Education and Lifelong Learning

Research to Support Schools of Ambition: Final Report

The Scottish Government

r/ social research

RESEARCH TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS OF AMBITION FINAL REPORT

**Ian Menter, Dely Elliot, Stuart Hall, Moira Hulme,
Kevin Lowden, Irene McQueen
University of Glasgow**

**Fran Payne, Norman Coutts, Dean Robson, Jenny Spratt,
University of Aberdeen**

**Donald Christie
University of Strathclyde**

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Executive Summary

This report is the Final Report of *Research to Support Schools of Ambition* (2006-10)[1]. The research was commissioned by the (then) Scottish Executive Education Department in August 2006.

Background

The Schools of Ambition programme was launched by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) in 2005. The aim was that Schools of Ambition would stand out in their locality, and nationally, as innovators and leaders, providing ambition and opportunity for young people (SEED, 2004, 2006). The programme supported 52 schools from across the 32 Local Authorities of Scotland.

Each school (or cluster of schools) received £100,000 additional funding per year over a three-year period to implement a plan for transformational change. This funding could be used to support changes to the built environment, promote new partnerships through community, college and business links, and/or to invest in curriculum and teacher development.

Research aims & support

In June 2006, a consortium of the Universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen and Strathclyde was awarded the contract for *Research to Support Schools of Ambition*. There were two strands to this collaboration: (1) a *mentoring strategy*; and (2) an *evaluation strategy* to explore processes of change across the network and distil lessons learned.

Mentoring strategy

The mentor programme offered schools support and advice on:
- refining teacher-initiated proposals;
- manageability / scope, stages, timeline and resources;
- ethical practice in practitioner research;
- collaborative use of a Virtual Research Environment (including a resource archive, discussion forum and noticeboard)
- data collection and analysis; monitoring and self-evaluation;
- dissemination of work in progress and writing development/evaluation summaries;
- compiling 'Telling the Story' portfolios, reporting on achievements.

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[1] The Annual Reports are available from:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/18110911/0
(2007) http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/10/17105044/0 (2008); and,
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/11/05160217/0 (2009)

Evaluation strategy

The research support team collected data from schools annually between 2007/09, using:
- semi-structured interviews with key informants;
- questionnaire surveys of participants in the programme;

In the final year of the programme (March-May 2010), school case studies were also undertaken, based upon interviews with headteachers in five schools where there had been a relative improvement in attainment and leaver destination data. These offered school leaders an opportunity to reflect on 'distance travelled' but were <u>not</u> intended as an assessment of the impact of SoA across all schools.

The process of change

Whilst each school is different, common themes emerged in the transformational plans. These included a focus on:
- leadership development;
- enhancing choice through curriculum flexibility, especially opportunities for vocational learning ;
- developing pupils' confidence and motivation;
- strengthening community involvement.

Change was most likely where culture and ethos supported more devolved leadership opportunities for staff and included pupil leadership opportunities. Staff ownership of transformation was seen as key to success in encouraging and supporting engagement with innovative pedagogical approaches, cross-curricular working and school-based continuing professional development (CPD).

Enhanced networking with other schools, sharing ideas and evidence led to an increasing development of learning communities. Initiatives that involved working in partnership with further education colleges and a range of community organisations, e.g. arts and sports providers, were easier to initiate and sustain than partnerships with business or enhanced parental engagement.

Enabling & inhibiting change

The main reported accelerators supporting transformation were: staff commitment, collegiality and willingness to collaborate; followed by funding/resources; strong leadership/support from senior management; and pupil involvement.

The most frequently reported inhibitors were: lack of time, both for planning and conducting evaluation activities and implementing activities, and staff negativity. Other inhibitors cited were competing initiatives and priorities, and staffing, both shortages and workload.

Key challenges also included:

- maintaining momentum through clear communication strategies and new opportunities;
- building capacity for change across the school community;
- extending partnership work with local community and business partners;
- sustaining positive change in the face of competing priorities and changing circumstances;
- developing cultures of inquiry and a capacity for robust evaluation that draws on multiple data sources.

Research engaged schools

Between 2007-09, encouraged by team advisers and mentors, increasing numbers of staff participated in evaluation groups. Although the number of staff actively engaged in professional enquiry overall was a small minority and predominantly involved senior staff, there is some evidence of increased confidence in, and use of, a range of research and evaluation techniques.

Adopting a research orientation to school improvement planning was dependent on the value attached to evidence-informed change by the school leadership group and the tenacity and skills of the school coordinator.
A coordinator/project manager in each school worked with senior management to translate the transformational plan into an actionable strategy, supported by cycles of evaluation, whilst seeking to align development and evaluation plans with the day-to-day concerns and priorities of classteachers.

School coordinators played an important brokerage role by: (1) raising the profile and communicating the relevance of activities; (2) inviting participation from peers; (3) encouraging acceptance of professional enquiry as a valuable professional development practice; (4) creating spaces for the self-determination of teacher research priorities; and (5) extending the focus of inquiry through involvement of wider community stakeholders.

Telling the Story

To allow flexibility in final reporting, each School of Ambition was invited to provide a portfolio under the general heading of 'Telling the Story'.

The Telling the Story Portfolios vary considerably in format and content but typically describe the range of School of Ambition activities, the challenges that were addressed and provide some comment on impact. A range of quantitative evidence is provided including pupil attainment, leaver destinations, attendance and exclusions, level of complaints/referrals and participation rates across initiatives. A minority of reports draw on pre- and post- programme surveys

Some portfolios include qualitative feedback from parents, pupils and others. Sources of evaluation evidence include focus group discussions, individual interviews, formal and informal observation reports and vignettes of pupil and

staff leadership experiences. Some schools made use of available published records such as HMIE reports or local newspaper reports.

Photographs, videos and written testimonies form a significant part of the overall evidence presented in school portfolios. Whilst these are accessible, they require supporting commentary, and their place within formative evaluation is not always clear.

Headteachers' perceptions of the influence of SoA

Interviewees with school leaders in five case study schools that had shown a relative improvement in pupil attainment and school leaver destinations, identified a number of measures supported by SoA which, in their views, had contributed to improved results.

These included:
- implementing new learning, teaching and assessment approaches including: critical skills training; Assessment is for Learning; solution-oriented schooling; staff mentoring of pupils;
- increased and improved staff development/ CPD to support the focus on learning, teaching and assessment;
- study weeks and residential events with a focus on particular subjects;
- working with associated primary schools to consolidate learning and support strategies;
- promoting creativity, reflective practice, peer learning and new ways of working across staff groups;
- promoting leadership across the school;
- addressing whole school ethos and relationships;
- enhanced partnership working.

Whilst acknowledging the challenges involved, headteachers within these case study schools regarded the programme as an accelerant of change: with additional resources enabling targeted support and encouraging cross-team working; sustained partnership work playing an important role in strategies to increase positive destinations; an emphasis on self-evaluation supporting existing planning and monitoring systems; and overall the experience leaving them well placed to implement Curriculum for Excellence.

Programme sustainability

Most schools considered sustainability when planning and implementing activities, with many developing strategies for succession planning to ensure that successful innovations did not disappear when the funding ended. The more sustainable School of Ambition initiatives beyond the life of the programme were those premised on attitudinal, relational or pedagogical change.

Through involvement in the SoA programme, school managers also felt more confident in meeting the challenge of full implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Lessons learned

Lessons learned included that:
- Strong leadership from senior management was needed to provide strategic vision and motivation for change.
- Positive change was enhanced when staff and pupils clearly understood the transformational objectives and developed a sense of ownership early in the process.
- Cultural change was greatest where pupils, parents and staff felt part of the initiative for example, during initial and on-going planning, evaluation processes and through the provision of (site-based) CPD tailored to specific needs.
- School evaluation capacity was more likely to develop where there was management support, a team of teachers responsible for evaluation and realistic evaluation aims built into, and informing, broader school planning.

Conclusions

The Schools of Ambition programme was an innovative way of providing support for schools going through a period of significant change, often in challenging circumstances. The programme was distinctive in promoting an action research model within a national programme for school change. Headteachers valued the opportunity to address specific local needs and educational priorities through devolved funding, within national guidelines and supported by national Advisers. As the programme progressed, many schools aligned their School of Ambition transformational plan with the school development plan, particularly in regard to the challenges presented by *Curriculum for Excellence*. Where successful, evaluation activities supplemented routine data gathering in schools, extended the range of methods available to teacher evaluators, and promoted the use of data to inform on-going developments. In a minority of schools, curriculum development was supported by teacher development and proceeded within a planned cycle of reflection and change. Whilst this model of collaborative problem solving proved a challenge in many schools, the majority of participants across the schools reported increased confidence in using a range of evaluation methods to assess progress towards locally defined goals.

The capacity of the schools to link curriculum development and self-evaluation was noted by HMIE in their report, *Lessons learned from the Schools of Ambition initiative* (HMIE, 2010).

The Schools of Ambition initiative is held in high regard by participants, who are keen to maintain the professional learning communities initiated through the programme. The key features of the programme – innovation, flexibility, autonomy and professional accountability – are salient features of contemporary education policy for all schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1　In 2005 the (then) Scottish Executive Education Department launched a major national initiative, *The Schools of Ambition*.　This policy arose out of the policy paper *Ambitious Excellent Schools* (SEED, 2004). The scheme sought to promote a new approach to school development, which enabled the school itself to determine its priorities for a three-year period of transformation.　With the support of their Local Authority, schools could make a bid to SEED by submitting a Transformational Plan.　Those schools (or clusters of schools) who were successful in their bid were allocated £100,000 per year of additional resource over a three year period in order to support the implementation of the Plan[2].　52 schools were selected in total (see Appendix 1), but launched in 3 stages:

- 21 schools in Tranche 1, launched in 2005;
- 7 schools in Tranche 2, from April 2007;
- 24 Schools in Tranche 3, in September 2007.

1.2　Shortly after the launch of the policy, SEED announced its intention to commission a team to provide *Research to Support the Schools of Ambition*.　The aim was to provide each School of Ambition (SoA) with external research expertise to support the evaluation of the implementation of their respective Transformational Plan.　Following a competitive tendering process a collaborative team from the Universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen and Strathclyde was appointed in August 2006 to commence this work (a year after Tranche 1 schools embarked on their transformational plan).　The current report has been produced by that team, in order to draw together insights gained over the duration of the programme and to offer a reflective analysis of the whole experience.　This research is not a formal evaluation of the programme, but rather a review of the research support provided to Schools of Ambition to aid implementation of the programme and to distil lessons learned regarding school transformation.

