

# **Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools**

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Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools**

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## References

### Annex of Nominated Outputs:

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- B. Dyson, A. and Ainscow, M. (2003) Standards and inclusive education: squaring the circle. British Education Research Journal (under review)
- C. Manchester: Ainscow, M., Howes, A.J., Farrell, P. and Frankham, J. (2003) Making sense of the development of inclusive practices. European Journal of Special Needs Education 18, 2, 227-242.
- D. Newcastle: Dyson, A., Gallannaugh, F. & Millward, A. (2003) Making space in the standards agenda: developing inclusive practices in schools, European Educational Research Journal, 2(2), pp. 228-244.
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## **Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools**

### **A summary of the research results**

*Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools* was one of the four research networks set up as the first phase of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme. This summary outlines the findings of the three-year programme of research carried out by the Network. This programme involved three linked studies, each of which was guided by the following questions:

- What are the barriers to participation and learning experienced by pupils?
- What practices can help to overcome these barriers?
- To what extent do such practices facilitate improved learning outcomes?
- How can such practices be encouraged and sustained within LEAs and schools?

The Network involved small teams of researchers from three higher education institutions in working with twenty-five schools, in three Local Education Authorities (LEAs) serving urban contexts. It was significant that, unlike much of the other research in this field, these schools were at a variety of stages of development, rather than being exceptional schools chosen because they were known to be examples of outstanding practice.

The three studies followed a similar research design and timeline, and eventually led to one set of findings. The overall strategy involved two interlinked cycles of action research carried out in partnership by practitioners and researchers. The first of these cycles was driven by the agendas of the partner LEAs and schools, and set out to use existing knowledge within these contexts, supplemented by further research evidence, as the means of fostering developments in the field. The second cycle attempted to scrutinise these developments in order to address the overall agenda of the Network, using existing theory and previous research, including the team's own work, as a basis for pursuing deeper understandings.

The findings indicate that the development of inclusive practice involves processes of social learning that occur within particular contexts. It is about those within a school working together more effectively, using various forms of evidence about existing practices in order to think creatively about how to address barriers experienced by some learners.

Teaching is a complex business that involves practitioners in making hundreds of fine adjustments in their lesson plans in the light of the responses of class members. Their plans and decisions are linked to assumptions that are built up and supported amongst groups of colleagues. Consequently, becoming more inclusive involves both experimenting with aspects of practice and, at the same time, revising the thinking that underpins these practices.

The studies have identified certain ways of engaging with evidence that seem to be helpful in encouraging such experimentation. These approaches can help to create space for reappraisal and rethinking by interrupting existing discourses, and by focusing attention on overlooked possibilities for moving practice forward. They include: mutual observation of classroom practices, followed by structured discussion of what happened; group discussion of a video recording of one colleague teaching; and data from interviews with pupils. The evidence suggests that under certain conditions approaches such as these can provide *interruptions* that help to make the familiar unfamiliar in ways that stimulate self-questioning, creativity and action

The research carried out by the Network indicates that although these kinds of actions may create space and encourage discussion, they are not in themselves straightforward mechanisms for the development of more inclusive practices. The space that is created may be filled according to conflicting agendas, not least as a result of pressures to ‘drive up standards’. It was also found that deeply held beliefs about the limitations of some groups of pupils can prevent the experimentation that is necessary in order to foster the development of more inclusive ways of working. Faced by such beliefs it is necessary to question the assumption that some pupils are incapable of learning, or that they require a different form of teaching from that offered to the majority of students. The experience of schools in the Network is that through such assumptions, leading to a search for separate arrangements for those children perceived as being different, vast opportunities for the development of more inclusive practices may be overlooked.

The studies point to the impact of developing the capacity of those within schools to reveal and challenge deeply entrenched deficit views of difference, which define certain types of pupils as ‘lacking something’. Specifically, it is necessary to be vigilant in scrutinising how deficit assumptions may be influencing perceptions of certain pupils. It also draws attention to the importance of school leaders encouraging their colleagues to gather and interpret information in order to create an ‘inquiring stance’. Such a stance can provide a challenge to existing assumptions about teaching and learning.

In almost all of the schools in the Network there was strong evidence that attempts to foster inclusive practices were associated with significant improvements in terms of the presence, participation and achievement of pupils. At the same time, involvement in Network activities encouraged a broadening in the concept of outcomes beyond the confines of the so-called standards agenda. There was also evidence that a culture of critical reflection had developed in most of the schools. It was noted, for example, that questions from other teachers, during the course of school-to-school visits, helped to foster a commitment to self-questioning. As a result, many teachers in the Network schools became more enthusiastic and confident in the value of asking questions about pupil outcomes, and in being actively involved in working out how their school can be organised better in respect of their learning and the learning of their pupils.

The research suggests that some elements of the recent national reform agenda, with its emphasis on raising standards, can exacerbate difficulties, through unintended effects of the accountability culture and fragmentation caused by competing priorities. Many of those involved in the Network talked in terms of the values that sustained their commitment to change in this context. For them, increasing the learning and participation of all learners was seen to require wide-ranging and ambitious change. On the other hand, the national agenda’s emphasis on the achievement of *all* learners can also open up possibilities for moving schools in a more inclusive direction. A strengthening of this aspect of the national agenda, combined with a slightly broader definition of ‘achievement’ and a fostering of the sorts of developmental processes outlined here, may hold out the best prospect for the emergence of a more inclusive school *system* extending beyond a few exceptionally inclusive schools.

The findings of the research are of relevance to a wide range of practitioners and policy makers, in this country and overseas, who are interested in widening the participation and improving the educational achievement of children and young people. The research is also significant in the way that it illustrates how academics can work in partnership with practitioners in schools and LEAs on improvement initiatives.

*Further details about the work of the Network are available from: [www.man.ac.uk/include](http://www.man.ac.uk/include)*

## **Final report on the work of the TLRP Network, 'Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools'.**

The Network carried out three studies. These followed a similar research design and timeline, and eventually led to one set of overall findings. Consequently, in this final report we present them in a way that emphasises how they interconnect in order to add weight to the overall conclusions that are reached.

### **1. Background**

Inclusion is arguably the major challenge facing education systems around the world. Recent efforts of the United Nations organisations have stimulated considerable activity aimed at increasing participation in schools in developing countries, although actual progress has been limited. Meanwhile, in many Western countries there is evidence of tensions between national reform policies for achieving excellence and those that are concerned with equity, particularly in the context of moves towards market-led approaches to educational improvement. All of this has helped to focus attention on the need to find more effective ways of combating marginalisation and exclusion of learners.

The context of England is particularly interesting in this respect. Since 1988, different Governments have introduced a series of much publicised policy changes in order to foster improvements in state education that are said to have brought about significant progress. However, whilst the Government boasts of apparent improvements in national test and examination results, there is evidence that many students still experience marginalisation. At the same time, there has been a worrying increase in the number of young people excluded from schools because of their behaviour, and the proportion of pupils placed in segregated special education provision of various forms has changed little over the last twenty-five years. Meanwhile, following the publication of national examination results in the summer of 2002, it was reported that some 30,000 youngsters had just left school without any qualifications at all, including a noticeable proportion from ethnic minority groups.

### **2. Objectives**

Set within this challenging policy context, this report summarises the activities, findings and outputs of a three-year programme of research, carried out by one of the four national research networks set up as the first phase of the Economic and Social Research Council's Teaching and Learning Research Programme. The three studies that were carried out by the Network were each guided by the following questions:

- What are the barriers to participation and learning experienced by pupils?
- What practices can help to overcome these barriers?
- To what extent do such practices facilitate improved learning outcomes?
- How can such practices be encouraged and sustained within LEAs and schools?

It is important to understand that the approach adopted by the Network differed significantly from much of the existing literature that has addressed the theme of inclusion in education and that was the focus of a systematic review undertaken in conjunction with this study (see output 13). In particular, the Network:

- conceptualised inclusion and exclusion in terms of the multiple barriers to learning and participation that potentially affect many learners in schools, rather than taking a narrow focus on particular groups and issues (e.g. the placement of disabled learners);
- involved schools that were at a variety of stages of development, including some that had recently faced periods of difficulty (i.e. special measures and serious weaknesses), rather than only examining exceptional schools chosen because they were known to be examples of outstanding practice;
- focused on developments in twenty-five schools, over three years, rather than focusing on short term scrutiny of individual schools;
- analysed the development of practice in the context of interactions between classroom, institutional and systemic factors, in contrast to research that focuses on only one of these levels; and
- made use of the different theoretical perspectives of a large team of researchers, rather than relying on a single viewpoint or conceptual framework.

In a context where education systems in the UK and internationally are seeking to become more ‘inclusive’, the findings of the research are of relevance to a wide range of practitioners and policy makers. Likewise, in a context where the impact of education research has been called into question internationally, the study is also significant in the way that it illustrates how academics can work in partnership with practitioners in schools and LEAs to bring about significant change.

### **3. Network Approach**

The development of an effective methodology for addressing the Network's agenda represented a major challenge and was, therefore, an important strand within the research programme. We took the view that barriers to learning and participation and the action needed to address them might differ from context to context. We saw the way practitioners understand their own contexts as a privileged source of insights. We also saw it as central both to the creation of barriers and to the development of actions to overcome those barriers. Rather than handing practitioners a ‘blueprint’ for action, therefore, we sought to work collaboratively with them to explore how their contexts could be understood and what actions might be possible therein. As ‘outsiders’, our role was to stimulate and support practitioners’ exploration, to engage with them in the mutual problematisation of the taken-for-granted assumptions of ‘insiders’, and to lead the theorisation and generalisation from particular contexts.

We were, therefore, involved in stimulating and monitoring a series of initiatives to improve the educational experiences of students in schools. However, our approach was closer to one of critical collaborative action research (Macpherson et al., 1998), rather than of quasi-experiment or school improvement, as usually understood. This is important for understanding how the study progressed and for the way in which we collected, analysed and used data (see below). Methodological issues are discussed further in nominated outputs A, C and G, and outputs 9, 18 and 20.

In practical terms, the Network involved small teams of researchers from three higher education institutions (Manchester and Newcastle Universities, and Canterbury Christ Church University College) in working with practitioner-research teams in twenty-five schools, in three Local Education Authorities (LEAs) serving urban contexts. At the start of the initiative, in the summer of 2000, workshops were held in each LEA for groups of teachers in the partner schools. The

school teams were invited, in discussion with their LEAs and the university teams, to identify barriers to learning and participation in their contexts and the actions which might be taken to address these. Each school made their participation in the Network a part of their development plans, and a core team of practitioners attended regular local meetings and four national seminars.

Members of the university teams visited the schools on a regular basis to support these core teams in collecting and engaging with evidence in relation to taking their development initiatives forward. The school teams were encouraged to investigate their own practices and monitor the impacts of their actions systematically, while the university teams gave them technical assistance and undertook independent investigations in ways that were negotiated with the schools (output 18 provides a detailed example of this process). Ultimately, however, control over the focus of inquiry in the schools, the direction of action and access to data in relation to that action belonged with the schools themselves. Consequently, although some schools carried out relatively robust evaluations, our data about schools and classrooms served principally to catalyse and illuminate teachers' questioning and development of their practices. On the other hand, we were able to gather rich data on the nature of this questioning and development process, and, specifically, on how practitioners in different institutional contexts conceptualise barriers and the action needed to overcome them.

The approaches used by practitioners to explore their practice and monitor action generated evidence in a wide variety of forms, including observations, examples of children's work, performance and attainment statistics, specimen teaching plans, interview notes, questionnaire returns and video recordings. The university researchers used similar techniques and in addition kept detailed field notes of all their involvements with the schools and school teams.

A key challenge was to analyse this multiplicity of data in a coherent and trustworthy manner. Our response was to build levels of explanation and theorising by encouraging triangulation between different kinds of data and dialogue between different perspectives. We therefore presented our interpretations of the situation in each school to the school team on a regular basis, and encouraged them to present their findings to us on the same basis. We held regular meetings with all the teams in each LEA area in order to encourage a similar dialogue. Moreover, dialogue between the three university teams' emerging interpretations was built into the research process. Regular meetings of the group of ten academic staff were held, including occasional residential events. The university teams presented working papers to each other and we were particularly careful to challenge each other to be explicit about the assumptions underlying their work. At the same time, a strong sub-network was established between the three research associates, who met, were in regular contact through telephone and email, and were able to contribute their own distinctive perspective based on extended contact with the schools.

