A Rapid Evidence Assessment

Investigating the Drop in Attainment during the Transition Phase
with a Particular Focus on Child Poverty

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1.   This Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) was commissioned to investigate the relationship between the drop in attainment during the transition phase with a particular focus on child poverty.

2.   The REA process was used to identify 51 referenced sources across Wales, the UK and internationally. Thirteen of these sources used strong quantitative methods, some with elements of longitudinal design to compare change over time, across the transition phase.

3.   This research focuses on the transition by pupils from the last year of primary school at age 10-11 to the first year of secondary school at age 11-12. In Wales and England these two years are also known as Year 6 (which is the end of Key Stage 2) and Year 7 (which is the beginning of Key Stage 3). Typically pupils will move from a small, local primary school where they are taught by one class teacher generally in a single, familiar classroom.

Key Findings

4.   National and international quantitative evidence agrees that pupils experience concerns prior to transfer. These concerns result in a degree of anxiety prior to and during the first year in secondary school. For some this anxiety may be more acute and may result in what some authors describe as a poor transition. Pupils may experience feelings of loneliness, uncertainty and low self-esteem which may affect their school work.

5.   There is evidence that some groups are more prone to experience such anxiety and a resulting poor transition. These groups include those receiving free school meals (FSM), those of lower ability, those of lower socio-economic status (SES), those with low self-image and self-esteem, those in minority ethnic groups, those with single parents and those without older siblings at their new school. Some of these groups are proxies for poverty, therefore it can be said that those in poverty have a higher likelihood of experiencing a poor transition.

6.   There is evidence across the UK that a drop in attainment takes place during the transition. Characteristics of pupils particularly affected by the drop in attainment include: pupils receiving free school meals, those with poor prior attainment, those with low self-esteem and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

7.   International quantitative evidence supports this view of a drop in attainment during the transition. Some authors provide evidence that a 'dip' in attainment occurs during the transition, suggesting that the drop is only temporary. Others see it as more pervasive, particularly for vulnerable

groups. The various literature sources tend to explore different groups. This limits the extent of comparison that can be made to explore which groups experience the most significant effects.

Key factors

8.   Five sets of transition issues are used to structure the analysis, drawing on recognised categories:
- **social and personal** – factors relating to young people, their peers, their parents and the wider school environment;
- **curriculum** – factors relevant to what is taught in both primary and secondary schools;
- **pedagogic** – factors relating to teaching, classroom practice and professional development;
- **autonomy and managing learning** – factors associated with young people being active learners who influence their learning;
- **administrative** – factors associated with the management of the transition process.

9.   The strongest evidence relates to social and personal factors as possible causes of a drop in attainment. Factors associated with the school environment (concerns about safety and concerns about the learning environment) were significant for those who experienced a drop in attainment for some subjects. The involvement of parents was significant in explaining improvements in literacy in one study. However, no robust evidence exists relating the drop in attainment to the impact of friendship groups, out-of-school activities or concerns about bullying.

10.   There is an extensive and compelling discussion of curriculum factors within the literature. Curriculum factors include transfer of pupil-specific information about learning, curriculum continuity and the changing relationship between pupils and teachers. However, there is no robust evidence of a link to a drop in attainment.

11.   There is no evidence of factors relating to pedagogy or autonomous learning directly influencing a drop in attainment. Pedagogy issues identified include differences between primary and secondary teaching approaches and a lack of professional dialogue between the two phases. Autonomous learning relates to whether Year 7 pupils can cope with the level of autonomy and whether the pupil voice is sufficiently communicated.

12.   There is no clear evidence of a link between administrative issues and a drop in attainment. However, many authors stress the importance of developing stronger relationships between primary and secondary schools, particularly around information transfer, and the role of local authorities to co-ordinate good practice and common systems.

13. Overall, there is too much reliance placed in the literature on inference between experiences of transition and changes in attainment. This view is supported by many authors.

Actions and Interventions

14. The rapid evidence assessment has identified numerous interventions and actions to address negative effects of the transition. Many in particular aim to address the drop in attainment.

15. However, very few robust evaluations of these interventions exist. This may be because some materials are not published. However, we suspect that there are different reasons. These include the cost and time required, but also the difficulty of undertaking such evaluations. The particular problem of attribution is a major challenge, given the wide range of other initiatives and activities which might be responsible for any effects detected by research results. There are very few reviews of different interventions, thus precluding comparison and assessment of which are the most effective and why they work.

16. Interventions and actions to address curriculum factors are the most common; covering a broad range of themes. Direct evidence of improved attainment is demonstrated as a result of a Scottish project tailored to pupils' needs, in this case low achieving, vulnerable pupils. Plus, there is indirect evidence of impact on attainment for extended curricula and out-of-hours activities. Other major areas of intervention, with anecdotal or assumed benefits, but with no explicit measure of impact on attainment, include: cross-phase teaching with a common curriculum; use of bridging units, summer schools and catch-up programmes.

17. Social and personal interventions were the second most common just behind curriculum interventions. The strongest evidence of impact is the Home School Knowledge Exchange (HSKE) project, in Cardiff and Bristol, which used robust quantitative techniques to demonstrate that the intervention had a significant effect. Open days/evenings for parents and buddy/mentoring interventions are commonly used but generally lack evaluation evidence. For example, spending a full working day with the future secondary school was regarded as one of the stronger interventions at reducing pupil anxiety, but there was no direct evidence of the effect on attainment.

18. Actions and interventions relating to pedagogy have some evaluation evidence that they address the drop in attainment. One study found a positive effect resulting from collaborative learning in science when delivered in the primary school but not when delivered in the secondary school. In addition, anecdotal evidence of benefits to teachers and approaches to teaching do exist. Key pedagogy interventions were sharing approaches to learning and teaching between the phases, teacher exchange and secondment, and use of Advanced Skills Teachers in primary schools.

19. There is limited evidence demonstrating the impact of actions and interventions to address administrative factors. However, there is a strong consensus that some specific interventions make a positive contribution to the transition process. These include transition planning, sharing good practice between schools, transition co-ordination between schools, and more effective feedback loops in the experiences and outcomes of transition with staff, parents and pupils.

20. There is no robust evidence suggesting that actions and interventions relating to autonomous learning address the drop in attainment. Interventions to address autonomous learning were not extensive; they covered pupils understanding of their learning styles, being professional learners and use of learning portfolios.

Impact on those in poverty

21. There is evidence that those in poverty are more likely to experience a drop in attainment during the transition. Most commonly this is identified through analysis of those pupils receiving free school meals. But it is also evident from other attributes strongly linked to those experiencing poverty. For example, those in poverty are likely to have low previous attainment. Prior attainment is a major factor in predicting future academic success.

22. However, there is little evidence that isolates which transition factors, associated with low attainment, are most likely to affect those in poverty.

23. Some of the interventions, with robust evidence of an impact on attainment, do clearly address the needs of pupils experiencing poverty.

The research base

24. This rapid evidence assessment has demonstrated the wide variety of methodologies and subject disciplines which have driven the range of research. It has also demonstrated the lack of research using experimental, longitudinal designs, which focuses on the drop in attainment linked to poverty.

Points of focus for future action

25. The following points of focus have been identified for future action:
    - focusing future transition interventions on poverty and targeting those experiencing disadvantage;
    - improving the level of parental engagement for pupils in poverty;
    - adapting the curriculum and pedagogy for those in poverty;
    - maintaining the focus on transition planning through local authorities;
    - a range of actions to support better understanding of current practice:

- o database of interventions;
  - o transition intervention framework;
- a range of approaches to improve research and evaluation:
  - o national research programme focusing on pupils receiving free school meals;
  - o more impact evaluations of interventions and transition plans;
  - o evaluation guide for schools;
  - o development of demonstration projects and action research;
  - o use of more experimental, longitudinal designs for large scale studies.

1. Introduction

1.1. The aim of this research study was to undertake a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of academic and other published literature. The focus is on the factors contributing to the drop in attainment of young people as they move into and through the early years of secondary education. The aim is to consider in particular children from less advantaged backgrounds. The research took place between February 2010 and June 2010.

Objectives

1.2. The objectives were:
- to evidence the rapid evidence assessment process;
- to synthesise the evidence found, highlighting key findings;
- to summarise the implications for policy and practice;
- to identify the gaps in the evidence base and provide suggestions for future educational research to address those gaps.

1.3. This report draws together the findings from the rapid evidence assessment process.

Study Background

1.4. In the 2005 document The Learning Country II: Vision into Action the Welsh Assembly Government set out its commitment to improving the continuity between Key Stage 2 (primary school) and Key Stage 3 (secondary school): "Pupils often lose continuity and progression in their learning during the transition from primary to secondary schooling".

1.5. In addition, the effects of the transition can be amplified by risk factors such as poverty, leaving some young people particularly vulnerable. Data presented in the statistical Bulletin Academic Achievement and Entitlement to Free School Meals (2008) shows clearly that the gap between rich and poor widens as the pupils move into and through the early years of secondary education, emphasising that previously existing inequalities increase once a child enters secondary school.

1.6. Three separate reports were submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government, which include recommendations to investigate the drop in attainment of young people as they move through the transition phase (i.e. from KS2 to KS3), including two recommendations focusing on children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds:
- The Child Poverty Expert Group offered recommendations in March 2009 including the following: "The Welsh Assembly Government should, as a matter of some urgency, investigate appropriate research to explore the reasons for the loss of educational progress of many of our young people as they move into and through the early years of secondary education. The research should explore the apparently close association between this phenomena and child poverty";

- In November 2008 The Children and Young People Committee published Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education, which included a recommendation to: "commission research into the reasons why educational progress seems to decline in the early years of secondary school, with particular reference to children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds";
- In addition, during early 2009 a Task and Finish Group was set up to review educational provision for 8 to 14 year olds in Wales, chaired by Professor David Egan. This group examined issues around the transition from primary to secondary education, as well as how schools should address the challenges of under-achievement and poor engagement. Their work produced seven recommendations with the last one urging the Welsh Assembly Government to establish the extent to which and the reasons for the drop in attainment between the ages of 8 and 14.

1.7. Furthermore, in November 2009 the Children and Families (Wales) Measure was passed, which underpins the Assembly Government's aim to support the UK Government's target of eradicating child poverty by 2020. One of the broad aims for contributing to the eradication of child poverty includes "to reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children".

1.8. It was recognised that a large body of work exists on the relationship between transition and attainment, as well as a range of research on the link between poverty and attainment. This work reframes this evidence to provide a comprehensive report and informed suggestions to advise future planning in Wales and investigate what it is about socio-economic disadvantage that leads to the drop in attainment.

Methodology

1.9. We reviewed each of the 51 selected documents (see bibliography at Annex A) as part of the analysis process. This report has drawn on the information and quotes detailed in the reviews. Where authors have quoted other sources, not on our list, we have referenced these as footnotes.

1.10. The key elements in the methodology of this study were as follows:
- agreement of search strategy and inclusion criteria;
- initial database searches to generate a long list of sources;
- agreement of exclusion criteria to generate a shortlist;
- document review;
- synthesis of evidence.

1.11. Each of these is described in detail in Annex B.

Report Structure

1.12. The structure of this report is as follows:
Section 2 covers an overview of the literature sources and draws out some generic key issues;
Sections 3 -7 describe the range of factors and interventions in the areas of social and personal, curriculum, pedagogy, autonomous learning and administration;

Section 8 compares the key factors, actions and interventions across all the issues;
Section 9 analyses the research sources from a methodological perspective;
Section 10 draws together the conclusions for this study.

2. Overview of literature sources

Variety and range of evidence

2.1. The sources reviewed are heterogeneous, wide-ranging, at times inconsistent and incomplete. This is due to the way this topic touches on many aspects of teaching in both primary and secondary schools, the range of research methods employed to explore this area, the range of different groups which might be considered to experience poverty and, the range of actions and interventions which exist.

2.2. Very few of the identified sources come close to exactly addressing the research topic because of this diversity. For example, some specifically try to assess whether certain factors directly affect the drop in attainment, with a clear, quantitative measurement of attainment; but they then do not explore the impact on those in poverty and do not describe interventions. Many studies describe interventions but do not evaluate them to a degree of rigour which enables an assessment of their impact in reducing the drop in attainment.

2.3. The research is a mixture of literature including academic articles published in journals, published books, government research/evaluation reports and other forms of reports.

2.4. The majority of the research relates to the UK (**Table 2.1**). However, a number of other countries are represented among the 51 selected items, in particular the United States (five).

Table 2.1: National focus of research	
Location	*Total*
UK	42
General	6
England	19
Wales	8
Scotland	7
Northern Ireland	2
International	9
General	2
US	5
Germany	1
Australia	1
Total	**51**

2.5. The studies incorporate a range of methodologies - covering quantitative, qualitative and literature review - with some studies including an element of each (Table 2.2). The table lists each study where the methodology was identified as strong to moderate. These use of systematic search criteria (Annex B) supported the process of identifying robust research.

Table 2.2: Methodologies	
Methodology	*Total*
Qualitative	33
Quantitative	30
Literature Review	15

Quantitative studies

2.6. Thirteen of the studies have used robust quantitative designs to establish whether a drop in attainment occurs and what factors might explain this drop (Table 2.3).

2.7. These studies cover England, Scotland, the US, Wales and Germany. Wales features in one study of two schools (Holtom and Lloyd-Jones) and partially in another study comparing pupils across two schools in Cardiff and two in Bristol (Greenhough et al).

Table 2.3: Quantitative Project Summaries		
Author/Date	**Title**	**Brief Description of Quantitative Element**
Ashton, 2008	Improving the transfer to Secondary School: How every child's voice can matter	2012 questionnaires sent to all year 6 students across one local authority in England, **1673 returned**. A response rate 83%. The questionnaire explored expectations of the transition process.
Evangelou et al, 2008	What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School? Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 Project (EPPSE 3-14)	Part of the EPPSE 3-14 Project – (Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14), looking at transition successes and challenges, support processes and hindrances, pupil/parent experiences and perceptions, background characteristics of pupils and families, practices leading to positive or negative transitions. **550 respondent survey of students** across six mixed English local authorities, using quota sampling to ensure representativeness. Undertaken in children's first year of secondary school (Yr 7),
Gibbons and Silva, 2007	Urban Density and Pupil Attainment	Detailed analysis of English Pupil Level Annual Census (PLASC)/National Pupil Database (NPD) data linked to pupil points score analysis resulting in three cohorts of those aged 16 in 2002, 2003, 2004; over **400,000 per cohort**.
Graham and Hill, 2003	Negotiating the transition to Secondary School	Survey of three secondary schools and three each of their feeder primary schools in Glasgow. Evidence is based on surveys, with **268 primary pupils** involved in an initial survey, with 173 taking part in a second stage when they had moved to secondary school.
Greenhough et al, 2008	What effect does involving parents in knowledge exchange activities during transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 have on children's attainment and learning dispositions?	**270 pupils** in 4 primary schools (2 in each of Cardiff and Bristol – 1 high Free School Meals and 1 not) and the major receiving secondary schools, plus similar comparison schools. All students were tested at the end of year 6 and again in year 7 after transfer in the spring term. Changes to students learning dispositions, attitudes and acclimatisation were monitored
Hargreaves and Galton, 2002	Transfer and Transition: Transfer from the Primary Classroom 20 Years on	Six transfer schools, covering approximately **600 pupils**, assessed in the ORACLE study using the Richmond basic skills test in the summer term before transfer and in the autumn and summer terms after transfer, together with attitude, motivation and self-esteem measures.
Rice, 2001	Explaining the negative impact of the transition from Middle to High School on student performance in mathematics and science	This analysis draws on data from the Longitudinal Study of American Youth (LSAY) (1992), a panel study of public middle and high school science and mathematics education, to study student progress across the transition from middle to high school. The study uses Cohort 2 with a base-year **sample of 3,116 students** who were in the seventh grade in 1987. These students were selected from middle schools that feed into 52 high schools randomly selected from national public schools stratified by geographical region and community type; 60 seventh-grade students were randomly selected in each school to be included in the study.

Table 2.3: Quantitative Project Summaries		
Author/Date	**Title**	**Brief Description of Quantitative Element**
Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009	A Brighter Future: Young People's Transitions in the South Wales Valleys	This qualitative and quantitative study focused on two primary schools and one receiving high school. Researchers interviewed eight young people from high school (year 7), seven parents/guardians of young people from high school (year 7), focus groups of primary and secondary teachers, and interviews of headteachers of the three schools. A survey of all young people in year 7 (**160**) was also undertaken, combined with analysis of data on pupil and performance.
Reyes et al, 2000	A Longitudinal Examination of the Transition into Senior High School for Adolescents from Urban, Low-Income Status, and Predominantly Minority Backgrounds	Research based on longitudinal pre/post surveys of US students at 2 primary schools going to 25 secondary schools. Total population of 235 students resulting in **137 pupils who completed the study** (57% female; 92% from minority backgrounds – 76% Latino and 16% African-American). The study aimed to explore the long-term effects that transition-related changes in perceptions have on final academic outcomes. Young people were tracked from 'eighth grade' (ages 13/14) through their transition to senior high school (14/15 upwards) and their ultimate completion outcome.
Stoll et al 2003	Preparing for Change: Evaluation of the Implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy Pilot	Quantitative and qualitative study involving the following survey elements: survey of English LEAS (81), pilot strategy managers (130 responses), teachers (361 responses) and **pupils (2,151 across pilot and non-pilot schools)**. Data analysis was conducted on progress tests and optional tests for **17,875** pupils in English and **16,868** pupils in mathematics who were part of the pilot.
Topping et al 2007	Group work: transition into secondary	Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of two collaborative learning projects. Both involved samples of **644 pupils** in Year 7 with comparator control groups, using a number of science based attainment tests and other attitudinal tests.
van Ophuysen 2009	Moving to Secondary School: on the role of affective expectations in a tracking school system	Longitudinal study of pupil attitudes and experiences of transition in Germany. Based on two phases of questionnaire fieldwork with **635 pupils aged 9 to 13**.
West, Sweeting and Young, 2010	Transition matters: pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary school transition in the West of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment	Survey element covers over **2000 Scottish pupils**. Data is longitudinal, referring to pupils at age 11 in primary schools, and then at age 13 and 15 in secondary school. The study also refers to the pupils after leaving school (age 18/19)

2.8. Most of these quantitative studies (nine) have a pre- and post-transition design (Table 2.4), undertaking surveys before and after the transition. Attainment is measured using published data on pupil performance in school tests, usually relating to the Key Stages or using specially designed tests. Most other data analysed in these quantitative studies is generated by surveys covering pupil attitudes and experiences, two draw on existing longitudinal government datasets.

Table 2.4: Attributes of quantitative literature sources						
Lead Author	Data/ Survey	Pre	Post	Attainment measured	Sub-groups	Country
Ashton	S	✓	-	-	-	England
Evangelou	S	-	✓	-	SES	England
Gibbons	D	✓	✓	✓ data	Urban focus	England
Graham	S	✓	✓		Ethnic groups	Scotland
Greenhough	S	✓	✓	✓ test	FSM	Wales & England
Hargreaves	S	✓	✓	✓ test	-	England
Holtom	S	-	✓	✓ data	FSM	Wales
Rice	S	✓	✓	✓ data	Maths & science	USA
Reyes	S	✓	✓	✓ data	Urban, ethnic, low income	USA
Stoll	D	✓	✓	✓ data	FSM, gender	England
Topping	S	-	✓	✓ test	-	Scotland
Van Ophuysen	S	✓	✓	✓ test	-	Germany
West	S	✓	✓	✓ data	Ethnic groups / SES	Scotland

2.9. There is some degree of focus on sub-groups who experience poverty, such as those receiving free school meals (FSM) and those with a lower socio-economic status (SES). However, each study tends to focus on different groups thus limiting opportunities for triangulation between them.

Intervention-focused studies
2.10. Around three quarters (38 out of 51) of the studies cover actions and interventions to address negative effects of the transition. Some are focused entirely on evaluating one particular transition intervention, some list specific named interventions with limited detail on evaluation findings, and others list possible or non-specific interventions as a result of secondary research.

2.11. Some interventions are structured, externally-funded projects which may involve a number of elements which could be considered as individual actions or interventions. For example, the Glasgow ENABLE project operated over three years, involving teacher exchange, pedagogy adaptation and curriculum adaptation for low achieving vulnerable pupils (Bryan et al, 2007). This is very different in nature to a taster session for Year 6 pupils, which is probably delivered out of mainstream resources. For this reason we use the term 'action' (as some activities are regarded as quite normal) or 'intervention' (as other activities are exceptional and additional).

2.12. These actions and interventions may operate at a school level, at a school cluster level, at a local authority level or at a national level.

Generic key issues

2.13. Prior to the detailed analysis a number of generic key issues are discussed arising from the literature sources.

When does transition happen?

2.14. The focus of this research and of most studies reviewed is on the transition by pupils from the last year of primary school at age 10-11 to the first year of secondary school at age 11-12. In Wales and England these two years are also known as Year 6 (which is the end of Key Stage 2) and Year 7 (which is the beginning of Key Stage 3).

2.15. Some authors broaden this out to consider how experiences in earlier years may influence the pupil. Others have analysed later years after Year 7.

