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Achievement for All National evaluation

Neil Humphrey

Garry Squires

Department for Education

This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

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Principal Investigators

Professor Neil Humphrey (Lead Principal Investigator)

Dr. Garry Squires

Research Team

Dr. Alexandra Barlow

Dr. Michael Wigelsworth

Dr. Ann Lendrum

Dr. Afroditi Kalambouka

William Bulman

Judith Hebron

Jeremy Oldfield

Lawrence Wo

Administrative Support

Jane Mortimer

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Acronyms used in this report

AfA	*Achievement for All*
APP	Assessing Pupil Progress – a moderated and structured approach to teacher assessments against National Curriculum expectations
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorders
BECTA	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
BESD	Behaviour, Emotional, Social Difficulties
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
HI	Hearing Impairment
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LA	Local Authority (Formerly local education authorities but now also referred to by many alternative names such as Children's Services)
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty
MSI	Multiple Sensory Impairment
NC	National Curriculum
NS	National Strategies
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PD	Physical Difficulties
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty
PS	Point Score – this system was devised to provide a common metric (see Appendix 1)
SA	School Action
SA+	School Action Plus
SCLN	Speech, Communication and Language Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. dyslexia)
ST	Statement of SEND
TA	Teaching Assistant
VI	Visual Impairment

Executive Summary

The aims of this national evaluation project are to examine the impact of *Achievement for All* (AfA) on a variety of outcomes[1] for pupils with SEND and to find out what processes and practices in schools are most effective in improving these outcomes. Our research design comprises (a) a quantitative strand involving longitudinal assessment of outcomes for approximately 16,000 pupils with SEND (including a comparison group of pupils attending schools that are not involved in AfA) through teacher surveys, parent surveys and academic attainment data, and (b) a qualitative strand involving interviews with key strategic figures, longitudinal case studies of 20 AfA schools, 'mini-case studies' of 100 pupils/families, and ad-hoc data collection at a range of events relating to AfA. The findings presented in this report are derived from data collected during the first year of the project.

Academic attainment data for pupils in our monitoring sample was collected on our behalf by colleagues at the National Strategies at the beginning of AfA and one year later. We analysed the progress that c.7,750 pupils with SEND in AfA schools had made during this period and compared it to population data for children with and without SEND provided by the DFE. This analysis showed that:

- Noticeable improvements were made across the AfA cohort in both English and Maths.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 10 made significantly better progress in English than pupils with SEND nationally during the first year of the project, and Year 5 pupils made significantly better progress in English than pupils without SEND nationally.
- Pupils in Years 5, 7 and 10 made significantly better progress in Maths than pupils with SEND nationally.
- Pupils at School Action Plus, and those with HI, VI, BESD and SPLD, made more progress than other pupils in the cohort.
- Males made more progress in Maths than females, and the reverse was true for English.
- Overall, more progress was made in English than in Maths.

Our exploratory multi-level analysis of the academic attainment dataset provided by National Strategies suggested that schools played an important role in determining the amount of academic progress made by pupils, accounting for between 15% and 34% of the variance in their scores.

Our thematic analysis of AfA implementation processes and practices in 20 case study schools across the 10 participating LAs suggested that:

- Initial concerns about project timescales have largely abated and schools feel like they are making good progress.
- Schools appreciate the inherent flexibility of AfA.
- The funding, training and networking opportunities presented by the project are enabling provision for pupils with SEND to develop within and across schools.

[1] These outcomes are: behaviour, bullying, positive relationships, attendance, wider participation, parental engagement and confidence, and academic attainment.

- In terms of Strand 1 (Assessment, Tracking and Intervention), schools are building well on their existing processes and practices.
    - The use of data to inform target setting and intervention has continued to develop.
    - Data is being put to a variety of uses to inform provision and promote positive outcomes (e.g. in structured conversations with parents).
- In terms of Strand 2 (Structured Conversations with Parents), schools and parents alike consider this to be the outstanding success story of the AfA so far:
    - The conversations are providing a more holistic view of pupils, have led to a culture shift in parental engagement, and have been effective in building a genuine partnership between home and school for pupils with SEND.
    - Parents feel more included in the process of their children's education, more empowered, and have sensed a change in the dynamic of their interactions with school staff.
    - Although there have been a small but significant minority of 'hard to reach' parents, schools have expressed determination to engage them by extending or adapting arrangements – e.g. home visits, evening or weekend meetings, putting on transportation, using other parents as advocates.
- In terms of Strand 3 (Provision for Wider Outcomes), considerable progress has been made since our last interim report:
    - Schools have responded well to the flexibility of work in this strand – they appreciate being able to tailor provision to suit their context and have expressed a strong sense of ownership as a result.
    - The variety of activities, strategies and approaches undertaken in each of the five wider outcomes is impressive, and there is some initial anecdotal evidence of positive impact.
    - Schools are drawing clear links between the different wider outcomes and across the strands of AfA.
- In terms of barriers and facilitators of effective implementation:
    - A sense of 'goodness-of-fit' with existing systems and provision has been an important factor.
    - There have been some concerns expressed about taking teachers out of the classroom.
    - Additional bureaucratic workload and staff turnover and capacity have been cited as impeding progress.

Our case study school and pupil profiles from a range of the 20 case study schools across the 10 participating LAs suggested that:

- There are noticeable cases of increased pupil confidence/self esteem across the case study pupils, due to strategies being employed in Strand 3 and through increased parental engagement and confidence.
- Structured conversations have helped parents understand their child's difficulties at school and have been used to equip parents to help their child with school work at home.
- Data practices and processes (Strand 1) have been tightened up and are being used to inform practice on an ongoing basis in the classroom.

- There have been changes in relationships between pupils and their families with staff at the school.
- There have also been cases of improved pupil attendance, attributable to a refocus on the pupil themselves and strategies devised to promote enjoyment of school.

In summary, there is good evidence from our interim findings to suggest that AfA is having a positive impact on the academic progress of many pupils with SEND. Schools have made considerable progress in implementation and our case study data suggests that parental engagement and confidence and a variety of wider outcomes are also being promoted.

Chapter 1: OVERVIEW OF THE *ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL* (AfA) NATIONAL EVALUATION PROJECT

Aims and objectives

The main aim of the national evaluation project is to examine the impact of AfA on a variety of outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)[2]. We also aim to find out what processes and practices in schools are most effective in improving these outcomes.

We intend to meet these aims by addressing the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of AfA on outcomes for pupils with SEND?
    a. In relation to attainment in English and mathematics?
    b. In relation to wider outcomes such as behaviour, attendance, and positive relationships?
    c. In relation to parental engagement and confidence?
    d. To what extent is any impact mediated by variation in regional, LA, school and pupil level factors?
2. What processes and practices are most effective in improving the above outcomes?
    a. In relation to activity at regional, LA, school and classroom levels?
    b. What contextual and pupil factors influence the relative success of these processes and practices?
    c. How sustainable and transferable are these processes and practices?

Research design

In order to address the above questions, our research project has both a quantitative component and a qualitative component:

Quantitative component

This component of the research primarily focuses upon Research Question 1. We are conducting online[3] surveys of teachers and parents of children and young people with SEND in Cohorts 1 and 2.

[2] The AfA project (including our national evaluation) focuses upon two cohorts of pupils. Cohort 1 are pupils with SEND in participating schools who were in Years 1, 5, 7 and 10 at the beginning of the 09/10 school year. Cohort 2 are pupils with SEND in participating schools who were in Years 1, 5, 7 and 10 at the beginning of the 10/11 school year.

[3] Hard-copy and telephone surveys have also been made available in order to ensure that people without access to the internet are able to participate in the research. Additionally, parent surveys have been

These surveys focus upon key AfA outcomes for pupils. The teacher survey looks at behaviour, bullying and positive relationships. In addition to these areas, the parent survey covers wider participation and parental engagement and confidence. We are also collecting and analyzing data on pupil attendance (this will be collected from participating Local Authorities) and academic attainment in English and Mathematics (this is being collected on our behalf by National Strategies).

The surveys are being conducted at three key time points – at baseline (Time 1 – the Spring term 2010 – Cohort 1 only), mid-point (Time 2 – Spring term 2011 – Cohorts 1 and 2) and at the end of the project (Time 3 – Summer term 2011 – Cohorts 1 and 2) so that we can track changes in pupil outcomes. Approximately 455 AfA schools and 54 comparison schools (who are not part of the AfA project) are participating in this strand of the project. Our potential sample of pupils/families for this strand is in the region of 28,000[4].

We are also interested in the way that schools affect pupil outcomes and we are conducting surveys at the school level in order to determine what factors (such as activity in each of the three key strands of AfA) impact most upon pupil outcomes. These surveys are completed by the AfA lead in each school. The first school level survey was completed in the summer term of the 09/10 school year. The second school level survey is due to be completed in the summer term of the 10/11 school year.

Progress so far for the quantitative component and next steps

At the time of writing, the following tasks have been completed:

- Baseline survey of teachers and parents (Cohort 1)
- Baseline and interim measurement of academic attainment (Cohort 1)
- Baseline measurement of academic attainment (Cohort 2)
- First school level survey

The second survey of teachers and parents (which represents the baseline for Cohort 2 and the interim measure for Cohort 1) will also shortly be completed. In the coming months we will conduct a second school level survey, a final survey of teachers and parents, and collate final academic attainment data for the pupils in our sample.

Chapter 2 of this report will focus on the quantitative component and discuss the progress made by pupils in Cohort 1 in English and Mathematics during the first year of AfA.

translated into the nine most commonly spoken languages other than English across the 10 participating Local Authorities.

[4] The total number of potential participants is fluid and subject to change because of the nature of identification, assessment and intervention processes in schools.

Qualitative component

This component of the research primarily focuses upon Research Question 2. Our qualitative data collection comprises of the following:

1. Interviews with National Strategies regional advisors, AfA project leads, and a representative sample of AfA lead/advisory teachers in each Local Authority. These interviews primarily focus upon strategic support for AfA implementation.
2. Longitudinal case studies of 20 AfA schools[5] (2 in each Local Authority), that primarily focus upon the process of AFA implementation and involving:
    a. interviews with Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, head teachers/senior managers, classroom teachers, support staff (e.g. teaching assistants) and pupils,
    b. focus groups and/or interviews with parents,
    c. observations and,
    d. analysis of school documentation.
3. 'Mini case studies' of 100 pupils/families (5 in each case study school). These mini case studies are designed to provide clear examples of how AfA is working to improve outcomes for individual pupils/families.
4. Additional, informal data collection at a range of events – for instance, the launch and update conferences hosted by the National College for School Leadership in each Local Authority. These additional data collection opportunities provide us with a broader view of progress in AFA implementation, including some of the early challenges and successes.

Progress so far for the qualitative component and next steps

We have completed 3 visits to the majority of our case study schools, with the fourth visits taking place at the time of writing. Members of the evaluation team have also attended various occasional events organised in each Local Authority.

Next steps in this strand include preparation for the fifth and final case study visits, due to take place early in the summer term of the 10/11 school year. These visits will focus on impact and sustainability.

Chapter 3 of this report will focus on the key emergent themes from our case studies of AfA implementation processes and practices.

Chapter 4 of the report presents case examples of schools and some of their pupils/families that are designed to illustrate the diversity of work undertaken as part of AfA and the impact that it is having.

[5] At the start of the project there were 20 case-study schools but one school dropped out of the project part way through. All 20 schools contributed to the initial case study visits and further case study visits were possible in the remaining 19 schools.

Chapter 2: THE IMPACT OF AFA ON PUPILS' PROGRESS IN ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS

About the data

This chapter provides an exploratory analysis of the impact of AfA on pupils' progress in English and Mathematics during the first year of the project. The data underpinning this analysis was collected on our behalf by colleagues at the National Strategies in December 2009 (Autumn 2009, baseline wave)[6] and December 2010 (Autumn 2010, interim wave) from participating schools. Pupils' scores were generated from key teacher assessments, and are reported as P Levels, National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. We converted these into a 'points score' (PS) (see Appendix 1) so that we had a continuous scale along which pupils progress could be measured. The points score scale ranges from 1 (equivalent to P Level 1) to 65 (equivalent to National Curriculum Level 10a/GCSE A*+), with 2 points of progress being equivalent to 1 sub-level of progress on the National Curriculum (e.g. moving from 2c to 2b). The scale allows us to statistically analyse the academic attainment data and make comparisons between different subjects (e.g. English and Mathematics) and different groups of pupils (e.g. males and females, those at different stages of SEND provision).

In order to contextualise the progress made by pupils in the first year of AfA, we ask the following key questions:

- How much progress has been made by pupils in the first year of AfA?
- How does this compare to the average progress made by other pupils with SEND nationally in a 12 month period?
- How does this compare to the average progress made by pupils without SEND nationally in a 12 month period?

In order to answer the second and third questions above, we used data from the most recent (2010) school census from the National Pupil Database (NPD) held by the DFE. For average progress made by pupils in primary schools we looked at the difference between pupils' end of Key Stage 1 and end of Key Stage 2 assessments (c. 650,000 pupils without SEND, and c. 80,000 with SEND); for secondary schools, we looked at the difference between the end of Key Stage 2 and end of Key Stage 4 assessments[7] (c. 910,000 pupils without SEND, and c. 100,000 with SEND). Having worked out these differences we then divided the figures by the number of years between each assessment to give us an average amount of progress over a 12 month period. For example, the NPD data showed that pupils without SEN nationally make on average 17.5

[6] Many pupils (c.80%) in Year 1 were assessed using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profiles in the autumn term 2009/10. Data produced using this system is incompatible with the metric used for other pupils (P levels/NC levels/GCSE grades). Therefore, we used data collected in the spring term 2009/10 (where P levels or NC levels were used) as the baseline for Year 1 pupils so that they could be included in our analysis of academic progress. As this means that progress for Year 1 pupils has only been measured over 2 terms rather than a full year, we have adjusted our national comparison data accordingly.

[7] Data was only used for pupils in the NPD for whom both relevant assessments (e.g. KS1 and 2, or KS2 and 4) were present; any pupils for whom one or more assessments were missing (e.g. because of absence, a school failing to register a level, or the pupil working below the NC Levels) had to be excluded from the analysis.

points in progress on the PS for Maths during the 5 years from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4. This equates to 3.5 points in progress per year[8]. These national averages provide useful reference points for comparison. However, they also allow us to conduct 'one sample t-tests' to let us know whether the progress made by pupils in the AfA sample is *statistically significant* (that is, not due to chance) when compared to that made by pupils with and without SEND nationally.

