



Faculty of
Education

Evaluating the Results of the Accelerating Progress Programme:

November 2006

“It really did focus us,...students did achieve better for themselves, ...it has helped to focus the whole school, it was such high priority it has helped all the staff and all the children to focus”

School Senior Leader

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This is the second of two reports about the Accelerating Progress Programme (APP) commissioned by the City of Bristol Local Authority (LA) from the Faculty of Education at the University of the West of England (UWE). An Executive Summary of this report is published as a separate document.

The first report on APP: *'Evaluating the Year 11 Accelerating Progress Programme'* delivered in June 2006 reported on:

- The nature of the Accelerating Progress Programme, the method of delivery and effectiveness of LA and consultant support to schools and indications of barriers;
- The development of school's responses to the programme;
- Projected impact on Year 11 attainment.

This report extends the work done in the first phase by carrying out an analysis of actual rather than projected examination results, and presents qualitative findings based interviews with LA, school based and other key staff.

1. Introduction: The Challenge Faced by Bristol Schools

1.1 Context

In the summer of 2005, thirty-six per cent of Year 11 pupils in the City of Bristol Local Authority (LA) schools achieved 5 or more GCSE A*-C grades compared to the national average of 57%, with other further indicators of under performance. This resulted in considerable disquiet locally and much negative media interest.

Bristol is England's eighth largest city and is the biggest population centre in the South West government region. Areas of the City are very multicultural, with about 10% of young Bristolians having English as an additional language. The regional importance, and service industry/financial base, of the city attracts a higher than average number of graduates to employment in greater Bristol, but conversely 28% of adults locally have limited or no qualifications.

Some districts enjoy considerable wealth and 24% of the regions employment is centred here, with the local unemployment figure below the national average at 3.1% of the working age population. There are also pockets of extreme socio-economic deprivation, with some wards within the bottom percentage point of the most socio-economically deprived districts in England.

75% of Bristol 11-16 year olds are educated in the LA secondary schools, with the remainder educated in the schools of neighbouring LAs or in the large local independent sector.

1.2 Intervention Strategies 2005-2006

During the school year 2005-2006, the Local Authority directed its School Improvement Officers to work with each LA secondary school to:

- Audit their strengths and challenges and make a needs analysis related to raising examination performance;
- Identify students who might benefit from additional interventions and support.

An *Accelerating Progress Programme* (APP) was subsequently launched for Year 11 pupils in ten LA schools to raise GCSE performance to a target of 47% 5+ GCSE A*-Cs in the 2006 examinations. Additional funding was provided by the City Council, the DfES, the NCSL and the National Strategy teams to support the APP strategy.

Schools, supported by School Improvement Officers, were asked to:

- Develop the constituent parts of the Accelerating Progress Programme;
- Deploy and co-ordinate support;

- Monitor the programme.

Additionally LA Advisors, ASTs and external consultants were charged with the responsibility of providing curriculum support and other forms of support; with school level targeting of pupils performing at the C/D GCSE borderline; and with developing an alternative curriculum for some targeted pupils.

1.3 Interagency Working

The LA's Educational Psychology Service provided support for key pupils in Year 11, and the IBIS Team (Improving Behaviour in School) offered training and consultancy to schools. The Tribal Consultancy's '*Pupil Champions*' were also deployed into some schools as pupil mentors. Additional adviser support was offered with performance data recording and analysis, and the Connexions agency supported pupils with low attendance and those at risk of exclusion. National Strategy Regional Advisors worked in creative ways and made a significant difference in those schools where they were deployed.

1.4 Data Analysis

Schools used their own knowledge of pupils, and the Fisher Family Trust (FFT) data to identify Year 11 students as-

1. 'Could's' - those with the general potential to achieve 5+ A*-Cs GCSEs;
2. 'Should's' - those whom evidence suggested would probably gain 5+ A*-C grades; and
3. 'Certainties' - those schools felt were certain to achieve 5+ A*-C GCSEs.

Prior to the examinations this monitoring suggested that 41.9% of pupils would hit the 5A*-C target in 2006.

1.5 Research Methodology

The second phase of this evaluation has involved an analysis of:

- the quantitative data following the publication of the GCSE examination results for the academic year 2005-2006,
- interviews with internal and external consultants who had worked on the intensive programme during the academic year 2005-2006, and
- case studies conducted in four schools.

The case study schools and the consultants were identified by a senior local authority officer. This ensured that the schools and consultants considered most appropriate for feedback were approached by the research team.

It was decided that interviews should not be conducted until schools and consultants had time to reflect on the outcomes of the examinations since this would offer greater clarity regarding plans for the new academic year 2006-2007. As a result, interviews were principally carried out in October 2006.

2. Quantitative Analysis

2.1 Aims of the Data Analysis

Analysis was carried out on the provisional data Bristol City Council (BCC) supplied to the research team on which the following part of the report is based. It should be noted that the data supplied by BCC was provisional at the time of publication as it was released to the research team before final cross checks could be carried out. Any reference to Fischer Family Trust (FFT) data are Key Stage 3-4 values.

There were three main aims of the analysis: to determine whether there was a significant difference in the improvement of attainment of the pupils within the ten schools that had been part of the Accelerating Progress Programme (APP) when compared to the seven schools that were not included in the programme; to determine how accurate the APP schools were at predicting the outcome; and to determine how accurate the schools were in determining which pupils the interventions should be aimed at, with the view that this would help inform whether there are any improvements that could be made to that process.

Table 1 Provisional Results for Bristol Local Authority schools.

School	% Year 11 achieving 5A* - C GCSE or equivalent				
	2006	2006>2005 (%age points)	Percentage point difference in expected and actual outcome	School Target	Percentage point difference in Target to actual
Ashton Park	38.4	2	0	42	-4
<i>Bedminster Down</i>	36.6	11	2	39	-2
<i>Brislington</i>	42.6	14	6	38	5
Cotham School	74.3	4	4	74	0
Fairfield High	53.8	11	2	61	-7
<i>Hartcliffe</i>	36.4	17	5	42	-6
<i>Henbury</i>	30.9	11	1	33	-2
<i>Hengrove</i>	35.7	19	10	27	9
<i>Monks Park</i>	35.4	4	-5	47	-12
<i>Portwayl</i>	27.2	6	0	37	-10
<i>Speedwell</i>	21.8	-3	-5	37	-15
St. Bede's	72.7	3	8	65	8
St. Bernedette's	61.1	15	6	57	4
St. Mary Redcliffe & Temple	84.7	8	5	80	5
The City Academy	50.0	-4	0	41	9
<i>Whitefield Fishponds</i>	28.3	-3	-8	39	-11
<i>Withywood</i>	33.5	11	4	30	4
BRISTOL LA	43.6	7	2	47	-3

Schools in *italics* are the APP schools
All figures are provisional and are supplied by BCC

2.2 What Difference did the APP make to the Results?

With regard to the Local Authority it can be determined that:

- The provisional overall improvement in the GCSE 5A*-C results on last year for Bristol Local Authority controlled schools is approximately 7 percentage points increasing from 36.5% to 43.6%.

- The local authority was approximately 3 percentage points below its published target of 47% for 2006. The FFT D estimate for the Authority was 46.7%.
- The provisional data for the 2004 results that was provided stated 35% of year 11 pupils achieved 5A*-C at GCSE. There was a 1.5 percentage point increase between 2004 and 2005 based on the data provided, therefore there was a significant improvement in the local authority results in 2006.
- The provisional data implies that 42 students obtaining 5A*-C that would not have done so if they were not doing the APP alternate qualifications such as ASDAN and ALAN. Note that this assumes they were not removed from subjects they were likely to be successful in to do the alternative qualifications.
- This means overall a 3% rise in the number of APP school students achieving the 5A*-C by doing alternative qualifications.