2.16. Some literature considers transfer issues relating to joining middle school which can occur at ages 8, 9 or 10 or leaving middle school for high school at ages 12 or 13. This mainly relates to US research where middle school systems are more common.

What is unique about the transition?

2.17. Typically pupils will move from a small, local primary school where they are taught by one class teacher; generally in a single, familiar classroom. At Year 6 pupils will be the oldest in their school, 'a big fish in a little pond'. Some describe it as a *"rite of passage in young people lives"* (Pratt and George[1], 2005 in West et al 2010 p21).

2.18. In the secondary school pupils will typically be in a much bigger school (in terms of size of buildings and numbers pupils), travel further to school and have multiple teachers covering different subjects. They will also be the youngest and smallest in the new school.

2.19. At the same time pupils will also be changing socially and physically as they approach puberty.

What are the consequences of the transition?

2.20. International quantitative evidence and the general body of literature on transition agree that pupils experience concerns prior to transfer. These concerns result in a degree of anxiety prior to and during first year in secondary school. For some this anxiety may be more acute and may result in what some authors describe as a poor transition. Pupils may experience feelings of loneliness, uncertainty and low self-esteem which may affect their school work.

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[1] Pratt and George, 2005. Transferring friendships: girls' and boys' friendships in the transition from primary to secondary school. *Children and society* 19: 16-26

2.21. A recent survey of Scottish pupils identified that a quarter of pupils found "the transition experience very difficult" (West et al, 2010). Many authors identify a range of factors which generate pupil anxieties prior to and during the transition.

2.22. There is evidence that some groups are more prone to experience anxiety and a resulting poor transition. These groups include those receiving free school meals (FSM), those of lower socio-economic status (SES), those of lower ability, those with low self-image and self-esteem, those living in urban (disadvantaged) areas, those in minority ethnic groups, those with single parents and those without older siblings at their new school. Some of these groups are proxies for poverty, therefore it can be said that those in poverty have a higher likelihood of experiencing a poor transition. Experiences of individual groups are covered in section 3.

2.23. There is evidence across the UK that a drop in attainment, compared with expected progress, takes place during the transition. One of the most commonly cited studies found that *"two out of every five pupils fail to make the expected progress in the year after the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3"* (Hargreaves and Galton, 1999, cited, in Taverner et al, 2001, p6). In a later study, Hargreaves and Galton (2002) refer to this as a 'hiatus'[2].

2.24. Key characteristics of such pupils, where robust evidence exists, include: pupils receiving free school meals, those with poor prior attainment, those with low self-esteem and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Scores for such 'at risk' pupils on standardised tests of attainment *"seriously decline after transfer"* (Galton and Morrison, 2000, p444).

2.25. Interestingly, Hargreaves and Galton (2002) also found evidence that higher performers undergo a dip in performance after the first term in the secondary school.

2.26. Evidence of the 'hiatus' is also found at the subject level. Subjects such as English and Mathematics show a reduction in pupil progress after the summer break (Taylor and Conor, 2005; Whitby et al, 2005). Literacy is a focus of many interventions and can be a limiting factor for learning development. In respect of science learning Burr and Simpson (2007) describe a 'loss of momentum' from the last year of primary to the second year of secondary education. Whitby et al (2005) suggest that Welsh language learning was affected, particularly when students moved to English-medium secondary schools.

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[2] Oxford Dictionary Definition - Hiatus: break or gap in sequence or series.

2.27. International quantitative evidence supports this view of a drop in attainment during the transition. Some authors provide evidence that a 'dip' in attainment occurs during the transition, suggesting that the drop is only temporary. There are many different ways for measuring attainment across the literature, which are discussed in section 9. The most common is Key Stage results, for example, as used by Gibbons and Silva below.

> **Gibbons and Silva, 2007, Urban Density and Pupil Attainment**
>
> This highly quantitative and robust study explored the association between urban density and pupil attainment. It used three cohorts of English pupils aged 16 in 2002, 2003, 2004. Sample sizes were over 400,000 per cohort.
>
> The dataset uses the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) database within the National Pupil Database (NPD) data. The PLASC data records information on pupil's school, gender, age, ethnicity, language skills, any special educational needs or disabilities, entitlement to free school meals and various other pieces of information including postcode of residence. The NPD records educational attainment at Key Stages for each pupil.
>
> The authors identify that disadvantaged pupils with low average attainment are most prevalent in urban areas. However, their interest in the transition is more about the movement of pupils between urban and non-urban areas to explore the effect on attainment rather than on the transition per se. Their methodological approach to measuring attainment is interesting and could be utilised in further research.

2.28. On balance most authors believe the effects of transition dissipate during the first year. Some think this dissipation happens as early as the first term, others believe that it takes up to a year.

2.29. In Wales some vulnerable groups of pupils are evidenced as more likely to experience a drop in attainment than other pupils. For example Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) data[3] shows that there is an increasing gap between the performance of non-FSM and FSM pupils in Key Stage 3, compared to Key Stage 2.

2.30. In an earlier study, Kenway et al (2005) suggests that Key Stage 2 results have been rising for both deprived and average schools but the gap between the two remains large. WAG data[3] demonstrates that in Key Stage 2, FSM pupils are seen to have a 20.0% difference in attainment to non-FSM pupils in English and 17.5% in Maths. In Key Stage 3, this gap in attainment increases to 29.0% (English) and 26.8% (Maths), with little evidence of any variation in this figure over the period from 2006 to 2009.

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[3] Statistical Bulletin Academic Achievement and Entitlement to Free School Meals (2009 http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/schools2010/100318/?lang=en

2.31. However, FSM is not accepted by everyone. Some believe it does not provide good coverage for low income families that are not claiming benefits (those experiencing in-work poverty) and is subject to a number of other criticisms. A major criticism is that parents do not claim due to not being aware of their eligibility (as evidenced in a working paper based on Hampshire FSM data, funded by ESRC, undertaken by Bristol University[4]).

2.32. Estyn analysis shows that schools with higher proportions of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds see a negative attainment effect compared with the performance of pupils who are not from a disadvantaged background.

"Pupils' performance is negatively affected by their own experience of deprivation, but it is also the case that other pupils who are not materially deprived are additionally affected by the general level of deprivation in the school" (Estyn, 2008, p13).

2.33. Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009 state that while the correlation between eligibility for free school meals and low educational attainment is established, *"the causal relationship is less clear".* They identify three explanatory factors covering: lower levels of cognitive, social and emotional development for children in poverty; lower levels of parental support for children in poverty; and, challenges for schools with high numbers of free school meals pupils. The authors conclude that all these factors contribute to low levels of educational attainment, which is the strongest predictor of later academic performance.

2.34. For some pupils this can lead to longer term effects such as depression and sustained poor performance (West, 2010). The various literature sources explore different groups and so no direct comparison can be made to analyse which groups experience the most significant effects.

2.35. The reasons why more disadvantaged communities have low school attainment are not well-understood, *"the fact that children from poorer family backgrounds have lower school attainment is well known, but the reasons are many, varied and poorly understood"* (Gibbons and Silva, 2006).

2.36. There is some limited evidence that aspects of the transition cause the drop in attainment mentioned above. However, this evidence is far from conclusive (West et al, 2010). Some authors believe there is insufficient longitudinal research to demonstrate that transition leads to changes in attainment (Taverner, 2001). Overall, analysis of the literature and the authors' own assessments is that too much reliance is placed on inferences that experience of transition leads to changes in attainment. The views of authors about the adequacy of the research base are discussed in Section 9.

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[4] Kounalia, D., Robinson, T., Goldstein, H., Lauder, H., (unpublished) The probity of free school meals as a proxy measure for disadvantage http://www.cmm.bristol.ac.uk/publications/FSM.pdf

2.37. There is extensive identification of, and support for, good practice actions and interventions. However, limited evaluation evidence exists to prove that some methods address the drop in attainment in general or for those in poverty.

2.38. One such project which provides some evidence of impact on attainment covers many intervention areas. The Key Stage 3 Strategy evaluation involved detailed statistical analysis of pupils involved (see inset below). The results indicated that fewer pupils (22%) did not achieve a level 4 in mathematics progress tests compared with 27% nationally. For English, 20% of the sample did not achieve a level 4 compared to 25% nationally. Furthermore, a significant negative effect was found relating to free schools meals status. However, the wide ranging nature of this intervention makes it hard to identify which sub element might have had the most effect.

Stoll et al, 2003, Preparing for Change: Evaluation of the Implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy Pilot

This evaluation study explored the implementation of the pilot strategy in LEAs and schools in England. The origins of the KS3 Strategy can be found in the widespread concern that pupils make limited progress during Years 7-9 and many become demotivated and disengaged. While this pattern is found in middle years schooling in other countries, it has been brought into sharper focus by the achievements of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) at KS2.

The pilot involved a model of dissemination and the programmes and materials of the Strategy. The key aspects of the intervention included:
- a range of centrally developed training and classroom materials and resources;
- development of frameworks for English, mathematics, and science;
- training and practical support from regional directors and LEA consultants;
- departmental audits to inform planning;
- literacy and numeracy summer schools and catch-up programmes for pupils transferring with KS2 literacy and numeracy attainments below level 4;
- booster classes for Year 9 pupils in preparation for the KS3 tests.

The evaluation has a strong quantitative element based on progress tests and optional tests. However, the report focuses more in changes occurring as a result of the pilot, rather than the impact on attainment. The main successes were judged to be raising the profile of KS3, focusing on teaching and learning, raising expectations (especially among lower attaining pupils) and support by KS3 consultants to schools.

Key factors

2.39. Five categories of transition issues, actions and interventions are discussed in a number of sources[5] (Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000; Fuller et al, 2005; Morrison, 2005; Ashton, 2008). Below we describe each category:

- **social and personal** – factors relating to young people, their peers, their parents and the wider school environment;
- **curriculum** – factors relevant to what is taught in both primary and secondary schools;
- **pedagogic** – factors relating to teaching, classroom practice and professional development;
- **autonomy and managing learning** – factors associated with young people being active learners who influence their learning;
- **administrative** – factors associated with the management of the transition process.

2.40. Some refer to these categories as 'bridges', a metaphor in relation to interventions that can help get pupils across the divide of the transition.

2.41. These categories are used to structure the issues and actions or interventions that have been identified as a result of this rapid evidence assessment.

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[5] Original references to: Barber, 1999, Bridges to assist a difficult crossing, Times Educational Supplement, 12 March 1999 and Lenga and Ogden, 2000, Lost in transit: attainment deficit in pupil transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3.

3. Social and personal factors

3.1. By social and personal factors we refer to pupils' and parents' experiences of the transition in terms of the school environment, atmosphere, layout and support mechanisms. This includes pastoral support for pupils and communication with parents.

3.2. There is some good evidence on how social and personal factors cause a drop in attainment, as measured through quantitative research. Many actions and interventions exist although there is limited evaluative evidence of the outcomes they achieve.

Issues

3.3. Social and personal factors are grouped into the following areas:
- individual characteristics;
- school environment;
- new routines;
- friendship/peer groups;
- local community and neighbourhood;
- parental engagement;
- concerns about bullying.

Individual characteristics

3.4. Individuals with certain characteristics are more likely to experience a drop in attainment as a result of the transition. We review the evidence around the following characteristics:
- socio-economic status/free school meals;
- attitude to change;
- academic ability;
- self-esteem;
- ethnicity;
- gender;
- special educational needs.

Socio-economic status / free school meals

3.5. Pupils from disadvantaged areas, often in lower socio-economic status (SES) groups, are less likely to get used to new routines with great ease, to settle in very well or to have positive transitions compared with high SES children (Evangelou et al, 2008).

Evangelou et al, 2008, What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school?

This study is part of the wider Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 project (EPPSE 3-14). It focuses on transition successes and challenges, support processes and hindrances, pupil/parent experiences and perceptions, background characteristics of pupils and families, and practices leading to positive or negative transitions. The methodology covers a literature

review, surveys of children and parents and 12 in-depth case studies of individual pupils.

The quantitative work is based around a post-transition quantitative survey of 550 Year 7 students, across six mixed English local authorities, using quota sampling to ensure representativeness. The design does not incorporate a measure of attainment so it is unable to assess the impact on this variable. It does include characteristic variables for: gender, SES of family, ethnicity, highest family qualification, family status, English as an additional language, SEN, FSM, index of disadvantage, index of home learning, and health problems.

This is a robust study covering relevant variables, but lacks the longitudinal aspect and attainment measurement.

3.6.   However, other robust research contradicts this evidence with socio-demographic factors (including SES) not strongly related to transition experiences (West et al, 2010). For example, univariate analysis indicates no differences between sexes and weak insignificant relationships with age and religion.

West et al, 2010, Transition matters: pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary school transition in the West of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment

This study primarily involved a literature review and longitudinal data for 2586 Scottish pupils derived from the West of Scotland 11 to 16 Study, although it was not originally designed as a detailed investigation of primary-secondary school transition. The cohort was first surveyed aged 11 in their final primary school year in 1994. They were followed up in secondary schools on two occasions, aged 13 in the first term of their second year in 1996, and again aged 15 in their fourth year in 1999. Finally, the cohort was followed up beyond school-leaving, aged 18/19 in 2002/3. The study employed a random, stratified sampling approach.   Sample attrition[6] led to an effective response rate of 79% (or 2196) by age 13 and 45% (1258) by age 18/19.

The baseline survey explored socio-demographic and family, personal, pre-secondary, primary school and peer group factors. Transition experiences and outcomes were then monitored during follow-up work. Although it included grades achieved at Standard and Higher levels, it did not monitor attainment throughout the longitudinal period.

3.7.   Children eligible for free school meals also experience reduced attainment compared to those who are not (Estyn, 2009). Eligibility for free school meals is linked to parental benefit status, and thus connected to socio-economic status.

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[6] researchers use 'attrition' to describe the percentage of respondents not responding in subsequent rounds of longitudinal surveys

3.8.   Stoll et al (2003) found that schools where higher proportions of pupils took free school meals showed less pupil progress across year 7.

3.9.   The Department for Children Schools and Families in England (2009 p17-23) also identified free school meals as a major factor. It described some of the causes of the drop in attainment for disadvantaged pupils as follows:
Cause 1: More advantaged children may have access to a wide range of books or educational software, but parents from disadvantaged families may not know the ways to help their child succeed;
Cause 2: Disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than others. They are less likely to make two levels of progress between key stages than their more advantaged peers. Low attaining pupils typically find it slightly harder to catch up if they fall behind; and high attaining ones typically find it much harder to excel;
Cause 3: 'Bottom group' teaching and learning contributes to low achievement and low expectations;
Cause 4: Pupils who are eligible for free school meals are three and a half times more likely to be permanently excluded from secondary school;
Cause 5: The influence of peers is important, as it can be seen not to be 'cool to learn', and it is more likely that working class pupils show less ambition;
Cause 6: A child who is eligible for free school meals is more likely to have special educational needs.

Attitude to change
3.10. Social and environmental aspects of school are at the forefront of pupils' minds, and the content of lessons tend not to be a worry until these issues are resolved (Ashton, 2008). However, once in the first year of secondary school, children reported coping better with the changes than they had previously expected (Graham and Hill, 2003).

3.11. Pupils who perceive school to be irrelevant are more likely to experience difficulties in coping with transition (Van Ophuysen, 2009).

3.12. Changing school factors that influence negatively on transition experiences include moving from being the eldest in primary school to the youngest in secondary school (Shepherd and Roker, 2005), particularly with the daunting physical size of older pupils (Taylor and Conor, 2005). Furthermore, the size of school can cause anxieties, such as, getting lost (Ashton, 2008).

3.13. The primary school is small and usually based in the local community, whereas the secondary school is larger and can be located outside of the immediate community (Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Taylor and Conor (2005) suggest that there are typically 400 pupils in a (English) primary school, whereas there are likely to be over 1,000 or 2,000 in a secondary school.

Academic ability

3.14. Pupils who have difficulties with transfer are the ones who are not academically prepared for the next level according to Anderson et al (2000). West et al (2010) concur, demonstrating that lower ability is a cause of poor transition. Lower levels of prior achievement, particularly in literacy, contribute to the educational gap between pupils from disadvantaged areas compared to more affluent communities (Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009). This begins as early as Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

3.15. Pupils are concerned about their ability to perform in their new school (Evangelou, 2008). Some pupils are worried that their test results would determine their class sets and that they may end up in the bottom set (Ashton, 2008). This is important, because Whitby et al (2006) find that students in the bottom sets made the least overall progress over the first year of secondary school.

Ashton, 2008, Improving the transfer to secondary school: how every child's voice can matter

This study involved a literature review, a survey of Year 6 pupils across a local authority in England and evidence from class research sessions with three schools. It was part of a two-year Neighbourhood Renewal Fund project aimed at sustainably improving transition across the author's Borough. The achieved sample size is 1,673, a 83% response rate on the total questionnaires distributed.

The survey explored general feelings about high school, who they thought would help, how well they felt they would settle in and how likely they were to get into trouble. In addition pupils were invited to say anything else about their transition experiences. The class research sessions with three Year 6 classes in the summer term involved the children participating in a range of activities aimed at eliciting their views about transfer.

The survey provides a robust sample although it only covers students' expectations of transition. It does not include any measure of attainment. The author cites this work as an example of how student views can be represented.

3.16. Students' perceptions of their academic competence have been found to decline after transfer with less enjoyment of school, drops in attendance and psychological distress (Greenough et al, 2007). However, Hargreaves and Galton's (2002) findings from the ORACLE study[7], indicate that low attainers liking of school is unaltered over the year, but, for high attainers, enjoyment of school declines slightly.

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[7] The ORACLE study assessed pupils using the Richmond basic skills test in the summer term before transfer and summer term after transfer, together with attitude, motivation and self-esteem measures

3.17. Van Ophuysen's longitudinal study of pupil attitudes and experiences of successful transition (2009) found that personal attitudes, such as perceptions of academic ability and the level of dislike of school, are more reliable predictors of transition experiences than performance in tests.

Van Ophuysen, 2009, Moving to secondary school: on the role of affective expectations in a tracking school system

This longitudinal study of German pupils at aged between 9 and 13 covered 635 pupils across 17 primary schools. It involved pupils completing questionnaires six times over three years. The data used in this article are drawn from just the first and the third data collections, which took place at the end of grade four, prior to transition, and one year later at the end of grade five at secondary school. At the end of grade four and five, student questionnaires and achievement tests were administered by field staff during the regular school day.

It focuses on emotional, motivational and achievement-related effects of the transition from primary to secondary school and its contextual determinants in the school and the family. Most of the test tasks were drawn from existing international and national large-scale student assessments (e.g. Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS]).

The main conclusions are that the majority of pupils look forward to secondary school and that personal attitudes are the most reliable indicators of experience of transition than academic performance.

3.18. Reyes et al (2000) finds that in the US grade losses for inactive students were not made up four years after the transition. The students who experience grade drops have a poor recovery potential, *thus "a post-transition drop …..puts the average student dangerously close to failing, while sealing the fate of the below-average student"* (p538). They find that a range of studies highlight the problem of academic failure and drop-out from high school, leading to *"disenfranchisement from society, poor mental health, greater likelihood of low-paying jobs and unemployment"*. (Reyes et al, 2000, p520) This is especially evident for young people from minority, low-income backgrounds.

3.19. Holtom and Lloyd-Jones (2009) agree with this stating that *"low educational attainment is a powerful predictor of low attainment later in a pupil's school career"* (p 19). In particular they feel that children from disadvantaged communities struggle because of their lower levels of attainment and weaker basic skills.

Self-esteem

3.20. Low self-esteem hinders transition (West et al, 2010). Hargreaves and Galton (2002) contrast a self-image scale with academic performance which indicates that children with below average self-image scores, both before and after transfer, will have a probability of ending up in the bottom 25 percentile on attainment.

3.21. Summarising the findings of earlier research, Galton et al (2000) state:
"the children most at risk from the transfer process [are] younger, less mature, less confident pupils; ones of non-academic disposition, often from poor social and economic background. These children had difficulty adjusting to both the physical and academic organisation of the new school as well as the standards of work, and experienced problems with pupil teacher relationships" (p346).

3.22. Thus we can generalise that pupils experiencing poverty and low self-esteem are particularly vulnerable during the transition.

Ethnicity

3.23. Graham and Hill (2002, cited in Evangelou et al, 2008[8]) find that 77% of their sample of teachers agreed that pupils who speak a language other than English at home found transition more difficult. Furthermore, children of Asian background were less likely than white pupils to feel they had improved academically after transfer. Therefore, the authors found that minority ethnic pupils were more likely than white pupils to feel they had experienced difficulties 'fitting in'. Ashton (2008) drew similar conclusions.

3.24. Primary research found that children from ethnic minority backgrounds were encountering more difficulties with transition than others (Graham and Hill, 2003; Greenhough et al, 2007). Graham and Hill suggest that this may partly be related to these children having to move between and manage different cultural worlds at home and school and in other areas of their life.

3.25. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds were found to be over-represented among those who were performing poorly or only satisfactorily in listening, talking, reading and writing, whereas more white pupils were very good or excellent (Graham and Hill, 2003).

3.26. Race factors and socio-economic status create some of the greatest difficulties with transition in the US (Anderson et al, 2000; Reyes et al, 2000). In particular the authors believe this links to a lack of parental support structures.