1.3　The wider education policy context in Scotland has been extremely dynamic during the lifespan of the Schools of Ambition programme.　In the wake of the 'McCrone Agreement', *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (SEED, 2001), great attention has been paid to the professional responsibilities of teachers and initiatives such as the Teacher Induction Scheme, The Chartered Teacher Scheme and continuing developments in Initial Teacher Education, have all sought to emphasise the professionalism of teaching.　Initiatives such as *Assessment is for Learning* and currently *Curriculum for Excellence*,

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[2] In cases of joint bids, such as in Clackmannanshire and Orkney, several schools shared £100,000 per annum; over the course of the programme some schools received additional funding.

are all consistent with increasing attention to teacher autonomy and development, indeed to an 'extended', rather than 'restricted' form of teacher professionalism (Hoyle, 1974). It is in this wider context that the experiences reported and analysed here need to be seen.

Project aims and parameters

1.4   *Research to Support Schools of Ambition* was commissioned to provide formative feedback to participating schools; and to share the wider lessons learnt across the education community and with policy makers and other stakeholders. The Project Specification (2006:4) states that *'the research will be resource intensive, and the approach is expected to be largely qualitative, participative and formative'*.

1.5   The aims of the research were to:

- Provide ongoing evidence-based feedback to the participating schools on the process, progress and impact of the programme, through ongoing dialogue that aids the schools in their own reflection;
- Provide ongoing evidence-based feedback to the wider education community, on the process, progress and impact of the programme;
- Explore and describe the process of change implementation and adoption by:
    o asking questions such as 'what difference has the intervention made to the lives of those in the participating schools and why';
    o identifying factors that enable or inhibit transformation; and,
    o addressing the concept of 'distance travelled';
- Explore the issues relating to the sustainability of the programme, by examining the impact of the programme beyond its funding period;
- Share the wider lessons learnt about the process and impact of school transformation across the education community, and with policy makers and other stakeholders.

1.6   The following activities were *excluded* from the research in the Project Specification:

- quantifying the costs and benefits of the programme;
- examining the process by which the schools were selected;
- undertaking a comparison of Schools of Ambition with schools not involved in the programme, or which are involved in other development initiatives;
- undertaking a comparative study of international developments.

Project design and methodology

1.7   From the outset of this work there were two strands of activity running in parallel. One was the provision of support for staff in the schools to evaluate the implementation of the Transformational Plan – or at least

some aspects of it. It was believed that this would strengthen the evidence base for further development and contribute towards the sustainability of the developments undertaken. In supporting the schools, the research team promoted an action research approach to change i.e. planned cycles of collaborative enquiry designed to improve teaching and learning. The second strand was for the research team to evaluate the effectiveness of this research activity in the schools.

1.8   The twin activities were carried out by a team of nine mentors from the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, with Aberdeen working to support the schools in the northern part of the country (including the Northern Isles) and the Glasgow mentors working elsewhere (including the Western Isles). The original plan,had been for the mentors to provide generic workshops in the schools which would induct teaching staff into research and evaluation procedures, supplemented by case-by-case mentoring according to need. However, in practice, a more customised approach was required. Not only were the needs of each school very different according to the priorities within their plans, but the needs of individuals in the schools varied according to their previous professional experience, and in relation to their role within their own institution's SoA project team. The overall approach was that each school was allocated an identified mentor who visited the school regularly, running discussion and 'training' sessions as agreed with each school. These mentors also kept in touch between visits, as appropriate.

1.9   The activity was supported through the provision of a Virtual Research Environment (VRE). This was the particular contribution of the University of Strathclyde, where the VRE had been developed within their Centre for Applied Educational Research as part of the national Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS). The SoA VRE provided among its facilities a resource archive from which research instruments or guides could be downloaded, a discussion forum where researchers in each of the schools could communicate with each other, as well as a noticeboard area to share messages about events and resources. Records of school visits and the progress of the schools were held in a university researchers' section that was available to the Scottish Government advisors and the mentors. The resources filestore contained all open access files that allowed schools to share plans and materials.

1.10   Although it was unusual for SEED to commission work of this nature, there have been a number projects in a range of locations where attempts have been made to connect teacher research with school development (see Hulme and Menter, 2008). There is a long tradition of teacher research in Scotland, much of it supported in former times by the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE), which held an annual Research Forum for practitioner researchers to come together. Such developments had also been actively supported by the Educational Institute of Scotland, which had established a research

committee as long ago as the 1930s (Lawn, 2004). More recently the General Teaching Council for Scotland has been supporting teacher researchers through an award scheme open to all serving teachers[3]. Lawrence Stenhouse's work that sought to bring together curriculum development with teacher research is well-known (and started in Scotland) (Stenhouse, 1975). What was most distinctive about the SoA research work however, in the Scottish context, was that it was a government-backed exploration of the link between teacher research and whole school development.

1.11 The work was carried out in close collaboration with government representatives and others throughout its course. A part-time government SoA Research Coordinator was appointed to maintain liaison with the research team and with the schools. There was also a team of professional advisers seconded to the Scottish Government, each of whom worked to support a group of the schools in the implementation of their plans. The research team members liaised increasingly closely with these advisers as the work progressed. A Research Advisory Group was established at the outset of the project and met three or four times each year. The membership included representation from a local authority, a school, Learning and Teaching Scotland, HMIE and an academic from another university, as well as policy and analytical officers from Government. In the early parts of the project, two critical friends – one with expertise in practitioner research and one with working in virtual learning environments – were also involved on a consultancy basis.

1.12 An important forum for communication and development between the 52 schools and the research team has been the series of annual School of Ambition Evaluation Conferences. These have been held each year in the summer, respectively in Stirling (2007) and Glasgow (2008, 2009). On each occasion there has been a mixture of plenary sessions (led by headteachers, HMIE, external experts) and workshop sessions. Most of the workshops were led by colleagues from schools reporting on aspects of their evaluation work. Some of the workshops, focusing on research methods and techniques were led by members of the mentor team. Attendance by teachers from the Schools of Ambition at each of these one-day events has been in the range 80-100, with evaluations reporting high levels of overall satisfaction.

1.13 It was agreed between the research team and the SoA policy team that the final reporting from each school on their achievements as a School of Ambition should be as flexible as possible. Rather than being required to provide a schematic audit-based report on the use of the resource, schools were invited to provide a dossier or portfolio under the general heading of 'Telling the Story'. A note of guidance was

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[3] See http://www.gtcs.org.uk/Research_/TeacherResearcherProgramme/teacher_researcher_programme.aspx?

prepared and issued to the school in each tranche as the conclusion of the funding period was approached (see Appendix 2). Members of the research team were available to provide assistance in collating and analysing the data that were assembled by each school. Once the portfolio was completed and submitted via the SoA adviser, they were then made publicly available on each school's website. There is a link to the school websites on the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) SoA pages. LTS also has a series of case studies and 'snapshots'[4].

1.14 Working on a project of this duration and complexity has presented many challenges, some of them unexpected. It has been crucial that there has been flexibility in the project design and the logistical arrangements. Some of the activity has required additional resourcing, for example support for the 'Telling the Story' portfolios has extended beyond the original three-year funding period. University of Glasgow members of the team were also commissioned to carry out similar research support work with six 'Partnership Project' schools in the City of Glasgow, where developments focused on the most disadvantaged pupils. SCRE team members also worked with schools in East Ayrshire and Edinburgh under the 2020 Vision project (Lowden and Hall, 2010). Each of these additional projects had some involvement from The Hunter Foundation as well as Government and the respective local authorities.

1.15 The work with the Glasgow Partnership project schools has been linked up with the work with the four Schools of Ambition located in Glasgow and, with the support of the City Council, Government has supported an additional study of lessons learned in these urban settings. This work is reported in a separate report, *Learning from Innovation and Change Management in Glasgow Secondary Schools: Research Report* (University of Glasgow, 2010)[5].

1.16 Whilst it is intended that each of the 52 Schools of Ambition will have undertaken sustainable development and change during its period of funding, a strong aspiration has emerged to ensure that a teacher enquiry approach to school development is also supported and sustained more widely. Discussions have been held with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), Scottish Government, Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) and the Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC), with a view to the possible establishment of a national teacher enquiry network. It is hoped that resourcing can be found for a support network to develop that will provide a forum for sharing expertise and ideas.

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[4] See: http://wayback.archive-it.org/1961/20100805220232/http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/sharingpractice/index.asp
[5] Available from: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/311860/0098439.pdf

Previous reports and published outputs

1.17   Three annual reports, each covering progress in the work over the school year, were produced prior to the production of this final report (available through the LTS School of Ambition webpages)[6].   In preparation for each report, surveys and interviews were conducted with a range of key informants, including school managers, school research leaders and external partners. The details of each report are summarised in Section Three of this report. The main themes explored include: the processes and management of change; facilitators and inhibitors to change; 'distance travelled'; sustainability; networking within and between schools; professional development; and *Curriculum for Excellence* readiness.

1.18   The documents *Leading Change* (Scottish Government, 2009) and *Leading Change Two*[7] (Scottish Government, 2010) produced by the Scottish Government SoA Support Team contain a number of illustrative case studies from schools in all three tranches. Many of the schools have been inspected by HMIE during the past three years and a synoptic review of these inspections is reported in the HMIE report (2010) *Lessons learned from the Schools of Ambition initiative*[8].

1.19   The research team and teacher researchers from some of the schools have made a number of presentations about this work and a number of papers have been published (details listed in Appendix 4).

Purpose and structure of the report

1.20   This report provides a retrospective overview of the whole project (2006-10). We do not attempt to convey all the details included in the three annual reports but rather to identify major themes and issues that have emerged in the two main elements of the work: school-led transformation and teacher research in support of transformation. A shorter summary of research findings is also available.

1.21   The following section considers research literature from Scotland, the UK and internationally in order to help the reader understand the significance of the work reported here and to relate it to experiences elsewhere. Section Three of the report provides greater detail on the main findings and lessons learned as identified in the three annual reports. Section Four offers a review of new data gathered during the final months of the project, based on five school case studies. The concluding part of the report, Section Five, summarises the lessons learned for successful school transformation.

