

4. WORK OF THE ADVISORY STAKEHOLDERS' GROUP

4.1 Introduction

It was agreed that four meetings would be held to discuss key issues for the progress and achievement of African-Caribbean boys. Discussion papers and reading material were provided for each meeting. The first meeting served as an introductory meeting whereby the purpose of the meeting, the particular areas of interest and concerns for each member and key issues were tabled. It was agreed to focus over the three remaining meetings in April, May and July of 2003 on the following key areas:

- recruitment, retention and promotion of Black teachers
- achievement and Black boys
- parents and community.

Session 1: Building a change agenda and key issues

Members were warmly welcomed to the meeting by Diane Abbott MP and Nick Sharman (previous LDA Director). Lee Jasper restated the Mayor Ken Livingstone's commitment to taking action on this issue. All agreed that the potential of the group to make a real difference to a critical issue for London – described by Ken Livingstone as a “silent catastrophe” – was enormous. With the appointment of a minister for London schools, a London Mayor, a London Schools Commissioner, plans for a national strategy for Black and minority ethnic achievement and the delivery of a number of urban educational and regeneration programmes, there was every opportunity to produce real, lasting change. In addition the establishment of a national pupil database in 2001 and a national system of ethnic coding meant that finally, robust national and London-wide pupil achievement data by ethnicity and gender was available and could be used to inform action planning and to target resources appropriately. It was agreed that if the advisory group was successful in its deliberations, it would shine a light on pre-existing areas of concern, bring deeper levels of insight and clarity and identify solutions.

A basic model for building a change agenda was discussed as follows.

- **Awareness:** too few schools and LEAs have a high enough level of awareness regarding the academic achievement of African-Caribbean pupils. Achievement data by ethnicity and gender needs to be widely shared at school, LEA, London-wide and national levels. Furthermore key issues need to be clearly defined and articulated to ensure high levels of understanding.
- **Accountability:** There needs to be a greater sense of accountability at all levels for the achievement of African-Caribbean pupils. A range of legislation, including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

very clearly sets out legal responsibilities in relation to race. The role of OFSTED was now even more important in ensuring that schools complied with the requirements of the Act. Strong leadership at LEA level in particular was seen as a critical component for powerful change mechanisms.

- **Acceptance:** Too few educationalists are willing to accept their duty, moral, professional or otherwise to address the educational inequalities which have already condemned generations of Black youth to lives with little hope of a meaningful future. Whilst the influence of wider society and the quality of support from home could not be ignored as highly significant contributing factors to educational achievement, it was strongly felt that schools can and must make an enormous difference.
- **Benefits:** Given a history of over 50 years of school, LEA and Government failure to address the critical issues, the path to achieving equity in education for African-Caribbean boys was likely to be steep and strewn with obstacles to change. Thus it was of critical importance to maintain a strong focus on the many levels of benefits for raising levels of achievement. Enhanced economic prosperity for London as a result of fully harnessing the creative talents of Black youth was but one highly desirable outcome.
- **Commitment to action:** A commitment at all levels to identifying the key levers, which would bring about the greatest change and then delivering against an incisive action plan, was agreed as the final phase of a model for successful change.

Key issues

These were identified as follows.

Quality of the school environment

As well as being concentrated in London, African-Caribbean communities tend to be concentrated in the most economically deprived areas of London. Furthermore, a relatively low number of boys' secondary schools and the over-subscription of girls' schools has meant that many African-Caribbean boys are concentrated in mixed schools with a high gender imbalance where there are many more boys than girls. Given the nature of adolescence, this in itself can create an environment in which it is difficult for either boys or girls to flourish academically. There is some evidence to suggest that the schools are over-crowded (often designed for much smaller school populations), have run down facilities, achieve much below average

examination results, have a high staff turnover and make use of a high proportion of supply staff.

In addition, even when African-Caribbean pupils are in attendance at a school with good facilities and good overall examination results, it does not necessarily follow that they share in that success. The LDA Commission pupil focus groups and pupil questionnaire results would indicate that Black pupils can have a much less positive experience than white pupils at the same school.

The London Challenge provides a real opportunity for the substantially improved provision of new secondary schools in London Boroughs where African-Caribbean pupils are present in substantive numbers. However, considerable attention will need to be paid to admissions policy and practice if African-Caribbean pupils are to be present in numbers in line with their presence in the local community. It would be tragic indeed if despite several new schools and the creation of a number of academies, that these developments had no beneficial impact on where African Caribbean pupils attend school.