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[8] Graham, C., and Hill, M. (2002), *The Transition to Secondary School.* Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society: University of Glasgow.

Gender

3.27. The literature highlights inconsistent views as to whether girls or boys experience poorer transitions.

3.28. Girls are found to be more vulnerable through difficulties in adjusting to disruption to friendship networks and impacts on self-esteem (Anderson et al, 2000). However, boys are seen to be more affected by a drop in attainment than girls. There is some evidence to suggest that girls are affected more at the later stages of secondary education (Whitby, 2006).

3.29. Demetriou et al (2000) infer that, *"boys are less likely to be stressed at transfer because they are more used to larger and more fluid [friendship] groupings"*. (p 438) However, they go on to state that girls are better at concentrating on desk work than boys.

3.30. The debate links to teaching and learning styles, 'feminisation' of the teaching system, and social differences between the genders (Galton et al, 2003; Greenhough et al, 2007). However, as can be seen by the range of evidence there is little consensus.

Special educational needs

3.31. Mixed evidence exists around special educational needs. Some studies indicate attainment below expected levels during transition (Anderson et al, 2000; Galton et al, 2003). However, others have found no evidence to suggest that vulnerable groups (such as those with SEN) had a less successful transition (Evangelou et al, 2008).

School environment

3.32. A number of authors have identified differences in the environment between primary and secondary schools as an issue causing poor transition (Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009).

3.33. Key changes include:
- the size of school (secondary schools are typically bigger in terms of pupils and physical buildings);
- more freedom and autonomy;
- typically multiple teachers rather than one main teacher;
- separate focus on subjects;
- generally less use of working walls and displays;
- pupils are the youngest, having been the eldest.

3.34. Coping with these changes is often linked to social and emotional development of young people. So, just as they are facing the changes described above they are dealing with new friendship groups and new routines (both covered below).

3.35. Holtom and Lloyd-Jones (2009) established that while pupils from deprived areas enjoy school as much as other pupils they are more likely to describe themselves as having poorer behaviour. The authors conclude that lower levels of social and emotional skills among pupils from deprived areas are connected to previously lower levels of performance, particularly with regard to literacy.

Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009, A brighter future: young peoples' transitions in the south Wales valleys

This study undertook a literature review, qualitative and a small quantitative survey as part of the research. The qualitative work was with small groups in two main schools. They undertook a survey of 160 pupils in year 7.

The key findings related to issues which particularly affect pupils from disadvantage backgrounds, covering: prior achievement; social and emotional development; value and importance of school; peer group pressure; and, parental attitudes and behaviour.

While describing these experiences and that they cause difficulties, the research does not explicitly demonstrate that the issues cause lower attainment.

3.36. Two school climate variables were found to magnify the negative effects of the transition on student performance in mathematics and science (Rice, 2001). These were 'increased concerns about school safety' as a result of being in a bigger, less familiar school (significant for science but not for mathematics) and 'increased concerns about the learning environment' (significant for mathematics but not for science).

Rice, 2001, Explaining the negative impact of the transition from middle to high school on student performance in mathematics and science

This strongly quantitative study drew on five years of data covering US pupils aged from 11 to 16, together with a literature review. The data was drawn from the Longitudinal Study of American Youth. The study used a recognised system for measuring academic progress, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) for mathematics and science.   The sample was 3,116 students who were in Year 7 in 1987, across 52 high schools.

Statistical analysis is robust and some significant findings are identified linking social and personal factors to a drop in attainment.

3.37. Lower attaining pupils have different areas of concern and optimism. For example low attaining boys were least looking forward to mathematics, English, science and being bullied (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002). This compares with the high attaining boys who were least looking forward to homework, detention, English and new teachers. So greater concerns exist about subjects for low attaining boys and aspects of new routines for high attaining boys.

New routines

3.38. The pattern of the school day is generally very different in secondary school compared with primary school. This includes moving between classrooms and familiarity with new teachers. Baumfield et al (2002) suggest that adjusting to new routines could be a cause of poor transition, as is the fear of the anticipated workload (Morrison, 2005), although neither is linked to a drop in attainment.

3.39. Yuen (2007) refers to work by Eccles and Midgley (1989[9]) on 'stage-environment fit theory' which describes how pupil motivation relates to the relationship between their needs and the educational environment. Thus an increase in a students' motivation to learn will result when there is a fit between their developmental needs and the educational environment. The factors that might negatively affect the 'fit' include increased class size, whole class tasks and lack of student-teacher relationship.

3.40. As well as concerns about negative impacts there are positive results of transition. The post-transfer year is when students, no longer the youngest in the school, can become very self-aware, *"conscious of 'growing up… they respond well to opportunities to exercise choice and to feel some sense of control over their learning."* (Demetriou et al, 2000) (p 429) There is evidence to suggest that the pupils become secure with routines and are ready for challenge. In fact if they do not receive new opportunities, they may turn to engaging in more social activities, which may cause tension with academic work.

Friendship/peer groups

3.41. The move from primary to secondary school brings a very different social environment, where pupils change from knowing their peers to not knowing many other pupils. Most of the evidence relating to friendship groups and peers is used to explain negative consequences of the transition but not necessarily a drop in attainment. There are some references to particular effects on 'at risk' groups.

3.42. Most pupils are pleased that they were going to secondary school with people they knew, but some are worried about being lonely, particularly those who were the only one from their primary school (Ashton, 2008).

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[9] Eccles, J. S., and Midgley, C. (1989). Stage-environment fit: Developmentally appropriate classrooms for young adolescents. In C. Ames and R. Ames (Eds.), *Research on motivation: Goals and cognitions* (Vol. 3, pp. 139-186). San Diego: Academic Press, Inc.

3.43. The importance of friendship groups is highlighted in the literature. Rice (2001) notes that the, *"existence, quality and stability of social structures can be an important predictor of a student's ability to succeed academically."* (p377)

3.44. Those within friendship groups are more likely to view school favourably and have higher performance levels. Hartup (1996, cited in Demetriou et al, 2000[10]) uses the concept of friends providing one another with *"cognitive and social scaffolding."* (p433)

3.45. Demetriou et al (2000) provide detail as to why friendships and student performance are linked. Young people without strong peer-relationships report less positive perceptions of self-worth and therefore may not adjust as well with the move to a new school. Furthermore, children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have lower levels of social and emotional skills which are regarded as becoming *"increasingly important factors in determining academic success or failure."* (Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009, p12).

3.46. Linked to the previous discussion Demetriou et al found that students low in achievement and self-reliance improve their scores on measures of success if their high-scoring friends reciprocate their friendship choice and if those friendships are stable for at least one year. However, West et al (2010) feel that workload and teachers were a bigger factor than how well respondents got on with other pupils following transfer to secondary.

3.47. However, friendships can have a negative impact on learning. For example, there is less investment from students in academic activities and more investment in non-academic activities during the transition phase (Demetriou et al, 2000). Galton et al (2003) concur, finding that friendships are a means of social support, but also that they can cause a distraction to learning. Pupils may not want to appear academic to their peers (Evangelou et al, 2008). Similarly for pupils in Years 7 and 8 social relationships with peers become the priority and an anti-work culture can develop (Morrison, 2005).

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[10] Hartup, W. W. (1996). Cooperation, close relationships, and cognitive development. In W. M. Bukowski, A. F. Newcomb, and W.W. Hartup (Eds.), *The company they keep: Friendships in childhood and adolescence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3.48. Noyes' (2006) identified issues of poor transition for one pupil who exhibited rebellious behaviour, which was linked to attitudes to learning derived from peer influences. Peer effects were found to have a significant impact on the case study pupil, particularly in relation to the challenging of authority. Increased competition in the classroom, combined with an increasing focus on gaining attention from peers outside the classroom, was seen in this pupil to be leading to disinterest in learning following the transition to secondary school. This attitude towards learning was soon seen to be leading to attendance problems. The paper quotes research by Epstein[11] in 1983 (p177), who asserted that:

"If students select their friends from a pool of students who are already similar to themselves on many characteristics, then their apparent influence is really a function of prior socialization by families, schools, earlier peers, demographic characteristics, geographic boundaries and other factors". (p52)

Noyes, 2006, School transfer and the diffraction of learning trajectories

This qualitative study involved in-depth tracking research with two pupils over an 18 month period. It explored influences of peer, family and school on their experiences of transition. The two pupils have very different experiences which enables the authors to contrast their fortunes.

Overall, the research is descriptive rather than explanatory.

3.49. A concern is raised in respect of children from disadvantaged backgrounds that they may bond to those they already know in a 'new and challenging context' and this may draw children from disadvantaged backgrounds into groups where attainment may be lower and where school rejection is more prevalent (Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009).

Local community and neighbourhood

3.50. A child's neighbourhood can be associated with negative influence on transition (Hayes and Chodkiewicz, 2006; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008), particularly urban neighbourhoods.

3.51. However, Gibbons and Silva (2006) demonstrated quantitatively through a focus on urban/non-urban experiences, that while pupils in urban areas have a lower general attainment they do not suffer such a dip through the transition. Reasons include greater school choice and competition between schools. The authors state that governments targeted schools in disadvantaged urban areas, such as the 'Excellence in Cities' program and the 'Aimhigher' programme, in order to address identified poor academic performance.

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[11] Epstein, J. (1983) The influence of friends on achievement and affective outcomes, in: E. J. and K. N (Eds) *Friends in school: patterns of selection and influence in secondary school* (London, Academic Press), 177-200.

3.52. Parental involvement and constructive out of school activities can mitigate such negative effects (Hayes and Chodkiewicz, 2006). The authors also state that it is not only teachers who are experts in relation to the curriculum, "…there is a need for active communication between schools and their communities to build shared understandings of the nature of community and of learning. This communication should recognize that learning takes place beyond the school…" (p4). A number of barriers are identified to effective school community links including a lack of time for parents due to balancing work and other family commitments, and a lack of time for school staff away from direct teaching.

3.53. Reyes et al (2000) found that for American urban, predominately minority-ethnic and low-income pupils, inactive students (who have dropped-out of their education, or had it disrupted by further transfer or exclusion) declined more sharply in grades and attainment than others. This is generally less relevant to areas such as Wales where urban geographies can have affluent areas alongside poorer ones.

3.54. There is no direct quantitative evidence of an impact on attainment caused by community and neighbourhood factors.

Parental engagement

3.55. Pupils that have parents who are more caring, involved and encouraging of autonomy are better at adjusting to transition (Anderson et al, 2000; West et al, 2010). Supportive parents are more likely to help a child learn new skills outside of school, even if the adult has no training in teaching children (Hayes and Chodkiewicz, 2006).

3.56. According to Greenhough et al (2007), family support is seen as important with the influence of parents being more *"tangible"* than that of teachers and friends. They found continuing high performers reported receiving more support from their parents during transition. Their intervention programme, the Home School Knowledge Exchange (HSKE), which aims to involve parents resulted in significantly higher literacy scores for participating pupils (detailed description in intervention section below). Results for mathematics were similar but not significant.

3.57. Parents can influence the potential drop in attainment during the transition phase, particularly in low income families (Hayes and Chodkiewicz, 2006; Evangelou et al, 2008; Holtom and Lloyd Jones, 2009). Low income families lack the flexibility to take paid leave to support their child academically and with any behavioural problems (Hayes and Chodkiewicz, 2006). Parents from disadvantaged communities lack the skills and confidence to engage with teachers and to help their children with homework (Holtom and Lloyd Jones, 2009). Other research confirms that those in social classes[12] D and E are less likely to say they feel very involved in their child's education[13].

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[12] Researcher often divide the population into different groupings, based on the occupation of the head of the household, used to compare data for people in differing socio-economic situations. The groups are most often

3.58. Rice (2001) identified a number of parental support factors in data analysis of the Longitudinal Study of American Youth. Ability to support their child is measured by socio-economic status, mother's education, single parent and home resources. The willingness of parents to support their children is defined by parent participation in school activities and activities/talking with parents about school at home. However, her results did not find a significant influence resulting from these factors.

3.59. The need for parental involvement during the transition to middle school is regarded as *"the missing link in helping students achieve academically at such a critical time in their lives"* Yuen (2007, p2). Furthermore he finds that many students consider their parents as one of their main sources of information and advice in coping with school.

3.60. Parents in one area were frustrated at not being able to go into the school at any time compared with the openness of primary school (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Similarly, findings from a case study in a disadvantaged area, identified that parents had poor relationships with teachers, due to language barriers and not understanding school practices (Hayes and Chodkiewicz, 2006). Problems were exacerbated as there was a lack of interest among school staff to support parents when they needed information about the school system. None of these points was directly related to attainment.

Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008, A holistic approach to primary-secondary transitions

This qualitative study involved longitudinal, in-depth interviews with eight pupils aged 10-12, seven of their parents and six professionals. It focused on a city in Scotland, to understand their experiences of primary–secondary transition. The purposively
selected sample reflected varying degrees of difficulties with transition. Children were identified by the Transitions Partnership in the area after consultation with the primary and secondary schools.

The research identified some causes of poor transition, but with limited links to attainment. Key causes identified were bullying, school size and lack of communication between schools. Overall, the study is descriptive of experiences rather than explanatory.

The research identified a number of transition programme interventions which all worked well. A key conclusion in respect of transition programmes is that they should start earlier and last longer.

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defined as: A- Higher managerial, administrative, professional; B - Intermediate managerial, administrative, professional; C1- Supervisory, clerical, junior managerial; C2 - Skilled manual workers; D - Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers; E - Casual labourers, pensioners, unemployed.

[13] Harris, A. and Goodall, J., 2007, Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement Do Parents Know They Matter? University of Warwick for DCSF, Research Report DCSF-RW004

3.61. Negative pupil attitudes towards secondary school can be derived from parents' negative school experiences in low income families (Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). However, this hypothesis was only partially supported by their primary research, as five of the seven parents interviewed had negative memories of school, but some felt comfortable going into school and some were returning to education to undertake further study (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008).

3.62. In contrast to Noyes' (2006) initial case study - described earlier - the family, school and peer influences on a second case study child are described as combining positively. He was assessed as reflecting the values that he had acquired from his family, which were associated with an 'excellent' work ethic that helped him to *"conform to, and be further conformed by, the schooling system"* (p53). The family were not seen to be putting unrealistic expectations on the pupil, but were described as having a balanced view of what would constitute success for him. There were few concerns, therefore, in advance of his transfer to secondary school. Observations and discussions with this second case study pupil following the move into secondary education showed that his primary interest was more in relation to academic ability. This contrasts with the case study 1 pupil who was interested in positioning people in the peer culture and avoiding those who were seen as 'geeky'. This led to the second case study pupil having very different priorities and a desire to maintain a good reputation. While not proven scientifically this case study demonstrates the positive effect parents can influence.

3.63. There are some issues related to particular groups. For example, pupils from one parent families have more problems adjusting to secondary school (West et al, 2010), although there is no direct reference to attainment. Derrington and Kendall (2004) find that the problem of transition is worsened if there is conflict with how children are treated at home and in school. For example, gypsy traveller students may be treated as young adults at home and children in school which often leads to conflict with staff/pupils and may lead to exclusion for their 'inappropriate' behaviour. Ethnic minority pupils in Glasgow are found to be less likely to confide in or seek support from their parents (Graham and Hill, 2003).

Concerns about bullying
3.64. Another factor which causes pupil particular concerned is the fear of being bullied in the new school. Ashton (2008) found that 17% of pupils (out of 1,673 questionnaires) stated bullying as a worry at the secondary school. Other authors cite bullying as a negative factor although there is no direct link to attainment (Evangelou et al, 2008). It is also something parents worry about in respect of their child's transition to secondary school (Shepherd and Roker, 2005).

3.65. Some pupils experience bullying ranging from name calling to physical violence during the transition phase (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). In some instances, there were frustrations that the school were not dealing with bullying effectively. In some cases it was believed that bullying had carried on from primary school.

3.66. One study evidenced a decline in bullying between primary school (61%) and secondary school (21%), although the authors noted the follow-up survey took place early in the secondary school year and that other research had found the opposite (Graham and Hill, 2003).

3.67. Pupils from disadvantaged areas, often in lower socio-economic status (SES) groups, are more likely to state worries about bullying (Horgan, 2007; Evangelou et al, 2008).

3.68. There is no evidence to link bullying or a fear of bullying to a drop in attainment but it clearly has the potential to cause a major distraction for some individuals which could have an academic effect.

Summary

3.69. Among social and personal factors three have some quantitative evidence of an impact on attainment: individual characteristics, changing school environment (relevant to mathematics and science) and parental influence (relevant to literacy and not significant for mathematics). Issues relating to friendships groups are seen to have potential impact but no explicit evidence of an impact on attainment was found.

3.70. Poverty is regarded as a factor influencing these issues. For example, the effect of lower social and emotional skills associated with those from deprived areas, the potential effect of negative friendship groups, lack of positive out-of-school activities and lack of parental engagement. However, none of these is proven robustly with quantitative methods.

Actions and interventions

3.71. Across the five factors, social and personal actions and interventions were the second most commonly referenced behind curriculum factors. A wide range of specific actions and interventions have been identified as follows:
- open days/evenings for pupils and parents;
- early contact between parents and secondary staff;
- induction days;
- parent and pupil guides;
- joint social events between year 6 and 7 pupils;
- pupil peer mentoring/buddying;
- targeted support for identified pupils;
- sharing information from primary to secondary on social groupings;
- stimulating parental involvement;
- out-of-school activities;

- anti-bulling measures.

3.72. For most of these interventions there has been limited systematic evaluation, therefore, evaluative findings are reported by exception.

Open days/evenings for pupils and parents

3.73. This was the most commonly referenced activity within social and personal factors (16 references). Open days and evenings generally occur during the summer term of Year 6, some are focused specifically on pupils, others on parents and some are combined.

3.74. A variety of formats and labels are used, such as taster days, transition days, new school parents evenings and parental visits to the new school. Some are described below:
- taster days, which involve seeing the new school facilities, meeting and being taught by secondary school staff, and meeting Year 8 pupils - sometimes linked to other interventions such as buddying and mentoring (Taylor and Conor, 2005);
- new school parents evenings, held in the primary school so as to be less intimidating for parents involving a description of the changes their children will experience (Derrington and Kendall, 2004);
- Year 6 parents evening including Year 7 parents who provide their experiences of the transition and the new school (Teaching and Learning Research Programme, 2008).

3.75. A comparison of five types of pupil interaction with their future secondary school showed that the taster day was the most effective at reducing pupil anxiety (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002). Taster days are where pupils spend a whole day at the destination school being taught by Year 8 teachers. Other variants included another half day follow-up session and subject based taster days for example in science and music.

3.76. One study found that the majority of pupils (82%) participated in open days (Evangelou, 2008). In particular they learn about having new subjects, different teachers and not being with the same pupils in all classes.

3.77. In the main, pupils find existing transition programmes to be helpful (Graham and Hill, 2003). However, they observed that transition programmes tend focus heavily on preparation for secondary school, and do not focus enough on post-transition where pupils try to adjust to the new school environment.

3.78. A variation mentioned in a couple of articles is the use of drama to raise awareness of transition issues and to identify concerns (Teaching and Learning Research Programme, 2008; Estyn, 2004a). Activities in one programme included:
- developing a 'drama within a drama' about two children, a brother and sister, who were about to experience transfer;

- 'Ridiculous rumours', in which children invent far-fetched rumours about secondary school and discuss their nature;
- revealing feelings about leaving primary school;
- acting out different kinds of body language in the playground, with an emphasis on ways of behaving which would help make new friends;
- going on a virtual tour of secondary school with students who already attend it;
- listening to parents talking about their hopes and fears about transfer;
- (Teaching and Learning Research Programme, 2008).

Early contact between parents and secondary staff

3.79. Establishing a rapport between parents and secondary school teachers is important at the earliest opportunity. Interventions targeted at parental involvement are discussed further below but the relationship can start well before the transition to secondary school.

3.80. For example, the HSKE project brought together parents of Year 6 pupils in a parents' evening to meet Year 7 secondary teachers (Greenhough, 2007). This helped to allay fears, provide opportunities for questions to be answered and to develop relationships and channels of communication with teachers.

3.81. An example, involving vulnerable groups saw teachers working with parents of gypsy and traveller children in Year 5 and Year 6 to help raise expectations and to develop trust (Derrington and Kendall, 2004). This provided continuity in relationships as the pupils moved between schools and assisted teachers to identify specific support needs of particular children.

Induction days

3.82. Eight authors reference induction days with varying definitions. Some see it as part of the first day back, for others it can be a longer period of activity. It is often linked to other aspects described below such as induction booklets and establishing buddy systems.

Fuller et al, 2005, Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 Transition Project

This study undertook qualitative research across four London boroughs to help develop solutions for effective pupil transfer.

The authors' approach built on the five transition bridges, introduced earlier, which they used to construct a self evaluation tool. Individual schools were asked to assess themselves against this tool and to highlight good practice. This results in a large array of examples of actions and interventions.

The authors do not draw any conclusions about which are the best practices, although they do list those identified by schools as impacting most on performance which they would highlight as their strength or exemplars. However the list is extensive with no explanation or objective assessment.

The full list covers:	
• clear staff responsibility;	• seating plans for Y7 classes;
• a drop-in person for parents and pupils;	• early transition activity in Y3, Y4 and Y5;
• Summer interviews for pupils and families;	• catch-up classes;
	• experienced staff teaching in Y7;
• Y7 buddies; Y7 visits to primary school;	• linking transition activity to the school's Teaching and Learning Policy;
• establishing a transition 'team' who work with pupils/families during the summer term;	• curriculum arrangement which reduce the number of teacher experienced by Y7 pupils;
• network learning communities;	
• teaching assistant attached to Y7 for the first half term;	• well-defined learning and support and mentoring arrangements.

3.83. One school has a 'team building day' for Year 7 pupils in the autumn term. Pupils are organised into mixed tutor groups with a team leader. The teams tackle eight cognitive and physical challenges. Staff believe that this day helps the pupils to develop socially and to feel part of the year group. Pupil feedback about this event was very positive (Fuller, 2005).

3.84. One study considers a school where Year 7 pupils return a day before the rest of the school so that they have a chance to become familiar with their surroundings before the older pupils return (Taylor and Conor, 2005). Ashton (2008) found that pupils were interested in having a longer induction period to improve the transition, such as a three day or even week long induction period.

Parent and pupil guides

3.85. Although less commonly referenced in the research articles than taster days there are a number of interesting examples of guides for pupils and parents (referenced in seven articles). More recently they have started to include use of multimedia technology such as video and websites. Examples include:

- an induction booklet developed in a London girls' school, which is written in a pupil accessible format covering key staff, equipment requirements, school rules, homework requirements, comments from previous Year 7 and a questionnaire to test their knowledge of the school following the induction day (Fuller, 2005);
- a pack which forms part of a two-year planning process for the transition covering Year 6 and Year 7 used by 100 schools in England. The pack includes resources and ideas for preparation across sections such as timeline, schools, teachers, pupils, parents, distinctive pupil needs and dealing with change (Taverner, 2001);
- the development of a prospectus from the secondary school for the primary school pupils and their parents has been identified as good practice in Wales (Powell et al, 2006);
- a video, website and booklet produced by one Welsh secondary school for its four feeder primary schools. The content covered issues on transfer and information about the new school (Estyn, 2004a);

- a video covering life in a secondary school combined with a top tips booklet (Greenhough, 2007).

3.86. The last item in the bullet list was part of the HSKE programme, which was subject to evaluation. The HSKE programme was found to have a clear influence on attainment during transition but there was no evaluation of the role played by the video and top tips elements in its success.

Joint social events

3.87. The bringing together of Year 6 and other groups is referenced in eight articles. Activities range from a small number of Year 7 students visiting the primary school through to more sophisticated projects which involve all Year 6 and 7 pupils. Other projects involve wider groups within schools.

3.88. An example of the simpler approach involved the head of year 7 visiting primary schools with a few Year 7 pupils to undertake a question and answer session (Taylor and Conor, 2005).

3.89. The Watch this Space project in South Wales linked Year 6 and 7 pupils as part of a series of challenges, fun days and visits. Organisations such as Coca Cola and BBC Wales were involved in this project which sought to promote confidence in pupils and raise awareness of the world of work (Estyn, 2004a).

3.90. In another case study, where primary schools are located close to the secondary school, Year 6 pupils attend a club at the secondary school (Taylor and Conor, 2005). Activities include story-telling, creative writing courses and computer projects, staffed by teachers, Teaching Assistants, administrative staff and sixth form students, managed by the Learning Resource Manager.

3.91. A variation of the joint event, involving wider year groups, trained Year 8 pupils who taught Year 5 and 6 pupils in science (Morrison, 2005). This was used to give responsibility to vulnerable Year 8 pupils who had experienced a drop in attainment, as well as providing Year 5 and 6 pupils with contact from an older peer group. Evaluation feedback from pupils and teachers was positive. Teachers felt the responsibility given to Year 8s had changed pupils' attitudes positively, although there is no evidence of the impact on their attainment. Year 6 pupils remembered the Year 8 pupils that they had met when they progressed to secondary school, which helped with their confidence.

Pupil peer mentoring/buddying

3.92. Peer support is quite common across the research articles with 12 mentioning examples of actions and interventions under a variety of headings from learning mentors, peer mentors and buddies.

3.93. Learning mentors targeted at those struggling academically is cited in two articles, particularly by reference to literacy skills (Estyn, 2008; Baumfield et al, 2002). However, there is no evidence of its effectiveness.

3.94. Mentoring schemes have traditionally run in Years 10 and 11 to contribute to improvements in attainment. However, more believe such schemes would be beneficial particularly in year 8 (Demetriou et al, 2000) and the evidence points to this increasing.

3.95. A number of studies state mentoring by older pupils as a way to support pupils during the transition phase whilst at secondary school (Demetriou et al, 2000; Fuller et al, 2005; Taylor and Conor, 2005; Morrison, 2005; Estyn, 2008). These are believed to act as sibling-type relationships; supported by evidence that students with older siblings were more likely to succeed (Derrington and Kendall, 2004). Modern variants have included use of email for Year 6 to liaise with older pupils (Ashton, 2008).

3.96. However, this may not be quite so popular. Evangelou et al (2008) provide evidence that only 17% of the parents mentioned that their child had been assigned an older pupil as a mentor. It is of course possible that parents are not always aware of such arrangements.

3.97. Buddy schemes are also cited as common interventions (Estyn, 2004; Yuen, 2007; Evangelou, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Buddying, which is slightly less formal than mentoring, can develop pupils' social and interpersonal skills (friendship, self-esteem and confidence). At a London girls school all Year 7s are 'buddied' with Year 8s, plus they are allocated an 'auntie' in the sixth form (Fuller, 2005).

Targeted support for identified pupils

3.98. The majority of social and personal interventions address all pupils. However, there is some degree of targeting (Shepherd and Roker, 2003).

3.99. Six articles reference support for targeted groups, examples include those who are gifted and talented (Baumfield et al, 2002), those experiencing educational underperformance (Estyn, 2008), those experiencing disadvantage, for example, receiving free school meals (Shepherd and Roker, 2003; Estyn 2008); those from gypsy traveller communities (Derrington and Kendall, 2004); those with SEN and those from minority ethnic groups (Shepherd and Roker, 2003). Some of these targeted pupils are experiencing poverty, in particular, those receiving free school meals.

Shepherd and Roker, 2003, Supporting children and parents during the transition to secondary school: a UK wide review

This review of 125 different intervention projects across England was undertaken by a combination of questionnaire and telephone interview. It identified that half of the projects targeted certain groups who find the transition difficult, such as those

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with SEN or those where parents experience difficulties in their relationship with their children.

Just under a half of projects (45%) involved parents described as from hard to reach backgrounds (for example, from disadvantaged areas or minority ethnic groups).

The major conclusion drawn by the authors was that rigorous and long term research is required to help assess the effectiveness of different types of transition project. They feel that not enough learning is built on previous experiences, resulting in instances of 're-inventing the wheel'.

3.100. The main types of social and personal support that such groups might receive include mentoring/buddying, engagement with parents and more sophisticated interventions such as the Pyramid club sessions.

3.101. The Pyramid Clubs (run by the National Pyramid Trust) which aim to support 'withdrawn and vulnerable children' during the transition phase are described below (Shepherd and Roker, 2005). The sessions were for one and a half hours a week for 10 weeks. They took place after school during primary school, with some follow up sessions in the first term of secondary school.

Shepherd and Roker, 2005, An evaluation of a 'transition to secondary school' project run by the National Pyramid Trust

Pyramid Clubs
- The sessions included activities to build self-confidence, develop interpersonal skills, and help pupils deal with difficult situations.

Children's views
- The children were very positive about the clubs.
- Many children had increased confidence, and described positive changes in behaviour, attitude and sometimes school work.
- The change in pupils' views indicated they were worried about secondary school.
- There were mixed views about whether the club was seen as 'cool' or 'uncool'. "Some felt stigmatized as a result of taking part, whilst others felt envied."
- There was a statistically significant positive impact on how the pupils felt about going to secondary school, their life at the time, the easiness of settling into secondary school and how scared they were about being bullied in the new school.

Parents' views
- Positive about the clubs and felt well-informed.
- Increased levels of confidence in their children. Parents felt the clubs helped their child settle into secondary school.
- There were a number of different things that parents mentioned, that they thought had helped their child to settle in. The most popular response was friendships, either existing friendships from primary school, being in the same class with children they already knew such as friends or neighbours, and making new friends in their class. Specific things the school had done had also

been mentioned, such as the importance of an induction day.

Teachers' feedback
- Very positive about the impact of the clubs on the children, such as making new friends, gaining confidence and being more prepared for the new school.

Volunteer Club leaders' feedback
- Believed the project was beneficial for the pupils, and increased self-confidence was the main impact for the pupils.

Project Workers' feedback
- Project workers also believed the project was beneficial for the pupils, and that increased self-confidence was the main impact for the pupils.

3.102. In a variation of the Pyramid Club, using approaches more common in primary schools, one London school is using nurture groups targeted at vulnerable pupils with special educational needs (DCSF, 2009). Nurture groups consist of small numbers, up to a maximum of ten, where children's learning is understood developmentally, their self-esteem is developed, all behaviour is understood as communication and a way of expressing feelings and emotions. The group includes external input from support agencies specialising in areas such as speech and language therapy, and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

3.103. However, the focus of targeted strategies is not always on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and poverty. Estyn's review of RAISE[14] activities, which covers some age groups experiencing transition, found staff had difficulties separating educational disadvantage from socio-economic disadvantage (Estyn, 2009; Estyn, 2008). Thus, many projects tackle a larger group of learners than just free school meal pupils and a few do not contain all learners eligible to free school meals.

Estyn, 2009, The Impact of RAISE funding

RAISE (Raise Attainment and Individual Standards in Education) funding aims to target disadvantaged pupils in order to raise their level of performance. The selection of schools to receive RAISE funding was based on the numbers of pupils receiving free school meals.

After two years of RAISE funding *"there have been no major changes in the performance of free school meal pupils against the main performance measures"*. Although performance may still improve in subsequent years. Schools that have received RAISE funding have developed a wide range of activities. For example, additional learning support to improve literacy skills, appointing a teaching assistant to undertake 'first day' tracking of absence and monitoring of lateness, mentoring by older pupils and increasing provision of an alternative curriculum for older pupils.

Estyn reviewed the impact of the RAISE funding through visits of HM Inspectors to a sample of schools and local authorities. Estyn concluded that pupils taking part

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[14] Raise Attainment and Individual Standards in Education

in RAISE activities were making good progress in four-fifths of all schools visited. However, a large gap remains between the performance of learners entitled to free school meals and other learners. There has been an increase in schools' awareness of the need to consider ways of improving the achievement of disadvantages pupils, although most schools need to do more to monitor progress and achievement of disadvantages pupils. Evaluation is good in a third of the schools.

3.104. The range of RAISE work makes evaluation problematic. This is due to the difficulty of isolating one activity as the cause of any improvement in pupil performance. For example, one school had ten projects addressing different but related issues. Overall, there was *"no evidence of a major step change in the performance of free school meal pupils"* (Estyn, 2008, p13), however, there were examples of significant improvement in attainment of free school meal pupils in some local authorities.

Sharing information from primary to secondary on social groupings

3.105. Explicit reference to sharing information from primary to secondary schools on social grouping is mentioned, less often than other actions, by four authors. This is regarded as slightly more detailed than the transfer of performance information referenced under administrative arrangements. It requires direct conversations to understand how the needs of various groups and individuals might best be addressed.

3.106. One school which receives many socially disadvantaged pupils regards the development of social skills as critical (Demitriou et al, 2000). The secondary teachers work closely with primary teachers to discuss friendship groups and try to ensure pupils will be with at least one good friend in their new classes. This can conflict with teachers trying to create class sets but is regarded as more important for vulnerable pupils.

3.107. In another school the Head of Year 7 meets with secondary teachers to discuss issues relating to pupils (Taylor and Conor, 2005).

Stimulating parental involvement

3.108. Parental support is influential to pupils' progress, particularly on literacy learning and for lower income families. Actions and interventions relating to parental involvement are referenced by 11 authors. They range from encouraging dialogue between teachers and parents through to more involved programmes aimed at influencing parental behaviour.

3.109. However, Shepherd and Roker (2003) provided evidence that only 6% of 125 intervention projects they studied had focused on information and support to parents.

3.110. Involving parents in school events and meetings is important with respect to monitoring the child's progress (Hayes and Chodkiewicz). Arad Consulting (2007) drew on international case studies from Chicago and Germany to conclude that the importance of positive home-school links can become "particularly apparent during transition stages, with good relations between parent and teacher often key to detecting early warning signs should problems begin to surface" (p62-63).

3.111. Examples of individual activities to increase parent participation in schools include:
- encourage parents to 'drop in' to the school to discuss the progress of their children (Taylor and Conor, 2005; Bryan et al, 2007);
- produce monthly written reports to parents on their child's progress so that parents are engaged in the child's attainment (Taylor and Conor, 2005);
- home-school agreements help to engage parents with the school (Taylor and Conor, 2005);
- parents participation in school committees (Yuen, 2007);
- attending school events, for example, by going to museums and cultural events (Yuen, 2007);

3.112. There is very little evaluative evidence within the research for any of the examples listed above. However, the evaluation of the Glasgow ENABLE project which provides additional support to lower ability and at risk pupils provided evidence of effective parental engagement methods (Bryan et al, 2007). Initially, parents showed a lack of interest in communicating directly with teachers or attending special parents' evenings. Responding to this problem, one teacher started inviting parents to spend an afternoon in their child's class to see them work and talk to the teachers. This was appreciated by parents who worked shifts and could not attend parents' evenings. It also made parents more confident to come directly to talk to teachers afterwards.

3.113. The ENABLE project definitely improved pupil attainment, although the extent to which parental engagement contributed to this, as distinct from other aspects of the project, is unknown. However, it is likely to be a necessary element in the mix of the programme.

3.114. An example of a more involved parental engagement intervention is the HSKE action research project in Cardiff and Bristol (Greenhough, 2007). It provides evaluative evidence of the impact that increased parental involvement can have. In particular this study compared those receiving free school meals with those who were not.

3.115. The key findings were that students attending schools with HSKE activities made significantly greater progress in literacy from Year 6 to Year 7 compared with students who did not. The researchers found no effect for city location, free school meals, gender or ethnicity. This shows that all students can benefit from this type of intervention including those in poverty.

3.116. One issue noted by the researchers was that the additional support required on this type of project creates increased demands on teachers in terms of time. For example, activities involving parents are likely to occur in evenings, outside of school hours.

Greenhough et al, 2007, What effect does involving parents in knowledge exchange activities during transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 have on children's attainment and learning dispositions?

This evaluation of an action research project, the HSKE, explores the effect of involving parents in school activities. The methodology involved desk research, quantitative and qualitative elements.

The project combined a range of different activities and interventions. Activities before the transfer included: videos (depicting life in a secondary school); top tips booklets on coping; informal events for Year 6 and 7 parents. Activities after the transfer involved: sharing photographs of their summer holidays, informal small scale parents evening and focused parents' events such as celebrating Somali parents' cooking skills.

The quantitative research covered 270 pupils in four primary school (two in Bristol and two in Cardiff), plus comparison schools. Pupils were tested at the end of year 6 and at the end of year 7 providing a clear measure of attainment in literacy and mathematics, which could be compared with those not participating in the HSKE programme.

This study represents a strong robust measure of the outcomes of the intervention.

3.117. In terms of effectiveness of parental engagement, Derrington and Kendall (2004) demonstrated that the majority of gypsy and traveller children they studied, whose parents attended parents meetings or visited the school, were still in school in year 9 (11 out of 13).

3.118. Overall, schools should continue to improve cooperation between teachers and parents (Arad Consulting, 2007). Shepherd and Roker (2005) consider that parents should be involved in the development of transition projects, for example by including them in pre-club information meetings, running support groups for parents, and providing updates on their child's progress: "enabling them to support the learning and development that is taking place." (p7)

3.119. Effective communication between the school and parents has to be regarded as a prerequisite of creating a supportive environment around the pupil. There is evidence that more involvement, within the school and at home, makes a positive contribution to a child's academic performance. In particular this can have a positive influence on those in poverty. However, poorer, lower educated parents have less resources to draw on to make this happen. They therefore require greater support.

Out-of-school activities

3.120. Out-of-school activities can have real benefits. For example belonging to clubs and societies can develop confidence and, social and emotional skills relevant to school. Some authors believe there is less investment by students in academic activities and more investment in non-academic activities during the middle years following the transition. Getting the balance right can be a force for good, but imbalance can have a negative effect.

3.121. One study finds that as the number of voluntary transitions between schools increased (e.g. due to moving house or because of behavioural reasons), student attainment and participation in extra-curricula activities decreased (Yuen, 2007). In a similar vein, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely, particularly during secondary school to attend out-of-school activities that would help them to develop their social and emotional skills (Holtom and Lloyd-Jones, 2009).

Anti-bulling measures

3.122. Policies and actions to address bulling have evolved throughout schools over time. They have had to become more specific and relevant to different channels such as cyber bullying, the use of mobile phones and text messages.

3.123. There were very few references to intervention to address bullying. Probably not because they do not exist but because it is not seen as a specific issue directly related to the transition.

3.124. Specific interventions linked to the transition that were mentioned include:
- primary and secondary schools aligning bullying policies so that pupils continue with the same systems (Fuller, 2005; Estyn, 2008a);
- linked to other interventions referenced in this section maintaining friendship groups can help to allay fears of bullying (Shepherd, 2005);
- one London secondary school introduced 'circle time'[15] in Year 7 to support the anti-bullying policy (Fuller, 2005);
- communicating anti-bullying policies effectively to parents as well as pupils (Fuller, 2005).

3.125. There is no specific evidence of these activities being evaluated to explore how they might affect attainment during the transition.

Summary

3.126. There is generally little comparison of the above interventions to assess their relative merits.

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[15] provides a time for listening, developing attention span, promoting oral communication, and learning new concepts and skills

3.127. From reviewing the evidence the area with the most robust evaluation to provide confidence that it does influence attainment during the transition is parental involvement. In particular this stems from one project the HSKE which used robust quantitative techniques to test the effect of the intervention.

3.128. Open days/evenings for parents and buddy/mentoring interventions are commonly used but generally lack evaluation evidence. Spending a full working day with the future secondary school was regarded as one of the stronger interventions at reducing pupil anxiety.

4. Curriculum factors

4.1. This section examines factors relating to the continuity of curriculum between primary and secondary school, the nature of what is taught in the early years at secondary school and assessing pupil performance.

4.2. There is moderate evidence on how curricular factors cause a drop in attainment and good evidence of how some interventions mitigate the drop in attainment for some vulnerable groups.

Issues:
4.3. The following four issues have been identified in the literature:
- transfer of pupil-specific information;
- curriculum continuity;
- changing relationships between pupils and teachers;
- subject specific impacts.

Transfer of pupil-specific information
4.4. Transfer of pupil data is covered under administrative factors, regarding the slow or incomplete information about pupils' experiences and requirements for additional support.

4.5. Pupil-specific curriculum information includes examples of pupils' work and pupils' learning-related issues. These can be exchanged between primary and secondary schools in physical form or through conversational dialogue between teachers.

4.6. In some cases examples of pupils work are shared to provide secondary teachers with evidence of what pupils have achieved. However, concerns are expressed that this often involves pupils' 'best work', which over-estimates their average ability (Hargreaves, and Galton, 2001).

4.7. Other authors feel that insufficient account is taken of pupils' previous learning, due to the lack of a structured process for transferring information about prior attainment (Burr and Simpson, 2007). This is attributed to the loss of momentum identified in science learning in secondary school.

4.8. The opposite view is taken by Taverner (2001), although not supported extensively by other authors in this review, that too much energy is expended on transferring data causing a "paper chase of portfolios".

4.9. Powell et al (2006) suggest there needs to be a tailoring to the type of information, for example, *"oral provision of background information where this is of a sensitive nature"* (p61). The implication is that some information may not be communicated effectively in written form or teachers may be reluctant to write it down.

4.10. There is no clear quantitative evidence that lack of or poor pupil curriculum-related data impacts directly on attainment.

Curriculum continuity

4.11. The continuity of the curriculum between primary and secondary school continues to be identified as a concern (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002; Greenough et al, 2007). Too often, repetition of primary school work occurs which does not result in the expected progression of pupils (Taverner et al, 2001; Baumfield et al, 2002).

> **Hargreaves and Galton, 2002, Transfer from the primary classroom – 20 years on**
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> This book analyses results from the replication of a study previously undertaken in the late 1970s. The ORACLE (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation) project followed pupils as they moved through their last two years of primary school and into their first year after transfer.
>
> The primary research involved survey work and observation prior to and after the transfer for 600 pupils enabling a comparison of attitude, motivation, self-esteem and attainment. Attainment was measured using the Richmond basic skills test. Data is robust and statistical significance identified in findings. However, there is limited analysis of how different subgroups of pupils, such as those in poverty, experience transition.
>
> The authors' broad conclusions are that a dip in attainment still occurs and that continuity between the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 curriculum remains a problem, despite the introduction of the National Curriculum in England.