Defining the monitoring sample

Our target population are those pupils with SEND in participating schools who were in Years 1, 5, 7 and 10 at the start of the 09/10 school year (the beginning of the project). We created a 'monitoring sample' from this cohort which includes all target pupils for whom we have both baseline teacher surveys and academic data. Our monitoring sample contains 8,710 pupils from participating schools, of whom valid baseline and interim English and Maths data was available for **7,754**[9]. Comparisons with population data held by the DFE demonstrate that our monitoring sample is representative of national trends among pupils with SEND in England in terms of gender, age, SEND provision and primary SEND need. Having a representative sample gives us more confidence in generalising our findings.

Our sample for the analysis of academic progress in the first year of AfA breaks down as follows:

	Males	Females
Year 1	1132	561
Year 5	1527	819
Year 7	1151	702
Year 10	1170	689

Explanatory notes about statistical terms

One sample t-tests and statistical significance

A one sample t-test is a statistical test that allows us to compare the mean score for a sample to a known average such as a population mean. So, in cases where progress of pupils in the AfA sample exceeds the known average for pupils with and/or without SEND nationally, the test enables us to determine whether this difference is statistically significant. It gives an indication of the probability of the result being due to random variation or chance. An acceptable level of probability of chance is less than 5%, reported as $p<0.05$.

Effect size

When a study uses a large sample, a small difference in the mean scores across the sample can lead to a statistically significant finding. However, to simply say that it is significant can be misleading and overstate the importance of the finding. To deal with this, it is necessary to also calculate the 'effect size'. This measure gives an indication of the size of the difference observed. A small effect size is in the region of 0.2, a medium effect size is around 0.5 and a large effect size is around 0.8.

With our analyses, we report significance levels first and then report effect sizes of those results that are statistically significant.

[8] NB: Calculating our comparison figures in this way assumes that progress is linear; that is, pupils make roughly equal progress from one year to the next. As we know that this is not always the case (for example, pupils' progress tends to be slower in the first couple of years at secondary school), the figures derived should be treated with caution and are used purely as a point for basic comparison.

[9] Gender unknown for 3 cases.

What we learnt about the academic progress of pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA

Mean PS progress in the first year of AfA across the whole monitoring sample were **2.85 for English** and **2.67 for Maths**.

40.3% (English) and **42.9%** (Maths) of pupils were **achieving or exceeding expected levels of progress for all pupils nationally** (based on the expectation of 4 PS or 2 NC sub-levels of progress in one year).

All year groups saw noticeable improvements in academic attainment over the first 12 months of the project. On average pupils made 2.85 PS progress in English and 2.67 PS progress in Maths. This is equivalent to approximately 1.5 NC sub-levels, just under the national expectation for all pupils of 2 sub-levels per year.

Progress in English

Figures 1 and 2 show the English PS progress made in the first year of AfA by pupils in primary and secondary schools. Reference lines on each figure show the mean progress made by pupils with and without SEN nationally to allow for comparison (as noted earlier, reference lines for pupils in Year 1 have been adjusted to reflect the fact that their data only covers two terms rather than a full year).

In primary schools, AfA pupils in Year 1 made 1.44 PS progress, compared to the average 2.05 PS for pupils with SEND and 2.1 PS for pupils without SEND nationally. This data needs to be treated cautiously, there is some uncertainty about the Year 1 data and several hypotheses can explain why the progress of this group *appears* to be less than expected:

- At the initial AfA launch conferences some head teachers told us that they did not identify children with SEND in Year 1 until they had sufficient time to settle to the demands of National Curriculum. This means that in those schools, only the children with the most severe and complex difficulties would be identified through pre-school health screening and early years educational screening. These children would be expected to make slower progress than other children who might be identified with SEND at a later stage.
- In some schools, there was a reluctance to use P Levels with Year 1 pupils, with a preference for continuing to use Early Years Foundation stage data. We are unable to make comparisons for any pupils in this group because of the low correlation between Early Years Foundation Stage scores and National Curriculum levels. It could be that some of these pupils would have made good progress but they are not included in our monitoring sample.
- Proportionally less pupils in Year 1 had statements of SEN and it may be that their needs had not been fully identified or supported in class. A greater proportion than other year groups were being supported at School Action (presumably with assessment continuing to be undertaken). This may have contributed to their *apparent* slower progress.
- We also have some uncertainty about the progress made by pupils in Year 1 nationally. We have used end of Key Stage 1 to end of Key Stage 2 attainment data from the National Pupil Database to work out average progress across the primary phase and then used this to provide a proportional amount of progress for Year 1. This may not be a wholly appropriate comparison to make as the reference data is from older children (e.g. those aged 8-11).

Pupils in Year 5 made 3.54 PS progress, compared to the average 3.08 PS for pupils with SEND and 3.15 PS for pupils without SEND nationally.

In secondary schools, AfA pupils in Year 7 made 2.69 PS progress, compared to the average 2.93 PS for pupils with SEND and 3.64 PS for pupils without SEND nationally. We think that this apparently lower level of progress may reflect the fact that these children were in their first year of secondary school. We know that transition from primary to secondary school can be a difficult time for any child, but particularly for those with SEND. From the point of view of the school, it may be more difficult to organise effective provision in Year 7 because staff do not know the pupils with SEND well. Thus, we might expect less progress among these pupils than those in other year groups in secondary schools

Pupils in Year 10 made 3.73 PS progress, compared to the average 2.93 PS for pupils with SEND and 3.64 PS for pupils without SEND nationally. However, some caution needs to be made in interpreting this data. Analysis of some schools' data suggested that some pupils were making negative progress (i.e. going backwards in their learning) and this perplexed us. We have been able to discuss this with some Local Authorities, who have indicated that at the beginning of the project, when baseline measures were taken, some schools submitted 'predicted GCSE grades' for Year 10 pupils instead of the 'actual levels' that Assessing Pupil Progress was meant to provide. This reflected a culture change for these schools and it took time for the teachers to switch their monitoring behaviour. It is impossible to go back and re-assess these pupils in the few schools that provided data in this fashion but it is anticipated that if this were possible then the progress of Year 10 pupils would be even greater than reported here.

Recommendation

If secondary schools want to measure pupil progress accurately to inform intervention planning and evaluation then they need to use 'current', not 'predicted' attainment data. They are encouraged to use the principles and processes of APP for both monitoring and setting realistic goals.

In order to ensure that pupils with SEND make a good start in secondary school, it is vital that effective transition arrangements are in place and that relevant information pertaining to pupil's needs is shared ahead of their arrival.

Interpreting the comparison graphs

We present data showing the progress of AfA pupils during the first year of the project in the form of a bar chart with reference lines indicating how much progress pupils with and without SEND make nationally. This allows the progress of AfA pupils to be compared with their peers across the country quickly and easily – if the top of a bar meets a reference line, then AfA pupils are making the same progress as the group represented by the line (e.g. all pupils with SEND nationally). If the top of the bar is higher than the reference line, they are making more progress than the reference group. If the top of the bar is lower than the line, then they are making less progress.

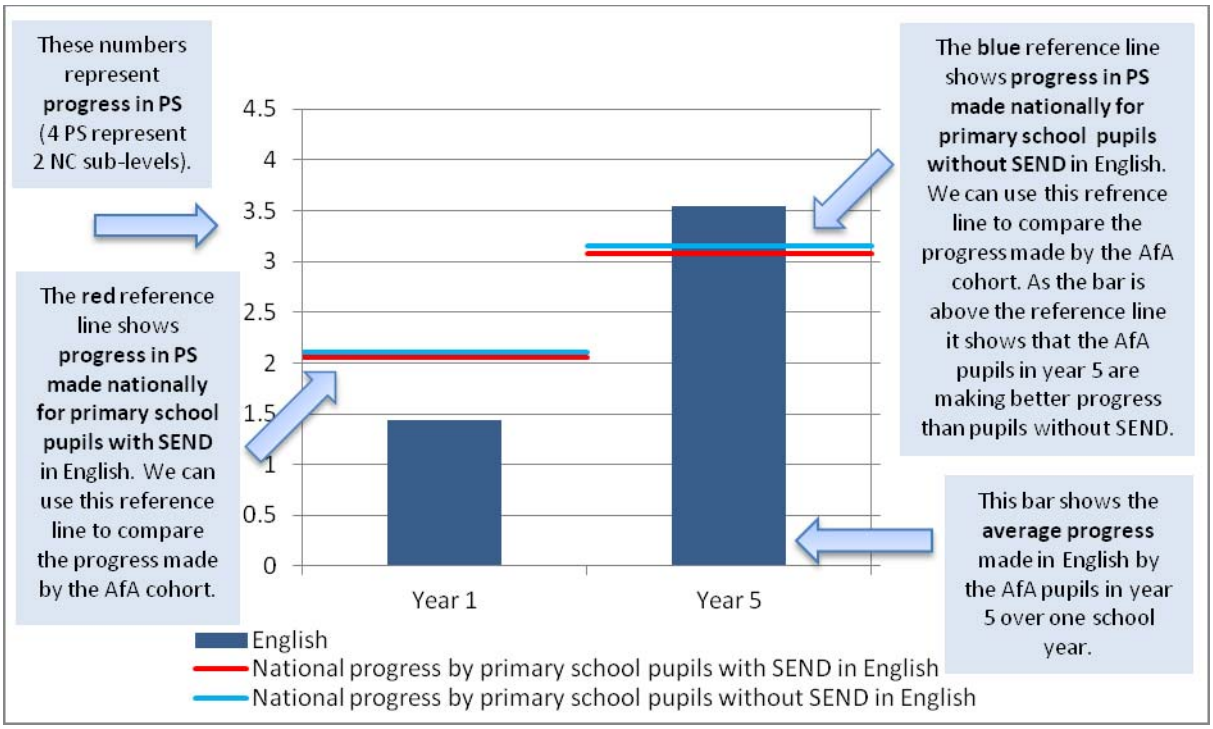


Figure 1: Progress made in English by pupils with SEND in primary schools during the first year of AfA.

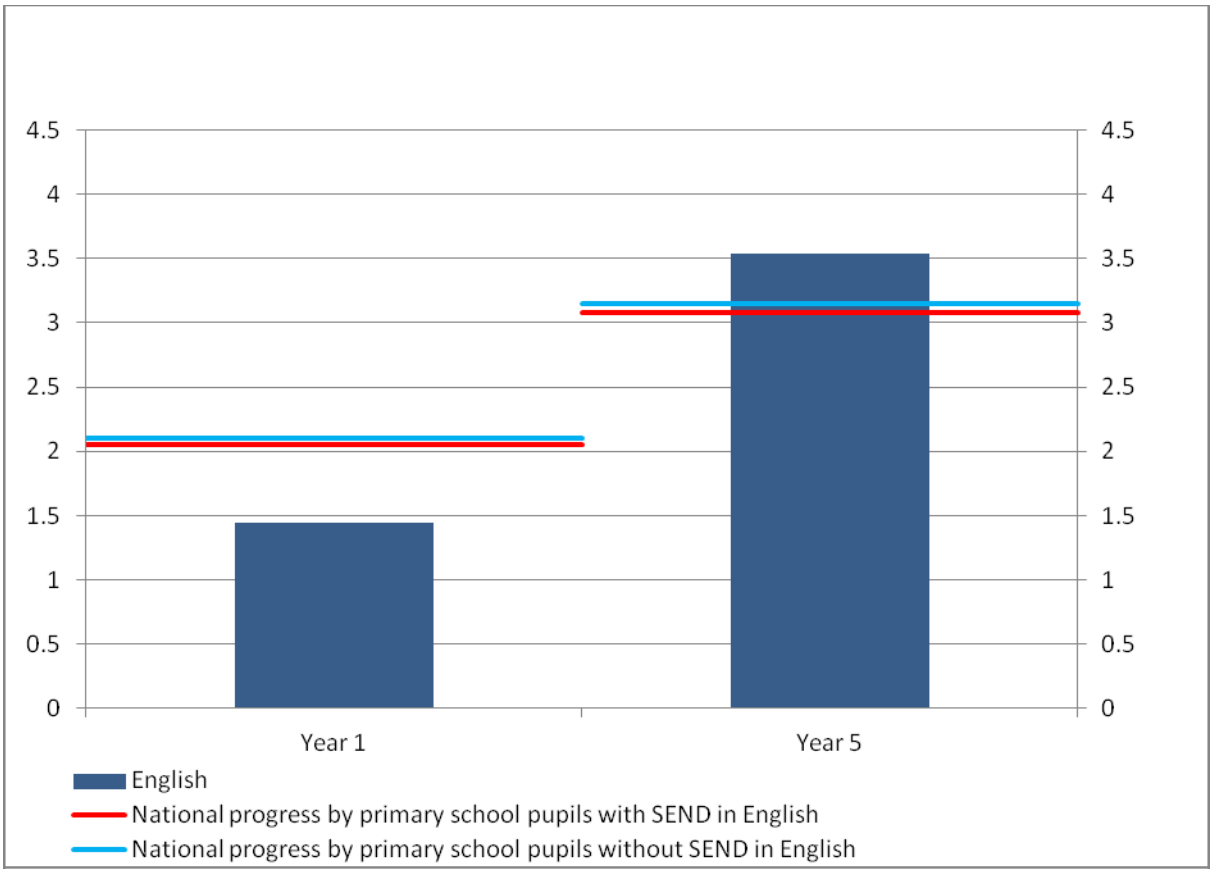
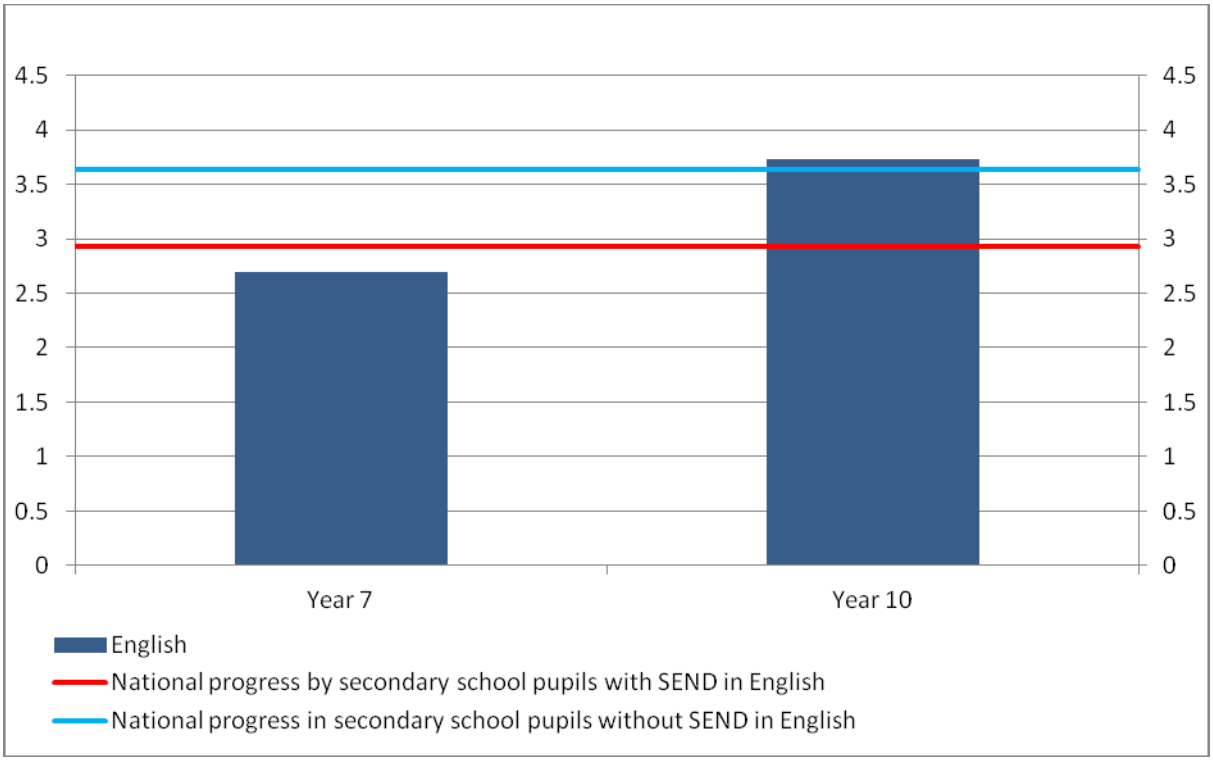


Figure 2: Progress made in English by pupils with SEND in secondary schools during the first year of AfA.