The database about what was happening within the partner LEAs and schools was accessible to all members of the three university teams through a 'closed' web-site. In addition, an 'open' web-site was developed ([www.man.ac.uk/include](http://www.man.ac.uk/include)) that encouraged wider involvement in the activities of the Network.

In addition, we held four national conferences in which all university, school and LEA participants in the Network had the opportunity to discuss their work and share findings. The first conference focused on sharing plans and early developments. The other three conferences included school visits, where practitioners from other LEAs visited the host LEA's schools and carried out small-scale research activities (interviewing students, observing lessons and so on) which were then discussed with the host school. (This process proved so powerful for participants that they requested - and undertook - similar research visits within LEAs, and maintained some of their inter-LEA contacts long after the conferences.) At each conference, the

university teams discussed interim findings with participants. The final conference focused on participants' making explicit what they saw as the outcomes of their work, particularly in terms of students' achievements broadly understood. Further details of these and other project **activities** are provided in Appendix A.

Crucially, then, the Network was not simply a loose collection of studies with different foci and methods. Rather, it was a collaborative effort by academic- and practitioner-researchers, working on common issues in a range of settings. The multi-site and multi-perspective nature of the Network means that we have been better able to address these common issues 'in the round' than if this had been either an isolated study or a collection of separate studies. For this reason, we propose to depart from the guidance on end-of-award reports somewhat by presenting brief reports from each university team at this point and spending longer on setting out the 'results' we have generated by synthesising these into a coherent set of findings.

#### **4. Project Reports**

In this section of the report we summarise the findings of the studies carried out by each of the three university teams. More detailed versions of these accounts will appear in a book to be published in the TLRP Gateway series.

Each of the studies was carried out separately, using the different starting points and perspectives of the three research teams, and taking account of particular factors within the individual LEA and school contexts. These differences are reflected in the accounts that follow and proved to be valuable in strengthening the analysis of evidence in relation to the overall research questions.

**4.1 The Manchester study.** The Manchester team's involvement with schools in one LEA began with the establishment of the Network within which activities took place. Working with schools in the early stages led to the identification of a series of 'promising approaches', each of which had the potential to lead to inclusive school development, but did not always do so, and certainly not immediately. Consequently, the team examined these processes in detail in order to throw light on what needs to happen in order to sustain inclusive development.

The account describes a process that builds on previous research carried out by members of the Manchester team. In particular, the team's work was influenced by the following guiding assumptions: schools should define their own starting points, within the framework of inclusive development; the project should be committed to institutional, not just individual change; and researchers can act as a resource to help generate data which promotes thinking about inclusion. These assumptions overlap and inter-connect in a number of ways, particularly in the central role they give to teachers as learners. They also reflect the team's interpretation of collaborative action research, positioning themselves as learners whose own initial understandings were likely to be revised, or even changed, through their involvement in the Network.

The Network itself is explained as a flexible structure within which the Manchester team attempted to support and challenge schools as they worked on areas of focus related to the overall theme of inclusion. In monitoring these initiatives, the team made use of theory that suggests that access to knowledge and activities is socially mediated by the members of a 'community of practice', and central to the way relative newcomers learn to be members, and to see themselves as members. This supports the conclusion that teachers' practices are always partly socially constructed, even though they are usually individually performed.

One of the findings of this process concerned the nature of the **barriers to participation and learning** experienced by pupils. Specifically, the study found that often the most significant barriers reflected closely-held assumptions *within* schools. This meant that they were less about changing particular ways of working, and much more about changing ways of thinking. So, for example, as a result of engaging with data, staff in one school eventually came to reinterpret their

own silence about disability as a barrier. In another school, an overly academic interpretation of the curriculum was recognised as constraining the participation of some young children. In another, assumptions about parents' lack of interest were revised when a different approach resulted in their enthusiastic participation in their children's education

The **practices which helped schools to overcome these barriers** were largely practices of enquiry, with various forms of data leading to discussion and reflection. The case study accounts of what happened in each of the schools highlighted how various forms of data acted as an *interruption* to current thinking and practice in ways that had the potential to move practice forward (see nominated outputs B and c). These accounts draw attention to promising approaches, such as the use of data that represented the perspectives of children about writing, or the arrangement of classes, or what they liked and disliked about playtimes. Interpreted as part of a social process, we found that such data can produce moments of shared uncertainty, leading to a rethinking of concepts. Again, it is clear that this process takes time, not least because it requires a level of ease with uncertainty which does not fit well with the common expectation that teachers will know the answers.

It is also clear from the accounts that not all data creates space and encourages discussion, and that the so-called promising approaches are not a simple mechanism for the development of more inclusive practices. The study reveals the significance of **social boundaries** that exist within and around schools, often linked to personal histories and relationships, and often also reflecting the impact of dominant external pressures, such as the standards agenda. Such boundaries are largely taken-for-granted, a way of conceptualising how values, preconceptions, relationships and norms affect what is possible within institutions. It also seems that they get stronger as institutional forms take shape around them, reducing communication across them still further, whilst strengthening people's assumptions about those who are perceived to be 'on the other side'. What researchers can know about institutions is likely to be limited by these same boundaries.

The study illustrates how such boundaries are often where the marginalisation of certain groups begins and develops. At the same time, it shows how they appear and grow; how they can be crossed; and how the more they are crossed, the weaker they become. Seen in this light, the interruptions already described can lead to new connections, as information, time, status, materials or people are used in new ways within schools. The study suggests that this is likely to happen gradually, through ongoing conversations in staff meetings, classrooms and corridors, often assisted by the input of a relative outsider who is accompanying the process. Here the study also provided convincing evidence that schools can support one another by acting as co-researchers, collecting and interpreting evidence in relation to their efforts to move practice forward

The evidence is that these processes can lead to improved **learning outcomes for pupils** in national assessments. However, they do so not by reinforcing a technicist view of the teacher, but through an emphasis on affective learning, pleasure in educative activities, and attention to improving pupils' self esteem.

The Manchester account also throws light on the challenges that are involved in **sustaining** the development of inclusive practice at many levels: personal, institutional, and more widely political. It illustrates how a network supporting research into barriers to learning and participation can lead to effective interruptions to thinking and practice, with 'outsiders' playing an important role in helping schools to persist, despite the boundaries that resist necessary changes in attitude and habit. The accounts suggest that these processes of enquiry and interruption are sufficiently engaging to be self-sustaining. We saw, for example, how teachers found themselves learning unexpected things about pupils and other staff, experiencing disappointments and frustration but also pleasurable surprises as a consequence of continuing to try and enact more inclusive practices and values. The Network created a supportive context for such processes, in terms of time and interpretive resources.

## 4.2 The Newcastle study

The Newcastle team began with a central paradox which had emerged from its previous studies of inclusive developments in schools: while such developments clearly occurred in particular aspects of school policy, organisation and practice, they were frequently ambiguous and simply reproduced existing patterns of exclusion in a different form. Therefore, the challenge was to understand whether such reproduction was inevitable or whether there were processes of development which could bring about less ambiguous forms of change.

We worked with six primary and two secondary schools, supported very positively by LEA advisers and advisory teachers. Given our starting point, we avoided offering any blueprints of 'inclusive practices' and instead emphasised the structured processes through which schools should investigate their current practices and investigate the actual impacts of any new action. We encouraged schools to undertake formal evaluations of their actions and gave them technical support in so doing. Where the outcomes of actions were likely to take time to emerge or be difficult to attribute to particular actions, we worked with schools to develop explicit 'theories of change' (Connell & Kubisch, 1999) so that they could track short- and medium-term impacts. We also negotiated with schools some ways in which we might collect additional data to carry out some 'independent' analysis of practice in the school. The aim was to use the evidence so generated to problematise existing understandings of both the school teams and ourselves. All of this was operationalised through a series of regular meetings between school and university teams individually and as an LEA group.

In the event, schools identified multiple **barriers to learning and participation**, ranging from the way in which writing was taught in primary schools, to the supposed deficits in linguistic skills of some students, to the failure of the staff culture within the school to respond to children's educational characteristics. In response, schools undertook multiple actions to remove these barriers. These ranged from changing narrower or wider aspects of pedagogy (for instance, by introducing 'thinking skills' approaches), to changing aspects of organisation (such as in-class grouping or the time spent by children from a SEN unit in mainstream classes), to a root and branch reconstruction of staff-student relationships and staff attitudes. In terms of **outcomes**, schools which took clearly-targeted action were able to demonstrate short-term impacts (for instance, a secondary school which employed staff to work with disaffected students generated reductions in exclusions). Others were able to demonstrate significant changes which were likely to lead to student outcomes in the longer term (for instance, a primary school which worked on structured questioning techniques showed that the quality of students' responses was enhanced, though this was not yet reflected in attainment scores). Some schools demonstrated fewer impacts, either because their data-collection was flawed or their management of the initiative left something to be desired (see below). Typically, although schools started with an expectation of having an immediate impact on measurable outcomes, they came to focus on a longer-term process of impacting on students' underlying capacities, their engagement with learning and their sense of themselves as learners. While they did not reject the 'standards agenda' out of hand, they saw this more broadly based approach as the only way to deliver raised attainments for many of their students.

A key feature of these processes of identification and action was the sort of ambiguity we had identified in previous work. On the one hand, schools made serious attempts to adapt their practices to match more closely what they took to be the characteristics, needs and wishes of their students. On the other hand, those adaptations were shaped by forces that were far from inclusive. For instance, a narrow interpretation of the 'standards agenda' as being about meeting attainment targets informed the choice of groups of students to work with and the aims of any action in many schools. Similarly, when schools tried to explain the mismatch between pedagogy

and the characteristics of students, rather stereotypical views of children from economically poor homes and communities came to the fore (see output 31; nominated output D).

The longitudinal and collaborative nature of this study, however, allowed us to develop our previous understanding of these issues. We found that there was a common process of development across the schools, with key factors which led to more or less inclusive outcomes. We identified a common trigger for development in schools in the form of a sense that something was not ‘working’. In particular, schools perceived a mismatch between their existing practices and the characteristics of some or all of their students, and this perception was frequently stimulated by the close attention to student performance required by the national standards agenda. The response to this trigger was variable across schools. It might lead to the pathologisation of children and their families described above, or to a critical interrogation of practice in order to understand what it was about it which made it inappropriate for some students. Likewise, it might lead to a wide-ranging reconstruction of practice, or to a more limited modification. Commonly, schools’ responses displayed a mixture of possibilities.

A major determinant of these responses was the leadership style, attitudes and values of the headteacher who could open up or close down the process of interrogation and response – or, indeed, who could simply fail to manage it productively. In turn, the head had to work with an established staff culture and we had examples of schools where heads had to wait for staff to leave before they could move the school on. However, these processes were stimulated by the structured engagement with evidence which we encouraged, by the questioning of ‘outsiders’ such as ourselves and LEA officers, and, particularly, by witnessing other teachers working in different ways with similar students. The work of an advisory teacher who took over teachers’ classes and used a problem-solving group work approach was particularly powerful in this respect.

In terms of **sustainability**, the catalyst for development in teachers’ common experience of ‘mismatch’, the focus provided by the apparently non-inclusive standards agenda, and the powerful effect of engaging with evidence and seeing other teachers in action gave us hope for the prospects of developing inclusive practices on a national scale. In particular, our decision to offer schools a structured process of investigation but to encourage them to manage that process for themselves and to avoid providing blueprints for action reduced the dependency of schools on external support. We do not minimise the ambiguity of the outcomes of these processes and doubt the possibility of ‘radically’ inclusive schools emerging in other than exceptional circumstances. However, we suggest that rather typical schools found ‘spaces’ in an apparently hostile standards agenda (see nominated output D) and that some opening up of that agenda, together with a strengthening of the supportive factors in schools’ development, might well have significant positive effects. We conclude that these contextual features are necessary in order to support such developments.

### **4.3 The Canterbury study**

The Canterbury team worked with eight schools and a Local Education Authority that contained areas of considerable poverty and overcrowding. The authority expressed firm commitment to a broad view of inclusion based on the definition of inclusion from the research team, that it hoped to persuade its schools to adopt. Located in London, near other authorities that had been more extensively privatised, and with previously relatively low levels of attainment on national tests, its progress was under a national spotlight. Over the time of the study its overall results on national tests showed dramatic improvement and it was regarded as an ‘immense success’ by government and in the press.