4.12. Lack of communication and awareness of each others' methods between primary and secondary teachers is a major factor in the discomfort and discontinuity experienced by pupils (Teaching and Learning Research Programme, 2008; Bryan and Treanor, 2007). A number of authors have touched on the language and attitudes of secondary staff as compounding a sense of hierarchy. For example, referring to "going down" to primary school when teaching lessons (Burr and Simpson, 2007; Hargreaves and Galton, 2002).

4.13. As referenced earlier, secondary teachers are keen to make a fresh start and often *"approach the teaching of their subject with no reference to previous learning in the primary phase"* (Taverner et al, 2001 p6). Explanations for this are mixed between teacher preferences and a lack of time to capture the detail for all pupils. Despite this, one author finds evidence that, from a curriculum perspective, teachers want more information and a better understanding of the different approaches between primary and secondary school (Evangelou et al, 2008).

4.14. A lack of time has also been noted as a barrier contributing to a disrupted transition for pupils. For example, Estyn (2004) found that some out-of-school-hours activities have been disrupted due to the high priority given to the new interventions and the resulting impact on teacher workloads. Shepherd and Roker (2005) suggested that if an external deliverer is providing the intervention project, then they should make sure that the involvement of pupils is not bureaucratic for the school.

4.15. The effect of often congested secondary school timetables is also regarded as cause of discontinuity compared with the relatively simple timetable in primary schools (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002).

4.16. An example of the discontinuity was identified in an evaluation of a project aimed at improving transition in relation to the consistent use of terminology in Maths (for example, sums compared with arithmetic) and consistent methods (equations and long division) between primary and secondary teachers (Bryan et al, 2007). This can confuse children and may be compounded by parental misunderstanding.

4.17. The above example serves to portray the dilemma facing secondary schools on a number of levels (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002). Some pupils want everything to be new, exciting and different. Such pupils embrace the resulting discontinuities which they associate with the change in status as they move towards adulthood. Others need to reassurance of things being similar to the primary school, such as teaching practices. The dilemma is thus striking the balance between these two extremes. Both have the potential to cause stress for at risk pupils:
"schools that believe in stressing the discontinuities between the pre- and post-transfer school, from day one tend…to lay stress on obeying the rules and good academic performance. Pupils at risk are therefore those who either misbehave or who do badly at their work. Schools that adopt a more relaxed approach at transfer tend to focus on pupils' capacity to deal independently with problems…for example, a pupil who forgot his pen would be expected to borrow from a neighbour. Pupils at risk in this situation are those who can't easily establish supportive networks with their peers and become too dependent on adults for support." Hargreaves and Galton (2002)

4.18. One author believes schools give unintended messages to students that earlier years are not so important, and that what matters is year 10 and 11 (Demetriou et al, 2000). They state that*, "Year 8 has neither the compelling novelty of year 7, nor the promise of ownership through option choices of year 9, not the 'real world' urgency of years 10 and 11…routine sets in and engagement can flag"* (p 429).

4.19. There is no explicit evidence of quantitative research which tries to explain how curriculum discontinuity directly causes a drop in attainment. In the main, the above factors are identified through a range of qualitative research.

Changing relationships between pupils and teachers

4.20. The most obvious change in the pupil-teacher relationship is moving from one main teacher who knows all the pupils in their class, to having many teachers for different subjects. Apart from the change to routine there are new relationships to be established across a wider range of individuals.

4.21. Relationships with new teachers were found to be an important influence on issues around transition (Galton et al, 2000), referring to research carried out by Birmingham Education Department in 1975 which found that, prior to transfer, 44% of primary school children were concerned about missing their primary teacher, with 33% expressing this concern a year after transfer.

4.22. Having a less personal relationship with teachers when moving from primary to secondary with increasing teacher-linked subject specialisation was highlighted by many authors as a key contribution to learning stress (Galton et al, 2000; Le Metais, 2003; Bryan et al, 2007; Ashton, 2009).

4.23. One paper (Hayes and Chodkiewicz, 2006) states that pupils felt teachers had low expectations of them and that there was no opportunity to change their ways. Galton et al (2003) concurred, stating that tensions and pressures can cause pupils to adopt particular behaviours that they find difficult to change. Noyes (2006) established this subjectivity was further exaggerated by teachers dealing with pupils differently, favouring those with similar origins to the teacher.

4.24. The literature suggests there is a need for pupils to be challenged within the curriculum, as otherwise there is an underestimation of academic capabilities (Taverner et al, 2001; Evangelou, 2008). The lack of attention to the needs of individual pupils has lead to disengagement and a perception by pupils that lessons are not useful or interesting (Estyn, 2008). Galton and Morrison (2000) refer to this change in teaching as a 'disjunction'.

4.25. There are also changes to teaching methods between the two phases of education such as more whole class teaching which we will consider in more details in the pedagogy section.

4.26. Overall, the changing relationship with teachers is regarded as an important factor by authors although there is no quantitative evidence of an impact on attainment.

Subject specific impacts

4.27. There is limited data on subject specific impacts. Where evidence exists it tends to focus on basic skills.

4.28. Grade losses were increased for language and mathematics skills after the transfer, although reading skills were constant (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002). This is supported by others who identified a reduction in pupil progress in English and Mathematics after the summer break (Taylor and Conor, 2005; Whitby et al, 2005).

4.29. Furthermore, Whitby et al (2005) believe that Welsh language was affected when students moved to English-medium secondary schools. Similarly, Estyn (2008) states that ensuring a smooth curriculum transition in Welsh is important to improve continuity in Welsh as a second language. Schools do not know enough about pupils' proficiency in Welsh to ensure that teaching is pitched at the right level in year 7.

Actions and interventions:

4.30. Actions and interventions addressing curricular issues are the most common with 103 references in the research. They include the following:
- effective data transfer to capture pupil level information;
- effective use of individual pupil data received by secondary schools;
- common curriculum / cross-phase teaching;
- extended curriculum / out-of-school-hours activity;
- approaches tailored to pupil needs;
- summer schools;
- catch-up programmes;
- earlier interventions.

Effective data transfer to capture pupil level information

4.31. One subject-specific intervention is the 'science passport' developed across four school clusters in Scotland (Burr and Simpson, 2007). The 'Swing through with science' project aimed to help schools work together to enhance the transition experience using the 'science passport' concept.

4.32. The 'science passport', used throughout the last year of primary school, progressed with the pupil into their first year at secondary school. It acted as a record of the pupils' prior achievement to inform secondary staff and to act as an 'aide memoire' for pupils. It included introductory units which aimed to act as a 'launch pad' for the secondary science curriculum.

4.33. Primary teachers were enthusiastic about using the passport and were optimistic that the project would improve the process of transition for their pupils. However, there is no evidence of impact on attainment.

Burr and Simpson, 2007, Swing through with science

This article reviews a subject focused intervention which aimed to improve transition using the concept of a science passport. The paper is mainly descriptive of how the process worked. It includes feedback (some quantitative) from key participants, such as teachers and pupils during the project. However, it but does not go on to consider the impact of the project on the pupils' transition experience or their resulting performance/attainment.

4.34. Other research has recommended the transfer of specific information to improve pupil level data transfer. For example, Estyn (2004; 2008) suggests that the following curricular information should be passed on - some of which is in addition to the Common Transfer System (CTS)[16]:

- National Curriculum levels attained at the end of Key Stage 2 in the core subjects by teacher assessment and in tests or tasks, where available, including raw scores from the test mark sheets and marks by attainment target;
- Key Stage 2 marked test or task papers, where these are available;
- standards of attainment in the non-core foundation subjects and religious education;
- standards of attainment in Welsh either as a first or second language;
- literacy standards where English is an additional language;
- copies of the Year 6 report to parents;
- attendance records;
- behaviour support plans (where applicable);
- individual education plan or statement of educational needs, (where applicable);
- details of particular achievements, or aptitudes, for example, in extra-curricular activities in music, sport, art, information technology.

4.35. One author suggests that common data transfer forms should operate across an LEA to ensure this process is effective (Fuller, 2005). Taverner et al (2001) observed that this had happened in an English LEA with the information being sent to the LEA by the primary schools and collated by the LEA before being distributed to secondary schools.

4.36. In Wales Estyn (2008) identified that tracking systems are often used to identify underperformance of pupils in literacy and numeracy.

4.37. There is no explicit evaluation of initiatives to transfer data so we are unable to establish how they might affect pupil attainment.

Effective use of individual pupil data received by secondary schools
4.38. It is one thing to provide the data described above, but if it is not used effectively it will not have been worth the investment of time. A moderate number of sources (eight) referenced the importance of making good use of data.

4.39. There is no explicit evaluation of actions to ensure effective use of data. However drawing from the issues many authors are concerned that secondary staff do not readily utilise the information once it is provided (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002; Burr and Simpson, 2007).

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[16] All maintained schools in Wales have a statutory responsibility to use the Common Transfer System (CTS) to transfer specific information electronically when a pupil joins or leaves a school. http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/schooldata/ims/dataexchange/school2schoolcommon/;jsessionid=v7zRMs1HgxNh5drvKpT29CDK6pV0jRvVHP2yT1RJwk1vvFyR1VJp!320120316?lang=en

4.40. Moving forward in the secondary school a few authors stress the importance of pupil tracking to monitor the progress of individual pupils more closely (Estyn, 2009; DSCF, 2009; Estyn, 2008; Fuller et al, 2005). Linked to this the setting of attainment targets/expectations is mentioned as an activity by some authors (Estyn, 2008a; Fuller et al, 2005; Taverner et al, 2001). An example of one English LEA which had a focus on standards of work to develop common understanding of what constitutes high attainment was outlined by Taverner (2001). There has been an increased focus on ensuring consistent understanding between teaching staff of what constitutes achievement at specific levels both in primary and secondary schools over the past few years. However, the literature focusing on transition does not appear to have explored this as a particular issue.

Common curriculum / cross-phase teaching

4.41. Cross-phase teaching using a common curriculum was a commonly referenced action (by 13 authors). There is certainly evidence that it occurs although some are not convinced it is common practice; a major constraint is time, linked to cost (Baumfield et al, 2002, Powell et al, 2006).

4.42. For example, one cross-phase teaching programme in an English LEA foundered due to lack of time among teaching staff (Baumfield et al, 2002). However, one school overcame this by having dedicated timetable time to teach in the primary feeder schools.

4.43. In another example, specialist teachers spent time teaching in feeder schools using team teaching approaches (Taylor and Conor, 2005), however no evaluation was reported of the effectiveness of this on addressing transition issues.

4.44. Other sources have identified that cross-phase curriculum activity worked best in core subjects, such as English and mathematics (Powell et al, 2006), although attempts to develop common schemes of work had not been achieved as well as hoped. Estyn (2008a) identified the same issue that interventions tended to focus on core subjects with not enough use of good practice across all curriculum areas.

4.45. A numeracy focused intervention project in East Ayrshire covered the last year of primary and first two years of secondary school (Bryan et al, 2007). Teachers discussed and agreed a programme of study to cover the three years, especially for lower performing students. The dialogue helped develop understanding between the teachers in terms of curriculum and pedagogy.

4.46. One intervention project in a London school addressed the subject of science (Fuller et al, 2005). Staff from primary and secondary schools, supported by an LEA consultant, developed schemes of work to avoid repetition and ensure commonality. This resulted in a transition unit which is taught by teachers of both phases in both school settings. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of impact on attainment.

4.47. There is further evidence of schools being prepared to change. For example reviewing the vocational curriculum or creating a theme based curriculum in Year 7 to aid transition and to revitalise the curriculum (Estyn, 2008). This was supported by RAISE funding in Wales which aims to target disadvantaged pupils in order to raise their level of performance. Through the evaluation of transition plans Estyn (2008a) concluded that joint preparation of units of work have been successful. Furthermore, Estyn identified that too few secondary schools have considered offering a more integrated approach to the delivery of the curriculum that builds on the way pupils learn in primary school.

4.48. A range of interventions exist relating to common curricula and cross-phase teaching. In general, there is limited evidence of the success of interventions although, in Wales slightly stronger evidence exists. Funding such interventions is a major challenge as they require additional resources to maximise their impact. Ultimately, there is no evidence of a direct effect on attainment.

Bridging units

4.49. Around nine papers referenced joint cross-phase projects such as bridging units. Bridging units are curriculum materials which are started in the final weeks of primary school and continue for several weeks after transfer to secondary school (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002). Workbooks are handed over to the transfer school so that the work can be continued when pupils start the new school. Examples include: a science booklet called Bubbles developed by Cheshire teachers which has been taken up by other LEAs; Moving On Up - produced by Birmingham LEA; other LEAs have units in core units.

4.50. Some schools resist bridging units if they have a perspective that new pupils should have total immersion in the new school culture. In fact some pupils complain that they are still doing primary school work at secondary school as they associate it with pre-transition (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002). The effectiveness of bridging units relies on effective relationships and transfer of materials between schools. Other concerns include a risk of de-motivation if exciting introductions, for example in science, are not matched when pupils arrive at the transfer school (Morrison, 2005).

4.51. There is some evidence of successful bridging projects. A bridging project, known as the 'Transition Model', involving a London school aimed to reduce the number of teachers experienced by Year 7 pupils (Fuller et al, 2005). The same teacher teaches English, History and Geography as discrete subjects for nine times in the week. It requires teachers to work well together and to be prepared to become knowledgeable about teaching material beyond a single subject. The evaluation identified a high level of enthusiasm and interest by pupils and marked improvement in pupil behaviour.

4.52. In another area of London a unique bridging project uses real bridge structures as a focus for study (Fuller et al, 2005). Year 6 students visit the bridges of the River Thames with both primary and secondary teachers. Units of work support continuation of the project into Year 7. Other activities include: science and technology teachers visiting the primary school to teach them topics on forces and structures; a project booklet includes holiday homework and research tasks which are marked and developed by Year 7 teachers; and, the completion of the project is celebrated.

4.53. Some interventions are less about designing specific materials but about shared cross-phase understanding. One English LEA supported schools to develop discussion and interpretation of the National Curriculum levels and tests (Taverner, 2001). A planning model was agreed which facilitates the dialogue and supports the continued development of pupils. Trials were carried out in science and geography. An important conclusion to emerge from the science strand was the importance of focusing on scientific thinking rather than just relying on tasks and activities.

4.54. A number of examples of bridging units have been described. They are relatively common interventions, although there are some critics of the approach. These interventions have not been evaluated robustly in the existing literature to compare, in a controlled way, how they influence attainment.

Extended curriculum / out-of-school-hours activity
4.55. A large number of articles (13) referenced extended curriculum activities linked to the transition. Generic examples demonstrate how the resources of secondary schools can be used in subject areas such as arts and music (Taylor and Conor, 2005). More specifically, one secondary school invites primary schools to use their 'SuccessMaker' literacy laboratory. Other examples involve visits to local businesses ('newspaper days' with the local evening newspaper), visits to museums and parks and a residential literacy weekend (Hardman et al, 2002).

4.56. An example from Scotland involved joint primary and secondary study support programmes, undertaken out-of-school-hours. One secondary school in particular had worked with all eight of its feeder primaries with a focus on curricular and pastoral aspects. This intervention focused on children who were alienated from learning and the evaluation identified the importance of establishing a rapport between teaching staff and vulnerable pupils. The evaluation also identified that activities often fell to teachers in the last year of primary school, which if broadened out would help balance the burden.

Lowden et al, 2005, Evaluation of study support and out-of-school-hours learning in Scotland

This evaluation used qualitative (interviews with local authorities, national stakeholders and case studies of eight schools) and quantitative (survey of all Scottish secondary schools and 10% of primary schools) methods. Responses to the survey were received from 151 secondary schools and 55 primary schools.

The research maps out the range of study support and out-of-school-hours learning activities taking place. There is a degree of focus on transition although some activities are addressing more specific in year issues. Difficulties with collation of attainment data precluded any statistical analysis of impact of the interventions.

More general findings were that the majority of respondents believed that interventions had made a positive contribution to pupils' attainment, self–confidence, study skills, motivation to learn and well-being.

4.57. In Wales, out-of-school-hours projects were focused on supporting the transition from primary to secondary school (Estyn 2004a). Projects included:

- Moving on Up - a performing arts project involving all Year 6 pupils from five primary schools of a secondary school. The pupils took part in workshops (organised by a theatre in education group) to develop theatre-related skills in their own school and the secondary school, culminating in a public performance at the local theatre;
- Keyboard Magic – a music project involving Year 6 pupils from six rural primaries visiting a secondary school during the lunch time period for tuition in music keyboard skills. The project will culminate in a performance in the Community Arts Centre;
- Project Extra – addressing issues of disaffection and under-achievement during transition through the development of stimulating ways to deliver basic skills. Pupils from partner primary schools are transported weekly (one hour three evenings per week) to the secondary school for a series of workshops on literacy, numeracy and science.

4.58. The evaluation of the above projects found: a positive effect on pupils' attitudes towards moving on from primary to secondary school; reduced pupil and parent fears about transition; raising of pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem; and, developing pupils' subject specific skills and key skills such as numeracy, speaking and listening, and ICT.

4.59. In particular these positive outcomes remained in evidence, when the pupils moved to Year 7 of the secondary school. Pupils maintained friendships with young people from other schools and got to know the teachers who worked with them on the projects. The evaluation concluded that *"these skills are equipping [pupils] to deal better with the demands of the Key Stage 3 curriculum".*

4.60. Evaluations of out-of-school-hours activities demonstrate a positive impact in a number of areas, including attainment, although robust pupil based measurement of attainment has not been undertaken.

Approaches tailored to pupil needs

4.61. Many curriculum based interventions are focused on particular groups of pupils. These were referenced in 13 articles.

4.62. In one London school the Key Stage 3 curriculum has been restructured to address the extreme needs of their large free school meal cohort (76%) who join at the start of Year 7 or who join at different times during the year (Fuller, 2005). Thus the curriculum structure is designed to recognise the needs of different starting points, raise the pace for high attainers and to provide support for learners with low prior attainment. This is achieved by having four different schemes of work for identified groups.

4.63. A review of 125 transition intervention projects found that 50% targeted certain groups identified as likely to find transition difficult (Shepherd and Roker, 2003). In particular this included those with special educational needs.

4.64. Student assistance programmes (SAP) in Wales target disadvantaged groups. The programme provides early intervention and prevention with regard to high risk behaviour[17]. It can involve a tailored curriculum, dedicated support and referral elements. Evaluations have provided positive results with pupils reporting increased feelings of self worth, improved attitudes to school and that they would recommend friends. However, there is no direct evidence of impact on the drop in attainment during the transition.

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[17] Student Assistance Programme, Cynffig Cluster
www.rhagori-cymru.org.uk/cynffig_comprehenisve_sap_presentation__e_.ppt

4.65. The evaluation of a range of Scottish intervention projects found that interventions targeted at disaffected pupils were less likely to work after school or at weekends (Lowden et al, 2005). In addition they need to be flexible, well-resourced, delivered at lunchtimes and possibly involving partner organisations. Issues associated with attendance arose from other intervention projects. One project targeting disaffection and under-achievement struggled to attract the less motivated pupils, especially boys (Estyn (2004). Shepherd and Roker (2005) considered poor attendance at out-of-school activities in light of how children would get home and if activities coincided with religious events (their case project coincided with Ramadan).

4.66. One of three Scottish intervention projects focused specifically on 'low achieving and vulnerable' pupils (Bryan et al, 2007). The ENABLE project, which addressed literacy and numeracy, involved separate classes for pupils in the first two years of secondary school with majority input from primary trained teachers. The teaching methods were based on a holistic, primary-style approach which emphasised social and pastoral care as well as delivering the academic curriculum. Pupils returned to mainstream classes in Year 9.

4.67. Evaluation results for the ENABLE project included reduced drop-out, improved academic performance compared with two years previously and, increased pupils' confidence and personal development. The evaluators concluded that: *"A model that targets the most vulnerable, least able pupils is particularly well suited to areas of deprivation, schools with a large proportion of children arriving without sufficiently developed skills, or where pupils present with emotional difficulties"* (Bryan et al, 2007, P 9).

Bryan et al, 2007, Evaluation of pilots to improve primary and secondary school transitions

This detailed evaluation of three pilot projects provides some good evidence of impact. Each project focused on a different subject and/or group:
- North Lanarkshire, focusing on literacy for all P6-S2[18] pupils, but particularly those moving from P7 to S1, Specialist Literacy Development Officers contributing to primary and secondary classes
- East Ayrshire, focusing on numeracy for all P6-S2 pupils, but particularly those moving from P7 to S1, Additional staffing in primaries and secondaries, enabling an increase in cross-sector liaison and teaching
- Glasgow City, focusing on literacy and numeracy for low achieving, vulnerable pupils (excluding those with serious behavioural difficulties) in S1 and S2, using separate classes for ENABLE pupils in S1 and S2, with majority input from primary trained teachers.

All three pilots were judged to have had a positive effect on the schools and teachers involved. Teachers believed the East Ayrshire numeracy pilot had

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[18] P7 or primary 7 equates to Year 6 the last year of primary school and S1 or secondary 1 equates to Year 8, the first year of secondary school

improved pupil attainment, although quantitative analysis was equivocal showing some improvement and some decline. Glasgow ENABLE pupils had better attainment than a comparable group in previous years. The quantitative evaluation approach for the ENABLE project is robust and provides good evidence of an intervention project, addressing low achieving pupils, resulting in a positive impact on attainment.

