

<b>Children and Young People Select Committee</b>		
Title	Transition from Primary to Secondary School – First Evidence Session	
Contributor	Scrutiny Manager	Item 3
Class	Part 1 (open)	10 November 2016

## **1. Purpose of paper**

- 1.1. As part of its work programme the Committee has agreed to undertake an in-depth review into successful transition between primary and secondary schools (Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3).
- 1.2. This evidence report provides an initial response to the Key Lines of Enquiry that were set out in the scoping paper as agreed by the Committee on 12 October 2016.
- 1.3. Jackie Jones, Service Manager for School Improvement and Intervention, will attend the meeting to answer questions that the Committee may have regarding transition planning in Lewisham and the issues affecting children and schools.
- 1.4. The Young Mayor’s Advisors will also attend to answer questions about their experiences of transitioning from primary to secondary school.
- 1.5. Visits will be arranged between November and January to allow the Committee to talk directly to schools and pupils.
- 1.6. A second evidence session is scheduled for 11 January 2017 when the Committee will receive feedback from the school visits as well as evidence from external organisations.
- 1.7. Visits to schools will be held in December 2016 and January 2017. Details and options for dates will be provided to Committee members as soon as possible to ensure as many members as wish to, are able to attend.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Select Committee is asked to:
  - Consider the contents of the report and the evidence from Jackie Jones, School Improvement Officer.
  - Consider comments raised by the young advisors taking part in the review process

## **3. Background**

- 3.1. In September 2016, approximately 3000 children left Lewisham’s primary schools to start secondary school. Of these, around 75% entered a Lewisham secondary

school. This is lower than the average across London boroughs. Around 15% of the Year 7 intake was made up of pupils from other boroughs.

- 3.2. Data on first preferences made by Lewisham residents for September 2016 showed that only 59% of all parents chose a Lewisham secondary school as their first choice.
- 3.3. At their meeting on 17 October 2016, the Advisors explained that there were children in their peer groups in primary school whose parents had required them to take the 11+ and they believed this led to 'brain drain' going into Year 7 as the most able children moved onto grammar schools outside the borough, or to the independent school sector. They also referred to negative perceptions of Lewisham secondary schools as an issue, recommending that schools focus more widely than on GCSE results to promote themselves such as strength in performing arts, or sporting success.
- 3.4. A table showing destinations of Year 6 leavers going to secondary school outside Lewisham<sup>1</sup> is attached at Appendix 1.

#### **4. Defining successful transition**

- 4.1. While it is widely known that the transition from primary to secondary school impacts on pupils' attainment, there is no agreed definition of successful transition.
- 4.2. According to a UCL study, the School Transition Adjustment Research Study (STARS), "successful transitions to secondary school are likely to be multi-dimensional and include aspects of academic performance, behavioural involvement, perceptions of school, and affective experiences in school"<sup>2</sup>. The study reported that a successful transition involved functioning well in two areas: 1) being academically and behaviourally involved in the school and 2) feeling a sense of belonging to the school.
- 4.3. This accords with the findings of longitudinal research published by the Institute of Education in 2008<sup>3</sup>. The research was based on responses from 550 children and families living in 16 local authority areas across the Country. It described a successful transition as one where:
  - children had greatly expanded their friendships and boosted their self-esteem and confidence once at secondary school
  - children had settled so well in school life that they cause no concerns to their parents
  - children showing more interest in school and work in comparison to primary school
  - children finding it very easy getting used to new routines
  - children finding work completed in Year 6 to be very useful for the work they were doing in Year 7.
- 4.4. The research revealed that children who felt they had a lot of help from their secondary school to settle in were more likely to have a successful transition. This

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<sup>1</sup> This is the best information available but may not be 100% accurate as all leavers' destinations may not be known.

<sup>2</sup> "Identifying factors that predicts successful and difficult transitions to secondary school" Nuffield Foundation, 2014 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/stars>

<sup>3</sup> "What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School?" DCSF Report DCSF-RR019 (2008)

included help with getting to know their way around the school, relaxing rules in the early weeks, visits and taster days.