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[6] The *Schools of Ambition Annual Reports* (2007-9) are available at: http://wayback.archive-it.org/1961/20100805220209/http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/about/schoolsofambitionresearch.asp
[7] Available from http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/30095118/0 and http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/311542/0098307.pdf
[8] Available from: http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/llsai.html

2. LITERATURE ON SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

2.1   A literature search was conducted to place Schools of Ambition within the context of international literature on 'school transformation'. Whilst transformation is defined in various ways, the following general definition is applicable to the aims of the Schools of Ambition programme: *'Transformation means change that is significant, systematic and sustained.'* (Caldwell, 2004: 82). This section of the report summarises the key messages from the literature that are pertinent to Schools of Ambition.

2.2   A literature search conducted between November 2009 and February 2010 produced an annotated bibliography of sixty articles published in scholarly journals between 2000 and 2009. This includes items from European, North American and Australian contexts. A set of key terms was drawn up using British Education Index (BEI) and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) thesauri (see Appendix 6). These terms were used to generate tailored search expressions for each of three commercial research databases: British Education Index, EBSCO Professional Development Collection and ERIC. The search results were supplemented by a number of key texts (monographs and edited collections) identified as relevant through the review process.

2.3   Four approaches to school transformation were identified in the literature: diversification of school type; within-school restructuring; school improvement networks; and grants for innovation and quality improvement (see Table 1 for details). Schools of Ambition focused on the third and fourth of these types of approach: the Schools of Ambition programme provided devolved funds for innovation to selected schools that were supported through school networking. It did not represent a form of school restructuring.

Summary of key themes

2.4   The review of literature identified key messages in relation to: readiness, sustainability, teacher development and enquiry, organisational structures and leadership effects; all of which are pertinent to the experiences of Schools of Ambition.

Capacity for change: 'readiness'

2.5   The literature on transformational change emphasises the importance of fostering a culture for change and being aware of the particular development stage of a school and different areas within the school (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Slavin, 2005). Various studies have noted that 'it takes capacity to build capacity' (Stoll, 2009; Hatch, 2001; Adelman and Taylor, 2007).

Table 1. Approaches to school transformation

Diversification of school type	Within-school restructuring	School improvement networks	Grants for innovation and quality improvement
Pedagogical and curriculum innovation by schools and teachers has been promoted internationally through higher degrees of de-centralisation and devolution of responsibility in a move towards 'self-managing' schools. This is evident in the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and the current attention to Swedish model of 'free schools' in England; the Australian Science and Mathematics School, Adelaide (www.asms.sa.edu.au/); and the charter schools movement in the United States (from 1991), Canada and New Zealand (Hepburn, 1999). Reasons advanced for devolution of control include the promotion of stronger links between education professionals and the communities they serve, fostering a more responsive and innovative service. However, diversification in itself is no guarantee of innovation. Whilst some evaluations indicate improved pupil outcomes and accelerated rates of innovation (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2008; National Audit Office, 2007), others have expressed disquiet over the negative consequences of competition (Ball, 2003; Reay, 2004) and the distorting effects of changes to school intake on claims for improved outcomes (Gorard, 2005).	Small school size has been positively associated with schools capacity to engage with reform (Bryk et al, 2010). The small schools movement involves the internal conversion of large comprehensive schools into multiple, independent small schools of no more than 400 students (Benitez, Davidson and Flaxman, 2009). Small schools aim to create a personalised, nurturing environment for learners, closer community relations and greater autonomy for professionals (Jacobowitz et al, 2007; Copland and Boatright, 2004). Research studies offer the cautionary note that the relationship between school size and pupil gains is influenced by academic skills on intake and therefore restructuring in traditionally 'low-performing' contexts requires a longer developmental period (del Prete, 2010).	Collaboration and networking within and between schools has been cited as a key strategy in promoting innovation, school improvement and teacher professional development (McLaughlin et al, 2007; Hadfield and Chapman, 2009; Katz, Earl and Jaafar, 2009). Examples in the UK include the *School-Based Research Consortia* initiative (1998-2001), *Research Engaged Schools Programme* (2003-5) and the *Networked Learning Communities* programme (2000-2006). Beyond the UK, strong models of school-university collaboration are found in the *Australian National Schools Network* (http://www.ansn.edu.au/) and Professional Development Schools (providing enquiry-based teacher education and faculty development) in the USA, Australia and Finland (Brindley, Lessen and Field, 2008; Doolittle, Sudeck and Rattigan, 2008). See also: the *Extending High Standards Across Schools* initiative New Zealand; *Leading Schools Fund* Victoria, Australia; *Schools on the Move: Lighthouse Program*, Ontario, Canada; and the *Manitoba School Improvement Program*, (Earl, Torrance and Sutherland, 2006; Earl and Lee, 1998). Advocacy of collaboration within school networks needs to be supported by careful examination of the impact of networks – what they do and what they achieve (Harris, 2005).	The Quality Education Fund (QEF) was established in 1998 in Hong Kong to promote pedagogic innovation and professional development through collaboration. Around 500 grants (up to $600,000), addressing priority themes, are awarded to schools each year through a process of competitive bidding. Project monitoring and self-evaluation by grantees is encouraged in association with external monitoring from the QEF. The QEF Impact Study (April 2009) reports that QEF projects have a positive impact on teachers' attitudes towards collaboration and change, especially where schools engaged in a larger number of small projects. The impact study cautioned against over-emphasising innovation and identified scaleability as a criterion of success. Projects found to be successful could be repeated in other settings to share learning and optimise benefits. Studies recommend allocating a portion of funds to the costs of developing staff for systemic change, especially preparation for 'change leadership and change agent staff (Adelman and Taylor, 2007; Fullan, 2009).

2.6   There is consensus across the literature on the need for leadership preparation to support reform efforts. Several commentators suggest that senior staff in schools have little training in facilitating major change (Adelman and Taylor, 2007; Fullan, 2005). A primary emphasis is often placed on scale-up processes and insufficient attention afforded to the leadership challenges of affecting transformational change. Based on examination of the characteristics of eight 'exemplary' school improvement programs in the USA, Fullan (2009:45) argues that effective leadership development needs to be *'job embedded, organisation embedded and system embedded'*.

2.7   The Schools of Ambition embarked on their plans for 'transformational change' at different stages of readiness. Whilst all the schools developed an initial transformational plan, the plans[9] and subsequent action plans to operationalise and monitor change varied in the level of detail provided. See Section 3 of the report for a review of responses across the schools, including attention to the formation of evaluation teams and capacity building at school level.

Sustaining improvement

2.8   Sustainability was an important issue for the Schools of Ambition and is a common challenge in reports of school improvement initiatives elsewhere. There are relatively few in-depth studies of how schools change and develop over extended periods of time (Fullan, 2000; Louis, 2006; Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001; Hargreaves and Goodson, 2006; Barker, 2006; Gray et al, 1999). Gray et al (2001) suggest that only 10% of schools involved in reform programmes typically improve 'ahead of the pack'. Several research studies report attrition when the initial impetus is lost (Slavin and Fashola, 1998; Fink, 2000; Giles and Hargreaves, 2006; Tubin, 2009). This is variously associated with routinisation of a new headteacher's regime, the attraction of untypical teachers to innovative projects, inexperienced leaders, innovation overload or lack of support from the wider education community. There is a reported tendency to see improvement programmes as 'time bound projects' expiring when the funding ends.

2.9   Research studies have reported dips in performance as schools engage with systemic change. For example, multi-state research in the USA suggests that student attainment falls in the first year of charter school status (CREDO, 2009).   Some writers suggest that special personnel evaluation and accountability procedures might be deployed to make allowance for this, including valuing qualitative ('soft') as well as quantitative ('hard') performance indicators (Adelman and Taylor, 2007; Barker, 2005).

2.10   Case studies of the life-cycle of innovative schools suggest a need to focus attention on succession. The likelihood of sustaining change is influenced by the extent to which a 'strong professional learning community' is built within the school i.e. a focus on leadership rather than leaders (Robinson et al, 2009). Change in leadership and school structures and processes can be

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[9] Transformational Plans are available from: http://wayback.archive-it.org/1961/20100805220200/http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/about/transformplan.asp

'highly destabilising' (Gronn, 1999). Research has drawn attention to the need for school teams to regroup and reorganise, providing 'stopping off points on the journey' (Earl et al, 2006; Barker, 2001).

2.11   An account of how the Schools of Ambition addressed the issue of sustainability is offered in the following sections. Section 3.16 notes that initiatives premised on attitudinal, relational or pedagogical change were easier to sustain than initiatives dependent on continuing additional resource, for example residential experiences for pupils. Section 4.34 notes that Headteachers in the five case study schools reported that changing school culture was an important factor in sustaining SoA developments; especially the promotion of new ways of working that were in accord with *Curriculum for Excellence*. Based on qualitative information gathered by the research team, section 5.27 concludes that most of the Schools of Ambition, particularly those in Tranches 2 and 3 were sensitive to the need for both a legacy and on-going development beyond the time limit attached to the initial funding and made efforts to address sustainability when planning and implementing their various initiatives.

Teacher development and enquiry

2.12   Research suggests that school reform directed at transformational change is likely to be enhanced by a focus on teacher development. Meta-analyses consistently identify teacher quality as a key factor influencing achievement (Hattie, 2009). It is unsurprising that prospects for whole school transformation are enhanced where interventions address the core activities of teaching (Elmore, 1996). The variation in quality between teachers in a school is as important as the variation in the quality of teachers across schools (Reynolds, 2008). Teacher effects are larger in schools serving disadvantaged communities. Writing from a North American context, Nye et al (2004:254) note that *'in low socio-economic schools, it matters more* which *teacher a child receives'.*

2.13   Studies consistently emphasise the role of continuing professional development (CPD) in supporting school improvement. Contemporary thinking on CPD indicates that it is most effective when it is site-based, peer-led, collaborative and sustained (beyond one term) (Bubb and Earley, 2009; Goodall et al, 2005). Significant advances have been made in relation to professional development activities that involve peer coaching, mentoring, observing and providing feedback to others. Successful introduction of collaborative peer review depends on fostering a culture of openness, and relations of collegiality and trust (see Lam et al, 2006).