The team emphasised the conceptual underpinnings of their attempts to understand, describe and develop inclusion with schools and the LEA. In particular they stressed the role of values in educational development, arguing that all actions embody a moral argument. Right action or practice required an understanding of the values that underlie it, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in it. The team saw notions of 'good' or 'best' practice as counterproductive, deflecting attention from underlying values and undermining rather than supporting principled educational development. They viewed inclusion as putting into action the particular values of equity, community, participation, entitlement, respect for diversity and sustainability. Some government policies were seen to share this broad value-driven notion of inclusion. The concern that LEAs and schools, particularly those in poor areas, should work to overcome lowered expectations within policies carried a significant inclusive message for the borough. However to the extent that the standards agenda and its associated accountability culture portrayed education as a largely technical enterprise, filleted of its moral content and purposes, such government policies appeared to be in opposition to the development of inclusion.

The team sought to understand how schools could develop inclusively while responding to the conflicting pressures of a particular local, national and international policy climate. All the project schools had stated a commitment to the LEA's broad inclusion view, although in practice the LEA as well as the schools drew on a variety of conceptions of inclusion, both broad and narrow, partly in response to the multiple and conflicting inclusion strands within government policies. While some in the LEA stated that they wished to move away from a view of inclusion as dominated by support for students categorised as having special educational needs, such a view was reproduced within aspects of its operations, as well as being a significant view within all the schools. This was reproduced most clearly in the roles adopted by the dramatically increasing numbers of teaching assistants.

The research team worked to understand and support new aspects of inclusive development in the school, as well as activities in which the schools engaged because of their prior commitments to inclusion. They documented these activities and attempted to understand how they could be fitted into the development planning strategies for the schools. At the same time, the team gathered detailed evidence on **barriers** within classrooms, playgrounds, staff rooms and within surrounding communities, through observations and interviews with staff in schools, students and parents. The inclusion priorities in schools reflected the circumstances in the surrounding areas, and many were concerned, in one way or another, with overcoming barriers in school community relationships, and reducing conflicts between students and students and staff. However school activities also included the development of learner autonomy and the spreading of shared values throughout the school.

In the process of understanding the school development planning process, barriers within government policies to the inclusive development of learning and participation were highlighted. The team concluded that in order to develop inclusively, schools have to resolve a series of policy tensions: dealing with multiple and contradictory education initiatives, rather than a coherent and carefully revised overall framework for education; mitigating the selective organisational requirement of the standards agenda; paying attention to conditions for teaching and learning as well as outcomes; balancing long-term rational planning with short-term and improvised change; ensuring that the pressures to create a successful image were matched by deep changes to cultures, policies and practices; moving from a compliance culture to a commitment to shared inclusive values; weighing the significance given to the role of Head teachers with the development of shared leadership; and developing constructive working relationships with an LEA 'pared to the bone'.

The Canterbury team saw the assessment of **learning outcomes** as particularly complex and resisted simplistic attempts to represent improvement in learning outcomes, as indicated by raised test scores or GCSE results. They considered the characteristics of a view of improved learning derived from an inclusive approach to education. The team saw improvement in inclusive learning outcomes as depending on a broadening of notions of achievement, as well as increasing levels of *critical* literacy and numeracy. It required achievement on a broad curriculum rather than a narrowing of the curriculum. It involved an increase in the capacity for independent study and the identification of personal interests and enquiries.

The complex measurements, analysis and interpretation required to give an overall picture of changes in inclusive learning outcomes within the eight schools were beyond the scope of this study. There was steady progress in Key Stage 2 test scores in six of the eight schools. In one of the schools a sudden decline in these scores in the last year of the Network, while interpreted as a failure of the school to make ‘progress’ within the LEA, was perhaps more constructively understood in terms of the history of relationships and loyalties within the school. The relatively greater improvement in measured test scores in one of the two secondary schools could be interpreted in terms of the number of Bangladeshi background students, for whom improvements in educational results were being pushed hard, both by families and the Mosques, and were rising rapidly. There was strong evidence that greater collaboration with the Bangladeshi communities would further support the development of achievements within the schools. The pushes to inclusion in the Borough were having relatively little effect on the performance of white working-class boys, as in other areas of the country, and ways of valuing their backgrounds and cultures and giving them a stake in employment opportunities remained in need of urgent consideration.

All the schools derived support from schools locally and nationally, particularly those within the Network. They recognised the limited discretion they had to develop themselves according to their own values. However, they found that the process of making values explicit, attempting to put them into action and resolving contradictions between them extended this discretion. It helped to clarify the frame within which new initiatives were absorbed and around which day-to-day practice was improvised. While inevitably some planning itself was reactive, coherence over values helped to reinstate an emphasis on rational planning. When schools related their development to inclusive values this created a counter pressure to some of the excluding effects of the wider policy environment.

## **5. Network Results**

In what follows we compare the findings of the three studies in order to address the overall research agenda of the Network. In particular we examine:

- The nature of the barriers to participation and learning experienced by pupils;
- What is involved in the development of inclusive practices;
- The extent to which such practices are associated with improved learning outcomes; and
- How such practices can be encouraged and sustained within LEAs and schools.

**5.1 Barriers to participation and learning.** Our analysis of barriers was based on: indirect evidence from teachers’ own identification of barriers; direct evidence from our own data-collection in schools; and a different kind of direct evidence from our observation of how teachers talk and think about their work.

The first two forms of evidence point to multiple barriers affecting a wide range of students. These relate to within-school factors, such as inappropriate aspects of curriculum and pedagogy, unsupportive staff attitudes, organisational arrangements segregating groups of students, cultural divides between students, families and schools, and so on. Two features are particularly striking here. First, it seems that the emergence of such barriers is not an exceptional event, but rather they appear to be endemic in schools. The Canterbury study shows that this is true even where there are avowedly inclusive policies and teachers who appear to be genuinely committed to inclusive approaches.

Second, a particularly powerful factor at work currently is the constraints under which teachers operate in terms of **the national policy context**. We see in all of the accounts the impact of national policy - the 'standards agenda' in shorthand - in shaping school practices that appear to exclude and marginalise some students and, arguably, limit the experiences available to all. The narrowing of the curriculum, the focus on targets and groups on the borderline of meeting those targets, the categorisation of students in terms of a narrow conceptualisation of attainment, and the de-democratisation of schools are just some of the ways in which this impact manifests itself. All of these features, of course, embody values that run counter, to a greater or lesser extent, to notions of inclusion and make it difficult for teachers to act in inclusive ways. Both the Canterbury and Newcastle studies document the almost overwhelming pressures which build up on schools and LEAs, most obviously those pursuing avowedly inclusive approaches in circumstances where national policy does too little to facilitate such approaches and has priorities which appear to lie elsewhere.

However, given the strong interpretivist thrust in our work, we have focused not simply on the contexts within which teachers work, but also on the ways in which teachers interpret those contexts, understand the students with whom they work, and formulate their task in regard to those students. Time and again in the accounts, we see teachers individually and collectively expressing *understandings* of what children are like, how they learn, how they can be taught and so on. These understandings have implications for the practices teachers evolve and, therefore, for the tendency of those practices to create or remove barriers.

Sometimes, these understandings have an ethical dimension that is explicit. Put simply, barriers to participation and learning arise because teachers and education decision-makers adhere to non-inclusive values, or fail to enact the inclusive values that they espouse. If this is true of the standards agenda, it was equally true of schools in the Network that maintained segregated forms of provision, or excluded significant numbers of students for disciplinary reasons, or prioritised institutional advantage over the educational needs of their students. However, this was often not simply a matter of teachers making conscious decisions to ignore the call of inclusive values, or to pursue contrary values. Rather, we saw schools where there was a high level of commitment to inclusive values and where that commitment was enacted in some aspects of practice, but where this was not so enacted in other respects. In some instances, we found that teachers who wished to act inclusively felt constrained by the circumstances in which they found themselves (e.g. high levels of staff turnover, local authority imperatives, national policy contexts, and so on). In other cases, we saw how staff who were clearly committed to inclusion were unaware of the exclusive nature of some of their actions (for example, in one school an enacted commitment to inclusion was accompanied by high levels of disciplinary exclusion). In other cases again, the impact of particular practices on raising or lowering barriers to learning and participation was uncertain.

It was also clear from each of the studies that teachers' understandings are shaped to some extent by **institutional factors**. We saw, for instance, examples of Headteachers who drive their schools in non-inclusive directions, or groups of staff who resist change in their established

practices, or staff cultures which militate against open inquiry and development. The Manchester account, in particular, talks of the internal 'boundaries' which develop within schools, which become more impenetrable as institutional forms develop around them and which then become the places where the marginalisation of certain groups begins and develops. The persistence in some schools of separate structures and procedures for children identified as having 'special educational needs' is an obvious example to which the Manchester team point, but which is also echoed in the other accounts.

However, what we regard as our most important finding is the extent to which barriers arise when **teachers' understandings** simplify the complexity of the situations in which they practice and, particularly, of the students they teach. This tends to be thrown into relief particularly at the points where established understandings are set alongside understandings derived from a different perspective; for instance: when a Canterbury researcher works with a girl with 'severe language delay', he finds that she can do far more than her teachers believe; when the teachers in one of the schools in the Newcastle study hand over their classes to an advisory teacher, they find she achieves things with them they thought impossible; and, when teachers in one of the Manchester schools hear what children have to say about their own and others' abilities, they have to rethink their notion of 'high ability'.

In each of these examples, it is evident that the teachers' initial understandings have missed some of the complexity of the situation and, specifically, some of the human complexity of the students involved. The practices which we saw following from these misunderstandings – inappropriately low demands on students, teaching which focuses on what children do badly while ignoring what they do well, selection for 'ability' groups on the basis of uni-dimensional notions of ability – likewise miss this complexity and thereby create barriers for learners. This tendency, of course, is compounded by the institutional and policy contexts within which teachers work. All three studies suggest that the national standards agenda, though resisted by some teachers, has become deeply internalised by others and provides them with a simplistic framework through which to understand the task of teaching their students.

What all of this suggests is that, in the schools we studied, barriers to participation and learning arise out of a complex set of interactions between the values which teachers seek to enact, the contexts within which they work, and the understandings they develop of their students and of their educational task. An important implication is that simple categorisations of particular types of practice as 'inclusive' or 'non-inclusive' are dangerous - and categorisations of whole schools as 'inclusive' or otherwise are doubly so. On the one hand, this is a worrying finding. It is clearly not possible for schools to reach a state of grace in which they have successfully removed all barriers and can declare themselves to be fully inclusive. On the other hand, the complexities, instabilities and ambiguities also mean that barriers are not fixed. There is always the potential for change and our findings have a good deal to say about how that change comes about.

**5.2 The development of inclusive practices.** The literature we reviewed in conjunction with this project (see output 13) reveals rather crude models of change in the field, based either on the unproblematic adoption of new 'techniques', or the unequivocal pursuit of explicit inclusive values by charismatic Headteachers. Our analysis suggest, however, that if barriers arise from the understandings of teachers, then their removal depends on those understandings being 'interrupted'. In other words, something has to happen which calls into question the assumptions on which teachers' work is based and the practices which arise from those assumptions.

In particular, we worked with schools confronted by the challenges and instability of the schooling process itself and, therefore, requiring to make some sort of communal sense of these situations. Some schools were facing changing intakes, for instance, or were failing to achieve

the results they hoped for, or were aware of particular learners who were doing less well than they might. Such instabilities generated a sense – however nebulous – that something was ‘not quite right’ and called for an explanation and a response. Our initial suggestion that schools should identify an area for development in relation to inclusion was essentially an invitation to formulate these explanations and responses.

Perhaps because we worked with teachers in teams rather than as individuals, we have been particularly struck by the role of social learning processes in enabling teachers to make sense of the instabilities amidst which they work. We have found it helpful, therefore, to draw on the notion of these teams (and the wider staff groups to which they relate in schools) as ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger, 1998) in the sense that they are engaged in negotiating meaning through social action and shared histories of learning (see nominated output B for further discussion and examples). Particularly powerful is the argument that it is in the nature of such communities to generate both continuity and change. This seems to us fundamental in explaining how schools that have established less-inclusive practices and understandings can nonetheless generate more inclusive possibilities.

We have found that certain processes help to stimulate and shape the generation of alternatives; for instance, certain ways of engaging with evidence seem to be helpful in encouraging critical dialogue between teachers about the situations they face. Our observation is that these can help to create space for reappraisal and rethinking by interrupting existing understandings, and by focusing attention on overlooked possibilities for moving practice forward. The approaches we have used include:

- conducting surveys of staff, student and parent views;
- mutual observation of classroom practices, followed by structured discussion of what happened;
- group discussion of a video recording of one colleague teaching;
- discussion of statistical evidence regarding test results, attendance registers or exclusion records;
- data from interviews with students;
- staff development exercises based on case study material or interview data; and
- school to school cooperation, including mutual visits to help collect evidence.

