

Meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils; what makes exceptional schools exceptional?

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Comparing Exceptional and strong schools

- 8 Exceptional Schools reaching 75%+ at GCSE including English and Maths in and serving high FSM communities
- 6 strong schools schools reaching national averages in high FSM communities
- Funded by Teach First to help them identify how to differentiate support for TF participants
- We found some surprisingly clear distinctions between the two so TF agreed to publish the report
- Now hoping to follow up for schools that are struggling in different ways and for primary schools.





The evidence base

- 6 TF schools that were classed as 'exceptional'
- 6 TF schools that were classed as 'strong'
- 2 non-TF (but TF eligible) 'exceptional' schools

The data came from:

- interviews with both TF and non-TF teachers;
- group interviews with members of the SLT;
- focus groups consisting of three activities, with both TF and non-TF teachers;
- analysis of school documentation inc progress; and
- the analysis of an online student survey



Professional learning (PL) environment

- Exceptional schools invested very systematically in Professional Learning
 - In strong schools professional learning was more centrally led
 - In strong schools there was less consistent teacher ownership of responsibility for Professional Learning
- Exceptional schools invested systematically in training for mentors and coaches across the school
 - Strong schools focused less on formal coaching and structured mentoring and in training coaches and mentors





Leadership

- Leaders more aware of the importance of modeling learning in exceptional schools
- Exceptional schools were more engaged in networked learning and external partnerships than strong schools.
- In *Exceptional Schools* all new recruits are expected explicitly to own schools' values and pedagogical priorities
 - Policies for supporting new teachers were less clear in strong schools —
- Most Exceptional Schools were involved in initial teacher education
- Performance management used rigorously and systematically in Exceptional Schools and persistent under performers left
 - In Strong Schools performance management and its effect
 of the quality of teachers was patchier



Relationships with students, parents and the community

- Exceptional schools' leaders were likely to work with outside organisations as a way to enrich the curriculum and to take a leading role in networks
 - In some Strong Schools some leaders did this
- Exceptional schools were also more likely to work extremely hard at involving parents
 - In Strong Schools this was patchier





Teaching and learning

- Exceptional schools had a clear focus on developing and maintaining a cross-school, explicit model of pedagogy
 - In strong schools some departments expected to and did develop their own
- Collaborative learning was more of a focus in exceptional schools,
 - but inconsistent in strong schools
- Subject knowledge was a high priority within exceptional schools.
 - Strong schools felt pedagogic expertise was more important
- More teachers in the strong schools wanted more support in behaviour management





The models of pedagogy

- Models of pedagogy varied in emphasis and structure.
 What was key was having an agreed approach & scaffolding
- One e.g. described multiple teaching and learning strategies in different sections of a guidance document.
- Use was monitored e.g. in relation to securing breadth
- Benefits, rationale and pitfalls of approaches illustrated
- Strategies covered, e.g. peer and self assessment, questioning, inclusion and independent learning
- Tools were provided to support and structure use



Features of scaffolding

- Learning and Teaching Framework may cover a range of evidence-based practices directed at one higher level outcome
- There was differentiated support for colleagues using different aspects of the model. So for example, middle leaders are asked to model and support specific developing strategies for their colleagues
- Teachers are expected to apply the strategies in the model in their daily practice
- There is a shared understanding among staff of what constitutes quality learning and teaching





Another model was realised through a CPD programme incorporating

- A map of progression e.g. in independent learning
- Case studies
- Underpinning theory and research; and
- Chance to explore this through coaching supported experiments





Pedagogy through students' eyes

- Home work is used significantly more in ES
- More oral assessment in ES, esp. Maths, history and MFL
- Group work, is used more in ES except for MFL
- Broadly ES and SS students experience similar level of challenge - more consistently in ES esp. in MFL and history
- More games, puzzles and web sites in ES esp. in Maths and history but more IWB use in SS
- More web site use in ES, esp. science, maths and history
- But in English ES strategies narrower/more traditional than in SS



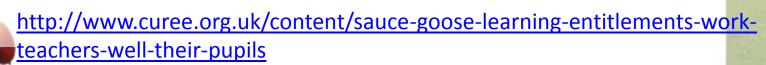
Sauce for the Goose

Strong schools focussed more on teaching teachers than supporting, structuring their learning

Exceptional schools focussed on colleagues' learning and recognised, reviewed and built on their' skills in line with their model of pedagogy

leaders developed systematic, work based
Professional learning opportunities and
practices ie they treated their staff as their
class
"I'll have what he's having!"

Consistency, systematisation, rigorous monitoring and moral purpose and a pedagogic model = a virtuous circle





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