- 4.5. Bullying, problems in dealing with different teachers and subjects or making new friends were all factors in leading to a negative transition. The report also found an association with less positive transitions for children with lower socio-economic status.
- 4.6. Further information on principles that underpin effective transfers and transitions can be found at Appendix 2.

## **5. Transition in Lewisham**

- 5.1. Transition in Lewisham varies on a school by school basis. There is little evidence, other than anecdotal, on how successful transition in the borough is. The application process is managed by the council and the council sends a transition booklet out to all Year 6 parents. In addition to the booklet attached at Appendix 4, the Council's website has further information available to parents at the website address below: [www.lewisham.gov.uk/secondarytransitions](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/secondarytransitions)  
Transition plans, including visits, are, however, coordinated by the schools. Secondary schools publish varying amounts of information on their websites in respect of their transition activities.
- 5.2. At their meeting on 17 October 2016, the Young Mayor's Advisors discussed their own experiences of transition and made a number of useful observations as follows:
  - Primary schools spoon feed children and so some children found it difficult to get used to fact that have to be independent and self-supporting eg with homework and detention risks that follow
  - Pupils suffer a loss of support network. They have less connection with teachers at secondary school eg one teacher plus teaching assistant in primary and then 10 subject-specific teachers, and limited contact with tutor each week
  - The Advisors gave some good examples of where students were given buddies from Year 10 or 11
  - The Advisors found that induction could be useful, and felt the best idea would be to have the last two weeks of primary school to meet with and attend new school and also meet mentors/buddies
  - The transition between Years 8 – 10 was also identified as a weak point. Many felt Year 9 was a lost year
  - It could be counterproductive to integration to create a separate 'safe' area for Year 7
  - Bullying was stated to be a problem in some Lewisham schools – some examples were given where they felt that the bullying had not really been addressed
  - Academically Year 7 could be too easy and not be a step up, leading to difficulties in Year 8 and upwards. The Advisors felt a better balance needed to be struck between them to settle but also integrating them into the schools as a whole with buddy idea/mentor support

## **6. Data collection**

- 6.1. The 2015 Ofsted report “Key Stage 3: the wasted years?”<sup>4</sup> found that ineffective transition was a widespread problem nationally. Of those interviewed for the report, some 85% of senior leaders admitted that they prioritised Key Stages 4 and 5 over Key Stage 3 when allocating staff. The report also found that many schools focused on pastoral support over the academic needs of pupils. It was reported that while this had an effect on all pupils, it was particularly detrimental to the most able pupils.
- 6.2. The Ofsted report identified that many schools do not build sufficiently on pupils’ prior learning, citing examples of pupils repeating the same work they had been doing in Year 6, or finding the work too basic. Mathematics was the area of most concern, but for the most able, a number of subjects failed to challenge sufficiently.
- 6.3. The key findings of the Ofsted report and its recommendations are attached at Appendix 3.
- 6.4. Lewisham state schools use a data collection system called 4Matrix. There is no statutory obligation for schools to collect KS3 data and so any KS3 data that has been collected will have been done locally within the school(s) and for internal use. Year 11 data is collected most regularly, between 3 and 5 times a year. The most up to date information held would be the outcomes for Year 11 pupils who left at the end of the previous academic year. Current data will be published on RAISEonline in December. School Improvement Officers, as part of their Autumn visit to schools, collect what data the school has available for the different year groups, however this is not nationally validated until the GCSE outcomes are known.
- 6.5. Currently, pupils’ results are measured at the end of KS2 and again at the end of KS4. The cohort at KS4 is markedly different to the cohort at the end of KS2 and therefore a direct comparison between expected progress and actual progress must consider that in addition to the loss of 25% of primary school pupils to schools outside the borough and the intake of 15% of Year 7 students from outside the borough, in-year admissions further complicate the picture with some students arriving new to the borough with no KS2 results.
- 6.6. Most schools benchmark Year 7 pupils in the first half term so they can assess progress. Schools generally collect progress, attendance and behaviour data to report to parents, with each school using its own benchmarking assessments. This data is not collected by the Council but is available in each individual schools. Looking in more depth at the data collected could be useful for the transition review to assess good practice both in terms of how the data is collected, how this links to data from primary schools, how schools are using it and to what level of success in terms of ensuring progress and successful transition.
- 6.7. The second evidence session and proposed visits will give the Committee the opportunity to enquire about data collection and schools’ transition arrangements in more detail.