In terms of proportions, 27.5% of AfA pupils in Year 1, 49.8% of those in Year 5, 38.6% of those in Year 7 and 56% of Year 10 achieved or exceeded the expected levels of progress over 12 months for all pupils nationally (e.g. 2 NC sub-levels, or 4 PS).

Our statistical tests demonstrate that during the first year of AfA:

AfA pupils in Year 5 made significantly better progress in English than pupils with *and* without SEND nationally (both p<.001). In both cases, these were small effect sizes (d=0.16 and 0.13 respectively).

AfA pupils in Year 10 made significantly better progress in English than pupils with SEND nationally (p<.001). This was also a small effect size (d=0.11).

Figure 3 shows the mean PS progress in English by year group and gender during the first year of AfA. On average females made more progress in English than males (2.87 compared to 2.64). This difference is particularly notable in pupils in Year 10. In terms of proportions, 39.6% of males and 41.8% of females in the AfA sample achieved or exceeded the expected levels of progress over 12 months for all pupils nationally (e.g. 2 NC sub-levels, or 4 PS).

Figure 3: Progress made in English by pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA by year group and gender.

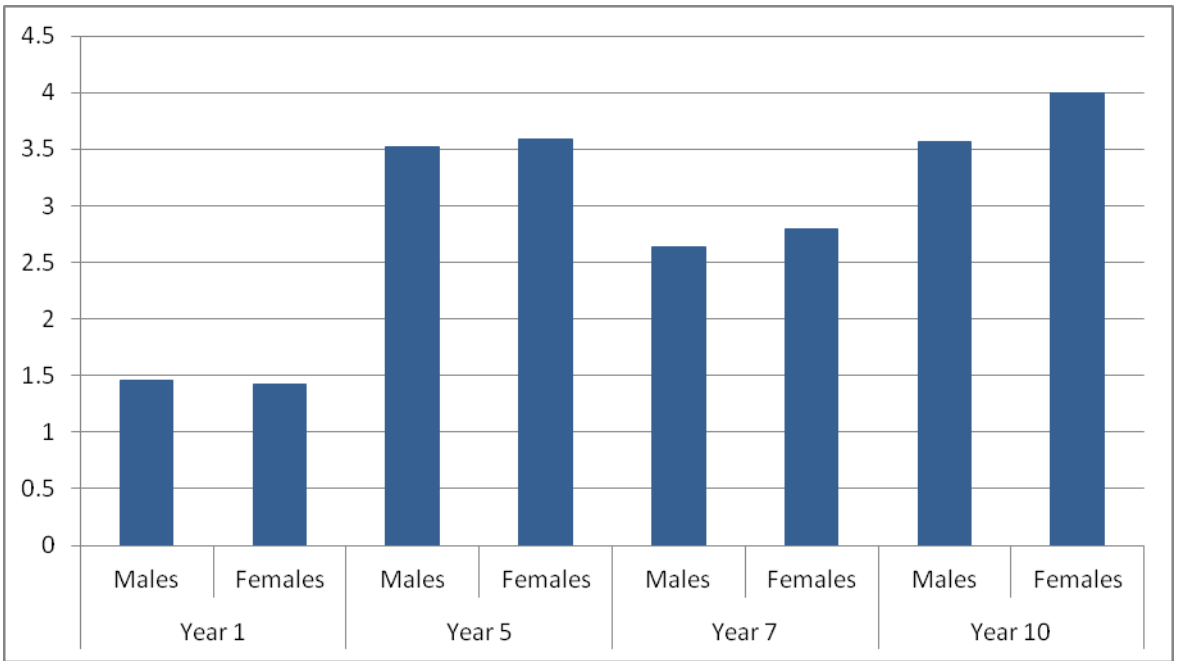
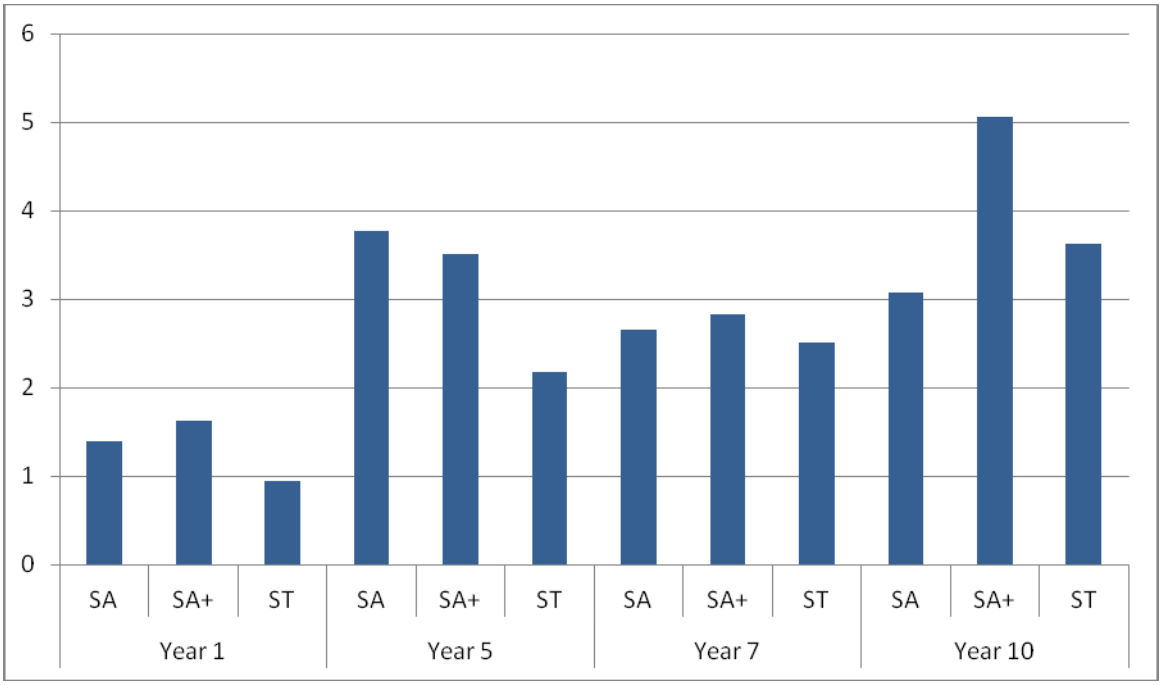


Figure 4 shows the mean PS progress in English by year group and SEND provision during the first year of AfA. On average, pupils at School Action Plus made the most progress over 12 months and pupils with Statements of SEND made the least (SA: 2.73, SA+: 3.26 ST: 2.32).

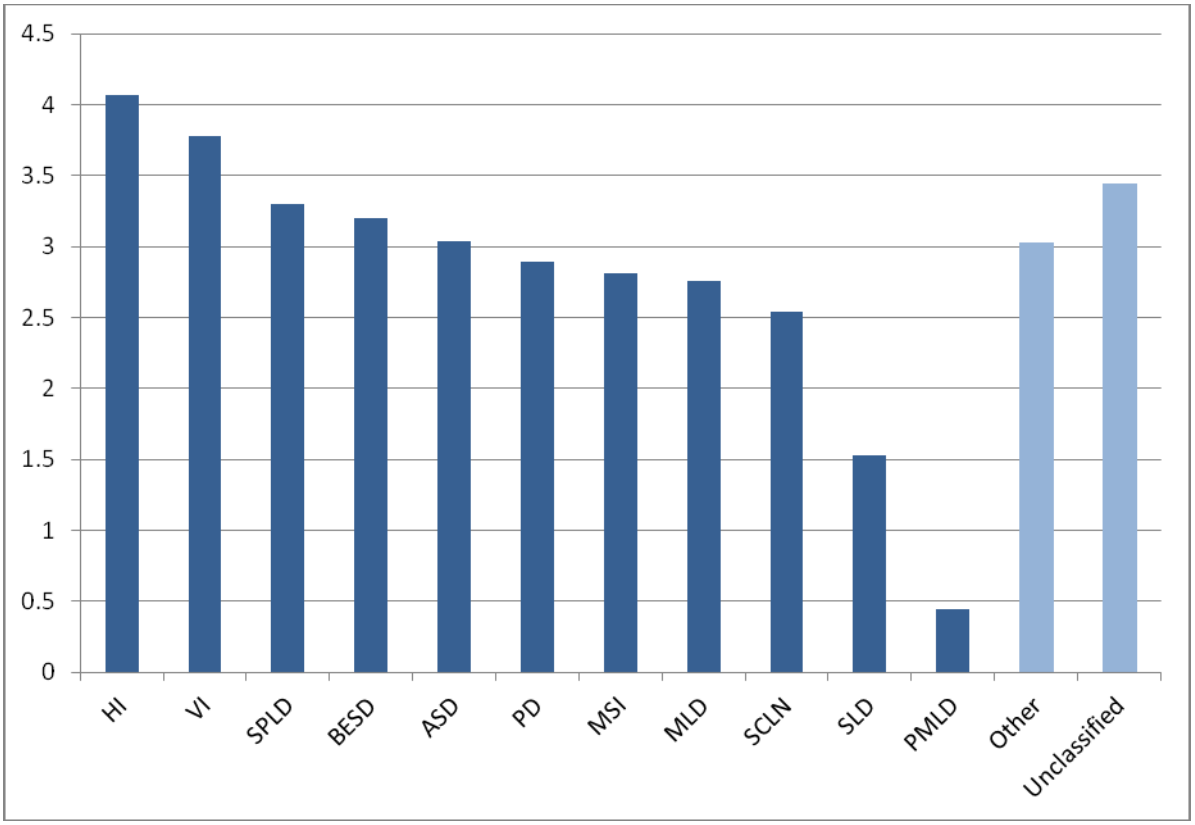
Figure 4: Progress made in English by pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA by year group and SEND provision.



In terms of proportions, 40.2% of AfA pupils at School Action, 42.8% at School Action Plus, and 33% with Statements of SEND achieved or exceeded the expected levels of progress over 12 months for all pupils nationally (e.g. 2 NC sub-levels, or 4 PS).

Figure 5 shows the mean PS progress in English by primary need during the first year of AfA. As would be expected the least progress was made by pupils with the more complex and/or severe cognitive difficulties, e.g. those with SLD (1.53) and PMLD (0.44). The most progress was made by pupils with HI (4.07) and VI (3.78), followed by those with SPLD (3.30) and BESD (3.20)[10]. However, on average the only group of learners to achieve or exceed the expected levels of progress over 12 months for all pupils nationally (e.g. 2 NC sub-levels, or 4 PS points) were those with HI.

Figure 5: Progress made in English by pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA by primary need.



[10] Pupils classified as 'Other' or 'Unclassified' have been discounted from this ranking as this category does not provide a meaningful description of pupils' primary needs.

Progress in Maths

Figures 6 and 7 show the Maths PS progress made in the first year of AfA by pupils in primary and secondary schools. Reference lines on each figure show the mean progress made by pupils with and without SEN nationally to allow for comparison (as noted earlier, reference lines for pupils in Year 1 have been adjusted to reflect the fact that their data only covers two terms rather than a full year). In primary schools, AfA pupils in Year 1 made 1.61 PS progress, compared to the average 1.91 PS for pupils with SEND and 2.01 PS for pupils without SEND nationally. Pupils in Year 5 made 3.07 PS progress, compared to the average 2.86 PS for pupils with SEND and 3.01 PS for pupils without SEND nationally. In secondary schools, AfA pupils in Year 7 made 2.94 PS progress, compared to the average 2.57 PS for pupils with SEND and 3.51 PS for pupils without SEND nationally. Pupils in Year 10 made 3.06 PS progress, compared to the average 2.57 PS for pupils with SEND and 3.51 PS for pupils without SEND nationally.

Figure 6: Progress made in Maths by pupils with SEND in primary schools during the first year of AfA.