4.68. Some evidence of impact on attainment resulting from targeted interventions has been identified. In particular, the ENABLE project focuses on a group likely to experience poverty. The intervention itself is multifaceted and includes aspects of pedagogy as well as curriculum factors.

Summer school

4.69. Summer schools are mentioned by 11 articles covered in this review. They tend to be used for those who needed to catch up in literary and numeracy, or for gifted and talented pupils (Galton et al, 2003). Taylor and Conor (2005) observed one school where activities are run for the primary pupils, including masterclasses for gifted and talented 9-11 year olds in the feeder schools. These mostly run for 8-10 days and were described by the headteacher as popular with both students and their families.

4.70. Stoll et al (2003) argue that while a two-week summer school would not substantially improve literacy and numeracy, pupils moving in to year 7 have more social confidence and were better motivated than they otherwise might have been.

4.71. One Scottish secondary school had worked collaboratively with all eight of its feeder primary schools, with a particular focus on enhancing the articulation of curricular and pastoral aspects of school life across the primary and secondary schools (Lowden et al, 2005). Activities included a primary to secondary summer school, running for two weeks involving up to 30 pupils, with the aims being to: enhance the existing induction programme with final year primary pupils; ease the primary-secondary transition; encourage early commitment to working outside of the normal school day; raising pupil self-esteem; and, encouraging an interest in the environment and the local community.

4.72. This summer school targeted pupils who met certain criteria, namely those: likely to find transition difficult or stressful; from socially/economically disadvantaged home backgrounds; have missed the two-day secondary school induction visit; and, need support in literacy and numeracy.

4.73. Summer schools and other joint primary/secondary activities provide *"familiarisation with secondary school, promoting rapport between pupils and teachers, building self confidence"* (Lowden et al, 2005). However, this research has no direct discussion on the impact of the activities in easing the primary-secondary transition.

4.74. In another example, Brighton and Hove City Council had a central project for looked after children which included summer catch-up lessons for Year 6 children who were moving up to secondary school (Arad, 2007). They focused on reading and writing, number and computer skills, to make children more confident about going to secondary school. The review comments on the importance of stability for looked after children. Other authors also evidence summer schools as supporting an element of catch-up (Kendall et al, 2005).

4.75. Some label summer schools as 'remedial programmes', that is, extra classes for underachieving pupils (Yuen, 2007). It is argued there should be alignment between such remedial courses and the core courses, and Yuen feels that this has not worked well in practice.

4.76. Summer schools can work better than in-school remedial programmes, as pupils are not being 'labelled' by other pupils, and these have been found to be effective. In the US, Mass Insight Education (2000, cited in Yuen, 2007, p27[19]) found that, "*…the average child who attends summer school will outperform between 55% and 60% of comparable students who did not attend the program*".

4.77. However, there is some evidence to show that the best teachers may not always be recruited to teach on summer school programmes, through reasons such as advertising late in the year, pay not being equivalent to the term-time pay, and because teachers value their summer break. *"Usually there are no rigorous selection criteria for hiring summer school teachers because the demand for teachers to teach in the summer exceeds the supply."* (Denton, 2003, cited in Yuen, 2007, p28[20]). Therefore those most in need of developing their skills may not be taught by those considered best.

4.78. Summer schools are familiar interventions, with some evidence that they can help support those who might be at risk of falling behind and those who are gifted and talented. However, limited evaluative evidence has been identified in the literature.

Catch-up programmes
4.79. Catch-up programmes are mentioned by ten authors. There is some overlap with summer schools as they can have a catch-up aspect. However, they can also be programmes that operate before and after the transition, usually during the school day. They tend to focus on literacy and numeracy (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002).

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[19] Mass Insight Education. (2000). For the first time ever: The extraordinary efforts in Massachusetts schools to get extra help to the students who need it most. Boston: Mass Insight Education.
[20] Denton, D. R. (2003). *Summer school: Unfulfilled promise*. Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board.

4.80. The ENABLE programme, mentioned earlier under programmes tailored to pupil needs, is an example of a more sophisticated catch-up programme; working with low achieving, vulnerable pupils on literacy skills. It did evidence impact on attainment.

4.81. Other include a school in London which enrolled all year 7 pupils with Level 3 English Key Stage 3 SAT scores in a breakfast club to follow a literacy catch up programme (Fuller et al, 2005), and a similar lunchtime club was also found to be effective (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008).

4.82. Demetriou et al (2000) state that it is important for schools to respond to the problem of 'catching up' with work. Stoll et al (2003) suggest this is particularly problematic for pupils arriving in year 7 with English and Maths at Level 3. They found that most pilot schools had used three 20-minute sessions in small groups of 6-8, accommodated by different approaches' to timetabling and staffing. Schools with significant numbers of Level 3 pupils encountered difficulties with managing catch-up activities. However, the use of catch-up classes outside school hours was reported by teachers as being seen by pupils as a punishment.

4.83. This is the risk with catch-up programmes. That they may impact negatively on the motivation and consequently the performance of underachieving students. Catch-up programmes can send negative messages to students about their academic abilities, heighten feelings of rejection and the exclusion from other classes. Reyes et al (2000) consider that the effect of publicising students' academic status and heightening their awareness of it causes *"distress [and] demoralisation"*. Furthermore, in the case of those with already depressed academic self perceptions catch-up programmes may cause a *"continued process of disengagement that began prior to their transition"* (p536).

4.84. The use of catch-up programmes is fairly wide-spread but evidence of impact is not extensive from the literature reviewed. However, given the targeted nature of such programmes the opportunity to evaluate, as in the case of the ENABLE programme, is readily available.

Starting interventions earlier e.g. Year 5
4.85. There are some who argue for earlier activity to address the impact of transition (Derrington and Kendall, 2004; Galton et al, 2003). Seven articles referenced earlier interventions.

4.86. Most programmes start in the summer term of Year 6, with some starting at the beginning of Year 6. Derrington and Kendall identify the need for more intensive transfer work as early as Year 5 to help raise expectations of successful transfer and future learning. In the case of gypsy traveller communities they stress the importance of developing relationships with secondary staff as early as possible.

4.87. Undertaking taster days in June and July for Year 5s is evidenced as being beneficial (Taylor and Conor, 2005). In addition Year 8s are involved to provide a perspective on life in the secondary school.

4.88. There is no explicit evidence of such early intervention being more beneficial than more typical work done later in Year 6, except for the observations of the work with gypsy traveller communities. There is no evidence of any impact of attainment.

Summary

4.89. Interventions and actions to address curriculum factors are the most common, covering a broad range of themes.

4.90. Some direct evidence of impact on attainment is demonstrated as a result of a project tailored pupils needs and there is indirect evidence of impact on attainment for extended curricula and out-of-hours activity.

4.91. Other areas of intervention, but with no measure of impact on attainment, include: cross-phase teaching with a common curriculum; use of bridging units, summer schools and catch-up programmes.

5. Pedagogy Factors

5.1. Pedagogical factors focus on improving teaching and classroom practice during the transition. There is limited evidence that pedagogic issues directly affect a drop in attainment. While there are a number of pedagogic interventions, there is limited evaluation evidence of them resulting in improvement in attainment.

Issues

5.2. Two broad issues are identified which may influence attainment of pupils during the transition:
- differences in pedagogies of the two phases;
- lack of professional dialogue between primary and secondary staff.

Differences in pedagogies of the two phases

5.3. Some authors describe discontinuities in teaching styles, which they believe may contribute to discomfort experienced by pupils during the transition.

5.4. For example, the pedagogy of secondary school teachers is described as being less 'active' than in primary schools (Ashton, 2009). While there are more pupil-adult interactions in the Year 7 of secondary school, the vast majority of time is spend as part of a whole class audience experiencing significantly less attention as individuals or small groups (Hargreaves and Galton, 2001).

Lack of professional dialogue between primary and secondary staff

5.5. This point has been largely covered by reference to curricula developments, highlighting the traditionally separate perspectives of primary and secondary teachers. Continuing professional development has not traditionally involved understanding the different approaches adopted in the other phase.

5.6. This has led to a variety of often competing concerns by researchers about how pupils experience the different approaches. For example, concerns that pupils need a similar classroom environment and teaching approaches in the secondary school to their previous primary school in order to feel secure and reassured (Bryan, Treanor and Hill, 2007; Hargreaves and Galton, 2001). Others consider that it is important to move to the secondary model of teaching as soon as possible (Taverner et al, 2001; Evangelou, 2008). Demetriou et al (2000) also identified that teaching styles and peer group interactions are important to 'challenge and engage' secondary students in class, as opposed to copying information down or rote learning.

5.7. Evidence of successful interventions for vulnerable students, such as the ENABLE project, suggest there may be benefits to particular groups by maintaining elements of primary teaching practice.

5.8.   The lack of dialogue between teachers of the two phases and traditional resistance to appreciate alternative pedagogies may be a factor which contributes to the drop in performance of pupils, although there is no explicit evidence.

Actions and interventions
5.9.   Actions and interventions have been identified in three main areas, plus some more limited references to other areas:
- shared approaches to learning and teaching;
- teacher exchange and secondment;
- advanced skills teachers provide outreach support to primary schools;
- other activities and interventions.

Shared approaches to learning and teaching
5.10. A number of research articles (seven) describe actions and interventions which involve sharing learning and teaching approaches.

5.11. For example, a London secondary school has introduced 'circle time' in Year 7 (Fuller et al, 2005), which provides a time for listening, developing attention span, promoting oral communication, and learning new concepts and skills. The pupils are used to working in this way and the school aims to build on these skills. In particular this has been used to support the school's anti-bullying strategy.

5.12. In another school reviewed by the same author Year 7 pupils engaged in collaborative paired and group work based on the Key Stage 2 model.

5.13. The use of the 'science passport' helped to develop dialogue between primary and secondary teachers, *"which had been seriously lacking"* (Burr and Simpson, 2007). In particular it helped to address primary science teachers' lack of self-esteem, especially in physics. The authors wonder whether pupils' perception that science is very different between primary and secondary is to do with the working environment. For example, changing from 30 plus students to only 20 in a specialist secondary science laboratory.

5.14. However, such approaches do not always work. A collaborative learning/group work project in Scottish secondary schools explored the use of these techniques in science teaching (Topping et al, 2007). The research showed positive results of a transition project implemented in primary school using collaborative approaches, but no evidence that the group work approach in secondary schools was resulting in significant gains in science attainment.

Topping et al, 2007, Group Work: Transition into Secondary

Focuses on two projects concerning primary to secondary transitions and the use of group work. These two projects built on a previous project, ScotSPRinG, which found that significant gains in science attainment and social connectedness between pupils were promoted by using collaborative learning techniques to teach

science. The evaluation was based on a mixed method, using four tests of science attainment and measures of self-esteem and group work.

Transition Project

- The Transition Project followed pupils who participated in the previous ScotSPRinG project. It explored transfer to the secondary school environment of pupil domain-specific knowledge and skills and general social, communication and teamwork skills.
- The results showed that there were continuing effects into the early stages of secondary school.
    - the project involved 644 pupils, 204 having been involved in earlier primary group work and 440 forming a comparator group;

Collaborative learning/group work Project

- The Collaborative Learning/Groupwork Project sought to implement group work techniques developed through the primary sector, in the context of support for secondary teachers through CPD and specially developed materials, and to explore the impact of such techniques on cognitive and social gains compared to existing methods of teaching and learning.
- There was no evidence that the collaborative approach resulted in significant gains in science attainment.
    - the project involved 644 pupils (259 formed the experiment group, 385 as the control). Pupils were drawn from: four secondary schools which were experimental schools and 4 were control schools in the East of Scotland and in the West of Scotland. However, the experimental schools in the West did not follow the original planned approach. The overall robustness of the findings is impacted by the relatively low number of schools taking part and variations in the implementation of the project.

5.15. Initial concerns about working in a different sector can be overcome. In East Ayrshire teachers expressed doubts regarding a numeracy pilot, as they were concerned about working in the secondary sector or having secondary maths specialists in their class (Bryan et al, 2007). Similarly secondary teachers were concerned that primary teachers would perceive they were there to criticise their methods. In this instance doubts were overcome through close cross-sector liaison, although they did represent a barrier to implementation. Different teaching methods introduced for Year 7 and Year 8 included more interactive methods of teaching and maths games. A criticism levelled by the teachers through the project evaluation was that insufficient information and ineffective communication occurred at the start of the project. However, teachers felt they had learned new teaching techniques from working together.

5.16. The ENABLE project in Glasgow used primary trained staff to teach basic literacy and numeracy to Year 7 and Year 8 before pupils returned to mainstream classes in Year 9 (Bryan et al, 2007). This created a more concentrated input for pupils academically and pastorally.

5.17. One recommendation from a review of intervention approaches was that LEAs have a role to bring together primary and secondary teachers for joint moderation of pupils' work, sharing schemes of work, discussing teaching and learning approaches and joint transition action research projects (Stoll, et al, 2003).

5.18. Overall, there is evidence of some approaches to learning and teaching between the two phases but there is room for more progress. Studies were not able to attribute any changes in attainment resulting from this improved understanding between teachers.

Teacher exchange and secondment

5.19. A small number of papers (five) referenced exchange visits between the two sectors, mainly around lesson observation.

5.20. Visits between Year 6 and Year 7 teachers usually involve detailed observation of the host teacher's lesson as a method of learning (Galton et al, 2003). However, the authors noted that Year 7 teacher visits to primary schools were more common than the reverse. The key areas of learning are that secondary teachers are broadening their teaching skills through trying out new approaches that they would not normally use with Year 7 and primary teachers are extending their subject knowledge through working alongside specialist secondary teachers (Estyn, 2004a).

5.21. However, there is no explicit measurement of how this activity impacts on attainment.

Advanced Skills Teachers provide outreach support to primary schools

5.22. A small number of references (three) exist in the transition literature to the work of advanced skills teachers.

5.23. One LEA in England initiated a joint project with a higher education institution and another LEA. This focused on improving teaching skills in delivering and assessing the Scientific Exploration attainment target at Key Stage 2/3 (Taverner et al, 2001). The project raised teachers' awareness of differences in their teaching, their differing expectations of pupils and the need for teachers across phases to discuss different concepts and skills that should be introduced at Year 7. They have also used the advanced skills teachers (AST) scheme to encourage the sharing of expertise. Fifteen ASTs were distributed among cross-phase groups of schools. There is no reference to results from this intervention.

5.24. Learning Development Officers in the North Lanarkshire project used a range of approaches including team teaching, extracting pupils from classes, and introducing new teaching and learning approaches, such as, cooperative learning, reciprocal reading and formative assessment (Bryan et al, 2007). Primary teachers reported that working with secondary teachers has increased their pupils' motivation.

5.25. There is one example where a project failed to progress because of a lack of credibility of intervention staff (Bryan et al, 2007). One Scottish school withdrew early from a project in East Ayrshire due to dissatisfaction among English teachers regarding the appointment of a Learning Development Officer. The authors concluded that this highlighted the importance of having credible and experienced staff in place.

5.26. While there are some benefits to teachers in developing their skills with the support of advanced skills teachers there is no explicit evidence of their impact on attainment during the transition.

Other areas
5.27. A few areas were mentioned briefly in one or two articles:
- joint training programmes on teaching skills was discussed and considered as an option for intervention, but there were no detailed examples (Taverner et al, 2001);
- groupings of students in Year 7 to reduce the impact of change – one or two articles describe approaches to teaching the first year of secondary school in a similar format, such as being based in one main classroom and having a smaller number of teachers (Fuller et al, 2005);
- adopting common strategic approaches - a local authority in London worked with its schools to develop a common approach to pedagogy (Fuller et al, 2005). Based on a concept used in Switzerland it aimed to build on prior learning at Key Stage 2 to ensure both pedagogy and curriculum reflected students' experiences at primary school. This involved common lesson structures, development of oral skills, modelling by pupils and getting classroom culture and teaching space right. Primary schools have adopted the same approach and early evidence indicates improvements in pupil behaviour, learning and attainment (however, no detail of these impacts and how they were measured were provided in the article);
- adopting common specific approaches - one London secondary school and its primaries have explored strategies for developing continuity in teaching and learning styles (Fuller et al, 2005). Examples of common language used in lessons include use of WALT (we are learning today…) and WILF (what I'm looking for…) in communicating learning objectives.

5.28. Apart from some evidence of impact resulting from the strategic approach (but no detail on how it was assessed) there is no other evidence of impact of these approaches in addressing the drop in attainment.

Summary
5.29. A range of actions and interventions relating to pedagogy have been identified. Most do not have explicit evidence of impact in attainment. There is some evidence linked to a group work approach to teaching science in primary schools and to the ENABLE project which involved primary teaching strategies in secondary school. There is no discussion of alternative pedagogies applied to different groups such as those in poverty.

6. Autonomous learning factors

6.1. Autonomous learning focuses on learners as active participants in the transition process and in their own learning. This is a less developed area, nevertheless, some issues are relevant. There is no specific evidence on how autonomous learning factors cause a drop in attainment.

Issues
6.2. Two main issues emerge from the literature:
   - pupils struggle with the additional autonomy in Year 7;
   - communication of the 'pupil voice'.

Pupils struggle with the additional autonomy in Year 7
6.3. There are divergent views of pupil resilience and ability to cope with autonomy. Those who are for maintaining primary structures in the early part of secondary school tend to believe that pupils are not ready for so much responsibility.

6.4. Others feel that pupils are likely to have gained a sense of independence. According to Demetriou et al (2000), autonomy, self-determination and social interaction are important during early adolescence. However, schools sometimes fail to offer opportunities for students to make their own decisions. Yuen (2007) states that there is more emphasis on teacher control and discipline after the transition, and less opportunity for 'student choice and self-management'. However, Hirsch (1998, cited in Demetriou, 2000) says it is unlikely that any country, *"has come to formulate the education of children mainly in terms of their own specific needs and characteristics."* (p427)

Communication of the 'pupil voice'
6.5. There are examples of how schools can involve pupils actively in providing feedback and improving transition for future cohorts. For example the work of Ashton (2009) is a survey of pupil feedback on their transition experiences within one local authority. Some schools form transition steering groups onto which pupils can be invited (Estyn 2008a).

6.6. The benefits of capturing the pupil voice include understanding particular problems, learning from pupil perspectives and empowering learners to feel involved in their learning.

6.7. However, it is generally regarded that such feedback is not commonly sought, specifically around transition (Estyn 2008a).

Actions and interventions
6.8. Actions and interventions include extended post-transfer induction programmes mainly in personal, social, health education (PSHE) and humanities including acquisition of study skills and thinking strategies.

6.9. A small number of more detailed references were identified in relation to autonomous learning in the following areas:

- pupils understand their preferred learning styles – this can be developed in concentrated Lifeskills programmes. One example based in a London School has a programme called "Attitude determines Altitude" which aims to help pupils make good decisions in the areas of personal, social, health and educational issues (Fuller et al, 2005). Evidence of this strategy working is seen by the reduced referrals to the Learning Support Unit;
- pupils are encouraged to become professional learners who proactively contribute to the transition process - this includes providing feedback in the form of surveys to collate the pupil voice. At one London school questionnaires are distributed to Year 7 and some pupils attend Senior Leadership Team meetings to provide feedback on transition experiences particularly relating to teaching and learning (Fuller et al, 2005). The key results of this approach have been changes to staff perceptions with a *"sharper focus on professional dialogue regarding pedagogy" [p. 28]*;
- pupils develop a learning portfolio – this is regarded as a powerful tool to help pupils recognise themselves as learners and to give samples of achievements, although it received few mentions. It can then be used to share information with the secondary school and extended in Year 7 (Fuller et al, 2005; Burr and Simpson, 2006).

6.10. These interventions are not as common as those in other categories. There is no evidence of a direct impact on attainment.

7. Administrative factors

7.1. Administrative factors relate to organisational arrangements prior to and during the transition, such as communications between schools and common systems for transfer. They mainly involve the primary and secondary schools, local education authorities and to a lesser extent parents and pupils.

7.2. There is reasonable evidence that administrative factors are important and affect the efficiency of the transition process. Some authors identify evidence that inefficient administrative arrangements may adversely affect transition experiences. However, there is limited evidence that administrative factors cause a drop in attainment.

7.3. This section outlines the issues raised by relevant sources and the actions and interventions that have evolved to address the issues.

Issues
7.4. Administrative factors are grouped into a series of four issues:
- communication between primary and secondary schools;
- consistency of approaches to transition;
- recognition of the particular difficulties some groups experience;
- role of local authorities.

Communication between primary and secondary schools
7.5. Historically there has been limited administrative communication between primary and secondary schools. This is generally linked to the different traditions of teaching practice with limited dialogue between the two phases (Galton et al, 2000; Le Metais, 2003; Bryan et al, 2007; Ashton, 2009). However, more recent sources relevant to Wales indicate that this is improving with stronger links through school clusters (Estyn, 2008a).

7.6. The critical aspects of communication relate to transferring information about individual pupils, their experiences and broader approaches to teaching such as curriculum and pedagogy (which are dealt with in more detail later).