Equally powerful in this respect have been what we have called ‘alternatives’. These might take the form of critical external perspectives provided, for instance, by the university research teams. However, our evidence suggests that even more powerful are practical demonstrations of different ways of working which teachers have accessed through visiting each other’s schools, or through having consultants come in and work with their classes. The power of these alternatives seems to lie less in the ‘good ideas’ which they offer than in the way they take a familiar situation and challenge the teacher’s assumptions about the way that situation has to be.

The studies show that under certain conditions, all of these approaches can provide interruptions that help to make the familiar unfamiliar in ways that stimulate self-questioning, creativity and action. Elsewhere, we have argued that they create ‘spaces’ for reflection and encourage discussion of alternative conceptualisations (see nominated output D). However, we have also found that interruptions to established practices and assumptions do not necessarily lead to the development of more inclusive practices. The space that is created may be filled according to conflicting agendas, arising from external imperatives, or deeply-embedded constructs and beliefs. At the same time, therefore, as the apparent inappropriateness of established practices were acknowledged, the need to obey to national imperatives, or explanations in terms of

children's 'special needs' or the inadequacies of their families (see output 31), prevented or shaped the exploration of alternatives.

What seems to be important, therefore, is the extent to which an 'interruption' leads to a fundamental questioning of existing assumptions and, thence, to a fundamental reformulation of practice. We have used notions of 'single loop' and 'double loop' learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978, 1996) to help conceptualise this - though our evidence suggests that these should be understood as poles of a continuum rather than as simple alternatives. Single-loop learning occurs when schools monitor and modify their practices without engaging with fundamental questions about the assumptions on which those practices are based; whereas double-loop learning delves much deeper than this. For instance, rather than simply modifying their existing 'routines' for teaching writing, some Network schools questioned whether the direct teaching of writing was appropriate for some of their disadvantaged students. Instead, they reduced the time they spent on writing and embarked on a programme of experiential learning, oral work and thinking skills.

Significantly, these examples of more fundamental questioning came mainly from Headteachers. Indeed, our work with schools suggests that Heads have a crucial role in sustaining these processes through what we see as constructivist approaches to leadership. First, they have to be prepared to open up the schools' practices to interrogation, however challenging this process may be. We have certainly encountered some Heads whose response to emerging anomalies has been to close down the process of inquiry as firmly as possible. Second, they have to sustain productive processes within communities of practice. Specifically they have to find ways of bringing together different understandings in order to determine the most appropriate ways to move forward. All of this means that the members of the group are exposed to manifestations of one another's perspectives and assumptions. At its best it provides many opportunities for developing new understandings. In our experience, however, it can also give rise to all kinds of jealousies, rivalries and misunderstandings that Headteachers have to handle. Finally, Headteachers have to instigate a process that translates interrogations of established practice into viable new practices - and again, we saw examples of Heads who engaged in endless questioning but were not able to reorient the school effectively as a result of these processes. In each of these respects, the role of Headteachers has much in common with others (in our case, university researchers and LEA officers) who seek to support school development from beyond the school.

In all of this, the standards agenda acts as something of a double-edged sword. We have already suggested that it permeated the thinking of Heads and teachers. However, we have also found that it focuses schools' concerns on groups of students who might hitherto have been somewhat overlooked. In particular, although schools in any circumstances can and do problematise their existing practice, our evidence suggests that, in the current English context, the mismatch between national performance targets and the realities of attainments in economically poor areas means that schools serving such areas are particularly likely to need to dig more deeply into the assumptions which underpin their established practices.

### **5.3 Learning outcomes.**

Given the complexities and ambiguities of the links between understandings and practices, it is not surprising that the further relationship between these and outcomes for students proved also to be complex. Nonetheless, we were aware from our systematic review of the research literature (see output 13) of the tendency for studies to focus only on teachers' understandings and to fail to track the impacts of these on practices and outcomes (more broadly defined) for students.

At the most basic level, we wished to explore the 'worst-case' hypothesis that a focus on inclusion issues would interfere with schools' performance within the standards agenda. In Appendix C2, therefore, we provide an analysis of outcome data for the 25 schools that took part

in the Network. The performance of schools in these terms is variable but it is at least possible to say that there is no convincing evidence here that involvement in the project was having a damaging effect. On the contrary, some schools seem to be doing remarkably well. Nonetheless, we are aware of the limitations of these data and it is for this reason that members of the project teams are now exploring the relationship between inclusion and student achievement in a DfES-sponsored project which gives them access to the entire National Pupil Database, and are undertaking a systematic review of the literature under the aegis of the EPPI Centre.

More interesting from the point of view of the Network are the findings of the more detailed monitoring which we encouraged schools to undertake of the actions they were taking. These actions, the way they impacted on practice and the outcomes they generated, need to be understood in terms of individual school contexts and evidence relating to these is presented in Appendix C1 and nominated output F. There is, of course, continuing variability across these schools but also, we suggest, evidence that practices did change, that there were impacts on students, and that outcomes (insofar as these could be measured within the time-frame) did improve.

Moreover, it was possible to detect a significant pattern across these schools. By the end of the Network's lifetime, there was evidence that staff in most of the schools had redefined their understanding of the relationship between their practices (organisational and pedagogical) and achievement outcomes for students. In some cases, this relationship was initially conceptualised within a narrowly technicist perspective. Schools assumed that a modification of practice would generate a more or less immediate improvement in measured outcomes. Whilst some saw that broadly-based action might be needed, others focused on some specific change – in how spelling was taught, or how pupils were grouped in class – which they expected to be reflected in SATs scores or some other attainment tests. However, in time even these schools began to see achievement outcomes as mediated by underlying student-level factors, notably students' learning capacities and characteristics, their engagement with learning and their view of themselves as learners. Consequently, staff began to broaden the scope of their action to impact on these factors. This was most clearly demonstrated in the school which began with a somewhat instrumental focus on encouraging children to take the non-fiction option in national assessments (on the grounds that this was more likely to yield a 'level 4') and moved on to a much broader introduction of problem-solving group work, on the grounds that this would release capacities in students which had previously been untapped.

As explained further in nominated output B, this more nuanced view of how achievement outcomes arise was articulated by teachers from across the Network at the final national conference. This gave the teachers a way not necessarily of resisting the national standards agenda (though some certainly wished to do this), but of reconceptualising the relationship between practice and 'standards' in a way that they felt to be both more likely to be effective in relation to their students and more educationally defensible. Moreover, these teachers were also clear that their monitoring of how their practice impacted on underlying student-level factors could not be restricted to the monitoring of outcomes. They were able, therefore, to develop a range of techniques – from direct observation to informal interviewing and structured discussion - for tapping into changes within students that might not be immediately evident in their attainments.

#### **5.4 Sustainable development**

As we have explained, a key feature of the Network's approach was that schools should decide upon initiatives for themselves and build them into their normal development processes. At a time when much of their energy was given over to responding to external imperatives, many of them told us that the opportunity to take ownership of an important development was particularly significant. Not surprisingly, therefore, most of them were committed at the end of the Network's life to continue to work in this way, and certainly the evidence from the broadening and

deepening of initiatives that was evident during the lifetime of the Network suggests that similar processes may well continue.

Beyond this sense of ownership, other factors in the sustainability of developments will be apparent from the foregoing account. Of crucial importance is that change is as fundamental to communities of practice as continuity and that the ‘interruptions’ to established understandings and practices are not exceptional events which require the coming together of unusual sets of circumstances. Rather, they arise out of the recurrent mismatches between the simplifications and routinisations of practitioners, on the one hand, and the complexities of the situations in which they must practice on the other. In an important sense, therefore, development is self-generating and the question is not how to sustain it, but how to shape it in ways that result in more inclusive practices. In this respect, we have seen the importance of the role of the Headteacher and leadership team, the principled commitment of members of staff, and the emergence of a staff culture in which there is collaborative engagement with evidence and a shared exploration of practice.

A surprising (to us) finding was the importance of the role of the LEA in helping to shape inclusive developments. Staffs in schools and LEAs were keenly aware of their need for encouragement and a sense of shared purpose in their endeavours, and it was LEA staff who insisted on and financially supported teachers’ direct participation in the national seminars held each year. Beyond this, although LEAs are in no position to enforce compliance, it was clear that they were able to create a framework within which schools interpret their roles and through which the meaning of national policy is mediated. We had marked contrasts between the extent to which our three partner LEAs emphasised narrower or broader interpretations of the standards agenda, developed ideological or pragmatic approaches to inclusion, and saw themselves as strategic policy-makers or promoters of ‘bottom-up’ development. These differences were reflected to a significant extent in the schools, which is one reason why the visits to other LEAs that the Network organised proved so powerful in giving teachers access to alternative understandings.

What emerges in terms of **sustainability**, then, is a complex picture in which recurrent opportunities for practitioners to interrogate and reconstruct existing understandings and practices produce responses that are shaped by the interaction of multiple biographical, institutional and external factors. It is not surprising, therefore, if many such opportunities fail to result in more inclusive practices, or if many practices which emerge are deeply ambiguous, or if inclusive practices frequently sit alongside non-inclusive practices in the same school.

On the other hand, the very complexity of these processes offers multiple points for intervention which might make the emergence of more inclusive practices more rather than less likely. This has major implications for how we might move nationally towards the development of a more inclusive school system. We assume that the stated government intention to move in this direction is genuine, that it has to sit alongside other political imperatives (notably, a commitment in some form to ‘standards’), and that waiting for exceptional Headteachers and schools to appear is not a realistic option.

What is needed – and what our work seems to offer – is a theory of change towards more inclusive practices which yields practicable, politically viable and effective actions. Our conclusion is that, if schools and teachers constantly experience ‘interruptions’ of the sort described here, then the focus for development might lie in strengthening the processes that allow them to respond productively to those interruptions. This would include:

- supporting teachers in engaging collaboratively with a range of evidence about their practice by extending the current imperatives (within the standards agenda) for them to engage with a relatively narrow range of performance data;
- selecting and developing school leaders not only on the basis of their technical managerial ability, but also on their values orientation and their ability to offer ‘constructivist leadership’, as defined above;
- strengthening the role of LEAs as the guardians of an external, principled perspective on the work of schools; and
- increasing the opportunities for teachers to witness each other in action and to engage with other schools in other areas.

Above all, sustainable inclusive development requires some reformulation of what we have referred to here as the ‘standards agenda’. It is, we believe, important to differentiate between some essentially non-inclusive delivery mechanisms within that agenda – narrowly-defined attainment targets, punitive inspection and accountability procedures, prescriptive programmes and the like – and its decidedly inclusive aims of enhancing the learning of all students, and ensuring that previously marginalised groups are enabled to achieve in line with their peers. Our findings suggest that what is now needed is an interrogation of the link between aims and mechanisms to see whether the latter are any longer likely to deliver the former. In particular, the ‘standards agenda’ could profitably be reformulated to take into account the link identified by teachers in the Network between achievement outcomes and the underlying capacities and dispositions of students (see nominated output B). This in turn would entail giving teachers greater flexibility – more ‘space’ in the terms of nominated output D – to shape their practice to the actual characteristics of the students they teach and to a broader notion of what counts as ‘educational’. In terms of what is politically possible, this would crucially *not* involve abandoning government commitments to enhance children’s achievements. Rather, it would mean grounding the attempt to deliver these commitments on a more robust model of what is involved in enabling children to learn in a school context. The recent unveiling of a primary strategy founded on the principle of ‘enjoyment’ as well as ‘excellence’ may suggest that this is an opportune moment for such a message to be heard.

## 6. Future Research Priorities

The Network has opened up four important lines of inquiry. These are:

- *In terms of organisational characteristics*: we have thrown further light on the characteristics that make schools more and less inclusive. This has taken us some way beyond the orthodoxies in the field (as identified in the associated EPPI review) and has suggested that schools with more inclusive practices (as opposed to ‘inclusive schools’ per se) might well emerge at system-wide level. This phenomenon needs to be investigated further.
- *In terms of practice*: the Network is probably the first in this country (and certainly the most substantial) to explore inclusion as a broad (i.e. applying potentially to all learners) rather than a narrow (i.e. disability or SEN specific) concept. Much has been discovered about how schools could/should respond to a range of marginalised groups, where these groups are present in schools and classrooms simultaneously. This marks the research as different from that which focuses on responses to single groups (eg disabled children, children from minority ethnic groups, children at risk of disciplinary exclusion, etc.). This line of inquiry needs further exploration.
- *In terms of the relationship between inclusive practices and student outcomes*: the Network has begun to explore this relationship at the school case (or, more correctly,

school initiative) level. The DfES project referred to above will extend this work through the analysis of a national data set but there is scope for more work at both of these levels and in exploring the linkages between them.