In the case of failing schools with high proportions of African-Caribbean pupils, a new model of LEA support may be needed if it is to be the case that whatever school a child attends, they can expect quality educational provision.

The creation of genuine multi-racial comprehensives in London remains a challenge with many schools being either white working-class, white middle-class or BME enclaves.

In short the quality of schooling for African-Caribbean boys in particular is poor in far too many cases and needs urgent attention.

Curriculum offer and Black pupils

It was generally agreed that for the majority of Black pupils the curriculum taught scarcely reflected the experiences, histories or cultures of Black communities. For far too many students the curriculum was barren and meaningless and being bored at school was a common experience. The school curriculum needs to be relevant, inspirational and mesmerising if it is to engage Black boys in particular.

Pupil teacher relationships

Relationships between Black pupils and white teachers were agreed as generally characterised by conflict and fear. As noted earlier, a range of research has indicated that

African-Caribbean pupils receive harsher reprimands for the same misdemeanours as pupils from other ethnic groups. Conflict seemed to be at its most intense at the juncture between childhood and adulthood i.e. where the boys are approximately 14-16 years old (in years nine and 10). (Black boys are over-represented in national permanent exclusions figures and these figures peak in year nine) (See Appendix 7 for national exclusions statistics). As the boys attempted to express their manhood and racial identity, for many teachers this was seen as a threat to their authority and minor confrontations escalated out of all proportion to become major conflicts. Simply questioning a teacher's decision, or attempting to reason with a teacher was often interpreted as rudeness by many teachers.

The quality of the teacher in front of a child is the single most important factor impacting on the achievement of Black pupils.

The capacity to develop and sustain deep and meaningful relationships with Black children is a critical component of the skills of a truly effective teacher. Black pupils in London schools need outstanding teachers who are not only first class subject teachers but have high levels of emotional intelligence, are culturally informed, committed to anti-racist practices and have an excellent understanding of learning processes.

A fear of Black boys – particularly those who are above average for their peer group in terms of height – tended to result in two extremes: an over-emphasis on control or a total lack of boundaries and consequences for learning or behaviour.

Institutional racism

Institutional racism most profoundly expresses itself in:

- low teacher expectations for the academic achievement of African-Caribbean pupils
- stereotyped views of Black parents
- allocation of African-Caribbean pupils to sets and groups on the basis of expected misbehaviour rather than ability

- over-representation of African-Caribbean pupils in lower level tiers for public examinations
- high levels of permanent, fixed term, and formal and informal¹⁵ internal exclusions for Black boys.

Home, community and school partnerships

It is often assumed, particularly when the parents of Black children have been born and attended school in the UK, that the parents have a clear and detailed understanding of the English schooling system. Even after attending a parents' evening, Black parents can come away with a far from accurate picture of their child's progress and achievement. Teachers often lack the confidence, or in too many instances are not fully committed to, systematically building positive partnerships with Black parents. Supplementary schools often struggle, despite considerable efforts to establish effective working relationships with local schools. Establishing and maintaining effective parent and community partnerships tend to be low on school agendas.

Black educational professionals

It was generally agreed that Black educational professionals i.e. Black teachers, managers, teaching assistants and learning mentors are uniquely placed to bridge the gap between home and school. In addition it was agreed that Black professionals are able to bring a particular perspective to addressing key issues. More Black staff in leadership positions are necessary to bring real drive and a sense of urgency to the change agenda. Members felt that the current Leadership Incentive Grant should be closely linked to leadership on race equality issues. It was seen as important to be clear about the professional roles of Black staff so that they were not seen as the sole owners or experts at dealing with issues related to the achievement of Black pupils. The achievement of Black pupils needed to be accepted as a whole school responsibility.

Effective LEA and school strategies to ensure the targeted recruitment of more Black governors was of particular importance for those schools with large proportions of Black pupils on the school roll.

¹⁵ Informal internal exclusions refer to situations whereby students are excluded from the curriculum through being sent outside of the class and left in the corridor for the majority of the lesson or being frequently sent on errands etc.

Challenges to a successful change agenda

These were identified as follows:

- the reluctance by some head teachers to see the achievement of African-Caribbean boys as worthy of a specific focus
- too few head teachers having a sound enough understanding of key race equality issues
- the reluctance to specifically address the issue of African-Caribbean achievement when white working-class boys are also underachieving academically
- the reluctance by educational professionals to accept the impact of institutional racism on the academic achievement of Black pupils
- a lack of collaboration or collegiate working between schools in the context of systems which endorse competition such as published league tables.