## 7. **Additional support for vulnerable and disadvantaged children**

- 7.1. In Lewisham, children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) or Special Educational Needs (SEN) are additionally supported through transition. In April of

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<sup>4</sup> “Key Stage 3: the wasted years?” Ofsted, September 2015

their final year of primary school, a meeting between SEN Coordinators at their primary and secondary schools is convened to put in place any additional support that the child may need during the transition process.

- 7.2. Some schools use Pupil Premium funding to support transition. School websites are required to show how they use their Pupil Premium funding as well as the impact of their spend. The following schools use some of this money to support transition:
- Bonus Pastor – funding for the Year 7 residential trip. 3 months additional progress made by pupils attending this outdoor residential.
  - Deptford Green – additional transition teacher to support the funding of smaller class sizes so that students received individual attention when needed. Impact PP students made greater progress than non-PP students in English between 1 and 3 sublevels.
  - Prendergast School (Hilly Fields) – summer school and supporting 25 students to attend school journey to Kent.
  - St Matthew Academy - supported 85 students attending summer school which included development of social skills.
  - Sydenham School – supported PP students to attend Year 7 residential trip.
- 7.3. Schools are practiced at targeting vulnerable, disadvantaged and low-ability pupils and the Ofsted report concluded that in many schools, pastoral transition for the most vulnerable children was an area of relative strength.
- 7.4. In contrast, the review found that it was the most able pupils whose progress was particularly affected when secondary schools did not build on prior learning. As a result, Ofsted has recommended that secondary schools focus as much on their most able pupils as on their low-ability, vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils, including the “most able” in its definition of “disadvantaged” pupils.

## **8. Transition Working Group**

- 8.1. Lewisham’s Transition Working group was set up in the Summer Term of 2016 to improve practice across Lewisham schools. It consists of Jackie Jones, Service Manager for School Improvement and Intervention, as well as secondary school leaders and governors, primary school leaders and governors and a representative of the local authority’s admissions team.
- 8.2. So far the group has agreed the focus for its initial work as follows:
- Agree a common process and practice
  - A self- evaluation form for secondary schools
  - Review and reworking of the common transfer form.
- 8.3. The aim is for these to be ready to go out to schools in November for review and completion.
- 8.4. The Group will then begin to look at how to improve the collaboration between schools by looking at clusters of schools working together in improving sharing best practice, curriculum development and sharing of pupil information. This will be an on-going and evolving piece of work with the clear aim of improving the whole process for Lewisham’s pupils, and recognising that maintaining academic progress is vital as pupils move from Year 6 to Year 7.

## **9. Key lines of enquiry**

9.1 This evidence session is designed to enable members of the Committee to address the key lines of enquiry as set out in paragraphs 7.2 to 7.4 of the scoping report. In particular to consider the local and national context in terms of successful transition, transition in Lewisham, and what good practice looks like and how can this be successfully embedded and emulated. These key lines of enquiry will be further explored in subsequent evidence sessions and during scheduled visits.

## **10. Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Destinations of Year 6 leavers going out of borough for secondary school
- Appendix 2 – Excerpt from “Strengthening transfers and transition: Partnerships for progress DCSF 2008”
- Appendix 3 - Executive summary of the Ofsted report “KS3: the wasted years?”

If you have any questions, please contact Emma Aye-Kumi (Scrutiny Manager) on 02083149534.