2.14   The Schools of Ambition programme was designed to support both development and evaluation activities at school-level. The literature on school transformation contains a focus on the development of a culture of evidence and research use in schools. A great deal of attention in the last decade has focused on the need to develop schools as 'learning organisations' and 'professional learning communities' (Senge et al, 2000; Leithwood et al, 1999; Coppieters, 2005; McLaughlin and Tarbert, 2001). Two dimensions to this task are reported in the literature: improved use of routine school data to

inform decision making; and the development of forms of professional enquiry that focus on the classroom work of teachers (James et al, 2007). Pedagogical leadership involves using data to think about school improvement and entails looking inside classrooms as well as examination of aggregate performance data (Earl, Torrance and Sutherland, 2006). Professional Development Schools in the USA, Australia and Finland have highlighted the contribution of collaborative enquiry to improvements in professional practice (Brindley, Lessen and Field, 2008; Castle, Arends and Rockwood, 2008; Doolittle, Sudeck and Rattigan, 2008; CfBT, 2006).

2.15 Improving staff engagement in CPD was a major strand among the Transformational Plans for Tranche 1. Section 3.12 of this report notes the development of collaborative and collegial forms of professional learning among some Tranche 1 schools. The Annual Report of Research to Support Schools of Ambition (2009) reports a degree of pedagogical innovation in relation to creativity, critical enquiry and cooperative learning. Furthermore, there were indications that there was a greater focus on school-based continuing professional development (CPD) activities being developed to support the change process among schools in Tranches 2 and 3.

Organisational structures for school reform

2.16 Research suggests a need to involve the wider school community in shaping the direction and pace of change. Reforms efforts are more likely to be successful where the reform is shaped at school level through authentic collaboration (Stringfield et al, 2008; Rand Corporation, 1978; Stoll et al, 2003). Studies of educational reform have acknowledged the capacity of teachers to embrace, accommodate or resist change (Cuban, 1998; Spillane, 1999; Lance, 2006). Section 5.9 summarises attempts by the Schools of Ambition to promote staff engagement by encouraging participation in evaluation teams/school enquiry groups and cross-curricular working groups.

2.17 In order to allow for reform at school level, the Schools of Ambition programme gave enhanced autonomy to school leaders in authoring their plans for transformational change and promoting networking between Schools of Ambition and the wider schools' community in Scotland. Networking activities included open days organised by individual Schools of Ambition, national and regional day conferences and information sharing through electronic media such as e-portfolios hosted on each school's website and the LTS sharing practice webpages.

2.18 Drawing on the work of Weick (1976, 1995) many commentators in the UK, USA and Australia have noted weak connections across the curriculum and between school departments (Hargreaves, 2008; Elmore, 2000; Goldspink, 2007). Whilst this may afford scope for creativity, loose linkage between areas of the school can be negative and allow the persistence of 'archaic' or 'anachronistic' practices (de Lima, 2007). Organisations need both central direction but also flexibility. The Schools of Ambition programme encouraged local innovation supported by guidance from the national Advisory Team.

Leadership effects, pupil gains and school reform

2.19 The relationship between leadership and pupil gains is likely to be indirect and is difficult to establish (Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009). Leithwood and Jantzi (2006:204) note that, *'While there is much discussion in the educational literature, both supportive and critical, about transformational orientations to leadership, empirical evidence about its effects in school contexts is extremely thin.'* Studies report that leadership is less influential than the negative impact of social inequality and school intake (Thrupp, 2001; Gorard and Taylor, 2001; Barker, 2007; Hattie, 2009).

2.20 The international literature suggests tensions between encouraging headteachers to author transformational plans that reflect specific local circumstances, and over reliance on judgements of success based on test and examination performance. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom and further afield, it has been noted that innovative methodologies and school-based curriculum development have been constrained by regulatory systems where standardisation is required and sanctions imposed for under-performance (Barker, 2005, 2008; McNeill, 2000; Gray et al, 2001; Hargreaves and Goodson, 2006).

2.21 A number of commentators have noted that the history of school reform is marked by 'change without difference' (Woodbury and Gess-Newsome, 2002; Cuban, 1988). Networked learning communities have achieved prominence in current approaches to educational change but the evidence base is sobering, especially with regard to secondary schools. Reynolds et al. (2006:57-58) offer the following the key lessons drawn from the research base on large-scale school reform:

   - *Most, but not all, of the reforms can point to one or more schools that have greatly improved some combination of faculty attitudes, student deportment and student attendance;*
   - *All of the reforms that have 'scaled up' to significant numbers of schools have examples of schools in which the reform has had no measurable effect and has been discontinued;*
   - *In virtually every case involving on-site observations of the reform implementation efforts, success has been greatest in schools where the design team and the local educators worked together to create the most efficacious interaction of the local realities with the reform design;*
   - *Reforms have been substantially more likely to produce measured results if they focused on primary schools.*

2.22 The Schools of Ambition programme (2006-10) was an innovative way of promoting change for learners through targeted whole-school change accompanied by self-evaluation. In common with other reform efforts, internationally, responses and outcomes within the life cycle of the programme varied. Section 5 of this report details key lessons to be learned from the experiences of the Schools of Ambition.

Conclusion

2.23 In summary, the following implications were identified from the review of international literature on school transformation:

- Successful school improvement depends on local capacity for change - developmental 'readiness'. Schools should be seen as 'differentially ready for different *kinds* of change' (Slavin, 2005: 268). Studies recommend attention to developing staff for systemic change, especially preparation for 'change leadership and change agent staff' (Adelman and Taylor, 2007; Fullan, 2009).

- School improvement models have tended to see schools as homogenous systems, assuming that the different elements of the school are very similar in type. Research suggests a need to differentiate strategies to address differences in capacity between different areas of the school (Stoll, 2009).

- A 'non-deficit' approach to reform is more likely to harness the commitment, motivation and creative energy of professionals (Goldspink, 2007). Building the capacity and confidence of schools to work with qualitative measures may enhance a focus on quality as well as productivity (Barker, 2008).

- Change requires teacher support and development. Contemporary thinking on CPD indicates that it is most effective when it is site-based, peer-led, collaborative and sustained (beyond one term) (Bubb and Earley, 2009; Goodall et al, 2005).

- Systemic reform of secondary schools is particularly problematic. Very few studies internationally record successful outcomes at district level.

3. SUMMARY OF THEMES FROM THE RESEARCH (2007-09)

Introduction

3.1 The research support team collected data from the schools annually over a three year period (2007-09), and this was reported in each annual report. This chapter summarises the data from the reports. It discusses the key themes which have emerged with respect to the impact of the transformation plans on the schools within the period of research support. The themes are:

- Leading change
- Professional development
- Sustainability
- Working with external partners
- Patterns of engagement in research and evaluation
- *Curriculum for Excellence* readiness

3.2 Table 2 below indicates how the three year research period related to the funding periods for schools. The research support team of university mentors commenced their work with schools in 2006. Tranche 1 (T1) schools started their funding periods in 2005, but only commenced evaluation of their transformational plan when the research support team became involved in 2006. In contrast, Tranches 2 (T2) and 3 (T3) had support from the research team from the beginning of their three year funding periods.

Table 2: Overview of Key Milestones for the Three Tranches and the Research

'05	21T1 Schools start programme (at various points during year)
Sept '06	Research Team support starts for T1 (most T1 schools reaching end of first of 3 year funding period)
March '07	7 T2 Schools start programme, with Research Team support from beginning of funding period
June '07	Online questionnaire issued to T1 schools (most approx mid-way through their funding period)
Sept '07	24 T3 Schools start programme, with Research Team support from beginning of their funding period
June '08	Online questionnaire issued to T1, T2 and T3 schools (T1 schools nearing end of programme, T2 schools nearing mid-way, T3 schools nearing end of first year)
March '09	Online questionnaire issued to T2 and T3 schools (T2 schools more than 2 years through funding period, T3 schools mid-way through programme)

3.3 This chapter draws on two sources of data: a) quantitative data from responses to the online questionnaire; and b) qualitative data from interviews with senior school staff.

3.4 The online questionnaire was sent each year (2007-09) to all staff identified on the virtual research environment (VRE) as being involved in evaluation activities, including those with a managerial/coordinating role as well as those directly involved. The quantitative data collection was directed specifically at school managers in year 3, hence the data are predominantly from senior

management and promoted staff. Table 3 shows the breakdown of ninety three questionnaire responses by type of staff, and Table 4 by school tranche.

Table 3 Online Questionnaire Respondents by breakdown of Staff

	2007 (n=30)	2008 (n=29)	2009 (n=34)	Total
Depute headteacher	9	13	8	**30**
Headteacher	5	8	11	**24**
Principal Teacher	6	5	7	**18**
Class Teacher	6	0	1	**7**
Project Manager/coordinator	3	1	3	**7**
Faculty Head	0	1	3	**4**
Other	1	1	1	**3**

3.5 It is acknowledged that there is a possible bias in the responses arising from the higher numbers from senior management which may not reflect the views of non-promoted staff. However, whilst the data may not be representative of the individual teachers involved in evaluation, the respondents' perceptions help to generate a picture of transformation in Schools of Ambition in general. It should be noted that the data represent approximately a 50% return of all staff registered on the VRE in 2007 and 2009, and around 20% in 2008. Registration was by self selection and the numbers registered per school differed. There were thus more questionnaire responses from some schools than others.

Table 4 Online Questionnaire Respondents by breakdown of School Tranche

	2007*	2008	2009**
Tranche 1 (21 schools)	19	9	0
Tranche 2 (7 schools)	0	5	7
Tranche 3 (24 schools)	0	10	17
Total number of schools	**19**	**24**	**24**

* Only schools in Tranche 1 were involved in the 2007 data collection
** Only schools in Tranche 2 and 3 were involved in the 2009 data collection

3.6 Caution has been exercised in interpreting the questionnaire data from 2007-09. Each annual set of questionnaire data includes schools at different stages of development of their transformational plan. Only the 2008 data include returns when all 52 schools were simultaneously in the national programme, and 2008 is the year when the response rate was lowest. It is therefore difficult to assess the scale of transformation across the 52 schools. It should be noted that the 52 schools encompass a wide range, from those deemed as innovative leaders by government inspection, to those identified as in need of considerable support to improve the school. Although some schools shared common themes in their transformational plans, there were very different starting points for transformation in each of the schools. It should also be noted that the data are comprised of an uneven distribution of schools

between the three tranches (see 3.5 above), and it is therefore difficult to make robust claims about each of the three years of data.

3.7 The qualitative data are derived from interviews with 35 senior school staff (Headteacher, 18; deputy Headteacher, 9; and Principal teacher, 1). All teachers from the 7 schools in Tranche 2 and 24 schools in Tranche 3 who had a leadership role in their schools, and/or responsibility for leading School of Ambition activity were invited to take part in an interview between March-May 2009. Thirty of the thirty one schools participated, with five schools electing to participate in a joint interview involving the Headteacher and a Depute or Principal Teacher. The remaining 25 interviews were conducted with individuals.