7.7. Reasons for communications and relationships between primary and secondary schools being under-developed are mostly tied to a lack of understanding between the sectors. For example, secondary teachers prefer to test pupils when they arrive to form their own judgements about their ability (Galton and Morrison, 2000; Teaching and Learning Research Programme, 2008). Other authors have described primary schools' doubts about the use by secondary schools of the 'masses of information' primaries provide and in turn secondary schools not trusting the information send by primaries (Baumfield et al, 2002).

7.8. When information about individual pupils is not communicated successfully then important knowledge can be missed. This may relate to particular needs, particular experiences or individual circumstances of pupils.

7.9. In some cases, the problem is efficiency rather than a lack of will. Taylor and Conor (2005) describe an approach within their case study where the secondary school tests pupils in the first week of the September term, because they do not receive the KS2 data in time. The authors feel that there may be a case for secondary schools to test their incoming pupils, so that they have instant access to data. Clearly a better solution would be to ensure data is passed on more quickly (Stoll et al, 2003).

Taylor and Conor, 2005, Excellence in Education: The Making of Great Schools

Research article includes a literature review and a detailed case study focus on one secondary school in Brent, London.

From the case study the research identifies issues associated with the transition such as changing teacher relationships, different larger school environment and being the youngest pupil. It goes on to describe many actions and interventions used in the case study school to address issues resulting from the transition.

The case study is mostly descriptive of the issues, actions and interventions with no evaluative judgement about the effectiveness of actions and interventions.

7.10. Burr and Simpson's (2007) evaluation of the Swing Through with Science project argues that the loss of momentum in science learning in secondary school occurs because teachers do not take enough account of prior learning. This is due to the lack of a structured process for transferring information about prior attainment. However, no other studies explicitly link these issues.

Consistency of approaches to transition

7.11. It is clear from the literature that a wide variety of approaches to transition exist between schools, together with many approaches to mitigate its negative effects on children.

7.12. Reviews of approaches undertaken by schools indicate that they generally develop different, tailored solutions to address their identified needs (Fuller, 2005). Research in six of the best value added schools in five London LEAs found no common approaches to transition. However, where secondary schools have a number of feeder primary schools, there may be difficulties if all primaries are not following the same approach. Also primaries have greater burdens if they feed into a number of secondary schools with different approaches.

7.13. This is not necessarily a criticism but evidence of diversity. Across LAs this is less of a problem but within an LEA the problems cited above will emerge.

7.14. A number of authors see transition plans or transfer plans as a vehicle to improve consistency of approaches to transition (Galton and Morrison, 2000; Estyn, 2008a).

7.15. In Wales, the development of clusters of schools with common systems supported by transition plans should mitigate such effects.

Recognition of the particular difficulties some groups experience

7.16. There is evidence that the failure to transfer information from primary to secondary may affect certain specific groups more than others.

7.17. For example, Estyn (2008) highlights the need for schools to focus more closely on free school meals pupils due to their vulnerability. In particular, schools need to monitor the performance of FSM pupils as a proxy to those who are disadvantaged. Indeed, Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) highlight instances where the secondary school were not aware of additional support that was normally provided for disadvantaged pupils in the primary school.

7.18. Arad Consulting (2007) recommend that there should be enhanced monitoring of pupils' progress, in particular those with SEN and those who are looked after.

7.19. The extent to which different groups experience a drop in attainment is discussed in Section 4.

Role of local authorities

7.20. Many studies identify the importance of local education authorities' (LEA) 'moderation' role in transition issues between their schools (Taverner et al, 2001; Stoll et al, 2003; Estyn, 2004; Estyn, 2008). One author concluded that a lack of LEA commitment affects pupils' transition. However, the research does not specify in exactly what ways (Fuller et al, 2005).

7.21. LEAs should have in place arrangements to provide support for joint transition arrangements (Estyn, 2004). Taverner et al (2001) concur, and suggest that the LEA should coordinate induction programmes across its secondary schools.

7.22. LEAs can also have a role in encouraging secondary schools to make use of transfer data to analyse pupils' progress (Taverner et al, 2001; Estyn, 2004). A number of studies have proposed consultation with schools to design national standardised form for this data (Taverner et al, 2001; Powell et al, 2006). This process could be coordinated by LEAs.

7.23. Overall, it is clear that the role performed by LEAs is important, although there is no clear evidence of a link to a drop in attainment. The LEA role is well developed in Wales, with some areas identified for improvement. Areas for improvement include greater consistency, better monitoring of transition planning and better monitoring of outcomes (Estyn, 2008a).

Summary

7.24. A range of administrative issues are evidenced in the literature, although any direct relationship to the drop in attainment in not clear. Relationships between primary and secondary staff appear to be improving which facilitates a range of other interventions described in sections below. There may be some instances where sub-optimal communication contributes to poor transition experiences for pupils.

7.25. Slow or ineffective transfer of pupil information to secondary school, even in a few instances, is cause for concern. LEAs should use their oversight role to ensure effective and timely transfer of this information.

Actions and Interventions

7.26. The main responses to the administrative challenges of transition relate to:
- planning;
- sharing good practice;
- staff roles;
- co-ordination;
- evaluation of processes and feedback;
- needs of specific groups.

Planning

7.27. Since 2007 primary and secondary schools in Wales are required to have transition plans in place to help support pupils as they enter new school systems. The aim is to ensure that pupils move from primary to secondary schooling in a planned way. The requirement sought to promote new and better links between secondary schools and their feeder schools and with greater levels of teacher interaction between those schools (Arad Consulting, 2007).

7.28. Other authors stress the importance of transition planning (Galton and Morrison, 2000), although there is limited evidence of the impact of transition plans. In Wales, Estyn highlighted this in a recent review of transition planning, when they observed that *"schools have not given enough consideration to the kind of information they will need to collect to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of transition plans."* (Estyn 2008, p7)

Estyn, 2008, The impact of transition plans

This review draws on: previous research reports; interviews with officers responsible for school improvement in eight LEAs; interviews with headteachers, transition co-ordinators, parents and pupils; and, analysis of documents from schools and LEAs.

The main findings are that while all plans are in place, covering how schools intend to improve arrangements of transition, they vary in quality. Shortcomings are: plans are not evaluative enough; plans are not specific enough, plans omit national and local initiative taking place; focus on processes not outcomes; limited focus on Welsh as a second language and, do not support measurement of

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impact.

The report includes good practice case studies, such as the following:
- A large cluster of schools in South Wales has set out within its transition plan its aims, objectives, priorities for improvement, lines of accountability and how impact will be evaluated
- All teachers have a copy of the transition plan. A wide range of materials, used for transition purposes are attached to the plan including:
  - The agreed curriculum map of topics that each school teaches in each subject Y5 – Y8;
  - A copy of the bridging project that all schools use to develop pupils' creative skills;
  - Procedures to transfer information and track pupils' progress;
  - Questionnaires used to capture views of staff, pupils and parents.
- A common programme of in-service training is articulated in the plan. A number of project activities include: visits to successful schools; joint planning for the development of thinking, organisational and research skills; and, the production of common tasks for assessment and moderation in English, mathematics and science.

7.29. Estyn felt that the plans it had reviewed were too generic to achieve specific improvements. Furthermore, the plans did not give enough attention to the needs of individual groups of learners. Estyn conjectures that absence of support for these individuals could lead to their disengagement if they feel that lessons are neither useful nor interesting.

7.30. Other sources have identified the value of transition planning. Fuller et al (2005) evidence a London school where a single document is used to communicate transition plans to parents and staff. The planning document covers seven stages from the offer of a place to the celebration of a successful induction held at the end of the first term.

Sharing good practice between schools
7.31. A role which local authorities can undertake linked to curriculum planning includes support for specific interventions and the sharing of good practice between schools.

7.32. Taverner et al (2001) identify three levels of support that LEAs provide to schools to combine the focus on pastoral, administrative and curriculum areas. These levels were identified from over 100 materials provided by LEAs as part of their research.

7.33. Level one relates to initiation and facilitation, where the LEA provides documentary evidence, through its own research, of an area in need of development. This is then shared with schools. Strategies as to how to address the identified need are discussed. This may result in further work at LEA level, such as the funding of school level initiatives or the production of a document to support schools in addressing key areas of concern. For example, an urban LEA in the North East of England decided to address lower progress from Key Stage 2 to 3. Key features of the plan of work included: a focus on pedagogical issues; different responses being encouraged for different schools; funding given to schools for transition; and, addressing issues of children's confidence and social skills.

7.34. Level two covers identification and dissemination, where the LEA identifies good practice within their schools through meetings and visits. This is then collated and shared with schools – usually in the form of a report or checklist rather than through training or conferences.

7.35. Level three relates to collation; the LEA collates the transfer documents from schools and puts together a document that combines all the requirements of their schools. This is then re-distributed to all head teachers so that a common format prevails across the LEA. This sometimes includes a move towards more effective use of ICT to transfer pupil data.

Taverner et al, 2001, Research into the theme: 'Transition between Key Stages in Schools'

This study involved qualitative research with 69 LEAs in England; using literature review and document analysis of approaches being undertaken by the LEAs. It covers both transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 and Key Stage 3 to 4.

A wide array of examples of actions and interventions are assembled, focusing in particular on the role LEAs can perform to support improved transition. However, there is no evidence of impact or contrast of what works better or in what circumstances.

7.36. The development of school clusters can also support transition through improved dialogue and understanding. By the term 'school cluster' we refer to joint working between three or more primary and secondary schools.

7.37. The collaboration of schools is regarded by some as an important intervention. Evangelou et al (2008) state that, *"the most successful schools…. were those with very close links and coordination between primary and secondary schools".* Contact between colleagues in primary and secondary schools, raises awareness of, and respect for, the work of each sector (Taverner et al, 2001)

7.38. However, Kendall et al (2005) find that while coordination between school clusters (Action Zones) and learning mentors made some contribution to better transition experiences, none of the activities led to substantial improvements.

7.39. The following list contains a range of specific school cluster joint arrangements that can help improve transition according to Estyn (2004):
- managing and co-ordinating transition;
- meeting pupils' personal and social needs;
- communicating the learning needs of individual pupils;
- curriculum planning;
- achieving continuity in teaching and learning methods;
- achieving consistency in assessment;
- developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and information
- communications and technology (ICT) skills;
- sharing information about pupils' achievement, attainment, attendance and behaviour;
- monitoring standards and tracking pupils' progress against prior attainment;
- school staff professional development;
- evaluating the impact of the cluster plan and improvement initiatives on standards;
- schools should make arrangements to receive information about the achievements and learning needs of pupils who transfer to, or from, schools outside the consortium or family.

7.40. Some clusters have developed joint behaviour-management policies so that pupils know what is expected of them on both sides of the transition. This might involve a variety of staff including education welfare officers, educational psychologists and learning and behaviour teams working more closely together as integrated teams in clusters (Estyn, 2008a).

7.41. While there is evidence of improved relationships between primary and secondary schools, there is no clear evidence of how it might contribute to addressing the drop in attainment.

Transition co-ordination
7.42. Eight references are made to transition co-ordination actions and interventions. There are two important elements to the role of staff in respect of the transition, first that a specific defined role exists and second that its purpose is shared between staff and schools.

7.43. A review of current practice in Wales identified that the role of a transition co-ordinator was to ensure smooth transition between key stages and to ensure the new pupils settle into the new school easily and quickly (Powell et al, 2006).

7.44. There are instances of primary and secondary staff performing such roles but in the main it relates to secondary staff. Estyn (2008) highlights that transition coordinators are often secondary school senior managers, which helps to reduce the burden on primary school staff. However, this can mean that primary schools are not always fully effective partners, which may limit the effectiveness of links to KS3 patterns of delivery.

7.45. Estyn (2008) refers to one school that is using a teaching assistant to support the transition of pupils; similarly Taylor and Conor (2005) suggest employing a part-time member of staff to work closely with the feeder schools is a good approach.

7.46. An example helps to describe how this works. At a secondary school in London the Intervention Manager acts as an Admissions and Liaison Assistant to Year 7 (Fuller et al, 2005). A documented job description specifies how the role assists the head of year in a range of procedures to support effective transition. The role has helped establish positive relationships with feeder schools including staff and parents. Activities include: visits and presentations to feeder schools and parents; and, home visits during the summer to address individual issues.

7.47. However, as with other examples there is no explicit evaluation of the contribution this type of role makes to address the drop in attainment, except to say it is regarded as positive by the schools.

7.48. Anderson et al (2000) suggest that students benefit from working with a transition team to help them understand the academic rigour and co-curricular options at the secondary level.

7.49. Counselling those most at risk of having problems was evidenced in international case studies as effective. Arad Consulting (2007) recommend that school leaders and managers should proactively nurture links between staff of secondary schools and their feeder schools to identify pupils at risk of being adversely affected by transition, in order to plan additional support in partnership with parents. The review recommends that this type of activity could be supported centrally at the LEA level.

Feedback to primary schools
7.50. This might involve feedback relating to one or more of the following, with a view to continuous improvement, according to Fuller (2005):
- effectiveness of transition plans;
- early progress of pupils;
- ongoing feedback on Key Stage 3, GCSE and post-16 attainment.

7.51. This type of information could be used by primary schools to look at the impact of their teaching and the impact of the transition process. This is supported by points in relation to the evaluation of transition plans. The question of resource to fulfil this type of activity is likely to be an issue for some schools. Although, there may be ways of spreading this resource cost through cluster working.

Staff, parents and pupils involved in evaluating transition arrangements

7.52. Linked to the above point, all stakeholders involved in the transition have a valid perspective on how well it works. Most schools ask pupils for their views after events such as induction days, although only a few schools ask the school council or other pupils for views on the transition and how it can be improved (Estyn 2008a). Dialogue also takes place at parents' evenings, but the extent to which this is focused on transition experiences which can influence school policy is unclear and unlikely.

7.53. In one school cluster in South Wales headteachers organised a day for the school council representatives from years 5 to 11 in the five cluster schools to come together to discuss transition. The proceedings were planned by pupils. School staff, an LEA staff member and a local Assembly Member were present in observational roles.

7.54. A school in London gains feedback using questionnaires sent to parents and pupils that provide feedback on transition and on progress of students (Fuller et al, 2005). This is then discussed with parents at twice-yearly Performance Review Days. In another school, referenced by the same author, the student voice is captured through questionnaires sent to Year 7 students to capture their transition experiences. The results, which are fed back to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and all teachers, have resulted in increased professional dialogue about how to support pupil transition.

7.55. A key finding of the work by Ashton (2008) was "*that children can be a very valuable resource in improving transition. Given accessible opportunities, which need not take up large amounts of time or resources, all children inform the transition process and contribute to ongoing improvement*".

7.56. In Wales it was noted that relatively few transition steering groups include parents or governors from partner schools (Estyn 2008a). There are some examples of additional parents' evenings in the autumn term of Year 7 to provide an early opportunity to discuss pupil progress in their new school. However, few schools involve parents in their evaluation of transition plans.

7.57. Overall, these examples are relatively infrequent and this is an area that could benefit from greater insight from teachers, pupils, parents and governors.

Arrangements for transition are tailored to the needs of specific groups of pupils

7.58. There is some evidence of tailoring transition to the needs of particular groups, as a result of transition co-ordinators' activities and of dialogue between the primary and secondary school regarding individuals' needs. Other focused work relates more to learning and is covered under curriculum factors in Section 5.

7.59. The following groups are noted by some authors as requiring particular attention: pupils with special educational needs (DCSF, 2009); looked after children; minority ethnic groups; those identified as gifted and talented; and, those with English as an additional language.

7.60. For example, a school in London has employed an LA-funded transition learning mentor who works with feeder primary schools to identify special educational needs (DCSF, 2009). This is done though dialogue with primary teachers and by reviewing relevant data. The focus is on literacy and numeracy. This process ensures that vulnerable pupils transfer with CAT scores[21], observation notes, resilience profiles and personalised timetables. This has resulted in lower permanent exclusions and persistent absence and improved pupil academic progress.

7.61. In another example, activities which have been effective with traveller communities include support on completing transfer forms, support on appeals procedures if unsuccessful with their first choice of school, identification of individuals at risk of experiencing problems and accompanying parents and children on visits to the secondary school (Derrington 2004). Some of these may apply to other vulnerable groups especially if parents have had poor personal education experiences.

7.62. There is some limited qualitative evidence that this type of intervention works by reference to the work with traveller communities.

Summary

7.63. Apart from the Estyn review of transition plans the literature does not contain extensive evaluation of interventions to explore whether they address the drop in attainment. Transition planning and transition co-ordination are the most commonly referenced forms of administrative intervention. There are some good examples of both although there is room for improvement and greater consistency across schools.

7.64. Areas identified for improvement include: better transition planning; more effective identification of individual at risk pupils; more efficient ways of transferring data from primary to secondary schools for the start of Year 7; and, involving parents in providing feedback on transition processes.

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[21] The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT) is an assessment of a range of reasoning skills.

8. Comparison of key factors, actions and interventions

8.1. This section contrasts the key factors linked to drop in attainment to identify where the strongest evidence exists and what are the most likely explanations. A similar analysis is then performed on the actions and interventions to identify where the strong evidence exists and what interventions are most effective.

Key Factors

8.2. There is limited comparison of causes of a drop in attainment, within the literature, to isolate the major influences. Therefore, this analysis is based on areas where the strongest evidence can be found.

8.3. The strongest evidence relates to social and personal factors as possible causes of a drop in attainment. Factors associated with the school environment (concerns about safety and concerns about the learning environment) were significant for those who experienced a drop in attainment for some subjects. Robust evidence from a parental action research project demonstrated that involvement of parents was significant in explaining improvements in literacy. Furthermore, certain types of individuals are more likely to experience a drop in attainment during the transition, such as those with poor prior attainment, those receiving free school meals, those with low self-esteem and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, no robust evidence exists relating the drop in attainment to the impact of friendship groups, out-of-school activities or concerns about bullying.

8.4. There is an extensive and compelling discussion of curriculum factors within the literature. Curriculum factors include transfer of pupil-specific information about learning, curriculum continuity and the changing relationship between pupils and teachers. However, there is no robust evidence of a link to a drop in attainment.

8.5. There is no evidence of pedagogy issues or autonomous learning issues directly influencing a drop in attainment, from the transition literature. Pedagogy issues identified include differences between primary and secondary teaching approaches and a lack of professional dialogue between the two phases. Autonomous learning relates to whether Year 7 pupils can cope with the level of autonomy and whether the pupil voice is sufficiently communicated.

8.6. There is no clear evidence of a link between administrative issues and a drop in attainment. However, many authors stress the importance of developing stronger relationships between primary and secondary schools, particularly around information transfer, and the role of local authorities to co-ordinate good practice and common systems.

Summary
8.7. Social and personal factors provide the strongest evidence of an influence on the drop in attainment. The above findings fit with conclusions arrived at by a number of authors.

Actions and interventions
8.8. A survey of transfer initiatives conducted by the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools (CSCS), referenced in Galton and Morrison (2000), investigated the popularity of interventions in English Schools to address the effects of the transition (see **table 8.1** below).

Table 8.1: New Initiatives on Transfer in English Schools

Survey of Transfer Initiatives		
(1) Administrative	Meetings of: Senior staff	50%
	Heads of Year	100%
	Subject Heads	30%
	Senco's (special educational needs co-ordinators)	35%
	Exchanging information and records	100%
	Holding Parent's events	100%
(2) Social and Personal	Induction days	100%
	Open evenings	50%
	Parent and pupil guides	70%
	Special ICT, drama and sports visits	10%
	Identifying problem pupils and offering guidance and counselling	2%
(3) Curricular	Teach lessons in feeder schools	20%
	Joint projects	10%
	Summer schools	5%
	Joint training days	2%
(4) Pedagogic	Joint programme of teaching skills	2%
	Employing ex primary head to co-ordinate first term's work after transfer	1%
	Teacher exchanges	5%
(5) Managing Learning	Extended induction programmes involving 'becoming a professional learner'	2%

Source: Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools (CSCS); replies received from 215 schools

8.9. The table demonstrates that administrative and social and personal initiatives were most common over ten years ago, although it does not provide an assessment of which initiatives are most effective or which provide value for money. The authors referred to the, *"lack of any systematic evaluation of these initiatives"* (Galton and Morrison, 2000, p447), which in the main continues to be the case.

8.10. Reviewing the evidence from this rapid evidence assessment, there appears to have been an increase in actions and interventions addressing curriculum issues, compared with the CSCS study. This is supported by later work which found, in a survey of English LEAs, that the majority of interventions were curricular (46%) followed by social and personal (32%), pedagogic (9%), managing learning (7%) and administrative (6%) (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 2003).

8.11. Below we summarise the findings on intervention activities, identifying where any clear evidence of impact exists.

8.12. Interventions and actions to address curriculum factors are the most common; covering a broad range of themes. Direct evidence of improved attainment is demonstrated as a result of a project tailored to pupils' needs, in this case low achieving, vulnerable pupils (ENABLE). Plus, there is indirect evidence of impact on attainment for extended curricula and out-of-hours activities (evidenced through general teacher assessment of more positive attainment rather than through performance data). Other major areas of intervention, with anecdotal or assumed benefits, but with no explicit measure of impact on attainment, include: cross-phase teaching with a common curriculum; use of bridging units, summer schools and catch-up programmes.

8.13. Social and personal interventions were the second most common just behind curriculum interventions. The strongest evidence of impact is the HSKE project which used robust quantitative techniques to demonstrate that the intervention had a significant effect. Open days/evenings for parents and buddy/mentoring interventions are commonly used but generally lack evaluation evidence. For example, spending a full day with the future secondary school was regarded as one of the stronger interventions at reducing pupil anxiety, but there was no direct evidence of this affecting the drop in attainment.

8.14. Actions and interventions relating to pedagogy have some evaluation evidence that they address the drop in attainment. One study found a positive effect resulting from collaborative learning in science when delivered in the primary school but not when delivered in the secondary school (Topping, 2007). In addition, anecdotal evidence of benefits to teachers and approaches to teaching do exist. Key pedagogy interventions were sharing approaches to learning and teaching between the phases, teacher exchange and secondment, and use of Advanced Skills Teachers in primary schools. Aspects of the intervention projects in East Ayrshire and Glasgow (Bryan et al, 2007) were pedagogical such as primary teachers teaching the first two years of secondary in the primary format, support from literacy development officers and close cross-phase working but findings relating to attainment were mixed across the projects.

8.15. There is limited evidence from the REA demonstrating the impact of actions and interventions to address administrative factors. However, there is a strong consensus that some specific interventions make a positive contribution to the transition process. These include transition planning, sharing good practice between schools, transition co-ordination between schools, and more effective feedback loops in the experiences and outcomes of transition with staff, parents and pupils.

8.16. Actions and interventions relating to autonomous learning do not have robust evaluation evidence that they address the drop in attainment. Interventions to address autonomous learning were not extensive, they covered pupils understanding of their learning styles, being professional learners and use of learning portfolios.

Summary

8.17. Although a range of actions and interventions have been described it is not clear how consistently they are all employed across local authorities. There is also no comparison of actions and interventions to identify which work best.

8.18. Particular examples with evaluation evidence of addressing the drop in attainment and of addressing vulnerable groups fall into social and personal, curriculum and pedagogy categories.

8.19. Some of the examples are composite intervention programmes which comprise a number of individual actions and interventions described in the previous sections.

9. Comparative analysis of research sources

9.1. In this section we review some of the different approaches taken by the research sources to key aspects of this work. We cover measurement of attainment, definitions of poverty, the research base and approaches to the evaluation of interventions.

Measuring attainment

9.2. Across the quantitative survey-based studies two broad approaches are used to measure the change in attainment.

9.3. The first approach uses Key Stage results at the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 3, or similar curriculum stages for international studies. Key Stage results are measures of standards achieved against objectively defined levels of performance at the relevant ages. This approach measures changes occurring over two years following the transfer. In particular this was used by Gibbons and Silva (2007) in the UK, West et al (2010) in Scotland and, Rice (2001) and Reyes et al (2000) in the US. This approach is also used by the Welsh Assembly Government in data analysis.

9.4. The second approach uses other forms of standardised tests which can be carried out at closer intervals than the first approach. For example, Greenhough at al (2007) used the PIPS (Performance Indicators in Primary Schools) test developed by Durham University (covering literacy and Maths) in their research on the HSKE project.

9.5. However, the standardised test approach is not always straight-forward. Pupils were tested before the transfer and towards the end of the spring term after transfer. Their preliminary analysis of the pre-transfer scores indicated that whilst no child was at the ceiling, a number were close. This risked assessments of higher achieving students being restricted or capped. Therefore, after transfer, the End of Year 6 tests were supplemented with additional material which was developed for older students but compatible with the PIPS materials. In a similar way Hargreaves and Galton (2002) used the Richmond basic skills test in the summer term before and the autumn and summer terms after the transfer.

9.6. A criticism of the Key Stages approach is that it is not sensitive enough to measure more frequent variations. For example, Hargreaves and Galton's (2001) work described above used the more regular capture of information to conclude that a hiatus occurs for some pupils. The design of tailored surveys also allows additional questions to be added to explore attitudes and perceptions of young people.

9.7. The benefits of the Key Stage data is that it is a consistent dataset which can be linked to other data sources for example the National Pupil Database (NPD) and the Pupil Level Annual Census (PLASC). It can then be used to analyse attainment for different groups such as those receiving free school meals, those of a particular gender and other criteria. Another benefit of the Key Stage data is that there are no additional costs as it is currently a normal part of school data collection.

9.8. Taken together the evidence indicates that there is a drop in attainment during the transition. This drop in attainment disproportionately affects some vulnerable groups. However, there is limited evidence that this drop is directly caused by aspects of the transition.

Definitions of poverty
9.9. A variety of disadvantaged groups are explored across the research. Most can be considered a proxy for those experiencing poverty. For example those receiving free school meals (FSM), those in lower socio-economic groups and those with low incomes.

9.10. FSM represents a good indicator with a clear definition. For example, the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (2008) states that pupils receiving FSM is a 'standard indicator of relative affluence'. Sutherland and Purdy (2006) also use FSM as a proxy. Similarly FSM is used as a criterion for RAISE funding which targets schools where at least a fifth of pupils are eligible for FSM (Estyn, 2008).

9.11. However, FSM is not accepted by everyone. Some believe it does not provide good coverage for low income families that are not claiming benefits and is subject to a number of other criticisms.

9.12. Other indicators associated with child poverty include children being on the child protection register, children who are looked after, being part of a lone parent family and having lower prior attainment.

9.13. For now, pupils receiving free schools meals is probably the best indicator available to identify pupils in poverty which can be consistently used in quantitative research. Other indicators such as income and socio-economic group generally require primary research to collect the necessary data.

Research base
9.14. This rapid evidence assessment has demonstrated the wide variety of methodologies and subject disciplines which have driven the range of research. It has also demonstrated the lack of research using longitudinal designs, which focuses on the drop in attainment linked to poverty.

9.15. The majority of research focuses on pupils' pre-transfer expectations and post-transfer experiences (West et al, 2010). Our rapid evidence assessment confirms this.

9.16. There is also limited agreement on which vulnerable groups are most affected (West et al, 2010). While some research has been undertaken in the US looking at socio-economic status, less attention has been directed to the impact of socio-economic status in the UK, although its importance is often assumed (Galton and Morrison, 2000). Other aspects have included the importance of the family, lower ability and low self-esteem.

9.17. West et al (2010) identify three reasons why the evidence base is weak. First, the research involves a wide range of perspectives and methodologies with a lack of longitudinal studies of sufficient duration. Second, there has been a lack of focus on individual predictor variables in UK research. Third, research has not focused sufficiently on the impact of the transition itself. Instead UK research has tended to describe the experience of transition and changes in outcomes but failed to link the two. Thus relying on *"inferences about linkage from two different sets of evidence"* (West et al , 2010, p25).

9.18. Conversely US research has tended to focus on individual characteristics such as self-esteem, family or peer group factors with less attention to the experience of transition itself.

9.19. The quantitative studies reviewed as part of the rapid evidence assessment conform to this critique. Even the work of West et al (2010), which is a strong quantitative study was not primarily designed as a detailed investigation of the primary-secondary transition, with no data collected on individual schools to enable analysis of school effects.

9.20. What is missing is to bring together these approaches, in longitudinal format, to investigate the specific impact of transition experiences taking account of socio-economic, family and personal characteristics, together with those of the school.

Evaluation of interventions
9.21. The rapid evidence assessment has identified numerous interventions and actions to address negative effects of the transition. Many in particular aim to address the drop in attainment.

9.22. However, very few robust evaluations of these interventions exist. This may be because some materials are not published. However, we suspect that there are different reasons. These include the cost and time required, but also the difficulty of undertaking such evaluations. The particular problem of attribution is a major challenge, given the wide range of other initiatives and activities which might be responsible for any effects detected by research results. There is also a lack of impact evidence to say, for example, whether a particular intervention is cost effective.

9.23. There are very few reviews of different interventions. Thus precluding comparison and assessment of which are the most effective and why interventions work.

9.24. This generally leaves us with a long list of 'good practice' interventions which are described to have been implemented and sometimes to have worked (but with no evidence of impact). In all likelihood some interventions and actions are likely to work better at addressing particular problems and in particular circumstances.

9.25. The examples where robust analysis is available include:
- three projects undertaken in Scotland to address a variety of interventions covering social and personal, curriculum and pedagogical factors (Bryan et al, 2007). The most effective of the three projects provided year 7 and 8 with teaching through a primary-format for identified, vulnerable groups. This was demonstrated by improved attainment data compared with previous year groups;
- the HSKE explored the impact of parental involvement, together with curricular aspects (Greenhough, 2007). It found improved attainment among the treatment group compared with a control group;
- the evaluation of collaborative learning techniques used in primary schools (Topping et al, 2007) found a continuing positive effect of this primary intervention in science;
- the evaluation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy Pilot covered many intervention areas including administration, curriculum, pedagogy and, social and personal (Stoll et al, 2003). Data analysis demonstrated improvement in attainment in English and Mathematics, although those receiving free school meals showed less progress.

9.26. Two other studies have some good, but less robust, evidence:
- two out-of-school-hours projects in Wales (Estyn 2004a) and Scotland (Lowden 2005) provide descriptive evidence of improvements in many areas including attainment. But no quantitative evidence of improvements in attainment are provided;
- the evaluation of the transition to secondary school project run by the National Pyramid Trust supports withdrawn and vulnerable children (Shepherd and Roker, 2005). Ten weekly sessions included activities to build self-confidence, develop inter-personal skills and deal with difficult situations. Robust findings evidenced a significant positive impact on how children felt about going to secondary school. However, there was no measure of impact on attainment.

9.27. A better understanding of which interventions work best and in what circumstances is required. This can only be achieved by improved evaluation practices. A particular challenge is how to support schools and other partners to undertake such evaluations.

10. Conclusions

Conclusions

10.1. The conclusions use the evidence generated through this assessment to address the following key questions:
- to what extent does a drop in attainment occur during transition?
- what factors are associated with this lower attainment?
- to what extent is attainment particularly linked to child poverty?
- how robust is the research evidence?
- what are the most effective interventions to address the drop in attainment?

10.2. We then outline a series of recommendations to support future improvements.

To what extent does a drop in attainment occur during transition?

10.3. There is general agreement that most pupils experience anxieties prior to and during the transition. For some this will result in a poor transition experience.

10.4. For some pupils the effect of this poor transition this will result in a drop in attainment. This is estimated to be around 40% of all pupils. Some argue that the drop in attainment is actually a dip which is recovered, although there are few detailed studies which prove this.

What factors are associated with this lower attainment?

10.5. Three areas emerge from quantitative analysis as being associated with a drop in attainment during the transition. These all fall into the personal and social category.

10.6. First, a number of individual characteristics which include having low prior academic ability, receiving free school meals, having low self-image and self-esteem, and being from an ethnic minority group.

10.7. Second, aspects of the changing school environment such as the size of the school, increased freedom, having multiple teachers, focusing on individual subjects, and being the youngest at the school.

10.8. Third, the level of parental support was seen to be a major influence on attainment.   Pupils with parents who take a greater interest, provide support and encourage autonomy are more likely to adjust to the transition more effectively.

10.9. Other areas where qualitative evidence exists, but without clear quantitative evidence include the following (grouped by main themes):
Personal and social:
- impact of friendship groups;
Curricular factors:

- transfer of pupil specific information;
- curriculum continuity;
- changing relationships between pupils and teachers;
- subject specific impacts;

Pedagogical factors:
- differences in pedagogies of the two phases;
- lack of professional dialogue between primary and secondary staff.

Autonomous learning focuses:
- pupils struggle with the additional autonomy in Year 7;
- communication of the 'pupil voice';

Administrative factors:
- communication between primary and secondary schools;
- consistency of approaches to transition;
- recognition of the particular difficulties some groups experience;
- role of local authorities.

To what extent is attainment particularly linked to child poverty?

10.10. There is evidence that those in poverty are more likely to experience a drop in attainment during the transition. Most commonly this is identified through analysis of those pupils receiving free school meals. But it is also evident from other attributes strongly linked to those experiencing poverty. For example, those in poverty are likely to have low previous attainment. Prior attainment is a major factor in predicting future academic success.

10.11. However, there is little evidence that isolates which factors, associated with low attainment, are most likely to affect those in poverty. While there is some qualitative evidence available, quantitative evidence is illusive. The strongest link can be made to parental support as a factor influencing low attainment for those in poverty during the transition; as there is some evidence that parental support is likely to be less intensive in low socio-economic group families.

How robust is the research evidence?

10.12. There is an array of qualitative and quantitative studies relating to the transition, the drop in attainment and aspects of poverty.

10.13. However, there is a lack of strong quantitative research which provides causal proof of which factors particularly affect children experiencing poverty. For example, a number of quantitative studies have robust pre- and post-transition survey or data designs with measurement of attainment. However, they tend focus on more generic issues rather than the experiences of those in poverty. This view is strongly echoed by many authors.

What are the most effective interventions to address the drop in attainment?

10.14. A wide range of interventions and actions are identified. Many which fall into the actions category probably take place in most schools, such as transfer of pupils' information, open days/evenings, induction days and transition coordination. Although we do not know for certain as there is no consistent evidence.

10.15. There are then a series of interventions which are probably selectively chosen to address particular needs of individual schools, such as bridging units, summer schools, out-of-school-hours activities, cross-phase teaching and stimulating parental involvement.

10.16. Finally there are more complex intervention programmes which might include a range of these and other elements.

10.17. An important point to make here is about the extent of evaluative evidence. While many examples of interventions and actions are documented as good practice there is very little evaluative evidence. In particular there is a paucity of evidence demonstrating that interventions have improved attainment.

10.18. This means that conclusions about the effectiveness of interventions can only be drawn from a small number of studies (seven). Fortunately, most of these have some degree of reference to vulnerable groups which can be regarded as a proxy for those in poverty.

10.19. Only four of the seven provide quantitative evidence of an impact on attainment. The main characteristics of these interventions are that they tend to be multifaceted. One focuses on additional support for vulnerable groups through modification of the curriculum and teaching strategies. The second targets parental involvement. The third used collaborative learning techniques in the primary phase and the forth is a larger national programme which covers aspects of administration, curriculum, pedagogy and, social and personal factors.

10.20. The three studies with less robust evidence cover the following: extended curriculum activities (two studies); and, an intervention project targeting withdrawn and vulnerable children which aims to build self-confidence.

10.21. There is support by other authors for interventions into all these areas but with little consensus on which is likely to have the most impact.

10.22. Beyond interventions targeted at vulnerable groups (some described above and others in Wales funded for example by RAISE) the best areas for support and development are curriculum-related, parental involvement-related and those focused on developing teaching practice.

Recommendations

10.23. The Assembly Government, in collaboration with schools and local authorities, should:

Interventions

- focus on those in poverty when addressing school transition and ensure that funding and support reaches the most disadvantaged pupils and their families;
- develop approaches that involve parents in their child's learning with a particular focus on pupils receiving free school meals;
- test structured approaches that incorporate curricula and pedagogic aspects, for example, interventions which maintain primary teaching into year 7 and 8;
- pay more attention in transition planning to cross-phase working, particularly around communication and understanding between primary and secondary teachers;

Good Practice

- develop a web-based database of interventions, including examples of projects and evidence of impact; that addresses what works and in what context;
- develop a transition intervention framework, based on the key headings in chapters 3 to 7 in this report, to assess the range of activities taking place;

Further Research

- establish a national research programme, including a national dataset of attainment at pupil level, focusing on pupils receiving free school meals to identify which transition-related interventions make the most impact;
- undertake more impact evaluations of interventions and transition plans to improve learning through experience;
- improve the rigour of approaches to evaluate the impact of interventions and transition plans by providing schools with increased support for evaluation;
- involve the schools in developing, evaluating and, where successful, mainstreaming (specific demonstration projects and action research);
- incorporated more experimental, longitudinal designs into larger-scale research studies.

ANNEX A: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ANNEX B: METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Key Stages

The key stages in this study were as follows:
- Agreement of search strategy and inclusion criteria;
- Initial database searches to generate a long list of sources;
- Interim project update and agreement of exclusion criteria to generate a shortlist;
- Synthesis of evidence.

Search Strategy

Defining Inclusion Criteria
The REA question and underpinning conceptual framework determine what studies should be included. The 'inclusion criteria' specify which studies are to be included in the REA together with justification for these decisions. They define the studies that the search strategy is attempting to locate.

Articles were generated by reference to the search terms through the range of sources described below. An 'in situ' assessment of relevance was made on each source identified by the search process prior to placing on the longer list, due to the wide array of material generated.

> **The underpinning conceptual framework covers:**
> 1. Nature of what's being studied:
> - the drop in attainment during the transition phase with a particular focus on child poverty and the reasons for the drop in attainment;
> - the differences between pupils in different circumstances and what it is about living in socio-economic disadvantage that causes a greater drop in attainment;
> - impact that transition-related dislocation has on attainment;
> - interventions to address identified issues, including those that aim to address socio-economic factors.
> 2. Setting and population:
> - primary and secondary schools, pupils aged 8-14, in the UK and OECD countries
> 3. Date of research:
> - only research published after 1999 (we relaxed this initially to check that there would be sufficient material).
> 4. Research methods:
> - all methods including qualitative, quantitative and desk research (e.g. systematic reviews).
> 5. Language of reports:
> - English only

Sources searched:

The following sources were searched as part of the Rapid Evidence Assessment:

- BEI (the British Education Index);
- BJES (British Journal of Education Studies);
- CJE (Cambridge Journal of Education);
- CERUK (Current Educational Research in the UK);
- ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts);
- Joseph Rowntree database;
- ERIC (Education Information Resources Centre);
- IDOX (Information Service);
- IEJ (International Educational Journal);
- Google Scholar;
- Grey Literature - SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe);
- Government reports (www.wales.gov.uk);
- Inspectorate reports (www.estyn.gov.uk).

Search Process

We distilled our initial list of terms into a manageable list focused on: schools; transition/transfer; description of young people and school stage; words associated with poverty; and, words associated with interventions/measurement and variations.

The full list of keywords includes[22]:		
school*	eight	intervention*
transition*	14	impact*
transfer*	fourteen	effectiveness
primary	depriv*	progress*
secondary	free school meal*	destination*
key stage	poverty	attainment
pupil*	poor	achiev*
young people	vulnerable	decline*
peer*	socio	drop*
8	economic	

Three approaches were tried, using Boolean logic for the searches:

- school* and (transition* or transfer*) and (primary or secondary or key stage or pupil* or young people or peer* or 8 or eight or 14 or fourteen) and (depriv* or free school meal* or poverty or poor or vulnerable or socio or economic);
- school* and (transition* or transfer*) and (primary or secondary or key stage or pupil* or young people or peer* or 8 or eight or 14 or fourteen) and (intervention* or impact* or effectiveness or progress* or destination* or attainment or achiev* or decline* or drop*);

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[22] An asterisk is a wildcard character to cover similar words.

- school* and (transition* or transfer*) and (primary or secondary or key stage or pupil* or young people or peer* or 8 or eight or 14 or fourteen) and (depriv* or free school meal* or poverty or poor or vulnerable or socio or economic) and (intervention* or impact* or effectiveness or progress* or destination* or attainment or achiev* or decline* or drop*).

To maximise the breadth of searches an additional search was carried out as follows:
- school* and (transition* or transfer*) and (primary or secondary or key stage or pupil* or young people or peer* or 8 or eight or 14 or fourteen or depriv* or free school meal* or poverty or poor or vulnerable or socio or economic or intervention* or impact* or effectiveness or progress* or destination* or attainment or achiev* or decline* or drop*).

Initial Long List
During the search process the researchers checked the documents to ensure their relevance, and where there was any doubt of their relevance they were included. The process involved generating a long list of documents which have been referenced in an Excel spreadsheet. This consisted of 161 documents.

Exclusion Criteria
Exclusion criteria have been designed to isolate the most relevant sources from the long list. Since all sources are related to school transition (sometimes expressed as transfer) the exclusion criteria focused on other attributes such as poverty, intervention and quality of sources.

> **1) Poverty Focus**
> extent of focus of article on poverty
>
> 3=strong
> 2=moderate
> 1= weak or none
> **2) Interventions**
> extent of focus on interventions
>
> 3=strong
> 2=moderate
> 1= weak or none
> **3) Qualitative Robustness**
> Robustness of qualitative research
>
> 3=strong
> 2=moderate
> 1= weak or none
> **4) Quantitative Robustness**
> Robustness of quantitative research
>
> 3=strong
> 2=moderate
> 1= weak or none

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5) Literature Review Robustness
Robustness of literature review

3=strong
2=moderate
1= weak or none

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Each source has been reviewed and scored according to the above criteria.
A few documents were excluded on the grounds that they were policy based
or repeated other documents.

Document Review
We reviewed each of the 51 selected documents (see bibliography at Annex
A) as part of the analysis process. The document reviews identified:
- evidence of causes of poor transition;
- the impact of poor transition, particularly on those in poverty;
- interventions to address identified issues;
- research methods.

Synthesising the Evidence
This report has drawn on the information and quotes detailed in the reviews.
Where authors have quoted other sources, not on our list, we have referenced
these as footnotes.