- *In terms of research methodology:* the Network has evolved a methodology of collaborative critical action research which is unusual, though not a new invention. However, there are few if any studies which think in terms of how such a methodology might be developed on a systemic scale. The possibility of developing such a methodology may be one of the Network's most important contributions.

## Appendix A: Network Activities

The studies have revealed the potential of networking as a strategy for fostering the development of inclusive practices. As we have seen, this has involved a range of interwoven threads. For example, within each of the LEA contexts we have seen how meetings and workshops involving school groups, and, to varying degrees, LEA staff, have provided helpful spaces for developing common understandings, learning from one another, and providing incentives to maintain momentum. The national residential conferences, attended by around 100 teachers and 15 LEA officers from the three LEAs, have provided further possibilities of a similar nature, although here the opportunities to see and hear about practice in very different local contexts offered even greater moments of challenge. Indeed, on some occasions the strangeness of what was witnessed in another LEA was so unsettling that some practitioners appeared to mask out the potential challenge by explaining it away.

March 2001	1 <sup>st</sup> National Network Conference, Southfield – 55 delegates
July 2001	2 <sup>nd</sup> National Network Conference, Southminster – 75 delegates
March 2002	3 <sup>rd</sup> National Network Conference, Castleside – 75 delegates
March 2003	4 <sup>th</sup> National Network Conference, Southfield – 70 delegates

Members of the team have recently worked with a group of teachers and LEA officers on the design of a school review and development manual based on the findings of the studies. The aim is that it will assist further groups of schools in replicating the approaches developed within the Network. During the current school year the manual will be used as part of initiatives in the three partner LEAs. It is anticipated that this will eventually be published commercially. In addition, a book that addresses policy implications is also in preparation.

March 2003	Residential planning seminar, 9 delegates from Manchester, Newcastle, Southfield, Castleside.
July 2003	2 <sup>nd</sup> planning seminar, 8 delegates from Manchester, Newcastle, Southfield, Castleside

In terms of academic research capacity-building, a number of PhD students worked alongside the Network team. Beccy Owen's PhD is based in one of the project schools and is investigating discourses of difference in the school. Beccy has attended project team meetings and one of the national conferences. Georgios Paschalidis' PhD is studying the construction of difference in Greek primary schools. Although his work is not linked directly to the Network, he is using (and has informed) some of the thinking in the Network. Both students are in the writing-up phase. The work of another PhD student, Kiki Messiou, led to a publication about the role of the pupil voice in fostering the development of inclusive practices.

In terms of teacher and school capacity building, the Network has provided teachers with encouragement, training and support in undertaking research into their own situations and practices. Each of the schools was asked to undertake specific small-scale investigations and to prepare reports which have been discussed jointly with the university team. In some cases, these reports - or the findings in some other form - have been shared with other members of staff and/or governors. Teachers have made formal presentations at each of the national conferences, and one teacher made a joint presentation with the university team at BERA 2001. Teachers have run workshops at LEA dissemination events. Throughout the latter part of the Network's lifetime, the school teams worked with the university team to formalise the findings from the project and to develop dissemination materials. There were regular meetings with LEA co-ordinating teams, particularly to discuss dissemination of findings to schools within the LEAs and ways of sharing what has been learned about managing action research. Several dissemination events within LEAs have been held over the course of the project, including a one-day workshop for all staff of the education department in one of the LEAs.

Termly meetings	of school and LEA coordinating teams in Castleside
Half termly meetings	of school coordinating teams in Southfield
Termly meetings	of school coordinating teams in Southminster
Fieldwork in schools	Average 100 days per year in each LEA.
March 2002	Castleside LEA dissemination event
January 2003	Southminster LEA dissemination event
February 2003	Southfield LEA dissemination event

Network members formed the core team for three systematic literature reviews (two completed, one in progress) under the EPPI system (outputs 13 and 19). The first of these was based directly on the project's research questions; the second was concerned with classroom practice to support inclusion; and the third focuses on the relationship between inclusion and pupil achievement. These are the first-ever systematic reviews of inclusion literature in this country and indicate the way in which the Network has had a multiplier effect in relation to other pieces of research. Two LEA officers, an advisory teacher and a teacher who were all closely involved with the Network took an active role in these reviews.

## Appendix B: Network Outputs

### B1: Publications

### B2: Conferences

### B3: Book outline

**B1: Publications.** Efforts have been made to reach both practitioner and academic audiences, in this country and overseas, through publications. These include:

1. Ainscow, M. (2001) Understanding the development of inclusive schools. In: Proceedings of I Congreso Nacional de Atencion a la Diversidad, Elche, Spain.
2. Ainscow, M. (2002) Reaching out to all learners: some opportunities and challenges. In: Dimensions of Diversity, Monograph: University of Western Australia.
3. Ainscow, M. (2002) Reaching out to all learners: the development of an inclusive pedagogy. In: Kari, N. et al (Eds.), Unitary School-Inclusive School. Hogskolen I Hedmark, Norway.
4. Ainscow, M. (2002) Rutas para el desarrollo de prácticas inclusivas in los sistemas educativos. In: Educacion Inclusiva. Madrid: Ministerio de Educacion, Cultural y Deporte
5. Ainscow, M. (2002) Using research to encourage the development of inclusive practices. In: P. Farrell and M. Ainscow (Eds.) Making Special Education Inclusive. London: Fulton.
6. Ainscow, M. (2003) Using teacher development to foster inclusive classroom practices. In T. Booth, K. Nes and M. Stromstad (eds.), Developing Inclusive Teacher Education. London: RoutledgeFalmer
7. Ainscow, M. and Tweddle, D. (2003) Understanding the changing role of English local education authorities in promoting inclusion. In: J. Allan (Ed.) Inclusion, Participation and Democracy: What is the Purpose? Kluwer, Academic Publishers, pp.165-177.
8. Ainscow, M. Market for collaboration. Times Educational Supplement 1<sup>st</sup> August 2003 p.11
9. Ainscow, M., Howes, A.J., Farrell, P. and Frankham, J. (2003) Making sense of the development of inclusive practices. European Journal of Special Needs Education 18, 2, 227-242.
10. Ainscow, M., Booth, T. and Dyson, A. (2003) Understanding and developing inclusive practices in schools: A collaborative action research network. International Journal of Inclusive Education (in press)
11. Ainscow, M., Booth, T., Dyson, A., Farrell, P., Frankham, J., Gallannaugh, F., Howes, A., Smith, R. (forthcoming) Inclusive Practices in Schools (*working title*) London: Routledge Falmer
12. Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (2002) Index for Inclusion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Bristol, CSIE.
13. Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (2002) Index for Inclusion (Early Years and Child Care), Bristol, CSIE.
14. Booth, T. (2003) Views from the institution: overcoming barriers to inclusive teacher education? In Booth T., Nes, K and Stromstad, M. (Eds), Developing Inclusive Teacher Education London, Routledge.
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26. Howes, A., Frankham, J., Ainscow, M. & Farrell, P. (2004) The action in action research: mediating and developing inclusive intentions, Educational Action Research, 12(2)
27. Messiou K. (2002) Marginalisation in Primary Schools: Listening to Children's Voices Support for Learning, 17(3), pp.117-121
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**B2: Conferences:** Throughout the three years, members of the Network have been very active in presenting accounts of the research at conferences. These have included:

1. Ainscow, M, Booth, T. & Dyson, A. (2001) Understanding and developing inclusive practices in schools : a collaborative action research network, *AERA Annual Meeting, Seattle, April 2001*.
2. Ainscow, M and Dyson, A. (2003) Standards and inclusive education: schools squaring the circle, *AERA Annual Meeting, Chicago, April 2003*
3. Ainscow, M. and Howes, A. Effective Networking for Inclusive Development in Schools: learning between communities of practice, *International Conference on School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Sydney, Australia, January 2003*
4. Booth, T. and Smith, R. (2002) Sustaining inclusive education development: learning about barriers and resources in a London borough, *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Exeter, 12-14 th September, 2002*
5. Dyson, A. (2002b) Inclusive education as an approach for all children, in *1st International Congress on Disability in the Basque Country and 11th National Congress on Spina Bifida and Hydrocephaly, Bilbao, Spain, 27-29 June 2002, Bilbao, Spain*
6. Dyson, A. (2002c) Making it happen: inclusive education as an approach for all children, in *Disability in Development Cooperation in the context of Poverty Eradication, Sustainable Development and Education, 10th - 12th May, 2002, Königswinter, Germany,*
7. Dyson, A. (2003) Inclusive education: a global perspective, in *Education Association of South Africa Conference (Stellenbosch, South Africa)* (A version of this paper is in preparation for publication as an invited international lead article in *The Japanese Journal of Special Education, 2003/4*).
8. Dyson, A., Gallannaugh, F. & Millward, A. (2002a) Making space in the standards agenda: developing inclusive practices in schools *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Exeter, 12-14 September 2002*.
9. Dyson, A., Gallannaugh, F. & Millward, A. (2002b) Making space in the standards agenda: developing inclusive practices in schools *European Conference on Educational Research, Lisbon, September 11-14 2002*.
10. Gallannaugh, F. & Dyson, A. (2003) Schools understanding inclusion: issues in inclusion and social class in *BERA Annual Conference, Herriot-Watt University, 11-13 September 2003*.
11. Howes, A., Booth, T., Dyson, A., and Frankham, J. (2003) Teacher learning and the development of inclusive practices and policies in *BERA Annual Conference, Herriot-Watt University, 11-13 September 2003*.
12. Howes, A., Frankham, J., Ainscow, M. & Farrell, P. (2002) The action in action research for inclusion: intention, iteration and impact, *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Exeter, 12-14 th September, 2002*

A number of these papers are available on the project website at [www.man.ac.uk/include](http://www.man.ac.uk/include) (click on 'research papers'). In addition members of the research team have addressed many conferences and workshops organised by LEAs, universities, schools and other agencies, in this country and overseas.

### **B3: Book outline**

Inclusive Practices in Schools (*working title*) London: RoutledgeFalmer

Set within a policy context where inclusion is explicitly valued and implicitly dominated by more pressing agendas, this book will be of relevance to a wide range of readers interested in widening the participation and improving the educational achievement of children and young people, including practitioners and policy-makers at the school, district and government levels, in this country and overseas. It will be useful to people studying for higher degrees and will also have implications for members of the research community, not least in respect to the analysis it makes of the ways in which academics can work in partnership with practitioners in schools and LEAs.

#### **Outline of the chapters**

The book will consist of six chapters, and will be completed in late 2003. The sections and chapters will be as follows:

#### **Chapter 1. Mapping the field**

In recent years the issue of inclusion has become more of a feature of discussions about the development of education policy and practice around the world. Such trends were strongly endorsed internationally by the Salamanca Statement and reflect the United Nations' global strategy of 'Education for All'. Both have had a major impact on policy debates in many different countries. Meanwhile there is no shortage of books and articles that have extolled the value of inclusion, and which have provided a whole range of accounts of "good practice" – but the development of inclusive practices in schools is not well understood. This chapter will situate the TLRP collaborative action research programme in relation to these debates, and set out the agenda for learning represented by this research.

#### **Chapter 2. Setting up the network**

The aims, framework, structure and methodology of the collaborative action research network is described, together with the processes for establishing trustworthy evidence.

#### **Chapter 3: Learning from difference**

This chapter outlines the principles which guided the approach taken by the Manchester team in working with nine schools in 'Castleside' LEA, positioning them close to the day-to-day realities in schools, in order to generate data that throw light on the complexities of development processes. Strategies of data generation through critical relationships are seen as a form of interruption that can help to create space for reflection, rethinking and experimentation aimed at increasing the impact on pupils.