## Appendix 1

### Destinations of 2016 Year 6 Leavers going to non-Lewisham secondary schools

LA Name	SchoolName	Qty	% Of
<b>Greenwich</b>	Eltham Hill School	58	7.8%
	Thomas Tallis School	52	7.0%
	St Ursula's Convent School	31	4.2%
	International Academy of Greenwich	30	4.0%
	Harris Academy Greenwich	18	2.4%
	The John Roan School	15	2.0%
	Colfes School	7	0.9%
	St Thomas More Roman Catholic Comprehensive School	6	0.8%
	Blackheath High School	3	0.4%
	Stationers Crown Woods Academy	2	0.3%
	Riverston School	1	0.1%
<b>Southwark</b>	Kingsdale Foundation School	72	9.7%
	Harris Boys' Academy East Dulwich	34	4.6%
	Harris Academy Bermondsey	24	3.2%
	Harris Girls' Academy East Dulwich	22	3.0%
	The St Thomas the Apostle College	19	2.6%
	Bacon's College	13	1.7%
	Ark Globe Academy	5	0.7%
	University Academy of Engineering South Bank	5	0.7%
	Ark Walworth Academy	4	0.5%
	Harris Academy Peckham	3	0.4%
	St Michael's Catholic College	3	0.4%
	Sacred Heart Catholic School	2	0.3%
	The Charter School	2	0.3%
	Compass School Southwark	2	0.3%
	Dulwich College	2	0.3%
	Notre Dame Roman Catholic Girls' School	1	0.1%
	St Saviour's and St Olave's Church of England School	1	0.1%
	Alleyn's School	1	0.1%
	James Allen's Girls' School	1	0.1%
	City of London Academy (Southwark)	1	0.1%
Newlands Academy	1	0.1%	
<b>Bromley</b>	Harris Girls Academy Bromley	53	7.1%
	Chislehurst School for Girls	27	3.6%
	Newstead Wood School	26	3.5%
	Kemnal Technology College	16	2.2%
	Coopers School	16	2.2%
	Harris Academy Beckenham	16	2.2%
	St Olave's and St Saviour's Grammar School	14	1.9%
	Bullers Wood School	7	0.9%
	The Ravensbourne School	6	0.8%
	Langley Park School for Boys	3	0.4%
	Langley Park School for Girls	2	0.3%
	Bishop Justus CofE School	2	0.3%

	Bishop Challoner School	1	0.1%
	Baston House School	1	0.1%
	Ravens Wood School	1	0.1%
	Darul Uloom London	1	0.1%
	Darrick Wood School	1	0.1%
	Hayes School	1	0.1%
	Harris Academy Orpington	1	0.1%
<b>Bexley</b>	Townley Grammar School	21	2.8%
	Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School	17	2.3%
	Bexley Grammar School	7	0.9%
	Beths Grammar School	3	0.4%
	Cleeve Park School	2	0.3%
	St Catherine's Catholic School	1	0.1%
<b>Croydon</b>	Coloma Convent Girls' School	11	1.5%
	Harris City Academy Crystal Palace	10	1.3%
	Virgo Fidelis Convent Senior School	2	0.3%
	St Mary's Catholic High School	1	0.1%
	Al-Khair School	1	0.1%
	Edenham High School	1	0.1%
	Harris Academy South Norwood	1	0.1%
<b>Kent - See also</b>			
<b>Medway</b>	Dartford Grammar School for Girls	8	1.1%
	Dartford Grammar School	7	0.9%
	Wilmington Grammar School for Girls	2	0.3%
	Tonbridge Grammar School	2	0.3%
	Weald of Kent Grammar School	1	0.1%
	Wilmington Grammar School for Boys	1	0.1%
<b>Lambeth</b>	La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' School	2	0.3%
	Bishop Thomas Grant Catholic Secondary School	2	0.3%
	The Elmgreen School	1	0.1%
	St Martin in the Fields High School for Girls	1	0.1%
	London Nautical School	1	0.1%
	Lilian Baylis Technology School	1	0.1%
		<b>743</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Appendix 2

### Key messages about transfer and transition

Source: Strengthening transfers and transition: Partnerships for progress DCSF 2008

#### 7 key principles that underpin effective transfers and transitions

Partnership working is essential for effective transfers and transitions for progress.