With regard to schools:

- The ten schools in the APP improved their results by an average of 8.7 percentage points compared to 5.6 percentage points in the schools not included in the APP. Although statistically there does not appear to be a significant difference, these results do equate to the APP inclusion schools having improved results by an extra 55.4 % when compared to the improvement of the schools not included in the programme.
- The figures are very similar when you remove the schools that achieved lower results than last year, with the APP schools securing an 11.6 percentage point improvement compared to 7.1 percentage points for the schools not in the APP. This means that APP schools have increased their pass rate by an extra 63%.
- Four of the ten APP schools had been identified as at risk of not reaching the 2006 national floor target of 25%, with five of the APP schools not achieving it in 2005 - in reality only one didn't achieve the floor target
- Seven of the ten APP schools and all of the non APP schools have comfortably achieved the 2008 30% floor target. With one school just achieving the floor target at 30.9%. Of the three remaining schools two are within 3 percentage points of achieving the target – the other needing to improve by nearly 9 percentage points by 2008.

Table 2: The Targets and Results for Each school and the Local Authority

Schools	% Year 11 achieving 5A* - C GCSE or equivalent				
	Actual outcome 2006	FFT B 2006	FFT D 2006	School Target	Percentage point difference in Target to actual
Ashton Park	38.4	43.2	48.4	42	-4
<i>Bedminster Down</i>	36.6	33.6	39.3	39	-2
<i>Brislington</i>	42.6	36.4	41.4	38	5
Cotham	74.3	70.8	74.9	74	0
Fairfield High	53.8	49.9	55.5	61	-7
<i>Hartcliffe</i>	36.4	39.8	45.5	42	-6
<i>Henbury</i>	30.9	33.0	38.5	33	-2
<i>Hengrove</i>	35.7	24.8	28.9	27	9
<i>Monks Park</i>	35.4	35.5	39.9	47	-12
<i>Portway</i>	27.2	31.5	37.6	37	-10
<i>Speedwell</i>	21.8	26.9	32.6	37	-15
St. Bede's	72.7	66.9	71.8	65	8
St. Bernedettes	61.1	55.7	61.8	57	4
St. Mary Redcliffe & Temple	84.7	78.3	82.6	80	5
The City Academy	50.0	24.0	28.0	41	9
<i>Whitefield Fishponds</i>	28.3	33.5	37.6	39	-11
<i>Withywood</i>	33.5	25.1	30.0	30	4
BRISTOL LA	43.6	41.8	46.7	47	-3

Schools in *italics* are the APP schools
All figures are provisional and are supplied by BCC

With regard to meeting Targets:

- The local authority achieved above its FFT B estimated 41.8% by nearly 2 percentage points.
- Five of the ten APP schools met or exceeded their FFT B.
- Three of the ten APP schools met or exceeded FFT D. These three schools also exceeded their school target.

2.3 How Accurate were the Schools at Predicting the Outcome?

- Fourteen out of all seventeen schools met or exceeded their May 2006 expected outcomes.
- The three schools that didn't meet their May 2006 expected outcome were all schools in the APP.
- Overall the Authority was within 2 percentage points of its expected outcome.
- Six schools (35.3%), three on the APP, estimated within 2 percentage points of their actual. Six schools (35.3%) estimated their outcome within 3-5 percentage points.

- Five schools (29%), three on the APP, were over 5 percentage points adrift on their estimated outcome.
- Assuming a 2 percentage point tolerance in line with the local authority result, only 35% of schools managed to accurately determine their outcome.
- Given the numbers of schools involved, there is no significant difference in the accuracy of predicting the outcome between the APP and the non APP schools.

2.4 How Accurate were the APP Schools at Predicting Individual Pupil Attainment?

The research team were also provided with data relating to the APP excluded, 'Certs', 'Should' and 'Could' cohorts as well as individual student data, which allowed for the following statements to be made:

- Of the students who were not included in the APP (APP excluded) , 9% (116 from 1045) still achieved at least 5 A*-C, and almost 1/3 of these students results included English and Maths.
- Schools were very good at ascertaining the 'Certain' 5 A*-C grades cohort. Although not all 'Certain' students achieved, in only three cases had individuals apparently been wrongly identified as being 'certainties'. These three students had FFT B estimates below 0.3 according to the data supplied.
- In one of these schools if all the students that achieved 4.5 GCSEs had got an extra 0.5 GCSE, the school results would have matched its expected May outcome.
- Six of the APP schools had at least one student who was not included in the identified APP cohort ie (APP excluded) who obtained over 8 GCSE passes at A*-C. In the vast majority of cases the FFT B and FFT D estimates would place these students in the APP cohort. It is not possible to determine whether the schools overlooked these individuals or whether there were other indicators that implied the student would not achieve as well as their FFT estimates indicated.
- There were only 3 cases of students (1.2%) identified as being 'Certs', that did not achieve the 5A*-C, where their FFT B estimate was below 30% (compared to the majority of 'Certs' who have a FFT B greater than 80%). These students may have been wrongly identified as 'Certs' or the schools may have had good reason to believe they would perform well above their FFT B estimate.

It is not possible to determine how good the schools were at determining the 'Could's' and the 'Should's' without being able to fully cross reference all the data on each individual pupil and because there is no way of determining what the pupil would have attained before the interventions.

In the case of one of the schools the results for the 'Could's' were 19 percentage points below the FFT B estimate, but above for both the 'Certs' and the 'Should's', it would need to be determined where the bulk of the APP interventions were applied. If they were focused on the 'Certs' and the 'Should's' it may imply that if the 'Could's' had received the same level of intervention then they would have achieved above FFT B as well. If however interventions have been applied to the 'Could's' it might be that the school did not identify those students accurately, or that the wrong interventions were applied – with the data available it is not possible to conclude which is the case.

It is however, possible to make the assumption with one of the case study schools that the APP interventions could have made a tangible difference. The two cohorts that are known to have had interventions performed above the FFT B estimate, but the two cohorts that had no interventions performed below their FFT B.

3. School Leaders Views

Several elements appear to have contributed to the impact of the APP and managing improvement:

- Changing School Cultures;
- High Expectations of Staff;
- High Expectations of Pupils;
- Closely Managed Staffing;
- Nature of Support Given to the Schools;
- Use of Assessment Data;
- Involvement of Pupils and Parents;
- Carrying the Programme Forward

3.1 Changing School Cultures

Key post holders and pupil expectations seem to have a very significant impact on performance. In one of the schools where interviews took place, the Heads of Science, Maths and English are now offering the students extra support after school on different nights of the week: with between fifty and sixty voluntary attenders on a regular basis - which one school senior leader described as “*challenging the whole culture of the school.*”

How far this additionality is sustainable for pupils or teachers is unclear but an increased level of motivation and ‘a feel good factor’ appears to be at work.

Managing interventions via the APP at school level required a strong steer from a senior leader and the support of the leadership team alongside clear identification of the cohort of young people who would most benefit from an alternative support structure, and timely interventions to secure success.

Timely interventions were not always managed. As one school-based senior leader commented:

“I think last year we started too late – with Tribal certainly that was the case, by the time Tribal came in we had already put in certain interventions in the school for some of our children and it was difficult to know whether those already benefiting in school would benefit from Tribal”

In the longer term, senior school staff suggest that the APP has helped schools target young people for support - one commenting this a coordinated approach to which children will be in which programmes is “paramount” as is knowing “what is going on in different areas of the school to have an overall view”.