It was felt that an element of compulsion (as was the case for the initially unpopular National Literacy and Numeracy strategies) would be required to ensure a sound approach to a national strategy for the raising the levels of academic achievement of Black pupils.

Session 2: Recruitment, promotion and retention of Black teachers

Professor Tim Brighouse outlined the key skills required for the proposed new status of the Capital Teacher. It was agreed that to teach successfully, London teachers must have teaching and interpersonal skills that go way beyond the skills and abilities of the average teacher in the UK. It was hoped that the introduction of Capital Teacher status would raise the status of teaching in London and lead to more new entrants to teaching in particular, seeing it as the most exciting and rewarding place in the country to teach. Professor Brighouse hoped that Capital Teachers would see themselves as part of a mission to address the underachievement of Black pupils. It was proposed that one of the key components of the Capital Teacher was to have cultural knowledge i.e. that the Capital Teacher should be able to demonstrate a sound understanding of a range of cultural norms and behaviours relevant to racially and linguistically diverse communities in London. It was felt by some that it was important to link the competencies to an ability to implement the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) 2000 Act.

Dr Singh-Raud, Senior Lecturer at Liverpool University and Member of the Teacher Training Agency Ethnic Minorities Focus Group, made a presentation to the advisory group outlining the key issues for the recruitment and retention of Black candidates to teacher training courses and recommendations for strategic approaches to maximise recruitment and retention. Key issues were identified as follows.

- Initial teacher training providers (ITTPs) need to clearly target BME communities and clearly signal that they welcome applications from BME candidates.
- ITTP gatekeepers, i.e. those who conduct the admissions interviews, play a significant role in determining the level of admission of BME candidates. Interviewers are traditionally from a white middle class background and without training may not be able to accurately assess the abilities and potential of BME candidates. The skill qualities and abilities needed for successful teaching in urban multi-racial backgrounds are quite different to those needed in many shire contexts and without a strong grounding in urban contexts it is all too easy to miss important strengths.
- Some ITTPs have profiling systems which indirectly exclude BME candidates who may not have acquired

their educational qualifications via traditional routes or have acquired the more traditional qualifications. Competition between ITTPs for the brightest and best candidates may mean that some candidates, who may not have outstanding academic records but none-the-less could make excellent teachers, are over-looked.

- Many prospective BME applicants are mature entrants and have substantive domestic and financial responsibilities. Hence the following are of particular significance for potential candidates when considering whether to apply for a place on a teacher training course:
 - distance from home of the courses
 - availability of the opportunity to train part-time (during the day and or in the evenings)
 - low initial pay for beginner teachers (compared for example to police officers or lawyers)
 - availability of affordable childcare – either close to home or on campus
 - the impact of a substantial drop in financial income as a result of giving up work and enrolling on a teacher training course.
- A significant number of BME candidates drop out from teacher training courses as a result of experiencing racism on teaching placements and receiving inadequate support from their tutors. In addition the pressures as a result of a substantial reduction in financial income and difficulties with childcare arrangements often add to drop out rates.
- Key strategies for successful recruitment and retention of BME candidates included targeted advertising in mainstream and BME press and radio, the provision of taster courses, outreach programmes in BME community centres and conversion programmes for overseas trained teachers. (Detailed recommendations from Dr Singh's presentation are included in the recommendations in section 7.)

Primary Head Teacher Joyce Moore made a presentation to the advisory group on effective school practice for the recruitment, retention and of Black teachers. Key issues raised were as follows:

- traditional recruitment and retention methods were generally insufficient. Head teachers now need to use a wide repertoire of approaches including word-of-mouth, opportunities to visit the school as standard, head-hunting, overseas recruitment, strong links to ITTPs, recruiting from teachers on teacher training placements and encouraging speculative inquiries. Standards of recruitment in general needed to be high Sarah Palmer, who spent a term researching the standards of advertising of vacancies in education for a book, found a picture of woeful mismanagement.

“Adverts were unattractive and vague, answering machines were switched off during the weekend; message takers were unfriendly and uninformed. Scruffy, out-of-date and even coffee-mug-ringed recruitment packs arrived in reused envelopes with insufficient postage and were frequently accompanied by covering letters which were badly mail merged, impersonalised copies, unsigned or simply not there!”

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- a most important element for recruiting Black staff is the reputation of the head teacher in terms of how they support and work with Black staff. Where a head's reputation is strong, teachers have been known to send their CV to the school and ask to be contacted when a vacancy arises
- too many LEA overseas recruitment programmes are targeted at Eastern Europe, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand and too few from the Caribbean, East and West Africa and America. Without very careful screening of overseas teachers who may have had very little experience of working with children from Black communities Black children can easily be exposed to very racist attitudes. Many supply agencies who recruit from overseas do not run induction programmes and as a result the overseas teachers are ill prepared for teaching in challenging London schools. Joyce challenged the recruitment strategy in her own Borough and as a result, a recruitment exercise took place in Trinidad resulting in eleven teachers coming to work in London. LEA induction for overseas recruited

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teachers was generally seen as poor and better central and school based induction was needed. Central induction provided highly important opportunities for networking and mutual support which were most important if overseas teachers were not to feel isolated

- the qualifications of many African and Caribbean teachers were not recognised as equivalent to UK teachers, despite many years of successful teaching – often at a senior level. Acquiring UK qualified teacher status was still a lengthy and difficult process, which in Joyce's opinion needed to be streamlined without compromising standards. To retain Black overseas teachers Joyce recommended paying teachers at the top of the unqualified scale and allocating by mutual agreement, extra responsibilities in line with the teacher's areas of expertise
- the presence of increasing numbers of Black teaching assistants and learning mentors now provided a rich pool from which schools and LEAs could develop qualified teachers. Prospective candidates who were Black, had been born and bred in London were seen as the most likely to remain teaching in London, understand the urban context and able to teach effectively. Brent LEA for example provides clear professional progression for teaching assistants. Hence the targeting of London based Black prospective candidates for teacher training, needed to be a priority for the DfES and TTAs in order to address the teaching shortage in London
- a key strategy for the retention of Black teachers for Joyce was to take a very keen interest in their professional development. Several Black teachers had reported to her that their line managers at their previous schools had taken very little interest in their professional development. Joyce had met a number of Black teachers who had been in the same school for ten or more years with the same or no responsibilities. Joyce has made it a priority to have a detailed knowledge of staff abilities and training needs and up-to-date information about training courses available
- the award of recruitment and retention points was generally seen as divisive by Joyce. Whilst adequate and fair financial remuneration was important for Joyce, what was more important, was ensuring that Black staff felt valued, were constantly encouraged and their culture and heritage celebrated.

A general discussion followed the presentations and the following key points were raised.

- Few LEAs have accurate and up-to-date data on the ethnic and gender profile of their teaching workforce. The role and the responsibilities of the DfES in collecting teaching work force data in the light of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 was discussed and it was agreed that this should be raised with the DfES. Possible roles for the GLA in collecting data on the London teaching force were also discussed.
- It was not uncommon for Black teachers to work in the most challenging schools and teach the most challenging classes despite making applications to a range of schools. It was agreed that it was very important for Black teachers to have quality initial teaching experiences so that they could set the highest standards for themselves.
- There are too few Black head teachers. Of those who are appointed there is some evidence to suggest that they generally work in schools in challenging circumstances (particularly for first headships), don't have access to the local informal head teacher networks, often aren't fully supported by their LEA and quite often leave headship in the face of considerable hostility from staff and or parents which in turn frequently results in long term sick leave.
- Black Directors of Education are very rare and tend to be in post for relatively short periods of time (typically 18 months to two years) compared to white Directors. (In general it is not unusual for there to be a high turnover of senior LEA officers in boroughs with high percentages of Black pupils resulting in poor continuity of approach in many instances).
- Creative approaches needed to be employed to recruit more to the teaching profession e.g. teaching careers programmes in primary schools, serving teachers working to recruit new entrants, tracking school leavers who go on to university and encouraging them to apply for teaching posts at their former secondary school (this has worked successfully at St Bonaventures Secondary School) etc.

Session 3: Black boys and achievement

The focus of this session was direct community led work to raise the attainment of Black boys. There was some discussion that followed on from the previous session concerning the recruitment, retention and promotion of Black teachers. Key points were as follows.

- Incentives or penalties might need to be in place to ensure key race equality targets such as those for recruitment to ITT providers were met.
- Many actions required had a direct link to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
- Ofsted should have a clear role in inspections of ITTPs to ensure the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 are met.
- It was very important that ITTPs provided courses tailored to meet the needs of mature students. Issues of part-time with day-time and evening training options as well as child-care provision, were of particular significance for the mature student teacher. To encourage ITTP providers to target mature students, the DfES would need to make extra funding available to the providers. MERIT Minority Ethnic Recruitment into Teacher Training was one example of a very successful joint collaboration involving West Hill Campus and Wolverhampton in Birmingham.
- The development of teaching skills should be part of the remit addressed by FRESA.
- The Teach First graduate teacher recruitment programme should be reviewed to ensure that it was targeting those institutions where there were high proportions of Black undergraduates as well as the 'red brick' institutions where Black undergraduates are traditionally under-represented.
- The SHINE programme offered by the London Leadership College and aimed at supporting the professional development of Black and minority ethnic teachers, although a good programme, was too small and infrequent to have a substantive impact. It was of particular importance that such a programme not only addressed the general issues of leadership in an educational setting but the particular challenges faced by Black senior managers.
- The DfES should look at creating a national forum for Black head teachers in order to provide a platform for mutual support and to gain further insight into their professional needs. The GLA could look at a London wide forum for Senior Black educationalists including professors.
- Race equality funding in education is frequently very tangled. EMAG is generally focussed on EAL as opposed to African-Caribbean attainment and with urban regeneration programmes such as the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), how much funding is getting to education is often difficult to ascertain. Consultation with Black communities and their representation on the decision-making bodies is often unsatisfactory.

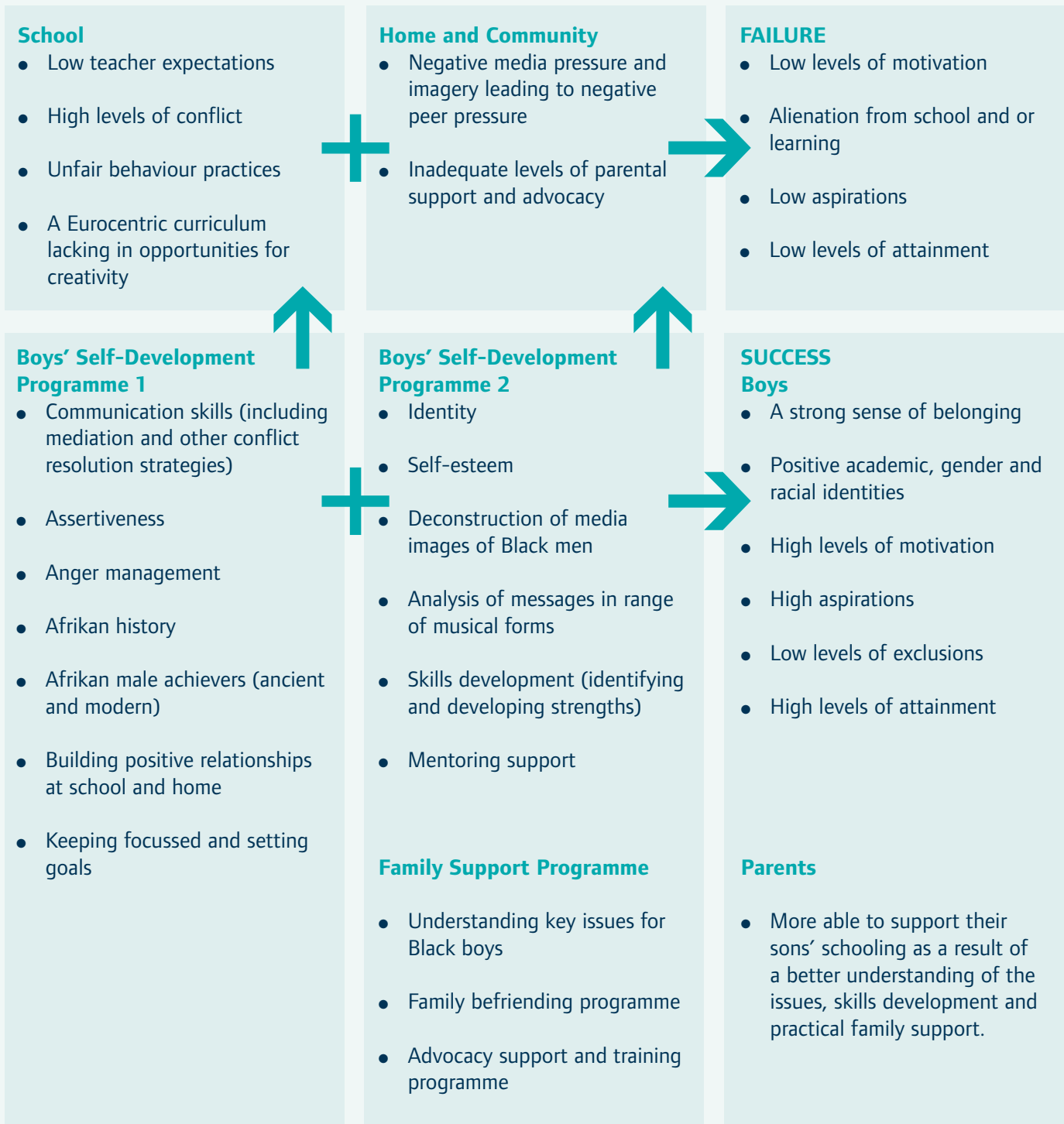
The educational experiences of Black boys

Key findings from the pupil focus groups were presented. These were as follows.

- Black boys were underachieving academically relative to girls and other ethnic groups.
- Boys identified labelling of them, a high level of negative teacher attention and a low level of positive teacher attention, unfair behaviour management practices, negative peer pressure, negative media pressure, not fully understanding the serious implications for inappropriate behaviour at school and an over focus on football and music as the key factors affecting levels of attainment at school. For some boys they also needed a higher level of parental advocacy and support. Black girls were often seen as getting higher levels of support with their schooling than for Black boys.
- Several boys felt that they experienced too much repetition of school work, often had to do work which was mundane and had too few opportunities for more creative and self-directed learning. The discipline of completing homework alone was a real challenge for some boys.
- Black boys often did not feel trusted or listened to by their teachers.

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Figure 2: A model for direct community based work with Black boys



A model for direct community work with black boys

It was agreed that in order to address issues of African-Caribbean underachievement, direct work with the pupils as well as teachers and parents was essential. Some of this work needed to take place in school and some in community settings led by Black men. Over the years a number of organisations and individual have delivered a range of community programmes. From Boyhood to Manhood and Origin are two well known programmes in South London. One Hundred Black Men is another. Typically the funding of such groups is unstable and they rely heavily on volunteer input. A model for academic success for Black boys through community programmes is presented in Figure 2.

A programme with a strong emphasis on communication and conflict resolution would contribute to empowering the boys in situations of conflict with teachers or pupils, which might lead to exclusion. Years of a sense of injustice in a school and wider context and for some, frustration with not having enough contact with fathers, has left many Black boys feeling very angry. Support with anger management needs to be a key part of any development programme. Whilst schools work to improve their curriculum offer, community programmes need to support young men in learning of the history of Afrikan people. Staying focussed on what really matters is a real challenge for many boys hence some input on how to stay motivated and focussed and setting goals is needed.

It is critical that Black boys understand the nature of negative media images, the effects of constant exposure to negative messages in music and the link to negative peer pressure. The development of high level visual literacy skills would enable Black boys to make more informed choices and be less prone to negative media influences.

Work to support Black families would be essential. An increasing number of mothers from one south London school, were very young and needed support with raising adolescent children. Many Black parents are not aware of what is available and where to get support. Given the high numbers of Black pupils being excluded, it is important that Black parents have access to good advocacy and advice around exclusions.

Origin: A rites of passage programme for young Black men

"ORIGIN... is about us as young Black men preparing for manhood, confronting our fears, trusting each other, representing our origins, uniting as one, knowing our role in the community, discovering our Black roots with self-discipline, having new experiences, resolving our problems, linking the things that affect us from our past to what's happening now. It's preparing us for our future."

Origin Young Men's Programme Participants 2002

The project co-ordinator, Paul Reid, comes from a youth work background. He left the Youth Service after having difficulty with persuading it to make African centred youth provision. Founded in 2000, Origin's programme draws on the ancient African gendered rites of passage programmes designed to enable young men and women make a successful transition to adulthood. Classically the young men leave the familiar environment of their village or town and go out into rural terrain where they undergo a series of challenges or activities designed to strengthen their character and deepen their understanding of the nature of adulthood. On their return home, they are greeted with much celebration as adults. Origin's programme for young men is delivered over a year largely through workshops one evening per week from 18.00 to 21.00.

The aims and objectives for the programme are as follows:

Aims

To tackle the social exclusion of African-Caribbean young men by supporting them to make informed and responsible decisions and developing positive identities

To develop partnerships with local authorities and voluntary sector agencies with a view to equipping young people with the skills necessary to successfully negotiate, engage in and fulfil their objectives.

Objectives

1. To target young men who are 'at risk' of social exclusion in terms of educational underachievement or exclusion, teenage parenthood, risky sexual behaviour, drifting into crime, family breakdown or going into local authority care.
2. To provide a range of support to young Black men including a mentoring programme and a personal development programme in order to explore with young

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people, the effects of self-defeating values, negative stereotyping and anti-social behaviour using a range of creative intervention to raise self-concept and self-esteem.

3. To enable young Black men to explore the links between past experiences, factors impacting upon them and their environment in order to assess the importance of setting realistic targets and developing social and life planning skills.
4. To provide challenging residential experiences to develop a sense of achievement, team work and group confidence.
5. To provide support to the families of the young men on the programme by facilitating a Parent Support Group to encourage parents and guardians to learn from their collective experiences and to offer each other support.

Topics covered during the evening sessions include communication, health, relationships and sexuality. In addition participants attend three residential challenge weekends and have a mentor assigned to them.

At the time of the Commission, the project was run by a volunteer co-ordinator, two volunteer development workers, a management committee and 30 volunteer mentors. Funding has been sought to appoint a full-time paid co-ordinator. The organisation is very mindful of becoming over dependent on grants which can be withdrawn at any point and is committed to developing effective mechanisms for community based self-funding.

Three cohorts of 20 young men have undertaken the programme to date and the programme is well supported by the community. Young men from the programme have reported feeling more confident, having a more positive attitude to school and improved relationships in a range of contexts.

It was generally agreed by advisory group members that organisations such as Origin provided a very valuable community service and their continued development was of vital importance. It was suggested that research is carried out on self-development programmes such as the Origin one in order to:

- identify how many self-development programmes for young Black men were in existence
- evaluate the impact of the programmes
- identify the funding requirements and funding streams
- identify how best to support their development.

Information on the best programmes should be disseminated within the community to encourage the extension of such programmes.

Session 4: Parents and community

“The involvement of parents is crucial and we know that ethnic minority families give the highest possible priority to raising educational standards.”

Charles Clarke, 3 June 1999

The focus for this session was key issues for effective partnerships with African-Caribbean parents and Supplementary Schools. Secondary School Head teacher Lesley Morrison made a presentation to the Advisory Group entitled Successful Partnership with Parents: One School's Perspective. The key points were as follows:

Principles for work with parents

- Parents are the school's most important resource.
- The views of parents must be respected and understood.
- Regular communication is an essential component of the partnership.
- The school must honour the trust the parents have placed in the school by awarding the education and care of their daughters to the school.

Understanding African-Caribbean families

In Lesley's view it was important that schools fully understood the varying nature of African-Caribbean families which their pupils came from and made no judgements or assumptions about the family structures. Black pupils are over-represented in looked after pupil statistics i.e. a high percentage are in care. Many pupils come from single parent female led households and some from traditional two parent households. Many new arrivals from Jamaica are in the temporary care of older siblings or aunts until a parent's arrival. As well as experiencing a considerable culture shock, these pupils are adjusting to a life without their mother and or father. For Lesley's school in Lambeth, a significant proportion of African-Caribbean mothers are relatively young, i.e. in their early thirties and raising their family alone. Their own school experiences have often been difficult and as a result they are inclined to initially view the school with suspicion. They are generally very keen that their children have a much better schooling experience than themselves but are often struggling with raising a teenage daughter whose behaviour may be challenging.

Strategies for breaking down barriers and building trust

At the heart of the strategy is open, honest and frequent communication with parents.

Parents are guaranteed an interview with a senior member of staff within 24 hours of their request for a meeting.

The school invests at least half-an-hour in an in-depth pre-admission interview with all new parents in order to discuss the role of the school, the role of the parents and expectations. Some African-Caribbean parents, still hold the view that it is the total responsibility of the school to educate their child. The school stresses that here in England it is a shared responsibility. The girls want and expect their parents to attend social and cultural events as well as parents' evenings.

Achievement evenings are run throughout the year for each year group where discussions are held on a range of issues relevant to high academic achievement. Issues such as the need for the girls to have a healthy diet, to have adequate sleep, teenage pregnancy and the need to monitor the amount of time the girls spend watching television and listening to music are candidly discussed. The school is careful to model what it advises e.g. chips are only available once per week from the school canteen where healthy food options are heavily subsidised and the girls are expected to have a bottle of water with them at all times. Parents are also alerted to very current issues such as the increasingly undignified and crude sexual images of young black women in music videos and the impact of this on young black women. Parents are encouraged to network and reinforce each other's values, so that daughters who are friends are getting similar messages from home, as a means of supporting each other in parenting. Strong advice is given on a range of issues. For example the school does not recommend students having TVs in their bedroom since parents cannot then easily monitor what is watched and for how long.

School newsletters are an important vehicle of communication with parents and values and constantly reinforced. All important communication is posted home rather than sent via the girls in order to ensure that parents receive the information.

In addition the school provides form tutor surgeries and curriculum evenings in order to provide parents with opportunities to learn more about secondary schooling

express their needs and improve their capacity to support their daughters.

A presentation on effective partnerships between mainstream schools and supplementary schools was delivered by Kemi Atijosan (Co-ordinator of Latimer Supplementary School and School Services Consultant) followed. Key points were as follows.

Acceptance that the education of African-Caribbean pupils is a shared responsibility and schools, parents and community groups have distinct but equally important roles to play

In Kemi's view, too many mainstream schools view supplementary schools with suspicion. For some pupils attending a supplementary school, when their mainstream school finds out, they are told off. Others still see the existence of supplementary schools as implicit criticism of their ability to educate Black youth and are reluctant to engage with their perceived competitors. At the other end of the spectrum, a number of secondary schools now run their own supplementary schools on a Saturday – such is the recognition of the potential impact of additional tuition. Others also offer the use of their premises at subsidised rates.

Mainstream schools and supplementary schools need to agree a common goal of the best possible education for Black children and work together to achieve this. Mainstream and supplementary schools often have different sets of information about children and sharing this can greatly enhance the children's progress and achievement. It is often reported that Black pupils with a reputation for behaving inappropriately at their mainstream school are very well behaved at their supplementary school. A dialogue about the supplementary school provision, which is supporting the pupil, could be of great assistance to the school.

A range of actions were suggested as follows.

Positive action for mainstream schools

- All mainstream schools should have a postholder with responsibility for parent and community liaison.
- Mainstream schools should identify the supplementary schools in their area and establish contact with the co-ordinator or a member of the management committee.

- A programme of visits should be set up so that the mainstream school can learn about the supplementary school and vice versa.
- Mainstream school secretaries/receptionists and premises managers should be fully trained on dealing with enquiries from community groups. (Some assume the community groups to be insignificant and fail to pass on messages or facilitate meetings with the head teacher).
- Mainstream schools should always approach supplementary schools when vacancies arise on their governing body as a means of developing strong working relationships. Co-option should be used where necessary.

Positive action for supplementary schools

- Supplementary schools should identify the mainstream schools that their students attend and focus on establishing effective relationships with a cross section of these schools.
- Supplementary schools should encourage parents to let their mainstream school know that their child attends a supplementary school and provide leaflets to support this process
- Supplementary schools should regularly send mainstream schools information about their activities and invite members of school staff to attend events.
- Members of local school staff should be approached to sit on the management committee of the school in order to contribute to the work of the school and to develop strong working relationships.

Joint actions

Both mainstream and supplementary school leaders need to:

- work together to develop an appropriate mainstream curriculum and appropriate supplementary school curriculum i.e. one which is fit for the purpose of educating Black pupils
- make samples of pupils work available to each other in order to identify and work together on areas where the pupil needs support and to celebrate successes at mainstream and supplementary school

- run joint workshops on educational matters
- share as much information as possible in order to maximise coherence for the pupils' learning (this might include case conferences on individual pupils or the school inviting someone from the supplementary school to attend a professionals meeting for a child at risk of exclusion).

Key issues for supplementary schools

- Inadequate levels of funding and staffing mean that supplementary schools do not always have the capacity to develop strong working relationships with local schools. Current capacity building programmes for supplementary schools are not producing the levels of growth needed.
- Keeping track of educational developments so that initiatives can be supported in the supplementary school is often very challenging.
- Schools often do not prioritise establishing working relationships with supplementary schools and despite several calls setting up a meeting can prove very difficult.

Communicating with parents

In the absence of specific training, many white teachers lack the confidence to speak frankly to African-Caribbean parents and key messages are not conveyed to parents or said so subtly the key points are lost. When the communication between home and school is effective, the school can support the parent on matters of discipline by reinforcing parental values. When parents leave home before their children, unless there is mobile communication, they have no way of knowing what time their child left home for school or whether they arrived on time. Parents need to be promptly informed when their children are late for school. A significant proportion of Black pupils attend school out of the borough they live in. Lambeth has the lowest rate of pupil school attendance at the borough lived in for the whole of England (PLASC 2002). Hence issues of travel and punctual arrival at school are often more significant than generally recognised. Telephone calls from school to African-Caribbean parents as well as letters of invitation to events are essential if African-Caribbean parents are to become more involved in school life, given many years of disaffection with the English schooling system.

The relevant points in relation to recommendations from the four meetings have been incorporated into the recommendations in Section 7.