1. Transfers and transitions are the key drivers to raising standards  
Every transfer between schools or key stages and year groups is a potential barrier to progress. Where this is strongest, the social, emotional, curricular and pedagogical aspects of learning are managed in order to enable pupils to remain engaged with, and have control of, their learning.
2. Assessment for learning principles underpin progress across transfers and transitions  
The principles behind effective learning and teaching are the same for transfers and transitions as for other aspects of education. The challenge is to apply them in more complex and disparate conditions.
3. Pupils need the confidence, understanding and skills to advance their own progress across transfer and transition  
Effective transfers and transitions happen inside the minds of pupils. Their ability to engage with and take control of their learning remain critical elements.
4. Partnership working is essential for effective transfers and transitions for progress  
The stronger the partnerships between stakeholders, the greater the potential for progress. The pupils experience one learning journey and only through working together can schools and LAs establish the conditions for continuous learning.
5. Effective partnerships are built on a common vision, shared responsibility and trust  
High level of mutual professional esteem are essential. Partners need a clear understanding of the priorities, issues and scope of the work being undertaken. There can be no sense of hierarchy, and all partnerships are responsible for the progress of the pupil before and after the transfer or transition.
6. Partnership working requires mutual understanding through shared experience and a common language  
Different approaches to learning and teaching have evolved in the different phases of education. An understanding of these is needed if patterns are to provide the right conditions for continued pupil progress. Professional discussions relating to pedagogy, progress, levelling of work, and expectations can contribute to this, as can teachers visiting each other's schools, observing practice and working with the pupils.
7. Sustained collaboration requires structures and systems that support formal and ongoing links between partners  
Structures and systems provide a framework for consistent partnership working that can be evaluated each year. They work best when responsibilities are identified in job descriptions and expectations are agreed by all partners.

## Appendix 3

### Executive summary of the Ofsted report “Key Stage 3: the wasted years?”, September 2015

The importance of a good start to a pupil’s secondary school education cannot be overemphasised. Leaders of successful schools set the right culture for learning that is embraced by their pupils from the outset. They ensure that pupils are well aware of their school’s high expectations for behaviour and conduct, and they have a clear understanding of pupils’ achievements in primary school and build on them from day one. These leaders ensure that their schools embed the learning habits that will stand their pupils in good stead for their future academic studies, for example in stressing the importance of reading often and widely.

In his Annual Report 2013/14, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector reported that primary schools had continued to improve but the performance of secondary schools had stalled<sup>5</sup>. The report noted that one of the major contributory factors to this was that, too often, the transition from primary to secondary school was poorly handled. Consequently, the gains made by pupils at primary school were not embedded and developed at Key Stage 3.

As a result, the Chief Inspector commissioned this survey to look at the effectiveness of Key Stage 3 in more detail. It takes into account the findings from:

- approximately 1,600 routine section 5 inspections carried out between September 2013 and March 2015
- 318 monitoring inspections carried out between September 2014 and March 2015
- 55 routine section 5 inspections in June and July 2015 that provided additional evidence on teaching and learning in modern foreign languages (MFL), history and geography at Key Stage 3 – the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects with the fewest number of pupils entered<sup>67</sup>
- 100 interviews with senior leaders
- 10,942 questionnaire responses from pupils in Years 7 to 9
- 14 good practice visits.

Overall, the survey found that, while pupils generally had the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects throughout Key Stage 3, in too many schools **the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils’ progress and achievement were not good enough.**

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<sup>5</sup> The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills 2013/14, Ofsted, December 2014; [www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-annual-report-201314](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-annual-report-201314)

<sup>6</sup> The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is a secondary school performance measure that shows the proportion of pupils who achieve grades A\* to C in English, mathematics, two sciences, a foreign language and history or geography at GCSE level; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/englishbaccalaureate-ebacc](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/englishbaccalaureate-ebacc). Data source Department for Education (2014). Statistical first release: Provisional GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2013 to 2014. Retrieved from: [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2013-to-2014](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2013-to-2014).