The APP has encouraged schools to introduce earlier intervention strategies. Several schools now identify that they will begin interventions in Year 10 or earlier, for example:

- *“identification of the APP cohort by the end of June;”*

- “Head of Year liaising with the families;”
- “a motivational speaker visiting to work with the students;”
- “due to start individual interviews much earlier.”

3.2 Heightened Expectations of Staff

It seems clear from school level interviews that there has been a very high input of senior school staff time and energy into APP. Senior school leaders identify that support for middle leaders and intensive ‘Faculty’ level reviews have been partly responsible for securing progress. Direct chains of command and clear expectations of accountability have been part of what one interviewee described as a ‘very hard-nosed strategy’ to ensure that middle leaders were delivering their role effectively and that their expectation of other staff was also high.

Interviewees identified that gaps in staffing, a lack of adequate staff in some shortage areas and some occasions of longer term unexpected staff absence continue to cause considerable challenges. Although schools have been faster to respond, and used additional funding/consultants and LA staff to infill and compensate for gaps, there remains a challenge for schools, especially since the ‘level of additionality’ offered in 2005-2006 cannot be sustained.

3.3 Heightened Expectations of Pupils

Ensuring that pupils are clear about the school’s expectations of them, and ensuring a strong sense of positive feelings, seem to be important elements of success, supported by consistent strategies for rewards and for managing disruptive and challenging behaviours.

Managing pupil attitudes required a lot of work in some schools, especially when staff felt that pupils seem de-motivated and disparate due to staffing problems and other challenges in schools. Pupils who did not feel that the curriculum had much to offer them had, in some schools, developed habits resulting in them being, as one leadership team member commented, “*all over the place (with) poor attendance*”. Where such behaviours needed to be modified, successful strategies included communicating that the success of the individual mattered to the school and firm behaviour modification, for example lunch-time detention, and very clear discipline systems.

3.4 Nature of Support given to the Schools

A small number of subject areas in schools were targeted for the most support, with *Pupil Champions* deployed to work with some teachers who were finding their work challenging: one school reported ‘huge problems with maths and science staff’ and a senior teacher commented that:

‘our major problems revolved around the lack or inadequate staffing in maths and science.’

Withdrawal of pupils for additional sessions has come at a price, for example some English departments saw a negative impact from APP as students were being withdrawn from English lessons to get more coaching in Science and Maths: this caused considerable resentment amongst English staff and a

consequent drop in morale, and in turn may have impacted on subject achievement and results. Some schools have therefore moved away from withdrawal for additional help.

3.5 Close Performance Tracking

The APP seems to have increased and tightened pupil performance monitoring in Year 10 and 11. There is some indicative evidence that there has also been an increasing rigour with monitoring and the mapping of interventions in the lower secondary years. Though it is highly likely that there remains room for improvement in Key Stage 3 performance monitoring, especially in foundation subjects and in the whole school sharing and use of such indicators where energy was consumed by work with Year 11 in 2005-2006, other year groups consequently received less attention.

Where schools made efforts to establish tighter assessment and monitoring, this seems to have contributed to heightened achievement. Senior school leaders identify that it is the way that data is collected and it is used which is important. Gathering data per se is of no value at all - but being 'smarter with data' can be empowering.

In one school, for example, a senior teacher commented that

'a new reporting system and data driven assessment. This allowed us to map school based assessment against FFT D data, and gave closer tracking across the year.'

Schools which use SATS results and other indicators to predict performance at GCSE and then determine the pupils who they expect to be 'Certs,' 'Shoulds' and 'Coulds' for 5A*-C GCSE, and then monitor performance during Y10 and Y11 feel this has a positive impact on supporting pupils. A senior leader in school commented that "the results show it was successful".

3.6 Interpersonal Relationships, Targeted Interventions and Borderline Pupils

Senior school staff interviewed felt that performance improvements for borderline pupils do seem to have been achieved via the APP interventions. This has required a 'good knowledge' of individuals within a year group, and special attentions for the 'Coulds' such as regular monitoring, extra support and the inclusion of those, 'even further down the stats list that we felt were showing the aptitude', for instance one senior leader commented that:

"actually our lowest attaining student had quite low SATs results but we knew he was working well and was well motivated and he ended up getting 10 GCSEs at C or above...so we feel we really do it child by child"

Senior leaders acknowledge the importance of learning mentors and building a relationship with pupils. It is felt that this works best where there is some flexibility and regular meetings:

“We did a survey last year and it showed that the students really appreciate the one to one help they get from their learning mentors”

3.7 Involvement of Pupils and Parents

Developing a sense of ownership, purpose and pace with pupils seems to have been important. For example a more intensive completion of coursework rather than a long drawn out process seems to have been empowering and generated a sense of positive task completion and satisfaction.

This was achieved, for example, via ‘curriculum enrichment days’ throughout the year to concentrate exclusively on a piece of coursework and to get this completed. This has a positive impact on morale, as does year heads and others offering praise in assemblies for the progress being made. Such *‘public acclaim is well received by the students.’*

Leadership team members suggest that greater participation is achieved where individuals are encouraged to ‘sign-into’ programmes rather than being told that they are joining them. This negotiated involvement increases a sense of choice and commitment, albeit with “some advice and guidance” and ...*“where we are providing more guidance it is with the lower ability students.”*

In general in schools it is:

“the very low ability students we have guided onto ASDAN and that was heavily guided – very heavily guided, though it does appear to be working well”.

whilst

“high ability students we have guided away from the (alternative curriculum) options!”

One of the benefits suggested by school leadership team members was enhanced attendance.

Where schools involved parents, there seems to have been a positive impact, for example where a group of forty students were each seen with parents or carers to discuss the school’s identified routes for these pupils. In this case, only two or three students/parents declined alternative provision, and all others were supportive of the increased focus on securing achievement or the offer of a revised curriculum model.

Some parents actively supported the interventions, for example some came into schools to help with the COPE programme, and this seems to have been positive.

One leader commented that

“Parental engagement has really improved in the school, we have more direct involvement with the parents and we get more parents coming into school parents evening”.

Elsewhere where lesser efforts have been made to involve parents less positive partnerships were achieved, for example there was some resistance to the withdrawal of pupils from some subjects for support in others.

To ensure home-school co-operation it is necessary for schools to keep parents and carers informed of intended interventions and to seek their co-operation and support in steering young people and maximising their performance.

3.8 School Staff Reactions to the Concept of APP

The ethos of most of the LA schools favoured the traditional curriculum model of 10 or more traditional GCSEs for most pupils and moving away from this towards an alternative form of accreditation did meet with some resistance in terms of teacher concern that pupils might be getting a ‘second class’ route or ‘bogus qualifications with limited value in the marketplace’. It is important that all school based staff understand the intention of APP and the benefits to the young people targeted – *and* to the remainder of the cohorts.

Some school-based colleagues expressed the view that “altering the curriculum is cheating” but senior leader’s experience suggests that

“the vocational GCSEs ...are harder to get a C in than the academic GCSEs so they are definitely not cheating at all”.

This is an important message if teachers’ and others innate conservatism is to be challenged and views of vocational and alternative qualifications are to be enhanced. Attitudes to alternative qualifications seem to have moved a little during the school year 2006-2007, and the role of APP in securing success may have helped teachers and others move further forward in accepting change.

