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# **Productive Partnerships? An examination of schools' links with higher education**

**A report on research carried out for the Sutton Trust**

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## Abbreviations

API	Age Participation Index
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTC	City Technology College
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
FE	Further education
FSM	Free School Meals
FYPSEC	Full-time Young Participation by Socio-Economic Class
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher education institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
LEPA	London Education Partnership Awards
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NCEE	National Council for Educational Excellence
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
PSA	Public Service Agreement
SSAT	Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
WP	Widening participation
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admission Services

### A note on terminology

In this report, for simplicity, we use the term 'universities' to refer to universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs).



## Executive Summary

The Government recently announced that all schools should have a university partner. Historically, schools and universities have had recruitment relationships and, more recently, there has been an additional focus on widening participation.

Whilst the percentage of the population attending universities has increased significantly since the 1960s, there remains a significant gap between the participation rates of those from different socio-economic backgrounds. This research explores the role of universities in helping to decrease this gap through their work with schools.

A total of £431 million<sup>1</sup> (Aimhigher 2005; HEFCE 2007) was allocated to fund widening participation activities in 2007-8. This research examines the extent to which schools believe current activity between universities and schools is effective. Although the report examines all links between schools and universities, there will be a focus on those aimed at widening participation and progression to university. Links around teacher education are not explored in depth, although they may indirectly contribute to the realisation of those aims.

## Research Objectives

The research project set out to examine the extent and effectiveness of links between schools and universities from the schools' perspective. More specifically, the project aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the motivations underpinning schools' relationships with universities?
2. What are the characteristics of the current links between schools and universities?
3. How effective and sustainable are links between schools and universities?
4. What are the barriers to establishing and maintaining effective links?

To help answer these questions, a survey was sent out to a sample of over 100 schools. A core group had been identified in other research or by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) as having especially good links with universities. These schools were then matched to comparator schools using a number of characteristics, including socio-economic background of intake, school type and location.

The first twenty-seven surveys returned by the schools were analysed. Follow-up interviews were then conducted with staff at twelve of these schools and an additional two interviews were undertaken with A-level staff from FE colleges. Discussions with practitioners and stakeholders working in the field also informed the research.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure refers to the Aimhigher budget (£77.1 million) and the HEFCE widening participation budget allocation (£354 million) for the academic year 2007-8. This budget is supplemented with additional resources from schools and universities, and does not include resources spent by universities on broader recruitment activities with school pupils.



## Principal Findings

### Motivation:

- There is no single model for effective HE-school links/relationships.
- Both schools and universities have different needs and motivations for engaging with each other.
- Different institutions have different reasons for working with particular schools, so there was some variation in their mode and level of engagement with different schools. Some universities recruited at certain schools whilst undertaking widening participation work at other schools, but with the two activities not necessarily linking up.

### How links were established:

- Links were often established through personal contact – through school staff who were alumni of a particular university, and students who returned to their old school to give advice.
- Other links between schools and universities built on contacts made at local meetings and events involving universities and schools.

### Types of links:

- A wide variety of different links was reported.
- Some links targeted a particular cohort (e.g. gifted and talented pupils). Others were accessible to the whole year group.
- A few schools reported work with parents, particularly those of sixth-formers preparing to go to university.
- Many links related to teacher training, though these relationships tended to be separate from other types of school/university activity, and often did not involve the same universities.

### Characteristics:

- Most of the reported links and activities targeted Year 11 and 12.
- Some engagement was reported for younger pupils, but this often involved a small subset of the year group (usually the gifted and talented group). With limited time and resources, older year groups were considered a priority.
- A minority of teachers felt that younger pupils were too young to benefit significantly from engagement with universities, though schools where the majority of pupils progressed to university felt that their Key Stage 3 pupils were already aspiring to HE.

- There was limited evidence of joint planning between school and university staff and students.
- Where there was joint planning it enabled school and university staff to develop a more sustainable and effective link. University and school staff also benefited in terms of increased knowledge and understanding of the two sectors, of application to HE and of the needs, concerns and abilities of future students.

### Barriers:

- Approximately one third of the sample did not cite any significant barriers to establishing and maintaining links with universities.
- Most of the remaining schools highlighted time as the biggest challenge, in particular competing demands on curriculum time and, in a broader sense, on teacher's time.
- Another challenge arose from staff changes in schools and universities. Where links were established and maintained through personal relationships, these links could be lost if staff changed roles or left the particular institution.
- Schools reported difficulties in seeking to initiate links and, specifically, making contact with the appropriate university staff member.
- They also reported a lack of co-ordination and planning of activities, which meant that sometimes events which were considered worthwhile by the schools were not taken up.

### Recommendations

1. **Longer term programmes should be developed rather than one-off activities.** This would have benefits in terms of planning and relationship building between schools and universities, and would provide a continuum of engagement for pupils.
2. **Co-ordination amongst universities and between universities and schools needs to be improved.** Currently, the provision available to different schools varies as a result of factors such as geographical location and the characteristics of the school's intake. Better co-ordination would enable more appropriate and more equitable coverage of provision for all schools.
3. **More opportunities should be found for planning and developing activities jointly between staff in universities and schools.** Taken together with recommendations 1 and 2 above, this would enable more effective relationships to become established, producing more relevant and engaging activities and enhancing the value pupils get from them.

4. **More work should be conducted with teachers around progression and widening participation.** Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the sector is too often narrow and outdated.
5. **There should be increased focus on engagement with younger year groups.** The gap in educational attainment between those from different socio-economic backgrounds is observed early on in pupils' educational careers, and this is a key driver of the HE participation gap. It is important to raise awareness of HE at younger ages (Key Stage 3) as this can impact on aspiration and attainment.
6. **There should be more provision of curriculum- and subject-focused activities.** Activities are considered more effective and meaningful for the pupils when there is a focused objective. For younger pupils this is likely to be around a subject area, but for older pupils there is more scope to focus on a particular area of student life – e.g. finances.
7. **Mentoring of pupils by university students should be extended.** An extension of successful mentoring arrangements could be useful in overcoming some of the current challenges in establishing effective links. E-mentoring could be an attractive option for schools which are not located close to universities.
8. **There should be more focus on work with parents and the broader community.** Consideration needs to be given to how activities aimed at pupils could include and impact on parents. Parents can have considerable influence on their children's aspirations and values, but children in families where no one has been to university may lack understanding about what university entails. Bringing a university presence into the community may have a considerable impact on aspiration by 'myth busting' commonly-held views regarding the type of person who goes to university and what university life is like.
9. **Engagement with universities needs to be evaluated.** Some activities are not considered particularly useful by schools who feel that resources could be better spent elsewhere. Effectiveness should be judged on outcomes rather than the frequency and variety of activities.

## Introduction

‘...every secondary school should have a university or college partner’ (Brown 2007)

In one of his last speeches as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown laid out his vision for education. This included stronger relationships between schools, colleges and universities, and this aspiration has been echoed by Ed Balls and John Denham since Gordon Brown took office as Prime Minister. The challenges faced by schools, colleges and universities in developing ‘partnerships’ are significant and include lack of time, difficulties in coordination and competing institutional priorities. Although all the schools which took part in this research have some relationships with universities, most have a long way to go before these could be considered effective and sustainable long-term partnerships.

This report looks to shed light on what school-university links currently look like in practice, and uses this to inform recommendations about the form which such partnerships could and should take. The spectrum of relationships between schools and universities is examined. The effectiveness of different types of links is also analysed, as are the challenges faced by schools in establishing and maintaining such links. Building on the evidence laid out in the report, policy recommendations are outlined which would enable stronger and more effective links between schools and universities to develop in the future.

# 1. Background

## 1.1 The political and policy context

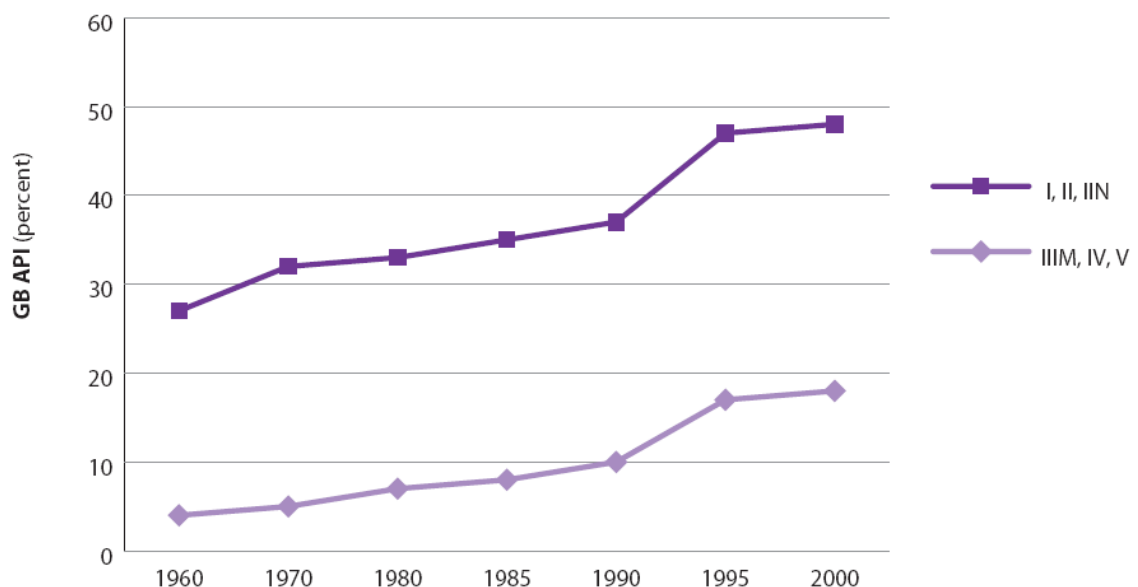
Since it was introduced in 2000, the Government's target of increasing participation to 50 percent by 2010, for those aged between 18 and 30 (HM Treasury 2000), has played a central role in Higher Education (HE) policy. Increased overall participation rates and widening participation to under-represented groups have constituted the key planks of New Labour's approach to HE.

- Increasing the skills of the workforce/ increasing participation**  
 'They [universities] unlock the talents of students; promote shared values; extend opportunities to an increasingly wide range of people; drive local and national economic growth; provide a highly skilled workforce; create innovative world beating products and services; create jobs; and support communities.' (DIUS 2008a, p. 3)

The Government views economic benefits to the individual and to the economy as the main justification of its desire to expand higher education. However, it is also important to consider the broader benefits to individuals and society of attending HE, including labour market outcomes, improved health, democratic engagement and enhanced citizenship (see Bynner *et al* 2003; Schuller *et al* 2004).

- Widening participation**  
 HE participation has expanded dramatically since the 1960s but, as Figure 1 shows, there is a persistent and considerable gap in participation between higher and lower socio-economic groups (DfES 2003).

Figure 1: Higher Education entrants by social class group (1960-2000)



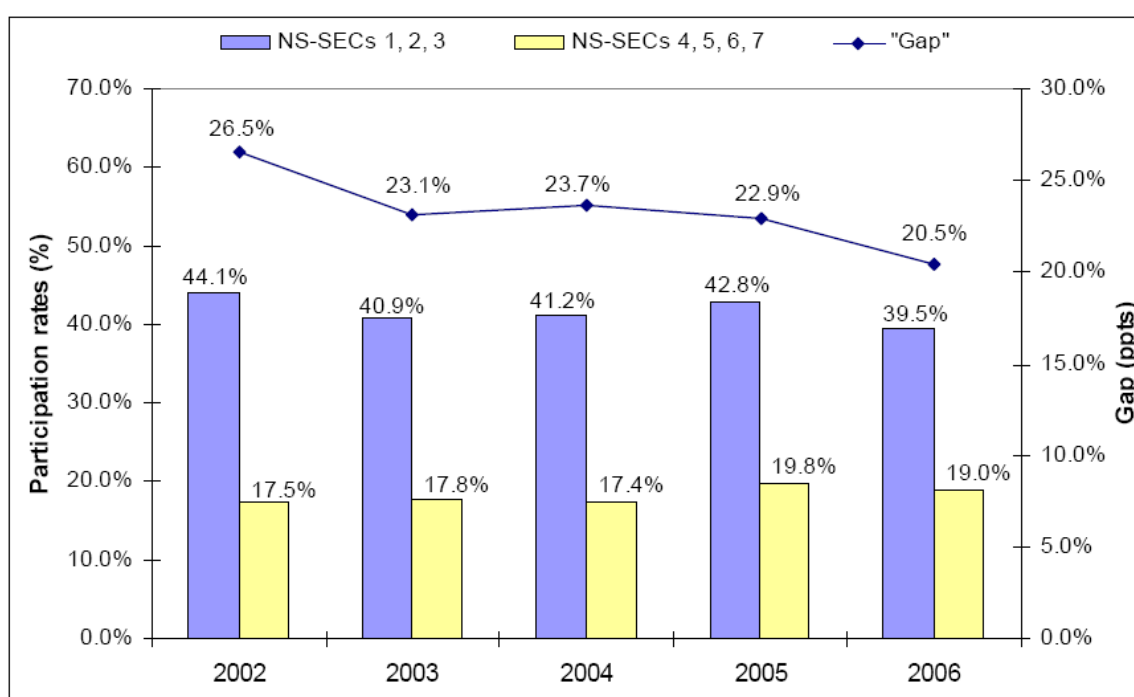
Source: (DfES 2003)

Whilst it is clear that there has been a general increase in the participation gap between those from different social classes since the 1960s, the exact size of this gap

and whether it is increasing or decreasing has been of considerable interest to policymakers and researchers.

Until recently, it appeared that throughout the Nineties the gap (as measured by API) had remained at between 25 and 30 percent (Kelly and Cook 2007). In 2007, the then DfES revised the methodology used to describe the participation gap, crucially taking into account changes in the socio-economic make up of the overall population<sup>2</sup> (Kelly and Cook 2007). This improved methodology shows a much more positive picture with the participation gap declining since the mid-Nineties. Figure 2 shows the participation gap as measured by the new Full-time Young Participation by Socio-Economic Class measure (FYPSEC)<sup>3</sup> (DIUS 2008b). This demonstrates a considerable improvement in the HE participation of different groups since 2002.

**Figure 2: Higher Education entrants by socio-economic background (2002-2006)**



Source: (DIUS 2008b)

The Government has a number of Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets aimed specifically at decreasing the attainment and participation gaps between different groups. A current indicator measures:

<sup>2</sup> The previous measure, based on the Age Participation Index (API), shows the number of UK young entrants to HE in Great Britain expressed as a percentage of the actual population. However, the social class breakdown of the British population over the Nineties is obtained from the 1991 census and assumed to be static. The updated methodology uses the annual Labour Force Survey to capture changes in the socio-economic make up of the underlying population (see Kelly and Cook, 2007, and Ramsden, 2005, for more detailed explanation).

<sup>3</sup> There remain several weaknesses in the FYPSEC measure. These include: data concerning socio-economic background is reported by the student; the measure is restricted to full-time, young students; coverage is not complete for the socio-economic background of students entering HE.

**‘The gap between the initial participation in full-time higher education rates for young people aged 18, 19 and 20 from the top three and bottom four socio-economic classes.**

This indicator will monitor young people's participation in full-time higher education by socio-economic class. Widening participation in higher education is a key measure of success in raising aspirations, narrowing achievement gaps and improving social mobility.’ (PSA Delivery Agreements 10 and 11 - HM Treasury 2008, p. 7)

Increasing and widening participation are obviously related, or at least can be, in that both could be achieved by working towards the same goal – the successful attraction of more students from non-traditional backgrounds would move the government towards achieving both aims. Unfortunately, this has not always happened. There is evidence that over much of the period of HE expansion since the 1940s, the rate of growth of numbers of HE students from more disadvantaged backgrounds was slower than the increase of those from the most advantaged backgrounds – thus increasing, rather than decreasing, the participation gap between different groups (Blanden and Machin 2003, Galindo-Rueda *et al* 2004, Glennester 2002). Without adequate initiatives and measures in place, it is perhaps not surprising that attempts to increase participation in fact increased the participation gap between groups from different socio-economic background due to expanding participation among the higher socio-economic groups. However, as shown in Figure 2, the most robust measures suggest that since the mid-Nineties there has been a gradual narrowing of the gap. The FYPSEC measure shows a fall from 26.5 percent to 20.5 percent from 2002 to 2006 (DIUS 2008).

- ***Existing initiatives***

Over the past decade there has been increased policy activity in the area of HE participation.

Aimhigher is a programme of interventions which forms part of the government's widening participation strategy, and now embraces much of the activity between schools and universities in relation to widening participation. Its predecessor, Excellence Challenge, was introduced in a few areas in 2001<sup>4</sup>. In 2004, Excellence Challenge, combined with the Partnerships for Progression initiative, run by HEFCE/LSC since 2002 (HEFCE/ LSC 2002), was rolled out across England as Aimhigher.

The Aimhigher initiative targets two cohorts:

- a widening participation cohort – those with backgrounds which are traditionally under-represented at university and who have the potential to succeed at university;
- a gifted and talented cohort – those who are high achieving in their schools but who are nevertheless at risk of under-achieving (Aimhigher 2006a).

Aimhigher interventions generally fall under one of the key themes: attainment-raising activity, aspiration-raising activity and information, advice and guidance (IAG).

The Aimhigher programme does not work in isolation and there are obvious overlaps with other initiatives and interventions e.g. the gifted and talented programme.

<sup>4</sup> Between 1999 and 2002, WP work took place through HEFCE projects operated through Regional Advisory Networks.

Government policy views widening participation and increasing overall progression to university as key aims for partnerships between schools and universities. This focus is also evident in the research findings from schools included in this study, which show that a significant amount of the activity between schools and universities emphasises widening participation. However, there are other reasons to foster strong links between schools and universities. Some of these involve improving transition to and success at university, such as ensuring that pupils are taught the skills they need to have a successful university experience. Other links, such as partnerships through teacher training and university support for school development planning, are less directly related to pupil progression and widening participation. However, these types of partnerships aim at raising attainment and therefore, if successful, are likely to have a positive impact on widening participation. This report identifies a range of links between universities and schools, but concentrates on those related to widening participation.



## 1.2 Underlying factors affecting HE choice and participation

In an attempt to understand the patterns of participation described above, this section reviews the existing research on the determining factors associated with the decision to continue to higher education, in particular those impacting on first generation and non-traditional entrants to HE, and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

For ease of analysis, the reasons for the gap between participation of different socio-economic groups can be split into four main drivers – educational attainment, aspiration, admissions and market failure (including finance) (DfES 2006). In this report, we focus on the first two.

- **Educational attainment**

‘True equality of higher-educational opportunity is a vast socio-economic project stretching back towards birth’ (Hood 2008)

Researchers from the Centre for Economics of Education used data from HESA and the Youth Cohort Study to uncover the points at which socio-economic background has the strongest impact on participation in HE (Galindo-Rueda *et al* 2004). They find that the impact is mainly felt long before applications to HE are made. Groups with different socio-economic backgrounds tend to have different prior attainment outcomes and this is a strong determinant of HE participation. This leads to the observation that, once pupils enter post-compulsory education, the impact of schools or of particular experiences (e.g. university visits) on a pupils’ future education trajectory, is severely curtailed. Encountering the idea of attending university for the first time in further education is usually far too late to affect outcomes.

The authors find that, in 2000, there appeared to be a HE participation gap between different socio-economic groups, which remained even when the numbers of achieved GCSEs and A-levels had been taken into account. This contrasts with the analysis of participation in 1996 where the participation gap was almost entirely due to educational attainment differences. However, once more detailed measures of education attainment are used, the HE participation gap shrinks and is not significant (Galindo-Rueda *et al* 2004). The authors ‘conclude that much of the impact from social class on university attendance actually occurs well before entry into HE’ (Galindo-Rueda *et al* 2004, p. 18). Recent analysis using a new dataset linking state school and HE data found that the socio-economic participation gap once prior attainment is taken into account is very small – 1.0 percentage points for males and 2.1 percentage points for females (Chowdry *et al* 2008). This finding is sometimes used by commentators and universities to claim that blaming universities for unequal participation is unfair, and that there is only so much universities can do on their own. As David Eastwood, when Vice-Chancellor of the University of East Anglia, told the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee:

*What is very interesting, if you look at the pattern of funding for initiatives to widen access and to increase participation, is that we are basically normally allowed to operate down to 16-plus, but we get no funding to send people out into schools to deal with people at Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3 where there is quite a lot of evidence that that is the key point in determining the children’s ambitions. ... I think it is that kind of Balkanization of educational policy which says that HE comes at the top end, and we are berated when we do get the numbers right. The key is partnerships (House of Commons 2003, p. 42).*

These views are supported by the finding that pupils from lower socio-economic groups who achieve good A-levels are as likely to attend university as those from more advantaged backgrounds (DfES 2003). When looking at pupils with the same A-level points, there is little difference between the participation rates of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds (DfES 2003). Recent quantitative work examining state-school pupils' participation in HE, shows that variation in the likelihood of attending a high status university<sup>5</sup> between different socio-economic groups largely disappears when prior attainment is taken into account (Chowdry *et al* 2008). However, there are observable differences in the patterns of participation between state- and independent-school pupils with similar qualifications on entry to university. A Sutton Trust report - *The Missing 3000* - suggests that 3,000 state-school pupils who achieve top grades in their A-levels are not going to a leading university. Pupils from state schools are significantly less likely to go to one of the so-called 'Sutton Trust 13' universities<sup>6</sup> than their independent school peers across the top end of the ability spectrum (as measured by A-level points), and more likely to go to a new (post-92) university (Sutton Trust 2004). Other research suggests that at least part of the reason for the disparity in patterns of participation is lack of confidence (Keys *et al* 2002). Curtis *et al* (2008) explore this in another recent report for the Sutton Trust.

As stated earlier, much of the gap between the participation of different groups is due to lower educational attainment at the end of school, which can often be traced back to earlier educational underachievement. One factor related to educational attainment involves the curriculum and qualification choices taken by pupils at different stages of their education career. It is important to understand the factors which affect pupils' decisions at different stages, as these are likely to impact on the chances of progression to HE later in a pupil's career.

The evidence suggests that, in order for universities to achieve the largest possible impact in terms of widening participation, there must be a focus on the building of effective partnerships with schools. Engagement with pupils early in their secondary school career is particularly crucial.

- **Aspiration**

Pupils' aspiration can be affected by many factors, including the influence of parents, peers, teachers, particular experiences, pupils' ability, perception of their ability, enjoyment of school, etc. It is a hard variable to measure, and it relates to many other variables such as whether or not a pupil's parents have attended university.

Although many factors impact on aspiration, this report is concerned with those which can be influenced by schools and colleges. In theory, these can include many of the factors listed above. Schools obviously play an important role in terms of pupil attainment, but they also have a part to play in inspiring parents to think about the options open to their children, including HE. One important way in which aspiration can influence progress, particularly for those from lower socio-economic groups, is through its impact on attainment.

A particularly interesting factor with regard to aspiration, in explaining differences in HE participation, is the importance of self-perception of one's ability. How one perceives

<sup>5</sup>As measured by research intensiveness.

<sup>6</sup> These 13 universities were identified by the Sutton Trust on the basis of an average of university rankings. The 13 universities are Cambridge, Imperial, Oxford, London School of Economics, University College London, York, Warwick, Bristol, Nottingham, St Andrews, Birmingham and Durham.

one's ability can have a considerable impact on a person's self-esteem and motivation. It can also impact on pupils' confidence with regard to their ability to aim for and get to university, as well as on their ability to cope once they have arrived. In a study undertaken for the then DfES, 13 percent of pupils cited uncertainties about their ability as the main reason for not considering applying to HE (Connor *et al* 2001; Chevalier *et al* 2008). The large variation in participation rates between schools with similar intakes suggests that the processes and practices of a school and its teachers can also have a considerable impact on a pupil's decision as to whether to apply to HE (see Curtis *et al* 2008).

The quality of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is also important in terms of widening participation and ensuring that all pupils have access to correct and relevant information. Teachers often play an important role in delivering this formally through explicit activities. They also deliver IAG through informal interactions with pupils, through their status as role models, and through the norms and expectations which they communicate to pupils. All these potentially affect aspiration and attainment.

To conclude this section, it appears that, although admissions practices and student finance have a role to play in supporting and enabling a HE system which is open to all, achievement of long-term changes in the participation gap will require a focus at the school level. Attainment is the key driver, but aspiration (and therefore the factors which influence this) is also important – not least due to its impact on attainment. The key to widening participation is 'about improving the quality of school-based experience for all students, but especially those from under-represented groups' and the central challenge involves 'getting more people to the matriculation starting gate' (Watson 2006, p. 8).

Some commentators conclude that widening participation means 'dumbing down' through universities accepting students from poorer backgrounds who have attained lower grades (McCartney 2006; Clare 1999). Yet there may be good reasons for accepting students with lower grades who have overcome major obstacles at home or school to achieve at that level. However, universities can also make a difference through their involvement in a pupil's prior educational career. As Deborah Eyre highlighted 'one role for universities is ... to play a part in creating the students they would like to teach at 18' (2004).

## 2 THE RESEARCH PROJECT

### 2.1 *Research methodology and project scope*

A number of schools were identified as having successful links with universities. These included the schools previously identified by Curtis *et al* (2008) for a Sutton Trust project on university entry (5 schools), schools which were identified by a survey carried out by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) as having excellent sixth-forms (14 schools) and schools which were showcasing their partnerships with universities at a two-day conference on this topic (14 schools).

Each of the schools (33 in total) was matched to 2-3 further schools using a number of variables, including the proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals, school type and location. These matched schools (75 in total) formed a comparator group.

A survey was designed and sent out to all 108 schools. The responses received from 27 of the schools by the deadline were analysed, and twelve of these survey responses were followed up with telephone interviews with the relevant member of staff. This enabled the research team to gain an understanding of the schools' perspectives on the relationships they have with universities, how effective these are and how they are established and maintained. An additional two interviews were undertaken with A-level staff at FE colleges to help identify any specific issues in the relationship between colleges and universities. The data obtained through these surveys and interviews were supplemented, where appropriate, with findings from a survey undertaken by London Aimhigher as part of an investigation into university/school interaction in 2005 (London Aimhigher 2005). See annex 2 for a description of this research.

The characteristics of schools which responded to the survey are described in annex 1. The respondents included a range of different school types: four grammar schools, one secondary modern and 22 comprehensive schools. Grammar schools are therefore overrepresented in the sample<sup>7</sup>. The average attainment of the schools at the end of Key Stage 4 (as measured by the percentage achieving 5 or more A\*-Cs at GCSE, including English and Maths) is above average, with 62 percent achieving this in 2007, compared to 46 percent nationally. The average proportion of pupils in those schools which responded, who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) over the period 2002-2006, was lower than the national figure (10.6 percent versus 14.3 percent). Schools were located across England in both urban and more rural settings.

The interview sample includes 12 schools from those responding to the survey plus A-level staff from two FE colleges. Two of the schools were 11-16 schools, one was a grammar school and one a secondary modern. The interviews were generally with Head of Sixth-form or the Head teacher.

A 2-day conference was attended by a member of the research team. This event was organised by the SSAT, and the focus of the event was partnerships between schools and universities. The event was attended by over 100 university and school staff from across the country. It included keynote speeches and a variety of workshops exploring different types of links between schools and universities.

<sup>7</sup> There are 164 grammar schools in England making up just under 5 percent of the 3399 state-maintained secondary schools in England (Coe *et al* 2008, DCSF 2008a).

## 2.2 Key findings

- Motivation:** There is no single model for effective HE-school links/relationships. Different schools have different needs and motivations for engaging with universities. Universities also have different objectives when establishing relationships with schools. Different institutions (and different departments within institutions) have different reasons for working with particular schools, so there was some variation in their mode and level of engagement with different schools. Some universities were recruiting at certain schools and undertaking WP (widening participation) work at different schools, but the two activities were not necessarily linked up. In schools where the majority of pupils went on to HE, the motivation for engaging with universities was usually to support and facilitate the progression to university, whereas schools with more diverse intakes often took part in activities aimed at enhancing understanding about HE and raising aspirations. Continuing professional development (CPD) for staff was another reason for schools to have relationships with universities.
- How links were established:** Links were often established through personal contact. For example, through school staff who were alumni of a particular university and students returning to their old school, but also through contacts made at various local meetings and events involving universities and schools. Some links had historical bases, for instance where a school and a university shared the same foundation.
- Types of links:** A wide variety of different links was reported. Some were targeted at a particular cohort (e.g. master classes for gifted and talented pupils) whereas others were accessible to the whole year group (e.g. talks about funding to support university attendance). Work with parents was reported in a few schools. Often (though not always) this was for parents of those in the sixth-form preparing to go to university (e.g. an evening talk on student finance) rather than targeting the widening participation cohort lower down the school. There were many links related to initial teacher education (and to a lesser extent CPD) but these relationships tended to be separate from any other type of school/university activity, and often did not involve the same universities.
- Characteristics:** Most of the reported links and activities were targeted at Years 11 and 12. There was some engagement reported for younger pupils but this was often a small subset of the year group, such as the gifted and talented cohort. The reason given by teachers was that, with limited time and resources, older year groups were considered the priority. There were also some differences between schools with different sorts of intakes. Schools where the vast majority of pupils went on to university felt that activities in Key Stage 3 were not useful for their pupils as they were already aware of, and aspiring to, HE. On the other hand, a significant minority of teachers felt that Key Stage 3 was too young for engagement with universities to have a worthwhile impact.
- There was some evidence of joint planning between school and university staff and students but this was limited. Where there was joint planning, this enabled the relationship between school and university staff to develop, and a more sustainable and effective link to evolve. Having staff from both sectors working together was also beneficial in terms of increased understanding of the two sectors. More specifically, it allowed school staff to update their knowledge and understanding about applying to and attending HE, and enabled university staff to have a better understanding of the needs, concerns and abilities of their future students.

- **Barriers:** Approximately one third of the sample did not cite any significant barriers to establishing and maintaining links with universities. The vast majority of the remaining respondents highlighted that the biggest challenge, in terms of effective links with universities, was that of time. Generally, this referred to curriculum time (i.e. pupil and staff time out of lessons) but time was also referred to in a broader sense, in that forging meaningful links with universities is one of many competing demands on teachers' time. Another significant challenge arose from staff changes in both schools and universities. Links were often established and maintained through personal relationships between specific members of staff. If people changed roles or left a particular institution, links were sometimes lost. In seeking to initiate links, schools reported difficulties in making contact with the appropriate person in the university. It was also felt that there was a lack of co-ordination and planning of activities. This meant that schools sometimes did not take part in events organised by universities as there was not enough notice given or the timing was not appropriate in terms of the school timetable and curriculum.



## 2.3 Further findings and discussion

- **Motivations for establishing links**

Schools felt that the key reasons for having links with universities were to raise aspiration and to improve progression to HE. Schools where much of the activity was focused on older pupils (this was often schools with high proportions going on to university) placed an emphasis on supporting the transition and progression to university. Schools were engaged in a mixture of functional activities, with very clear objectives, which aimed to give information (e.g. the UCAS process or student finance), while more experience-based activities were aimed at smoothing the transition between learning in a school to learning in a university. From the universities' side, these relationships could be described as 'recruitment relationships'. As one teacher described:

*it's easy to get speakers if they believe they are getting publicity as it were [for their courses].*

The motivation for the FE colleges was on ease of progression as students moved between the sectors, reflecting the fact that they cater for older pupils.

When compared to schools where most pupils already had a good awareness of HE, schools with more mixed intakes were rather more likely to offer activities aimed at explaining future educational pathways to younger pupils. Many of these schools suspected that the awareness of HE among some of their pupils was very limited on entering the school in Year 7, and some felt that it was important to have activities targeted at younger pupils, but this did not often happen other than for those pupils identified as gifted and talented (see section on younger pupils below).

Use of facilities was also a reason cited for linking with universities, particularly relating to specialisms in sports or science. Although these links seem initially to be motivated by access to resources, there are potentially much wider ranging impacts which could stem from these types of links. In fact, links which were based around subjects seemed to be particularly effective.

A secondary motivation was staff development but, as with initial teacher training, these links were generally separate from links focused on pupils, and were with different institutions.

- **How the links were established**

Links were initiated in a range of different ways. Approximately equal numbers of links were instigated by the schools and by the universities. Many of the relationships were based on personal contacts or networks, for example teachers maintained links with places where they studied or ex-pupils of a school returned to talk about their university experience. Many contacts were also made through networking at local meetings and events which involved teachers and university representatives. As one teacher said:

*Simple serendipity of personal contact and that to us has always the most useful way of doing it... through past students or through people who we happen to have met who we've got on with.*

A number of schools had close links with particular universities for historical reasons e.g. the school and the university shared the same foundation. These particular relationships appeared relatively easy to maintain, partly because they were so well

established and because contact and communication between university staff and school staff were routine.

Where the relationships were not based on a personal contact, the link was usually made between the member of school staff and the school liaison or widening participation department within the university. The member of school staff was not always a teacher in the school. Librarians and careers advisors often played an important role in setting up links, maintaining relationships and co-ordinating activities with universities. Schools did report some difficulties in locating the right person to contact within the university. Where academic staff had been contacted directly by the school (i.e. no prior personal contact existed), responsiveness varied. Lack of responsiveness on the part of the university is likely to be due, at least in part, to time pressures, but is also likely to be related to the faculty or department context, to the university's overall mission and its approach to WP. One teacher observed:

*Basically I think probably the more established universities seem to be quite happy with what they're doing and then the newer universities tend to be the ones which will make more of an effort and seem to be more amenable to sort of sending people out.*

Schools sometimes reported a lack of liaison between WP, school liaison, outreach staff and academic staff in universities. One example of this was the contrasting advice given to schools from different people within the same institution with regard to admissions requirements and the likelihood of success:

*You get very different responses if you are talking to their admissions officers as opposed to their academic admissions tutors ... and we often get conflicting responses there - we often get those who are in the admission office where getting applicants is their goal will tend to give much rosier pictures about how accessible their university is to all.*

Conflicting views were reported on the importance and usefulness of 'buy-in' or engagement at a senior level in both the school and the university. On balance, it was felt that active support and involvement from a Vice Chancellor (or Pro-Vice Chancellor) was useful as it helped to ensure a higher level of engagement across academic departments.

- **Types of links**

This research identified four categories of links between schools and universities: links related to widening participation, recruitment or progression, teacher training partnerships and those involving more structural relationships, such as university sponsorship of academies and trust schools. The first two categories involve links which directly engage pupils with universities, and are therefore the main focus of this report.

The table below shows the percentage of respondents who reported particular types of links with universities over the last year.



Table 1: Types of contact between schools and universities

Type of contact/ link	Percentage of schools
Pupils attending university open days	96
Pupils visiting universities for other reasons	93
Initial Teacher Education partnerships	88
Provision for gifted and talented pupils	77
Continuing Professional Development for teachers	72
University staff and students teaching in school	48
Other – through Aimhigher	48
Mentoring arrangements between pupils and university students	36
University representation on school's governing body	26
Formal links through school's trust or academy status	19
Other	64

n=27

*Widening participation links*

Widening participation links have the objective of raising awareness about HE but are also focused on raising the attainment of pupils among groups who have not traditionally attended university.

The first engagement between university and school pupils generally took place in Year 9. Activities focused on younger pupils were predominantly around gifted and talented provision and therefore did not usually include the whole cohort. These activities took the form of master classes, residential course and summer schools for the gifted and talented pupils within the year group.

Many successful links were developed around a subject, often as part of the school's subject specialism. Teachers felt that the reason such links were more successful, compared to generic large-scale activities, was that they had a specific focus to the relationship, such as curriculum enrichment or taking advantage of specialist facilities at the university. These links often involved the universities sharing facilities or providing experiences that the schools were unable to offer. Teachers felt that where activities had a focus beyond widening participation, the experience was more meaningful for pupils. Using a subject-related link as a basis to facilitate a relationship between pupils (and teachers) and universities seemed to be a particularly useful and more relevant way of engaging younger pupils.

Whilst there was evidence of one-off events for Key Stage 3 pupils, often taking the form of a one-day event at a university, it was not clear that these were the most effective means of using resources. Pupils did not always understand the purpose and relevance of the event, in part, due to the lack of appropriate preparation and follow-up. There was little evidence of sustained engagement with a particular group of pupils over a key stage.

*Progression links*

The most common type of link, undertaken by nearly all schools surveyed, involved visits to university open days during Years 12 and 13. One barrier/limitation to these is the time pupils spend out of lessons during these important years. Some schools felt that generic open days or HE fairs were not particularly valuable and added little to what could be discovered on the internet and by reading the prospectus.

Respondents from several schools and colleges spoke of compact agreements (or similar) with local universities<sup>8</sup>. These were regarded positively. In schools where there were no such formal agreements - often high attaining schools – the Head of Sixth-form often had existing relationships with particular admissions tutors at certain universities. These relationships had developed over time due to the relatively large proportions of pupils progressing to these institutions. This meant that a certain amount of trust had developed between the schools and admissions tutors and, in one case, this had actually led to lower offers being made to pupils from that particular school.

Much of the engagement between schools and universities during Years 11, 12 and 13 focused on providing information to pupils about the choices available to them at the end of school. This often included talks by university staff or students, usually to pupils, but there was also evidence of this type of session being organised for parents. Mentoring was mentioned by some schools. This often took the form of students coaching school pupils through the application and selection process (sometimes for a particular subject, e.g. medicine).

Contact between schools and universities can also help increase retention rates at university. There is limited point in widening participation if new entrants merely drop out at a later stage. As well as a participation gap between those starting university from different socio-economic backgrounds, students starting university from non-traditional backgrounds are more likely not to complete their degree course (House of Commons 2008)<sup>9</sup>. The change in learning environment from school to university brings many challenges, and success requires a broad skill set. However, such skills are not always developed to a high enough level for university (Wilde *et al* 2006). One way to ease the transition between school and HE is to offer HE modules in schools whereby sixth-form pupils take undergraduate modules during Years 12 and 13. This could help develop pupils' skills and confidence (see for example the Young Applicants in Schools and Colleges Scheme - <http://www.open.ac.uk/yass/>).

Some schools (particularly those with traditionally high progression rates to university), prepared their pupils for university by developing independence through different teaching methods and study skills sessions, often delivered by someone from a university.

#### Teacher training links

Most schools reported some link with a university around initial teacher education or CPD, with schools accommodating trainee teachers and some teachers undertaking courses at the university. Although many of the schools were involved with universities through teacher training, these activities rarely overlapped with other types of link. Even where schools were involved in other types of engagement with a particular university, these links usually operated independently from teacher training activities.

For one college, staff development opportunities available to local university staff were opened up to staff in the college:

<sup>8</sup> A recent HEFCE report examined compacts and found evidence that they existed in 51 universities, although often the term 'compact' was not used (see HEFCE 2008).

<sup>9</sup> There is some evidence from the US that any apparent gains in WP can be superseded by retention problems, particularly amongst first-generation students (Turner 2004; Chait and Soares 2008; Goldrick-Rab and Roksa forthcoming).

*They [university] advertised their staff development programme in my college and staff could go to these as of right ... [there were also] events around subject areas to update knowledge ... it was quite a vibrant partnership.*

This can be an effective way of initiating and developing relationships between staff in the two sectors. One school thought that more teachers teaching in university and lecturers teaching in schools would be the best way to foster sustainable and effective links:

*I'm convinced that there ought to be much more fluidity between those who teach in the universities and those who teach in schools...if you really wanted to build links between schools and universities that would be the way to do it...there would be a really fertile link that might be achieved there ... where university dons come and teach in schools and school teachers go and teach in universities it would be the best means of cross fertilising the two systems which actually have very very little overlap.*

#### Structural relationships

The Government is actively encouraging universities to form long-term, deep relationships with schools through their involvement in establishing academies and trust schools. It is clear that there can be considerable benefits to having long-term structural links, but it is unlikely that this will be possible for all schools, not least because there are fewer than 150 universities. Even ensuring a university member on every school's governing body - a somewhat more realistic aim - would pose a considerable challenge. This would be due, in part, to capacity issues for the university but also to geographical location.

Several schools mentioned structural links with universities in terms of both university involvement with academy or trust status and with university representation on the school's governing body. Generally schools were unclear whether representation on the governing body translated into real benefits for the pupils.

#### Activities with parents and communities

Only a few schools mentioned activities specifically aimed at engaging parents and universities. Those which did exist took the form of evenings held at the school to discuss aspects of progression to university – for example, events to learn more about financing attendance at university. Schools rarely reported direct engagement with parents of younger pupils. One school tried to engage parents in simple but effective ways much earlier on e.g., by asking parents to collect their children from the university after an activity for the pupils. There were also examples of parents engaging with universities in adult learning arrangements facilitated by the school.

#### Activities with teachers

Some schools (usually those with quite high post-18 participation rates) have developed long-term links with a few universities, or with Oxford and Cambridge colleges, to which the school had sent pupils over the years. These relationships were often between a teacher and a university admissions tutor, and teachers felt that these relationships were mutually beneficial due to the level of trust that had been developed. Admissions tutors knew the type and quality of the pupils likely to come from the school and teachers fully understood the university's admissions process. The personal relationship also allowed any problems with applications or changes to processes to be clarified quickly.

As technology and communication has expanded over the last 20 years, so has the range and number of sources of information regarding HE. School provides just one point where information can be accessed. In the context of differential access to technology and different parental experience of HE between social groups, the sources of information provided by the school may be more important for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In a recent survey<sup>10</sup> of 11 to 16 year olds conducted by Ipsos MORI for the Sutton Trust, 40 percent of pupils answered 'not very much' or 'none at all' when asked whether their teachers had given them information about going into higher education (Ipsos MORI 2008). This percentage is likely to be much lower if the survey were undertaken with 16-18 year olds, but nonetheless, it highlights the need for more time to be spent in school discussing HE before the age of 16. There is a growing body of research which shows that the quality of IAG is often variable and, overall, is considered to be low (Wilde *et al* 2006). Research shows that schools can play a role in the decision making process, and that where pupils feel supported in this process, schools can be more influential and pupils are less reliant on other factors such as family and friends (Blenkinsop *et al* 2006).

Although teachers provide pupils with an obvious source of information about HE, they have often had quite a narrow experience of HE themselves, and this is often outdated. The traditional or 'royal route' of 5+ good GCSEs, 2+ A-levels and then a full-time degree, may not be the most helpful route but, currently, this 'dominates patterns of aspiration' (Watson 2006, p. 3, Brown *et al* 2004). Some schools held judgements about certain universities, and these influenced their choice of which universities the school should actively try to engage:

Interviewer: *Was it a conscious decision to approach Cambridge than perhaps your nearest university?*

*What [local university] [laughs] Cambridge is top of the pile and [local university] isn't ... we are quite an academic school and we do like to encourage our pupils to go to the best university they can get into and we consider that to be our job so we start at Cambridge and work down.*

Such opinions are not always helpful. Even in high attaining schools, pupils are likely to have a range of abilities and attributes which would best be accommodated by a variety of courses at a range of different institutions.

Only a minority of schools mentioned specific links with FE colleges providing HE courses which could mean that pupils are not fully aware of the full range of pathways available to them. Data from a research project undertaken for the Nuffield Foundation (Wilde *et al* 2006) showed that FE colleges felt that school and sixth-forms did not always give useful and accurate information and advice to pupils regarding HE provision available at colleges, e.g.:

*Schools believe HE can only be accessed through A Level .... students only get part of the message (University admissions tutors quoted in Wilde *et al* 2006 p. 23).*

<sup>10</sup> 2,387 interviews were conducted among school children aged 11-16 in England and Wales between 11th January and 28th March 2008.

*Very few local sixth formers come here for HE. Schools consider us second class. There's ignorance in schools about vocational HE* (University admissions tutors quoted in Wilde *et al* 2006 p. 23).

Another survey by Ipsos MORI<sup>11</sup> for the Sutton Trust found that the knowledge and information held by teachers regarding Oxford and Cambridge was often incorrect, with 91 percent of teachers underestimating the representation of state school pupils and more than half (56 percent) thinking it was more expensive for students to study at Oxford and Cambridge (Sutton Trust 2008). Partnerships between HE staff and teachers, including working together on planning activities, could be one way to update teachers' knowledge of the diversity of the HE sector and the routes into it.

- **Characteristics of links**

- Age targeted

The majority of work with universities focused on Years 12 and 13 (16-18 year olds). Whilst there was considerable engagement with Key Stage 4 pupils (14-16 year olds), links at younger ages were generally with a select subset of the cohort. This usually took the form of gifted and talented related activity for a small number of Year 9 pupils (e.g. attending a master class or summer school at a university). This could potentially have negative effects on WP as the majority of pupils may see a select group attending university activities, and this may reinforce the message that 'university is not for me' (Jenkins 2008).

Schools serving more disadvantaged intakes were more likely to report a feeling that a) not all students entering the school in Year 7 were aware of university and b) that this was often dependent on the family's educational and socio-economic background. As discussed earlier, much of the gap in participation at university between groups with different socio-economic backgrounds can be traced back to inequalities in educational attainment from earlier on in pupils' educational career. It is therefore important to 'sow the seeds' at an early age.

A large proportion of teachers felt that engagement during Key Stage 3 was not important. In part, as we have seen, this was due to the fact that their particular schools had high participation rates, and so raising aspiration and awareness of HE was not considered necessary. Others felt that Key Stage 3 was too young for pupils to benefit from interaction with universities. However these views are also likely to be influenced by the context in which schools operate. In schools where the needs of the student body are large and varied, there are many competing priorities on staff and pupil time (see section on barriers to effective links).

Data from the London Aimhigher survey support the finding in this research that there is little focus on younger year groups – see table 2 below. These results are to be expected as the target age group for Aimhigher is 13 to 19 years old (Aimhigher 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Ipsos MORI surveyed nearly 500 teachers.

**Table 2: Year groups in which activities are delivered in London schools**

Year group	Yes, activities being delivered	No, activities not being delivered
7	19 %	81 %
8	30 %	70 %
9	65 %	35 %
10	80 %	20 %
11	85 %	15 %
12	80 %	20 %
13	63 %	37 %

Source: London Aimhigher (2005)

As well as 'sowing the seeds', engaging with younger pupils can be important in terms of IAG and influencing education pathway choices made at 14 and 16.

The choices which pupils make at ages 14 and 16 can limit the options open to these pupils later on, and therefore can impact on their future education pathways. Decisions made at 14 are likely to become increasingly important as the 14-19 diplomas are phased in, and some universities have highlighted the need to ensure that appropriate IAG is delivered for each age group.

*At 14, for example, there is little awareness of where education is taking them. There's also a need to choose GCSEs carefully at 14* (University admissions tutor quoted by Wilde *et al* 2006, p. 22)

A review of the literature undertaken by NFER for the DCSF (DCSF 2005) found that most of the evidence available focused on individual factors or on factors relating to the school's approach. Individual elements refer to individual characteristics such as pupils' perceptions of the intrinsic or extrinsic value of different subjects, and the influence of parents and teachers on decisions made. School factors include the guidance and support offered at the school.

Further qualitative research undertaken by NFER<sup>12</sup> (Blenkinsop *et al* 2006) found that schools can make a difference to how young people make decisions. It demonstrates a link between schools which appears to be effective in terms of curriculum management, pupil support, staff expectations and school leadership, and the quality of decisions made by pupils in those schools. Where the pupils felt supported in decision-making by the school, the school appeared to be more influential than friends and family. A more worrying finding is that few pupils made the link between their choices at 14 (and to a lesser extent at 16) and their careers education and guidance. Pupils in schools which did not have adequate support for decision making or provide careers guidance were more likely to 'have mindsets that reflected a 'comfort-seeking' or 'defeatist' approach to decision-making' (Blenkinsop *et al* 2006, pg vii). This seems to support the concern noted from universities (Wilde *et al* 2006) regarding quality of IAG provision during Key Stage 3.

Curtis *et al* (2008) looked at schools that are successful in sending significant numbers of pupils to prestigious universities. They interviewed pupils in Year 13 who were applying to university. They stated that these pupils' experience and perception of WP interventions varied, with some reporting that events had encouraged them to progress to HE. Others felt that interventions were not particularly helpful as they were not

<sup>12</sup> This research involved two waves of in-depth interviews with 165 pupils in Year 9 and 11 across 14 schools between February 2005 and February 2006 (Blenkinsop *et al* 2006).



appropriately targeted. Some of the pupils referred to events which had happened lower down the school such as taster days, subject-specific master classes or Aimhigher events at universities. It is not possible, however, to draw causal links between university engagement during Key Stage 3 and university participation, but it could be a contributory factor.

#### Planning and preparation

Where pupils (rather than just teachers or governors) had contact with university staff and students, this often took the form of one-off events or activities, rather than being part of a longer-term programme. Exceptions to this were the mentoring of pupils by university students and events which formed part of a structured programme of linked activities organised by universities.

Although schools' relationships with universities were often sustained over years, this usually took the form of an activity repeated each year (for the next cohort), rather than the university sustaining a relationship with particular pupils. Such one-off activities are not in themselves ineffective if there is adequate preparation and follow-up with pupils by the schools. Teachers interviewed saw this as valuable but it did not happen often enough. For preparation and follow-up to be possible and effective, it is necessary for teachers to be involved in planning the activity, or at least to have an awareness of what it is likely to involve. Timings and advance notice are obviously important here.

It is perhaps useful to think about these collaborations not as relationships between the university and the school but rather between the university and the pupils, with the school as the enabler. In these cases, the university/school relationship is important, but the focus should be on the engagement between pupils and the university. The relationship between school staff and university staff/ students should support this engagement. It seems that an area where the relationship between university and school staff best benefits pupils is around their shared ground, namely teaching and learning (Eyre 2004). The focus on subject-specific links is important here where teachers and university academic staff unite around their shared interest in a particular subject area.

#### Do links vary across different types of schools/ colleges?

Most findings apply to the whole sample but there were some findings specific to FE colleges and 11-16 schools, which we discuss briefly below.

#### FE colleges

The interview sample included staff from two FE colleges and two 11-16 schools. FE colleges often operate in very different contexts - offering different qualifications and catering for a different (although obviously overlapping) group of pupils. One particular issue associated with FE colleges was that involvement with universities was voluntary:

*You can't normally say to someone this is a compulsory part of your course – it's normally – 'would you like to go?' ... links won't work if students don't turn up.*

*The students themselves can be a problem in that we [the staff] can think something is a wonderful idea ... and they don't necessarily take you up.*

The representatives from the colleges participating in the research both felt that their more structural or strategic relationships with universities were not particularly effective. While one felt that buy-in and support from the top of the university (Vice Chancellor or Pro-Vice Chancellor level) was important in ensuring the success of these links, another felt that formal partnership at a high level did not lead to increased benefits for

the pupils, and perhaps even hindered relationships. The crux seemed to be the motivations for engagement – some universities placed widening participation at the core of their mission while others seemed to be more politically motivated.

The colleges reported different levels of interaction with and different dynamics in their relationships with 'selecting' and 'recruiting' universities and with different subject areas within universities, although these divisions were not identified as strongly by the schools. The labels of 'selecting' and 'recruiting' did not simply map onto 'old' and 'modern' universities, as subjects and courses varied across and within institutions in terms of whether they were oversubscribed by high quality applicants.

One college felt that evidence of an effective link should be judged by how many of their pupils ended up going to the particular university. Perhaps because of the likely characteristics of their student body, one college felt that, for them, engagement with 'leading' universities was not always helpful as it did not necessarily translate into more pupils achieving a place. Universities were seen as ticking the boxes by undertaking WP activities with particular groups. This sent out confusing messages to pupils who felt let down by the system. The tutor described this as 'dangling a carrot in front of then just to take it away'.

#### *11-16 schools*

Some 11-16 schools felt that they faced particular barriers and challenges as they are not viewed by universities as a priority for engagement. As discussed above, universities often have the option of being selective in terms of who they engage with. If this is compounded by other factors, such as geographical location, then it may be hard for 11-16 schools to establish meaningful links with universities:

*Because we don't have a sixth-form we often get left out if initiatives or they are not interested in us.*

In London, where proximity to universities is not a major factor, there was no difference between the numbers of universities with which 11-16 and 11-18 schools were engaging. However 11-16 schools were slightly more likely to target activities at younger pupils (see table 3). The table shows that in London, pupils in 11-16 schools are more likely to experience an activity with a university before Year 12 than those in 11-18 schools. This may be due to the finding, previously highlighted, that in 11-18 schools the priority for university engagement often focuses on Year 11 and the sixth-form.



**Table 3: Year groups in which activities are delivered in 11-16 and 11-18 London schools**

Year group	11-16		11-18	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
7	24 %	76 %	18 %	82 %
8	32 %	68 %	29 %	71 %
9	72 %	28 %	62 %	38 %
10	100 %	0 %	69 %	31 %
11	92 %	8 %	87 %	13 %

Source: London Aimhigher (2005)

*Which universities do schools and colleges work with?*

Nearly all schools responding to the survey reported that they had links with a range of institutions – including at least one ‘new’ and one Russell group university. Where this was not the case, the links focused on Russell group institutions and ‘old’ universities only, and attainment and progression to university in these schools were high. The engagement between universities and these schools focused particularly on obtaining information about applications and recruitment to universities, rather than on widening participation. For some of these schools, this was because it seemed most practical and useful to establish links with those institutions which traditionally received the highest proportion of their pupils. Others, however, rejected engagement with certain universities as they felt that their students should not have aspirations to attend them because these universities were not considered to be ‘good enough’ for their pupils. It would therefore not be useful to establish a relationship with these institutions:

*For example, if we were approached by [university] we wouldn't like that as our students are not terribly well suited to [that university].*

A relatively high proportion (approximately half) of schools responding to the survey had links with Oxford or Cambridge (which may, in part, reflect the high proportion of high achieving schools in the sample).

Some schools and colleges felt there was a difference between the approach and level of engagement of different universities. The attitudes of some universities could be attributable to their specific context, and particularly to whether they were a recruiting or selecting university (or even a particular subject within a university). Some schools reported that they were more likely to be turned down by selecting institutions when they approached a university to take part in an event.

Universities, generally, can be fairly selective with regard to who they engage with. The map in annex 3 illustrates that there are many more secondary schools compared to universities in England. A rough calculation shows that, for every school to have a university partner, each university would need to link with 25 schools<sup>13</sup>. Although this does not, perhaps, sound unachievable, there is still scope for universities to be selective in their deeper partnerships. There is also evidence that at least some universities target particular schools. One school reported that a particular university had halted a link with the school because its results had risen above a certain level and it therefore no longer fell into the university's target group.

<sup>13</sup> There are 3,399 secondary schools in England (DCSF 2007) and 136 universities (Edubase search 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008).

Selectivity on the part of a university was illustrated by one particular institution which had been approached by two different colleges. One found the university in question to be particularly supportive and responsive, while the other had experienced barriers and had found it difficult to establish a link. The first college reported that their effective link was underpinned by a historical relationship, as were other substantive and ongoing links mentioned by other schools and colleges.

As discussed above, there is also a certain amount of selection happening the other way round i.e. schools selecting or rejecting the universities they wish to work with.

One FE college had a systematic approach to targeting which involved gathering data on the most popular destinations of the previous year. The universities on this list were then targeted with a view to establishing links with them. A potential impact of this approach could be that the range of universities experienced (and later attended) by the college's students becomes increasingly narrow.

As discussed above, schools serving different intakes show different motivations for establishing links with universities. Similarly, universities have different motivations for engaging with schools, and this varies across different universities, across different departments within universities and, to some extent, on the type of school. As noted earlier, some universities engaged in two distinct types of engagement with schools: one focused on recruitment activity and one focused on widening participation. For some institutions there was a more obvious overlap. Where these activities were very separate, there was some concern that this approach could send confusing messages to pupils. As one careers advisor put it:

*They [activities] were fantastic but it wasn't as if [university] were going to end up with a lot of [our] students on their course – so there is a little are a lot of mixed messages coming through to the students ... they get a carrot dangled in front of them just to be taken away. They [universities] are fulfilling their widening participation remit but they are not seeing it all the way through by actually admitting those students onto those courses.*

- ***Barriers to initiating and sustaining links***

One third of the sample reported that they had not experienced any barriers to establishing and maintaining links with universities. Of those which did cite them, there was remarkable similarity in the barriers described. Time constraints and staff changes were the two most prominent barriers, with nearly all schools (of those reporting barriers) identifying these as the most challenging.

Barriers were much less likely to be mentioned by schools where the attainment was very high and where a large majority of the cohort continued on to university. As mentioned above, different types of schools had different types of links with universities in terms of the ages targeted, their motivations for engaging with universities, and the types of activities undertaken.

#### *Time constraints*

Time was cited by the majority of survey respondents as a barrier to successful links between schools and universities. During follow-up interviews, however, it was clear that this took different forms. Instead of the administrative time barrier, i.e. time spent by teachers in initiating, developing and maintaining the relationships with universities, the most commonly cited time constraint involved curriculum time or student time:

*A bit of staff time to organise it but to be honest it's just the curriculum time really – there's just so much to try and do and everything matters somehow ... so where it gets squeezed to I guess.*

*Universities need to realise that we actually discourage student from going out [on university visits in sixth form] as they miss lesson time.*

*From a practical point of view... [a barrier is] students being released from lessons 'cos they have a very tight curriculum at AS and A2 and often teachers don't like them being released so the timing of events is really important.*

This finding echoes numerous other reports and commentators regarding an overcrowded curriculum. It also echoes the complaint about too many conflicting targets and competing initiatives in schools, articulated by the teaching profession (see for example ATL 2006 and The Primary Review 2008)

One could take the view that such time constraints could be overcome through different prioritisation within schools and by their teachers. However, the main determinant of university entry is, in fact, educational attainment. The main priority must, therefore, be the achievement of qualifications and this was recognised by several interviewees. The question here is how can engagement with universities increase aspiration and motivation? And then, how do increases in aspiration and motivation translate into improved educational attainment?

It is important to convince schools (and universities themselves) that universities can have a role in raising attainment in schools if schools are to fully harness the resources available. More subject-focused or study skills focused interventions could be important. If these were well planned and delivered, they could directly support the school in relation to the curriculum and to exam pressure. Evidence from the staff interviews also suggests that focused and specific interventions are more beneficial to pupils than more general and broader activities:

*[we took a group of students]... to use their chemistry labs one afternoon which went down extremely well. The kids thought it was great - they were allowed into*

*top of the range, high tech lab facilities and its good advertising for [the university] it was a nice double-edged relationship.*

*The more formal visits tend not to be that useful. I have spent tedious hours walking around universities in large groups with other school teachers.*

This finding is supported by the London Aimhigher research which found that teachers felt 'the generic university visits and careers conventions are less effective at engaging and motivating the students than the more interactive and specialised activities, and that too many valuable resources are being used on provision of such generic sessions' (London Aimhigher 2005, p. 10).

Although not the focus of this project, it is important to highlight that whilst there are considerable pressures on schools, as discussed in this report, there are also corresponding pressures on universities. In the first four months of this year alone, government announcements have included calls for universities to engage more fully with employers, to play a bigger role in community cohesion and to support the roll out of up to 20 new university campuses (DIUS 2008a). This is on top of the other expectations on universities to engage in the running of schools, to carry out outreach and widening participation work, and to improve support for students while they are studying (in order to reduce drop-out rates). There have also been developments involving the 14-19 curriculum and qualifications, as well as foundation degrees in partnership with schools and colleges. The different importance attached by universities to these priorities depends on the institution's mission as well as the context and circumstances in which it is operating. It also relates to the distinction between 'recruiting' and 'selecting' universities discussed elsewhere in this report - the motivations for engaging with schools vary between universities and their departments, depending on the circumstances faced with regard to student recruitment.

Universities sometimes acknowledged the time pressures faced by schools. Here, an admissions tutor comments on this issue and the need for universities to be responsive to it:

*There is no time in the time-table for visits, taster courses and so on. HEIs need to pitch it at exactly the right point in the school year. There is no time to do anything other than what is required for the examinations (University admissions tutor quoted in Wilde et al 2006, p.22).*

*The curriculum is full. We could do talks in schools but they couldn't fit us in (University admissions tutor quoted in Wilde et al 2006, p.22).*

#### Personnel and communication

The second important barrier involved staff changes at the school or the university. If the main point of contact within an institution left (or restructuring took place), there was a serious risk of the link being lost:

*You get a good link with a university - we had a great link with [university] for a number of years and the personnel changed down there ... but then it became more difficult because the person who'd been very happy to travel up to [Local Authority] was no longer there and basically we lost the link. It's a shame that sometimes these things hang on the individual rather than the system or structure that is in place - it's all quite casual arrangements that we've got.*

*If that particular person goes then we have to work very hard to make sure it's [the link] continued ... and over the years we have found, generally speaking, that it would not continue if the person leaves.*

Interviewer: *why is it that links can die out when a person leaves?*

*Because it depends on the enthusiasm of that particular person and the personal links which have been developed*

One school specifically mentioned that, due to the amount of marketing material he received from universities for different activities, he very rarely responded to such overtures unless they were targeted at his school, or there was some kind of personal link.

Maintaining relationships between school and university staff (and students) is obviously a challenge. However, it can be also seen as an advantage as it is more likely to foster an effective outcome in terms of activities and events which benefit the pupils. When WP work is underpinned by a strong and purposeful relationship between university and school staff, it is more likely to include joint working on a project/ activity (or at least some contribution of ideas and insights to the planning). In turn, this should mean that: a) the teachers are more engaged with the activity; b) they are better equipped to prepare pupils to make the most of the experience; and c) will undertake follow-up work. It should also help to ensure that the activity is age appropriate and delivered in the best way to engage the pupils:

*It's a question of the personalities involved so if you get hold of someone who really is keen on that sort of thing then your luck's in and you get a good link... but it's not down to the university - it's really down to the individuals involved*

*I think I've come to the conclusion that a lot of your best work has got to be done because you've got two individuals who really want to make a difference. ... which obviously has its dangers, if personnel changes they're in trouble.*

Some teachers had concerns about the extent to which university students and staff delivering activities were always effective. This was reported as being inconsistent:

*They [university staff] often have a one-size-fits- all talk ... often I've not been very impressed with their flexibility to deliver the appropriate stuff to different students.*

#### Co-ordination and planning

Many schools identified the co-ordination and timing of events and activities as a barrier:

*We get all sorts of odd letters at odd times going to odd people that aren't always targeted.*

Marketing material for events was often sent out to schools too near to the actual event to allow adequate planning and preparation, both logistically and educationally. In many schools, planning began in the summer term for the following year with an evaluation of the needs of the students over the coming year. Planning in advance meant that schools could be more strategic with regard to the activities in which they took part, and they could plan the school timetable around particular events. The

success of activities also relies on established links with universities, on not starting from scratch each year, and is made easier by some stability in funding.

The London Aimhigher report supported this view and added that although schools favoured events earlier in the academic year, they felt that universities preferred activities to take place in June and July, after their main exam period (London Aimhigher 2005).

### Geography

Geographical location was a key factor for some of the schools, and relationships were often made with the closest universities:

*Because [nearest town] doesn't have a university ... so it [location] is a key factor.*

A study for HEFCE looked at different geographical areas (as a proxy for different levels of disadvantage) in terms of HE participation, and found that London was the only area in the country where (between 1994 and 2000) participation had risen in the most disadvantaged areas (Corver 2005). Corver feels that this 'London effect' is due to the presence of more universities in the area (Corver 2005, MacLeod 2005). This means that pupils can live at home whilst studying, but also means that pupils are more surrounded by graduates and the effects of having a graduate education. Corver found that the presence of graduates in a community was a key characteristic of areas of highest HE participation (although there is a correlation with high household incomes in these areas too). This also has implications for the value of mentoring between graduates and pupils in more disadvantaged areas. In London, there is also access to a wider range of institutions offering different routes to get to HE which means that school pupils in London are perhaps more likely to be aware of the less traditional routes open to them (Corver 2005).

The map in annex 3 shows the location of all secondary schools and universities in England. From this, it can be seen that universities appear to be situated in areas where there is high school density, i.e. cities, so whilst there may be a range of universities accessible to schools in these areas there are also many areas where there are no universities particularly nearby. More imaginative methods of interaction and engagement may be needed in these areas.

### Funding

Funding was not raised as a barrier in the majority of responses. Where it was mentioned, this was in relation to pay for staff time (to develop links and organise events), or with regard to transport costs. Where activities were funded through the schools, funds were often found through Aimhigher resources or through funding allocated to the school's specialism. A significant minority of schools mentioned issues around access to Aimhigher funding. Some staff were unclear as to how to apply for these funds, and others had concerns about how this funding was allocated between schools within an area. They also mentioned that transport costs were often covered by pupils, which could prove difficult for some families.



### 3 Policy implications and recommendations

#### 3.1 Policy implications

##### Longer-term programmes

It is clear that there could be large benefits to pupils, teachers and universities from longer-term programmes with pupils in schools rather than ad-hoc projects which, although often repeated each year, are not repeatedly engaging the same pupils. One way of achieving this is through long-term structural engagement such as a university supporting an academy or trust, but it is clear that this level and model of engagement would not be possible for all schools. Schools and colleges also felt that structural engagement through HE representation on the school or college governing body did not have much impact in terms of tangible benefits to pupils around access to HE links.

Successful longer-term and more strategic patterns of engagement with pupils could be developed by a) the school liaising with a particular university or universities to provide a continuum of engagement for every year group, each year's activities building upon the previous year; and b) a single university, or group of universities, providing a set programme of activities which would save time and effort on the part of schools.

##### Co-ordination, communication and planning

Improved timetabling and co-ordination of events could lead to more efficient activity between schools and universities. This would help to ensure increased take up of university events and activities as these could be timed to fit in with the school curriculum and timetable. Better communication between the two sectors is needed. Longer-term planning with other universities and schools (underpinned by a strategic agreement between institutions) should help improve co-ordination and timetabling as events would be planned well in advance. More strategic planning could also lead to more effective use of resources.

Increased levels of dialogue between staff at schools and universities should also improve co-ordination, and would allow for more tailored and relevant activities. It would allow activities to be pitched at the appropriate level for pupils thereby ensuring maximum impact. Again, this would help embed activities in the school curriculum and timetable as teachers would witness the value added by such activities and would therefore be more likely to engage with universities.

##### Work with teachers

Whilst links between schools and universities relating to initial teacher education (and to a lesser extent CPD) were reported frequently, there is also a need for teachers to update and expand their knowledge and understanding about HE. This was not something that was frequently addressed. Teachers are often one of the key sources of information for pupils regarding education pathways and their advice and support is particularly important for pupils without family experience of HE.

##### Work with younger pupils

In most schools, Key Stage 3 pupils were unlikely to be engaged in activities with universities (instead, links at this age tended to be targeted at a select group of gifted and talented pupils). Engagement early on in secondary school is important, especially in terms of increasing awareness of HE, and particularly amongst those from families with no prior experience of HE, as it can have significant impact on aspiration and attainment.

As the 14-19 qualification reforms develop, choices taken at the end of Key Stage 3 are likely to become increasingly important and therefore awareness of different pathways is vital. Effective contact between younger pupils and universities will need to take a different form from that with older pupils which is usually focused specifically around issues related to progression to HE. There are many potentially fruitful links, particularly subject-focused ones, such as use of university laboratory facilities to enhance the teaching and learning of school science.

### **More focused and specialised activities**

Teachers felt that activities which are focused and which have specific objectives are more effective and worthwhile. These activities/links are often curriculum- or subject-based, and an advantage of this is that, through their links to the curriculum, they can support what is happening in the classroom, rather than adding to it. Curriculum- or subject-based links therefore seem more useful to teachers and pupils faced with the time constraints described above. This type of link could also encourage joint planning as staff from universities and schools engage with a topic in which they both have an interest.

Mentoring was only used by one fifth of schools in the sample. Evaluations of Aimhigher have identified mentoring as one of five more effective outreach activities (Aimhigher 2006b). E-mentoring would be useful in areas where there are not many universities, and would help to overcome some of the barriers faced by schools due to their location.

### **Work with parents**

Parents influence on their children is another area which universities (and schools) have yet to tap adequately. Very few schools reported activities which involved parents, especially with regard to WP type activities.

### **Evaluating effectiveness**

Opportunities for feedback by school staff were reported, but more comprehensive evaluation of initiatives could feed into more systematic improvements. Where effective feedback and evaluation was used, it led to more appropriate activities which better engaged pupils. There is little formal evaluation within schools of the effectiveness of their engagement with universities, but there was evidence of more informal reflection with regard to which relationships are worthwhile and which are not. Some schools reported thinking back over what had and had not worked at the end of each year as they looked ahead to plan the next year. More joint evaluation would encourage closer working between teachers and university staff, and should also lead to improved quality in activities. Schools would then be more likely to regard these activities as worthwhile and relevant and, therefore, to give them greater priority.



### 3.2 Recommendations

1. **Longer term programmes should be developed rather than one-off activities.** This would have benefits in terms of planning and relationship building between schools and universities but also would be more effective in providing a continuum of engagement for pupils. Longer term planning would mean that activities could be built into the school's yearly timetable, thus making preparation and follow-up of activities and events easier.
2. **Co-ordination both between universities and between universities and schools needs to be improved.** Currently the provision available to different schools varies as a result of factors such as geographical location and the characteristics of the school's intake. Better co-ordination would enable more even coverage of provision for all schools, though it also needs to be tailored to their particular needs.
3. **More opportunities should be found for planning and developing activities jointly between staff in universities and schools.** Taken together with recommendations 1 and 2 above, this would enable more effective relationships to become established. More dialogue between staff in the two sectors should produce more relevant and engaging activities and enhance the value pupils get from them. Improved relationships would also create a foundation for more effective and useful feedback and evaluation.
4. **More work should be conducted with teachers around progression and widening participation.** Teachers often provide the first port of call with regard to information, advice and guidance on HE for pupils but often their knowledge and understanding of the sector is too narrow and outdated.
5. **There should be increased focus on engagement with younger age groups.** Most of the links between universities and schools are targeted at pupils in Key Stages 4 and 5 but the gap in educational attainment between those from different socio-economic background is observed earlier on in pupils' educational career and this is a key driver of the HE participation gap. It is important to raise awareness of HE at younger ages during Key Stage 3 and before as this can have a positive impact on both aspiration and attainment. Activities focussing on younger pupils are likely to become more important as the 14-19 phase develops and choices made by pupils at 14 have greater impact on later pathways. More of these activities should involve the whole year group, rather than specific groups such as those designated gifted and talented.
6. **There should be more provision of curriculum- and subject-focused activities.** Activities are considered more effective and meaningful for the pupils when there is a focused objective. For younger pupils this is likely to be around a subject area but for older pupils there is more scope for the focus to be on a particular area of student life – e.g. finances. Schools may feel more able to release pupils (and teachers) from lessons where the focus of the activity is on a curriculum subject, thus supporting classroom work rather than being in addition to it.
7. **Mentoring of pupils by university students should be extended.** An extension of successful mentoring arrangements could be useful in overcoming some of the current challenges in establishing effective links. Mentoring is by its nature relatively long-term and has been shown to be effective in Aimhigher evaluations. E-mentoring could be an attractive option for schools which are not located close to universities.
8. **There should be more focus on work with parents and the broader community.** Consideration needs to be given to how activities aimed at pupils could include and

impact on parents. Parents can have considerable influence on their children's aspirations and the value parents put on education feeds down to their children. Children in families where no-one has been to university may lack the broader perspective and understanding about what university entails. Bringing a university presence into the community may have a considerable impact on aspiration by 'myth busting' some of the commonly-held views regarding the type of person who goes to university and what university life entails.

9. **Engagement with universities needs to be evaluated.** Some activities are not considered particularly useful by schools and they feel that resources could be better used elsewhere. Effectiveness should be judged on outcomes rather than the frequency and variety of activities. Annual evaluation would help to identify which activities and links had worked well and inform effective planning for the following year.

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### Annex 1 – Characteristics of the sample

Survey sample: There were 27 respondents to the survey.

School ID <sup>1</sup>	Group <sup>2</sup>	SchTyp1 <sup>3</sup>	SchTyp2	SchTyp3 <sup>4</sup>	FSM <sup>5</sup>	5+ A*-C (inc E&M) <sup>6</sup>	Sutton Trust 13 success rate <sup>7</sup>
1	1	Comp	11-18, Mixed	Fdn	<5%	51-60%	10%<15%
2	2	Comp	11-18, Girls	VA	5%<10%	51-60%	10%<15%
3	1	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	5%<10%	61-70%	15%<20%
4 (*)	1	Comp	11-18, Mixed	Fdn	<5%	81-90%	10%<15%
5	1	Gram	11-18, Mixed	C	10%<15%	81-90%	10%<15%
6	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	Academy	35%<40%	n/a	5%<10%
7	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	VA	15%<20%	31-40%	<5%
8	1	Gram	11-18, Mixed	Fdn	<5%	91-100%	10%<15%
9 (*)	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	VA	5%<10%	61-70%	10%<15%
10 (*)	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	5%<10%	41-50%	5%<10%
11	2	Gram	11-18, Boys	VA	<5%	91-100%	35%<40%
12	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	VA	<5%	81-90%	20%<25%
13	1	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	5%<10%	51-60%	10%<15%
14 (*)	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	5%<10%	51-60%	n/a
15 (*)	1	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	15%<20%	31-40%	15%<20%
16 (*)	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	<5%	61-70%	20%<25%
17 (*)	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	VC	10%<15%	21-30%	10%<15%
18 (*)	1	Gram	11-18, Mixed	VA	<5%	91-100%	45%<50%
19	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	5%<10%	31-40%	5%<10%
20 (*)	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	Fdn	<5%	61-70%	20%<25%
21 (*)	2	Sec Mod	11-16, Girls	VC	5%<10%	41-50%	n/a
22	1	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	15%<20%	71-80%	20%<25%
23	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	Fdn	<5%	51-60%	10%<15%
24 (*)	1	Comp	11-18, Mixed	VA	5%<10%	81-90%	35%<40%
25 (*)	1	Comp	11-16, Mixed	C	10%<15%	41-50%	n/a
26	2	Comp	11-18, Mixed	C	20%<25%	31-40%	<5%
27	2	Comp	11-18, Girls	VA	35%<40%	51-60%	5%<10%

1. Staff from schools which are labelled with (\*) were interviewed.

2. Group 1 refers to the original group selected because of their effective links and group 2 is the comparator group.

3. Comp=comprehensive, Gram=grammar school (selective), Sec Mod=secondary modern

4. C=community, Fdn=foundation, VA=voluntary-aided, VC=voluntary controlled

5. This column give the proportion of pupils at the school were eligible for free school meals (FSM) over the period 2002-2006. The national average over this period was 14.3 percent.

6. This column gives the proportion of pupils attaining 5 or more A\*-C grades at the end of Key Stage 4 in academic year 2006-07. The national average for this year was 46.0% (DCSF 2008b).

7. This is the percentage of pupils progressing to HE which entered one of the Sutton Trust '13' universities between 2002-2006. These 'top' 13 universities were identified by the Sutton Trust on the basis of an average of university rankings. The 13 universities are Cambridge, Imperial, Oxford, London School of Economics, University College London, York, Warwick, Bristol, Nottingham, St Andrews, Birmingham and Durham.

#### Interview sample

From the 27 survey respondents, 12 took part in a follow-up interview - shown in the table with a (\*). A further two interviews were undertaken with A-level staff from FE colleges.

## **Annex 2 – Findings from the London Aimhigher Interaction Survey**

### **Summary of findings from a survey of school-university interaction conducted by London Aimhigher with the support of The London Challenge, Spring 2005**

A survey of school-university interaction was undertaken by Rebecca Milne of London Aimhigher in spring 2005, using the London team's contacts in universities and colleges and, through summer school recruitment, London secondary schools.

*Over 300 of London's 400+ secondary schools are involved in elements of the Aimhigher programme. London's six local and three thematic Aimhigher partnerships support about 60,000 'interventions' each year with the purpose of raising aspirations (for younger pupils) and improving attainment (for older students as they get closer to applying for HE courses). The London Team manages the regional summer school programme which reaches about 3,000 Year 10 and Year 11 students. What do practitioners themselves think about the effectiveness of this effort?*

Responses from 31 of London HEIs and 72 maintained secondary schools yielded the following:

#### **Schools want to see:**

- Resources transferred from the delivery of generic university visits and sessions to more subject-specific curriculum-based provision with access to HEI academic staff
- More interaction with undergraduate students in the form of student shadowing, mentoring and classroom support in a similar style to Beginner Teachers
- More Information, Advice and Guidance sessions including guidance from admissions tutors on entry tariffs
- More provision for vocational pathways and the Gifted and Talented cohort
- More provision of residential activities
- The introduction/expansion of work with parents across the region.

The basic sessions currently being delivered by many HEIs need to be developed as they have become rather stale, with little innovation and variety across the region. Sessions need to be more interactive and dynamic to encourage schools/students to continue to engage.

#### **Targeting by ages: involve younger students and encourage continuity**

Provision should be targeted at all year groups, not only focused on Year 12 and 13, with greater provision for younger students. Students should have the opportunity to attend multiple activities to create continuity instead of one-off interventions.

#### **Organisation: each partner to be more aware of planning cycles**

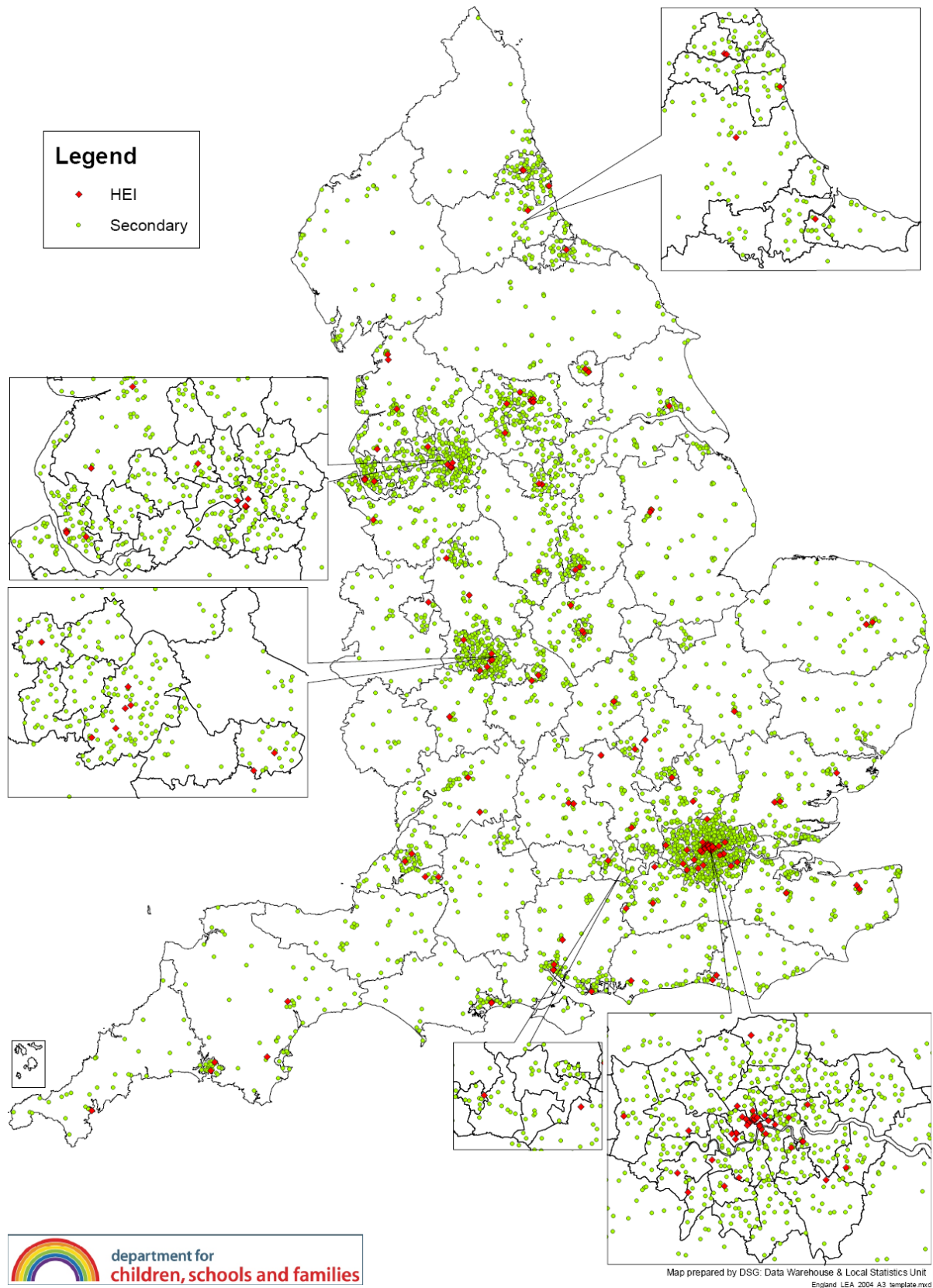
Schools are unable to plan activity strategically as they receive a constant influx of promotional material from HEIs. HEIs often fail to give schools appropriate time to engage students in activities and accommodate timetabling constraints.

#### **Broader strategy**

Within the HE sector there is a lack of knowledge and awareness of school agendas and how pupils learn. There needs to be a great improvement in cross-sector understanding of structures and curricula, within both schools and HEIs.

Source: London Aimhigher (2005)

### Annex 3 – Map of secondary schools and universities in England



Source: produced on request by analysts at DCSF

Notes: The map contains all universities and secondary schools in England – this includes non-state-maintained secondary schools such as CTCs and academies.