<sup>7</sup> Lesson observation was derived from 51 of the 55 inspections and student responses from 39 of the 55.

Inspectors reported concerns about Key Stage 3 in one in five of the routine inspections analysed, particularly in relation to the **slow progress made in English and mathematics** and the **lack of challenge for the most able pupils**.

Inspectors observed MFL, history and geography lessons at Key Stage 3 in 51 routine inspections carried out during June and July 2015. Inspectors reported significant weaknesses in all three subjects. Too often, inspectors found teaching that failed to challenge and engage pupils. Additionally, low-level disruption in some of these lessons, particularly in MFL, had a detrimental impact on the pupils' learning. **Achievement was not good enough in just under half of the MFL classes observed, two-fifths of the history classes and one third of the geography classes.**

It is no surprise, therefore, that there is low take-up in these subjects at GCSE. Some pupils told inspectors that they were not taking these EBacc subjects at Key Stage 4 because they did not enjoy them or had found them difficult at Key Stage 3, particularly MFL. A small number made an explicit link between their choices and the quality of teaching that they had received at Key Stage 3. **This is a serious concern given the government's ambition for all pupils starting Year 7 in September 2015 to take the EBacc subjects when they reach their GCSEs in 2020.**<sup>8</sup> Improving the Key Stage 3 provision in these subjects will be crucial to raising the EBacc success rate in the coming years.

The weaknesses in teaching and pupil progress identified by inspectors reflect **the lack of priority given to Key Stage 3 by many secondary school leaders**. The majority of leaders spoken to as part of this survey said that they **staffed Key Stages 4 and 5 before Key Stage 3**. As a result, some Key Stage 3 classes were split between more than one teacher or were taught by non-specialists.<sup>9</sup>

The status of Key Stage 3 as the poor relation to other key stages was exemplified in the way schools monitored and assessed pupils' progress. Inspectors found that **too many secondary schools did not work effectively with partner primary schools to understand pupils' prior learning and ensure that they built on this during Key Stage 3**. Worryingly, some secondary leaders simply accepted that pupils would repeat what they had already done in primary school during the early part of Key Stage 3, particularly in Year 7.

In addition, half of the pupils surveyed said that their homework never, or only some of the time, helped them to make progress. Inspectors found that, too often, homework did not consolidate or extend pupils' learning.

It was evident that some school leaders did not use **the pupil premium effectively in Key Stage 3 to ensure that gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers continued to close on transition to secondary school**. Instead, any additional support was typically focused on intervention activities in Key Stage 4,

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<sup>8</sup> Policy paper: English Baccalaureate (EBacc), Department for Education, June 2015; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc)

<sup>9</sup> A 'non-specialist' is defined as a teacher who does not have that subject as part of their undergraduate or teaching qualification.

which often sought to compensate for ineffective practice in the earlier years of secondary education.

In general, careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) was particularly sparse in Year 8 and improved only slightly in Year 9. In schools that offered it, CEIAG typically focused on option choices for Key Stage 4 but lacked any advice on the GCSEs required for different careers.

Nevertheless, inspectors also found examples of good practice. In the best secondary schools, leaders set the right culture and ethos to create the kind of orderly, purposeful learning environment that is the bedrock for successful learning. Teachers had a comprehensive understanding of pupils' prior learning, gained through well-established ways of working with their partner primary schools. As a result, they were able to ensure that they built on this at Key Stage 3. The headteachers in these schools made Key Stage 3 a high priority for all staff, pupils and parents. In order for secondary schools to continue to improve, this good practice needs to become the norm.