Leading change

3.8 The importance of leadership is a strong theme emerging from the three Annual Reports. The resources provided by the programme and the opportunity thus afforded to exercise autonomy, to take risks and to innovate called for effective leadership and this was clearly recognised by school managers. The Annual Reports have documented explicit attempts to create devolved and distributed forms of leadership in many of the schools. An example of this is the formation of evaluation groups consisting of a mixture of promoted and non-promoted staff.

3.9 The first annual report in 2007 reported that many schools were attempting to build new school cultures more open to change and to create participative structural arrangements to support devolved leadership. Indeed, the 2007 Report which focused on schools in Tranche 1, with most being just over mid-way through their funding period, described a number of school settings where institutional cultures had undergone significant change, through constructive collaborations, both internal and external, and through partnerships with a wide range of organisations. The 2008 and 2009 Reports indicated that establishing an appropriate ethos and building institutional cultures which value evidence and innovation remained a challenge for all three tranches within the Schools of Ambition programme.

3.10 An increasing degree of alignment between School of Ambition transformational plans and school development plans was evident over the period covered by the three Annual Reports. This, at least in part, reflects clearer articulation by the Schools of Ambition Programme Team advisers to schools in Tranches 2 and 3 at the outset of their funding period, of the expectations of the programme with respect to transformation to schools, and hence a greater awareness on the part of schools in Tranches 2 and 3.

3.11 In addition to teacher leadership, the 2008 Report highlighted a strong focus on pupil leadership as a component of transformational plans across the schools. There was also evidence of schools establishing leadership programmes aimed at school pupils complementing other strategies to foster their active participation in school life.

Professional development

3.12   An emerging strength of the Schools of Ambition programme identified in the 2009 Report was the development of collaborative and collegial forms of professional learning to promote positive change for learners. Where schools had been successful in encouraging a wide range of staff to engage in the change and evaluation processes, for example, by participating in cross-curricular working groups, this was perceived as a significant opportunity for professional learning and development. Schools were also reported to be experimenting with innovative pedagogical approaches, for example, to harness the potential of creativity, critical enquiry and cooperative learning. Furthermore, there were indications that for schools in Tranches 2 and 3, there was a greater focus on school-based continuing professional development (CPD) activities being developed in order to support the change process. Evidence of enhanced networking, both formal and informal and involving both internal and, importantly, external partners, was reported in 2008 and 2009. As the programme developed at a national level, many of the Schools of Ambition became increasingly 'outward looking' (Headteacher T2 school, 2009 Annual Report) and participated in regional, national and international events and networks.

3.13   There was a trend of increasing development of learning communities between 2007 and 2009 as evidenced through questionnaire respondents reporting sharing evidence and ideas with other schools. Successful support and collaboration was evidenced through an increasing proportion of respondents talking about self-evaluation and reflective practices, both on an individual and whole school level.

3.14   Between the 2007 and 2009 reports increasing numbers of respondents reported that evaluation activities had impacted on their own professional development.   However, a small reverse trend was noted in terms of respondents integrating research into everyday practices (although it should be noted that this was still reported by the majority[10]).

> *It has allowed me to embed strategies within the department to continually evaluate what we do with pupils, staff, and parents so development work is done for the right reasons.*
> (Principal Teacher, Tranche Two school 2009)

3.15   Furthermore approximately one fifth (the numbers remaining fairly static between 2007-09) were at the time actively considering accreditation for the evaluation work they had undertaken. However, encouragingly, a trend was noted that over the data collection period (2007-09) increasing numbers were considering accreditation 'in the future'.   Overall, the questionnaire data indicate that involvement with the Schools of Ambition research and evaluation activities impacted positively on the professional development of most of the respondents. The experience of undertaking research, analysis and reflection assisted in developing individuals as professionals, enabling

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[10] small minority = 1-10%, minority = 11-49%, majority = 50-79%, most = 80%-89%, almost all = 90%+

them to contribute effectively to the improvement of educational practice in their own professional setting. The majority indicated an intention to use their research experiences to inform future professional development plans.

Sustainability

3.16   In the final year of their three year funding period, sustainability was a key concern for the schools. School leaders had given careful consideration to those aspects of innovation that were sustainable and those aspects of the programme where additional resource might be needed. In the 2009 round of interviews, a minority of school leaders suggested that some areas could not be sustained. Residential experiences provided through pupil leadership academies were identified by several schools as areas that could be difficult to sustain without significant additional resource from external sponsors. Aspects regarded as more sustainable were initiatives premised on attitudinal, relational or pedagogical change such as Learn to Learn[11], or strategies based on changes to school policy such as parental engagement. Where leadership opportunities were devolved, strategies for succession planning or loss of time-limited Coordinator/Project Manager posts were more firmly established (Annual Report 2009:31).

> *We have not spent all of our money yet. In fact, a lot of the projects have been taken forward through other partners coming in and helping to support the money side of things. What it does do is give you the opportunity to think differently. As soon as you start to open up people's thinking, actually what happens quite often is that you can sustain things because money or support comes from somewhere else.*
> (Headteacher, Tranche Three school, 2009)

> *Whole change in culture and ethos does not require any funding or resources to sustain. That is a mindset and that change has been made and is established.*
> (Headteacher, Tranche Three school, 2009)

Working with external partners

3.17   Engaging the *business community* in sustainable initiatives proved to be an enduring challenge for many schools, especially those located in areas with few larger industries and neighbouring schools making similar requests. Throughout the programme the involvement of the local business community was principally through routine and established aspects of enterprise education, including work experience.

3.18   *Partnership work with primary schools* was enhanced in some schools through an extension of pupil-led leadership academies for Primary Seven children in local schools. A range of diverse partnerships were also forged with local constabularies, universities, charities, Arts organisations such as the National Theatre, professional football and rugby clubs and community sports

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[11] http://www.alite.co.uk/index.php   The Alite programme used by one school is an example of a pedagogical approach which emphasises particular learning strategies.

providers, as well as training providers such as the Scottish Outward Bound Association, Columba 1400 and Brathay.

3.19 *School-college partnership* has proved particularly fruitful, with many schools routinely involved in curriculum enhancement initiatives with local colleges and employers.

3.20 *Parental engagement* was an area cited as requiring continuing work by a number of schools. This was mentioned in annual interviews by a minority of school leaders in all three tranches.

3.21 The extent of *local authority* support, interest and involvement in Schools of Ambition projects varied across the cohort throughout the programme. Support appears to have been strongest where the Transformational Plan involved more than one school and especially clusters of schools.

Patterns of engagement in research and evaluation

3.22 A wide range of approaches to the management of research and evaluation activities was reported across the Schools of Ambition annual reports. The role of the designated research coordinator was a key consideration and the degree to which this person was supported by staff colleagues in a collaborative team approach varied greatly across schools. The first annual report indicated that a team approach with responsibilities clearly shared was the most effective when allied with enthusiasm on the part of the headteacher and clarity and realism in terms of research plans. This theme was echoed in the subsequent annual reports which confirmed the importance not only of a team approach to the management of the transformation and evaluation processes, but also of fostering a sense of collective ownership of the transformational goals across the school community as a whole.

3.23 There is evidence of increasing numbers of staff participating in evaluation groups (mainly composed of three to six persons) between 2007-09. This trend can partly be explained because as the programme developed at a national level, programme team advisers and research team mentors encouraged the formation of evaluation groups. However, in many instances, even where this ideal was espoused, depending on the differing recruitment practices in schools, responsibility for evaluation activity remained in the hands of a rather small minority of senior staff. This raises questions about the capacity of schools to sustain activities initiated through the programme.

3.24 The focus of research and evaluation activities varied considerably across schools as reported in the first annual report. Many schools in the early stages of their three year funded period favoured an instrumental approach focusing on clear targets and outcome measures and relying on data available through existing processes. Schools were being encouraged to adopt a more developmental, action research approach, generating new evidence to inform innovation and future developments and there were signs that schools were gaining confidence to do so through their participation in the programme.

3.25 By 2009 there were signs of increased confidence among schools in the use of a range of research and evaluation techniques supported by their university mentors, with questionnaire surveys, focus groups and interview approaches most widely used. However, the proportion of school respondents actively involved in carrying out such evaluation activities reportedly remained a minority in the majority of schools responding to the survey carried out by the project team. The 2009 Report signalled the integration of evaluation with the implementation of change as an area for continuing development. It recommended extending the prevailing model of reflective practice to include a greater recognition of the potential value of systematic, collaborative professional enquiry.

3.26 In all three annual reports (2007-09) respondents expressed most confidence in using quantitative approaches (questionnaire surveys) and these were most frequently used for evaluation purposes. However, respondents also reported confidence in designing, conducting and analysing qualitative data. This confidence is reflected in an increasing recognition of the value of qualitative approaches. For example, between 2007-09 respondents increasingly reported the use of individual interviews and focus groups, the latter used most frequently with pupils. Schools encouraged by their university mentor were responsive to other qualitative approaches well suited to collecting pupil data, for example the use of image-based research involving photos and/or film. Pupils were the main source of data collected by respondents, followed by staff and parents. Despite being encouraged by mentors to involve pupils and parents as data gatherers this practice was very limited.

Accelerators and inhibitors

3.27 In each of the three annual reports respondents identified similar factors as being the main accelerators and inhibitors contributing to successful engagement with evaluation activities and running of SoA activities as a whole. However, the level of these varied depending on the stage of implementation of the plan.

3.28 The main accelerators in supporting transformation in order of frequency were:

- staff commitment, collegiality and willingness to collaborate;
- funding/resources;
- strong leadership/support from senior management;
- pupil involvement.

Strong Leadership and direction as well as shared vision have made carrying out the actions within the transformational plan straight forward. Also carrying out systematic research and evaluation has reinforced our vision.
(Project Manager, Tranche Two school, 2009)

3.29 Other accelerators mentioned by a small minority of respondents seen as conducive to supporting school staff and ultimately contributing to the overall school ethos and supporting transformation were:

- devolved opportunities for leadership among teaching and non-teaching staff,
- a dedicated School of Ambition project manager/coordinator;
- maintaining a high public profile for School of Ambition work and communication with the local community;
- sufficient time, both to meet with others and to conduct evaluation;
- self-evaluation already established or becoming embedded in the school; an encouragement to be reflective;
- good channels of communication;
- local decision taking.

> *Factors that really enable transformation, I think, are communication and clarity. Factors that inhibit it are stubbornness and staff that are unwilling to change...One of the major inhibitors of change is your staff.*
>
> (Depute Headteacher, Tranche Two school, 2008)

3.30 In all three annual reports a number of constraints were identified by a small number of respondents as inhibiting both engagement in evaluation activities and the successful running of SoA activities as a whole. The most frequently reported inhibitors to the success of SoA activities cited by respondents were: lack of time, both for planning and conducting evaluation activities and implementing activities within the school transformational plan, and staff negativity. Other inhibitors cited were competing initiatives and priorities, staffing, both shortages and workload.

3.31 The small number of respondents mentioning staff negativity, suspicion, and/or lack of trust between colleagues remained fairly static between 2007-09. Respondents reported staff resistance was particularly evident in schools where staff perceived a lack of awareness and ownership of the school's transformational plan, as well as a lack of knowledge as to where their role lay in the *'whole picture'* of the school's SoA activities. Similarly poor communication, unrealistic timelines being set and staff absences or shortages, contributed to the ability of some schools to maintain momentum. However, poor communication was only mentioned by one questionnaire respondent in 2009. A small minority cited other priorities, for example, curricular development work, and in a few individual cases evaluation was perceived as either not worthwhile or an additional demand on an already full workload.

3.32 In spite of these concerns, evaluation activities were valued by most of the respondents in each of the 2007-09 reports for providing evidence of a positive impact in terms of the transformational objectives. For example, in one school, feedback from questionnaires and focus groups indicated its transformational plan had impacted positively on the culture of the school. In another school, there was evidence that improved pupil behaviour and

attendance was beginning to increase attainment for the 'More Choices, More Chances' group.

3.33 The three annual reports (2007-09) provide evidence of evaluation activities increasingly informing the majority of schools in their development and improvement planning; informing their future SoA activities and refining of the transformational plan; assessing the impact of SoA activities on pupil achievement, confidence and motivation and assessing the impact of SoA activities on the wider community.

> *Questionnaires, focus groups' comments have shown that the transformational plan has impacted positively on the culture of the school.*
>
> (Principal Teacher, Tranche Two school, 2009)

3.34 Although an increasing number of schools reported evaluation activities impacting positively on their transformational objectives, the numbers indicating that research evidence had led to modification of their plan remained static (around one third) between 2007-09.

Curriculum for Excellence readiness

3.35 In the 2009 Report it was evident that for many schools in Tranche 2 and Tranche 3 *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) was seen as a stimulus for sustained direction of change. School managers felt more confident to meet the challenges of implementation of CfE through their schools' involvement in the Schools of Ambition programme. The annual reports 2007-09 provide encouraging evidence of the schools experimenting with innovative pedagogical approaches consistent with the guiding principles of CfE, including, for example, harnessing the potential of creativity, critical enquiry and cooperative learning.

> *Leadership capacity and learning capacity are integral to the shape of Curriculum for Excellence in the future, so we feel that we are on the right road already. Schools of Ambition has helped accelerate that by the additionality it has brought to the school improvement plan.*
>
> (Headteacher, Tranche Three school, 2009)

> *The curricular aspect of Schools of Ambition has become a way of enabling us to deliver a Curriculum for Excellence. You could not put a credit card between the two things now.*
>
> (Headteacher, Tranche Three school, 2009)

3.36 It was reported in 2009 that the work of curriculum development groups facilitated the promotion of connections across the curriculum and 'energised' cross-subject working. School managers expressed the view that sustained innovation over their three-year funding periods promoted ways of working adapted to change. Several schools had been involved in the production of

illustrative case study materials for the LTS *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Journey to Excellence* websites[12].

Conclusion

3.37   In the 2007-09 annual reports of the Schools of Ambition, school-level change was evident where there was:

- a change in culture and ethos which supported more devolved leadership opportunities for staff, and included pupil leadership opportunities;
- staff ownership of transformation. This was key to success in encouraging and supporting their engagement with innovative pedagogical approaches; cross-curricular working; and school-based CPD activities;
- enhanced networking with other schools, sharing of ideas and evidence which led to an increasing development of learning communities.

3.38   Initiatives which involved working in partnership with further education colleges and a range of organisations, e.g. arts and sports providers, were considered to be fruitful and well established. Those which involved working with the business community were subject to a range of challenges depending on the local circumstances. In a minority of schools parental engagement had not progressed as far as other partnership working, and was perceived to require further development work.

3.39   Schools of Ambition enabled opportunities for professional development, through cross-curricular working groups, using innovative pedagogies, networking and peer learning. Most interviewees in tranches two and three reported a greater focus on the development of in-house continuing professional development (CPD) activities during the transformational period to support the change.

3.40   Professional development was further enhanced through engagement with evaluation activities. Between 2007-09 increasing numbers of staff reported participating in evaluation groups, although the number of staff actively engaged in professional enquiry overall was a small minority and predominantly involved senior staff. There is, however, evidence of increased confidence in, and use of, a range of research and evaluation techniques and developing an action research orientation. The value of taking a reflective stance and using research evidence to improve educational practice and inform future developments was only evident in a small minority of schools.

3.41   School transformation was perceived to be accelerated and inhibited by a combination of different factors. The main *accelerators* were:

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[12] See http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/sharingpractice/secondary.asp and http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/journeytoexcellence/index.asp

- staff commitment, collegiality and willingness to collaborate;
- funding/resources;
- strong leadership/support from senior management;
- devolved leadership opportunities and pupil involvement.

Other accelerators supporting transformation were:

- devolved opportunities for leadership among teaching and non-teaching staff,
- a dedicated School of Ambition project manager/coordinator;
- maintaining a high public profile for School of Ambition work and communication with the local community;
- sufficient time, both to meet with others and to conduct evaluation;
- self-evaluation already established or becoming embedded in the school; an encouragement to be reflective;
- good channels of communication;
- local decision taking.

The main *inhibitors* were perceived to be:

- lack of time;
- staff negativity;
- other competing initiatives and priorities.

3.42   Through their schools' involvement in the SoA programme school managers felt more confident to meet the challenges of implementing *Curriculum for Excellence.*   The more sustainable SoA initiatives beyond the life of the programme were those premised on attitudinal, relational or pedagogical change.

4. SCHOOLS OF AMBITION - REFLECTING ON IMPROVEMENT. THE VIEWS OF HEADTEACHERS IN FIVE SCHOOLS (2010)

Introduction

4.1 This chapter reports on the findings from interviews carried out with headteachers in a small number of schools that had shown a relative improvement in attainment/leaver destinations over the SoA funding period. The primary objective of this exercise was to identify those elements of the schools SoA programme which were regarded, by the headteacher, as key in improving attainment and leaver destinations and to explore the ways in which these elements contributed to improvements. In addition to the focus on attainment and leaver destinations, the research team also explored with the headteachers the potential impact of the SoA programme on school roll.

4.2 It is important to note that this exercise was focussed on the ways in which schools achieved improvements and not on identifying how successful SoA was overall in terms of impact on these measures.

4.3 In addition to potential gains accruing to schools from the SoA developments, schools are also subject to multiple other factors that may also influence pupil attainment and leaver destinations, for example:

- engagement with other initiatives;
- personnel changes;
- policy changes;
- changes in local demographics;
- variation in pupil cohort performance;
- smaller schools more subject to apparent variation in performance.

4.4 When exploring the extent to which their SoA programme had been instrumental in promoting improvement many of the interviewed headteachers stressed these points. However, they were also generally clear in their views about the relative importance of the various SoA elements in relation to improvements in attainment and leaver destinations in the school in comparison to other factors.

Methodology

4.5 To explore the link between SoA developments and improved attainment, school leaver destinations, and changes in school rolls, the research team conducted additional interviews of one hour's duration with headteachers in five Schools of Ambition where there had been a relative improvement in attainment and leaver destination data. 2005 and 2009 were selected as the base and comparator years for attainment and leaver destination data in both Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schools.

4.6 2005, the year in which Tranche 1 schools started the programme, was selected as the base year for analysis. Although Tranche 2 schools did not

become involved in the programme until 2007 at least two of our Tranche 1 study schools had experienced a protracted development in their transformational plan which resulted in a major part of year one being 'lost'. Thus the 'real' starting points for our Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 study schools varied more than their grouping suggested.

4.7 2009 was used as the comparator year for the attainment and destination data in both Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schools for a number of reasons. It was the latest year for which data was available and was relevant to both Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schools. A number of Tranche 1 schools were still spending SoA monies during 2009 (the year after they received their final SoA payment), and, according to our Tranche 1 interviewees, the major elements of the initiative had largely been sustained after the funding period. Thus SoA work was still developing in Tranche 1 as well as Tranche 2 schools.

4.8 Considering 4.6 and 4.7 above, refining the analysis to reflect 'official' start/finish dates for each of the schools was not felt to offer any additional advantages to the methodology.

4.9 Interviews took place between March and May 2010. Prior to the interview, headteachers were sent copies of the interview guide (see appendix 5) and summary data for the school. This data included information from 2005 to 2009, and covered:

- school roll;
- free meal entitlement;
- Standard Grade and Higher Grade results;
- school leaver destinations.

4.10 Over the course of the interview, headteachers were asked to reflect on the data, highlighting inaccuracies, providing their/their school's interpretation of the data and contributing additional relevant information as appropriate. It was hoped that this iterative process would: identify the extent to which the SoA initiative promoted attainment and achievement in the school; identify other relevant factors influencing attainment and achievement; and provide further comment on the sustainability of the initiative.

4.11 Headteacher interviews were transcribed and analysed using the main research questions as the analytical framework. The resulting responses for each of the main topic areas were summarised and the relationships between them and associated factors were explored by the researchers. Researchers shared interpretations of interview data with each other to promote validity.

Selection of the case study schools

4.12 Five schools met the inclusion criteria for this strand of the research. Each of the schools, three from Tranche 1 and two from Tranche 2 had explicitly identified improving attainment and achievement (often expressed in terms of leaver destinations and/or life chances) as aims in their Transformational

Plans[13], and were also among the schools that had shown relative improvement in their attainment and leaver destination data between 2005 and 2009. Analysis of pupil attainment in all cases was based on year groups who experienced the SoA developments in schools.