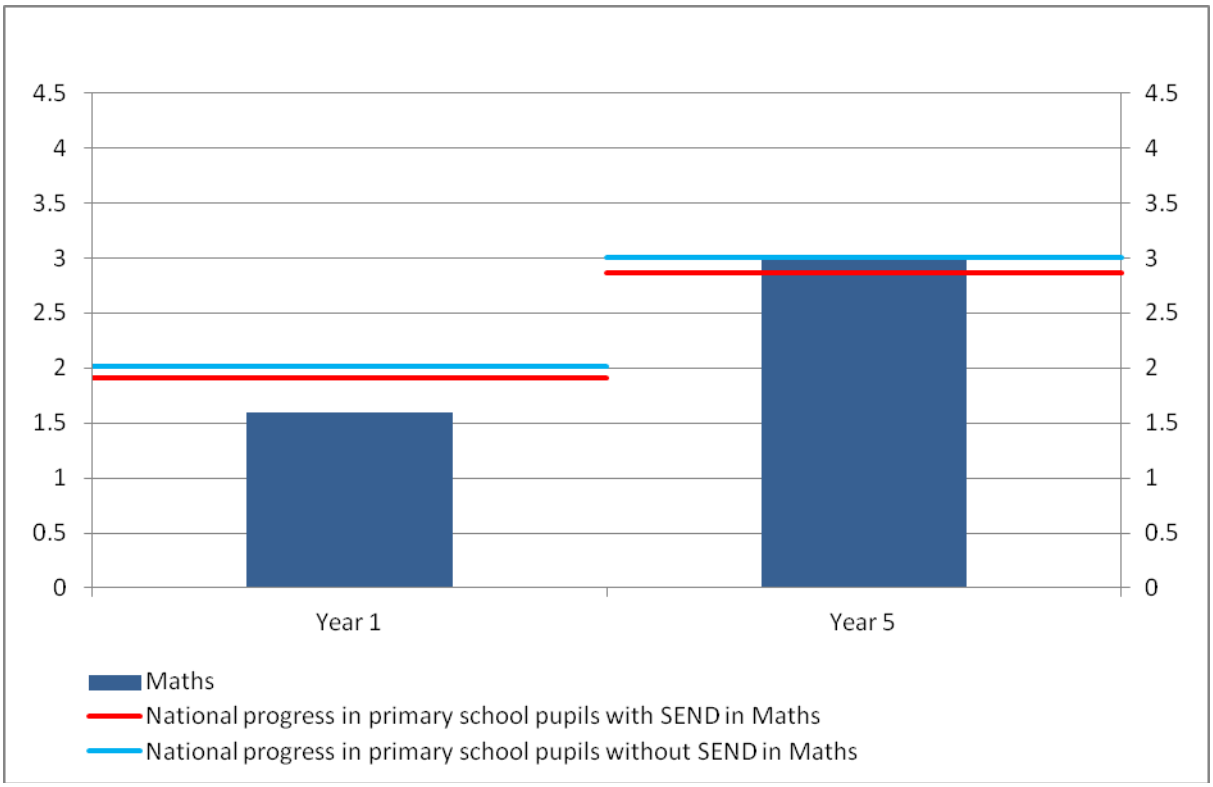
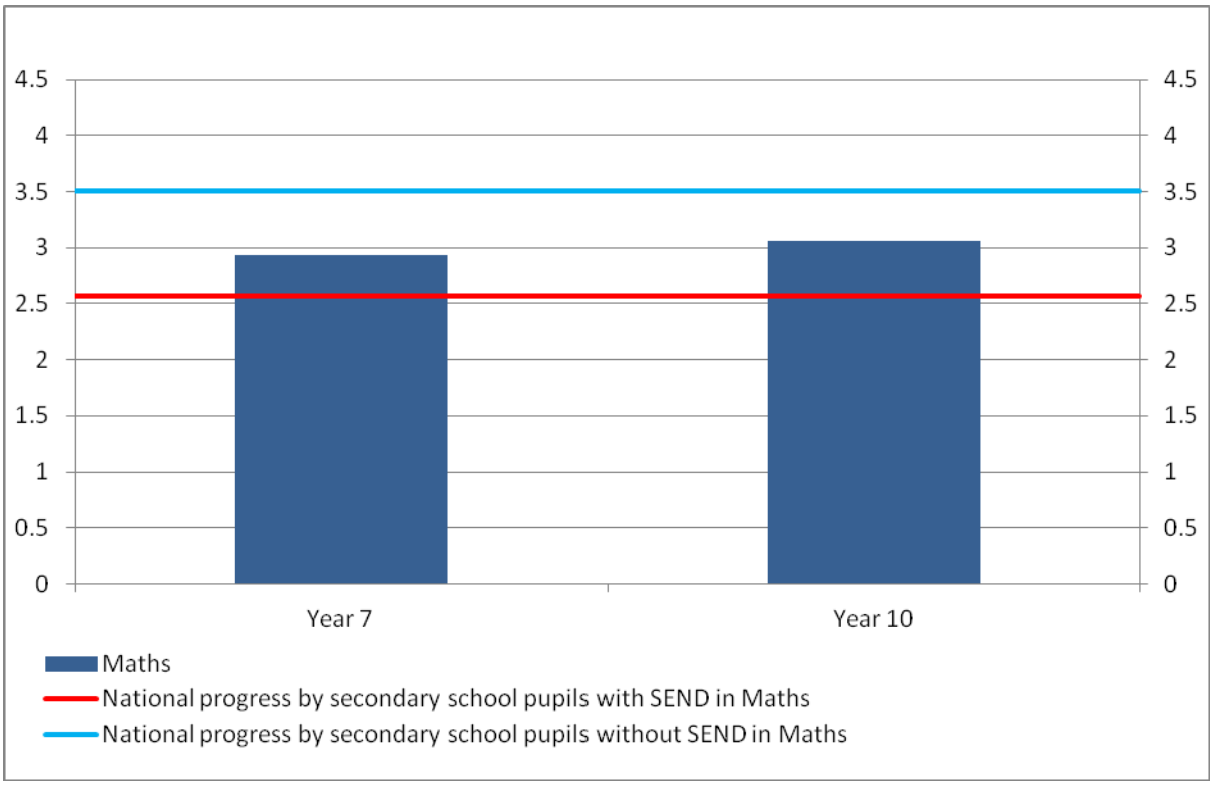


Figure 7: Progress made in Maths by pupils with SEND in secondary schools during the first year of AfA.



In terms of proportions, 24.7% of AfA pupils in Year 1, 49% of those in Year 5, 46.1% of those in Year 7 and 50.9% of Year 10 achieved or exceeded the expected levels of progress over 12 months for all pupils nationally (e.g. 2 NC sub-levels, or 4 PS points).

Our statistical tests demonstrate that during the first year of AfA:

AfA pupils in Year 5 made significantly better progress in Maths than pupils with SEND nationally ($p<.001$). This was a small effect size ($d=.07$).

AfA pupils in Year 7 and 10 made significantly better progress in Maths than pupils with SEND nationally ($p<.001$ and $p<.01$ respectively). These were both small effect sizes (both $d=.06$).

Figure 8 shows the mean PS progress in Maths by year group and gender during the first year of AfA. In direct contrast to the trend found for English, on average males made more progress in Maths than females (2.76 compared to 2.52). In terms of proportions, 43.6% of males and 41.9% of females in the AfA sample achieved or exceeded the expected levels of progress over 12 months for all pupils nationally (e.g. 2 NC sub-levels, or 4 PS points).

Figure 8: Progress made in Maths by pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA by year group and gender.

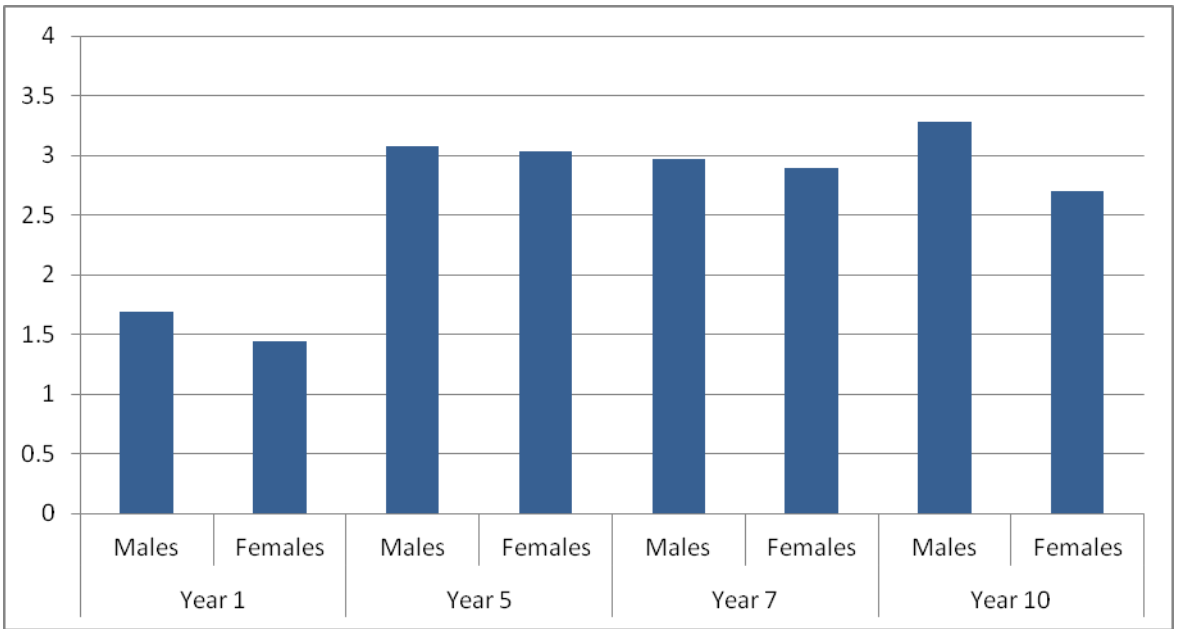


Figure 9 shows the mean PS progress in Maths by year group and SEND provision during the first year of AfA. On average, pupils at School Action Plus made the most progress over 12 months and pupils with Statements of SEND made the least (SA: 2.59, SA+: 2.89, ST: 2.34). This is a very similar pattern to that which emerged for English.

Figure 9: Progress made in Maths by pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA by year group and SEND provision.

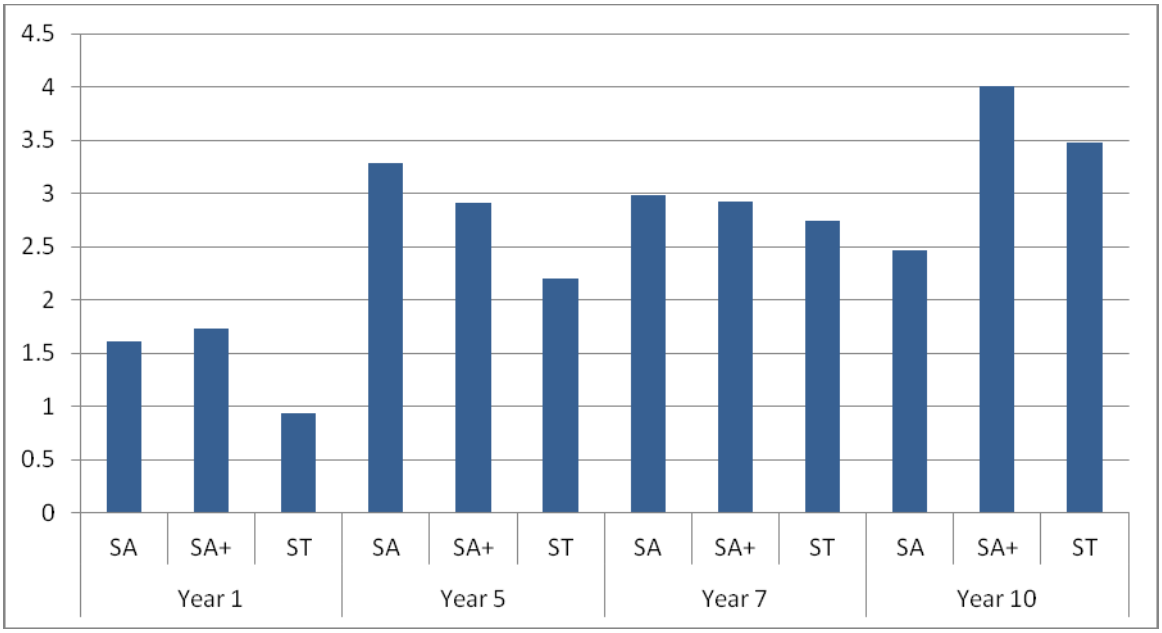
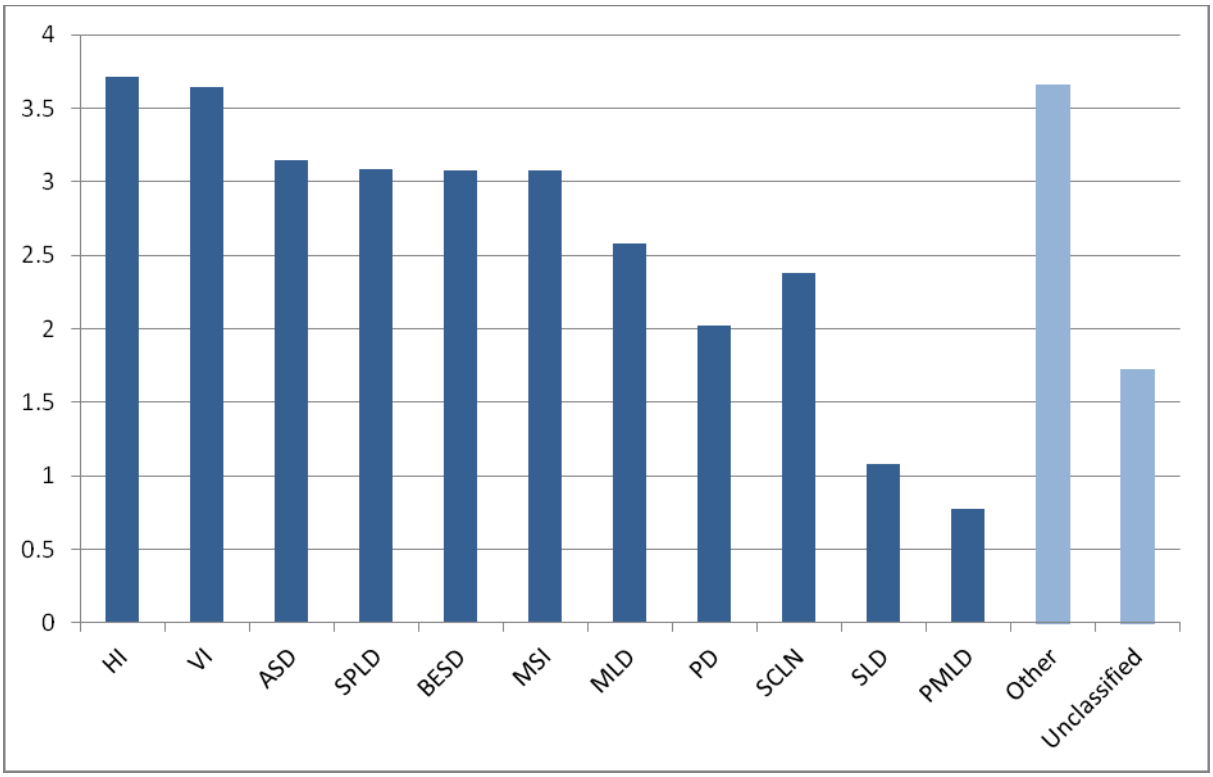


Figure 10 shows the mean PS progress in Maths by primary need during the first year of AfA. As would be expected the least progress was made by pupils with the more complex and/or severe cognitive difficulties, e.g. those with SLD (1.08) and PMLD (0.78). The most progress was made by pupils with HI (3.71) and VI (3.64), followed by those with ASD (3.15), SPLD (3.09), BESD (3.08) and MSI (3.08)[11]. This is a very similar trend to that found for English. However, on average the no single group of learners achieved or exceeded the expected levels of progress over 12 months for all pupils nationally (e.g. 2 NC sub-levels, or 4 PS points).