## Key findings

- **The Key Stage 3 curriculum in the schools surveyed is generally broad and balanced.** Almost all schools offer the full range of Key Stage 3 national curriculum subjects. Most senior leaders reported that they allocate around two fifths of curriculum time to core subjects.
- **Inspection evidence highlights weaknesses in Key Stage 3.** From September 2014 to March 2015, one in five inspection reports identified Key Stage 3 as an area for improvement. Where weaknesses are identified, these concerns are typically around the leadership, challenge for pupils and quality of teaching.
- **Too frequently, teaching in MFL, history and geography at Key Stage 3 does not lead to good levels of achievement.** Evidence from 51 routine inspections chosen randomly in the summer term 2015 indicates that in just under half of the classes observed in MFL, approximately two fifths in history and one third in geography, achievement was not good enough. In these lessons, pupils were not challenged or engaged sufficiently. Low-level disruption was a key detractor from the pupils' learning, particularly in MFL.
- **Key Stage 3 is not a high priority for many secondary school leaders in timetabling, assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress.** Eighty five per cent of senior leaders interviewed said that they staff Key Stages 4 and 5 before Key Stage 3. Key Stage 3 is given lower priority, where classes are more often split between more than one teacher or where pupils are taught by nonspecialists.
- **Leaders prioritise the pastoral over the academic needs of pupils during transition from primary school.** While this affects all pupils, it can have a particularly detrimental effect on the progress and engagement of the most able.

□ **Many secondary schools do not build sufficiently on pupils' prior learning.** Many of the senior leaders interviewed said that they do not do this well enough and accepted that some pupils would repeat some of what they had done in Key Stage 2.<sup>10</sup> Pupil responses indicate that repeating work is more of an issue in mathematics and English than in the foundation subjects.

□ **Some school leaders are not using the pupil premium funding effectively to close gaps quickly in Key Stage 3.** Inspection evidence and senior leaders' comments indicate that this is another area where Key Stage 4 often takes priority.

□ **Developing pupils' literacy skills in Key Stage 3 is a high priority in many schools. This same level of priority is not evident for numeracy.**

The headteachers we spoke to were able to explain how they were improving literacy at Key Stage 3 but only a quarter could do the same for numeracy. This is reflected in inspection evidence, for example from monitoring inspections, where Her Majesty's Inspectors reported improvements in literacy nearly three times more than they did numeracy.

□ **Homework is not consistently providing the opportunities for pupils to consolidate or extend their learning in Key Stage 3.** Approximately half of the pupils who responded to the online questionnaire said that their homework never, or only some of the time, helps them to make progress.

□ **Careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in Key Stage 3 is not good enough.** In the Year 8 questionnaire, 45% of pupils said that they either received no CEIAG or that what they had received was insufficient. In Year 9, 37% of pupils responded in the same way.

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<sup>10</sup> This type of repetition is distinct from the 'mastery' approach, which is studying the same topic or concept but in greater depth. It develops deep and comprehensive knowledge, skills and understanding; a command of a subject.

## Recommendations

### Secondary school leaders should:

- make Key Stage 3 a higher priority in all aspects of school planning, monitoring and evaluation
- ensure that not only is the curriculum offer at Key Stage 3 broad and balanced, but that teaching is of high quality and prepares pupils for more challenging subsequent study at Key Stages 4 and 5
- ensure that transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 focuses as much on pupils' academic needs as it does on their pastoral needs
- create better cross-phase partnerships with primary schools to ensure that Key Stage 3 teachers build on pupils' prior knowledge, understanding and skills
- make sure that systems and procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 are robust
- focus on the needs of disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 3, including the most able, in order to close the achievement gap as quickly as possible
- evaluate the quality and effectiveness of homework in Key Stage 3 to ensure that it helps pupils to make good progress
- guarantee that pupils have access to timely and high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance from Year 8 onwards<sup>11</sup>
- have literacy and numeracy strategies that ensure that pupils build on their prior attainment in Key Stage 2 in these crucial areas.

### Ofsted will:

- make sure that inspections focus even more sharply on the progress made by Key Stage 3 pupils
- report more robustly on how schools ensure that all pupils make the best possible start to their secondary education.

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<sup>11</sup> Schools have a legal duty to secure independent careers guidance for all pupils in Years 8-13. The statutory guidance that underpins this duty can be found at:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools).