools, LAs continued to play an important role in maintaining linking partnerships and encouraging effective links between schools. Interviews with local authority staff suggested that they played a role in:

- Embedding school linking in schools – to ensure continuity in case of staff turnover/sickness
- Delivering CPD opportunities as per the SLN three-day training model (see Chapter 1)
- Providing ongoing support to overcome any challenges
- Encouraging schools to monitor and evaluate the impact of school linking.

Interviews with LA staff suggested that losing key members of staff within a school was one of the main reasons for links between schools breaking down – though other reasons included unsuccessful matching of partner schools and schools not being committed to the project.

> *'We had one school where one of the link teachers moved to a different school and the teacher who took her place wasn't as dynamic. So the teacher from the other school was ticked off to be honest and they were going to drop out'.* (LA strategic manager)

LAs played a critical role, therefore, in trying to ensure that schools involved in the network were not only committed to the process, but that more than one teacher was involved in managing the school linking programme. Overall, it was more likely to be sustained and continue if schools made links to the school linking programme across the curriculum, including, for example, in citizenship or PSHE lessons. There was some evidence to suggest that this was more likely to be the case in schools that had been involved in  SLN for a while, and that schools in their first year sometimes relied on one key member staff to coordinate the linking activities. In such cases, there was a danger that if this teacher either left the school or was absent due to sickness or other reasons, the school linking process could break down.

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**Effective practice in embedding linking in school**

One LA always ensured that each school had at least two named contacts involved in the school linking programme. *'It's important for someone else to have a hand in it and know about it, whether it's the lead teacher, mentors or someone else in their school.  Otherwise, the teacher goes and you have invested so much with that teacher and they take all that knowledge with them'.*

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LAs emphasised **the importance of training (CPD)** delivered to schools to ensure not only a successful start-up of the school linking process but also to sustain effective

partnerships. Four of the LAs had delivered at least three CPD training days as recommended and designed by SLN, while the other three had offered two training days.

All authorities emphasised the positive impact of the training that they had delivered. They all believed that it had not only helped to engage schools in the school linking process, but that it had also ensured that schools sustained their involvement. In some cases, it had also helped to overcome issues or challenges identified by schools. LA staff believed that teachers had particularly appreciated the CPD training days for the opportunity to link with other schools and learn from their experiences:

> *'The CPD is essential. It's been a fabulous opportunity for staff to network and to share their experiences and that has been one of the biggest learning points in the whole project because they have been able to share their experiences and inspire colleagues'.* (LA operational manager)

However, in some cases, teachers from schools had not been able to attend training sessions as a result of other engagements or not being able to find cover for lessons. As a LA contact said:

> *'It's quite fatal if one of the link teachers is there and the other teacher isn't. It's not good for the partnership is it? And that's happened because of illness or one of them is on a residential'.* (LA operational manager)

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**Effective practice in delivering CPD training**

One LA had linked the provision of the incentive payment to schools with their attendance at the first two CPD training events. *'We didn't give them the money if they didn't turn up. We had to pay them for the last one, but the first one we kept saying to them, "if you don't come you don't get the money because that's for cover"'.*

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LAs provided **other forms of support to schools** other than the specific CPD training events, although the level of support differed across authorities. In all cases, the operational manager maintained contact with participating schools either by phone or by email, but others had more direct contact, sometimes also involving a strategic manager.

Some of the LAs had maintained considerable ongoing support to schools throughout the year. One operational manager, for example, had kept a very hands-on role with the four secondary schools involved in school linking, although he only had one day per week available for the project.

> *'My role involves speaking with all the teachers involved, writing schemes of work, coming up with the ideas for the linking events, arranging venues, catering, evaluating, speaking to the pupils, being there on the day to help with the organisation and support mainly the teachers, making sure it's suited to the aims and objectives of the project itself'.* (LA operational manager)

There were similar levels of hands-on involvement in two of the authorities which had around 20 schools in the network and full-time operational managers. In these cases, it was felt that offering such *'hands-on support'* was a way of encouraging more schools to get involved in school linking by taking some of the organisational burden off schools. It is possible that without such ongoing support, some schools would not have found the time to engage in the programme. It is also worth noting that LAs without a full-time operational manager were more likely to report problems in finding time to support schools and were also less likely to have large numbers of schools involved in the network.

This contrasted with more minimal contact and support in one LA. The operational manager in one LA with six secondary schools involved in the school linking programme said that, after the first of two CPD training events, his role had mainly been to keep in contact with the schools by phone and email and to send termly updates to SLN. He believed that after the initial set-up, the schools had pushed the programme forward largely independently of him without much need for ongoing support. *'If the schools were dependent on me, I wouldn't have been giving them a good service'*.

Almost all LAs said that they had **encouraged schools to use the SLN evaluation forms** to collect baseline and end-of-project data from pupils in order to measure any changes in attitudes, confidence and self-esteem. However, three authorities reported that they realised, sometimes only towards the end of the year, that several schools had not conducted the baseline assessment. This meant that not all schools had collected data on the impact of the programme.

Some LAs had complemented these school-based evaluations with their own attempts at measuring, or at least documenting, the impact and outcomes of the school linking programme. In some cases, this consisted mainly of monitoring information relating to the number of visits conducted or the number of pupils involved in the programme. Others used more informal evaluation methods, including conducting informal interviews with pupils.

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**Effective practice in evaluating the impact of school linking**

In one authority, evaluation activities had been conducted at three levels. The LA had encouraged schools to use the SLN evaluation forms to collect baseline and end-of-project data from pupils. However, the operational manager had complemented this data with case studies of individual schools using various documents and photos to put together individual profiles of the linking activities and their outcomes within schools. In addition, she had encouraged schools to conduct their own individual evaluations tailored to their own schools and projects, including the use of learning journals, emotion graphs or video journals: *'We asked them to pick one or two and stick with it, so things like, learning journal where after each significant event the children reflect in writing about what they have done and learnt'*.

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### 3.2.3 Network sustainability in the future

All LAs considered that the programme had been highly **cost-effective**, although the actual amount of money received by schools to support their linking activities differed. It ranged from £400 to £1000 per school dependent on decisions by each LA about how to make best use of the funding received via SLN. However, most LA staff emphasised that the funding provided only covered some of the total costs and that schools involved in school linking had to spend some of their own resources to fully fund the costs. The support provided was seen as an important mechanism to get schools involved, if only to cover the cost of cover to encourage teachers to attend CPD sessions.

> *'Most things like this in the past have been £4000.  Every time you get involved in an external piece of work you're given £4000 to get on with it. The £600 is just initial costs contribution, it's been very useful and they* [the schools] *have appreciated* [it].*'* (LA strategic manager)

Most of the LAs were planning to **continue school linking the following year** – either by drawing on additional funding from within the LA, asking schools to fund the support or drawing on existing funds from the previous year that had not yet been spent. Only one LA explicitly stated that they were unlikely to continue to support school linking in schools due to financial issues:

> *'Well, we're in a terrible state, our budget has to be reduced a lot, and I don't know if I will be in post next year. I know there will be no money from the local authority at all. That's the way of the world'.*  (LA operational manager)

In two authorities, strategic managers involved with  SLN had convinced senior LA staff to fund the school linking in the future; this had been done by selling the concept, and aims and outcomes of school linking to them.

> *'We have tried really hard to sell it and we have been out and presented to lots of different groups and steering groups, and it's worked.  We have shown them video evidence, we have taken the children, and we took an identity box the class made full of special things the children have done. And they have opened the box and taken things out and their reaction has been "Wow this is really good, the quality of work is really high and rich as well!", and I think that's why they've kept it on'.* (LA operational manager)

However, LAs were generally concerned that such funding would be restricted to the following year and that they would not be able to rely on continued support for school linking in 2011/12 as a result of the impact of proposed *'huge spending cuts'*.

LAs with continued funding in 2010/11 were hoping to continue or even grow links between schools. Several of them reported already a growth in the number of schools wanting to get involved in school linking in 2010/11. Furthermore, even if LA support was not available, most LA staff thought that some schools would continue links – although this would be restricted to those with effective, existing links and a real

commitment to the value of school linking. They also thought that it would also depend on the schools retaining staff with the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm for school linking.

## 3.3 Implementation and management at the school level

This section outlines the work that took place at the school level, from set-up and maintaining the link to the future involvement of the schools in the linking network.

### 3.3.1 Linking work start-up

The most common reason given by schools for signing up to SLN was to provide opportunities for the pupils at their school to mix with those from different backgrounds. Some of the schools felt that their own school population was not very diverse, and that their pupils were not very aware of the differences that could exist between themselves and others:

> '...it's almost a mono culture, our pupil exposure to, or experience of different strands of community cohesion can be very limited. Socio-economically it's quite narrow and culturally and racially...' (senior leader)

The desire to provide opportunities for pupils to mix with people from different backgrounds was linked to wanting to help their pupils to develop respect and understanding of other people, and to show that although differences might exist, that there can also be similarities. Teachers frequently talked about wanting to broaden the horizons of their pupils, and to give them the skills to be able to work with different groups of people, including people that were different from themselves, as described by one of the school linking coordinators:

> 'I want them to learn there are more similarities between us than there are differences between the different people; that's the main aim. It doesn't matter where you live, what colour you are, the fact you have the same interests, same feelings ... hopefully they can raise awareness of each others' beliefs. I think tolerance is another one.'

In addition to improving their pupils' ability to work with others, school staff also felt that the linking work would help to improve other life skills such as self confidence, critical thinking and communication skills:

> 'I can see benefits in terms of self-confidence and self-esteem. The fact they are being taken out of their comfort zone, as a life skill exercise, it's important.' (school linking coordinator)

The school staff also felt that the linking work would be an opportunity to raise the aspirations of their pupils and to show them that they could achieve more. This was particularly the case in schools where the link had been made between schools with pupils from different socio-economic groups because they wanted their pupils to

realise that they did have things in common with people who were richer or poorer than them:

> *'...when we go to our link school...there will be lots of big houses, and it will open the discussion about how do we get to live somewhere like this ...the main thing will be talking to children about [the fact that] there is something out there other than their own town, and if we want the good things in life we have to work hard for them and aspire to them...'* (senior leader)

Less frequently mentioned was that school staff felt that joining the network would help their school meet the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion, as part of the Ofsted requirements. At the time of joining the network, the duty on schools was a relatively new aspect of Ofsted inspections and consequently schools were exploring ways of evidencing their commitment to the duty, as one school linking coordinator explained:

> *'...it's also now something OFSTED will be looking at in a big way...that community cohesion aspect, so this is a useful tool in helping us to achieve that target really.'* (school linking coordinator)

Funding was also mentioned as a reason for schools to join the linking work. However, it seemed more that funding would have been a barrier if it had not been in place, rather than funding being seen as a particular incentive to participate.

As part of the EOI process used by LAs, schools could request to be partnered with a particular type of school, and some had even identified named schools that they would prefer to link with. Schools tended to want to work with another institution that looked different from them in some way, in relation to pupils' ethnicity, religion or socio-economic status. This was neatly summarised by one Senior Leader who said that: *'we have gone for a contrasting school, really that's more or less our school in reverse, if you like'.*

One of the issues faced by schools (and also mentioned by LAs, as described in Section 3.2) was that it was not always possible to link sufficiently diverse schools as requested. For example, in some areas the majority of schools had a high proportion of white British pupils, and most of these schools wanted to be linked with a school with a more diverse ethnic mix. In such cases, some schools were paired with schools that differed from them in other ways, including, for example, socio-economic status:

> *'We wanted to link with a school which was multi culturally diverse and what we have linked with is a school that is different in terms of its socio-economic status, so it's a very wealthy area. While that does have barriers that need tackling and we can do that, I was hoping to tackle the multicultural issue... for me what would have been best was to have a link with* [an urban LA] *rather than linking with a school within our LA and then there would have been a wider scope of schools to chose from...It's got plenty of benefits but it's just not the focus I was hoping to tackle.'* (senior leader)

**Effective practice in initiating a school link**

SLN provides clear guidance to schools about the need to understand their own motivations for linking. Indeed, during the CPD training sessions, schools are asked to consider the broad meanings of the terms identity and diversity and to work with local communities in the first instance. This underlines the importance of schools being clear from the off about their reasons for linking and what they aim to achieve. This thinking needs to be passed on to the people making the links (the LA or SLN for the Gateway model) to maximise the chances of being linked with a school that would help them to achieve their aims.

Some of the schools were proactive and identified the school they wanted to link with and made the link themselves, in advance of joining the programme: *'I had links with* [the LA of the link school] *because that's where I used to work, and knew one of the extended services coordinators who then put me in touch with* [our link school]. *Then we found out about the schools linking project and joined in with that, and I think when we went for the training there we were probably the only two schools that had done it like that, met and were doing something together. A lot of the schools hadn't even met and I don't know how they have got on. So finding our own link has been good.'*

## 3.3.2  Participating in the link

Once the link had been made, school linking coordinators had to work together to make the link work, a process facilitated by the CPD provided . The following section summarises what links looked like and teacher experiences of CPD and monitoring and evaluation of the work throughout the year. Finally, it discusses the challenges experienced by schools.

**Management of the SLN programme** within schools was typically taken on by a single teacher who became the school linking coordinator. Some schools were combining the linking work with that of other programmes, such as the UN Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA), links to the curriculum (for example citizenship or history) and SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning). In some instances, the location of the linking work in the school defined which teacher became the school linking coordinator in the school, in others it was a particular interest of the teacher.

**Effective practice in involving school staff in the link**

One senior leader identified the risk of only having one member of staff involved in the link work. So, in addition to the school linking coordinator who was a class teacher, teaching assistants also helped with the link: *'We have had some of our teaching assistants involved and we have highly skilled teaching assistants. It doesn't always have to be a teacher; other schools need to recognise that. For it to have a wider impact in school, teachers have to realise that other people are also just as capable as they are of delivering a project like this effectively.'*

Schools, particularly those participating in linking through their LA, were following the SLN approach and, on the whole, schools successfully implemented the programme during the first year of the work. The links took place over one academic year, allowing schools to build the relationship over time. Schools completed activities before meeting the other school, often swapping materials such as passports or video diaries before meeting the pupils from their link school. The first visit was usually in a neutral venue and involved sport or creative work, or team building activities. As the year progressed, most schools met a number of times, sometimes hosting visits at their schools or in the local community.

The work between the schools typically focused on identity, diversity (in terms of culture and religion), community and history framed by the SLN questions: Who am I? Who are we? Where do we live? and How do we live together? The focus of the activities that the links did when they met up was often related back to the reasons for joining. For example, schools that had signed up in order to broaden horizons tended to use activities that explored difference and similarity in identity. There was no difference in the topics covered by primary and secondary schools. although the level of work was often different.

Linked schools tended to have similar age groups of pupils working together. In most links, the pupils were from a single class or year group, which was often the case if the school linking coordinator was a class or year tutor. Decisions about the year groups involved were often led by other activities and priorities for those year groups. For example, Year 11 pupils were not chosen to participate in any of the case study schools because they were working towards their key stage 4 qualifications. Some secondary schools had decided to start the work with Year 7 initially, with a view to expanding the work as that cohort progressed through the school.

> *'....it's been kept to that small group, one of the things we have discussed is how we can use the lessons learnt next year and look at implementing that, we're looking at the lessons we have learnt and how to filter it in to other subjects'* (school linking coordinator)

In most cases, pupils were selected to participate by the staff depending on the role of the school linking coordinator. For example in primary schools it was often the class of the school linking coordinator that participated. In a few instances the school chose the pupils who would participate in the linking work specifically because they thought that the young people otherwise did not have many opportunities to mix with people that were different to them. One school had identified a group of boys that they thought '*might be radicalised at some point...*':

> *'we have selected a group of boys in this case, all from Year 7. The reason we have selected the boys we have is we thought that they were boys who might be radicalised at some point, or haven't had much contact with white British pupils. The other two schools we are working with have the opposite problem. They have children they are worried might be in contact with BNP at some point. The idea is to bring the groups together and we have looked specifically*

*at the same age group. What we don't want is ageist bullying, or superiority. So we want Year 7's all across the board and we are looking to introduce our Asian and Afro Caribbean boys to their white British boys and try to find commonality between them all. '* (school linking coordinator)

The other approach was to have a school council model, including pupils from different year groups (in primary) or from different classes within the same year (in secondary). In this model, pupils were nominated and voted onto the council by their classmates. Such links involved two schools both using a school council model.

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**Effective practice in school approaches to linking**

Regardless of the type of model used by schools, one of the most important things to make the link work was a clear sense of direction and a realistic assessment of what the work would involve. It was also important that the two linked schools had similar aims and hopes for the work: *'It's important that the staff you chose have a very clear understanding of the core purpose of the project and a clear overview of the minimum of what is expected and the time frame of it. It's important that people are aware of the shape it should take. Also, what the project is about.'* (Senior Leader)

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The linking coordinators from schools that had been recruited through LAs attended **SLN CPD training** delivered by the LA advisers, who, in turn, had received facilitator training from SLN. Part of the training was an opportunity for the paired link teachers to work together to plan the activities and focus of their link. School linking coordinators were then expected to continue to coordinate the work outside the training sessions. Teachers found the opportunity to attend the training with their counterpart helpful, though in the few instances where a teacher had attended without their partner it had resulted in a less useful experience, as described by one school linking coordinator who attended one of the sessions even though their partner could not:

> *'...you need to be with your partner. So in the morning the giving us information was fantastic, and the people who delivered it were brilliant, and that gave lots of ideas. Listening to other staff running the project was helpful, but if your partner isn't there, there isn't much to do.'*

Perhaps more could be done to cater for teachers attending training without their partner to ensure that the training is still useful. Flexibility in the timing and length of courses to encourage attendance would also help, for example considering twilight sessions. The training sessions often required time during the school day, which meant that finding and funding classroom cover became a consideration.

The SLN CPD training and resources had provided school linking coordinators with ideas for activities and most reported using them as an integral part of the link work. There might be further scope for training or networking sessions across as well as within LAs to enable such sharing of practice to become more widespread.

Most LAs had provided several training or keep-in-touch sessions throughout the year. School linking coordinators had found these sessions helpful, particularly as an opportunity to share their experiences with other schools, and to learn about different approaches. However, this appeared to depend on the approach of the LA, for example, two school linking coordinators from the same LA would have liked additional sessions in which they could share their experiences and hear about activities taking place in other links:

> *'It would have been nice to bring everyone together at mid-point and see what other schools were doing and catch up with your own partnership school, look around, give us advice and support.'*

> *'It would be nice now that everyone had finished to listen to what other people had done and how it went, and I know that would be useful.'*

In addition to the CPD training provided by LAs, school linking coordinators valued having support from the LA when they needed it, for example, when arranging activities or thinking of ideas for how to move the link forward. The LAs also provided practical help with logistics which was appreciated by school linking coordinators:

> *'I thought it was really good. They were on the end of the phone if there was anything we needed to know, they were there* [with] *any information that we weren't sure about, they would signpost us. They were really good, very helpful.'*

Schools that were involved in the linking work via the Gateway route were less happy with the level of training and support they had received, and this was reflected in the amount of link work they had completed, the level of confidence of the school linking coordinators and the detail of their plans for the work. The Gateway schools had generally participated in fewer link visits – partly because of geography (as some links were across LA boundaries), but also in some cases because they had less of a structure in place in terms of training and support than the schools who were recruited through their LA. One of the school linking coordinators involved in a Gateway link explained:

> *'I think the training was very good and I think having that national training and setting the ball rolling is really useful,* [but] *I think more could be done to help the schools in terms of ideas. Some of the schools are really far away and I'm not sure how they are getting on…. There could be more support. I don't know whether that needs to be in the form of funding but sitting down with us and saying what are the barriers, would be useful. …Having someone with experience looking at our strategy and questioning us on why we want to do it, and what the impact is, having someone there to be the objective critical friend would be useful.'*

**Effective practice in training and support for linking**

Making the most of the CPD training and support provided by the LA helped schools to really progress with the link work. As one school linking coordinator described, having a lot of the logistics organised by the LA gave them time to focus on the linking work: '[LA operations manager] *was great. She's always on the end of an email and I think we didn't have much trouble organising things. At the first linking day we'd been provided with a whole load of stuff to do with venues and how activities might run, and possible suggestions. So we had that at the start, we were able to book the venue and just get on with it.'*

**Monitoring and evaluation** of activities was not consistent between the schools visited. Where it had taken place, it was only of the pupils who had been directly involved in the linking work, and not of any wider impact that might have taken place on the whole school.

Although the LAs encouraged monitoring and evaluation, and covered ways to do this in the training sessions, some schools had not done any formal monitoring or evaluation of the linking work. Schools had often used informal ways of gauging how the link was proceeding, such as group discussions after each link visit or activity. A few of the school linking coordinators said they had monitored the activities by observing the pupils and making their own notes.

In some schools they had used forms and activity sheets to obtain feedback from the participating pupils. Very few schools used journals or questionnaires to capture the views of the pupils.

**Effective practice in monitoring and evaluation of linking**

Following the advice provided by SLN about the importance of reflection, one of the primary schools used the reflection time after each linking activity to also evaluate the impact of the activities. In addition to group discussion, throughout the link the pupils completed a 'feeling' or 'blob' tree to show how they felt about the project at different stages, including before the children met each other. This was designed by the particular teacher in this school separate from the support and materials provided by SLN. The blob trees allowed pupils to indicate how they felt about the linking by colouring in the 'blob-person' that they most closely identified with and the teachers were able to review changes across the year. It was also an accessible way for the pupils to start to reflect on the activities.

Chapter 4 will explore the level of impact the work had at pupil, school and LA level.

### 3.3.3 Challenges and lessons learned

School staff identified a number of challenges that they had encountered during the set up and running of the linking work – predominately related to time, attitudes and resources and funding.

Time and availability was an issue both within school and when trying to liaise and work with the link school. One school linking coordinator described the challenges, but also commented that the central support from the LA had helped:

> *'it's getting everyone together …there has been quite a lot of email tennis, but equally we can't always meet face-to-face. A lot of the meetings have been Friday after school…it's about time and organising it in a way you can get staff involved … I guess this project has relied on goodwill. Sometimes that central organisation and funding, and making sure things happen, makes it easier'.*

Teachers found it easier to dedicate time to the link when the school linking work had been integrated into the coordinator's role and was closely aligned with their existing responsibilities. However, when the linking work was added to a more diverse workload, teachers found it more difficult. In some links, the work held a different status or priority within the two schools and this was often reflected in the amount of time spent on the project. This in turn caused tensions between the schools.

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**Effective practice in school leadership support for linking**

Support from the senior leadership team was seen as very important in order to facilitate re-arranging activities and making time for the linking coordinators to meet up and plan the work together, as highlighted by one the senior leaders: *'Just ensure that back-up is there. If a staff member needs more time then you know as a head you have to support that. There are always challenges  when you are releasing staff … where we have worked with the school council, taking them out of year groups, that has been a particular challenge.'*

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Scheduling between schools could also be difficult when trying to coordinate conflicting timetables and obtain cover for lessons. In some cases this was further complicated by difficulties in contacting the coordinator for a variety of reasons. In extreme cases, this led to a breakdown of the link. The availability of pupils for activities was sometimes a problem, particularly when trying to coordinate meetings between the pupils during school hours. This was more of an issue in links using the school council model and at secondary level. One of the school linking coordinators suggested that better use of technology and social media could be a solution for future work:

> *'Try to make it easier for schools to link, having a website. The kids are always on facebook and I think if you are going to engage pupils and get them to work together…take advantage of the medium they use. Maybe one of the downfalls we have had is that we have been too staff-led, maybe pupils should have used the internet to get them communicating. It's an easy medium, they are very computer literate.'*

As mentioned above, the link work was normally taken on by a single member of staff – the school linking coordinator - within a school. In most links this did not cause an

issue, and indeed, many schools saw the first year of the work as a pilot on which they would consider building in subsequent years. However in schools where the school linking coordinator left during the year, continuity became an issue and in some cases the link suffered with, for example, fewer linking activities taking place. The continuation of the link was dependent on the quality of the handover between teachers, and the attitude of the teacher taking it on. Linking coordinators who had experienced a change in their counterpart at the other school felt that the linking coordinator should – where possible – remain the same throughout the project.

Most of the school linking coordinators became involved in the work because it fitted with their interests. However, engaging other staff within the school could sometimes be a problem. It was a particular issue when there was a changeover in staff midway through the year and the project was allocated to a member of staff not previously involved. One senior leader explained that this was an unexpected challenge: '*you think it's going to be the children having the issue when teachers are notoriously inflexible and stuck in their ways and I hadn't anticipated that*'.

In the first year of the linking work, schools were provided with some funding for cover and transport, and so money was not frequently mentioned as a challenge. However, as will be highlighted below, it was becoming a real concern for schools hoping to continue the work the following year.

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**Effective practice in the use of funding to support linking**

Good planning and working together were key to the success of a link: '*we had funding for the supply, and I think that's why it was effective. We had the quality time to sit down and meet and think it through, and we didn't want to do it after school because I don't think it would have worked. There is a lot of work involved before and after. The actual project itself was quite easy, that wasn't a strain at all. There is a lot of work leading up to it and schools need to recognise [that]. It needs to be well planned.*'

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### 3.3.4  Future sustainability

Many schools had signed up to the linking programme as an initial pilot for the first year. Most of the schools were hoping to continue the linking work after the first year, but in many cases they were not yet sure if it would. The main uncertainty was related to funding the activities and whether they would be able to find internal funding to support activities such as providing transport to neutral venues. One pair of link schools felt that they would be able to continue the link because they were within walking distance of each other. Although, as mentioned above, funding was not in most cases a direct incentive to participate in the programme, it was important in order to support schools to run the programme by providing resources such as staff cover and funding some of the activities. One school for whom funding was likely to be an issue was considering continuing the link electronically through email contact, but without meeting up face-to-face.

The amount of time that coordinating the link had taken was also a factor for consideration, as described by one of the school linking coordinators:

> *'This has been done in my free time. I have had to pull pupils out of their lessons, I have put about 35 hours of my own time, and that's a considerable chunk really. I have tried to speak to the other schools* [about next year] *but I think they are struggling like me with time.'*

Desire to continue the link was related to whether the link had thus far achieved what schools had set out to do. Schools with a positive experience of the process were more likely to want to continue the work into the following year. In some cases, schools were considering ways of expanding the linking work in one of two ways: firstly in terms of expanding the linking to involve more pupils within their school, and secondly some were considering other types of links, both within the UK and internationally. Although on the whole schools were interested in continuing link work, some were considering trying to form a link with a different type of school. This tended to be the case in schools that had been paired with a school of a different profile to what they originally hoped for when they signed up to the programme.

All of the school staff interviewed said that they would recommend the programme to other schools; however some of the interviewees were more cautious than others, adding that it is worth doing if the right member of staff takes it on:

> *'Yes, as long as they have the right members of staff who have a clear vision for it, yes, definitely.'* (school linking coordinator)

> *'Yes, I would, but it needs to be the right person, it's got to be someone who believes in it. It is time consuming, it's a lot of emailing and you're working with schools you don't know and each school has their own way of working and sometimes you have to find a way to make it work. It has to be the right person.'* (school linking coordinator).

This was reflected in the comments from one school who felt that staff at their link school were less keen to continue the work. In order to keep the linking work on track, the staff in both schools need to dedicate time to moving the linking work forward and maintaining regular contact between the schools. Without a driving force, the links can drift and in some cases fall apart, as was seen in a couple of examples of school links visited as part of this research.

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**Effective practice in sustaining links**

Teachers identified several areas of advice for schools considering linking work in the future:

- Keep the activities simple and be realistic about what can be done in the time available

- The people taking on the linking in schools need to be flexible, committed, enthusiastic and interested in the work

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- The linking coordinators need to dedicate real time to make the link work

- Be clear about what the outcome of participating will be. Both schools need to have a clear and aligned vision for what they hope to achieve from the link

- Do as much of the planning face-to-face, and make the most of opportunities to work together face-to-face (for example, at training sessions)

- Plan dates and activities as far in advance as possible

- The pre-visit and planning work is important to lay the groundwork with the pupils

- Try to ensure that teachers from both sides of the link attend the training sessions

- Have more than one member of staff involved in the programme within a school to aid continuity

- Regular contact and clear communication between schools is essential to keep the link moving

- Make it about the pupils

- Senior leadership support is crucial from the outset

- Consider the distance to the link school – if it is too far away it will make meeting difficult and challenging

- Be clear about the amount of funding and maximise its use for training and support across the year of the link

- Plan for sustainability in the link beyond the first year, where possible

- Focus and celebrate positive outcomes of the links within and across schools and LAs.

The next chapter looks at pupils' experiences of the programme.

# Chapter 4 Pupil experiences and views of the SLN programme

## Key findings

- School linking visits involve a variety of activities, from sport to learning about different cultures and religions, and most often provide an opportunity for pupils to explore similarities and differences between themselves and the link-school pupils.

- Most pupils enjoy the school linking activities, in particular meeting new people. They tend to think that linking is fun and interesting (61 and 56 per cent of secondary school pupils involved in linking, respectively).

- The majority (70 per cent) of pupils have had the aims of the programme explained to them but not all pupils reported being involved in pre-linking and post-linking activities. However, data suggest that involvement in such activities can enhance pupils' enjoyment of and learning from linking.

- In a small number of instances, pupils had less positive linking experiences, for instance, experiences of conflict between pupils from different linking schools, and found taking part in linking upsetting (7 per cent).

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores pupils' experiences and enjoyment of the Schools Linking Network (SLN) programme, drawing on data from pupils directly involved in school linking, both from the survey of secondary school pupils[4] and from group discussions with primary and secondary pupils. When discussing the case study data, it should be noted that, unless explicitly stated, the views and experiences described relate to both primary and secondary pupils. Although the main focus of the chapter is on pupils' accounts of their participation in the programme, teacher's views on pupils' experiences are also included. It should also be noted that this chapter focuses on pupils' *experience* of the programme rather than on its *impact*, which is the subject of Chapter 5.

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[4] All survey data reported in this report are for secondary school pupils who took part in both the pre- and the post-intervention surveys.

## 4.2 Pupil experiences of school linking

### 4.2.1 Activities completed as part of the SLN programme

In most cases, pupils involved in linking were given **an introduction to the programme** which included the reasons for their school's participation in it. Indeed, the majority (70 per cent) reported, in the survey, that their teacher explained to them and to other pupils why their school was participating in the SLN programme. The reasons given by teachers for taking part were 'to meet new people from different backgrounds' (54 per cent of pupils who said they had been given an explanation), 'to work on things that we all need to do to live and work together in the wider world' (37 per cent) and 'to find out more about where we all live' (23 per cent of pupils who were given an explanation).

School linking involved **a variety of activities**. The most frequently reported activity that secondary pupils did with their link school was a 'sports/outdoor activity' (44 per cent of pupils), followed by a 'drama, art, film or music project' and 'learning about different cultures or religions' (both 32 per cent of pupils). This was further illustrated by the qualitative data, which revealed that the activities pupils were involved in included, for example, playing cricket, music making, and museum visits. It also was apparent from the focus groups that pupils felt that the programme was aimed at meeting other children/young people who go to a different school from them, rather than merely being about the specific activities they completed. As one pupil emphasised, '*It was fun. We got to meet new people*'.

As for the **focus of the linking activities**, pupils tended to report that the school linking visits were an opportunity to find out about similarities and differences between pupils relating to 'likes and dislikes', 'languages', and 'what's most important to you in your life'. 'Cultural practices' and 'religious practices' were less often mentioned, as was 'skin colour'. However, it is worth noting that over a quarter of pupils reported that they saw or talked about no similarities or differences (shown in Table 4.1). This figure would seem comparatively high and may mean that, in some cases, more input from teachers may be required to ensure more meaningful exchanges take place between linking pupils.

**Table 4.1    Similarities and differences seen or talked about by pupils as part of linking activities**

|                                           | %   |
|-------------------------------------------|-----|
| Likes and dislikes                        | 48  |
| Languages                                 | 36  |
| What's most important to you in your life | 31  |
| Cultural practices                        | 25  |
| Clothes people wear                       | 25  |
| Skin colour                               | 24  |
| Religious practices                       | 23  |
| Finances/money                            | 12  |
| None                                      | 27  |
| N =                                       | 455 |

*More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.*
*All those who had directly taken part in school l inking activities (N=455).*
*A total of 426 respondents answered at least one item in this question (6% non response).*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

The qualitative data also indicate that the pupils involved in linking activities often talked about likes and dislikes, including hobbies, in both primary and secondary schools. For example, primary pupils said *'we got to meet new people and people who have hobbies the same as you'* and *'we had quite a lot in common that we didn't know in the past. They have XBOX 360. If you give them your address, you can talk online and play games and stay friends'*. In addition, there was evidence that pupils were not only focusing on their individual characteristics but also on aspects relating to the communities from which they came, such as other pupils' culture. One of the primary pupils reported, for example, that *'we saw a different culture'* and a secondary pupil commented that their favourite part of the programme was *'trying all the different foods in Brick Lane'*. The case-study data also revealed that pupils also talked about differences between their school and the link school as part of the school linking activities. For example, one primary pupil said *'we have been meeting up with the school to see what's different between our school and their schools, and the way they do things and the way we do things'*. However, as indicated in Table 4.1, only about a quarter of pupils indicated that cultural and religious practices, or socio-economic aspects of pupils' lives, were a focus of such discussions. An increased emphasis on such practices may have had a positive impact on pupils' awareness of important cultural and religious differences.

### 4.2.2   Activities completed before and after meeting the link schools

Survey data indicate that a wide range of **pre-linking activities** had taken place in schools in preparation for linking visits (see Table 4.2). However, nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of the secondary pupils who were involved in linking reported that they did not do any such activities before meeting their link school. This high figure may partly be a result of pupils not realising that activities they were doing in class were part of the SLN programme. The qualitative data supports this interpretation, as the

majority of teachers interviewed reported that they had done at least some work in class before the first school linking visit. However, the extent of the preparatory work differed considerably between the case study schools, with some schools having only informal discussions, whereas other schools did specific pieces of work, such as making 'identity passports', books or DVDs, in preparation for the visits. Teachers in only a couple of schools reported that they did not do any preparatory work. In one case, this was a deliberate decision as the staff wanted only to work with the pupils from the two schools when they were together.

### Table 4.2 Pre-linking activities reported by pupils

| Before the first meeting with your link school, what activities did you or you school-mates do to prepare for the meeting | % |
|---|---|
| Talked about how we felt about meeting the other school | 36 |
| Talked about ourselves/our families/where we live | 35 |
| Something else | 35 |
| Talked about how to make people feel welcome | 28 |
| Discussed what words we use to describe ourselves/where we live/other people | 25 |
| Collected information to send to the link school | 20 |
| Didn't do any activities beforehand | 24 |
| N = | 455 |

*More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.*
*All those who had directly taken part in school l inking activities (N=455).*
*A total of 429 respondents answered at least one item in this question (6% non response).*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

The data, however, suggests that conducting pre-linking activities is desirable. Indeed, pupils who said they had talked about how they felt about meeting the link school beforehand were significantly more likely to report enjoying meeting pupils from the link school. In particular, 70 per cent of those who had talked about meeting the link school rated their enjoyment as either 4 or 5 (on a five point scale) compared with 53 per cent of those who said they had not talked about it before meeting the link school. There was also an indication that those pupils who had talked about themselves, their families and/or about where they lived tended to report greater enjoyment of meeting the link pupils.

As for **post-visit activities**, nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of secondary pupils reported that they had not done such activities after meeting the link school – at the time of the post-intervention survey, at least. Of those who did report that they had done activities after the visit, the most frequently cited activity was 'discussing the similarities and differences between our school and our link school'. Many pupils had also talked about themselves, their families and/or where they live, and about what their school would like to do in future linking activities (shown in Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3    Post-linking visit activities reported by pupils**

| After you met with your link school what did you do | % |
|---|---|
| Discussed the similarities and differences between our school and our link school | 40 |
| Something else | 37 |
| Talked about ourselves/our families/where we live | 26 |
| Talked about what our school would like to do in future linking activities | 26 |
| Wrote something about the linking work | 16 |
| Told rest of our school about the linking | 15 |
| Didn't do any activities afterwards | 24 |
| N = | 455 |

*More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.*
*All those who had directly taken part in school l inking activities (N=455).*
*A total of 427 respondents answered at least one item in this question (6% non response).*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

Qualitative interviews with teachers also revealed that some post-linking activities were being conducted in nearly all of the case-study schools. In some schools, activities after the visit were limited to class discussions. For example, one teacher reported *'it was through discussion and things like that, how they felt* [it] *went, what sort of feelings they had about the children they met during the link visit'*. Others reported more structured post-activities, such as journal writing or carrying on with the identity work pupils were doing before they met with the link school. One structured activity consisted of pupils filling out a form:

> *'Basically, they had to write four things. 'Heart' was something they really enjoyed; 'head' was something that had made them think about, something they had thought about; luggage was something they would take away from the day; and litter was something they didn't like and they would leave behind. They did reflect on that and think about what they got from it.'* (School Linking Coordinator)

The case-study data showed that the extent and types of post-visit activities varied considerably between schools, and it might be that the impact of the SLN programme can be enhanced if post-activities are consistently completed in all schools participating.  As the survey data suggest, post-linking activities are associated with greater enjoyment of the programme. Indeed, pupils who, post-visit, either wrote something about the linking work, or told the rest of the school about their linking work, were significantly more likely to rate the joint activities which they did with the linking school positively, compared with other pupils. Thus, around two-thirds of those who either wrote something (66 per cent) or told the rest of the school (67 per cent) rated the joint activities as either 4 or 5 (on a five point scale) compared with only just over half (53 per cent for both) of those who did not do these post-activities.

In addition, pupils who discussed the similarities and differences between their school and the link school tended to report greater enjoyment of meeting the link-school's pupils. Finally, pupils who had *not done* any post-linking activities were significantly less likely to report enjoyment of the programme and meeting pupils from the link school. In particular, 46 per cent of those who said they had *not done* any such activities rated the school linking experiences as either 4 or 5 (on a five point scale), compared with 60 per cent of those who said they had done such activities.

### 4.2.3 Meeting pupils from the link school: expectations and experiences

The **pre-contact expectations** which pupils involved in linking had regarding pupils in their link school(s) were quite varied. Some groups reported that they were not sure what the other pupils would be like. For example, one group had formed no expectations before because *'they just turned up on the day'* and another seemed to have mixed views: *'I wasn't really sure what they would be like. I thought they could be a little bit nasty or nice'*. However, of those who did have expectations, more groups seemed to have negative, rather than positive, expectations of the link school pupils. In a couple of situations, teachers seemed to have passed on negative stereotypes to the learners. For instance, one pupil reported that *'Mr X said they came from a rough area, so I thought they would be like bullies and a bit nasty'*. Similarly, pupils in another school reported that their teacher had explained to them that the other school was involved in the programme *'to help white boys who might become racist'*. These examples demonstrate the importance of good quality training for staff involved in delivering the projects, particularly in terms of the use of language employed to refer to different groups of pupils. However, some groups *did* hold positive expectations of the link-school pupils. One group of primary school pupils saw a DVD of the pupils from their link school and reported that *'from the school play we watched they looked quite kind'*.

Upon contact with the link school, the **experience** of the majority of learners was that the link pupils differed at least a little from their expectations, mainly in terms of personality. In some cases, pupils were pleasantly surprised, such as one primary pupil who said: *'I thought they would really show off...* [but] *when they came to our school we got to know them and realised they weren't showing off at all'*, and one secondary pupils who said that: *'I thought there were all going to be geeks, but they came out like us'*. However, in some cases, school linking experiences resulted in more negative perceptions of the link-school pupils than learners originally held. For example, one group of pupils, who were initially unsure what to expect, later said '*some were big headed, like walking into you and stuff'*.

A few of the groups reported that the pupils in the link school differed from their expectations, but they reported mainly superficial differences, such as that they had a different school uniform from what they were expecting, or a different school timetable. Only in one school did pupils feel that the pupils differed culturally from what they were expecting. One pupil said 'N*one of them were Muslim. All of them were* [A's] *colour* [white]'.

### 4.2.4 Perceived similarities and differences compared with the link school pupils

The majority of pupils interviewed were able to identify a number of **similarities** between themselves and the pupils in the link school. These perceived similarities were centred around common interests and similar tastes (i.e. likes and dislikes). None of the pupils mentioned any similarities or differences in relation to their culture.

A large number of pupils felt that they shared a lot in common with the pupils in the link schools. For instance, one pupil said: '*they're not really much different from us really, they all have their moody moments like we do and they all have their giddy moments like we do so not that different*'. Pupils reported a number of shared interests between themselves and the link school pupils, such as sports and other hobbies. However, pupils in some case study schools did feel that they did not have anything in common with pupils in the link schools. In most cases, this was because they thought they could not relate to them – that they '*were a bit boring*'. Another pupil felt that they did not have anything in common due to the lack of ethnic diversity at the link school. She said: '*I thought we had nothing in common because we have some Polish people and a couple of Korean people and we didn't think they had any other people at their school or anything.*'

Perceived **differences** centred on similar themes as the similarities, such as hobbies and also schools' differences in matters such as timetabling or school facilities. However, in a few schools, pupils reported religious differences between themselves and the pupils in the link school. One primary pupil said: '*I think they are different because they have one religion, but we have lots of religions*' and another pupil added: '*I think we're quite different because their school is just Christian and our school is Muslim...*'.

Overall, even where pupils identified significant differences, these were not seen as a barrier to getting on and making friends with pupils in the link schools. As one primary school pupil observed: '*It didn't matter if there were differences; you could still talk*'. However, pupils were more likely to perceive religious differences as problematic.

## 4.3 Pupil enjoyment of school linking and challenges experienced

### 4.3.1 Pupil's enjoyment of the SLN programme

Overall, both primary and secondary **pupils enjoyed the SLN programme**. Indeed, half of the secondary pupils who took part in linking reported that they quite enjoyed or really enjoyed it (see Figure 4.1). More specifically, the pupils surveyed seemed to enjoy **meeting new people** from the link school, with over half either *really enjoying* or *enjoying* this (see Figure 4.2). The majority of primary school pupils also reported, during focus groups, that they liked the SLN programme either a lot or a little.

## Figure 4.1   Secondary pupils' overall enjoyment of the SLN programme
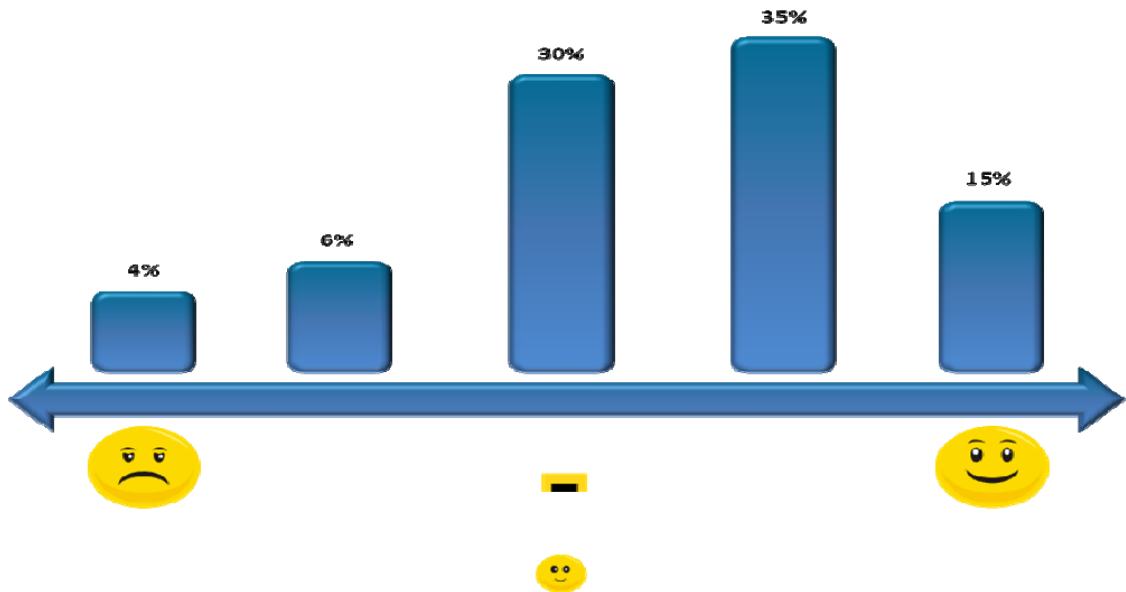


*Base: All those who took part in the SLN programme (N=455). Non response = 10%.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

## Figure 4.2   Secondary pupils' enjoyment of meeting new people from the link school
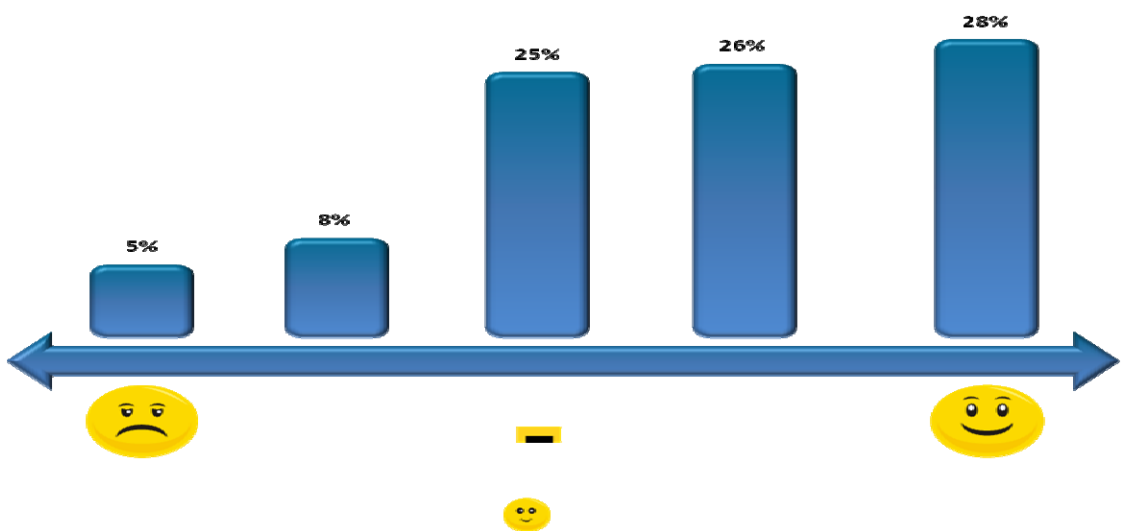


*Base: All those who took part in the SLN programme (N=455). Non response = 9%.*

*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

The survey indicates that secondary pupils tended to describe their experience of school linking in positive terms. Indeed, those who took part in linking activities tended to say that their experience of linking had been fun (61 per cent), interesting (56 per cent), different (52 per cent) or exciting (43 per cent). Less than ten per cent of pupils considered that it had been upsetting, intimidating or irrelevant.

The qualitative data corroborate these findings, revealing that the part of school linking that pupils seemed to enjoy the most was meeting new people. This was for a variety of reasons, including the opportunity to make new friends, meeting others with similar interests and to learn about others.

Many of the pupils commented on how they enjoyed the opportunity to meet others who had similar hobbies as them. For example, one pupil commented that a good thing about the programme was that: '*we got to meet new people and people who had hobbies the same as you*'. In particular, pupils enjoyed the opportunity to make friends with other pupils their age and, in fact, the majority of primary pupils and some of the secondary pupils reported that they had made friends with some of the pupils from the link school. For example, one primary pupil said: '*I met this friend and we both like going around a museum and learning about everything*'.

However, in a minority of the case study schools pupils reported **conflict** between themselves and the pupils in their link schools. In one particular case, pupils reported that: '*When they came, they were sort of being a bit like violent and not treating our school as we would treat it, and some of them were swearing and jumping on the hut and we just felt a bit uncomfortable*'. Similarly, pupils in another case-study school reported a negative school linking experiences due to religious differences between the schools. For instance, one pupil said that: '*most of the people in our school are Muslim and some of them teased us because we were Muslim*', and another added: '*They all hated us. Everyone was saying "I hate you"*'.

Interestingly, the majority of the pupils in the two schools who reported conflict during the link visit had negative expectations of the pupils before they had first met them. For example, one primary pupil said: '*I thought it was going to be boring, and I thought the idea was stupid*'. The linking experience in these schools may have, therefore, simply reinforced existing stereotypes. This finding further supports the need for good quality pre-linking activities to try and break down existing stereotypes, and to avoid reinforcing such stereotypes through negative contact experiences.

Overall, however, most of the pupils surveyed **enjoyed the activities** they did with the link school (shown in Figure 4.3). This is corroborated by the qualitative data, which revealed that most of the pupils enjoyed the activities they did with the link school, such as '*making clay tiles*', '*drama*' or '*dancing*'.

**Figure 4.3    Secondary pupil's overall enjoyment of the activities they completed with the link school**
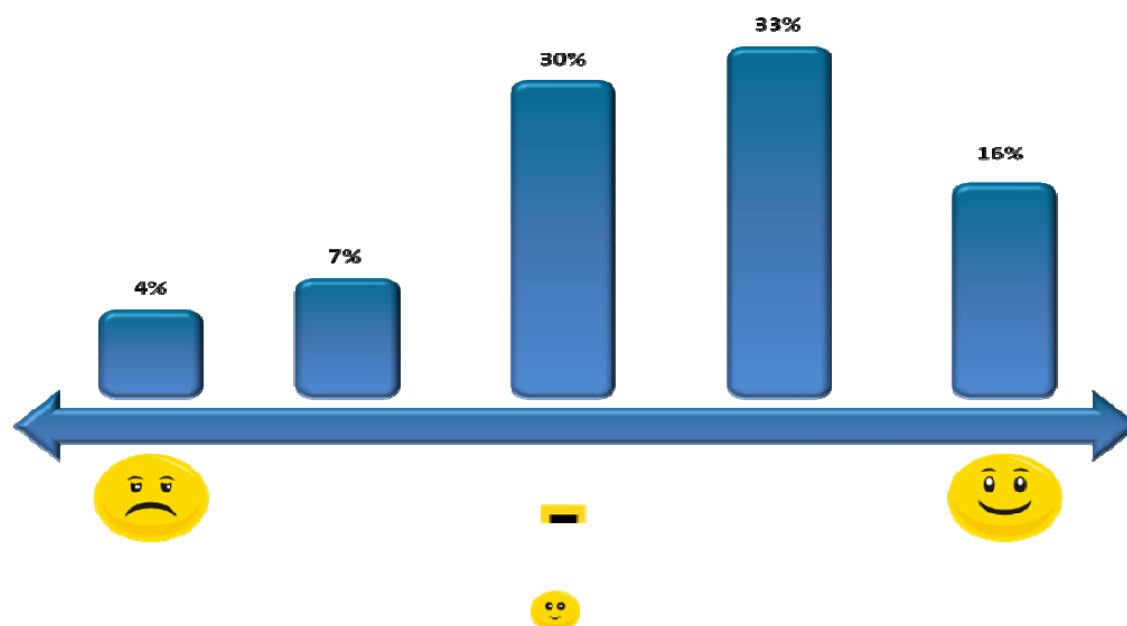


*Base: All those who took part in the SLN programme (N=455). Non response = 9%.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

The pupils also seemed to enjoy the opportunity to do activities with pupils from the link school. One of the pupils in the secondary school commented they liked meeting new people due to the benefits of working together with new people: '*you know how you see things in a different perspective...when people give you ideas as well, you see it from another view point*'. Similarly, one primary pupil commented that a good thing about school linking was that '*you get to play games with them*' and another that they wouldn't have had the opportunity to do the activities they had done if it wasn't for meeting the link school.

One of the primary pupils felt slightly negatively about the activities they did as part of school linking because they felt segregated from the pupils in the link school. He said that: '*some of the activities were ok...we didn't get to learn what their proper school life was like as we were separated*'. This again shows the need for schools to give careful thought to how linking activities are organised.

### 4.3.2  Teachers' perceptions of pupils' enjoyment of the SLN programme

The majority of teachers reported that before the pupils met the pupils from the link school they felt worried or scared. One primary teacher said that pupils '*were worried about something going wrong, not being liked, being ignored, and they were worried about being separated from their friends*'. More specifically, as another teacher explained, pupils '*were most worried about what to say when they met the children, they didn't know how to communicate with them*', due, in this case, to the religious differences between the two link schools.

However, overall teachers were positive about pupils' experiences of school linking; most of the teachers felt that pupils enjoyed school linking and were engaged in the programme. Many teachers thought that the experience was a good opportunity for the pupils to make friends with other pupils, and to meet new people in order to help overcome negative preconceptions. Some teachers also mentioned how the school linking programme was a good opportunity to do certain activities such as going on trips and using ICT.

Nevertheless, a small minority of teachers did report some negative experiences. One primary teacher reported that: *'some pupils weren't happy about how they were treated by other children; there were a few characters from both schools that were a bit aggressive'*. This was something that the teachers in the schools involved dealt with as part of the review and evaluation of the linking and in their further work with their pupils.

### 4.3.3  Pupil attitudes towards future involvement in the SLN programme

Generally pupils reported that they **would like to do the SLN programme again** in the future. This seemed largely because they enjoyed meeting new people and making friends with them. However, pupils showed a mixed response in terms of whether they would like to meet again with the same or a different school.

Some pupils were keen to remain linked with the **same school** because they felt that the link was already in place and that friendships had been made. One pupil said: *'you can't really do it again* [with a different school] *because you might leave them [the current school] behind and you can't just forget about them...you might not keep in contact with this school'*.

On the other hand, some pupils commented that they would prefer to link with a **different school**. In one school this was because pupils wanted the opportunity to learn about different cultures. For instance, a primary pupil said that: *'I'd like to meet with another school because it would be quite different and you could compare it with a different school, and not see who we like best but see who we have more in common with'*. Pupils in a primary school, who had reported negative incidences during the linking, said they wanted to link with a different school because *'if we've met them and we didn't really like them, then I think it would be silly to meet up again, as we didn't really like them so it's just a waste of time'*.

In one case only, pupils in a school where negative incidents were reported during the linking said they would not like to do school linking again, even with a different school.

### 4.3.4  Pupil views on how the SLN programme could be improved

Pupils offered a range of suggestions about how the SLN programme could be improved, both in terms of the type of school they were linking with and the types of activities they did as part of the programme.

A number of pupils from a few different case study schools suggested the programme should involve **more pre-linking activities**. One primary pupil explained:

> *'I think we could do it again but start a bit slower this time, not just meet them straight away, like, I liked it when they sent their names, and maybe we could send a couple of letters before we meet them and maybe do another book or something before we meet them, so it's more relaxed'.*

A few pupils commented that they would like the linking to take place at a **neutral venue**, rather than visiting each other's schools. As well as the location of the visit, pupils also made suggestions about the **type of activities** they wanted to do in the future, and the **frequency of linking visits**. One primary pupil commented that there should be '*better activities that are suited to the kids doing the link'* and others felt that the activities should be more practical and hands-on. One pupil commented that the pupils should be consulted on the types of activities they do as part of the school linking programme. A few pupils suggested that, alongside the activities, there should be more time to talk with the pupils from the link school, and a small number of pupils suggested that the link schools should meet more frequently. One pupil reported that: '*there were big gaps in between meetings at the start'*.

Pupils also made suggestions with regard to the pupils and school**s** with which they were linking. Many suggested that the school linking could involve **more people in the school**, such as more classes or the whole school. For instance, one pupil said that '*it would be good to get the whole school together'*. Many pupils also commented that they would have preferred to link with a school that was **geographically nearer** to them. This seemed to be so that friendships and the link could be more easily maintained. One primary pupil said: '*it would work if the school was near you, they are too far'*. Finally, a few pupils commented on the **type of pupils** they would want to link with. One group said that they would welcome the opportunity to meet others with a different skin colour. In addition, one pupil in this group said they would like to meet others who spoke a different language, although the rest of the group disagreed.

The next chapter concentrates on the evidence of the impact of the programme on pupils, schools, teachers and LAs.

# Chapter 5  Impact and Outcomes

## Key findings

- School linking can have a **positive impact** on many aspects of pupils' skills, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours, particularly their respect for others, their self-confidence and their self-efficacy, as well as broadening the social groups with whom pupils interact.

- However, there is **mixed evidence**, for the programme's impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding, their willingness to express their opinions, and perceptions of school and wider community climate (e.g. perceptions of the incidence of bullying).

- The programme is more likely to have an impact if there is **sustained involvement** (two or more visits) of pupils in the programme, and impact beyond those pupils directly involved in linking activities is likely to necessitate a deliberate and sustained **dissemination effort** within the school.

- Although the programme is designed to have an impact on pupils, there is evidence that **school and local authority staff** also benefit from involvement in the intervention.

## 5.1    Introduction

One of the aims of NFER's independent evaluation of the national pilot of the SLN programme was to measure the impact and outcomes of school linking at different levels, including on pupils, schools, staff, and local communities. Some of the impact and outcomes have been covered in preceding chapters. This chapter examines the extent to which the programme can be said to have had an impact on each of these levels.

## 5.2    Impacts and outcomes for pupils

As detailed in Chapters 1 and 2, the SLN programme was designed to develop pupils in a number of ways, including their knowledge understanding and awareness of communities living in Britain, as well as their attitudes, skills and behaviours relevant for living in, and fostering, an integrated and cohesive society. This section examines the extent to which the SLN programme can be said to have achieved these intended impacts. It starts by providing details of how the analysis of impact on pupils was conducted, followed by presentation of the evidence for the SLN programme's impact on pupils.

### 5.2.1 Analysing the impact of the SLN programme on pupils

As described in detail in Chapter 1, the evaluation included a quantitative and qualitative strand, both with data collection points at pre- and post-intervention stages of the SLN programme. The quantitative strand consisted of a survey of secondary school pupils, some of whom were in programme schools and others in comparison schools. Pupils in programme schools had been involved in school linking to varying degrees (shown in Figure 5.1)[5]. The qualitative strand, on the other hand, comprised case studies in a number of local authorities and included, amongst others, group discussions with pupils in both primary and secondary schools who had been involved in the SLN programme.

**Figure 5.1 – Survey of secondary school pupils: subgroups of pupils used in the analysis of impact on pupils[6]**
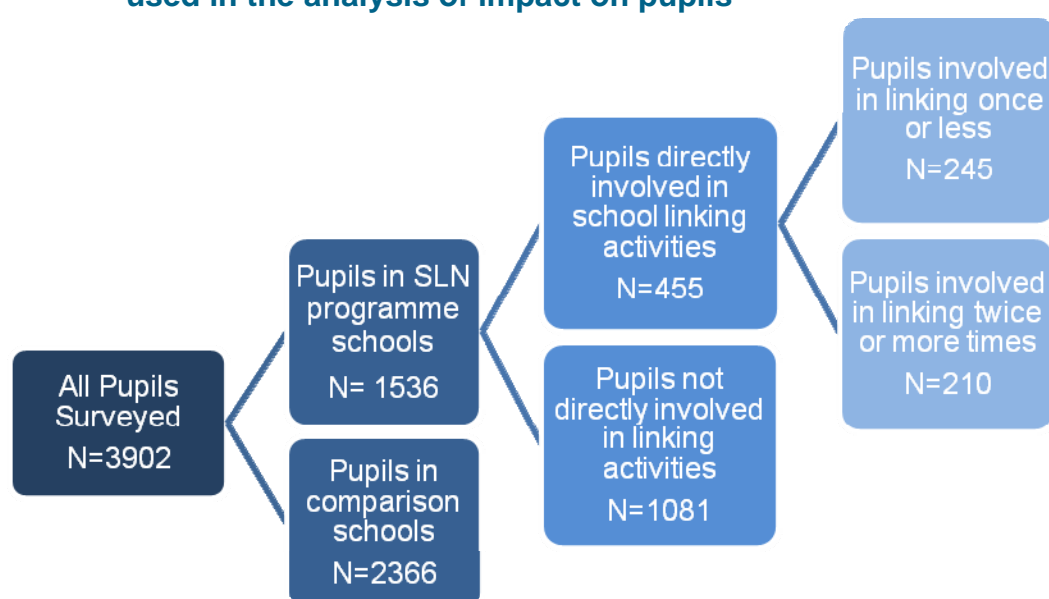


Our analysis of the impact of the SLN programme on pupils and schools therefore draws on:

a. **Reports from pupils directly involved in school linking activities about what they felt that they gained from taking part in the programme, as well as reports from teachers on the perceived impact on pupils[7].** These data were obtained, post-intervention, from the group discussions with pupils, interviews with teachers, and the survey of pupils in programme schools.

b. **The comparison of how different groups of pupils changed over time** on characteristics which the SLN programme was designed to influence, measured using data from the pre- and post-intervention survey of secondary school pupils. Groups of pupils compared were:

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[5] All survey data reported in this report are for secondary school pupils who took part in both the pre- and the post-intervention surveys.

[6] 'Pupils involved in linking 'once or less' includes those who were 'not sure' of the number of times they had met with their link school.

[7] As seen in Chapter 4, there was no widespread formal evaluation of the programme in schools, and so, views of teachers presented in this chapter are mostly teachers' own perceptions about impact.

- Pupils in SLN programme schools *compared with* those in comparison school

- Within programme schools, pupils directly involved in the SLN activities *compared with* those not directly involved in school linking

- Within programme schools, pupils with sustained involvement in school linking (on two or more visits) *compared with* those with less involvement (see Appendices 8.3 and 8.4 for how pupils were sampled for the survey, and for their characteristics).

This second aspect of the analysis (b.) involved an examination of survey responses at both pre- and post-interventions as well as multilevel modelling.

*Examination of pupil survey responses* consisted of comparing change over time, if any, in terms of measures designed to assess whether the SLN programme had the desired impact. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 illustrate the kind of patterns which are indicative, or not, of a possible influence of the SLN programme on pupils, and how comparison is made between different groups of pupils (using, in these examples, hypothetical intervention and comparison groups). Where both groups have either not changed over time, or changed to the same extent, it is unlikely that the SLN programme will have had an influence (such as in Figure 5.2). On the other hand, where the intervention group has improved to a different degree to that of the comparison group (as indicated by the different slope of the intervention group's line in Figure 5.3), it is possible that change in the intervention group may have been due to participation in the programme (rather than, for instance, due to maturation that would have occurred anyway in the absence of the intervention).

**Figure 5.2 – Example of data indicating no influence of intervention (hypothetical data)**



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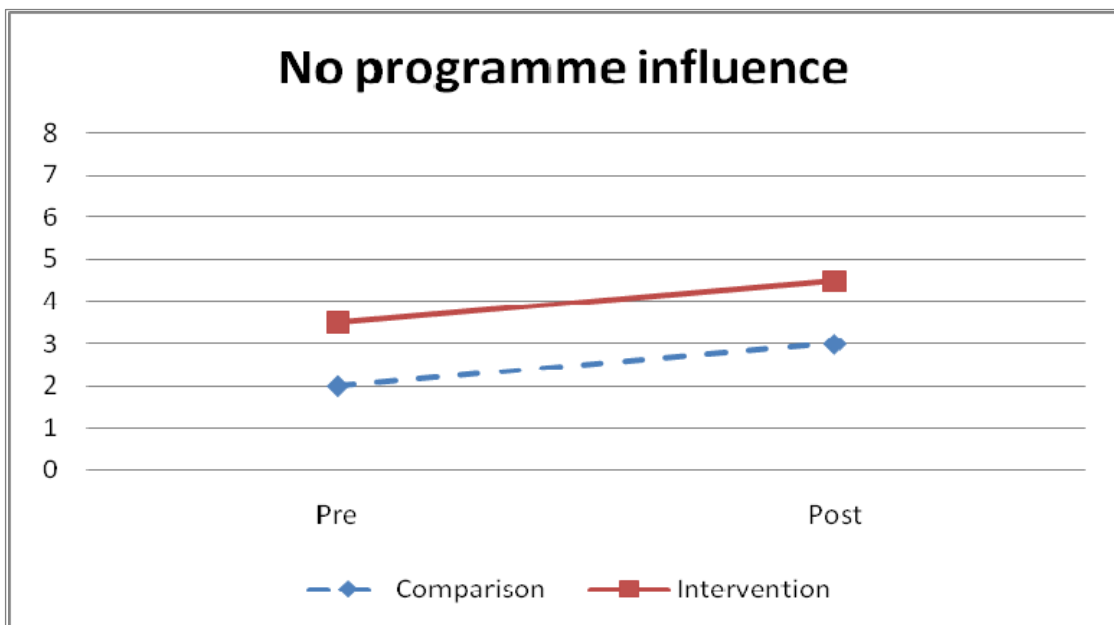
**Figure 5.3 – Example of data suggesting an influence of the intervention (hypothetical data)**
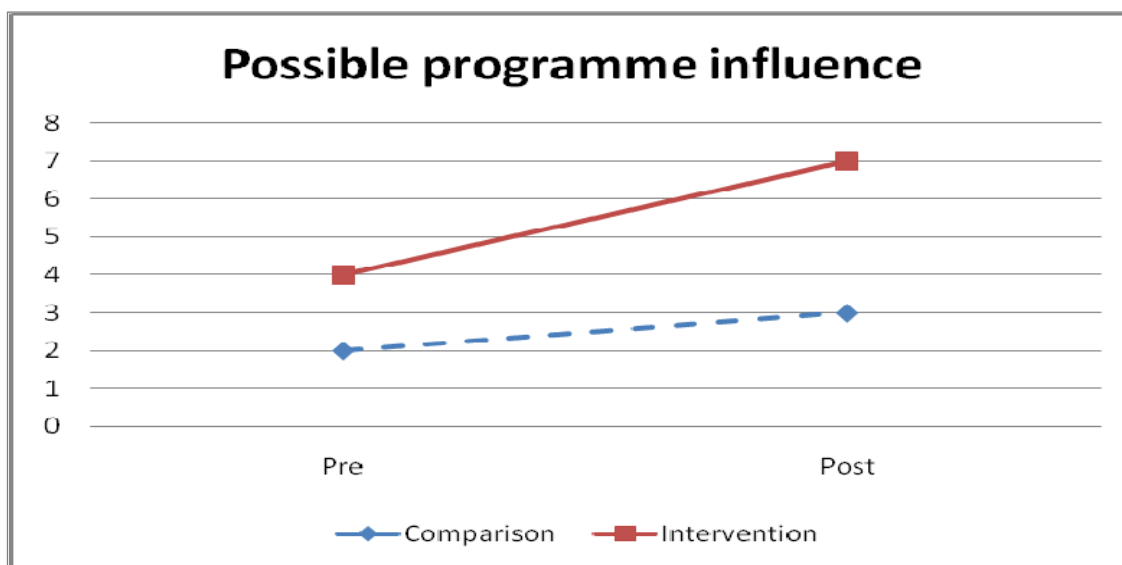


Where examination of pupil survey data revealed that the programme may have had an influence, *multilevel modelling* was then used to further probe into the possible influence of the programme on pupils and to draw more robust conclusions about programme impact. Multilevel modelling is a type of statistical analysis which is used to determine the extent to which belonging to a particular group (for example, being in an SLN programme school and not a comparison school), or scoring more or less high on a certain pre-intervention characteristic (for example, having positive attitudes towards other communities), is associated with *outcome variables* measured at the post-intervention stage (that is, variables on which the SLN programme aimed to have an impact). (Further details about multilevel modelling can be found in Appendix 8.7.)

The statistical modelling acknowledged that schools were not randomly allocated to the programme and comparison groups, and that pre-existing differences between schools and pupils in each group, rather than the influence of the SLN programme itself, could account for changes observed at post-intervention in those taking part in the intervention. It also acknowledged that, within programme schools, there was no random allocation of pupils to the different subgroups of pupils described above (shown in Figure 5.1), and so, that differences between subgroups of pupils at the post-intervention stage could also be due to pre-existing differences between them rather than the SLN programme[8].

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[8] Multilevel modelling was used to test the hypothesis that, with other factors statistically controlled for, pupils' involvement in the SLN programme was associated with changes over time in the variables of interest. In some instances, modelling was conducted even where graphical inspection of survey data indicated no difference between groups of pupils in order to test the hypothesis which the evaluation set out to address. This is because it is possible for differences between groups not to show on graphical inspection of data but to nevertheless surface upon modelling, due to so-called 'suppression effects'.

In the absence of randomisation[9], a number of school- and learner-level characteristics were statistically controlled for in the modelling, including how pupils responded to the pre-intervention survey and their background characteristics. This was in order to try and isolate the likely unique contribution of the SLN programme to any changes observed in the outcome variables, thus strengthening the conclusions drawn from the data regarding the impact of the programme (see the Appendix 8.7 for details of variables controlled for). This general approach, used throughout the analyses reported in this section, is depicted in Figure 5.4.

**Figure 5.4 – Survey of secondary school pupils: groups of variables used in the analysis of impact on pupils**
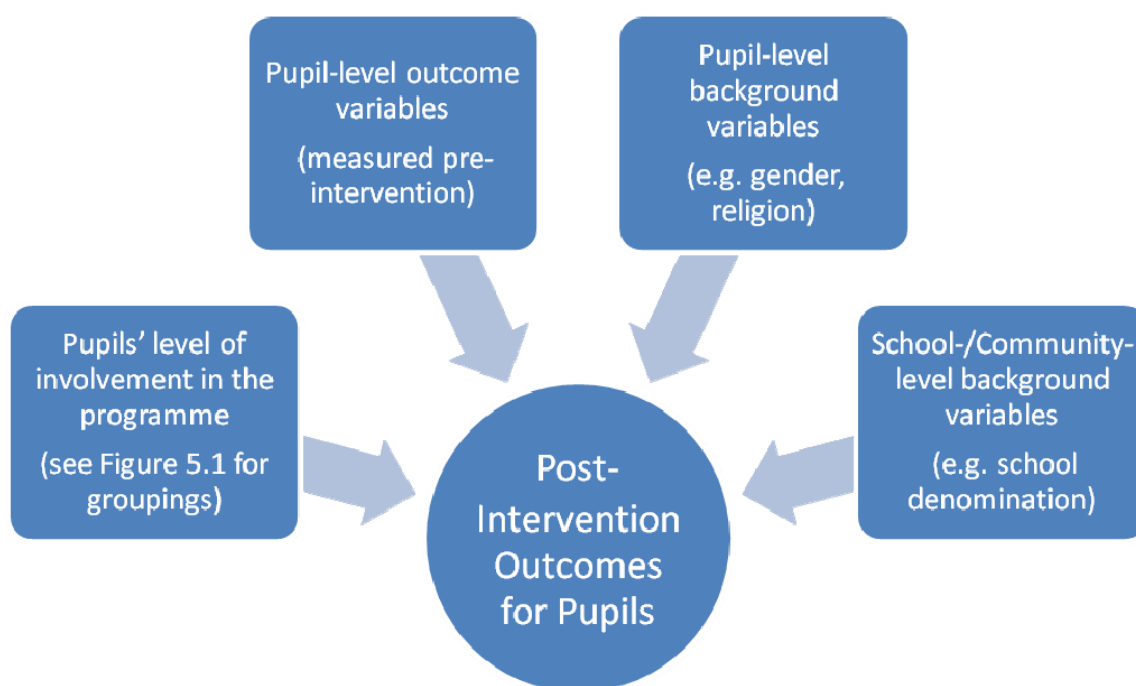


It should also be noted that some of the variables used in the modelling are the exact responses which respondents made to the survey (for example, whether pupils agreed or disagreed with a given statement) whereas others are 'factors'. These are compound variables arrived at by analysing how responses given to sets of questions relate to each other (see Appendix 8.5 for further details relating to the factor analysis). Factors used in the analysis of programme impact are described in the relevant sections below[10].

Finally, where a statistically significant relationship was found between taking part in the SLN programme (or being more or less intensely involved in the programme) and the outcomes of interest, graphs are used in this chapter to illustrate some of the

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[9] Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) produce the strongest evidence of impact, or otherwise.
[10] Scores on factors were standardised so that, on each factor, possible scores range from 0 (low) to 100 (high).

change that occurred over time for the groups in question (and tables are included in Appendix 8.8). It should, however, be noted that not all such changes may be attributable in their entirety to the programme itself, even when a statistically significant relationship is found between programme participation and outcome variables. This is because some of the change may be best accounted for by other variables used in the analysis (shown in Figure 5.4)[11]. (The extent to which change observed in the graphs can be attributed to the SLN programme, or its intensity, rather than to other variables controlled for in the modelling, can be seen from the modelling results[12] (shown in Appendix 8.9)).

## 5.2.2 Knowledge and understanding

There is some indication that the SLN programme had an impact on the knowledge and understanding that pupils have of themselves and their communities, as well as others' communities and cultures. Indeed, the analysis showed that many secondary school pupils who took part in school linking activities felt, as reported by survey respondents at post-intervention stage, that they **learned something new** through these activities, namely that they had learned:

- More about people from different backgrounds (53 per cent)
- Something new about themselves (42 per cent)
- That they have lots in common with people from different backgrounds (39 per cent)
- New information about their family, their local area or their community (29 per cent).

Only a minority (14 per cent) of pupils surveyed reported that they had learned nothing through the school linking activities.

This is confirmed by the qualitative case-study data, which also indicates that, for some pupils, involvement in school linking helped to overcome pre-conceptions, fears or prejudices about pupils in the other schools. As expressed by one primary school pupil: '*I've learnt that you can be friends with anyone no matter what they look like*'.

However, the statistical modelling did not reveal any impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Indeed, other things being equal, there was no association between being in an SLN programme school or participating in school linking activities and pupils being more likely, at the post-intervention stage, to say that they 'know lots about different cultures and people with different backgrounds'. There may be a number of reasons for this, including the fact that, over time, pupils are likely to

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[11] The data shown in graphs are the actual response percentages, or factor scores, with data for the pupils directly involved in school linking activities and pupils in SLN programme schools not directly involved in linking having been weighted so these groups are as similar as possible to the comparison group in terms of background characteristics and pre-intervention attitudes.

[12] The relative strength of association between each predictor and an outcome can be seen from the *effect sizes* in models where the outcome are factor scores, and from the *odds ratio* for the remaining models shown in Appendix 8.9.

continually learn more about themselves and others as part of their everyday lives, with or without an intervention.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, at the post-intervention stage, many surveyed pupils from programme schools who had directly taken part in school linking activities reported that, since taking part in the activities, they:

- **Were more interested in finding out about others**, with 50 per cent (strongly) *dis*agreeing that since taking part in school linking they had *not* been interested in learning more about other cultures/communities or meeting people from different backgrounds

- **Had their beliefs or assumptions about other communities and cultures challenged**, with 25 per cent (strongly) agreeing that this was the case.

Whilst these results do not equate to evidence of pupils having developed their knowledge and understanding as a result of the SLN programme, they indicate that school linking may set in motion processes that can work to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of themselves and others. It is also possible that initiating these processes could lead to the programme yielding longer-term outcomes in the form of pupils being motivated to learn more about others as part of their daily lives, although such beneficial effects could be short-lived unless programme messages continue to be reinforced at school (and/or elsewhere).

Interestingly, the teachers interviewed tended to talk more about an **increased awareness** of people from other cultures and people and communities that were different, rather than improved knowledge or understanding:

> *'I think a lot of them have developed an awareness of other cultures and people from other backgrounds. Again, we're a very white school and most of our influences are European, so it was healthy for them to mix with people with different backgrounds and values.'* (School Linking Coordinator)

Thus, teachers believed that awareness and exposure were the first steps to improving knowledge and understanding of other communities:

> *'Meeting new people is a really good thing for them. Many of the community are quite insular, they don't often go into the city, they don't travel widely at all. I don't think many of them would have been to the war museum at all before, so that's a really good thing; it gets them out of their own community and it helps to raise their aspirations and knowledge of communities, and cities and how they work. It's also put them in contact with a different culture, a more, traditional white culture which they wouldn't have come across.'* (Senior Leader)

### 5.2.3 Attitudes and dispositions

Another aim of the SLN programme was to have an impact on pupils' attitudes and dispositions. These include trust in and respect for others, as well as awareness of

discrimination. As seen below, the analysis showed that the intervention had an impact on only some of these variables.

A noticeable proportion of surveyed pupils who had taken part in school linking activities reported, at the post-intervention stage, that it had *not* changed their views or attitudes towards others. Indeed, almost a quarter (24 per cent) agreed (or strongly agreed) that that they had not changed their views in any way. The statistical modelling also showed that the SLN programme seemed to have no impact on a number of outcomes, namely pupils' *enjoyment of diverse people and cultures*, their *openness to different opinions*, their *openness to immigrants*, their *trust* of others, and their perceived level of discrimination in Britain today. (See Table 5.1 for a description of these factors).

**Table 5.1 – Attitudes and dispositions: factors used to measure the impact of the SLN programme**

| Factor name | High scores on factor mean pupils… |
|---|---|
| *Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures* | Enjoying mixing with others from different backgrounds and learning about their cultures |
| *Openness to different opinions* | Believing that people should not be criticised for having different opinions and that all sides of an argument should be listened to |
| *Openness to immigrants* | *Not* subscribing to views that people wanting to move to Britain should have to learn English and that Britain does not have room for any more immigrants or refugees |
| **Trust of others** | Trusting others of the same age, neighbours, family, teachers and the police |
| *Inter-ethnic and inter-faith trust* | Trusting people from a different race, ethnic group or religion |
| **Respect for the rights of others** | Believing that all who live in Britain should have the same rights and that good citizens speak up for people who are treated unfairly and respect the rights of others |
| **Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination** | Reporting that teachers talk about discrimination occurring in school and society |

However, analysis showed that the SLN programme appears to have influenced some aspects of learner attitudes and dispositions, particularly their **respect for others and their rights**. Indeed, at the post-intervention stage, just over half (52 per cent) of surveyed pupils who had been involved in school linking felt that, since taking part, they had become 'more understanding and respectful of others'. There is also some evidence from the statistical modelling that the programme may have achieved some positive attitudinal changes in this area. Indeed, sustained involvement (involvement in linking activities on two or more occasions) was associated with pupils being more inclined, at the post-intervention stage, to feel *respect for the rights of others*. This included believing that 'everyone who lives in Britain should have the same rights',

independently of age, race, ethnicity, religion or financial circumstances, and that 'being a good citizen of Britain means respecting the rights of others' (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6, and Appendices 8.8 and 8.9, for details of pupil responses and the modelling, respectively).

**Figure 5.5 – Secondary pupils agreeing or strongly agreeing that everyone who lives in Britain should have the same rights (percentage of pupils)**
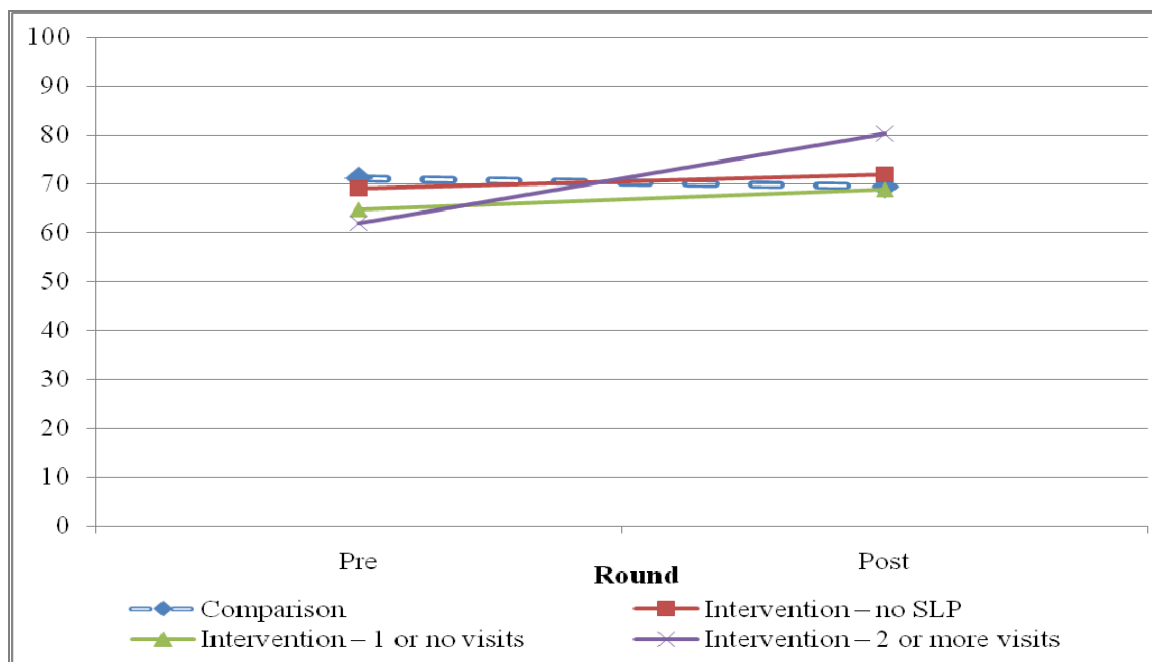


*Base: All in comparison schools (N= 2366) and intervention schools (SLP 2 or more, N=210; SLP 1 or 0, N=245; no SLP, N= 1081) who took part in both the pre- and the post-survey.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

**Figure 5.6 – Secondary pupils agreeing or strongly agreeing that a good citizen respects the rights of others (percentage of pupils)**
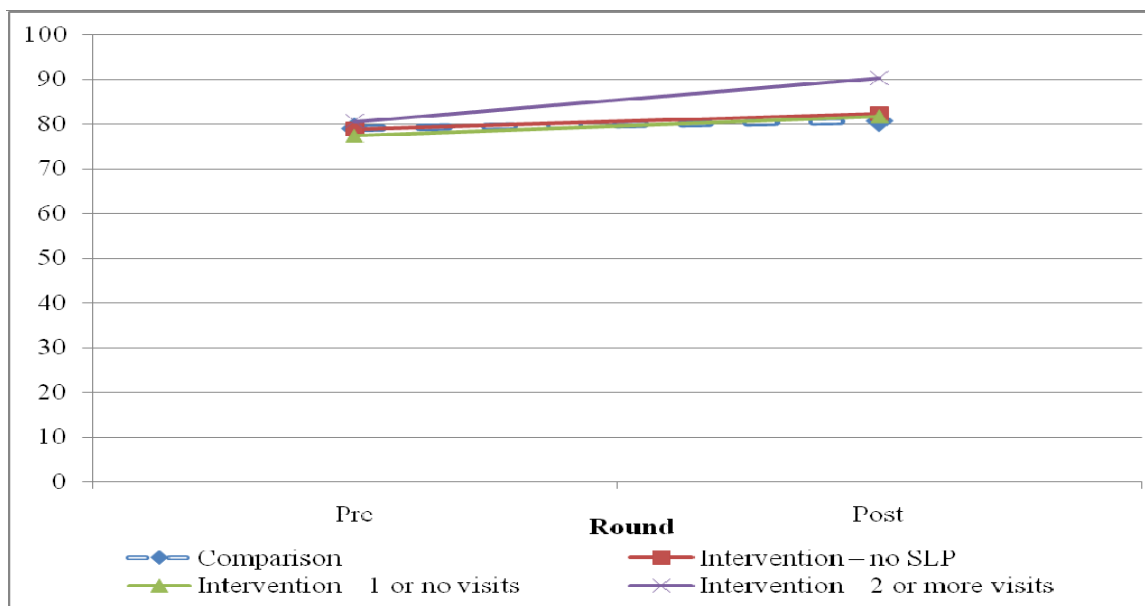


*Base: All in comparison schools (N= 2366) and intervention schools (SLP 2 or more, N=210; SLP 1 or 0, N=245; no SLP, N= 1081) who took part in both the pre- and the post-survey.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

Findings relating to the impact of the SLN programme on pupils' attitudes regarding **interpersonal interaction** are mixed. Just over half (51 per cent) of those directly involved in school linking activities did feel that, through linking activities, they had learned that 'we have to work together as a team to achieve things', as reported by surveyed pupils at the post-intervention stage. This is a positive finding since it indicates that the programme will have made many pupils more predisposed to working collaboratively with others independently of their background. This was also noticed by some of the teachers interviewed as part of the case studies, who felt that involvement in the linking work had improved how well the pupils interacted with others.

However, changes in attitudes and dispositions towards others were not always in a positive direction. In some cases, there appears to have been a reinforcement of **negative attitudes and fears**. The post-intervention survey, for instance, showed that 11 per cent of pupils who had taken part in school linking reported feeling more negatively towards other communities since taking part in linking activities. Some (18 per cent) also responded that through school linking activities they had learned that they find meeting people from different backgrounds difficult. This finding is further supported by some of the case-study data. For instance, one primary school pupil's linking experiences had made him wary of others as he had '*learnt that I shouldn't expect people in other areas to be friendly*'. Also, one secondary pupil's prejudices appeared to have been reinforced as the pupil commented '*I don't want to sound racist but they* [pupils in London] *were black. They weren't white*'.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the proportions of pupils who reported developing negative attitudes, or having had their negative attitudes reinforced, is small when compared to the majority (53 per cent) of pupils who thought that taking part in school linking had not made them feel any more negatively towards other communities.

The SLN programme also appears to have had an impact on pupils' awareness of when issues of discrimination are being discussed by their teachers. Indeed, the statistical modelling showed that being directly involved in linking (compared with pupils in a SLN programme school but not involved in school linking, or with pupils in comparison schools) was associated with greater ***awareness of teachers discussing discrimination*** at the post-intervention stage (see Figure 5.7, and Appendices 8.8 and 8.9, for details of pupil responses and the modelling, respectively). This finding may reflect a greater awareness of discrimination issues on the part of the pupils, but it needs to be interpreted with caution. This is because of the possibility that teachers of pupils involved in linking activities *did* talk about such issues more often, rather than it merely being that pupils involved in linking activities became more aware of teachers discussing issues of discrimination.

## Figure 5.7 – Secondary pupils' *awareness of teachers discussing discrimination* (mean scores on factor)
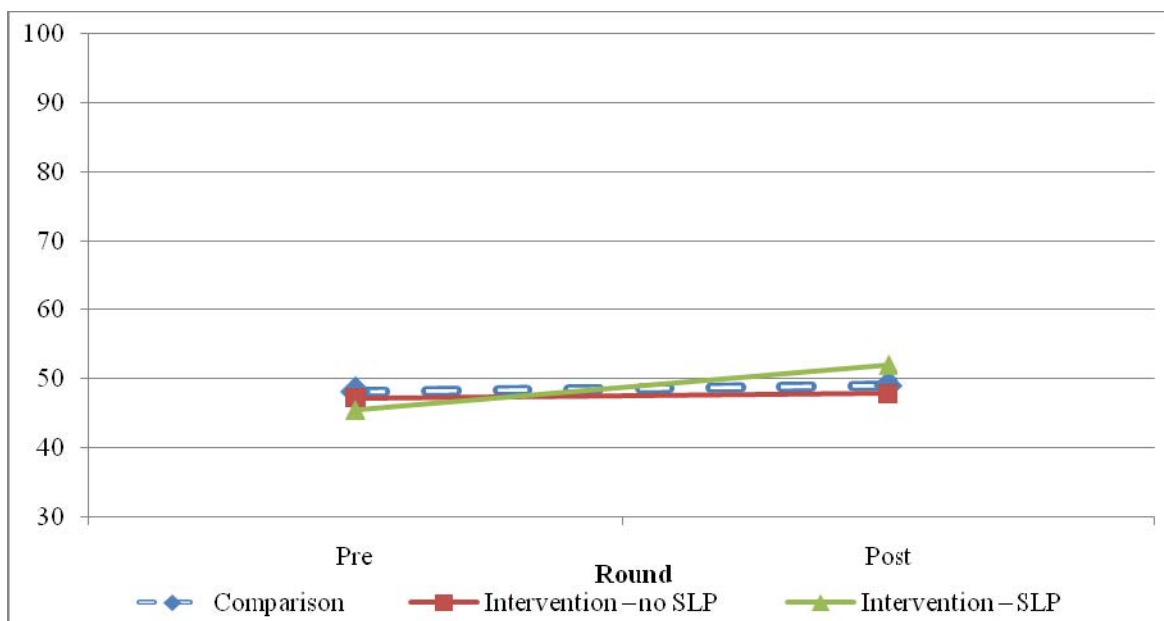


*Base: All in comparison schools (N= 2366) and intervention schools (SLP, N= 455; no SLP, N= 1081) who took part in both the pre- and the post-survey.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

### 5.2.4 Relevant self-beliefs, skills and behaviours

Besides influencing knowledge, understanding and attitudes, the SLN programme also aimed to help pupils develop self-beliefs, skills and behaviours of relevance to life in an integrated and cohesive society. There is some indication that the intervention did provide opportunities for pupils to improve in these areas.

Pupils' reports indicate that the SLN programme is associated with gains in pupils' **self-confidence** and **self-efficacy**[13] in relation to interpersonal situations which involve others from different backgrounds, including intercultural communication. For instance, the post-intervention survey of pupils showed that, of those pupils who directly took part in school linking activities:

- Just over half (52 per cent) felt 'more confident about meeting people from different schools and different communities' since taking part in school linking

- Many thought that, through school linking activities, they had learned how to meet new people and how to get along with them (44 per cent), and that they can cope in strange and new situations (43 per cent).

These gains in self-confidence in interpersonal situations were also borne out by the qualitative case-study data. Indeed, in both primary and secondary schools, some pupils reported increases in confidence, such as a secondary school pupil who said: '*I feel comfortable meeting new people. It's helped. Before I was nervous but, now that I've met them, I feel quite confident*'.

The increase in confidence had also been noticed by the teachers interviewed, and often it was the first thing teachers mentioned when asked about the impact which the link work had made on the pupils. One of the school linking coordinators from a primary school reported:

> '*I think a big thing for our children has been the confidence, they were quite apprehensive about meeting new people and they are now quite good at articulating and saying things like that they have leant to cooperate with other people and make new friends*'.

In addition, there is evidence from the survey that, at the post-intervention stage, pupils in SLN programme schools who had been involved in linking activities were more likely to report **social interaction** with people from different backgrounds from theirs. According to the statistical modelling, other things being equal, pupils directly involved in school linking activities (compared with pupils in a SLN programme school but not involved in school linking or with pupils in comparison schools), were more likely at the post-intervention stage to report often meeting and mixing with people who come from another racial or ethnic group (shown in Figure 5.8). (For details of pupil responses and the modelling, see Appendices 8.8 and 8.9, respectively).

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[13] Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's ability to perform certain actions to the desired effect.

**Figure 5.8 – Secondary pupils reporting that they often mix with people who come from another racial or ethnic group (percentage of pupils)**
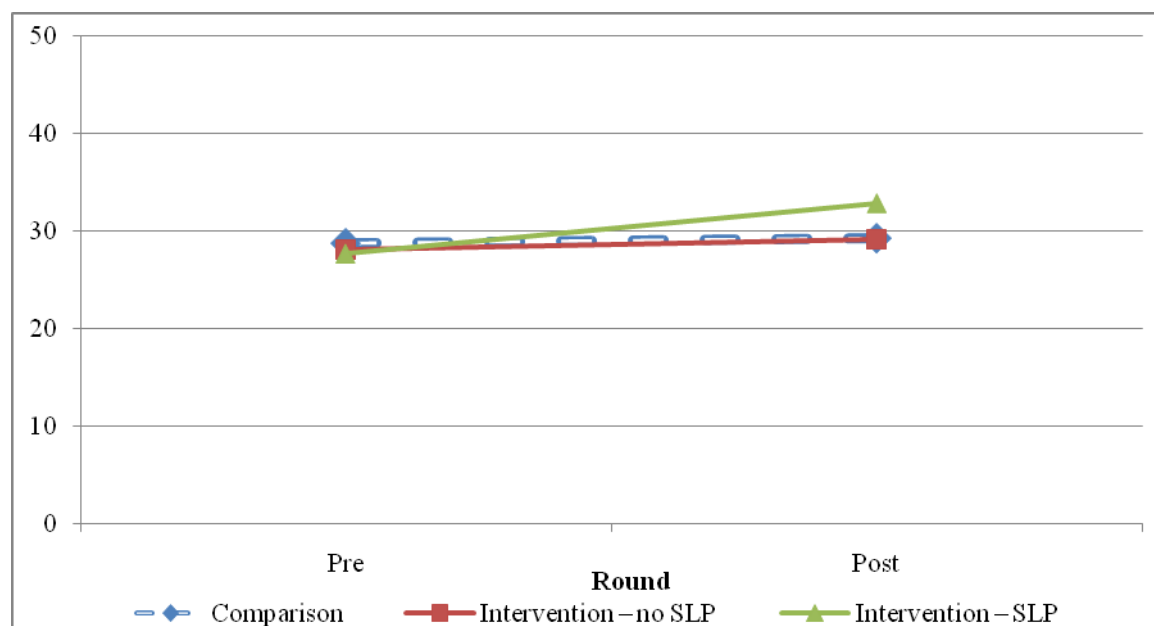


*Base: All in comparison schools (N= 2366) and intervention schools (SLP, N= 455; no SLP, N= 1081) who took part in both the pre- and the post-survey.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

These gains in self-confidence and self-efficacy, together with changes in patterns of social interaction and the gains in knowledge and understanding (section 5.2.2), indicate that the SLN programme has the potential to predispose pupils to **interact and work collaboratively** with others from different backgrounds.

Taking part in the SLN programme, however, does not appear to have made pupils more able or willing to **express their opinions publicly**. For instance, inspection of pupils' survey responses indicated that there was no change over time in the proportion of pupils in intervention schools (whether directly involved in linking or not) who agreed that they like sharing their ideas in class (shown in Figure 5.9). In addition, statistical modelling revealed the finding that pupils directly involved in linking (compared with pupils in a SLN programme school but not involved in school linking or with pupils in comparison schools) became more likely over time to say that they do not give their real opinions in classes for fear that their classmates will laugh at them (shown in Figure 5.10). (For details of pupil responses and the modelling, see Appendices 8.8 and 8.9, respectively).

**Figure 5.9 – Secondary pupils agreeing or strongly agreeing that they like sharing their ideas and their opinions in their class (percentage of pupils)**
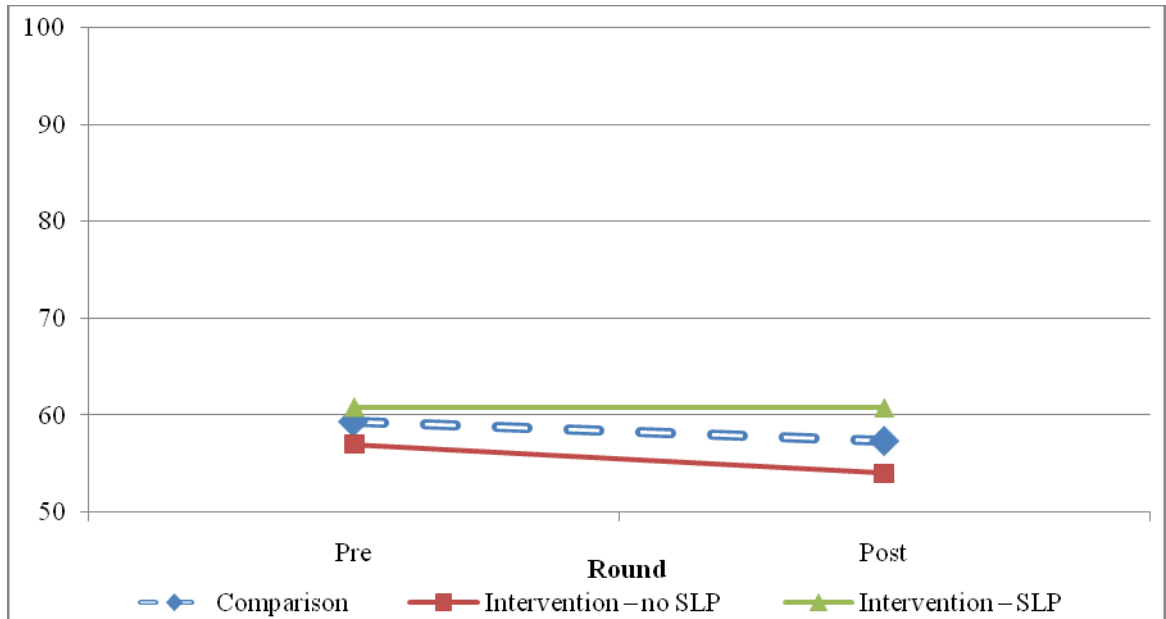


*Base: All in comparison schools (N= 2366) and intervention schools (SLP, N= 455; no SLP, N= 1081) who took part in both the pre- and the post-survey.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

**Figure 5.10 – Secondary pupils agreeing or strongly agreeing that they do not give their real opinions in class because they think their classmates will laugh at them (percentage of pupils)**
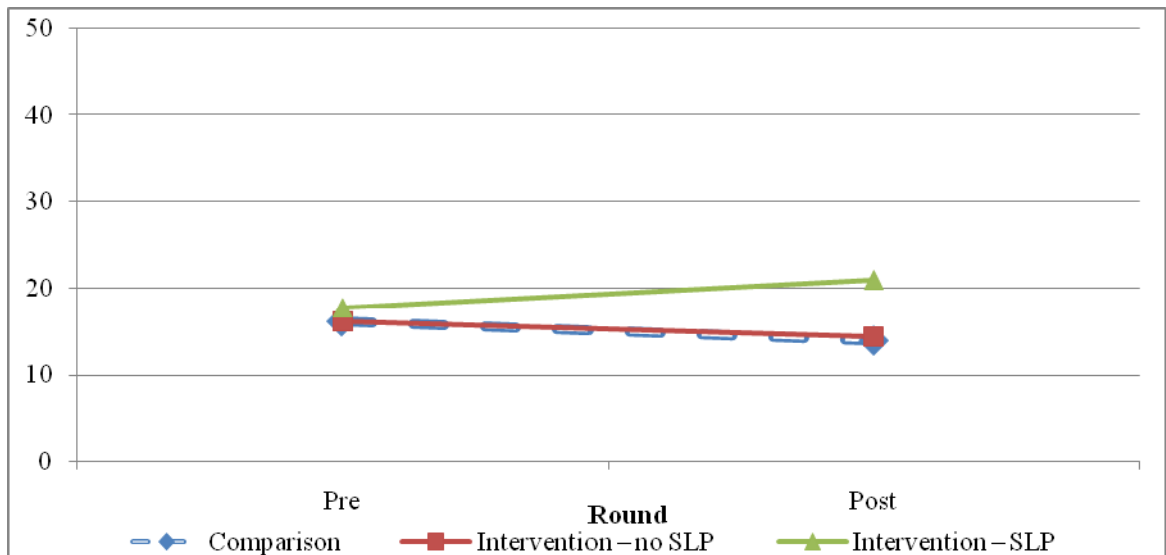


*Base: All in comparison schools (N= 2366) and intervention schools (SLP, N= 455; no SLP, N= 1081) who took part in both the pre- and the post-survey.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

There may be a number of reasons for this heightened awareness of, and concern with, what is socially acceptable behaviour amongst those involved in linking activities. In intervention schools where participation in school linking activities was not done by whole classes, pupils who changed their views as a result of linking may

now have more positive views of other groups than their class mates, and so, be unwilling to express them publically for fear of social sanctions, such as being laughed at. On the other hand, if pupils involved in the SLN programme have negative views of other groups, the programme may have made them aware of the inappropriateness of prejudiced views, thus making them now more reticent about expressing them publicly. These findings highlight the need for teachers to continue working with pupils post-linking, providing a safe environment in which to explore potentially controversial issues.

### 5.2.5 Community integration and cohesion at school and beyond

One of the effects of involvement in the SLN programme could be to improve pupils' perceptions of the level of integration and cohesion of communities around them. In other words, it might be expected that pupils involved in the programme would develop a more acute awareness and assessment of the level of integration and cohesion in their school and in their neighbourhood – this could be both positive and negative depending on the nature of their school and neighbourhood.

Regarding integration and cohesion in school, the statistical modelling showed no connection between participation in school linking and levels of *segregation within the school* as reported by pupils (see Table 5.2 for a description of the factors examined in this section). However?, the modelling revealed that being a learner directly involved in school linking activities (compared with pupils in a SLN programme school but not involved in school linking or with pupils in comparison schools) was associated with more reports, at post-intervention, of having been **personally bullied** or having seen **other pupils in the same school being bullied** due to their racial, ethnic, religious or socio-economic characteristics (see Figures 5.11 and 5.12, and Appendices 8.8. and 8.9 for details of pupil responses and the modelling, respectively). However, this may be merely due to an increase in awareness of instances which constitute bullying rather than an increase in actual incidents. As such, this increase in reports of bullying may constitute a positive outcome of the SLN programme.

**Table 5.2 – School and wider community climate: factors used to measure the impact of the SLN programme**

| Factor name | High scores on factor mean pupils… |
|---|---|
| *Segregation within the school* | Perceiving fellow pupils as not getting on with each other, if they are from different classes, year groups, races, ethnicities, religions and/or socio-economic background |
| *Personal experience of bullying at school* | Reporting having been personally bullied in the last 12 months due to their race, ethnicity and/or their socio-economic background |
| *Witnessing of bullying at school* | Reporting having seen someone else being bullied in the last 12 months due to their race, ethnicity and/or their socio-economic background |
| *Neighbourhood's openness to diversity* | Pupils reporting that, in their neighbourhood, people get on well with each other even if they are from different backgrounds (geographically, racially/ethnically, religiously or financially) |

As for pupils' perceptions of integration and cohesion in their neighbourhoods, the modelling revealed no connection between participation in school linking and perceptions of *neighbourhood's openness to diversity*. Therefore, it would appear that the SLN programme has not had an impact on how pupils view their community, at least within the short-term scale of the evaluation.

The statistical modelling does indicate that the neighbourhoods in which pupils live may influence the attitudes and dispositions which the SLN programme aims to change, making it possibly more challenging for the programme to effect an impact on some pupils rather than others. Indeed, the modelling (see Appendix 8.9) showed that, with the influence of the SLN programme accounted for, *neighbourhood's openness to* **diversity** at pre-intervention was associated with pupils' post-intervention reports regarding:

- *Personal experience of bullying at school* and saying that 'I don't give my real opinions in my classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me'; in these cases, the greater the pre-intervention *neighbourhood's openness to diversity*, the less likely pupils were, at post-intervention, to report having been bullied and to say that they do not give their real opinions

- *Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination, respect for the rights of others,* and saying that 'a good citizen of Britain respects the rights of others'; in these cases, the greater the pre-intervention *neighbourhood's openness to diversity*, the more likely pupils were, at post-intervention, to report awareness of discrimination being discussed and support for the respect for the rights of others.

**Figure 5.11 - Secondary pupils' *personal experience of bullying* (mean scores on factor)**
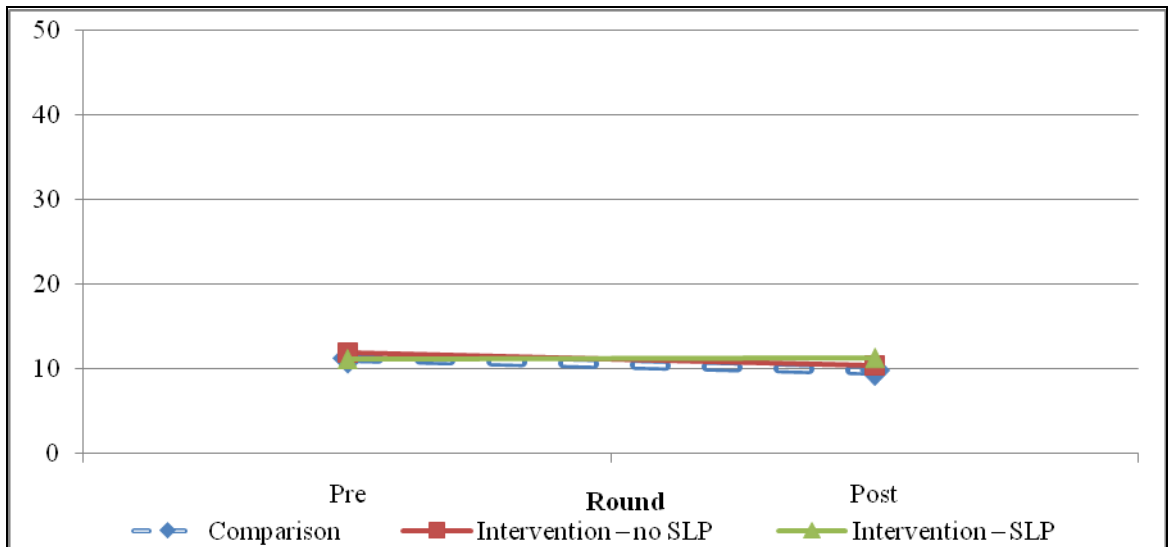


*Base: All in comparison schools (N= 2366) and intervention schools (SLP, N= 455; no SLP, N= 1081) who took part in both the pre- and the post-survey.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

**Figure 5.12 - Secondary pupils' *witnessing of bullying* (mean scores on factor)**
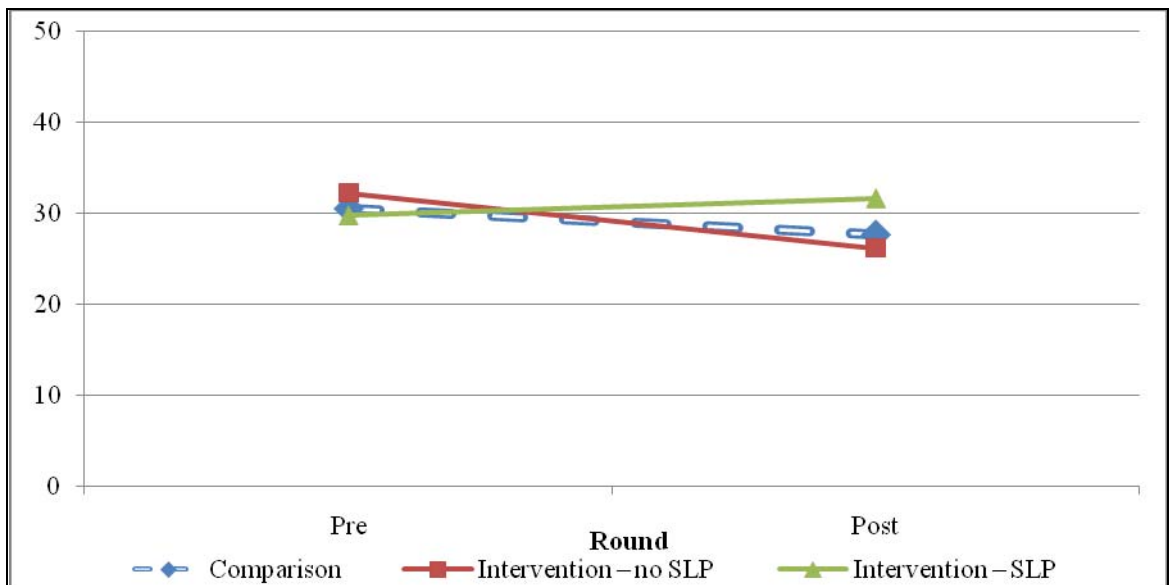


*Base: All in comparison schools (N= 2366) and intervention schools (SLP, N= 455; no SLP, N= 1081) who took part in both the pre- and the post-survey.*
*Source: Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network programme, NFER.*

While the survey findings are mixed regarding a possible impact of the SLN programme on perceptions of integration and cohesion, it is worth highlighting that case-study data indicate a number of ways in which taking part in school linking can enhance positive feelings among pupils towards, and a sense of belonging to, their school and local areas. For instance, one secondary school pupil reflected on how her

local area compared positively to the link school's area: '*People are friendlier in* [local area] *because they are less busy and have more time for people. In London it's all about rush, rush around and pushing you out of the way and all that*'. Another secondary school pupil explained how involvement in school linking had helped to show that their school had changed for the better: '*They used to think this school is bad, but when we changed to* [new school name] *people still didn't think we had changed for the better, but doing this we are getting recognised and showing people, yes, we have changed for the better*'.

## 5.3   Impacts and outcomes for schools and teachers

The main aim of the SLN programme is to ' develop and deepen children and young people's knowledge and understanding of identity/ies, diversity, equality and community 14 (as outlined in Chapter 2 and detailed on the SLN website). The programme can be expected to have an impact mainly on the pupils directly involved in the linking activities. However, as seen below, the research also showed that there had been an impact on the teachers involved in the linking work. Also, some schools had put in place activities aimed at disseminating the impact of the programme across the school, in order to reach pupils not directly involved in linking.

Several of the teachers involved as school linking coordinators felt that the link work had improved their **confidence**. They also believed that it had helped to improve their **organisation and collaborative working** skills because of the extensive and ongoing liaison work that was required with the other school. Overall, one of the main areas of benefit for teachers and schools was said to be that they had better links with other schools, and they had improved how they work together. Although this was predominately related to the link school, attendance at the LA training days had also enabled contact and collaborative working with other schools.

The impact was not only self-reported by the school linking coordinators. Most of the senior leaders had observed a positive impact on the teachers that had been involved in the work, as illustrated here:

> '*It's been really good for* [the coordinator]*, she was new to Year 6 and it's helped her as a teacher: it's helped her relationship with the children; that always help, for their professional development.*' (senior leader)

Although some had observed a positive impact on their softer skills, on the whole, teachers felt that the link work had not affected their teaching practice, but that it had reinforced what they had already been doing:

> '*Not to my direct teaching. But I think there is a lot to learn from them, like from any other  link you learn from it and this is what's nice, you see when*

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*you club together that two heads are better than one.'* (School Linking Coordinator)

A minority of teachers reported that they now had a better **understanding** of the role of integration and cohesion, and of schools' duty to promote it. The limited impact was partly because several teachers felt that their knowledge and understanding in this area was already quite good. In terms of **curriculum knowledge**, two of the teachers mentioned that it had helped their knowledge of citizenship, and one felt that through the linking work she had an improved understanding of cross-curricular work. The activities and resources used as part of the SLN programme had been received positively, and a few of the teachers said that they valued the suggested ideas for activities.

None of the interviewees felt that the link work had impacted on **school policy**. In most cases, this was due to them having signed up to the school linking because it supported existing work the school was doing. In some cases, schools had developed other, related activities such as other links with schools in the UK and internationally. However, there was an emphasis on this being alongside the linking project, rather than because of it:

> *'Not a change as a result, this was part of the school improvement. Community cohesion is a massive thing at the moment, plus we're constantly aware that a lot of our children live in a bubble, we're linked with schools all over the world, and although we're are linked globally, which is important it's also important to realise that down the road are very different schools and situations and family lives than they are used to, it was policy we wanted to change and this was part of that.'* (senior leader)

Interestingly, it was not only the pupils who improved their understanding through increased exposure to different groups of people. Two of the school linking coordinators said the experience had made them more aware of the differences between pupils, and it had given them an opportunity to reflect on the ability and strengths of their own pupils:

> *'All it did was made me realise, that I'm not used to teaching in more challenging schools and it made me realise I don't know what they are like. It's just made me realise how independent our children are, they don't need you – they are very organised children.'* (school linking coordinator)

While most teachers reported a positive impact from the link work, two of the teachers reported that the link work had a **negative impact**. In particular, they felt that the time spent on the link work had reduced the time available to be innovative in other ways and in other lessons.

As outlined in Chapter 3, schools signed up to the school linking programme mainly because they hoped to improve outcomes for the pupils at their school or to complement the activities their schools were already involved in. Expected benefits

for teachers were not mentioned, and some of the interviewees appeared quite surprised at the level of impact that it had on them, as described by one of the school linking coordinators:

> '[It's had a] *huge effect in terms of my confidence, organising teams, group work, presenting skills, independent learning. I hadn't thought that there would have been huge positive changes in my skills'* (school linking coordinator)

Schools found it harder to document any impact on **the wider school** and this varied depending on the approach of the individual school. In some schools, they had focused the work on a small group of pupils as a pilot project, with a view to potentially expanding it in the school in subsequent years. In such instances, the impact was confined to the pupils who had been directly involved.

In most cases, some **limited dissemination of the activities** had taken place within the school, for example presenting some of the results or outcomes of the linking activities at assemblies, or on display boards in common areas within the school.

> '*There is one* [display board] *in the entrance and the subject leader keeps* [it up to date]. *It's been publicised in a really high quality newsletter, every Friday with photos and stories, it's been in there. Parents would know about it through that and the rest of the staff.'* (senior leader)

In most cases, teachers felt that other pupils in the school were at least aware that some activity was taking place, but not necessarily that any of the messages from the work had been passed onto other pupils. As highlighted in Chapter 3, evaluation and monitoring of school linking was limited in many schools, which meant most of the schools found it difficult to assess the wider impact of the programme on other pupils.

The scarcity of programme dissemination activities beyond pupils directly involved in linking activities is consistent with the fact that the statistical modelling showed no evidence of programme impact amongst pupils in SLN programme schools who were not involved in school linking. It should be noted, however, that at the time of the follow up case-study visits to schools, the school linking work had not quite ended, and a few of the schools were still planning events within the school to try and raise awareness of the work that had taken place. Several also had ideas for how they might make the rest of the school more aware and more involved in future years of the links, such as having sessions run by the pupils directly involved in the link work and inviting parents and governors to events. Dissemination to the rest of the school and the wider community appeared to be an area that teachers were aware that they needed to build on, but one that they wished to concentrate on once the linking work had become more embedded within the school.

## 5.4　Impacts on the local authority (LA) and wider community

This section explores the views of local authority (LA) staff on the extent to which the SLN programme had impacted on their own activities and on the local community.

### 5.4.1　Impact on local authorities (LAs)

Most of the local authorities (LAs) believed that participating in the SLN had led to:

- increased links with other departments/staff within their LA
- a more coherent approach to integration and cohesion within some LAs.

Thus, some local authorities found that involvement in the SLN programme had resulted in increased communication and collaboration across departments within their authority in order to address integration and cohesion objectives. As one strategic manager in an authority commented:

> *'I think there is also now more of a link between the international liaison office and us because the international liaison officer is on the steering group, and it means that the possibility of thinking about international school linking and local school linking might be feasible to think of as one program rather than 2 separate things. I think it's also brought me closer to school improvement.'* (LA strategic manager)

### 5.4.2　Impact on the wider community

LA staff were not aware of any *direct* evidence of the impact of the SLN programme on wider communities.  However, almost all were able to identify ways in which they thought it could have had an impact, including via:

- Parents involved in school linking events
- Governors involved in school linking days and other events linked to the programme
- Newsletters sent out to parents and/or the local community
- Celebrations events, involving parents and other members of the local community
- Websites presenting details and outcomes of the school linking programme
- Involving other members of the community in linking events (e.g. travellers, police liaison officers, etc.)
- Displays in the schools
- Links with other local authority departments and its members.

Some areas were planning to explore the impact on the local community in the future:

> *'Well, I couldn't answer that at this stage. But it's something I want to ask them, I want to know what the parents made of the project, if there was*

*something useful or something they felt their children should know more about.'* (LA operational manager)

Others recognised that to increase the impact on the wider community, future work needed to involve parents and the wider community more in school linking to increase this impact:

> *'From what I can gather perhaps we do need to have a strategy to involve parents and local groups. I think it has to do with the cycle of the project; the project starts with issues of identity, who am I and where am I from, and it moves to looking at children from the other school and then looks at the community where they live. I think the question of who I am has been successfully answered in a way you know. But I'm looking forward to seeing how they have dealt with: "Where do we live and how do we live together?" and so on.'* (LA operational manager)

The next chapter considers the main conclusions from the programme's evaluation and draws out recommendations for enhancing the delivery and impact of school linking going forward.

# Chapter 6   Conclusions and recommendations

## 6.1   Introduction – changing context

As was noted in Chapter 1, NFER was commissioned by the DfE (formerly DCSF) to conduct an independent evaluation of the national pilot for the SLN. This evaluation was focused on three key objectives:

1.  To collect data on the *types of school linking* activities taking place in LAs and to evaluate the *processes* (at LA and school level) that are administering and supporting the school linking

2.  To measure the *impact* and *outcomes* of school linking at different levels (i.e. on pupils, schools, staff, and local communities)

3.  To consider the *sustainability* and *cost-effectiveness* of school linking beyond the pilot phase.

This final chapter pulls together the key findings from the preceding chapters. These are presented in relation to conclusions to each of the three key objectives of the evaluation, in turn. The conclusions are then used to make recommendations concerning school linking and  SLN going forward.

The chapter has been written in recognition that the landscape of policy and practice in education and local communities, including in schools and LAs, is considerably changed from that when the evaluation was commissioned in 2009. These changes include:

- The renaming and refocusing of the commissioning body, in that the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) has been renamed the Department for Education (DfE) with the focus, as the name suggests, primarily on education and schools.

- The election of a new coalition Government that has differing policy emphases, including, in relation to this evaluation, an emphasis more on the promotion of integration in society and communities than on community cohesion.

- The announcement of the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) with tighter controls on budgets and spending at national and local level (including in LAs) in the coming years and an increased emphasis on impact and value for money (VfM).

- The publication by DfE of the Schools White Paper 2010, entitled *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), with: an emphasis on the role of teaching and teachers; the announcement of a curriculum review presaging a slimmer National Curriculum; and, the likelihood of more flexibility for schools in planning the curriculum and teaching approaches.

The conclusions and recommendations in this chapter should be viewed against this changing policy and practice context. The changing context has considerable

implications for the rationale, aims, practices and funding of school linking, at national, LA and school level, and for the activities of SLN beyond the current pilot phase.

## 6.2   Conclusions

It is important to preface the conclusions with some observations about the nature of the evaluation objectives and types and sources of data gathered. These aspects of the evaluation have an impact on the type and nature of the conclusions reached.

First, it should be noted that the three objectives of the evaluation are not separate but interrelated. The evaluation has provided evidence that the types of school linking and the processes (at LA and school level) have an effect (both positive and negative) on the impact and outcomes of school linking at different levels, which, in turn, have an effect on the sustainability and cost effectiveness of school linking beyond the pilot phase. This means that the conclusions of the evaluation (i.e. for the three objectives) should be viewed as interrelated.

Second, it must be recognised that links can be made between the differing types of data collected during the evaluation. The quantitative survey data provides overarching figures and numbers on school linking while the qualitative case-study data provides more in-depth information that helps to explain how and why these figures and numbers have come about.  Taken together the two types of data enable conclusions to be drawn not only about impact and cost-effectiveness but also about types and processes of school linking and sustainability.

Third, it is important to realise that links can be drawn between the data gathered about the same experience of school linking but from different perspectives. Having evidence about school linking provided by staff in LAs and schools, as well as from pupils, ensures a rich triangulation of evidence in terms of how school linking was conceived and planned, how it was delivered in practice and how it was received. This enables conclusions to be drawn about all stages of school linking from inception, through planning and delivery to evaluation and potential sustainability.

Having taken note of these aspects, the following sections present, in turn, the conclusions in relation to each of the three objectives of the evaluation.

### 6.1.1   Types and processes of school linking (at LA and school level)

The first point to note in relation to the first objective of the evaluation concerning *types and processes of school linking* is that the evaluation investigated three types or models of school linking conducted through the SLN pilot phase. They are:

- *Partnership model* between LAs and the SLN, where the LA and its staff have face-to-face and on-line access to SLN training, materials and support throughout the linking process to assist their work with schools.

- *Gateway model* where schools, via SLN, have on-line access to a list of potential linking school partners and to SLN materials, but no LA support.

- *NGO model* where an NGO works with a group of schools on school linking, having access of the SLN approach, but largely facilitating the links itself.

The evaluation investigated considerably more examples of the partnership model in the evaluation than the other two, because the pilot phase is based primarily around the partnership model.

The main conclusions in relation to the first objective of the evaluation are set out below.

The first conclusion is that while it is possible for all three types or models of school linking to develop effective practices, the evaluation found that the partnership model was more successful in this respect than the other two models. LAs and their staff and, in turn, schools and school staff, appreciated the level of support provided by the partnership model throughout the linking process and, in particular, the access to expert training and resources. This gave the partnership model a considerable edge in terms of developing effective linking processes and practices, particularly when compared with the on-line Gateway model. The NGO model is a hybrid, which is dependent on the nature of the NGO involved and its contact with schools.

The evaluation also found that, although the partnership model was the most common approach to school linking, in reality, it comprised a myriad of practices and processes in reality on the ground. This is because LAs and schools adapt the SLN partnership model to fit their particular contexts and circumstances. The major influences on the degree of adaptation are the size of the LA and extent and levels of diversity in each LA, as well as the types and numbers of schools involved. For example, larger LAs with greater numbers of schools and higher levels of community and school diversity found it much easier to link schools to consider issues of integration and cohesion around ethnicity than smaller LAs where there was much less diversity. The latter LAs had to be creative in the nature of the linking, bringing schools together around issues such as religion/interfaith aspects and socio-economic background as well as ethnicity.

The processes of school linking at LA level are also dependent on the balance between the involvement of primary and secondary schools. The evaluation suggests that it is harder to develop effective processes and practices in school linking involving secondary schools than primary schools. This is due, in part, to differences in the size, foci, curriculum organisation and staffing between secondary and primary schools.

The further conclusions from the evaluation about the processes (at LA and school level) that are administering and supporting the school linking are set out in relation to the three interrelated stages of the linking process, namely:

- *Linking start up*
- *Linking planning and maintenance*, and
- *Linking sustainability.*

The first two stages (i.e. start-up and planning and maintenance) are covered below while the third stage (i.e. sustainability) is addressed in the conclusions about the third objective of the evaluation – cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

The main conclusions concerning *school linking types* and *processes* are structured in relation to the main challenges identified during the evaluation at each stage and evidence gathered about effective practices in addressing those challenges.

## Linking start-up

The evaluation identified two key challenges in this stage of the pilot phase of SLN namely.

- *Encouraging schools to participate in linking*
- *Beginning the school linking process.*

*Encouraging schools to participate in linking*

The evaluation highlighted the challenges for LAs in recruiting sufficient numbers of schools to participate in linking activities and ensuring that those recruited provided the breadth of diversity necessary to set up meaningful school linking partnerships between schools. The majority of LAs involved in the evaluation struggled to get sufficient numbers of secondary schools to participate in the pilot phase of SLN. This was often because the money available was insufficient to attract the interest of secondary schools. Linking in many LAs more commonly involved primary schools.

Having attracted schools to participate in linking activities there was then the challenge of matching schools so that there were sufficient differences between the partner schools to make the linking meaningful. The evaluation highlighted how this was a particular challenge for LAs where the local area, and therefore the schools, was largely mono-cultural. Schools did not want to link with schools that were similar to them but rather with those that were very different, particularly in terms of ethnicity and culture.

The following highlight a number of the effective practices that LAs employed to mitigate this challenge including:

- Employing LA staff who had good local knowledge of schools and the local context to ensure achieving the best mix of school links.

- Ensuring there was an LA coordinator to drive the process in recruiting and linking schools.

- Having a clear rationale, aims and objectives for why school linking was important (often drawn from the SLN Handbook) and ensuring that these messages were relayed and understood by schools and then, in turn, by school staff and pupils.

- Having small amounts of money to pump prime school links – this was particularly crucial at the start of the linking process in attracting schools.

- Recruiting committed and proactive staff in schools that had sufficient time available to take part in school linking.

- Schools recruiting staff and pupils in sufficient numbers who understood the rationale for school linking and were motivated to participate.

### *Beginning the school linking process*

This was the challenge of ensuring the meaningful linking of pairs of schools through initial actions that laid the foundations for an effective, successful and sustainable link. This included justifying the rationale for why link schools had been paired together, in terms of the focus of the link. The evaluation unearthed a number of effective practices employed by LAs to meet this challenge.

- Broadening the rationale for and nature of the link to focus not just on ethnicity and culture but also on differences in religion/inter-faith and/or socio-economic circumstances. This approach was employed by LAs in areas that were more mono-cultural than others. The broadening was the only way to meet the aspirations of the participating schools about taking part in the linking.

- Linking with schools in neighbouring LAs in order to broaden the potential for ethnic, cultural, religious/inter-faith and socio-economic differences between local contexts and schools. This worked well where there were already existing links between neighbouring LAs.

- Having a clear programme of activities for the whole of the linking process including pre-link, link and post-link activities – the activities provided in the SLN Handbook and staff training sessions were especially useful in this respect.

- Ensuring that all those involved in school linking in schools participate in pre-link activities and, where appropriate, were involved in the planning of some of these activities. Such involvement was a particular plea from pupils in schools. The evaluation found that the better the pre-link activities the more likely participants – LA staff, school staff and pupils – found school linking enjoyable, successful and to have impact.

- Managing expectations (both positive and negative) about linking carefully and sensitively. It was important that both schools involved in the linking had similar expectations. The evaluation also highlighted the impact that teachers can have on pupil expectations in terms of the transmission of their own expectations about linking – this can be both positive and negative. It is important for teachers to

allay any fears that pupils might have in advance of linking to ensure that they approach it in the right frame of mind.

## Linking running and maintenance

There are three main challenges in this stage of school linking, namely those concerning:

- *Managing links*
- *Having meaningful link activities*
- *Building in monitoring and evaluation.*

### Managing links

The evaluation highlighted the importance for all those involved not only of starting but also of then maintaining the linking process throughout the school year. There were a number of effective practices recommended by SLN to LA and school staff to overcome this challenge, that were pursued and adapted by LAs and their schools dependent on their local circumstances.

- Having effective, committed school linking coordinators at LA level. The LA coordinator was essential in driving the school linking process throughout the year. The evaluation suggests that the presence of the LA coordinator explains why the partnership model of SLN was more successful in practice than the Gateway model. The NGO model also had a named coordinator who helped to facilitate the links between the NGO and participating schools.

- Having an effective and committed school linking coordinator at school level (i.e. in both link schools). This was crucial in establishing the link and maintaining it throughout the year. It was helpful if the coordination role was shared by teachers in link schools to mitigate against the possibility of illness and/or the coordinator moving on during the year.  Problems arose in managing links where one school and its coordinator were more committed to the link than its partner school.

- Ensuring that the coordinator is well supported in terms of status, time and funding. The evaluation showed that school linking was most successful where the linking coordinator, whether at LA or school level, was supported in their role by senior management and had sufficient time available and some funding to cover the main components of the role, such as attending training and planning, carrying out and monitoring activities.

- Having clear processes at all stages of the link, notably in the pre-link, link and post-link phases of school linking. These processes should be clear to all participants at LA and school level. The evaluation demonstrates the importance of having all three phases of the link in place in order to make for an effective link.

- Using the pre-links and on-going CPD training, for LA and school staff, as a carrot throughout the linking process to attract initial interest and maintain momentum in the link. The evaluation demonstrated how the pre-links and initial CPD training acted as a learning carrot for LA and school staff, while the on-

going CPD sessions maintained the focus on the link and encouraged evaluations of the impact of the link at the end of the linking process.

*Having meaningful link activities*

The evaluation also highlighted the challenge of building in meaningful link activities throughout the school linking process. The more meaningful the link activities, the more likely the link was to be successful for the LA, schools and pupils. The processes and practices that helped LAs and schools to overcome this challenge included:

- Moving beyond the initial and the personal in linking to address deeper issues concerning integration, ethnicity and difference. School linking was more effective and meaningful where the link moved beyond initial discussion about personal similarities and difference between the link partners to focus on deeper issues concerning similarities and differences between local areas, schools and pupils in terms of ethnicity, culture, cohesion and integration.

- Conducting link activities at least two times or more during the course of the link. The evaluation found that the greater the number of linking activities carried out during the course of the link between the partner schools then the more likely the link was to have impact for pupils. Indeed the SLN model recommends at least four link activity meetings evenly spaced over the year.

- Ensuring that school linking is properly planned and embedded into teaching and learning across the curriculum. Such planning and embedding meant that school linking was more likely to be seen as real learning by pupils. It also brought the involvement of more teachers, subjects and pupils and therefore increased the chances of the linking being sustained by the school beyond the pilot phase.

- Consulting pupils when choosing link activities. Pupils got more out of school linking where they were involved in choosing and planning link activities.

- Building in post-linking activities involving LA and school staff and pupils. The evaluation suggests that having such post-link activities led to greater enjoyment of the link for participants.

*Building in monitoring and evaluation*

The third challenge in relation to running and maintaining school linking was that concerning building in monitoring and evaluation of the linking process. Such monitoring and evaluation was important not only for SLN but also for LAs and link schools in providing information that contributed to making an assessment about the impact, cost-effectiveness and sustainability of school linking for participants. It also provided an evidence base that could be used to showcase the positives of school linking within and across LAs as well as within and across schools. Practices that helped to address this challenge included:

- Using the SLN monitoring and evaluation forms to encourage LAs and schools to build in their own monitoring and evaluation processes. The fact that these forms were available underlined the importance of monitoring and evaluation in the school linking process.

- Collecting a range of monitoring and evaluation evidence – surveys, pupil testimonies, photos, video recordings - from a range of partners and perspectives including those of LA staff, teachers and pupils about pre-linking, linking activities and post-linking. The majority of LAs held end of year events to showcase this evidence to a wider audience.

- Building in opportunities to analyse the monitoring and evaluation data collected and to collate and report on the outcomes, both positive and negative, in order to improve the school linking process and build for sustainability. Some LAs recognised the opportunity to use the evidence to showcase school linking to other schools, to inform other colleagues and to lobby for funding to continue and grow such links.

### 6.1.2  Impact and outcomes of school linking

The second objective of the evaluation was to measure the ***impact and outcomes*** of school linking at different levels (i.e. on pupils, schools, staff and local communities). The main conclusions emerging from analyses of the evaluation data concerning this objective are:

- School linking is a new, complex and challenging area. The practice and processes of school linking are still emerging through the pilot phase of SLN. This means that school linking is a challenging area to map and evaluate. It explains why the evaluation was based on a two-stage quasi-experimental research design involved a 'first 'pre' stage' and a 'second 'post' phase'.

- The key determinant of the impact and outcomes of school linking for pupils is the intensity of the school linking experience. The survey evidence from pupils who participated in the school linking pilot showed that linking had greater impact where pupils linked with pupils from their partner school two or more times during the year.

- School linking can have a range of impacts, both immediate and over time, for all participants. The evaluation found evidence of such impact in a diverse range of LAs and schools and for pupils in both primary and secondary schools.

- The evaluation uncovered primarily positive outcomes for pupils, schools and LAs. This was due to linking being carefully planned, conducted and reviewed However, there were a small number of examples of negative outcomes, where linking merely reinforced existing attitudes and stereotypes about particular groups in society. Though in the majority of the case studies visited school linking was successful in meeting its aims and objectives, such success cannot be taken for granted in all cases and requires ongoing support.

- The majority of LAs, schools and pupils, in both primary and secondary schools benefitted from involvement in the school linking pilot phase.

- There is evidence that school linking can impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours, particularly those concerning self-confidence and self-efficacy. However the picture is mixed about the impact of school linking on particular aspects and attributes, such as their willingness to express opinions and perception of school and community climate.

- There is evidence that involvement in school linking can have an impact on participating LA and school staff in terms of their CPD, opportunities for self-reflection, learning about their pupils through observation of them interacting with pupils from partner schools and their attitudes.

- There is evidence that school linking can have an impact beyond those participating in the linking. For example at LA level, this can be through connections to other staff and programmes and at school level through embedding and curriculum links to other subjects and aspects and the involvement of other teachers and pupils. However, more needs to be known about the exact nature of such impact, particularly over time.

- The impact and outcomes of school linking are greater where the co-ordination role is shared at both LA and school level. There is a danger where there is there is one person coordinating that the impact can be lessened or lost if that person becomes ill or moves on from the school or LA. It is also difficult for one person to promote the outcomes of school linking, ensure sustainability and attract funding.

- The majority of participants who took part in the evaluation at LA and school level reported that they were keen to continue their involvement in school linking beyond the pilot phase. This was dependent at LA and school level on sufficient funding and staff time being available. Pupils reported that they particularly enjoyed taking part and 'meeting new people'. Such pupil outcomes matched teacher expectations about the benefits of school linking.

### 6.1.3   Sustainability and cost-effectiveness of school linking

The third and final objective of the evaluation was to consider the *sustainability and cost-effectiveness* of school linking beyond the pilot phase. As was noted in the introduction to this chapter, the changing context of policy and practice has made this objective even more pressing than when the evaluation was commissioned. The main conclusions emerging from the evaluation data concerning the cost-effectiveness of the school linking pilot and its sustainability going forward are:

- There is an interrelationship between cost-effectiveness and sustainability. The sustainability of school linking going forward is dependent on its cost-effectiveness and vice-versa for LAs, schools and funders.

- The pilot phase of SLN was viewed as highly cost-effective by participating LAs and schools, both primary and secondary, in relation to its impact and outcomes achieved.

- LA and school staff believe that for school linking to be effective and sustainable there is a need for money to support the whole process of school linking i.e. to pay for coordination of links at local/LA level, CPD training and support for schools, the school coordinator's time, monitoring and evaluation and post-link activities. Finance is particularly important at the start of the process to pump prime and encourage schools to sign up and participate.

- It is harder to attract secondary schools to participate in school linking than primary schools. This is, in part, because the sums of money available to take part are less appealing to secondary schools (who have much larger budgets) than to

primary schools. This is a factor that could influence issues of sustainability for both existing participating schools and future link schools.

- There is evidence from the evaluation that collecting and using monitoring and evaluation evidence can assist with issues of sustainability and funding at LA and school level, both within and across LAs and schools. Some LAs had used evidence from the pilot phase to support the case for continuing school linking and involving more schools.

- The chances for the sustainability of school linking at school and LA level can be improved if conscious attempts are made to embed the learning and outcomes across the school curriculum and to link the learning to other LA programmes and initiatives.

- The majority of LAs and schools involved in the evaluation had plans to continue their involvement in school linking beyond the pilot phase in 2010/11 and had already secured funding and staffing to enable this to happen.

- There was considerable uncertainty at the time the evaluation fieldwork was completed in Summer 2010 among LAs and schools (both primary and secondary), that they would continue to be involved in school linking in 2011/12 and beyond. This was not because of a dwindling commitment to school linking but was a direct consequence of the current financial and policy climate and the uncertainties about the amount of funds that would be available, the role of LAs in relation to communities and schools, the amount of staff time that would be available and the extent of competing policy priorities.

## 6.3   Recommendations

It is not appropriate to offer detailed recommendations from the evaluation concerning the future of school linking beyond the pilot phase of SLN given the changing nature of policy and practice context from the time when the evaluation was commissioned. Rather it is more effective and helpful to provide ten overarching recommendations that relate to the aspects of the evaluation and of school linking addressed through this report. These ten recommendations are:

**Types and processes of school linking**

1. **Review the differing types or models of school linking**: Consider in more detail the particular strengths and weaknesses of the Partnership, Gateway and NGO models of school linking in relation to the changing context of policy and practice. There should be a particular focus on the diverse ways in which LAs operate the Partnership model.

2. **Manage the expectations of LAs and schools about the focus of school linking**: some LAs and schools, driven by the particular local context and lack of ethnic and cultural diversity, have begun to broaden the focus of school linking to incorporate further aspects such as religious/interfaith and socio-economic/class. There is a need to manage such expectations and

decide the extent to which such broadening, particularly the religious/interfaith dimension, should be a feature of all school linking going forward.[15]

3. **Address the challenge of recruiting more schools, particularly secondary schools and making links across neighbouring LAs**: Much of the current school linking involves primary rather than secondary schools and takes place within rather than across neighbouring LAs. With the issues addressed by school linking of particular relevance to older pupils there is a need to address the question of how more secondary schools could be encouraged to participate in school linking. Also with neighbouring LAs providing greater diversity of contexts and schools there is a need to explore the potential to set up school linking across neighbouring LAs.

4. **Focus on improving the processes of school linking**: The evaluation outcomes underline the importance for effective school linking of having linking processes that cover pre-linking, linking and post-linking activities. There is a need to use the learning from the evaluation to focus on improving these processes.

**Impact and outcomes of school linking**

5. **Give more thought to impact and outcomes**: Though the importance of impact and outcomes is articulated through SLN's CPD training and support, it is clear that this is not always translated through into actual practice on the ground. There is therefore a need for those involved in school linking to give greater thought to what the desired impact and outcomes such linking are, particularly for pupils, schools and communities, and decide how they can best be achieved in practice.

6. **Improve the collection of monitoring and evaluation data and explore how it can be used for greater impact**: The evaluation underlines how the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation can be used to promote school linking to wider audiences within and across schools and LAs. It suggests the need to explore how such sources can be used for greater impact at national, local and school level.

**Cost-effectiveness and sustainability of school linking**

7. **Explore the cost effectiveness of different types and processes of school linking against impact and outcomes:** The outcomes of the evaluation highlight how those involved in the SLN pilot phase view school linking as

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[15] Interestingly since this evaluation was completed the Schools Linking Network (SLN) has begun working closely with the Three Faiths Forum to establish a national model for interfaith linking as part of the schools linking programme going forward.

highly cost-effective. There is a need to explore the cost-effectiveness of the different types of school linking (Partnership, Gateway and NGO) and of the particular processes (pre-linking, linking and post-linking) going forward against impact and outcomes.

8. **Address the uncertainties about the sustainability of school linking going forward:** It is imperative to address the uncertainties that LAs and schools already involved in school linking have going forward about their ability to continue being involved in such activities beyond 2010/11. There is a danger that if these uncertainties continue then the experiences and momentum of school linking built up during the pilot phase will be dissipated and lost, making it difficult to retain existing links in LAs and schools and attract new ones.

**Evaluation of and research on school linking**

9. **Make full use of the strengthened evidence base**: All those involved in, and those who will be making decisions about, school linking should take account of the evidence and conclusions of this independent evaluation in their practices and decision making. The evaluation strengthens the evidence base concerning the types, processes and practices of school linking at LA, school and pupil level. It provides considerable food for thought and action for policy makers at all levels as well as for SLN staff, LA staff, school leaders and staff and children and young people.

10. **Look to take the evaluation design further**: Look to follow-up the pupils and school and LA staff who participated in the SLN pilot phase at a later point to gauge the extent of any on-going impact of school linking on pupils, schools and LAs and to assess the extent of sustainability.

## 6.4 Final Comment

In an evaluation of this nature, it is fitting that the last word should go to those most closely involved in the processes and practices of school linking. The following quotations provide a pithy snapshot of some of the main conclusions from this independent evaluation of the pilot phase of school linking conducted by the SLN.

*'Generally, we found it* [the linking] *was more mono-cultural. We did have schools that had diverse ethnic minority populations, but overall it was the mainly white British schools that registered'*. (LA operational manager)

*'The only challenge was [that] we didn't have secondary involvement, but I think money wasn't attractive to them. I always find primary schools have a can do attitude; secondary colleagues have so much on that, unless there is a big monetary carrot to dangle, they are not interested really.'* (LA strategic manager)

*'If the teachers are on board and enthusiastic, they completely make the project, they make it happen'*. (LA strategic manager)

*'The CPD is essential. It's been a fabulous opportunity for staff to network and to share their experiences and that has been one of the biggest learning points in the whole project because they have been able to share their experiences and inspire colleagues'*. (LA operational manager)

*'They're not really much different from us really, they all have their moody moments like we do and they all have their giddy moments like we do so not that different'*. (primary school pupil)

*'I think a lot of them* [our pupils] *have developed an awareness of other cultures and people from other backgrounds. Again, we're a very white school and most of our influences are European, so it was healthy for them to mix with people with different backgrounds and values.'* (school linking coordinator)

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# 8. Appendices

## Appendix 8.1    Case-study selection

As part of the qualitative strand of the evaluation, NFER visited 8 cluster groups involved in Wave 4 of the SLN programme. In each cluster, interviews were conducted with LA staff (e.g. Strategic and Operational Managers of the programme) and with school staff (a senior leaders and the school linking coordinator). In addition, focus groups were conducted with pupils involved in linking.

In total, 20 schools were visited pre- and post-intervention. Of these schools, 10 were primary, nine secondary and 1 was a special school. In addition, 17 had been recruited via a LA route, 2 via the Gateway and 1 via an NGO.

## Appendix 8.2   Survey fieldwork procedures

The quantitative strand of this research involved two paper-based surveys of secondary school pupils – an initial survey in the autumn term 2009, before linking activities started, and a follow-up survey in the summer term 2010 after linking activities between schools had taken place. The follow-up survey was administered to the same respondents that completed the pre-intervention survey.

Two samples were required for each of the two surveys undertaken - an *intervention sample* of secondary schools that were involved in the Schools Linking Network programme, including Citizens Pathway schools, and a *comparison sample* of secondary schools that were not involved in linking initiatives. Schools in the initial intervention sample were selected by the NFER project leader from a list of participating schools provided by the DCSF. Schools in Bury that had started linking activities before the pre-activity survey were withdrawn from the sample. Logistic regression procedures were used to draw the initial sample of comparison schools, taking a number of background variables (percentage White British, FSM, Region, Size, EAL) into consideration to obtain comparison schools that matched the characteristics of the SLN intervention schools. A number of secondary schools were excluded from the comparison sample owing to their involvement in initiatives similar to the SLN programme, including schools in previous waves of School Linking, Three Faiths Forum, London Citizenship or Gateway schools. In addition, schools in Bradford, Bucks or Northants were excluded and the DCSF requested the of exclusion schools known to be taking part in Tellus4 owing to similarities in the survey questions. (See Table 8.2.1 for details of school-level response rates).

### Table 8.2.1 School-level response rate

| Round | Type | No. of schools contacted | No. of schools which completed the survey | Response rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Round 1 – pre-intervention | Intervention sample | 36 | 17 | 47% |
| | Comparison sample | 120 | 27 | 22.5% |
| Round 2 – post-intervention | Intervention sample | 17 | 15 | 88% |
| | Comparison sample | 27 | 23 | 85% |

In each school, up to six classes from years 7-10 were asked to complete the pre-intervention survey. Pupil names, year groups and dates of birth were data captured and used to link to the National Pupil Database (NPD). Informed consent was requested from pupils regarding permission to match individual data collected as part of the survey to the NPD

## Appendix 8.3    Survey: achieved sample and sample weighting

Pupils were surveyed before and after the SLN programme period. A sample of 3902 pupils responding to both the pre- and post-surveys was achieved – 1536 from SLN programme schools and 2366 from comparison schools. Among the 1536 pupils from SLN schools, 455 reported that they had been directly involved in school linking activities. All survey data reported in this report are for secondary school pupils who took part on both the pre- and the post-intervention surveys.

All subsequent analysis was based on this sample of 3902 pupils. Details of responses to each and both surveys are given below. Details of sub-groupings of those who took part in both surveys were provided in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.1).

### Table 8.3.1. Survey responses

|  | Surveyed pre-intervention | Surveyed post-intervention | Surveyed both times |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pupils in SLN programme schools | 2282 | 1620 | 1536 |
| Pupils in comparison schools | 3690 | 2502 | 2366 |
| **Total** | **5972** | **4122** | **3902** |

To explore possible impacts of the SLN programme, comparisons were made between the pupils directly involved in school linking activities (N=455), pupils in SLN programme schools but not directly involved in school linking activities (N=1081) and pupils in comparison schools (N=2366). For all descriptive analysis (counts/percentages), the former two groups (pupils directly involved in school linking activities and pupils in SLN programme schools not directly involved linking) were weighted to be as similar as possible to the comparison group in terms of background characteristics and pre-intervention attitudes, so as to minimise interference due to pre-existing differences. Pupil's background characteristics data were retrieved from questionnaire responses and the NPD. Pre-intervention attitudes were measured using 'factors' created from questionnaire responses (details of which are given in Appendix 8.5).

## Appendix 8.4    Survey: school and pupil characteristics

The following tables show the background characteristics for the pupils surveyed at both pre- and post-intervention, before weighting. (The samples of schools which the pupils attended were not drawn to be representative of the national population of schools given that the aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the programme on participating schools).

| Pupils Surveyed | | Comparison | Intervention schools - no linking | Intervention schools - involved in linking |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year group | 7 | 20% | 27% | 46% |
| | 8 | 22% | 10% | 21% |
| | 9 | 31% | 36% | 17% |
| | 10 or 11 | 27% | 26% | 16% |
| *Unweighted N* | | 2366 | 1081 | 455 |
| Sex | Male | 41% | 47% | 44% |
| | Female | 59% | 53% | 56% |
| *Unweighted N* | | 2366 | 1081 | 455 |

| Pupils Surveyed | | Comparison | Intervention schools - no linking | Intervention schools - involved in linking |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnicity | White - British | 73% | 72% | 68% |
| | White - Other | 3% | 4% | 6% |
| | Mixed | 4% | 4% | 6% |
| | Asian - Indian | 6% | 5% | 2% |
| | Asian - Pakistani | 3% | 3% | 1% |
| | Asian - Bangladeshi | 1% | 1% | 0% |
| | Asian - Other | 2% | 2% | 1% |
| | Black - Caribbean | 2% | 1% | 4% |
| | Black - African | 3% | 4% | 6% |
| | Black - Other | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| | Chinese | <0.5% | <0.5% | 0% |
| | Other | 2% | 2% | 1% |
| | Declined to say | <0.5% | <0.5% | <0.5% |
| | Missing | 1% | 1% | 4% |
| *Unweighted N* | | 2366 | 1081 | 455 |

| Pupils Surveyed | | Comparison | Intervention schools - no linking | Intervention schools - involved in linking |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Religion** | None | 33% | 42% | 43% |
| | Christian | 47% | 36% | 40% |
| | Hindu | 2% | 3% | 2% |
| | Jewish | <0.5% | <0.5% | <0.5% |
| | Muslim | 8% | 9% | 6% |
| | Sikh | 4% | 2% | 1% |
| | Buddhist | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| | Another religion | 1% | 2% | <0.5% |
| | Missing | 5% | 6% | 6% |
| *Unweighted N* | | 2366 | 1081 | 455 |

| Pupils Surveyed | | Comparison | Intervention schools - no linking | Intervention schools - involved in linking |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Eligible for free school meals** | Not Eligible | 87% | 84% | 84% |
| | Eligible | 13% | 15% | 15% |
| | Missing | <0.5% | <0.5% | 1% |
| *Unweighted N* | | 2366 | 1081 | 455 |
| **English as an additional language** | No EAL | 87% | 84% | 86% |
| | *EAL* | 13% | 16% | 14% |
| *Unweighted N* | | 2366 | 1081 | 455 |
| **Special Educational Needs** | No SEN | 61% | 67% | 61% |
| | School Action/Plus | 12% | 16% | 15% |
| | Statement | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| | Missing | 26% | 15% | 22% |
| *Unweighted N* | | 2366 | 1081 | 455 |

| Pupils Surveyed | | Comparison | Intervention schools - no linking | Intervention schools - involved in linking |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| How many books are there in your home | 0 | 4% | 3% | 4% |
| | 1-10 | 16% | 15% | 14% |
| | 11-50 | 26% | 26% | 23% |
| | 51-100 | 21% | 19% | 20% |
| | 101-200 | 14% | 17% | 14% |
| | More than 200 | 14% | 17% | 21% |
| | Missing | 5% | 4% | 4% |
| *Unweighted N* | | 2366 | 1081 | 455 |

# Appendix 8.5 Factor analyses of survey data

Factor analysis is a statistical technique for identifying patterns in questionnaire responses. It identifies groups of questions which have been answered in a related way. Often, questions within each of such groups relate to the same theme and can be combined into an overall measure of that theme (known as a 'factor').

The extent to which a factor gives a reliable measure of the underlying theme can be measured by a quantity called 'Cronbach's alpha'. Cronbach's alpha takes values from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better reliability. In general, a factor with reliability of 0.7 or above gives a good measure of the underlying theme, whereas a factor with reliability between 0.5 and 0.7 gives a less reliable but acceptable measure.

The factors constructed for this study and their reliabilities are given in the table below (Table 8.5.1). Some factors were only available in the pre-intervention survey as the related items were not included in the post-intervention survey. Factor scores were scaled to range from 0 (low) to 100 (high).

These factors were then used in the weighting (see Appendix 8.3) and the multilevel modelling analysis (see Appendix 8.7).

**Table 8.5.1   Factors used in the analysis of the impact of the SLN programme**

| | No. of items | Item content | Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
| *Factors constituting outcome variables when measured at post-intervention stage* | | | | |
| Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures | 3 | **a)** I enjoy being with people with backgrounds and experiences that are different from mine; **b)** I know lots about different cultures and people with different backgrounds; **c)** I enjoy learning about different cultures and people with different backgrounds. [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.68 | 0.68 |
| Openness to different opinions | 2 | **a)** People should not be criticised just because they have different opinions; **b)** It is important to listen to all sides of the story before making a decision. [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.62 | 0.65 |
| Openness to immigrants | 2 | **a)** People who want to move to Britain from abroad should have to learn English; **b)** Britain does not have room to take any more immigrants or refugees [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.65 | 0.71 |
| Trust of others | 5 | I trust: **a)** people my own age; **b)** my neighbours; **c)** my family; **d)** my teachers; **e)** the police. [Response scale: 'not at all' to 'completely'] | 0.67 | 0.68 |
| Inter-ethnic and inter-faith trust | 2 | I trust: **a)** people who are from a different race or ethnic group than me; **b)** people who have a different religion than mine [Response scale: 'not at all' to 'completely'] | 0.89 | 0.91 |
| Respect for rights of others | 3 | **a)** Everyone who lives in Britain should have the same rights, no matter what age, race, ethnicity, religion they are, or what their financial circumstances are; **b)** Being a good citizen means speaking up for someone who is treated unfairly; **c)** Being a good citizen means respecting the rights of others. [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.69 | 0.67 |
| Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination | 4 | In lessons: **a)** we talk about discrimination [because of religion, race, background, age or something else] in society; **b)** we learn about the experiences and opinions of people different from us; **c)** we talk about whether there is any discrimination in our school; **d)** we talk about issues or problems in our local area. [Response scale: 'often' to 'never'; 'don't know' ] | 0.77 | 0.76 |

## Table 8.5.1   Factors used in the analysis of the impact of the SLN programme (continued)

| | No. of items | Item content | Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
| *Factors constituting outcome variables when measured at post-intervention stage (cont.)* | | | | |
| Segregation within the school | 4 | In my school, students don't get on if they are: **a)** in different classes or year groups; **b)** from different racial or ethnic groups; **c)** from different religions; **d)** from families that are better off or worse off (financially) than each other. [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.82 | 0.83 |
| Personal experience of bullying at school | 4 | Experience of having been bullied by other pupils in last 12 months because of: **a)** your race or ethnicity, **b)** your religion, **c)** where you live, **d)** how much money you or your parents have? [Response scale: 'yes', 'no', 'don't know'] | 0.82 | 0.82 |
| Witnessing of bullying at school | 4 | Having seen someone else being bullied by other pupils because of: **a)** their race or ethnicity, **b)** their religion, **c)** where they live, **d)** how much money they or their parents have? [Response scale: 'yes', 'no', 'don't know'] | 0.80 | 0.79 |
| Neighbourhood's openness to diversity | 4 | Where I live, people get on well in my neighbourhood even if they are: **a)** from different parts of the city/town/village; **b)** from different racial or ethnic groups; **c)** from different religions; **d)** better off or worse off (financially) than each other . [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.89 | 0.90 |
| *Factors measured at pre-intervention stage only* | | | | |
| Enjoyment of school | 3 | **a)** On the whole I like being at school; **b)** I am usually bored in lessons; **c)** School is a waste of time for me. [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.68 | - |
| School climate | 4 | **a)** My teachers give lots of opportunities for discussions and debates in class; **b)** My school never asks us what students want; **c)** Students can change things at my school if they work together and talk to the teachers/headteacher; **d)** In my school, students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues. [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.60 | - |

*Table 8.5.1   Factors used in the analysis of the impact of the SLN programme (continued)*

| | No. of items | Item content | Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
| *Factors measured at pre-intervention stage only (cont.)* | | | | |
| Friendship and mixing with different races/religions | 8 | How many of your friends are: **a)** a different race or ethnicity than you (e.g. White, Black or Asian); **b)** a different religion than you? [Response scale: 'none' to 'more than half']; Are any of your best friends from: **a)** another racial or ethnic group; **b)** from a different religion? [Response scale: 'yes', 'no', 'don't know']; How often do you meet and mix with people who come from: **a)** another racial or ethnic group; **b)** a different religion?; How often do *your parents* meet and mix with people from: **a)** another racial or ethnic group; **b)** a different religion? [Response scale: 'often' to 'never', 'don't know'] | 0.83 | - |
| Friendship and mixing with financially different people | 4 | **a)** How many of your friends come from families that are better off or worse off (financially) than yours?  [Response scale: 'none' to 'more than half']; **b)** Are any of your best friends from a family that is much better off or worse off (financially) than yours is?  [Response scale: 'yes', 'no', 'don't know']; **c)** How often do you meet and mix with people who come from a family that is much better off or worse off (financially) than yours is? **d)** How often do *your parents* meet and mix with people from a  family that is much better off or worse off (financially) than yours is? [Response scale: 'often' to 'never', 'don't know'] | 0.73 | - |
| Importance of religion | 2 | **a)** How important is your religion to the way you live your life? [Response scale: 'not at all important' to 'very important'; 'don't know']; **b)** How often do you go to religious services or classes?[Response scale: 'never or hardly ever' to 'daily (or almost daily)'] | 0.76 | - |
| Friendliness of neighbourhood | 4 | **a)** I have lots of friends in my neighbourhood; **b)** Most of my relatives live in my neighbourhood; **c)** There are lots of clubs and groups in my neighbourhood that my friends and I could join; **d)** It's easy to make new friends in my neighbourhood [Response scale: 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'] | 0.66 | - |

## Table 8.5.1  Factors used in the analysis of the impact of the SLN programme (continued)

| | No. of items | Item content | Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Pre-intervention | Pre-intervention |
| *Factors measured at pre-intervention stage only (cont.)* | | | | |
| Unfair treatment outside school | 6 | Do you think that you have ever been treated unfairly outside of school because of: **a)** your race or ethnicity; **b)** your religion (or because you don't have one); **c)** your sex (whether you are a boy or girl); **d)** your age; **e)** the people you hang around with; **f)** how much money you or your parents have? [Response scale: 'yes', 'no', 'don't know'] | 0.76 | - |
| Unfair treatment for any reason | 10 | Have you ever been treated unfairly by any of the teachers at your current school because of: **a)** your race or ethnicity; **b)** your religion; **c)** your sex (whether you are a boy or girl); **d)** the people you hang around with; **e)** some other reason? [Response scale: 'yes', 'no']; Have you seen *someone else* being treated unfairly by any of the teachers at your current school because of: **a)** their race or ethnicity; **b)** their religion; **c)** their sex (whether they are a boy or girl); **d)** the people they hang around with; **e)** some other reason? [Response scale: 'yes', 'no', 'don't know'] | 0.81 | - |

# Appendix 8.6    Background to the analysis of survey data: imputation of missing data

Before multilevel modelling analysis (described in Appendix 8.7) could begin, it was first necessary to replace any missing values within our data. Much of the missing information within our data occurred due to pupils choosing not to respond to particular questions within the questionnaire. Previous research has shown that under most assumptions replacing missing data with imputed values (that is, estimate of what pupils would have said had they chosen to reply) leads to more accurate analysis than either removing pupils with missing values (which could greatly reduce the available sample size) or replacing missing values with a simple default such as the mean. Imputation was accomplished using the MICE package within the software package R[16].

This software imputes a reasonable value for each piece of missing data based upon the responses the pupil has given within the remainder of the questionnaire. Each piece of missing data was imputed five times to enable us to account for the uncertainty in the actual response which a pupil would have given, had they answered the question. This process produced five copies of the data each of which had complete information for all pupils. All subsequent analysis was conducted on all five copies of the data and results across all five data sets were combined.

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[16] Both the software and the MICE package together with documentation are freely available from http://cran.r-project.org/

# Appendix 8.7 Background to the analysis of survey data: multilevel modelling

## 8.7.1 Use and advantages of multilevel modelling

Multilevel modelling is a statistical technique for finding relationships between a measure of interest (an 'outcome') and a value of one or more related measures ('predictors'). In the case of this study, this technique helped to investigate the extent to which belonging to a particular group (e.g. being in an SLN school vs. a comparison school), or scoring higher on a certain characteristic at pre-intervention (e.g. the 'friendship and mixing with different races/religions' factor), is associated with certain outcome variables measured at post-intervention (e.g. the 'enjoyment of diverse people and cultures' factor).

Multilevel modelling has a number of distinct advantages over other estimation procedures. First, it allows comparisons to be made on a like-with-like basis. For example, we may be interested in assessing the relationship between 'respect for the rights of others' and being directly involved in school linking activities, but know that post-intervention 'respect for rights of others' tends to be higher for pupils with more positive pre-intervention attitudes. For this reason we need to disaggregate the relationship of, on the one hand, post-intervention 'respect for the rights of others' with direct involvement in school linking from, on the other hand, the relationship of post-intervention 'respect for the right of others' with pre-intervention attitudes. Multilevel modelling enables this by identifying the degree of association between post-intervention 'respect for the right of others' and direct involvement in school linking activities, all other things being equal. In other words, it estimates the relationship between an outcome of interest and involvement in the intervention, statistically controlling for differences in pupils' background characteristics and pre-intervention attitudes.

The second advantage of multilevel modelling, which is particularly important in the analysis of educational data, is that it takes account of the fact that there is often more similarity between individuals in the same school than between individuals in different schools. By recognising the hierarchical structure of the data (i.e. the fact that pupils are nested within schools), multilevel modelling yields the most accurate estimation of the statistical significance of any relationships.

## 8.7.2 Multilevel modelling: outcome variables

In this study, multilevel modelling examined a number of outcomes derived from the post-intervention survey (shown in Table 8.7.1). Some of the outcomes are factors measuring specific themes whereas others are exact responses to questions in the survey. For outcomes in the form of factors, multilevel modelling investigates the likelihood of getting high factor scores ('continuous' multilevel modelling). Whereas

for outcomes in the form of question responses, multilevel modelling investigates the odds[17] associated with giving certain responses ('logistic' multilevel modelling).

**Table 8.7.1   Post-intervention outcomes for pupils: factors and questions by outcome type**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *knowledge and understanding* | **Questions** | • I know lots about different cultures and people with different backgrounds (SA/A vs. SD/D/N)<br>• I enjoy learning about different cultures and people from different backgrounds (SA/A vs. SD/D/N) |
| *attitudes and dispositions* | **Factors** | • Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures<br>• Openness to different opinions<br>• Openness to immigrants<br>• Trust of others<br>• Inter-ethnic and inter-faith trust<br>• Respect for the rights of others<br>• Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination |
| | **Questions** | • Being a good citizen of Britain means respecting the rights of others (SA/A vs. SD/D/N)<br>• How much discrimination do you feel there is in Britain today (A lot vs. A little/Not at all/DK)<br>• Everyone who lives in Britain should have the same rights (SA/A vs. SD/D/N)<br>• How much do you trust the police (Quite a lot/ Completely vs. Not at all/ A little/ DK)<br>• My teachers give lots of opportunities for discussions and debates in class (SA/A vs. SD/D/N)<br>• I feel more comfortable being with people from the same background as mine (SA/A vs. SD/D/N) |
| *self-beliefs, skills and behaviours* | **Factors** | • Segregation within the school<br>• Personal experience of bullying at school<br>• Witnessing of bullying at school |
| | **Questions** | • Have you seen someone else in school being bullied because of their race or ethnicity (Yes vs. No/DK)<br>• Have you seen someone else in school being bullied because of their religion (Yes vs. No/DK)<br>• Are any of your BEST friends in need of extra help with school work and learning (Yes vs. No/DK)<br>• How often do you meet and mix with people who come from another racial or ethnic group (Often vs. Sometimes/Rarely/Never/DK)<br>• I don't give my real opinions in my classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me (SA/A vs. SD/D/N)<br>• I don't give my real opinions in my classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me (SD/D vs. SA/A/N)<br>• It is important to listen to all sides of the story before making a decision (SA/A vs. SD/D/N) |

*Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Not sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, DK=Don't know*

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[17] The odds of a particular response to a question from a pupil are the percentage of times this response is expected from a particular type of pupil divided by the percentage of times an alternative response is expected.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***community integration and cohesion at school and beyond*** | **Factors** | • Neighbourhood's openness to diversity |
| | **Questions** | • Where I live, people get on well even if they are from different parts of the city/town/village (SA/A vs. SD/D/N)<br>• Where I live, people get on well even if they are better or worse off (financially) than each other (SA/A vs. SD/D/N) |

*Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Not sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, DK=Don't know*

### 8.7.3   Multilevel modelling: predictor variables

To isolate the likely unique contribution of the SLN programme to any change of the above outcomes, a number of background and attitudinal characteristics were controlled for in the modelling.  The table below (Table 8.7.2) shows the variables that were entered into the multilevel models as predictors. All predictors are examined against each outcome, but only those showing evidence of likely association with the outcome are included in the final models reported.

### Table 8.7.2 Predictors

| |
|---|
| **Involvement in school linking activities:**<br>• Pupils directly involved in school linking activities twice or more<br>• Pupils directly involved in school linking activities once or less<br>• Pupils in SLN programme schools but not directly involved in school linking activities<br>• Pupils in comparison schools |
| **Pupil-level background variables:**<br>• Gender<br>• Special Educational Needs<br>• Eligible for free school meals<br>• Ethnicity<br>• English as an additional language<br>• Year group<br>• Gifted/Talented<br>• Deprivation (IDACI)<br>• Key stage 2 average point scores (English, maths, science)<br>• Born in the UK<br>• Religion<br>• Length of time lived in current neighbourhood<br>• Number of books in home |

*Table 8.7.2 Predictors (continued)*

| |
|---|
| **School/community-level background variables:** |
| • Headcount of total No. of pupils in the school |
| • Denomination of school |
| • Mixed/ single sex school |
| • % pupils in the school eligible for free school meals (2008) |
| • % pupils in the school who are white British |
| • % of local community who are white British |
| **Factors (pre-intervention factor scores):** |
| • All 19 pre-intervention survey factors (see Appendix 8.5) |
| **Questions (pre-intervention survey responses):** |
| • Each multilevel model of a post-intervention survey question response also includes the same question answered at the pre-intervention survey, so as to control for prior differences. |

Examples of how to interpret each type of model are given below.

### 8.7.4 Models with outcomes in the form of factors

For outcomes in the form of factors, multilevel modelling investigates the average value of factor scores ('continuous' multilevel modelling). All of our factor scores are scaled so that each pupil may score between 0 and 100. Typically a score of 100 would indicate a pupil strongly agreeing with all the items that form the scale and a score of 0 would indicate strongly disagreeing with all such items. An example is the model investigating how much increase in the 'teachers discuss discrimination' factor score is likely to be associated with involvement in school linking activities. The results for this model are shown below (see Table 8.7.3).

## Table 8.7.3 Teachers discuss discrimination (Post-intervention factor score)

| Predictors | Fixed effect | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| Enjoyment of diverse people and culture (Pre-intervention) | 0.062 | * |
| School climate (Pre-intervention) | 0.155 | * |
| Teachers discuss discrimination (Pre-intervention) | 0.292 | * |
| Neighbourhood's openness to diversity (Pre-intervention) | 0.041 | * |
| Respect for rights of others (Pre-intervention) | 0.067 | * |
| Year 8 (vs. Year 7) | 5.328 | * |
| Year 9 (vs. Year 7) | 2.013 | * |
| Year 10 or 11 (vs. Year 7) | 0.059 | |
| Single sex school (vs. Mixed schools) | -3.452 | * |
| % pupils in the school eligible for free school meals (2008) | 0.182 | * |
| Books in home - none (vs. One shelf) | -2.302 | |
| Books in home - very few (vs. One shelf) | -2.043 | |
| Books in home - one bookcase (vs. One shelf) | 1.893 | |
| Books in home - two bookcases (vs. One shelf) | 2.340 | * |
| Books in home - three or more bookcases (vs. One shelf) | 1.594 | |
| Pupils directly involved in school linking (vs. All other pupils) | 3.393 | * |

*\* Significance is calculated at the 5% level.*

The results suggests that, all other things being equal, pupils directly involved in school linking activities are on average scoring 3.4 points higher compared to all other pupils (pupils not directly involved in school linking activities and pupils in comparison schools) and this difference is statistically significant. This size of effect is equivalent to having an additional 3.4 per cent of pupils responding "Often" to all of the statements that form this item and having 3.4 per cent fewer pupils responding "Never" for each item.

### 8.7.5 Models with outcomes in the form of question responses

For outcomes in the form of question responses, multilevel modelling investigates the odds associated with giving certain responses ('logistic' multilevel modelling). For example, it investigates how much more likely a pupil involved in school linking activities is likely to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to the statement of 'I don't give my real opinions in my classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me'. The results for this model are shown below (Table 8.7.4).

**Table 8.7.4  I don't give my real opinions in my classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me (Agree/Strongly Agree) (post-intervention questionnaire response)**

| Predictors | Odds ratio | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination (Pre-intervention) | 0.995 | * |
| Personal experience of bullying at school (Pre-intervention) | 1.009 | * |
| Neighbourhood's openness to diversity (Pre-intervention) | 0.994 | * |
| Openness to immigrants (Pre-intervention) | 0.996 | * |
| Girls (vs. Boys) | 1.469 | * |
| Key stage 2 average point scores (English, maths, science) | 0.961 | * |
| Pupils directly involved in school linking (vs. All other pupils) | 1.567 | * |
| I don't give my real opinions in my classes (Pre-intervention) | 6.172 | * |

*\* Significance is calculated at the 5% level.*

The results suggests that, all other things being equal, the odds of pupils directly involved in school linking activities responding 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to the given statement is 1.6 times that of other pupils (pupils not directly involved in school linking activities and pupils in comparison schools). This difference is statistically significant.

# Appendix 8.8    Survey: pupil responses and factor scores

The tables below display either weighted frequencies (see Appendix 8.3 above) or factor scores, as applicable, for the outcomes for which the multilevel modelling showed a statistically significant association between the (degree of) involvement in the SLN programme and the outcome.

### Table 8.8.1 - *Respect for the rights of others* (mean factor scores)

| | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
|---|---|---|
| **Comparison** | 76.2 | 76.0 |
| **Intervention – no SLP** | 76.2 | 76.8 |
| **Intervention – 1 or no visits** | 75.0 | 74.5 |
| **Intervention – 2 or more visits** | 74.7 | 78.7 |

### Table 8.8.2 – 'Everyone who lives in Britain should have the same rights' (percentage agreement)

| | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
|---|---|---|
| **Comparison** | 71.1 | 69.3 |
| **Intervention – no SLP** | 69.0 | 71.8 |
| **Intervention – 1 or no visits** | 64.7 | 68.8 |
| **Intervention – 2 or more visits** | 61.9 | 80.3 |

### Table 8.8.3 – 'Being a good citizen of Britain means respecting the rights of others' (percentage agreement)

| | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
|---|---|---|
| **Comparison** | 79.0 | 80.6 |
| **Intervention – no SLP** | 78.8 | 82.3 |
| **Intervention – 1 or no visits** | 77.3 | 81.7 |
| **Intervention – 2 or more visits** | 80.5 | 90.2 |

### Table 8.8.4 – *Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination* (mean factor scores)

| | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
|---|---|---|
| **Comparison** | 48.1 | 49.0 |
| **Intervention – no SLP** | 47.3 | 47.8 |
| **Intervention – SLP** | 45.5 | 52.0 |

**Table 8.8.5 – 'Meeting and mixing with people from another racial or ethnic group' (percentage saying 'often')**

|  | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
|---|---|---|
| **Comparison** | 28.8 | 29.3 |
| **Intervention – no SLP** | 28.1 | 29.1 |
| **Intervention – SLP** | 27.7 | 32.8 |

**Table 8.8.6 – 'I don't give my real opinions in my classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me' (percentage agreement)**

|  | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
|---|---|---|
| **Comparison** | 16.1 | 13.9 |
| **Intervention – no SLP** | 16.1 | 14.4 |
| **Intervention – SLP** | 17.8 | 21.0 |

**Table 8.8.7 – *Personal experience of being bullied* (mean factor scores)**

|  | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
|---|---|---|
| **Comparison** | 11.3 | 9.8 |
| **Intervention – no SLP** | 11.9 | 10.4 |
| **Intervention – SLP** | 11.2 | 11.3 |

**Table 8.8.8 – *Witnessing of bullying* (mean factor scores)**

|  | Pre-intervention | Post-intervention |
|---|---|---|
| **Comparison** | 30.5 | 27.6 |
| **Intervention – no SLP** | 32.2 | 26.2 |
| **Intervention – SLP** | 29.8 | 31.7 |

## Appendix 8.9    Survey: multilevel models

The tables below display the outputs from the multilevel modelling for models which showed a statistically significant association between the (degree of) involvement in the SLN programme and the outcome under analysis.

### Table 8.9.1 – Multilevel model for outcome variable *Respect for the rights of others*

| Predictor | Base case | Fixed effect | Effect size | Sig (p<0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre - Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures | - | 0.073 | 7.551 | * |
| Pre - School climate | - | 0.033 | 3.300 | * |
| Pre - Openness to different opinions | - | 0.059 | 6.235 | * |
| Pre – Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination | - | 0.027 | 3.822 | * |
| Pre - Unfair treatment for any reason | - | -0.035 | -4.454 | * |
| Pre - Segregation within the school | - | -0.027 | -3.053 | * |
| Pre - Friendliness of neighbourhood | - | -0.032 | -3.769 | * |
| Pre - Neighbourhood's openness to diversity | - | 0.053 | 6.413 | * |
| Pre - Openness to immigrants | - | 0.038 | 5.634 | * |
| Pre - Respect for the rights of others | - | 0.253 | 26.091 | * |
| Girls | Boys | 1.683 | 4.943 | * |
| BME | White British | 2.052 | 5.432 | * |
| English as an additional language | Not EAL | 3.925 | 8.004 | * |
| Year 8 | Year 7 | 0.656 | 1.515 | |
| Year 9 | Year 7 | -1.291 | -3.531 | |
| Year 10 or 11 | Year 7 | -1.689 | -4.367 | * |
| IDACI | - | 4.595 | 4.582 | * |
| Key stage 2 average point scores (English, maths, science) | - | 0.180 | 4.318 | * |
| Books in home - none (0) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -7.791 | -8.899 | * |
| Books in home - very few (1-10) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -1.169 | -2.578 | |
| Books in home - one bookcase (50-101) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 1.142 | 2.779 | |
| Books in home - two bookcases (101-200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 2.251 | 4.778 | * |
| Books in home - three or more bookcases (more than 200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 2.177 | 4.791 | * |
| Pupils that are involved in school linking twice or more | Pupils in comparison school and pupils in intervention schools but linked once or less | 3.496∝ | 4.789 | * |

∝Pupils involved in school linking twice or more score, on average, 3.5 points higher in the '*Respect for the rights of others'* factor compared to other pupils.

**Table 8.9.2 –   Multilevel model for outcome variable 'Everyone who lives in Britain should have the same rights'**

| Predictor | Base case | Estimate | Odds ratio | Sig (p<0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre - Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures | - | 0.007 | 1.007 | * |
| Pre - Openness to different opinions | - | 0.007 | 1.007 | * |
| Pre - Unfair treatment for any reason | - | -0.006 | 0.994 | * |
| Pre - Segregation within school | - | -0.005 | 0.995 | * |
| Pre - Openness to immigrants | - | 0.010 | 1.010 | * |
| Pre - Respect for the rights of others | - | 0.015 | 1.015 | * |
| Girls | Boys | 0.248 | 1.282 | * |
| BME | White British | 0.404 | 1.498 | * |
| English as an additional language | Not EAL | 0.466 | 1.594 | * |
| Key stage 2 average point scores (English, maths, science) | - | 0.025 | 1.026 | * |
| Books in home - none (0) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -0.529 | 0.589 | * |
| Books in home - very few (1-10) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -0.153 | 0.858 | |
| Books in home - one bookcase (50-101) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.118 | 1.126 | |
| Books in home - two bookcases (101-200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.182 | 1.200 | |
| Books in home - three or more bookcases (more than 200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.003 | 1.003 | |
| Pupils that are involved in school linking twice or more (q16=yes and q17 at least twice) | Pupils in comparison school and pupils in intervention schools but linked once or less | 0.527 | 1.694∝ | * |
| Pre - Everyone who lives in Britain should have the same rights (Agree/ Strongly Agree) | Strongly Disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Missing | 0.711 | 2.037 | * |

∝The of odds of agreeing that 'everyone who lives in Britain should have the same rights' for a pupil involved in school linking twice or more are 1.7 times those of other pupils (either in a comparison school, or in an intervention school but participating in school linking for once or less).

### Table 8.9.3 – Multilevel model for outcome variable 'Being a good citizen of Britain means respecting the rights of others'

| Predictor | Base case | Estimate | Odds ratio | Sig (p<0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre - Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures | - | 0.010 | 1.010 | * |
| Pre - Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination | - | 0.006 | 1.006 | * |
| Pre - Unfair treatment for any reason | - | -0.009 | 0.991 | * |
| Pre - Segregation within the school | - | -0.007 | 0.993 | * |
| Pre - Neighbourhood's openness to diversity | - | 0.007 | 1.007 | * |
| Pre - Respect for the rights of others | - | 0.016 | 1.016 | * |
| Girls | Boys | 0.240 | 1.271 | * |
| English as an additional language | Not EAL | 0.598 | 1.819 | * |
| Key stage 2 average point scores (English, maths, science) | - | 0.052 | 1.054 | * |
| Books in home - none (0) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -0.988 | 0.372 | * |
| Books in home - very few (1-10) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -0.392 | 0.675 | * |
| Books in home - one bookcase (50-101) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.015 | 1.015 | |
| Books in home - two bookcases (101-200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.212 | 1.236 | |
| Books in home - three or more bookcases (more than 200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.019 | 1.019 | |
| Pupils that are involved in school linking twice or more | Pupils in comparison school and pupils in intervention schools but linked once or less | 0.529 | 1.697∝ | * |
| Pre - Being a good citizen of Britain means respecting the rights of others (Agree/ Strongly Agree) | Strongly Disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Missing | 0.756 | 2.130 | * |

∝The odds of agreeing that 'being a good citizen of Britain means respecting the rights of others' for a pupil involved in school linking twice or more are 1.7 times those of other pupils (either in a comparison school, or in an intervention school but participating in school linking for once or less).

**Table 8.9.4 – Multilevel model for outcome variable *Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination***

| Predictor | Base case | Fixed effect | Effect size | Sig (p<0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre - Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures | - | 0.062 | 4.777 | * |
| Pre - School climate | - | 0.155 | 11.383 | * |
| Pre - Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination | - | 0.292 | 30.327 | * |
| Pre - Neighbourhood's openness to diversity | - | 0.041 | 3.680 | * |
| Pre - Respect for the rights of others | - | 0.067 | 5.053 | * |
| Year 8 | Year 7 | 5.328 | 9.050 | * |
| Year 9 | Year 7 | 2.013 | 4.049 | * |
| Year 10 or 11 | Year 7 | 0.059 | 0.112 | |
| Single-sex school | Mixed school | -3.452 | -5.939 | * |
| % pupils in the school eligible for free school meals (2008) | - | 0.182 | 8.730 | * |
| Books in home - none (0) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -2.302 | -1.934 | |
| Books in home - very few (1-10) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -2.043 | -3.313 | |
| Books in home - one bookcase (50-101) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 1.893 | 3.389 | |
| Books in home - two bookcases (101-200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 2.340 | 3.653 | * |
| Books in home - three or more bookcases (more than 200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 1.594 | 2.581 | |
| Pupils that are involved in school linking | Pupils in comparison school and pupils in intervention schools but didn't experience any linking | 3.393∝ | 4.755 | * |

∝ Pupils involved in school linking score, on average, 3.4 points higher in the *Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination* factor compared to other pupils (either in a comparison school, or in an intervention school but not having experienced any linking).

**Table 8.9.5 – Multilevel model for outcome variable 'Meeting and mixing with people from another racial or ethnic group'**

| Predictor | Base case | Estimate | Odds ratio | Sig (p<0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre - Friendship and mixing with different races/religions | - | 0.023 | 1.023 | * |
| Pre - Enjoyment of diverse people and cultures | - | 0.007 | 1.007 | * |
| Pre - Trust of others | - | -0.004 | 0.996 | * |
| Pre – Inter-ethnic and inter-faith trust | - | 0.005 | 1.005 | * |
| Pre - Respect for the rights of others | - | 0.007 | 1.007 | * |
| BME | White British | 0.449 | 1.567 | * |
| Key stage 2 average point scores (English, maths, science) | - | 0.028 | 1.029 | * |
| % pupils in the school eligible for free school meals (2008) | - | 0.014 | 1.014 | * |
| Books in home - none (0) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.715 | 2.044 | * |
| Books in home - very few (1-10) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | -0.076 | 0.927 | |
| Books in home - one bookcase (50-101) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.115 | 1.122 | |
| Books in home - two bookcases (101-200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.118 | 1.125 | |
| Books in home - three or more bookcases (more than 200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.233 | 1.263 | * |
| Pupils that are involved in school linking | Pupils in comparison school and pupils in intervention schools but didn't experience any linking | 0.295 | 1.343∝ | * |
| Pre - How often do you meet and mix with people who come from another racial or ethnic group (Often) | Sometimes/ Rarely/ Never/ DK/ Missing | 0.866 | 2.378 | * |

∝ The odds of often 'meeting and mixing with people who come from another racial or ethnic group' for a pupil involved in school linking are 1.3 times those of a pupil not involved in school linking (either in a comparison school, or in an intervention school but not participating in school linking).

**Table 8.9.6 –  Multilevel model for outcome variable 'I don't give my real opinions in my  classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me'**

| Predictor | Base case | Estimate | Odds ratio | Sig (p<0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre - Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination | - | -0.005 | 0.995 | * |
| Pre – Personal experience of bullying at school | - | 0.009 | 1.009 | * |
| Pre - Neighbourhood's openness to diversity | - | -0.006 | 0.994 | * |
| Pre - Openness to immigrants | - | -0.004 | 0.996 | * |
| Girls | Boys | 0.385 | 1.469 | * |
| Key stage 2 average point scores (English, maths, science) | - | -0.040 | 0.961 | * |
| Pupils that are involved in school linking | Pupils in comparison school and pupils in intervention schools but didn't experience any linking | 0.449 | 1.567∝ | * |
| Pre - I don't give my real opinions in my classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me (Agree/ Strongly Agree) | Strongly Disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Missing | 1.820 | 6.172 | * |

∝ The odds of agreeing with the statement 'I don't give my real opinions in my classes because I think my classmates will laugh at me' for a pupil involved in school linking are 1.6 times those of a pupil not involved in school linking (either in a comparison school, or in an intervention school but not participating in school linking).

**Table 8.9.7 – Multilevel model for outcome variable *Personal experience of being bullied***

| Predictor | Base case | Fixed effect | Effect size | Sig (p<0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre - Unfair treatment for any reason | - | 0.063 | 6.264 | * |
| Pre - Personal experience of bullying | - | 0.217 | 23.321 | * |
| Pre - Segregation within the school | - | 0.042 | 3.672 | * |
| Pre - Friendliness of neighbourhood | - | 0.035 | 3.287 | * |
| Pre - Neighbourhood's openness to diversity | - | -0.061 | -5.722 | * |
| Pre - Trust of others | - | -0.044 | -4.032 | * |
| Pre - Unfair treatment outside school | - | 0.043 | 4.645 | * |
| Girls | Boys | -3.155 | -7.225 | * |
| SEN statement | No SEN | -3.163 | -1.896 | |
| SEN School Action/ Plus | No SEN | 3.449 | 6.107 | * |
| Key stage 2 average point scores (English, maths, science) | - | -0.511 | -9.553 | * |
| Books in home - none (0) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 7.200 | 6.412 | * |
| Books in home - very few (1-10) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.410 | 0.704 | |
| Books in home - one bookcase (50-101) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 0.331 | 0.628 | |
| Books in home - two bookcases (101-200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 1.404 | 2.324 | |
| Books in home - three or more bookcases (more than 200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 1.474 | 2.530 | |
| Pupils that are involved in school linking | Pupils in comparison school and pupils in intervention schools but didn't experience any linking | 2.689∝ | 3.994 | * |

∝ Pupils involved in school linking score, on average, 2.7 points higher on the '*Personal experience of being bullied*' factor compared to other pupils (either in a comparison school, or in an intervention school but not participating in school linking).

## Table 8.9.8 – Multilevel model for outcome variable *Witnessing of bullying*

| Predictor | Base case | Fixed effect | Effect size | Sig (p<0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre - Enjoyment of school | - | -0.057 | -3.418 | * |
| Pre - Awareness of teachers discussing discrimination | - | 0.054 | 4.034 | * |
| Pre - Unfair treatment for any reason | - | 0.126 | 8.538 | * |
| Pre – Personal experience of bullying | - | 0.089 | 6.513 | * |
| Pre – Witnessing of bullying at school | - | 0.287 | 29.432 | * |
| Pre - Segregation within school | - | 0.110 | 6.533 | * |
| Pre - Unfair treatment outside school | - | 0.066 | 4.832 | * |
| Pre - Openness to immigrants | - | -0.060 | -4.715 | * |
| Girls | Boys | -3.076 | -4.793 | * |
| Denomination - Church of England | Denomination - Does not apply | 4.232 | 3.094 | |
| Denomination - Roman Catholic | Denomination - Does not apply | 6.533 | 6.641 | * |
| Single sex school | Mixed school | -4.065 | -5.045 | * |
| Not born in the UK | Born in the UK | 4.522 | 4.334 | * |
| Books in home - none (0) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 4.649 | 2.817 | |
| Books in home - very few (1-10) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 1.725 | 2.017 | |
| Books in home - one bookcase (50-101) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 1.616 | 2.086 | |
| Books in home - two bookcases (101-200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 3.833 | 4.316 | * |
| Books in home - three or more bookcases (more than 200) | Books in home - one shelf (11-50) | 1.672 | 1.952 | |
| Pupils that are involved in school linking | Pupils in comparison school and pupils in intervention schools but didn't experience any linking | 3.163∝ | 3.197 | * |

∝ Pupils involved in school linking score, on average, 3.2 points higher on the 'Witnessing of bullying' factor compared to other pupils (either in a comparison school, or in an intervention school but not participating in school linking).

## Appendix 8.10   Exemplar Local Authority Audit Form
### (part of SLN requirement for LA involvement in national pilot programme, training and support)

# LOCAL AUTHORITY AUDIT FORM

**THIS FORM IS PROVIDED AS A PROMPT FOR YOU TO PREPARE FOR THE TRAINING AND SETTING UP YOUR PILOT PROGRAMME. PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO SLN WITH AS MUCH INFORMATION AS YOU CAN TOGETHER WITH THE BOOKING FORM AND DEPOSIT.**

| LA Profile | Newtown LA |
|---|---|
| **TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS:** | 129 |
| Nursery | 11 |
| Children's Centres | 15 |
| Infant | 8 |
| Junior | 8 |
| Primary | 78 |
| First | |
| Middle | |
| Secondary | 15 |
| FE Colleges | 3 |
| PRU's | 3 |
| Other<br>• Academy<br>• Special School | <br>1<br>6 |
| Ethnic Profiles of School Population NOR 32,289<br>• White British<br>• Asian/Asian British is the largest BME category with Pakistani pupils making up almost 3% of total NOR<br>• Mixed heritage groups – Mixed Other, Mixed White Asian and Asian Other are the largest groups within this category<br>• Black/Black British<br>• Other Ethnic<br>• Chinese | <br>90.2%<br>5.7%<br><br><br><br>2.1%<br><br><br><br>.7%<br>.7%<br>.6% |
| % EAL | 6.8% |
| % FSM | 14.2% |
| Demographics:<br>Spread of Population in schools | |

| KEY PRIORITIES: | |
|---|---|
| Attainment | |
| KS 1 | To continue to raise standards for all and work to escalate progress for any identified group at risk of under achievement |
| KS 2 | |
| KS 3 | |
| KS 4 | |
| Progress | |
| Attendance | Reduce persistent absence in a group of 6 schools |

Behaviour

Newtown LA is currently conducting a Secondary Behaviour Review, and in particular is looking at issues around transition

The LA is also near completion of developing a resource called Race Aid which is aimed at secondary pupils who have been excluded or are at risk of being excluded for racist behaviour.

Permanent exclusions are higher that our statistical neighbours so the LA and schools are continually working to reduce those

Racist Incidents

Schools have clear guidance and support in regards to reporting and handling racist incidents. The guidance to schools has recently been revised and the procedure for reporting will allow for forms to be electronically submitted. Last year there were 139 racist incidents reported; there appears to be some under-reporting in secondary schools and the LA is working to ensure this is addressed.

Newtown LA promotes anti-racism education in schools through the curriculum, particularly through SEAL. A KS3 Community Cohesion Curriculum Project was recently developed by 5 secondary schools and the LA which has resulted in the development of a website www.newtowncohesionproject.co.uk

The LA provides training to school staff and governors on race equality and community cohesion, In November 2008, the LA held a conference on Community Cohesion for schools which was well-received.

Bullying

Newtown LA and its schools are working to reduce incidents of bullying through continued curriculum work through PSHE and SEAL. The LA and schools have worked hard to promote Anti-Bullying Week and collate a programme of events across the borough. The LA offers support to schools in recording and reporting bullying incidents and is organising a conference on Anit-Bullying

| ECM Priorities: | |
|---|---|
| • Being Healthy | Please see attached sheet for ECM priorities. |
| • Staying Safe | |
| • Enjoyment and Achievement | |
| • Making Positive Contribution | |
| • Economic Wellbeing | |

| **PRESSURE POINTS/HOT SPOTS IN THE DISTRICT** (evidence for these?) |
| --- |
| Newtown LA has been identified as one of the top 10 most polarised LAs in the country and research shows that the equality gap has widened between the most affluent and the most deprived areas. |
| **COMMUNITY COHESION ISSUES IN GENERAL IN THE COUNTY** (evidence for these?) |
| Newtown has a good score on the NI where people indicate how well people get on with each other but the LA wants to make sure that this is maintained with a particular emphasis on the Priority areas. |
| Newtown started receiving asylum seekers in 1999; those seeking asylum are often housed in the more deprived areas of Newtown where there is often a high level of discontent and frustration, thus making settling into such areas difficult. |
| There is a significant Pakistani Muslim population in Newtown, and two mosques – one which is in a more affluent areas and the other in a more deprived area. The Pakistani community around the mosque in the more deprived area can be very sheltered and closed. |
| Young people in the town can be exposed to extremist views. There has been some activity by the BNP in certain areas of Newtown; equally there are areas where extremist Islamic views may be voiced. |
| The majority of the BME population in Newtown is dispersed which can make them feel isolated and unheard. |
| **COMMUNITY COHESION ISSUES IN RELATION TO SCHOOLS** (evidence for these?) |
| The BME pupil population has risen from 2% in 2003 to 8% in 2009. Whilst there are a few pockets in Newtown with a significant number of BME residents, many schools have isolated BME learners and need to establish links to enrich the community dimension. |
| Newtown is a high achieving authority with rising standards in 2008; therefore there is a risk of widening the gap for some vulnerable groups, such as FSM/non-FSM. BME cohorts achieve well |
| A few schools have reached or are close to reaching a tipping point of being perceived by some white parents as having too many BME pupils and are therefore choosing other schools. There is a need to educate some in the community about the advantages and opportunities of having a multi-ethnic school profile |
| Many schools need support in involving parents from different backgrounds and in making links with the local BME community groups. |
| **AIMS OF SCHOOL LINKING IN YOUR LA**(at this point these are predicted and may change) |
| To raise standard in teaching and learning across the LA by sharing best practice and designing learning programmes which include powerful learning experiences. |
| To promote community cohesion in schools and tackle issues around identity, diversity, belonging and community. |
| To create opportunities for children and teachers from polarised communities within Newtown to share experiences. |
| To identify and research local issues which may inform business planning for schools, the LA, community strategy, etc |
| **SCOPE** (i.e. there may be a range of identified issues and more than one priority) |
| Promotion of community cohesion in schools: share best practice, involve |

parents, make links in the local community, increase opportunities for pupils to learn about others from ethnic backgrounds and build relationships

Raise the profile of diversity within Newtown and celebrate this in the curriculum

Raise standards

**CAPACITY/RESPONSIBILITY/STRUCTURES (how do you envisage this programme connecting with other related work and priorities?)**

This programme is envisage to connect with:

The School Improvement Team's plan for raising standards. The lead primary advisor and the advisor responsible for inclusion are both on the committee looking at local school linking

The LA inclusion plan in regards to raising the achievement and profile of BME pupils and its work around community cohesion. The Head of Inclusion Services is on the committee.

Newtown's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

Newtown school's participation in international linking programme. The International Liaison Officer who has managed most of the internal school links will take an active role in managing the schools linking officer.

Healthy Schools and SEAL

Inclusive Communities

**OUTCOMES – HOW MEASURED (predicted as above)**

The above will be measured by a collection of teacher and pupil evaluation; records which capture the voices of teachers, parents, pupils and other in the community; observations which look at best practice; analysis of standards in participating schools.

School linking activities produce teaching and learning experiences of high quality and result in a rise in standards

Pupils, parents and teachers report a heightened understanding of community cohesion issues which cover identity, diversity, belonging and community.

Links between different communities in Newtown are strengthened

Research and evidence collected to inform future strategy and practice around school linking