4.13 The schools were selected to represent a range of geographical locations, establishments of varying sizes, included both denominational and non-denominational schools and recorded different levels of deprivation (measured by free meal entitlement). Table 5 (overleaf) provides details of the five schools and summarises pupil attainment and destination data for each.

4.14 The reason that only Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schools were considered for inclusion in this research exercise was that they had had more time than Tranche 3 schools to have witnessed the impact of their SoA developments. In addition, selecting schools where relative improvement (see 4.15) had taken place was felt to afford the best opportunity for identifying those SoA programme elements which were key in promoting improvement.

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[13] Twenty-two out of the 28 Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schools explicitly mentioned improving attainment as an aim in their Transformational Plans. Although the other six Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schools were not explicit in highlighting improved attainment in their Transformational Plan, they generally made reference to improving the wider achievement of pupils as detailed in *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Table 5. Profiles for the five selected study schools

Tranche 1 - Performing above national average prior to SoA involvement			
School	**Free meal entitlement**	**Attainment** Change between 2005-2009 Max. 15 parameters Number of parameters on which school recorded • improvement of more than 2 percentage points • no change [i.e. a variation of less than 2 percentage points] • reduction of more than 2 percentage points	**Positive destinations** Notable change between 2005-2009
1 – Medium sized school in central town (D)	Below national average	Improvement - 12 (8 > 5 percentage points) No change – 2 Reduction - 1	14% point increase in pupils going onto HE. 9% point decrease in pupils going onto employment.
Tranche 1 - Performing below national average prior to SoA involvement			
2 – Small school in city (D)	Well above national average	Improvement - 10 (7 > 5 percentage points) No change – 4 Reduction – 1	4% point Increase in pupils going onto HE 8% point increase in pupils going onto FE 4% point increase in pupils going onto training 15% point decrease in pupils going onto employment.
3 - Small school in city (ND)	Well above national average	Improvement - 8 (7 > 5 percentage points) No change – 3 Reduction – 4 (3 > 5 percentage points)	3% point increase in pupils going onto HE. 9% point increase in pupils going onto training. 3% point decrease in pupils going onto employment
Tranche 2 – Mixed performance relative to national average prior to SoA involvement			
4 - Medium sized rural school (ND)	Below national average	Improvement - 11 (7 > 5 percentage points) No change – 2 Reduction 2 (1 > 5 percentage points)	9% point increase in pupils going onto HE 6% point increase in pupils going onto FE 6% point decrease in pupils going onto employment.
Tranche 2 – Performing below national average prior to SoA involvement			
5 - Large school in city (ND)	Well above national average	Improvement - 11 (9 > 5 percentage points) No change – 4 Reduction – 0	12% point increase in pupils going onto HE 14% point increase in pupils going onto FE. 10% point decrease in pupils going onto training 9% point decrease in pupils going onto employment
Key Size Small - 500 pupils or fewer Medium - 501 to 900 pupils Large - more than 900 pupils	D – Denominational ND – Non - denominational		FME – national average 12.3% Below/above national average – up to 10% points Well below/well above national average – greater than 10% points

Headteachers' views on the role of SoA in relation to changes in pupil attainment, leaver destinations and school roll

4.15   This section outlines the views of the headteachers in the study schools on the extent to which School of Ambition developments impacted on; pupil attainment, leaver destinations and school roll. The final part of the section briefly considers their comments on the wider impact of the Schools of Ambition programme.

Pupil Attainment

4.16   As previously reported, improved attainment in schools was used as a basis for selection and inclusion in this strand of the research. Potential study schools were assessed on 15 different parameters across three stages with 2005 and 2009 selected as the base and comparator years for schools (see methodology 4.4 - 4.7). Table 6 details the attainment parameters.

4.17   Subsequent analysis of pupil attainment was based on year groups who experienced the SoA developments in schools.

Table 6. Parameters used in assessing attainment changes (2005 - 2009)

S4	S5	S6
• Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 3 • Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 4 • Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 5	• Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 3 • Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 4 • Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 5 • Percentage attaining 1+ awards at SCQF level 6 • Percentage attaining 3+ awards at SCQF level 6 • Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 6	• Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 3 • Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 4 • Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 5 • Percentage attaining 1+ awards at SCQF level 6 • Percentage attaining 3+ awards at SCQF level 6 • Percentage attaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 6

4.18   Table 5 includes a summary of changes in school attainment between 2005 and 2009. The table displays the number of parameters on which the school's attainment,

- improved (gain of 2 percentage points or more)

- no change (variation of less than 2 percentage points)

- reduced (loss of 2 percentage points or more)

The table also highlights the number of attainment parameters on which the change in attainment was greater than five percentage points. Changes in attainment were not uniform across the five schools and there was variation in the degree and extent of improvement. For example,

- School 1 showed improvements in 12 of the 15 parameters with eight of these improvements greater than 5%. Over the same period attainment fell on one parameter and remained static on two others.

- School 4 displayed improvements in eight parameters with three of these above 5%, two above 10% and two others greater than 15%. At the same time the school saw a fall in attainment on four parameters with three of these above 5%. On three other parameters results were unchanged.

4.19   All five headteachers believed that the SoA programme had contributed to gains in their attainment figures over the period 2005-2009. Typically, the programme was regarded as a catalyst for existing plans to promote attainment and school improvement. While there were variations in the study schools' transformational plans and objectives all included a focus on raising attainment.

4.20   Interviewees identified a number of measures supported by SoA which, in their view, had contributed to raising attainment. These included:

- implementing new learning, teaching and assessment approaches including: critical skills training; Assessment is for Learning; solution-oriented schooling; staff mentoring of pupils;
- increased and improved staff development/ CPD to support the focus on learning, teaching and assessment;
- study weeks and residential events with a focus on particular subjects. In one school (School 5) SoA money was used to support residential maths weekends which proved so popular among pupils and parents that parents now contribute financially towards the events;
- working with associated primary schools to consolidate learning and support strategies;
- promoting creativity, reflective practice, peer learning and new ways of working across staff groups;
- promoting leadership across the school;
- addressing whole school ethos and relationships;
- partnership working.

4.21   Headteachers' comments described how these various measures helped promote attainment, for example,

> *The big headline aim for us from School of Ambition was about increasing the engagement and motivation of pupils in the classroom…The kids are more engaged, more motivated, and teachers are more confident as well because you've given them their head. We said to teachers "Anybody who has any good ideas just come and let us know" so we weren't directing the money. As soon as you do that people are going to come and say "I fancy doing that, I fancy doing that or if I get another computer there, if I get this bit of software here then I think I can develop that". That's it in very simple terms, but I think that's what we did. I think we made what was happening in the classes more exciting and better engaged kids and that's had a knock-on effect on attainment.*
>
> (Headteacher School 1)

> *I would say the promotion of leadership, distributive leadership. We've seen so many members of staff at all levels, support staff, teaching staff, promoted staff and the pupils coming forward to lead initiatives which have brought about transformational change and have also*

helped to raise attainment. People accepting responsibility - I think that's probably one of the key factors for us.

(Headteacher School 4)

4.22 Some of the headteachers commented that their monitoring and tracking of pupils progress and attainment and evaluation of measures to promote positive changes had improved and had become more systematic.

Monitoring and tracking pupils' progress was an integral part of the work. Previously the pastoral care team were superb at knowing the relationships, families and support. There was a genuine concern for pupil welfare, but what we wanted to do was to make the pastoral care team and the whole school interested in monitoring and tracking progress which was not just about the touchy feely bit, but it was about driving attendance and time-keeping, bottoms on seats, chance to succeed. One of the indicators that's not here is the attendance figures which have gone up …… so I think that drive that "Where is pupil x today? Why is he not at school?" The expectation changed, but not only has the expectation changed, but what are you going to do about it? People were accountable for doing things that contributed to the vision that we wanted to improve life chances.

(Headteacher School 3)

4.23 There was acknowledgement from a few of the headteachers that more systematic pupil tracking was also supported through HMIE inspections and local authority Quality Improvement procedures. One headteacher spoke of the role he had played in the development of a local authority pupil tracking system.

The whole tracking and mentoring of kids' progress particularly once they get to 4th Year where we just use our existing management information system using SEEMIS click and go, but a lot of the schools don't use it to the extent we use it. We use it more than anybody in the Authority. We do everything on it because I was sold on it when I came. I came here five and a half years ago now and I had used it in my previous Authority and in fact I had been seconded for a day a week to develop the practice in it across other schools, so I could see its potential.

(Headteacher School 1)

School leaver destinations

4.24 Across the five study schools there was an increase in the proportion of pupils going onto higher and further education while, at the same time, there was a general decrease in the proportion of pupils securing employment. Table 5 summarises changes in leaver destinations in the study schools between 2005 and 2009. Interviewees suggested that the gains in HE and FE destinations were likely to reflect improvements in attainment, aspirations and in some schools developments in vocational education. The decrease in

employment as a destination was generally felt to be a result of the economic downturn.

4.25 Partnership working with a range of organisations and education providers including FE and HE was evident across the schools and was cited as a key factor in facilitating positive destinations. In school 1 the headteacher identified the school's leadership academy as important in helping to raise pupil aspirations and improved leaver destinations.

> *We do a lot of work in confidence and leadership training for youngsters. I've been up in Skye at the Columba 1400 leadership academy. We've had a number of kids up there as well. We've had staff there. We now run our own leadership academy in here, so we've got kids who have been on Columba then trained other kids …. We've now got to the stage where we have been engaged by the Local Authority to run a leadership academy with one of our neighbouring schools ….. a lot of store is put in pupil leadership, pupils taking responsibility for their own future and I think that [improved leaver destinations] might just in part be down to some of that getting through to them.*

(Headteacher School 1)

4.26 In a number of the schools SoA funding supported additional dedicated staff including careers advisers (some of whom were integrated into the school support systems), mentoring specialists, outdoor education providers, and FE staff. In one school, the SoA funding had also facilitated scholarships with HE providers. Such partnership developments were often also partly funded by local authority and other sources such as charitable grants.

4.27 School 3 was unique among the schools, having managed to maintain the proportion of pupils going into employment over the period 2005-2009. Here the Headteacher suggested that their success in employment terms was largely the result of a major initiative in careers support and employment experience. SoA funding had enabled a careers adviser to be placed within the pastoral care team (which also included Educational Liaison and Attendance Officers), who were working with vulnerable pupils and their families to promote sustained positive destinations. The careers adviser's work also included liaising with the school's employability officer and enterprise programme and working with other local authority partners and employers to address positive destinations. The Headteacher was clear that this SoA supported careers adviser had had a significant impact on destinations.