Leadership team members commented that staff:

“[I] think (APP) is a positive thing. A big thing for us is attendance and it does seem to be improving that,”

and that

“We found it was a real motivator for the students to go into the GCSEs knowing you have already got one”

School based staff are aware that raised 5A*-C GCSE equivalence performance in 2006 means a raised expectation for 2007 and beyond. One school based senior leader felt that they faced

“a harder year this year, now that the expectation is for improvement on this years performance,”

while another spoke of the challenge ahead

“Our thinking has not changed as a consequence of this summer’s results. Our concern was that we were being given a catch up year, and somewhere in the mix was the danger that we would be laughed at for doing it too late. It’s not sustainable (to have so much extra input,) and there is a danger of this being seen as the answer. Our thinking has been to shove some of the thinking right back down the system (to put improvement strategies into Year 10 and Years 7 to 9) and gradually move away from fire-fighting.”

This realistic sense of seeking sustainability and long term planning to maintain and improve levels of achievement seems positive.

3.9 School Staff Reactions to the Deployment of External Consultants in Schools

Senior leaders were comfortable with the notion of additional staff being deployed into schools by the LA, and identified a series of key features where

this was a successful model and were able to identify when it failed to secure progress.

Successful consultant support was marked by:

- High school staff confidence in the curriculum/specification awareness and pedagogic skills of the consultant;
- Timely deployment;
- Work with pupils on high priority topics e.g. highly focused feedback on coursework or mocks;
- High pupil confidence, often linked to consistency and regular contact;
- High pupil attendance at additional and booster sessions;
- Coaching of staff in need of professional development and skills/confidence building.

Where additional consultant time was not beneficial this was marked by:

- Withdrawal of pupils from things they value for meetings or catch-up time;
- Staff changes, inconsistency and irregular contact;
- Non-availability of consultants at times which suited the schools/pupils.

Pupil willingness to engage with consultants and decision making seems to have been fundamentally important. For example, school leadership team members commented that

“I had one student who was really turned on and she said “look Miss, I know I need help with my maths but I am not going to go out of my maths coursework lesson to get help with my maths because I need my coursework”

“They (the students) were making informed decisions really and think they reasoned it through for themselves and decided that other things were more important for them at that time”

Surprisingly, pupils may not have been very conscious that considerable additional resources were being deployed against their development. In schools which actively sought pupil and parent feedback-

“It didn’t really mention the APP” but “talked about the teacher support for them, in fact no one mentioned any of the people who had supported them who had come in from outside the school”

and

“there was a specific question where they could name someone and no was mentioned apart from the school staff.”

It would be interesting to know whether the Connexions Service survey identifies whether pupils saw the consultants as a ‘normal’ feature of Year 11.

There was not strong support for continuation of the Tribal *Pupil Champions* work amongst school leadership team members, although some individual consultants work was praised highly, and school leaders did acknowledge that the deployment of the Tribal team was very late in the APP process (January 2006).

The most highly valued additionality offered by Tribal was preparatory work for examinations. For example, consultants who had been examiners and who commented on or marked draft coursework and mock examinations, thus securing strong and rapid feedback.

LA Advisor support does seem to have been valued, with one leader commenting that *“The LA consultants were more flexible, not just with the students, but with helping and advising the staff as well.”*

Their role may have been, according to those interviewed, especially important with the students that were motivated but were academically weak, the ‘Could’s’ – those that are borderline. It was acknowledged however, that these pupils were also in school more than the de-motivated children that were part of the Tribal intervention.

School leaders felt that:

“Some of the consultants were good, though it varied subject by subject (one) was fantastic and worked in the classroom with classes, ...directly with the kids in the class – and the ...new teachers that needed the support. (another) was not as good, ...having to do a lot of work but was flexible and came in a lot to work with a cohort of students. Their attendance was a lot better and we found it very useful in terms of their results and attendance as well.”

Positive comments referred to:

“working together to provide materials to help the whole faculty,”

“I found the advisor very flexible and enthusiastic to support us...there was one time when I couldn’t get in and at short notice he took my class for an exam session and he was great.”

4. Evidence from Consultants

4.1 Reflections on the Need for the Intervention

4.1.1 No Alternative

Without exception, each consultant interview reflected positively on the outcomes of the intervention, reporting that during the academic year 2005-2006, the authority had no alternative other than to provide intensive support for its lower achieving schools. They were also of the view that the outcomes achieved justified the energy and resources expended on the intervention.

It is the opinion of consultants that the outcome of the initiative has impacted positively on teacher, pupil and parent confidence and it is likely that this will help sustain and secure further progress in 2006-2007 and thereafter.

“We had no alternative but to take this approach last year.”

“We had no choice but to do this last year.”

*“The intervention **HAS** made a difference.”*

“We had no option.”

“If it makes a difference to parents confidence in our schools, if it makes a difference to pupils confidence in our schools and if it makes a difference to the confidence of teachers believing that their kids can do it, then it’s worth it – and they will do even better next year……. So yes, it was worth all the money spent on it!”

“It can’t be denied that this was a pressurised time for all parties (schools and LA) – but a bit of pressure is good for everyone - that’s healthy. The good outcome made it all worth while.”

“I wouldn’t have started it in November! But that wasn’t a choice was it? We did what we had to do.”

4.1.2 Early Anxieties

Some informants had experienced a degree of anxiety and concern early in the process. This was largely due to the speed at which the project had to be prepared and implemented as well as the fact that it had not been possible to put the additional support in place until relatively late in the academic year (November 2005).

“I was particularly anxious at the outset because the programme was not put in place until November 2005. Setting it up took time and therefore it was not possible to implement until this time”

“In practice, in starting the programme in November meant that the students were almost at a stage when they would need to take their mock exams!”

Others felt uneasy because of the necessity to change agreed procedures and support arrangements planned (often with schools that were not targeted) prior to the decision to introduce the new strategy.

“Normally, the team would have met senior school leaders in September to discuss and agree what they needs were for the following academic year and from those discussions, a plan for support for the year would have been drafted. This took place last year and such plans were put in place. Then however, the national league tables were published and Bristol’s position within these resulted in an emergency reconsideration of what should happen in 2005-2006 and an alternative strategy was agreed.”

“Previously, work relating to KS3/4 had been structured according to identified themes. This had been agreed on by the authority consultants and senior leaders in schools but in September these had to be shelved and replaced by an alternative strategy. It was agreed that this would address short-term ends for KS3 & 4 - with a completely different focus and was to start in November.”

4.2 Reflections on the Factors that lead to the Success of the Initiative

4.2.1 Confidence and Enthusiasm of Consultants

One of the important factors that greatly assisted in the success of the project was the confidence of both local authority and external consultants who had previous experience of working in similar situations and succeeding. This helped reduce the level of concern regarding the late planning and start of the programme.

“I had previous experience however, of picking groups up in February and so she knew that it was achievable.”

“We [Tribal] were confident that we could make a difference through learning/teaching and management/leadership capacity-building, by working in and with schools.”

In addition to this, the experience, expertise and enthusiasm of consultants (both local authority and external) employed on the project was an important element that helped sustain impetus and motivate pupils whilst also supporting school staff.

“We [Tribal] have access to 100 Tribal specialists – enthusiastic and skilful teachers of English, maths and

science, and highly successful school senior leaders – able to engage with staff and help to awaken a thirst for learning and achievement in the students.”

“Once they had started in this new role, the consultants could not be stopped. They almost got too pulled into doing things for the teachers and the schools. Half way through, I had to say to them that they also had to do other things (e.g. teach alongside ‘catch-up’ work) and demonstrate good practice over a wider range of areas”

4.2.2 Cooperation and Collaboration

Consultants interviewed spoke of the close cooperation they had experienced from the schools and they felt that this was a further prerequisite for success.

“We had a lot of cooperation from the schools.”