Figure 10: Progress made in Maths by pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA by primary need.



The role of schools and LAs in the academic progress of pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA

One key area of interest in our evaluation of AfA is the extent to which differences between LAs and schools contribute to the amount of academic progress made by pupils with SEND. To explore this, we performed exploratory 'multi-level models' (also known as hierarchical linear models) on the academic data covering the first year of the project. In basic terms, these are statistical tests that allow us to determine the proportion of variance in the academic progress made by pupils with SEND that is attributable to differences between pupils, differences between schools, and

[11] Pupils classified as 'Other' or 'Unclassified' have been discounted from this ranking as this category does not provide a meaningful description of pupils' primary needs.

differences between LAs. Table 1 shows the outcome of the multi-level models, which were performed separately by subject (English and Maths) and year group (Years 1, 5, 7 and 10)[12].

Table 1: Percentage of variance in pupils' progress in English and Maths during the first year of AfA attributable to differences between pupils, schools and LAs (statistically significant findings highlighted in bold).

		English	Maths
Year 1	LA	2%	1%
	School	**15%**	**18%**
	Pupil	**83%**	**81%**
Year 5	LA	1%	0%
	School	**26%**	**24%**
	Pupil	**73%**	**76%**
Year 7	LA	0%	0%
	School	**15%**	**16%**
	Pupil	**85%**	**84%**
Year 10	LA	7%	2%
	School	**31%**	**34%**
	Pupil	**62%**	**64%**

Schools have played an important role in determining the amount of academic progress made by pupils with SEND during the first year of AfA.

Several key trends are evident from these analyses. Firstly, in all cases, the influence of differences between LAs on pupils' academic progress was minimal and not statistically significant. This does not mean that the support provided by LAs has not been important, but rather that the LAs were not sufficiently different from one another to produce an effect on pupil progression at the individual level. Differences between schools were more influential, explaining between 15% and 34% of the variance in pupils' progress scores. The proportion of variance explained at the school level was statistically significant in all cases. The school level variation (or 'school effect') is larger than that typically reported in multi-level studies[13] and bodes well for our final report, in which we hope to be able to identify (through our school level survey) which school level AfA practices are the most important drivers of pupils' academic progress. Of particular interest are the models for Years 5 and 10 – these were the year groups who made the most academic progress on average and it is also these year groups where school level differences have the largest influence on this progression. Finally, the largest proportion of variance in scores was always attributable to the pupil level (that is, individual differences between pupils).

[12] These are what are referred to as 'empty' models that simply provide information about variance attributable to different levels (e.g. pupil, school LA). In the final evaluation report we will produce 'full' models that also include key explanatory variables at each level. So, for example, we will be able to report not only what proportion of variance in pupils' progress is attributable to differences between schools, but also what school level characteristics appear to be most important (e.g. OFSTED school leadership rating).

[13] Tymms et al (2010) report that the 'school effect' for academic attainment is typically around 8-15%.

Summary of key trends in academic progress during the first year of AfA

From the analyses presented in this chapter the following trends are evident:

- In both English and Maths pupils with SEND have made noticeable progress during the first year of AfA. In some cases this progress is significantly better than pupils with SEND nationally.
- Some groups of learners are making better progress than others. In particular:
    - Pupils in Years 5 and 10
    - Pupils at School Action Plus
    - Pupils with HI, VI, BESD and SPLD
    - For maths, males
    - For English, females
- Better progress has been made in English than in Maths.
- Schools played an important role in determining the amount of academic progress made by pupils.

Recommendation

There is good evidence to suggest AfA is having an impact on the academic progress of many pupils with SEND. However, some pupils are making less progress than others and schools may wish to focus more resources on these groups during the rest of the project in order to facilitate their academic development.

Chapter 3: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES AND PRACTICES IN AFA SCHOOLS

In the last interim report[14] we discussed the importance of the work done by the local authority leads and the regional advisors to support the implementation of AfA, its co-ordination across schools and LAs, and in maintaining the momentum (Humphrey & Squires, 2010, pp. 30-34). We also discussed the importance of leadership for the smooth implementation of AfA at school level (Humphrey & Squires, 2010, p. 41). In this report we are focussing on the processes and practices within the schools themselves.

What we learnt about how schools are implementing AfA

Our second component of qualitative data collection included visits to our case study schools, where we spoke to School AfA leads, key teachers, parents and pupils themselves. We also interviewed LA leads and lead teachers. The focus was around:

- Implementing the structured conversation practices and experiences related to parental engagement (Strand 2)
- Implementation of provision for developing wider outcomes (Strand 3)

General

The case study schools appeared to have mostly recovered from the initial trepidation about the project timescales reported in our first interim report and "now they feel like they've caught up… and they're quite happy" (Lead Teacher, LA H). Schools continue to be positive about AfA, viewing it as *a way to extend or enhance existing provision and/or as a vehicle for school improvement*: 'Our SEF says AfA is what's driving our school forward to improve more long term, so we're building everything on it … it's been a really positive experience because it has re-launched us, it has redirected us and it's affected everything else we do, tuning everything else up' (School 15, LA H). The *flexibility* of the project has been welcomed, particularly the opportunity 'to think outside the box and do things outside the norm because …. it gives licence and the financial support to do it which is fantastic' (School 16, LA H). Some schools have adapted AfA, recognising that "It has some strengths to it that we have used, but we have tended to take the bits that work for us as opposed to taking it wholesale" (School 9, LA E).

> *It's the first initiative that said 'right…what are you going to do? We'd like these outcomes but you get on with it.'…'we'd like to see parents fully engaged and we'd like to see the children improve, but how you do it is totally and utterly up to you. Here are the people you can call in for help if you want.' And that's what's makes it exciting, you're totally in control again. So it's down to schools…to take it and to go all out because if you go all out with one thing everything else pulls with it.* **(School 15, LA H)**

[14] Humphrey, N., & Squires, G. (2010). Achievement for All National Evaluation: Interim Report.

Funding

A key facilitator for many schools has been the project *funding* and the freedom to spend this *creatively*. Some schools have used this to pay for teacher's to be covered while they are released for AfA related tasks - 'release time' (School 7, LA D). Some schools have used it as an opportunity to build capacity - 'update the training' (School 15, LA H). Other schools have used the funding to encourage teachers to work longer or more flexibly - 'as a bit of a softener.... I kind of pay the staff for staying after school and people doing the structured conversations outside school hours… so that's … given them a little bit more incentive to get on with it' (School 16, LA H). Another school has used the funding to 'extend opportunities and for further development within the school development plan around nurture groups, breakfast clubs, resources and encouraging and it's funding opportunities for the children who are within the cohort on free school meals to access extra-curricular activities and adventure opportunities' (LT, LA H).

Sustainability

Some schools have focused on *sustainability* from the outset, aware that 'obviously there's not going to be any money around whatever happens. But we're using the funding that we've got to build to the future in a sustainable way' (School 15, LA H); this has included 'buying sort of really good resources that are going to have a good long life' (School 16, LA H).

There was, however, some concern in schools about 'what happens when the money stops?' (School 15, LA H): 'It is a huge undertaking, unless we can streamline I am not sure how sustainable, it is once the funding is removed and it will be interesting to see. Because the leadership role is about, at secondary level at least, about taking all the information, going and assimilating it and getting it moved on and that is a big job. And I think it is a leadership job, because someone has to have the purse strings to make things happen, where there is not purse, I don't know how that works' (School 11, LA F).

Training

The *training* made available for schools is seen as 'valuable' (School 20, LA J), particularly when it was of a practical nature; in some cases, 'it inspired us' (School 5, LA C). Not all training was as helpful, however, and some schools were concerned about the time spent out of the classroom; despite this, some schools 'think it would be perhaps useful to have more AfA training as we go along' (School 7, LA D).

Networking and pooling of resources

Some groups or clusters of schools have chosen to *pool their resources*: 'AfA has enabled larger, more expensive initiatives to take place and has encouraged schools to work together to provide more opportunities' (LA Lead, LA C). One 'family group' of schools shared funding to retain the services of an experienced SENCO: 'the family SENCO has been there for a number of years but he's just retired; we put some of our money aside to actually keep him on board to oversee things because he's so skilled and he knows the family so well and all of us, all of the SENCOs and the heads all work together really well and

> *It was really useful because it was the first time we got to work with other schools and discuss things that everyone was sort of wondering like, how do you assess wider outcomes, talking about that. It was nice because the table I was on, there was a huge mainstream school, 'School Z', there was a PRU, there was the special school 'School Y' and then there was 'School X', another mainstream, so we were all sort of talking about, even though we are all very different, all had the same common things that we picked up on.* **(School 6, LA C)**

know each other well so that's very supportive' (School 17, LA I).

In terms of *school clusters/networks*, many schools said that they 'enjoy the cluster network and they get a lot out of it' (Lead Teacher, LA H). Benefits have included 'outside agencies coming in to speak to us' (School 8, LA D) and opportunities for 'talking to other AFA leads and finding out what they've done' (School 7, LA D). Others believed 'it was good really because you chat to others and then you are quite pleased with what you have done, and it sort of boosts your confidence and you pick up ideas and its good networking' (School 3, LA B). Not all clusters were useful, however, and it appears that careful consideration needs to be given to how these are arranged so that may be most effective: 'They're useful but we really felt we wanted to just get up and go with this and get it…and sometimes you can meet for meetings and we'd rather do action here, so we're not very good at clustering. But that's because we've got to get the thing going appropriate to our school, it has to meet our needs and as I say we've got…the other school are…totally different, you know, over the railway line, it's totally different and therefore it doesn't always…' (School 11, LA F). These difficulties with 'relevance' were overcome through the sharing of minutes between clusters, 'because that broadens it so what somebody's doing in another cluster might be more relevant to a school like us than our neighbour, with a very different catchment area' (School 11, LA F).

Recommendation:

Schools can consider how to work purposefully together in networks or clusters to aid school development and embed the principles of AfA further e.g. exploring how resources and expertise can be pooled; how capacity for future working can be built; how leadership practices can be developed and shared.

Assessment, tracking and intervention (Strand 1)

Work in this strand has seen schools' routine use of data to inform target setting and intervention develop further. Communication with parents and sharing of academic data has also improved; several strategies, often utilising ICT (e.g. instant text messaging to celebrate achievement, on-line reporting), have been developed or advanced. As much of the work in this strand has built upon or helped to refine existing systems and processes in schools (e.g. 'evolution' rather than 'revolution'), it is seen as being sustainable beyond the immediate lifespan of AfA.

A striking feature of schools' work on assessment, tracking and intervention has been the diversity of ways in to which academic data has been used.

Classroom level

The use of APP in the classroom has been seen as 'very good for tracking progress and highlighting gaps' and for planning future intervention practices. For example, in School 15 (LA H) there is now an electronic folder on the staff computer network for each child in the

To aid planning and provision and to look at the curriculum, *in Year 1 for example we had…a higher than usual number of children coming up from Foundation Stage below the level of six that's required, so you know, we really used that to look at the curriculum in Year 1 for that first term and really look at closing those gaps and making sure that the teacher was using the Foundation Stage to plan from as well as the Year 1 curriculum.* **(School**

AfA cohort, which includes all targets and other relevant information. Teachers have target sheets on hand that highlight the targets they are working on, which are used to guide their daily provision (e.g. 'I can' statements for Year 1 pupils) (School 15, LA H). As the AfA lead of School 3 (LA B) puts it, teachers are using APP 'to think about what they're actually teaching and adapt what they're teaching to what is needed by the pupils'.

Some class teachers have been using data in order to, 'identify where more support is needed and what are the resources that [pupils] need at a classroom level' (School 18, LA I), to inform pupil IEPs, and to organise TA input (School 10, LA E). As the assessment and tracking process takes place on a regular basis (e.g. half-termly), staff have highlighted the advantage of having plenty of data to map progress across time, and 'if things are going wrong… if a child isn't progressing you can find out why, rather than wait 'til the end of the year' (School 15, LA H).

For children on School Action, we'd look at their provision map and say 'OK, well they're getting a literacy intervention, their maths is fine so they don't need anything there, what else do we need to make sure they're getting? **(School 1, LA A)**

Data is also being used at the start of school year to allow teachers to get to know their new cohort better (e.g. pupils' specific needs, what has worked in previous years and what has not, discussion with pupils' previous teachers, and subsequent planning of provision) (School 3, LA B). Staff therefore have the opportunity to get to know the cohorts both '*vertically*' (from one year to the next, or looking back over previous years) and '*horizontally*' (across the same year from one subject to another, e.g. Maths and English). Other examples of uses of data in the classroom have included motivation building through subtle competition (School 4, LA B) and to set groups and differentiate within lessons (School 7, LA D).

Data collected through Strand 1 is also used during structured conversations with parents. Some schools have reported that this has boosted parental engagement in their children's learning. In one school, target setting is shared among staff and parents through online reporting. Individuals logging in are able to see a pupil's current academic level, the targeted level and a commentary on what needs to be in place to allow progress to the next level/sub-level (School 4, LA B). Similarly, School 8, in LA D devised its own pupil tracker with academic and pastoral data. Whilst the use of ICT as a facilitative tool in the assessment and tracking process has been successful in the main, in some instances the use of electronic forms of reporting were seen to be difficult (School 3, LA B).

The heads of year and year learning coordinators use the data and they're printed out and there's a system where the children that have gone down…or under achieving, are highlighted, then interventions are put in place. **(School 3, LA B)**

School level

Assessment and tracking is also used to plan support at school level. Schools have been enthusiastic in developing their provision mapping, including both academic and behaviour targets, and presenting them in an accessible way that enables all staff to monitor progress and guide intervention. This is reinforced by frequent teaching and learning meetings where best practices to support pupils with SEND are discussed (School 12, LA F). Tracking systems are used in such meetings to share levels of progress within schools among teachers and management, and plan interventions at school as well classroom level.