It throws light on how such changes are supported or resisted by factors that become more apparent when scrutinising what happened from these three interconnected perspectives. This illustrates how barriers and opportunities at each level shape the way changes are adopted and adapted, pursued or dropped. It shows, too, how some barriers can stifle and dampen change, and how interruptions that resonate can have a sustained effect on people and processes. Particular attention is given to schools working in partnerships in ways that seem to support continuing inclusive development. Examples are used to point to the value of what is described as peer-assisted self-evaluation as a means of encouraging better use of available expertise and experience. Comment is also made about the implications for 'outsiders', including the research community.

#### **Chapter 4: The impact of institutional factors on development in Southfield LEA.**

The starting position of the Newcastle team was an assumption that whilst 'inclusion' is generally clear at the level of broad principles, its meaning needs to be worked out in relation to other

principles and in terms of the barriers to learning and participation which manifest themselves in particular schools and classrooms. The team encouraged schools to adopt a relatively rigorous approach to data collection and critical review, in the expectation that this would enable them to work their way towards a fuller understanding of what inclusion meant for them. Accounts of schools reveal how most of them started with a relatively narrow focus which they were able to widen progressively as the project developed, and how the changes they introduced produced demonstrable benefits for children. However, it will also describe the turbulence experienced by some of the schools and the way some of the projects were diverted or subverted by external and internal pressures. Actions are seen to be deeply ambiguous, representing clear attempts to overcome barriers to learning and participation on the one hand, whilst on the other being shaped by and reinforcing the narrowing assumptions of the standards agenda. The chapter develops a model to show that the developments in the Southfield schools, for all their ambiguities, offer the best way forward if we wish to develop a more inclusive school *system*, rather than simply occasional examples of exceptionally inclusive schools.

### **Chapter 5: Learning about systemic barriers and resources for development within the London Borough of Southminster.**

The Canterbury team conducted research in the London Borough of ‘Southminster’ where the impact of historical, legislative and political pressures is particularly evident. The broad, transformative notion of inclusion that the team brought to the enquiry is compared with notions of inclusion within government policies, and within the Borough and its schools. Accounts of what happened in the LEA and schools demonstrate the shift in balance from ‘understanding and developing inclusive practices in schools’ to ‘understanding the development of inclusive practices in schools’, focusing on the attempts to develop more inclusive cultures, policies and practices, prompted by the commitments of staff, this and other research projects, and encouraged by the strongly favourable view of many staff in the education department. Consideration is given to the persistence and vulnerability of such developments, where the fragmented view of inclusion within government policy is reproduced to some extent within the LEA and its schools. Whilst Southminster LEA goes further than many in its efforts to draw its agendas together, its potential to limit these is constrained, and there are pressures for the LEA staff themselves to create additional initiatives which further undermine attempts to combine and reduce demands on schools.

### **Chapter 6: A systemic approach to developing inclusion**

This chapter compares and contrasts the findings of the three studies, focusing on both the process and the outcomes of these activities, in order to construct a local theory of the development of inclusive practices. The theory will address the issues of school-based staff development and leadership; the potential of school-to-school cooperation; implications for the work of LEAs and for national policy makers, if inclusive development is to become widespread and sustainable. Recommendations will be made which relate to practitioners, policy makers and researchers.

## **[Appendix C: Network Impacts**

**C1: Impact at the school level – school level evaluations**

**C2: Impact at the school level – attainment, attendance and exclusion data**

**C3: Impact at the LEA level**

**C1: Impact at the school level.**

The Network has had a direct impact on the work of all of the schools involved, each one of which has undertaken and evaluated one or more initiatives. Not all of these initiatives have been targeted at raising attainments directly (some, for instance, have addressed school cultural issues). However, each of those that has, generated evidence suggesting positive impacts. A summary of this evidence is presented in the following table.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Impact</i>
<b><i>Primary schools</i></b>	
<i>School 1:</i> Aimed to improve the writing of all children, but particularly ‘underachieving’ children whose attainments were below average, in conjunction with the development of ‘thinking skills’ approaches and increasing experiential learning activities. Led by teacher of Year 5 class – increased use of thinking skills approaches and reduction in narrative writing tasks in foundation subjects. Increasing involvement of all staff, encouraged by discussion of new approaches at staff meetings and sharing of evidence. New approaches were adopted to greater or lesser extent by teachers throughout the school.	By and large children enjoyed activities and felt they helped them to learn more effectively. Writing scores in KS2 SATs (2002) matched those for reading for the first time. The attainments of ‘underachieving’ children improved most markedly but higher attainers also made very good progress. The success of the project in improving outcomes was said to hinge on the effect that implementing new approaches had had on children’s attitudes to learning: ‘The way that teachers are now exploring ideas with children, encouraging them to think and giving them experiences is having an impact on children’s motivation and this is the greatest impact of the work’. Based on this success, at the end of the project this school was committed to a continuation and expansion of its work.
<i>School 2:</i> Aimed to improve writing through the development of children’s higher order thinking and questioning skills by changing approaches to teaching. Originally, a Year 2 cohort that had benefited from early intervention strategies in literacy and was considered to be a particularly ‘able’ group. Two teachers taught the Year 2 cohort together for one lesson a week. In this lesson they presented stimulus materials and engaged the children in group discussion and increasingly challenging question-and-answer. There was increasing involvement of all staff, encouraged by discussion at staff meetings of successes of and problems with new approaches and sharing of evidence. Investment was made in training and resources for all staff to support new approaches. Partnership teaching approach continued and expanded so that more teachers and year groups were involved. Introduction of additional strategies,	There was a noticeable increase in pupils’ confidence and motivation. Teachers involved in the project were increasingly enthused by the impact the new approaches appeared to be having generally on the participation and learning of pupils in their classes. Their impressions were supported by the more formal evaluation. For example, lesson plans provided evidence of a consistent focus on developing thinking skills over successive years and on the part of different teachers. Examples of children’s written work also provided evidence of the use of new approaches to teaching and learning as do records of lesson observations. Children increasingly involved in sophisticated questioning of their peers, and there were improvements in the purpose and organization of pupils’ writing. Improvement in writing SAT and QCA test results. New approaches benefited most pupils, with the exception of a small number identified as having the

<p>including philosophy lessons. Use of thinking skills approaches by an increasing number of teachers. Teachers' questioning became increasingly sophisticated.</p>	<p>most severe behaviour difficulties.</p>
<p><i>School 3:</i> aimed to improve standards of writing of all children, but particularly 'underachieving' boys, through the development of non-fiction work. Training was provided for all teachers on the teaching and assessment of non-fiction writing. Review of planning for non-fiction work in the literacy hour. Raising the profile of non-fiction writing through displays and the library. Introduction (led by an advisory teacher) of thinking skills approaches as a means of enhancing work on non-fiction. Training for all teachers on the use of alternative forms of recording and other new approaches, including ways of managing pupil groupings more flexibly. Increased integration of statemented pupils with their peers. Use of 'thinking skills' approaches by all teachers in a range of curriculum areas.</p>	<p>Children using new approaches to organize their thoughts before writing and for recording information. Children increasingly motivated by non-fiction writing. Improvement in writing SATs results. Certain children demonstrating knowledge through drama and discussion activities that they would be unable to do through the medium of writing. Collaborative working helping to dispel preconceptions in children about other members of their class. For example, a boy in Year 6 described the impact made on him by the progress of one of the statemented children. It was: like a bomb dropping on me...She has brought (<i>statemented boy</i>) on to be...like if he's stuck, he'll have a try. His behaviour is much better. Some abilities are just unreal. Since (the advisory teacher) has come in his ability has risen above other people'.</p>
<p><i>School 4.</i> Aimed to investigate the consequences for pupils of a move to mixed attainment grouping, among pupils in a Year 1 and a Year 4 class. Pupils in these classes were organised into mixed attainment groups for part of the literacy hour (guided writing). Their class teachers, the headteacher and one other teacher were involved at this stage. The project was opened to the rest of the teachers and nearly all became involved. Data from teachers' logs and interviews with children were discussed at staff meetings. Other changes were introduced as part of a broad development programme, including the introduction of new behaviour management systems, the implementation of circle time and alterations to lunchtime routines.</p>	<p>Pupils were positive about the help they received from each other in mixed attainment groups. Some lower attaining pupils seemed to struggle in mixed attainment groups, but this seemed to be when tasks set did not require genuine co-operation. Children thought the wider changes in school had generally brought about improvements. Children believed that changes to the discipline system did not affect the behaviour of a small core of children and they were receiving more attention than those who behaved well all of the time.</p>
<p><i>School 5:</i> aimed to improve writing and investigate possible factors in underachievement in writing, such as gender or home background, focusing on an equal number of boys and girls whose writing attainment was at least two sub-levels behind their reading attainment. Development of a specific intervention programme that involved withdrawing</p>	<p>WAT became an established part of school provision. Some teachers began to use WAT techniques in their classrooms with other children. The project group began to discuss teaching and learning more widely and some members experimented with new strategies such as peer tutoring. The writing of targeted children improved (on average by one sub-level in ten weeks) and</p>

<p>individuals or small groups for support delivered by two learning support assistants (<i>Write Away Together</i>). A ‘toolbox’ of support materials was compiled for LSAs. Successive waves of children targeted for intervention Regular meetings of project group to discuss progress and share evidence. Training of LSAs. The investigation of gender and home background became less important.</p>	<p>these gains had been sustained. Children learned to analyse and evaluate their own work. There was a significant impact on children’s attitudes and motivation. Children believed their writing had improved through their involvement in WAT and could state the strategies that had helped, for example being asked to set their own targets. An unexpected outcome for some children was an improvement in spelling levels even in those cohorts where children had a specific problem with spelling..</p>
<p><i>School 6.</i> Aimed to develop a learning community by changing the culture of the school, involving all stakeholders in the school – children, staff, parents and wider community. A strategic plan addressing teaching and learning issues and the development of communication and collaboration in the school. Specific actions included the introduction of pupil centred target setting, the adoption of collaborative approaches to planning, improving the resources and materials accessible to all stakeholders and increasing access to professional development. Progressive implementation of strategic plan, hampered to an extent by resistance to changes from some staff. Progress evaluated along three dimensions: staff culture, community involvement and pupil involvement.</p>	<p>Children found the behaviour systems introduced after staff training helpful. Children were enthusiastic about target-setting and felt it helped them learn. Since 2000 SATs results have improved noticeably, with a rate of increase that has exceeded the national average for all core subjects.</p>
<p><i>School 7</i> initially aimed at raising the standards of all children’s attainment by focusing on the gifted and talented. However, there was a shift in thinking, through an exploration of the taken-for-granted meanings of ability that were used in the school. Whole-school structures such as an 'activity week' were introduced through which staff and students were able to see each other in new ways. A extensive programme of weekly extracurricular and curricular visits and activities was introduced.</p>	<p>Interviews with pupils suggested that they valued the new opportunities available in the school, and teachers valued the insights they gained through questionnaires to parents about their children’s abilities. KS2 results rose to a new highest level, and teachers began to pay more attention to the detail of pupils’ experience in the classroom. Examples of written work provided evidence of appreciation of a wider set of abilities.</p>
<p><i>School 8:</i> The impetus for the project comes from the relatively low performance of children in literacy tests, compared to maths, at KS2. The school looked at existing writing practices from different perspectives, including a large and repeated survey of pupils’ experience of writing,</p>	<p>Interviews and questionnaires with pupils to understand the experience of writing became an important point of reference for teachers. Teachers were enthusiastic about the value of supporting writing through introducing structures and plans, and took notice of the detailed comments by many</p>

<p>with questionnaires and interviews by support staff for those seen to find writing most difficult. A lead teacher supported trials of writing strategies in other teachers' classrooms. Strategies involving pupils more actively were introduced, as where pupils were asked to work as pairs of mixed ability in assessing and developing each others' work.</p>	<p>pupils about how they experienced writing. More formal evaluation suggested that pupils were enjoying writing more, and that they benefited from the peer support structures. KS2 results in English rose to a new high, above those of Maths for the first time.</p>
<p><i>School 9.</i> Children with a hearing impairment spend part of most days in the school's special education resource facility. Observations of the effects of current practice, pupil interviews about their experience in school, and a questionnaire for support staff provoked rethinking of taken-for-granted assumptions, and involved a continuing dialogue about practice between researchers and staff. A ongoing and critical issue was whether the 'difference' of disability should be ignored or acknowledged and valued.</p>	<p>Each element of research activity was allocated time and attention of the whole staff through staff meetings, and there was widespread involvement in consideration of data about the impact of current practices on pupils and staff. The participation of socially marginalised pupils, sometimes through a process of labelling in terms of disability and ethnicity, became an issue for legitimate discussion in the school, and one that staff worked on. Later, a particular focus was developed on the reading skills of pupils with a hearing impairment which resulted in gains in attainment and active participation in classrooms.</p>
<p><i>School 10:</i> A 'nurture group' changed the way some pupils, parents and staff related to each other, and the school looked to use the nurture group as a catalyst for wider development. Pupil interviews and questionnaires by university, school staff and an educational psychologist raised questions about role and direction of school development, and about the relationship between learning at home and at school.</p>	<p>Pupils who were in the nurture group made impressive gains in self-esteem and participation in the classroom by the time they returned to their mainstream class full time. Detailed monitoring showed that through flexibility in grouping it was possible to avoid creating an isolated group in the nurture class.</p>
<p><i>School 11:</i> Aimed to address underachievement, firstly by boys but then later by all pupils. The question of the role of pupils was raised and thoroughly addressed through forums and class councils, while the SENCo supported staff in changing their practice to become responsive. Pupil interviews and experiments with new arrangements led to the development of 'Supporting Achievement for All', a multi-aimed development process which involved governors and parents as well as staff and pupils.</p>	<p>Many pupils noticed and appreciated the efforts of staff to get them more involved in solving problems in the school. Pupil interviews showed how their image of school and learning was improved through particular teaching and learning related initiatives such as developing the classroom environment, creating additional extra-curricular sporting opportunities and involving parents directly in classrooms in a range of roles, as visitors and as assistants.</p>
<p><i>School 12:</i> Systematic observation by a group of staff on children's use of playtime provided a focus for over a year, for</p>	<p>There was a n observed increase in pupils' taking responsibility for and solving problems on the playground. Pupils spoke</p>

learning about the barriers presented by playtime. Giving new roles to some pupils (through the school council) had an effect on classes and playground. Systematic observations of pupil behaviour by a group of staff, supported by interviews. School council members were interviewed several times as they developed a role in resolving playground conflicts.	about their role articulately and clearly on different occasions. Teachers spoke explicitly about how changes were more sustainable where pupils were involved.
<i>School 13:</i> Poor spelling was identified early on as a barrier to pupils' success, and a new form of practice in the teaching of spelling was introduced by the KS1 lead teacher. New resources were modelled in an open classroom, and a year later the practice was implemented by all class teachers in KS1.	The school made careful use of evaluating and analysing outcomes, using tests and teacher observations. Results showed that spelling results improved consistently for all children, irrespective of prior ability in spelling.
<b><i>For equivalent details of Southminster schools, please refer to nominated output E</i></b>	
<b>Secondary schools</b>	
<i>School 20:</i> The project involved developing the skills of students to act as a reference group to provide feedback to staff about developments in school. Around forty Year 8 students (including good, average and poor attenders) formed the reference group. Nine teachers with middle management positions volunteered to work with students in the reference group. Over time, the group structure was not sustained, and the 'project' was transformed into a range of loosely connected improvement initiatives with responsibility distributed amongst different members of staff.	Initiatives included reviews of the school's discipline system, the operation of summer schools and the homework policy, the establishment of an 'inclusion block' outside ordinary classrooms for disruptive students, improvements in the school environment and changing the timing of the school day. The project stimulated considerable activity, and students were positive about some changes, for example the shorter school day. However, they also reported that initiatives had not addressed particular problems, for example disruptive behaviour in some classes.
<i>School 21:</i> To set up an in-house service to support students whose behaviour was causing concern and to address attendance issues. Seventeen students at Stage 3 on the SEN register because of their behaviour and any students whose attendance was causing concern. Behaviour support teachers were appointed, and used existing monitoring systems to track the progress of individual students. Once the service had become an established part of school provision, training was offered to other teachers in school, and a programme of group work was developed.	Attendance improved, permanent and temporary exclusions decreased, and behaviour improved. Students attached to the Service were very positive about counselling, support in classes and the opportunity to be involved in group work. Contact with the Service helped some individual teachers to develop new approaches to managing difficult behaviour. However, some students believed that many teachers remained untouched by the Service and persisted in treating them unfairly.
<i>School 22:</i> A teaching and learning group was formed which discussed and analysed the practice of a diverse group of staff. Classroom problems proved to be local: widespread but not common throughout the	A more positive culture for teaching and learning emerged through this consistent and ongoing attention to the quality of pupils' learning experiences, made sustainable by continuous efforts to link

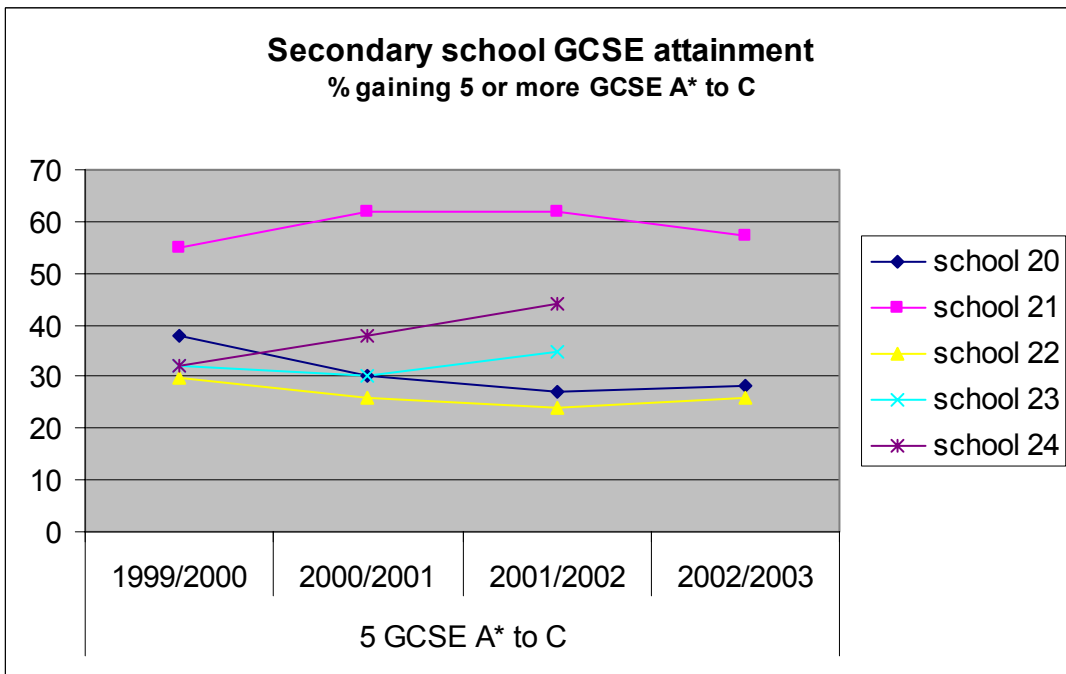
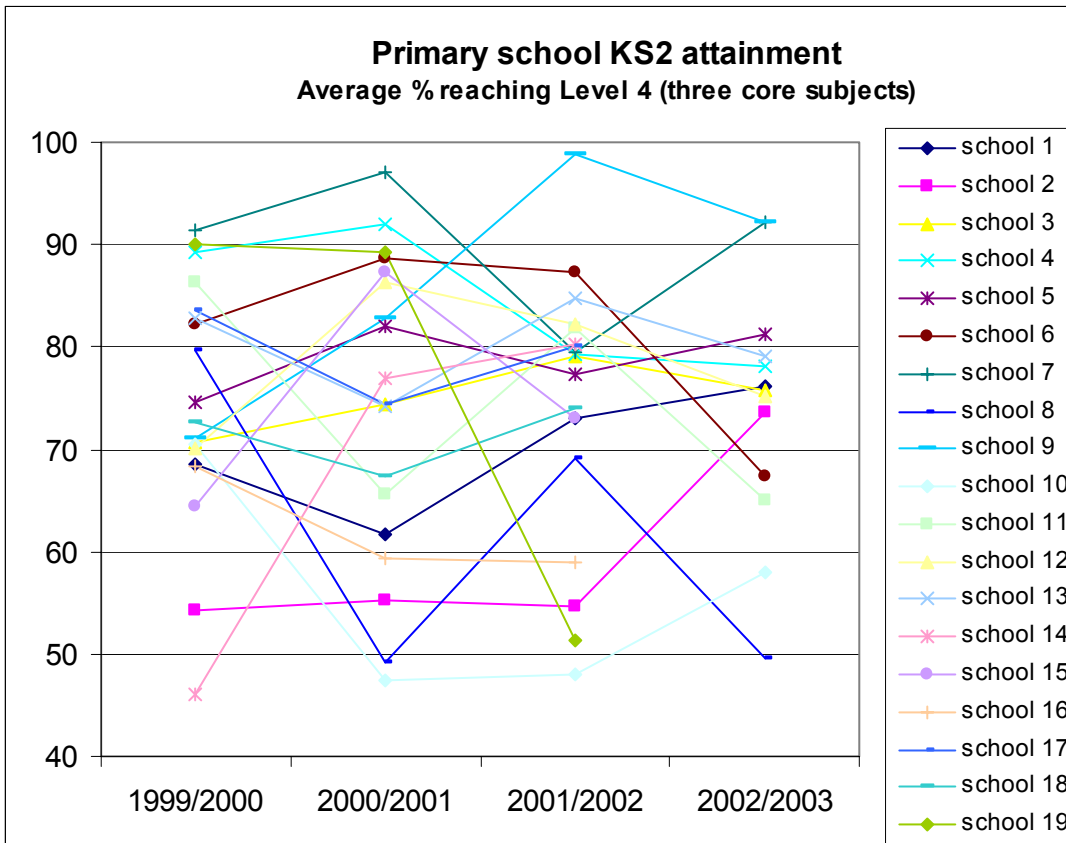
<p>school. Video of lessons was used to stimulate discussion in the staff group, along with interviews with pupils. Projects to improve processes of teaching and learning were increasingly coordinated through the work of key staff, relying on qualitative feedback from pupils utilising a computer network. Classroom environments and teaching materials were made progressively more stimulating.</p>	<p>and coordinate separate developments in particular departments. Several fast-track pupil groups succeeded in AS level exams, raising expectations of many students.</p>
<p><b><i>For equivalent details of Southminster schools, please refer to nominated output E.</i></b></p>	
<p><b>Special school</b></p>	
<p><i>School 25:</i> (A co-educational school for children categorised as having moderate learning difficulties). The focus for research was ongoing work on 'inclusion' with mainstream schools. Interviews with pupils about their experience in different schools, and observations of pupils in different settings, and it became clear that inclusion as practiced required significant extra resources, and left systemic problems unchallenged. The headteacher eventually accepted the need to take risks in using existing resources innovatively.</p>	<p>An increasing number of pupils were able to move back into permanent mainstream placements, or to see this as a clear possibility for the future. Links between teachers in different schools required constant maintenance; the development of specialisms in the special school such as video production facilities seemed to offer real and more sustainable links.</p>

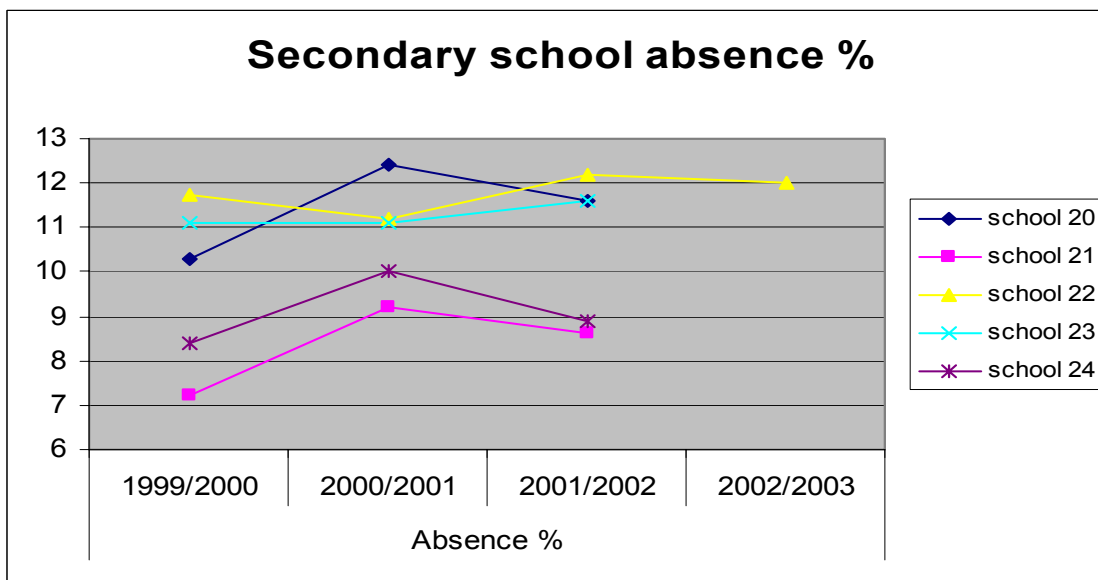
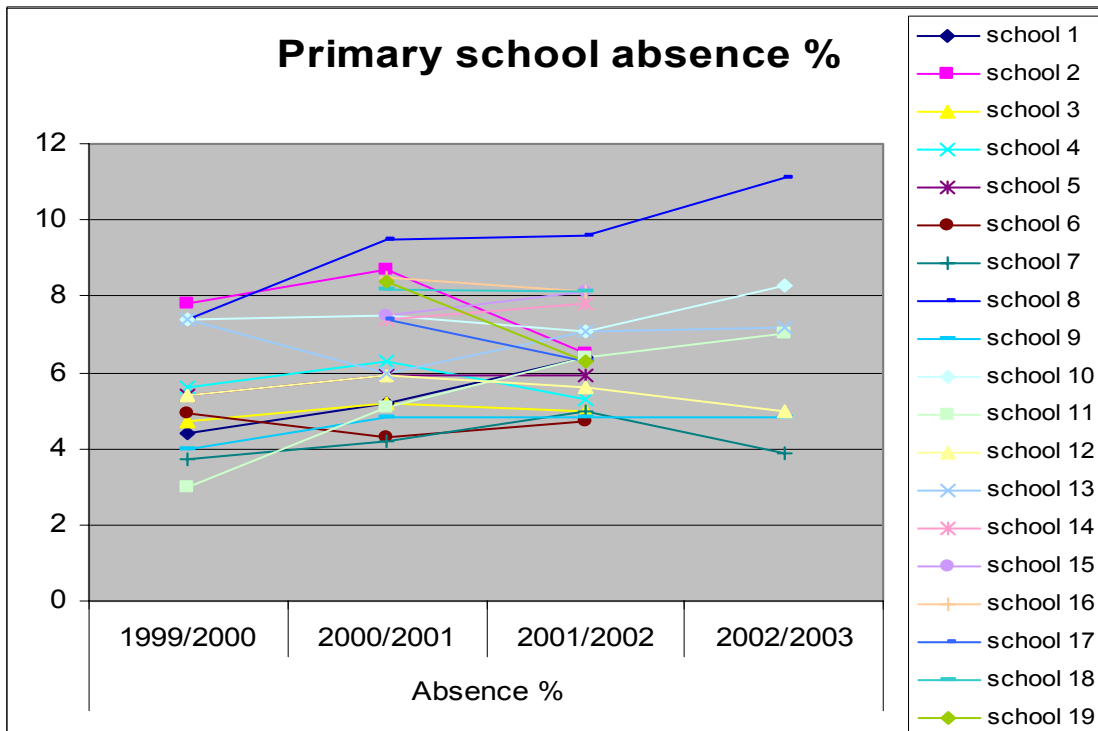
In addition to the evidence that is particular to each school, it is important to consider data common to each school. Data is available on attainment in Key Stage and GCSE tests, on attendance, and on exclusions from schools, and this data is presented in the next section in as complete a form as is currently possible.

**C2: Impact at the school level – attainment, attendance and exclusion data**

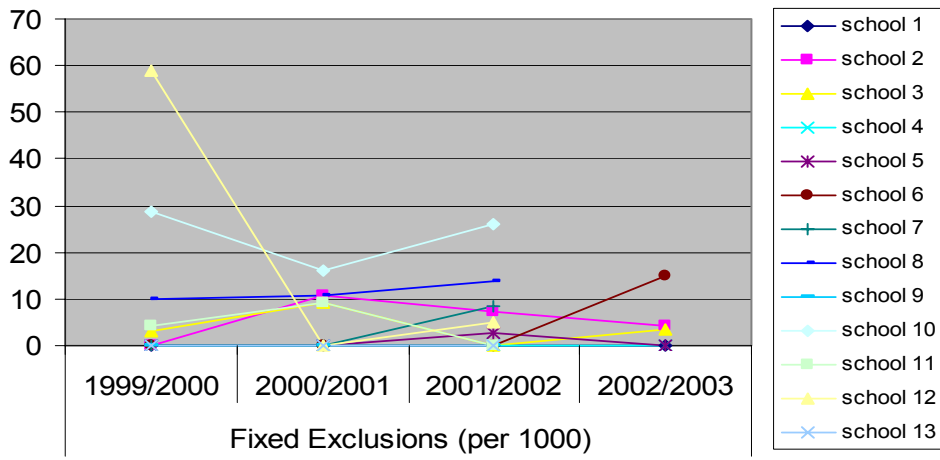
**Attainment graphs: 2000 – 2003**

**Attendance and exclusion graphs: 2000 - 2003**

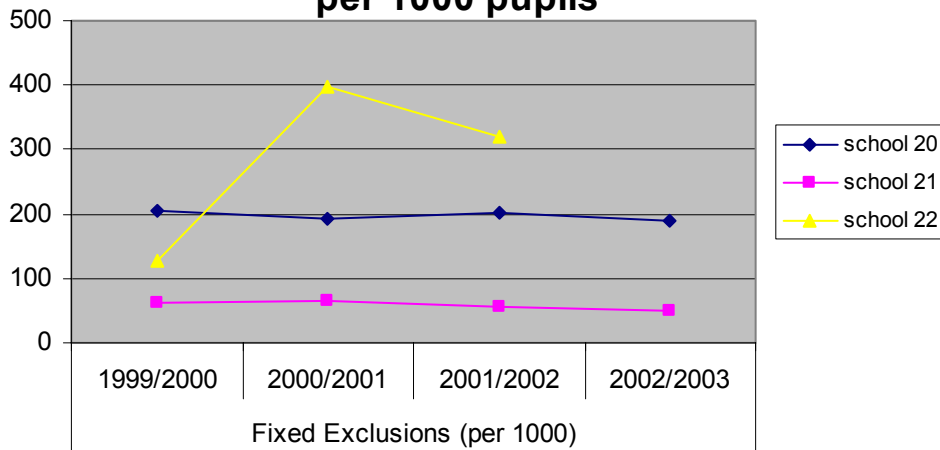




### Primary school fixed exclusions



### Secondary fixed exclusions per 1000 pupils



### C3 Impact at school level: commentary

The performance data in C2 show a complex picture which requires careful interpretation. In particular:

- The performance of schools varies across the range of indicators and over time, making it difficult to identify clear trends.
- The impact of any initiative taken under the aegis of the Network is likely to be overlain by many other factors – other initiatives in which the school is participating, cohort effects, teacher effects, changes in school demographics and so on.

Under these circumstances, data at this level can be misleading. For instance, school 6, which aims at cultural change, suffers a disaster in its 2002/3 KS 4 SATs. However, the trend in previous years had been markedly upward and therefore cohort, teacher and test unreliability effects cannot be discounted. Equally, school 2, which focuses on improving writing through a thinking skills approach, shows a strong and fairly consistent upward trend in the writing assessments at KS2 and the English assessments at KS4. However, the same trend is evident in all the other attainment indicators, which may either mean that its thinking skills approach had positive impacts in other areas, or that there were third factors – increase in staff morale, a greater focus on learning across the curriculum, cohort effects – which explain these changes.

This inevitably means that it is not possible to use these data to reach sweeping conclusions about the schools as a group. What unites these schools, given the diversity of their initiatives, is a commitment to developing more inclusive practices. There is no evidence that such a commitment *in itself* is likely to have significant impacts – either positive or negative – on indicators such as these. This is hardly surprising given the relatively crude nature of the indicators, the diversity of school initiatives, the limited scope of some of those initiatives and the distance between their foci and the sort of outcomes measured by these indicators. This conclusion suggests we should be appropriately cautious – and very clear – about what we expect more inclusive practices to achieve. Some of the theoretical claims in the pro-inclusion literature may be somewhat overblown. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose from these data that the development of inclusive practices will have negative impacts on performance indicators.

Our advice to the schools (and the position we would adopt here) is that these broad indicators become more meaningful when they are set within the context of the much more fine-grained data collected at school and classroom level. Upward movements in these indicators are encouraging where the initiative taken is likely to have a direct impact on the indicator concerned and where it is possible to construct and substantiate a ‘theory of change’ which will link the initiative to such outcomes. Downward movements are worrying if similar conditions are met. Looked at in this way, the detailed data collected in school 2 does indeed support a link between the initiative and improved outcomes, while school 6’s problems seem most likely to be explained by cohort factors. As appendix C1 indicates, there are many encouraging signs when the data are looked at in the round, that the development of inclusive practices has positive impacts. However, difficulties cannot always be explained away and our conclusion remains that positive outcomes are only likely if the actual impacts of initiatives are monitored in detail and action taken to remedy any emerging problems.

#### **C4: Impact at the LEA level**

At LEA level, there has been a substantial and tangible commitment to the Network as a means of promoting school development. One LEA re-employed its former SEN adviser on a part-time basis to act as liaison with the Network, and created a project team, including a senior primary adviser and two advisory teachers. The other LEAs made particular officers responsible for managing connections between Network and other schools, and valued the Network as an opportunity to learn about the value of action research. Although only twenty-five schools were involved directly in the work of the Network, its influence has widened as the three participating LEAs have used the procedures and findings to guide further initiatives to develop inclusive practices. For example, in reflecting recently on the impact in their LEA, one senior officer commented:

‘Overall, the very considerable impact on the primary schools exceeded all of our expectations whilst the impact on the secondary schools has been far less noticeable. Schools have developed their understanding of the inclusivity which they comprehend to be the task of nurturing practices which promote and realise quality learning opportunities for all pupils... commendably (this has been) achieved during a protracted period of time when the tension between the government’s standards and inclusion agenda still remains unresolved. Each school’s small project team has gained much professional development by participating in the school based investigation of their choosing. The success of their developmental work and dissemination to colleagues has contributed to their enhanced confidence and reflective thinking. In addition there has been a real sense of pride in being associated with a prestigious national research project. A trusting and critical professional friendship has also been experienced and greatly valued by contact with other schools in the local and national network through reciprocal visits and working groups. Schools have collected quantitative data which revealed measurable improvements in pupils’ writing, listening and speaking skills. Staff have also developed strategies to systematically collect and analyse qualitative data in relation to pupils’ self-esteem, motivation and active participation in the learning process. (In summary) schools have demonstrated that the under-achievement of pupils can be rectified by changes in adult responses such as teaching methodology and classroom organisation’ (LEA officer, Southfield).

An unexpected impact has come from teachers who have been members of school teams moving on to other schools and LEAs, where they have continued the Network's approach. Two deputies who have moved on to headships have indicated that this is the case and that their involvement with the Network was instrumental in their promotion. A third deputy has taken up a post in Ethiopia as part of a university-based project on teacher development for inclusion.

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## Annex of Nominated Outputs

- A. Ainscow, M., Booth, T. and Dyson, A. (2003) Understanding and developing inclusive practices in schools: A collaborative action research network. International Journal of Inclusive Education (in press)
- B. Dyson, A. and Ainscow, M. (2003) Standards and inclusive education: squaring the circle. British Education Research Journal (under review)
- C. Manchester: Ainscow, M., Howes, A.J., Farrell, P. and Frankham, J. (2003) Making sense of the development of inclusive practices. European Journal of Special Needs Education 18, 2, 227-242.
- D. Newcastle: Dyson, A., Gallannaugh, F. & Millward, A. (2003) Making space in the standards agenda: developing inclusive practices in schools, European Educational Research Journal, 2(2), pp. 228-244.
- E. Canterbury: Booth, T., Smith, R., Rustemier, S. (forthcoming) Changing schools, developing inclusion, reforming education: chapter 5 in Ainscow et al, (forthcoming) Inclusive Practices in Schools (*working title*), RoutledgeFalmer
- F. Booth, T., Rustemier, S. and Smith, R. (2003) Developing Inclusive Cultures, Policies and Practices in Tower Hamlets: accounts from schools, London: Tower Hamlets LEA
- G. Ainscow, M. (2002) Using research to encourage the development of inclusive practices. In: P. Farrell and M. Ainscow (Eds.) Making Special Education Inclusive. London: Fulton.

N.B. These are bound in a separate volume.