Importantly, consultants took great care to ensure that school felt respected and that they did not feel patronised in any way. This resulted in teachers feeling empowered as a result of the additional capacity provided. This in turn, was important in securing and reinforcing cooperation and collaboration.

“It’s important when you are in this kind of consultancy work that you take people with you (students and teachers) – people must feel that you are doing it with them, not to them. We were very sensitive to this reality.”

“A senior local authority officer discussed the intervention and what form it would take with the headteachers.”

“We do not want to convey to the staff that they are failing. These are people who are under great pressure and the last thing they need is to have their morale dented any further”

“No one raised any issues regarding the support we were providing. No one felt undermined or threatened in any way nor did they think that we were involved because they were not up to the task.”

“We initially thought that there might be a problem. I don’t think that these anxieties materialised. There was some frustration when a consultant would take pupils out of another lesson. I think that the Tribal people were so good as a team that it didn’t cause anywhere near the problems that we had anticipated. There was plenty of ‘give and take’ and schools must have coordinated it well”

One consultant drew attention to the fact that much of the success of the project was due to the support received from both senior authority officers and senior school leaders

“We received very good support from senior local authority officers.”

“Senior leaders in the schools demonstrated from the initial meetings with us that they were keen to receive additional support.”

They also commented positively on the cooperation received from students.

“The response received from most of the students was also very positive. We achieved significant success with many of the targeted students.”

There is also evidence of a high degree of collaboration between local authority consultants and external consultants. That evidence suggests that there was mutual respect between the two and often they supported each other in the same curriculum area in amicable ways.

“LA and external consultants were engaged in working on a school-by-school basis. In some schools they worked together – and this worked well. The English LA consultant worked with a Tribal colleague in another school. In other schools however, they worked quite separately. Tribal had very set days/times when they were able to work in schools, LA consultants however, had greater flexibility and so it was possible in some instances to work together but on others, this was not the case.”

“There were no problems between the two sets of consultants – no clashes between the two.”

“Tribal consultants were so good that no real problems emerged. There was plenty of ‘give and take’ and the schools coordinated it well. As a result there was nothing but collaboration between the two sets of consultants.”

“We used 6 LSN consultants and schools gave us very favourable feedback on all of them. They were very professional and good to work with. I had no direct experience of working with Pupils’ Champions and can’t comment.”

“The LA consultant and external consultant often worked together in a school one complementing the other – whereas in other schools they would work completely separately. The way they worked was coordinated through the senior leader who was coordinating the programme.”

Whilst there seems to be a consensus that in most circumstances, good relationships flourished between consultants and schools, there is also evidence

that this was not always achieved. Where this was the case it reduced the impact of the process and ultimately, the outcomes.

“There were some difficulties but these were few and far between. To my awareness, two departments experienced difficulties with LA consultants and felt that their leadership skills were being challenged – but in all the other schools/departments teachers understood the consultancy role and did not feed back any negative views. In fact they welcomed such support and wanted it!”

“Unfortunately, at another school, although I had set up an initial meeting with staff and the school leadership early on, I could not get access to the teacher concerned until March. When I finally got access to her/him, the coursework had not been done properly and this had to be addressed in a very short space of time.”

“In terms of outcomes, the first of the two schools achieved 66% grades C and above in that subjects. This is an extremely good result (but since I am only now beginning to look at comparative data, I can’t say precisely how much better this was compared to the previous year).”

“In the case of the second school, they achieved very disappointing results – the task was too great to achieve within the time available as a result of not gaining access until March.”

“There were two examples only where there had been tension between the department and the consultants and these were generally around issues that were felt to have challenged their leadership skills. In every other department that we worked with in every other school, teachers understood the role of this intervention and I didn’t get any negative feedback. People wanted the support. Consultancy is seen as being a positive thing.”

An important element that serves to support the desired level of collaboration and cooperation is the way that consultants worked alongside colleagues in the schools to jointly identify specific areas of needs and subsequently designed and delivered bespoke programmes to address these. This mode of practice again helped ensure that the schools retained a high degree of ownership of the intervention from an early stage.

“The schools decided precisely how they wanted us to work with them. We believe that each school is unique – with its own context and at a particular place on its journey of improvement. Each has its own specific needs, but what they all have in common is that they each want to raise their

students' achievement - that is why schools make use of the additional capacity provided by the consultants."

4.2.3 Clarity and Understanding of Task and Role

In addition to securing access and engaging collaboratively with schools, the importance of ensuring that all involved (within the schools and consultants themselves) were clear about what was to be done and why. From a very early stage in the intervention, great care was taken in ensuring that this was the case.

"We [Tribal] are careful to ensure that there is absolute clarity with the schools from the outset - they need to know exactly what they could expect from us and what our expectations are of them."

*"In undertaking this kind of intervention it is very important that a clear sense of purpose and explicit aims are set and that these are conveyed to **ALL** the school staff. Additionally, it is important that we as a local authority are clear about what the intervention is all about – whose responsible for what. It is also important that it is made clear to schools what it is that they are responsible for so that they can 'take ownership' of initiative."*

"If there was anxiety or criticism at the start of the venture it was around schools not being clear about what we were going to do and how. We have to be very careful that we have the opportunity to explain to all involved in the schools what we are about and who we are."

The process adopted by consultants in introducing the project was therefore important for its success and considerable attention was paid to this.

"Where it's possible to set up pre-engagement meetings with all concerned, it works well. A good example of this was at school X. Here we met the Head and the school project link person (head of year 11) and were introduced to the staff at a morning briefing. I then spoke at the Year 10 and 11 assembly about Pupils' Champions. This was followed by a meeting with the target group of year 11 students to explain what we were doing, how, and why them. At this meeting each student was given a pamphlet about the project and asked to share this with parents/carers."

"All this is captured in a school 'contract' before the project begins and is available to be shared with staff, including the mini CVs for the Tribal specialists and the flyers about the project – we encourage these to be displayed in the staff room."

Whilst it is clear that a lot of effort had been placed on ensuring that all parties were clear about the process of the intervention and the reason for it, there is some evidence that this was not always the case

“Schools were sometimes unclear about the aims and purpose of these exercises (practice exams). Frequently there was confusion between what was understood by Senior Leaders and the teachers. They didn’t always agree on the reason for doing them or what the students should get out of them. Practice exams could be seen as providing experience of taking an exam under exam conditions or it could be to provide formative assessment. But the two things should be done at different times depending on what is expected of it. Depending on what they are intended for they should be done in different ways, given different instructions and given different feedback. If its being done for formative feedback, you might do paper one and provide feedback before giving them paper 2 to improve their work. But if it’s intended as a practice run and to gain experience of exam conditions, then it would take quite a different form.”

The fact that some teachers were frustrated by the withdrawal of targeted pupils from their lessons also suggests that there was a lack of clarity (or at least agreement) in some schools (see below).

4.3 Impact of the Intervention on School Staff

Schools generally appreciated the opportunity to engage consultants in modelling good practice with teachers and support for middle leaders. Tribal consultants were also able to provide the schools with additional capacity that was greatly appreciated at stressful times. In some cases, they were also able to offer further support to senior staff where a school inspection was imminent.

“In the limited amount of time available (30 days per school), we were able to add and build teaching capacity. For students - provide extra revision opportunities, and also demonstrate examination techniques, coursework catch-up, intensive individual support via academic mentoring etc. For staff – modelling good classroom practice, support with schemes of work development, moderation, classroom management etc. We were also able to provide support and challenge for middle leaders in key curriculum areas, and I believe that we were able to support and help build confidence.”

“In some cases, we [Tribal consultants] were able to support the staff in preparing for inspection since many of our project team are also qualified Ofsted inspectors.”

4.4 Identification and Dissemination of ‘Good Practice’

Consultants provided schools with clear feedback relating to evidence of good practice and, at the same time, highlighted areas where progress was disappointing or inadequate. The development of a ‘feedback form’ to provide formal feedback of this kind ensured that all aspects on a school’s intervention programme were monitored and reported on at regular review meetings.

“This addressed areas of concern and examples of good practice under specific headings at that stage of the initiative. Interestingly, I don’t think that by the end of the year anything had needed to be changed in this because we had been able to identify the key issues for schools very early on. So the key things that we were feeding information back on were around these issues throughout the project:

- Coursework
- Catch-up
- Trial Exams
- Revision
- Module test & results
- Data
- Training”

“Information under these headings was fed back to schools very openly at review meetings. This resulted in a summary document that provided an overview of how we felt the schools were doing, what particular issues needed addressing or to provide positive feedback where things were going well. “

“These would then be given to the senior management team in the schools. Heads were also sent a letter pointing out areas where schools could do things better. That complemented the outcomes of the Engineers House meeting”

4.5 Factors that may have Impacted Negatively on the Project

4.5.1 Project Overload

All schools are under pressure to improve performance across a number of measures. A consequence of the government’s attempt to support schools in this has been the introduction of a large number of initiatives and strategies - many of which operate simultaneously. There is a danger that the introduction of the Year 11 Accelerated Pupil Progress programme could be seen within this context, as a Tribal consultant identified.

“It’s also often a real management challenge for schools when they have a plethora of initiatives going on at the same time, maybe four or five. These need to be linked up in to an overall school programme, otherwise there is a danger of ‘over-kill’ as a result of too many strategies operating at the same time.”

“In addition to the potential impact of too many initiatives operating simultaneously, schools had to host a significant number of different people working alongside and with them in various capacities. This has the potential of creating additional stress for teachers and pupils alike.”

“The problem that schools face is the number of different people (faces) they are exposed to and have to work with.”

Bristol City Local Authority had appreciated the potential difficulty created by ‘project overload’ and had taken the initiative of giving its schools permission to set aside their focus on national strategies in order that they could direct their energies to the Accelerated Prepress Programme.

4.5.2 Role Overload

Concerns relating to Year 11 and examination preparation are only one aspect of the plethora of tasks that confront middle leaders on a daily basis. It is therefore imperative that they are supported in addressing their broader professional responsibilities and in assuming responsibility for the challenges that this represents.

“We have to ask ourselves how much can colleagues in schools – teachers or middle leaders or senior leaders, how much can they cope with this kind of programme since this is only focused on year 11 – while the school also has to deal with the whole school issues. Just how much can they take?”

4.5.3 Unpopular Practice

Some schools have drawn attention to resentment generated on occasions by teachers who experienced the withdrawal of pupils from their lessons so that targeted pupils can concentrate on an alternative subject area. Consultants also drew attention to this and it has clearly been identified as an issue that should not be repeated in future.

“It’s also possible that some frustration or tension can result from the nature of the timetable. In some schools we are able to exploit the ‘block’ timetable when the whole cohort are working on the same curriculum area at the same time. That way, students don’t get withdrawn from other lessons for intensive work in another subject. This is a position that is difficult to manage in most places, however, but we try our best to minimise disruption to students’ teaching and learning.”

Similar concern is also stated in the report produced by Tribal Education (April 2006) *An Interim Evaluation of the Impact of the Pupils’ Champions Programme*

“Staff objecting to withdrawal from lessons has been a big issue for us.”

Tribal consultants regretted the termination of contracts at the end of the first cycle of intervention. They were of the view that the benefits that accrued from the 2005-2006 intervention could be significantly reinforced and developed through further engagement over two or three years. This would involve capacity development with teachers.

“Our engagement with Bristol was constrained to 5 months only, while in other national project schools we have a longer period available to us.”

“The intervention lasted for one year only. The impact of our intervention is enhanced if it extends over 2 or 3 years.”

“When we’ve worked in schools for 2 to 3 years our role develops and we move on to engage more in CPD support for the teachers and middle leaders.”

4.5.4 Limited Clarity and Communication

Despite the very positive feedback from interviewees regarding the high degree of collaboration between consultants, there is some conflicting evidence in the literature. The report produced by Tribal Education in April 2006 ‘*An Interim Evaluation of the Impact of the Pupils’ Champions Programme*’ suggests that there were occasions when school-based decisions were taken without alerting consultants to a program of timetable changes:

“Unfortunately the last 2 Fridays have had no impact on year 11. Last Friday 17/3 I arrived to find year 11 involved in mock exams all day. No mention of this had been made the previous week and no warning given This week’s 24/3 session was cancelled at short notice – again due to conflicting arrangements by the school.”

4.6 Unexpected Value Added

Some consultants drew attention to additional benefits accrued from the initiative. One such benefit relates to unexpected improvement at Key Stage 3 in some key curriculum areas. It has been suggested that such improvement is a direct consequence of the wider influence of the intensive work with Year 11 and the application of skills refined and developed by teachers has also been used in the teaching of their subjects with groups other than those targeted for the intervention.

“It is interesting to note that at Key Stage 3, Maths & Science in Bristol went well above the National Level in Bristol schools this year. I believe that this is not a coincidence and that it is a spin off of the learning accrued from the initiative.”

“A lot of what we were doing last year will percolate down and impact on year 10.”

Another consultant drew attention to the fact that there was some evidence of improved attendance rates. It is speculated that this could relate to the explicit expectations made of students not to miss the intensive sessions provided by consultants. It is indeed possible that what is witnessed here is a positive response to greater expectation of students.

“We hope that our work will lead to an improvement in school attendance patterns. It is important to make it clear to students (and staff) that they are expected to attend our sessions. In schools where this was made explicit to students, there was evidence of attendance patterns improving.”

As a result of the close and intense working arrangements between consultants and schools, consultants had noticed a marked positive change in the relationship between themselves and their colleagues in schools. They are of a view that this relationship will enable them to work more effectively with teachers in 2006-2007 and beyond.

“Our relationships with the schools now are quite different. It has become a very close relationship as a result of such close working over the year.”

4.7 Key lessons learnt by consultants

4.7.1 Greater clarity at the outset

Some consultants agreed that in addition to what schools have learnt as a result of the initiative, they too had learnt a lot as a result of this experience and that this would be used to advantage subsequently. All agree that the speed with which this initiative had to be planned and initiated was not ideal - but under the circumstances, this was inevitable. On another occasion however, some external consultants felt that despite the care taken in introducing themselves and the project to all involved in the schools (as described above), they would have appreciated more time and opportunity at the outset of the project to engage more fully in a process of clarifying what they hoped to achieve and to negotiate more thoroughly ways of operating with schools.

“It would have been good to have more time to introduce the Pupils’ Champions project to all involved e.g. to Headteachers at one of their pre-arranged meetings. There was no time to do this. It’s difficult to find times when all headteachers are available together outside those times which have been agreed well in advance as a part of the annual cycle. To meet with all key CSA colleagues to discuss the project more fully. A meeting was arranged at X School for CSA support staff but, because of their individual commitments, not all were able to attend. To discuss these issues with a project school’s headteacher and all senior leaders as a team before the project began as well as with the Heads of Department of each targeted subject area in each of the schools at an early point and thereafter, to meet with all the staff. Finally, to

introduce the team to all the targeted students together with the Tribal specialist team.”

The importance of clarifying short-term, as well as long-term aims was emphasised so that consultants are supported in working towards more sustainable outcomes – whilst at the same time, addressing short-term tasks and are better positioned to communicate the same message to senior and middle leaders in schools.

“I would explain to consultants more clearly what the different was between the ‘short-term’ work and the sustainability elements. On this occasion, perhaps we wanted too much for the short-term at the expense of the longer-term sustainable elements. Had they been clearer about the different parts of their role the outcomes could have better addressed both aspects.”

“I would have better defined the duality of their role for the consultants in making sustainable things and also working on short-term impact. There were times when consultants were so busy working with individual pupils that they didn’t spot other pattern in the result because they were not on top of the data enough. “

4.7.2 Desirability of an earlier start

Not surprisingly, all interviewees highlighted the desirability of an earlier start to the intervention process - but at the same time, they understood that in this instance, this was not possible.

“To arrange to start the project support process early in the autumn term, allowing a few weeks for schools to settle in at the start of a new academic year so as to allow a full 8 months of concentrated, intensive support work.”

“I would never again start this process in November – but on this occasion, we had no choice!”

Reference by consultants to the anxiety generated due to the timing of the introduction of the programme is also reflected in the interim report by Tribal Education:

“The programme has been a success. Students are more confident and engaged in work. I hope that we haven’t left it too late.”

As a consequence of the work undertaken in 2005-2006, consultants are reassured that the foundations laid can now be built on and that schools and the local authority are better positioned to offer more intensive support to students from an earlier stage in the year.

“Currently, we have a lot more in place and have been able to start everything much earlier this year than at this time last year - especially in terms of support for young people.”

4.7.3 Refining ability to assess pupil achievement and progress

Some consultants drew attention to the fact that some middle leaders were not always able to identify the precise level at which students were working and were able to work. This was clearly of concern to consultants. Further evidence to support this concern emanates from the analysis of the quantitative data and is reported on above. This is clearly an area that can be refined and developed in 2006-2007.

“Working with schools has highlighted the fact that some were scoring students at a far lower level than they should be and teacher skills in scoring pupils needs attention and this is an important part of my role.”

4.7.4 Closer Monitoring of Middle Leadership

The nature of the project meant that much had to be achieved in a very short time. One of the outcomes of working under such sustained pressure was that consultants would sometimes accept without question what middle leaders told them regarding the status of the data they had gathered and analysed. In most instances this worked well - but there was evidence that in some cases there was a discrepancy between what consultants were led to believe and what middle leaders had in fact done. This highlights the importance of middle leaders taking ownership of the challenge to ensure that the information provided was accurate.

“I would also look for more evidence of what Heads of Department tell senior leaders and consultants were doing. Too often they would say that all was OK and that tasks were being done and monitored – evidence suggests that this was not always the case. We failed to always ensure that the Heads of Departments were always on top of the day-to-day work and data collection and analysis was not always as accurate as it needs to be.”

This discrepancy suggests, that senior leaders do not always necessarily hold middle leaders responsible. Monitoring of this nature in future is unlikely to be the sole responsibility of consultants and therefore it would seem to be important to examine further how senior leaders can be supported in refining their part in the process.

4.7.5 Greater Parental Involvement

Consultants noted that they had not on this occasion attempted to involve parents directly in supporting the work of the project. Some felt that on another occasion, an attempt to so do would be desirable and could possibly be supportive of the work being done by the school.

“We could have done more to engage parents in the process – although we are aware of the challenge this can pose”

“All LAs and L&SC must have a prospectus in place for 2007. this will help inform parents – but we have to market it well to get the parents involved.”

4.7.6 Engagement with Year 10 and Earlier

Mention is made above regarding the desirability of ensuring an earlier start to the intervention. Consultants also raised the desirability of engaging with pupils at an earlier stage in their school career so that a culture of success can be developed within schools and pupils attitude to learning and achieving enhanced from an early stage.

“We would also have liked to have been able to be involved directly in capacity building lower down the schools – with students in year 9 and 10, and even year 7, rather than leave it until year 11.”

“At the end of the last academic year, I made my team look closely at Years 9 & 10 to make sure that they were progressing smoothly and to help make sure that they would not be arriving in Year 11 in a deficit mode.”

“As a result of the workload last year, I don’t think that we kept a close enough eye on Year 9 intervention – doing the revision work with Year 9s in maths, science and English. Good intervention shouldn’t be the revision at the end of Year 9; it should be built in all the way through, particularly for English. The focus of the Key Stage 3 intervention should be in Year 7 – a lot earlier.”

“Information, advice and guidance is urgently required in KS3 in order to help raise expectations.”

4.7.7 Whole-school Development

Last year’s challenge inevitably resulted in consultants’ actively engaging with individual targeted departments and teachers. An inevitable consequence of such intensive involvement at this level has been a reduction in the focus of work within a whole-school context. Consultants highlight the need to refocus some of their work to engage with this important challenge.

“I am not sure however, that working with individual teachers or departments is necessarily the best way to progress since what this has meant is that we have tended to neglect the task of working in a ‘whole school’ context and address ‘whole school’ issues. I think I’d like to see that being fed back in – but you’ve got to start from where you’re at.”

4.8 Priorities for 2006-2007

4.8.1 Building on success

There is a general belief among consultants, that the authority can support schools to build on last year's success. One consultant was also of the opinion that last year's success would of itself contribute to even better outcomes in the academic year 2006-2007 since in his/her opinion, 'success breeds success'.

"This success has made a big difference to them and their pupils. They now see that they can do it again and improve even more next year. We now have a lot of schools that have made significant improvement."

"I hope it will be possible to build on the many positive experiences from last year, and to find the necessary resources to enable the project to be repeated this year – i.e. to provide a bespoke improvement programme to help meet the needs of individual schools. If this is not possible, centrally, then allow us to promote our project across the CSA for individual schools to buy in. It would be easier to get the project up and running in the future, building on the experiences and relationships developed last year, and the many achievements"

"This year, the main job is to generate more contact with schools to help support them in the Quality Assurance. They should have their own QA arrangements in place but we want to make sure that this is secure. We also have to boost staff confidence particularly in low achieving schools. This year, schools are experiencing the 'feel good factor' and after all, we expect that 'success will build success'"

Another consultant was of the opinion that the local authority needs to 'hold its nerve' in the face of adverse media publicity and work at enhancing the success already achieved despite any additional cost that this could incur.

"I hope that they can hold their nerve, after a successful year in which a lot was achieved by the CSA team and colleagues in schools, and maintain the momentum over the mid and long term. I also hope that they have the capacity – or can find the capacity - to do all that they wish to do to continue to raise standards in the city."

4.8.2 Building and sustaining capacity

Consultants interviewed were very clear that at a strategic level, it is important that the Local Authority now supports schools in building capacity and to ensure that the lessons learnt and skills acquired as a result of the support provided in 2005-2006 are sustained.

“It was understood that such intervention would not be sustainable or lead to sustainability because the consultants were doing these things in place of the school staff and not directly supporting them to become better at these things themselves.”

“This year is all about building capacity. This is absolutely fundamental.

“Our priority now is that of building capacity. Enabling schools to help themselves and not taking responsibility for direct teaching and learning ‘catch-up’ sessions etc (hopefully!).”

“It is important at this point however that the LA consultants are not ‘doing it for’ the schools and to make sure that the schools were doing it for themselves. It is important at this time to make sure that the teachers were taking a close look at their own values and accepting responsibility – not taking the view that ‘it is out of my hands’.

“The real challenge for this year is that of ensuring sustainability. We can’t do the same this year as we did last year. We now need to build capacity and find ways of enabling the schools to share good practice.”

“To their credit, they (schools) are already doing this (building capacity). An example of this is 4 schools supporting middle leaders in the core subjects and sharing their practice in terms of revision, programme coaching, mentoring etc. and that in turn will hopefully help build capacity. Head teachers are keen to take part in this kind of initiative but as an authority, we are being careful not to overload schools this year.”

To achieve this, all involved agree that the role of the consultant will need to be significantly different to that of the previous year and that the task of supporting senior and middle leaders develop capacity is likely to be both time-consuming and challenging.

“We are not intending to be teaching in the same way as last year and we don’t intend to be doing coursework catch-up work with departments, although if that were necessary due to unforeseen circumstances, I dare say that we would end up doing it.”

“Building capacity is far more time consuming for schools than having someone in to take Year 11 out. To build capacity they would need to have someone working alongside the consultant all the time and that’s got a huge implication for schools that are already challenged in terms of the capacity at their disposal.”

“Because of all the other day-to-day pressures on Heads of Departments however, I suspect that there will be an element of compromise in this and we will still end up doing some of the things we did last year – but I can’t quite assess that yet”

“Unlike last year, when in a way, we would have been doing things for the departments, this year the aim is to support them in doing it for themselves – by sitting with the individual staff member and challenging them to draw conclusions, justify them and act on them. That however puts a lot more onto subject leaders compared to me taking the task away and coming up with the answer. But time-consuming as it is, it’s got to be done if we are to make a long-term difference.”

In achieving sustainable progress, some consultants have identified the importance of ensuring that appropriate professional development opportunities are provided for those in middle leadership roles in schools and that ideally, this should be incorporated in the Authority’s planning over the next two to three years.

“One key message was the need for middle management training across the CSA - a joined up approach is very important for this type of support work.”

Developing sustainable capacity across the Authority should not be viewed as the responsibility of individual schools working in isolation. This is greatly enhanced where it is addressed within the supportive context of groups of schools sharing good practice. This was identified as a major factor at the intervention evaluation day held at Engineers House in July 2006.

4.8.3 Develop Other Aspects of the Role of Consultants

There is a view amongst some consultants that other aspects of their work, including the provision of support for curriculum areas not targeted in 2005-2006, now need to be given attention.

“Although we have tackled the immediate issue (year 11) and we consultants became very involved in teaching groups of pupils real knowledge - preparation of course development, the necessary preparation of the courses has not been put in place and staff training is needed to improve quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure sustainability.”

“It’s important that make sure that courses are properly planned and staff are trained well – we’re now doing this.”

4.8.4 Ensuring Curriculum meets Pupils Needs

Some respondents were of the view that greater use needs to be made of the vocational curriculum and associated examination strategies and that schools should be supported in the task of matching programmes to pupil needs.

“The task now is how we continue to develop so that schools target the appropriate youngsters and develop the most appropriate curriculum to meet the child’s needs.”

“Schools need to consider how they can also raise their profile by ensuring that each of its pupils is placed on the most appropriate programme.”

“Some schools are not placing their pupils on programmes that best match their needs. BTEC programmes will help them do this and much of this planning and preparation needs to come into place in Year 9. By reviewing curriculum we can provide students with a greater menu of choice – and even create flexibility within KS4 for a person to achieve a Level 1 in Year 10 and then move them on to a Level 2 in Year 11. GCSE does not allow for that.”

5. Concluding Comments and Observations

5.1 The Costs of APP

It was not the remit of this research to carry out a Cost Benefits Analysis, and thus no financial analysis has been made of how far APP constitutes 'value for money' or of the unit cost of raising performance using the techniques employed in 2005-2006.

The Connexions Service pupil-focused report on APP offers an insight into 'consumer' level reactions to APP, as does a report from the Tribal consultancy.

Negative media coverage of the positioning of former Chief HMI Woodhead, and his highly politicised critiquing of the APP and Bristol results, suggests that senior authority officers may benefit from having statistics to hand which allow them to defend the investment in APP. To some extent the data analysis within this report supports such a defence and it is likely that the LA statistical unit analysis will carry this further.

It is unclear how far APP impacted in a negative way on subject results outside of the target subjects. One school leader and several consultants reported that some teachers in subject areas without intervention support felt undervalued, especially where students were removed from their classes to 'catch up' or be given additional time in other subjects.

Consultants and school leaders were of the view that it is also possible that APP had a psychological impact on pupils' self-perception and performance. One senior leader in a school commented that:

"Students were also not prepared to work for other subjects outside the targeted 5 GCSEs."

Concentrated effort with Year 11 may have reduced the amount of input for other year groups, although this is difficult to quantify, however some school senior leaders acknowledged that there was a dip in Year 9 performance because:

"With the focus on Year 11 we tended to take our eye off the ball with Year 9."

"We didn't achieve our targets at Key Stage 3 – and across the authority you do wonder if that is a by product of all the focus being on the year 11 – it was a fall over all the authority of 3%, but that was only in English, it did go up in maths and science. I think in English we did take our eye off the ball."

The extensive use of vocational and other alternatives to GCSE is changing the expectations and cultures of some schools, for example where larger numbers of pupils will be entered for the ALAN qualification and all will 'be taken through and examined until they pass', which does have implications for

costs and time available for other activities - for example the case of the pupil this year who reportedly:

“..... took 16 attempts to pass an ALAN assessment... and although she only just scraped through then, she was very pleased with herself.

5.2 Carrying the Programme Forward

The generous additional funding deployed in 2005-2006 is not available this year and so schools have found ways to carry the strategies developed by APP forward using their own resources.

In the current year, *Pupil Champions* will not be used but pupil assessments and challenging grades for all students have been set; in some schools tutorials on a three weekly cycle are being trialled to see if this sustains pupil interest. There has been some resistance to this as “an added chore” and teacher union reps have also expressed some concerns over workload.

However the instant feedback from self-led testing was rated highly by those school-based senior leaders interviewed, since it reportedly “*boosts the confidence of the students,*”

School leaders and consultants identified one of the challenges for the Bristol schools as how to secure ongoing support for ‘new’ curriculum innovations if there is limited capacity within the advisory service. Within the APP during 2005-2006 there was support for understaffed departments, departments without a subject leader and departments facing challenging circumstances. There was also considerable support for the ‘applied’ GCSEs, such as Engineering, Health and Social Care, Leisure and Tourism, and there was some brokerage of support from the exam boards, which schools felt “*was useful but too late.*”

They also identified that they would like the LA to:

- Broker early support from the exam board, especially for the new courses;
- help to sharpen teachers’ focus in specific areas;
- continue to offer strong subject advisor support, and provide some ‘hands-on’ working with young people and staff.

A consultant expressed the view that the success achieved last year would help achieve even better levels of achievement in 2006-2007.

“This success has made a big difference to them and their pupils. They now see that they can do it again and improve even more next year. We now have a lot of schools that have made significant improvement.”

5.3 Priorities for 2006-2007

- The first priority for 2006-2007 is to support schools to build on last year's success;
- Schools need support in building capacity and in ensuring that the lessons learnt and skills acquired are sustained;
- Senior and middle leaders, as well as teachers, need support to develop capacity. This is likely to be both time-consuming and challenging;
- Developing sustainable capacity can be greatly enhanced where groups of schools share good practice;
- In some schools, curriculum areas not targeted in 2005-2006 now need supporting;
- Schools need support in refining skills for scoring students' level of performance;
- Greater use needs to be made of the vocational curriculum and associated examination strategies;
- Schools need support in the task of matching programmes to pupil needs.