Schools are also using their data to inform analysis at school management level; for example, cross-checking progress made against other background variables such as free-school meal eligibility, care status (School 4, LA B; School 16, LA H), and ethnic minority status (School 10, LA E).

In terms of the strategic leadership of the school …we meet with our School Improvement Partner termly and she looks at pupil progress data ... we look at the emerging trends, in terms of each year group to see whether there's any patterns or under achievement. We talk to the teachers about what the priorities have been, who the target groups are and why and …we'll talk about individual children, their performance, what are the potential barriers for learning for individual children …there are systems in place that never used to be in place before. **(School 10, LA E)**

Structured conversations with parents (Strand 2)

This strand continues to be one of the resounding successes of AfA for schools and parents alike. As one school put it, it has been 'the most powerful part of the project', and 'an absolute roaring success' (School 18, LA I). A mark of this success and perceived impact is seen in the fact that some schools have expressed plans to roll out structured conversations with parents of children without SEND or even across the whole school (School 20, LA J).

School view

A key element in this strand of AfA has been, 'designated time to get to know what parents feel and take onboard their hopes and aspirations for their children' (School 18, LA I). It is felt that the structured conversations have offered school staff something new and unique that has enabled them to get to know about their pupils' needs, aspirations and lives beyond school in much more depth than they had previously, contributing to a more 'holistic' view. They have also provided schools with 'a really valuable way of thinking about children's progress', which has had an impact on their practices and provision (School 9, LA J). The process of having three conversations per year was seen by some schools as a chance to formulate a joint working agreement with parents in which they can map progress throughout the year.

The structured conversations give you a wider picture of each child and actually some of the children were very active at home and doing a whole variety of things. One child in particular, she's a really skilled musician and we didn't know that …and actually found out quite a lot about individual children. **(School 9,**

It challenges the concept that some students have that traditionally parents were only brought in when a student was in trouble. Our key teachers have been at pains when this was started to speak to the students and say, 'you are not in trouble - we want to celebrate how well you are doing and we want your parents to come in'. They feel really special that this is happening about them and they are really proud and they will go and seek out their key teacher and say 'I haven't forgotten it is next week'. And it is really positive. **(School 8, LA D)**

Schools have also reported a change in the general culture of parental engagement through the structured conversations. Whilst some parents were previously very reluctant to approach schools, this new way or working has provided something of a paradigm shift (one school in particular have reported an increase in the involvement of fathers in their children's education – School 8, LA D). Many parents now view the school as collaborating with

them in their child's progress, listening to their views, and working in their best interests. As a result, schools have noticed that some parents feel more 'comfortable coming in to school and asking about things' (School 7, LA D), to the extent that they are now viewed as a genuine 'point of contact' for support and advice (School 19, LA J). Overall, the structured conversations have acted as 'a really good vehicle to get positive relationships going' (School 18, LA I). There is evidence that this culture shift is spreading, with other parents (beyond the AfA cohort) feeling more encouraged to come forward and talk to teachers (school 7, LA D), and benefits being seen for other children (e.g. in one school, teachers helped an older sibling of a child with SEND after they managed to initially engage the parent through the structured conversations (School 9, LA E).

The structured conversations have led to positive changes for both schools and parents in the home-school relationship.

The structured conversations are enabling schools and parents to find common ground and work together on solutions to ensure that pupils make good academic progress. However, they are also being used to deal with issues such as confidence, social and emotional skills, and other broader factors that bridge between home life and school based learning (e.g. bed-time routines for younger pupils). Schools have been able to use the information acquired through the conversations to extend or adapt their provision, or put additional support systems in place for pupils and their families. Examples of work undertaken following structured conversations include the revision of IEPs to include jointly negotiated targets (School 9, LA E); a family care worker visit from the Joint Access Team to the family of a child with severe disabilities to provide advice on support issues (School 18, LA I); and, the introduction of drum lessons for a pupil with problems of co-ordination and anger management (School 16, LA H). One school (school 16, LA H) are planning evening classes for parents, as they have found during structured conversations that this is something that many parents feel they would benefit from. Finally, in one case, the structured conversations led a mother deciding to take further qualifications and become a teaching assistant (School 5, LA C).

I think the strategy for getting parents to talk about their child first rather than us jumping in is interesting, you know, I think that's a really good idea that we can fly with. **(School 10, LA E)**

It is like they seem to have more of a personal view about him which I prefer because I like the feedback off them… I thought they were really good. To be honest I have always been scared of teachers, I don't know why but. I am really quite impressed. (Parent, School 8, LA D)

It allowed me to voice any concerns or any suggestions. **(Parent, School 7, LA D)**

Parents' view

Parents have had a similarly positive experience of the structured conversations. They feel very appreciative of the time devoted to them to raise their concerns and aspirations, share their ideas, and feel 'more included in the whole picture' (School 8, LA D). There has also been 'a real sense of parents getting a better understanding of about what their child needs' (School 18, LA I). The conversations are empowering parents generally through creating a more balanced dynamic between home and school, and providing them with more information about the range of provision

available: 'We had a meeting in January with the teacher who asked us what we wanted for Chris. We were not aware what was available so you can't really ask for something when you don't know if it is available or not." (Parent, School 17, LA I). As a result, parents of pupils with SEND are able to play a more active role in contributing to decisions about their children's education.

Hard to reach parents

Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback on this strand of AfA, some schools have expressed concerns about the most 'hard to reach parents'. One school (school 8, LA D) commented on five parents who were 'absolutely too busy - or not interested'. Several other schools reported concerns about parents who don't turn up to take part in the conversations and as a result expressed some frustration at the amount of useful teacher time wasted through non-attendance. However, schools have also expressed some determination to engage such parents by whatever means possible. For example, one school used the positive experience of those parents who *had* attended structured conversations to try and facilitate engagement among parents in the community who *hadn't* (school 18, LA I). Other examples of successful strategies have included picking parents up to bring them to school (School 4, LA B); conducting the conversations on home visits; and, holding meetings at the times most convenient to the parents (e.g. in the evening) (School 6, LA C).

Schools are expressing determination to engage even the most 'hard to reach' parents.

Provision for Wider Outcomes (Strand 3)

Considerable progress has been made by the majority of schools in implementing Strand 3 of AfA since the last interim report. Indeed, some schools have already started reporting anecdotal evidence of impact on certain wider outcomes, and some schools expressed optimism about the effects still to come: 'It is up and running. I think in each of the 3 projects, which we will be seeing over the next couple of days the maths project, the book club and the planters building project. In each of those cases there is potential for more and so I think we have only just started scratching the surface really. But I think that is good, I think we are heading in the right direction' (School 12, LA F). A key emergent theme is the flexibility afforded within Strand 3. Schools have responded well to this as it has enabled them to set up strategies and approaches that are appropriate to their context and the needs of their pupils.

Strategies to improve attendance employed by different schools have included breakfast/wide-awake clubs (School 15, LA H), rewards for children who have attendance problems (School 10, LA E), talking to parents more about attendance (School 10, LA E), and actively involving an educational welfare officer (School 6, LA C; school 20, LA J). Staff are also being creative in developing their own bespoke strategies for individual pupils. For example, in one school (School 11, LA F) a key teacher devised a chart with the task of getting ready for school broken down into five targets. When the pupil met his targets for whole week, his achievement was celebrated by the school during assembly. School 2 (LA A) offered hairdressing lessons 'first thing in the morning – that tends to be a crowd puller' to deal with late comers or unauthorised absences in the mornings. Another school (School 20, LA J) have written an action plan in co-operation with the education welfare officer who is actively involved in attendance meetings. School 7 (LA D) already had a number of attendance strategies and personnel in place (e.g. school health advisor, school liaison officer) but reported that

AfA, 'has actually accelerated the need to implement the strategies'. Some of their AfA funding has been used for the school liaison officer to be involved in several panels (e.g. health and punctuality panels), often involving parents, and they are happy with the progress for this outcome as pupil attendance has exceeded target levels.

Many schools are attempting to improve behaviour by boosting self-esteem, changing children's attitudes, and establishing positive relationships. For example, School 16 (LA H) is implementing a strategy where children with SEND are involved in a project outside of school working with other people, in order to build their confidence and team-work, and improve their social skills. Another school (School 15, LA H) said that behaviour in their school is more an issue relating to self-esteem and confidence rather than disruptiveness. They have used AfA funding to get training for a TA in art therapy; this was put into practice with a girl with a limited vocabulary, who found a new way of expressing her emotions. The school view this training and the skills acquired by the TA as sustainable and are optimistic that it would help other children with similar difficulties. Other strategies used by schools to improve behaviour include use of circle time (School 15, LA H) and SEAL (School 15, LA H; School 17, LA I; School 7, LA D). School 17 have also explored the use of nurture groups, parent support advisors and setting aside school nurse time for pupils to talk about their worries and concerns.

> *Its about giving pupils opportunities to shine in other ways and develop their strengths in other things, but also providing activities that will develop confidence - I think that's a big thing.* **(School 18, LA I)**

Developing positive relationships was a popular outcome chosen for focus amongst the case study schools, partly because it is seen as underpinning other wider outcomes (such as behaviour). Several schools already had strategies in place relating to positive relationships (e.g. SEAL) that they could build upon through AfA. Some of the strategies used in promoting positive relationships by schools have included the use of 'buddies' and mentors (School 12, LA F; School 15, LA H), building friendships during lunch times (school 3, LA B), teamwork building, social skills training, circles of friends, various opportunities derived from the SEAL programme (e.g. assemblies - School 7, LA D) or PHSE curriculum. Additionally, several schools reported that staff had undertaken continuing professional development in relevant areas to give them ideas of how to build positive relationships (e.g. training courses on mental health and SEAL).

> *We felt that if we developed the positive relationship side and children feeling confident with each other and what to do in different situations, that might then help them with dealing with things in the playground and their perception of being bullied, which is often a perception and not necessarily what's happening. And also we felt that with all the other work that we're doing hopefully there would be an impact on attendance as well.* **(School 18, LA I)**

School 8 (LA D) have set up a lunch club where the large Year 7 AfA cohort are involved in activities such as sandwich making and social skills quizzes as a way for having fun and at the same time raising important issues that constitute 'food for thought' about developing positive relationships. Another school (School 18, LA I) set up a group called 'Diversity', designed to raise the profile of children with SEND by encouraging "them to nurture their self esteem by talking about the issues that come across and the barriers to learning that they have on a daily basis". The group (Year 1 and Year 5 pupils) runs on a weekly basis during lunch time, and children have 'tell time' and celebrate

successes for all children, but particularly for those with SEND. The same school also involve parents for certain playtime sessions where children and parents learn games together, an approach to "engage parents and support children at the same time". One school implied that parents may need help with positive relationships too and by engaging parents and supporting them, the school can help to tackle a "deadlock" of disaffection and promote positive relationships in school overall (School 12, LA F). A key teacher in School 11 in the same LA also implied that parents may need some support with their attitudes too so as 'to look at things in a much more holistic manner' too. One way that the school looks at promoting positive relationships is through a project for emotional wellbeing and involving a counsellor to work with groups of children who find it difficult to deal with certain issues. Other schools have also rationalized the involvement of parents in building positive relationships (school 8, LA D).

Eliminating bullying was only chosen by two of our case study schools, so our evidence base is rather more limited than for other outcomes. Nonetheless, other schools have reported impact in this area through activity in other strands (this is perhaps unsurprising given the interlinked nature of the wider outcomes). One concrete example of work on this outcome is seen in School 18 (LA I), who had a day 'off timetable', available to a whole year group, that focused on bullying. Students participated in designing a poster, developing an assembly presentation, and other activities focusing on the issue of bullying. The school has also included work in this area in a quiz they run as part of a lunchtime club, and are planning workshops on defining 'bullying' and discussing which different acts constitute bullying. Another school are in the process of developing various anti-bullying initiatives such as 'frequent bully' tutor groups and a bullying survey (School 4, LA B).

Schools focusing upon increasing wider participation of pupils with SEND have been extremely active, offering a range of clubs before and after school and during lunchtime. The 'wide awake' club, for example, is a free breakfast club, created through AfA funding and is offered to pupils in the AfA cohorts as well as others in the school (School 15, LA H). Some of the pupils in Years 5 and 6 at this school are used as mentors for the younger ones, helping them academically, socially and emotionally. School 17 (LA I) liaise with the extended school co-ordinator in order to provide activities that would keep children with emerging behaviour difficulties engaged at school. School 12 (LA F) have started a maths club and a book club, which encourage parents to participate with their children so as to provide a common approach between school and home and make maths more enjoyable through play activities. Similarly, the book club aims to encourage parents to become more actively involved in the development of their children's literacy. These joint school-home activities are helping to boost parent

> *They have also been given some maths games and it is brilliant. It is like a board game you have all these numbers and these cars and you have to add or subtract whatever to make these numbers, but because it is a board game you can do it with your whole family. The pupil loves it and it is a bit of sort of friendly competition between him and his brother as well.* **(Parent, School 12, LA F)**

> *Children who are reluctant to come to school, on those days that these things are happening, you always see them here because it is their day that they want to be here. Then that has a knock on effect because that increases confidence and they come the next day and so evidentially it has increased our attendance figures of SEND children.* **(School 18, LA I)**

engagement, presenting further evidence of the 'convergent' character of the three strands of AfA.

One very noticeable overarching theme in the provision within this strand of AfA is how schools are drawing the links between the variety of outcomes, and across into the other strands of the project. They are thus able to use Strand 3 activities and strategies as a vehicle to make improvements 'across the board'. Indeed, schools sometimes acknowledged the difficulty in selecting two out of the five outcomes, as they found them 'inter-linked' (School 11, LA F). There are many examples of work interlinking between wider outcomes and across strands. In School 15 (LA H), a pupil that has received LSA support on speaking targets is improving her attendance. The pupil was very shy and would not come to school if she thought she might have to read in the class, but as her confidence in reading improves, her attendance has also increased. Another school (school 18, LA I) felt that through their providing several extra curricular activities, children would be more likely to attend better on days that those activities were running. In School 16 (LA H), drama provision designed to develop positive relationships boosted the confidence of 'quieter children', encouraging their wider participation in school life. School 17 (LA I) have suggested that their after-school provision has improved pupils' behaviour at home. In an example of interlinked practice between Strands 2 and 3, School 10 (LA F) have been trying to improve attendance and behaviour by specifically targeting these two areas during the structured conversations with parents.

Schools are drawing links between the different wider outcomes and strands of AfA, and many are seeing work in one area directly impacting in others.

Barriers and facilitators

A key facilitator for many schools has been the *goodness-of-fit* between AfA and their existing aims and provision: 'its not been a huge culture shift' (School 10, LA E) and 'we were in a really fortunate position that priority areas for us fitted perfectly with AFA so actually it was a bit of a bonus' (School 1, LA A). Schools feel that 'AfA is really an extension of what we do as a matter of course' (School 16, LA H) 'and we can address so many more issues and actually be far more creative than the money allowed before' (School 11, LA F). One teacher, however, 'was really indignant because she felt that Achievement for All is what we're all about and always have been about so she was really… indignant that anyone would suggest that we needed help' (School 1, LA A).

In many ways what Achievement for All has done is fitted in to best practice in the school, so many of the systems that were already set up in school were complemented by AfA and at the same time AfA was complemented by the things we already had set up in school. **(School 9, LA E)**

I feel it's just pulling more things together into a better sort of cohesive framework. **(School 3, LA B)**

Despite general enthusiasm for the project, and particularly the structured conversations with parents, there were some concerns about teachers 'taking that time out of the classroom' (School 10, LA E); although 'having money to release staff to carry out AfA work/structured conversations was great … it meant the teacher's classes were regularly without their class teacher, which led to parent unrest!' (Lead Teacher, LA C). Schools were also concerned about the *additional bureaucratic workload,* with 'so much running around and paperwork' (School 16, LA H), and 'would rather put time and energy into talking to and

working with students' (School 9, LA E). *Staff turnover and capacity* have also been problems for some schools, with secondary schools in particular challenged by 'the sheer volume of children on the project and the number of adults involved in working with the child throughout a day' (Lead Teacher, LA I).

Many schools found that staff were initially concerned about having to implement 'another initiative' (School 2, LA A) that 'isn't addressing our need' (School 11, LA F). However, several school leads stressed that 'this one we can tailor very specifically, so we're looking at it in a completely different light. And for once we actually felt this is something we can see will make a difference with the children and we're not doing it just because we are told this is what we have to do' (School 11, LA F). Some schools hoped to overcome staff resistance by keeping the profile of AfA low and initially involving only limited staff: 'I've been very careful the way we've introduced it gradually as opposed to do a major launch. Simply because, and I don't like this expression, but simply because of this sort of initiative fatigue that you know 'Oh God! Not another one, here we go again'. So we've done it very carefully to make sure it's been received positively' (School 19, LA J). Other schools encouraged staff to 'see it much of an extension of what they do already' (School 8, LA D) and 'what we've tried to do is to build it into what we were doing … so that it as far as possible we could get it to underpin the work of the school as opposed to sitting separate' (School 10, LA E).

Chapter 4: CASE STUDY PROFILES OF SCHOOLS AND PUPILS

This chapter provides case study profiles of four AfA schools and eight pupils (two per school). In presenting these, our aim is to illustrate how the general principles of AfA implementation outlined in the previous chapter play out 'at the chalkface' in individual schools and for individual pupils, including the areas in which the project is perceived to have had an impact.

Case Study School 15 (LA H)

School 15 is an average sized primary school on the fringe of a town. The school have received an outstanding grade in their most recent OFSTED report. The numbers of children eligible for free school meals and who have SEND are much lower than found nationally. Although the Head Teacher reports that the school's SEND provision has always been good, they are constantly looking for ways to improve it – hence their involvement in AfA. School staff have a very enthusiastic and positive perception of AFA; they see it as something very new and innovative, "not just another scheme". AfA has enabled them build on existing practice and they have used project funding to set up new resources and to experiment with new ideas and approaches. School 15's Head Teacher is the AfA Lead and was previously a SENCO. The Year 1 key teacher is also the deputy head and the current SENCO, and the Year 5 key teacher is the Key Stage 2 manager, so all are experienced staff and part of the school leadership team – this has facilitated the smooth running of the project.

> *I think initially when you get a new initiative people go, 'oh my goodness it's another thing', but I think because it is so tailored to what we need to do and because for once you can use the funding for it to meet those children's specific needs, it has can really transformed the provision we have been able to provide.* **(Key Teacher, Year 5)**

The school are very data orientated and have their own comprehensive system of monitoring attainment. Although this system was set up prior to AfA they have tailored and adapted in line with Strand 1 guidance. They have set up folders for each child's records, and have both hard copies to hand and electronically stored copies. As well as pupil information these folders contain information about each national curriculum area, where they are now, and their 'I can' targets - this data is uploaded on a termly basis. Additionally, AfA key teachers complete a target sheet on a daily basis with their 'I can' statements and highlight the ones pupils have been working on - this is linked to the AfA lead's computer. This procedure keeps them focused on individual children's needs and means that key information is always to hand. They have also been using the Target Tracker system more regularly since the inception of AfA. The only problem School 15 experienced relates to the APP training - they reported that they did not find it useful and found the course leaders were giving mixed and overly complicated messages.

> *There was one set of parents that have never turned up to any meetings and I think that is a real success that they have come to every single AfA meeting. They are never going to be easy to reach... but actually I think we have been able to meet them where they are and kind of focus on that, that's been a real success… and they seem to have taken a lot more interest in their child because of it. I think that's had a massive impact on that child and just that child's experience of school is going to be much more positive.* **(Key Teacher, Year 5)**

Despite having lots of good practice already in place and positive relationships between school and home, the structured conversations introduced as part of AfA have provided School 15 with a very different approach and are letting them "re-focus on the parents". The school believes Strand 2 will have the biggest impact for them and have said already it has, "made a big difference, it's kind of broken barriers" with parents and they have "seen more kind of honestly from some of the parents". It has also "changed the perception" of parents and how schools engage with them.

Parents reported that it was nice to be able to spend a lot of time speaking to their child's teacher and were able to get their points across, that they felt understood and knew what was happening in terms of support. School 15 used the third structured conversation of the first year of AfA as a 'hand-over', with the outgoing and incoming key teacher both attending. Therefore, all training for new key teachers was carried out well in advance and incoming staff had the experience of being involved.

School 15 are particularly excited about the free reign and flexibility of Strand 3 of AfA, as it is allowing them to explore areas they haven't been able to before. The school are focusing on improving attendance and behaviour. They have used the money to send their Year 1 and 2 teaching assistant (TA) on training for an art therapy course, which the school are calling 'draw and talk'. They are using it with the younger pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties who find it hard to express themselves verbally and talk about emotions and issues at home. The TA is personally very interested in this area and thought it would benefit some of the young pupils who had experienced problems in their home life. This TA works one-to-one with the pupils once a week for 12 weeks and the pupils are instructed to draw whatever they want. They then talk about what they have drawn, and this helps to realise and address issues that would have gone unnoticed or be difficult for the pupils to articulate. Over the course of the 12 weeks there have been noticeable changes.

> *We have got one child who's got emotional and behavioural difficulties and she been doing drawing and talking therapy and we've seen that change from quite negative drawings to… last week she was drawing rainbows. We would never of been able to deliver that without AfA and that has had an impact on her academic work because, in her self she is so much happier and has worked through some things, just by drawing.* **(Key Teacher, Year 1)**

School 15 Pupil Profile – "Jenny"

> *Back in year 4, her attendance was really bad. She didn't want to come to school. She was being bullied and she was being forced to stand up and talk in front of class and read aloud and things like that and that just wasn't working. She just wasn't coming to school. And this year, they've seemed to be concentrating on her confidence, building that and not forcing her to do anything, and it's made a real difference.* **(Parent)**

Jenny is a Year 5 pupil with SLCN on School Action provision and receives support from a speech therapist. Earlier on in school she had been bullied because of her stammer and this resulted in a reluctance to come to school, which subsequently affected her academic performance. She is reluctant to contribute orally and read aloud in class, as she worries about her stammer and has confidence issues. As part of AfA and following discussion with her parents in the structured conversations, a number of approaches to help her have been devised. For instance, the structured conversation allowed her mum to discuss

that Jenny does not like to be forced into reading aloud. They are also working on ways to improve her self-esteem and confidence – for example, she takes part in confidence building experiences with the class TA and she has been encouraged to attend a drama club after school. Since these issues were resolved her attendance has improved and her academic performance is exceeding expectations. Jenny's mother commented that she seems much happier to go to school now and has noticed some key changes – for example, she now volunteers to read aloud in class.

School 15 Pupil Profile – "Robert"

Robert is a Year 5 pupil with MLD receiving provision at School Action. His main problem has been with reading, and initially staff thought that he may be dyslexic. The focus of AfA intervention has been on his reading and writing and he is receiving regular provision in that area. At the structured conversations targets and approaches to help Robert with his reading were discussed. He works at least three times a week in the morning with the TA and uses the '*Toe-by-Toe'* reading scheme, which is an individual programme designed for pupils that have dyslexia. As this is an individual programme Robert is taken out of class during this time. Although he fells this is helping him with reading bigger and more complex words, he is worried he is missing out on other things going on in class. He also works on his *Toe-by-Toe* at home with his parents. Robert's mother has noticed steady improvements – she says that he enjoys reading much more now and is more confident. His parents are kept informed of his progress through parents evening, written reports and the structured conversations. The school are focusing on behaviour and attendance as part of Strand 3, however none of these are a particular concern for Robert so there are no specific interventions in place here.

Case Study School 8 (LA D)

School 8 is a larger than average secondary school in a generally disadvantaged urban area. The proportion of pupils in the school eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. Pupils for whom English is not the first language is much higher than in most schools. The school has lower than average numbers of pupils identified as having SEND. School 8 strive to provide a culture of high aspiration and achievement, and received a grade of 'good' in a recent OFSTED inspection.

> *This is just very different, it is a very different relationship that is growing all the time.* **(Key Teacher)**

The AfA lead is an Assistant Head for Inclusion. She is supported by an Operational Manager who oversees the day-to-day running of the project. AfA has been taken on so enthusiastically across the school that Year Managers with direct responsibility for year groups outside the target cohort (Years 7 and 10) volunteered to be key teachers, enabling a smaller key teacher-to-pupil ratio. The Head Teacher is on the local steering committee for AfA and as such is committed to making the project a success in the school.

AfA is seen as an extension of existing provision, and as such is already embedded in the school's ethos - it has become "*an integral path of everyday school life*" and "*has been really embraced.*" Nevertheless, all staff involved remain concerned about how the project can be sustained when funding ceases at the end of the two years.

> *It's enabled us to really get to know these students, to get to the reasons why maybe they don't achieve, and then to set targets and enable them to achieve.* **(School AfA Lead)**

The school already used data extensively to inform practice from the classroom through to strategic planning level, including APP as part of their Assessment for Learning procedures. Year Managers have been trained in APP techniques as part of their role as AfA key teachers. In addition, "challenge targets" are set for all pupils and a traffic light system is used identify concerns as soon as they arise. A specific AfA tracker has been devised by the Year Managers to track pupils in the project. This tracker uses not only academic data that was previously collected, but also contains personal and social data, including information on attendance, attitude to learning, interventions, whether or not structured conversations have taken place and the best way to contact parents. The tracker has become a rich source of information for all staff, not just those directly involved in AfA. To promote achievement in Mathematics and English, the LA in which School 8 resides has funded the "Lesson Study" initiative. This is a collaborative project between teachers and pupils that aims to find and deliver the best strategies for learning in a particular class. There is considerable enthusiasm for this in the school, and a DVD has been made to showcase techniques and strategies.

> *The fact that parents are coming into school, and students know they are coming in for this meeting, that is not only building a relationship with the student in school, but the parents of the student and with the Year Manager. So it has a knock on effect to everything because it is not just about their academic levels - it is about the whole student and whole picture.* **(School AfA Lead)**

The structured conversations with parents are seen as the main area of success so far. Indeed, not only is overall engagement much improved, but there are a number of parents who are seen to be engaging with the school for the first time. There has been a knock on effect for pupils, who now see a genuine partnership between school and home. Parents have reported learning more about their children's educational needs and the support available through the school. Most structured conversations have taken place on weekdays, although some have taken place at weekends and during school holidays in order to accommodate parents' needs. This flexibility is seen as a particular strength and something that has enabled more parents to be reached. As English is a second language for many parents at School 8, a home-school liaison officer has been seconded using project funding to support those lacking in confidence to participate fully. While the vast majority of parents have engaged in the structured conversations, there remains a small number who have not been reached, despite considerable efforts on the school's part.

The school has chosen bullying and positive relationships as their focus for Strand 3 of AfA. The activities undertaken include taking all AfA pupils off timetable for a whole day to focus on bullying prevention through activities such as drama, workshops and poster design, with the intention of promoting student voice. Year 10 pupils worked to support the Year 7 pupils in workshops as a way of fostering positive relationships. There is evidence that this has been successful - for example, one current Year 11 pupil remains very supportive of the younger pupils with whom he worked during the anti-bullying day. Lunchtime clubs have been organised for Year 7 pupils in AfA, which have been well attended, particularly by the boys. The older pupils have been more reluctant to participate, but one strategy that has met with great success has been to involve them as mentors with the younger AfA pupils. There has been a much improved uptake of such opportunities in the second year of AfA, with lunchtimes sessions to discuss topics of concern to the students, such as examination stress; this has had a noticeable positive impact on their attitude to learning.

School 8 Pupil Profile – "Andrew"

Andrew is in Year 8 and has a Statement of SEND for BESD. He has difficulties managing his temper and outbursts have, in the past, resulted in temporary exclusions and the risk of removal from mainstream school. Through AfA, Andrew has spent time with his key teacher discussing his difficulties and various strategies have been put into place, such as a yellow and red card system, which allows him to take time out of the classroom without having to explain to the teacher when he feels that he can no longer cope or is close to losing his temper. He works closely with a TA for whom he has great respect and is responding well to the one-to-one support that she can offer. He also has a specially designed timetable that is aimed at allowing him to integrate as much as possible, especially in areas in which he can experience success. Parental involvement has been an area of particular success. Just before starting at secondary school, Andrew went to live with his father who was unaware that he had a statement for his behavioural problems. Through the structured conversations, Andrew's father has been able to gain a greater understanding of his son's difficulties and the support available in school. In the most recent conversations, both parents have attended and are now working closely with the school to support their son. They appreciate being able to "work as a team" with the school and know that they can contact key staff easily if they are worried about something. Andrew has responded well to his parents coming in for the structured conversations and enjoys knowing that both parents have this close working partnership with the school.

School 8 Pupil Profile – "Faryal"

Faryal is a Year 11 pupil who receiving provision at School Action Plus for VI. She copes well in school and is making good academic progress, but needs help with enlarged print and also on reading her work back to her. Attendance has been an additional concern, especially as she is shortly to take her GCSEs. She has good relationships with her peers and staff. She has enjoyed working closely with her AfA key teacher and feels that this one-to-one support has been of great benefit when there is an aspect of her work in which she is struggling. She feels that the school communicates her achievement and targets well to her and she likes the "traffic-light" system that is used to track progress. To help her with independent study, the school gave Faryal a laptop in Year 10. Both she and her father believe that this has been of great benefit, as she can enlarge her work in class when necessary. Faryal's father is very supportive of the school and feels that the structured conversations have enabled him to understand any areas of difficulty she has academically. Up to now he has come to the meetings alone, but he is keen for his wife to come to future meetings. He feels the structured conversations have been of particular use in terms of raising concerns about attendance and also in understanding how he can help his daughter with her studies at home. He has appreciated the opportunity to plan his daughter's targets with the school. He is also pleased that he now knows how to help her with her mathematics at home, as this is an area in which she would like to improve.

Case Study School 6 (LA C)

School 6 is a Key Stage 4 pupil referral unit within an urban area. There are approximately 50 pupils on role at the centre, who have been unable to attend mainstream schools due to their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. These problems have resulted in school refusal and disaffection. The AfA lead for the school is very passionate about Achievement for All and stated that "it fits with what we already do". AfA has provided them with the funding to maintain their good practice and also improve in areas which need to be developed. The school is positive about

the project, highlighting the importance of the flexible approach it offers, which allows them to focus on their own particular areas of need. This is particularly important as they feel they need more flexibility as the project does not work the same way as it would in a mainstream school.

A challenge to the project at the end of the first year of AfA was that a number of key staff involved in the project left the school. This posed some difficulties in terms of maintaining momentum and consistency. However, the new AfA school lead has enhanced the profile of the project within the school and staff are now more aware of, and involved with, the project. There have also been considerable changes in the pupils attending the school; a number of pupils left at the end of year one of the project and are now being offered alternative provision elsewhere. This has presented a challenge for the school as in effect they are starting the project all over again with new pupils.

There's a lad here for instance, whose parents were disengaged with school life generally. They had no time for us on our first few interactions and then after the structured conversation led by a key teacher, and seeing what the school's done, are now very happy for phone calls and discussions, so that's really where I would say its had a major effect. **(School AFA Lead)**

The school feels that AfA has made their provision more organised, particularly around Strand 1; the assessment and intervention aspects have given them a focus, and these have become more rigorous as a result of AFA. Staff at the school, however, acknowledge that tracking and monitoring of pupils remains a work in progress. There have been problems for the school being able to obtain information about pupils from their previous school especially in terms of what level they are working at. They therefore take a baseline measurement in the first week, and use this information to generate a personalised timetable for each student.

Staff at the School 6 have been generally very positive about the structured conversations. There is a hope that these conversations will ultimately help to improve attainment and attendance as the pupils begin to see the staff and parents working together. They are keen to implement them and where these conversations have taken place they have received positive feedback from parents. As some parents have been difficult to engage, a number of strategies have been used – the school set aside a day for parents to come in for the conversations, which form part of their termly review programme, and key teachers have also agreed to go to the parent's home in order for the conversation to be carried out. Where this has not been possible they have conducted some over the telephone. The impact of the school's willingness to 'go the extra mile' has been positive, with parents reporting that they appreciated these efforts.

Some of us decided to use going out to actually visit the parents as a means of engaging them. You know from a personal point of view, one set of parents who did come in for the meeting after that, whenever I have contacted them to have a conversation about anything in the centre I felt much more comfortable speaking to them because we'd had that initial meeting and I felt that helped really in terms of my relationship with the parents. (**Key Teacher)**

School 6's main focus for Strand 3 of AfA has been developing positive relationships. The school have partnered with a special school that is also involved in the project. Pupils have constructed bird

The developing relationships with others, I think that the link that we've got with [special school] has been brilliant and I think that's going to be sustained which for our kids… well there's just huge benefits, emotional intelligence, engagement and then coming back into the centre and actually being able to improve their behaviour and their focusing on their lessons. **(Key Teacher)**

boxes, bird tables and bird and squirrel feeders, which are erected in the special school's garden. The project has had benefits not only for the children at the special school, as they have enjoyed interacting with older children, but also for the children from School 6 themselves, who have been able to use their practical skills to make a positive impact on the community. The key teacher that accompanied these pupils on the visit has commented that although these pupils sometimes display challenging behaviour in their school, they have had no problems when helping other children and seeing the impact that their work has had upon others. The pupils have really enjoyed being part of this project. School 6 have also used AfA funding to start another project designed to develop positive relationships, this time focusing on horticulture. Pupils are learning how to grow vegetables and plants, and then local primary schools are coming in to the school, where pupils at the centre will teach them how to plant and grow the plants. They are also able to get qualifications in this area as well. School 6 hope to develop this into a community project so that their pupils can develop positive relationships with the community. They envisage this as being sustainable beyond the lifespan of AfA.

NB: As pupils at School 6 only attend until a new educational placement can be found, their cohorts are naturally somewhat 'transient'; this creates a unique set of challenges for AfA, but also for our research team in developing pupil profiles. The two pupils described below left School 6 at the end of the 09/10 school year.

School 6 Pupil Profile – "Simon"

Simon is a Year 10 pupil receiving SEND provision at School Action Plus who left the School 6 in July 2010 after securing a new school placement. His teachers described him as being very aggressive in school but during the year he was involved in AfA he seemed to grow in stature, with his key teacher reporting that children said that he appeared more like 'a grown up'. His self-esteem also seemed to increase. Simon responded extremely well to being involved in the special school project outlined above, having remarked that, "when I first walked in, I felt sorry for them [children in the special school], but now I don't feel sorry for them because they are all so happy all the time, it makes me think that, I'm going to re-evaluate my own life". Staff at his school noticed a slight change in his behaviour, attributing his progress to performing well in the special school project. Simon's father attended structured conversations and stated that the school were very supportive and helpful, wanting the best for this son.

School 6 Pupil Profile – "Sean"

Sean is a Year 10 pupil who left School 6 in July 2010. He has a statement for BESD. His parents have reported that since he began attending School 6 he had been much better behaved; they also said that he was well supported in the school and had a good relationship with his key teacher. During his time at this school, Sean was also entered for external examinations and participated in some extra-curricular activities - particularly sports. Staff said that Sean was well supported in the school and that the small classes had helped him. The impact of the structured conversations were very positive. His parents stated that "they've told us more about Sean's work rather than his behaviour

because whenever we've come to meetings before it's always been about Sean's behaviour whereas the last meetings we've been to it's been about his work and what he's done in his work…which we found, well which I found was a change, a real good change".

Case Study School 1 (LA A)

School 1 is a small primary school situated amongst dense social housing and commercial properties in the centre of a city. There are a high proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities. The majority of pupils are learning English as an additional language, and in the lower years many pupils are only just starting to do so. This complicates the identification of special educational needs, but as this is a well-established pattern the school has developed a robust set of procedures to meet the challenge. Although there are twice the national average levels of children with statements of SEND in the school, the overall proportion of pupils on the SEN register is in line with national levels. Almost half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, well above the national average, and pupil mobility is also particularly high.

> *The heart of AfA is…putting responsibility [for children with SEND] back with the class teacher…and to actually say these children are your responsibility, I'm here to support you, I'm here to make sure that they're getting the right support but the everyday teaching and learning is down to you* **(AfA Lead)**

Staff in School 1 see AfA as enabling them to build upon existing good practice. This belief is backed up by the impressive number of interventions that the school were running prior to AfA. The project lead is also the Inclusion Manager, and her hope is that through AfA, provision for children with SEND will become more embedded, in that class teachers will be aware and informed enough to ensure key inclusive principles such as differentiation are consistently applied in their lessons.

> *The TAs have been doing lots of work with the children, so we've been able to send them on training and so it's actually gone really well and we've had an intervention going on for children with speech and language issues. So that's really, it's been fantastic actually, watching them – they've been able to talk more and engage more – it's amazing.* **(Key Teacher, Year 1)**

> *All data is looked at, leading us to identify where extra support is needed and obviously there is a conversation around the data as raw data does not always tell the whole story.* **(AfA Lead)**

In terms of Strand 1, the Inclusion Manager and the Head Teacher decide which interventions will be implemented, how to fund them and how to staff them each term. These decisions become evidence-based in that data is collected during any intervention with clear targets, beginning and end points. This enables an informed decision from school leadership about whether or not to continue a programme and which groups of pupils might benefit from it. AfA has had an impact on this process in that additional funding has allowed the school to experiment with new interventions, and to extend proven interventions by training more staff. For example, 'Talking Partners' has been successfully piloted in Year 1 and 'High Five' has been introduced to Year 5. 'Talking Partners' was a particular success in that by the end of the intervention the vast majority of pupils were in line with national

age-related expectations. One key factor in the success of this intervention was the fact that the school could afford to train a teaching assistant to deliver this intervention – meaning that delivery was stable during a period of time where the relevant external agency changed personnel three times.

Meetings regarding the progress of each pupil are held each term and attended by the class teacher, Headteacher and the Inclusion manager. These meetings provide an opportunity to look at academic data and to expand on the picture for each child in terms of those aspects that are harder to measure.

Feedback from the school about the structured conversations has generally been very positive, although it was felt that the training could have been delivered in less than a whole day. That said, it was also reported that the training was useful in terms of how to word questions and draw information from parents. The conversations themselves are seen as very beneficial by all school staff. Not only have they helped teachers to engage parents and learn more about children's home lives but, according to the AfA lead, the process has improved the confidence of key teachers to come up with new ideas and solutions for their pupils. There were difficulties in getting certain parents to attend structured conversations, particularly those who have had negative dealings with government agencies concerning immigration or educational welfare, but the AfA lead attempted various strategies - including offering home visits - and all parents have now had at least two structured conversations.

> *What we were seeing last year was a pattern, children who were socially excluded or getting to trouble frequently at lunchtime were on and off the special needs register and it was often that they just didn't have the right skills to be in the playground…so we are trying to make sure that they are having a fun time, not excluded.* **(AfA Lead)**

The wider outcomes selected by School 6 for Strand 3 of AfA are wider participation and positive relationships. Wider participation was selected because although staff felt that there was a good range of extra-curricular activities on offer, the clubs tended to be attended by the same children and rarely those who would most benefit from them. Progress on this front has been best in Year 5, where all AfA pupils regularly attend at least one after-school club. In terms of positive relationships, School 6 have used some of the AfA funding to open 'The X', a room set up to meet the needs of children on the SEND register, many of whom were socially excluded or isolated during break and lunch periods. Other pupils also attend the room (which contains a pool table), giving those in the AfA cohort positive role models. Pupil voice initiatives were used to find out what children wanted from 'The X', making the whole intervention more 'child-focused'. Different children attend on different days, and there is one member of staff supervising roughly ten children.

School 1 Pupil Profile – "Tara"

Tara is in Year 2 and is at School Action on the SEND register due to her difficulties with speech (SLCN). Due to problems with her tonsils that she has struggled with since birth, Tara only began to speak when she was 4 years old. She has seen several speech therapists and still has regular medical appointments. When she began school she was not only behind her classmates in terms of speech but also more broadly in terms of emotional maturity and academic competence. The developmental gaps between her and her peers mean that Tara struggles to make friends at school.

Along with other small-group work that the school undertook with Tara and her classmates on the SEND register, the 'Talking Partners' intervention in Year 1 last year really helped her and she is now in line with national expectations in reading, writing and numeracy. Tara's progress is also thanks to the extra tuition arranged by her mother, who feels that paid extra tuition is something that the school would have a lot of demand for were it to be offered after regular hours. Tara is still struggling to make a consistent friend, but teachers are helping her mother to identify potential friends that can be invited to the family home. The school have also appointed a peer mentor for Tara to help her mix with the other children in her class. There is progress on this front, but according to Tara's mother it is slow because her communication in conversation is still impaired.

> *She is catching up but she is still a little behind…she has improved quite a lot really…spelling, writing…her speaking is getting quite good now so everything is coming up at once: it's good*. **(Parent)**

School 1 Pupil Profile – "Samuel"

Samuel is a Year 6 pupil who is receiving provision at School Action Plus for BESD. When he is struggling, Samuel can be disruptive in lessons, confrontational with teachers and has been involved in physical fights with peers. Samuel lives with his mother, who previously struggled to motivate him to come in to school and received support from the Educational Welfare Officer to this end. During the structured conversation last year, Samuel's class teacher gave his mother some strategies for getting him into school in the morning. In return, Samuel's mother was able to tell the teacher why she felt he was having problems at school, which she chiefly attributes to the total lack of contact with his father. Both the teacher and Samuel's mother have said that the opportunity to talk about his needs in depth has been very helpful, deepening the teacher's understanding and reassuring his mother that her son's difficulties were not simply seen as indiscipline or the result of a lack of concern on her part. One intervention that the school implemented was to encourage Samuel to attend after school activities. This is a response to the fact that he was often isolated at playtimes and in class, which was felt to be one of the triggers of his confrontational behaviour. Samuel lives relatively far from the school and so did not know any of his classmates when he joined and continues to play at home with another set of children – with whom he never has any problems according to Mrs Ashton. Although Samuel attends the after school clubs regularly and is especially enthusiastic about film club, at the end of Year 1 of AfA the project lead still felt that Samuel was isolated when not in managed situations such as lessons or 'The X'. That said Samuel himself says that he enjoys the clubs, and his attendance has improved since the start of AfA – which may well be more connected to having more fun at school than any strategies employed at home in the morning.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Table 2: Conversion chart for academic attainment data[15]

P levels	GCSE	NC	Point Score
1			1
2			2
3			3
4			4
5			5
6			6
7		1c	7
8		1b	9
		1a	11
		2c	13
		2b	15
		2a	17
	G-	3c	19
	G	3b	21
	G+	3a	23
	F-	4c	25
	F	4b	27
	F+	4a	29
	E-	5c	31
	E	5b	33
	E+	5a	35
	D-	6c	37
	D	6b	39
	D+	6a	41
	C-	7c	43
	C	7b	45
	C+	7a	47
	B-	8c	49
	B	8b	51
	B+	8a	53
	A-	9c	55
	A	9b	57
	A+	9a	59
	A*-	10c	61
	A*	10b	63
	A*+	10a	65

[15] GCSE grades in this table are allocated points based on a table sent by NS. These are different to the QCA charts (which have A* at 58 and give alternative courses). National Curriculum level conversion uses information from the National Strategies website.

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