> *He started to make massive inroads both in pastoral care, through going to assemblies, going to parents' nights, doing one-to-one interviews. He generated a phenomenal interest in challenging worklessness along with our pastoral care team … He's contributed enormously … You look at the stats the answer is I can't say he's contributed all of it, but he's been a key player in the partnership. When the money stops we'll look at whatever financial resources we've got and we'll make that a priority because it's still part of our ongoing*

priority to improve the life chances of young people beyond the project…The whole work experience programme has been lifted by employers coming in and interviewing pupils before work experience.
(Headteacher, School 3)

4.28   In this school, and in a number of the others, SoA funding had enhanced staffing in pastoral care teams. Often the pastoral care team prioritised work that ensured vulnerable pupils attended exams and so promoted their life chances.

School roll

4.29   All but one of the study schools had seen their pupil roll fall in recent years. Two of the small city schools (school 2 and school 3) had their rolls drop by more than 15% since 2005, while schools 1 and 4 showed more stability in their rolls with falls of less than 5%. School 5 recorded an increase in its roll of almost 6% over the same four year period.

4.30   Headteachers of schools with falling pupil rolls suggested that this situation was primarily the result of population changes in their locality and therefore largely outwith the control of the school.

4.31   Placing requests can influence a school's roll. For example, in one locality a growing private housing development had not resulted in increased numbers of pupils attending the school since the majority of the new residents had sought places for their children in schools outwith the area. However, there was also some evidence that the SoA programme had increased the number of placing requests in one of the schools. In School 5 the headteacher reported having had some success in attracting increased numbers of pupils to the school as a result of changes in parents' perceptions of the school. This was felt to be partly the result of having a new school building and partly because of the SoA initiative. This school's SoA plan included a strong focus on parental engagement.

We were involving parents an awful lot and we still are and we'll still continue that … [A parent] said she felt that her son had a better deal here and that she was more involved here and she liked that. She said "I like the way you involve the parents, I didn't feel I was really welcome at [other local school] and I think that …… was a lot to do with School of Ambition. People see things happening, other kids in the area are going on to university, people are speaking about the school in a positive way and that all comes together … It gives you publicity.
(Headteacher School 5)

Sustainability

4.32   According to the headteachers, sustainability had been an important feature of their SoA objectives from the planning stage onwards. In general, they all

agreed that the majority of the changes and developments secured to date through their SoA programme would be sustained.

4.33 Where initiatives were being discontinued this was often because they had been overtaken by new developments while, at the same time, partnership working had opened up new opportunities and new avenues for pooling resources. Where an approach or strategy had proven effective (for example, staff mentoring aimed at supporting increased pupil attainment) some schools allocated additional school budget funds to bring in external specialists to continue the work. Here, the SoA network had played a role in helping schools identify appropriate specialists and allowing them to share effective approaches with other schools across Scotland.

> *Actually the money itself was not spent on anything big. It wasn't spent on building a hall or doing things like that, but it was little bits of money given to people to allow them to expand their ideas and to experiment and to really push the boundaries of their imagination. A particular example of that would be the leadership academies that we run and still run where our pupils are leading leadership academies for other schools in Scotland and it genuinely is the children who go out and teach in these residential activities and they promote the values that they have learned. Children teaching children was the most important and most powerful thing that we have done and are continuing to do.*
> (Headteacher, School 4)

4.34 Headteachers in the study schools reported that changing school cultures was a contributing factor in sustaining the SoA developments. Staff and pupils now thought and worked in different ways, ways that, a number of interviewees also pointed out, were more in accord with *Curriculum for Excellence*.

> *I think [SOA] prepared us for the next step, Curriculum for Excellence. We're used to a way of working which helps with Curriculum for Excellence…Teachers who are used to meeting in collegiate groups and discussing things are quite happy to go to other schools and come back and talk about it. I believe it makes it a wee bit easier for departments in terms of Curriculum for Excellence. That doesn't mean we've cracked it. I just think we're in a better position than had we not been a School of Ambition. You've got the thought processes and the structure there.*
> (Headteacher, School 5)

Conclusion

4.35 In the five study schools,recording a relative improvement in pupil attainment and school leaver destinations, headteachers believed that there was good evidence to indicate that their SoA activities had positively impacted on attainment and leaver destinations.

4.36 There was limited evidence of an increase in placing requests (an indication of changes in community perceptions of a school) in the schools. Four out of five schools reported no change while one noted an increase in placing requests.

4.37 Overall, the 'additionality' provided by SoA, allowed staff to develop specific measures to support pupil attainment and achievement.

4.38 The SoA programme has also enabled schools to develop an ethos of sustained improvement within a context of national educational developments at a time of increasing financial challenge.

4.39 Within the study schools the Schools of Ambition programme was regarded as an accelerant of change. Additional resources enabled the provision of targeted support, including enhanced pastoral guidance and careers support, and encouraged cross-team working. Sustained partnership work appears to be an important factor in strategies to increase positive destinations. The emphasis placed on self-evaluation in the Schools of Ambition programme supported existing planning and monitoring systems. Leaders in the study schools felt that the three-year cycle of innovation and evaluation experienced during the transformational period left the school well placed to respond to a *Curriculum for Excellence.*

5. LESSONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

5.1 This chapter draws on a range of primary and secondary sources of evidence accrued by the research team during *Research to Support Schools of Ambition* and referred to throughout this report to summarise lessons for successful and sustained school transformation. These lessons are also informed by related insights gained by the research team during their research and support for similar initiatives i.e. the Partnership Project schools in the City of Glasgow (University of Glasgow, 2010) and the 2020 Vision project in East Ayrshire and Edinburgh (Lowden and Hall, 2010). Indeed, many of the same key factors and conditions that appear to influence successful school transformation are evident across these various initiatives.

5.2 While the transformational plans across the 52 Schools of Ambition varied in focus and reflected each school's own context and priorities, there were common and inter-related themes. These include: improving learning and teaching across the school, both in terms of pedagogy and curriculum; promoting positive school ethos and capacity for change through CPD and leadership development for staff and pupils; and improving achievement and attainment.

5.3 The measures and activities adopted by schools to address their transformational goals also varied reflecting schools' circumstances and plans. These measures, and indeed some of the aims of the schools, evolved as the programme proceeded. Despite this diversity across the programme, it is possible to identify some common conditions that appear to facilitate transformation and to offer lessons that have wider applicability for managing change in schools.

5.4 The findings from the research, related studies and wider literature indicate consistent themes concerning conditions that have facilitated school transformation. It appears that many of these features of success, while supported by external conditions, are driven by internal and in-school factors.

School level conditions and structures

School leadership

5.5 The research literature indicates that evidence of leadership effects on school transformation is equivocal and that there are insufficient large-scale empirical studies on the impact of leadership at individual or 'distributed' levels (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006; Murphy, 2005). The literature consistently indicates that leadership effects are small (see Hallinger and Heck, 1998) and that 'instructional' (or pedagogical) leadership is more significant than 'transformational' leadership in improving pupil outcomes. Hattie (2009) provides a succinct definition of these two leadership approaches.

> *Instructional leadership refers to those principals who have their major*
> *focus on creating a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear*

teaching objectives and high teacher expectations for teachers and students. Transformational leadership refers to those principals who engage with their teaching staff in ways that inspire them to new levels of energy, commitment and moral purpose such that they work collaboratively to overcome challenges and reach ambitious goals (Hattie 2009, p.83).

5.6   While this indicates that impact on pupil outcomes is influenced by instructional leadership, the qualitative evidence gathered from Headteachers during the Programme indicates that broader, whole school change and ethos which helps to sustain classroom-level innovation is promoted by transformational leadership.

5.7   It is apparent from the Schools of Ambition programme is that while 'shared ownership' of activities is crucial to promote change, a common feature of progress in Schools of Ambition has been the role of strong leadership and the development of a clear transformational vision. Indeed, an important driver for sustaining transformation activities was the presence of coherent and committed senior management that provided the strategic vision and motivation for change. The impact of senior management on promoting leadership and engagement across the school community was enhanced when management were able to enlist the support and respect of staff, pupils and parents. In addition, there is consistent qualitative evidence across those schools involved in the Schools of Ambition programme to indicate that measures to promote leadership across pupils and staff are associated with the schools' capacity for change. The provision of leadership opportunities contributes to an overall ethos that is conducive to sustained innovation. The research literature indicates that effective leadership development requires embedding and support through all levels of the education system from individual post, the school and beyond (Fullan 2009: 45). This implies that sustaining leadership development is an issue not just for schools but for local authorities and government.

5.8   Those schools that sought to enhance staff and pupil leadership have drawn on the support of organisations such as Columba 1400, Brathay, the police, universities, charities, community providers, arts organisations, sports clubs and community and training providers. While such opportunities have been seen by staff as effective in stimulating leadership development, cost implications have meant some schools have explored ways to adapt aspects of these external leadership programmes within their own schools to make them more sustainable. This has seen some schools drawing on the skills and abilities of external leadership course participants to develop and sustain in-school leadership academies and programmes. For example, one School of Ambition has developed a pupil leadership group. This group uses activities such as team building, personal reflection, mentoring visits and work in the local community.

Promoting engagement

5.9   Positive change appeared to be enhanced when staff and pupils clearly understood the transformational objectives and developed a sense of

ownership early in the process. This finding is consistent with the work of Goodson et al (2006: 57) who report that large-scale education change is more effective when teachers perceive innovation activities to be in line with their professional identity. Staff engagement was facilitated by encouraging them to participate in Schools of Ambition processes, for example, by engaging the school community to address transformational aims, forming evaluation teams/school enquiry groups and cross-curricular working groups.

5.10 In some of the Tranche 1 schools the transformational activities were focused on particular departments. This often led to those staff not directly involved being either unaware of the rationale and impact of the transformational activities and in some cases led to resentment that funding was being selectively deployed. However, these negative perceptions were usually successfully addressed by expanding the programme across the school and inviting all staff (including promoted and non-promoted staff) to take a role in defining and leading initiatives.

5.11 A feature of many transformational plans has been a focus on promoting school ethos and a culture conducive to change. The importance of promoting a culture predisposed to positive school change and capacity building is highlighted in the research literature (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Slavin, 2005, Stoll, 2009; Hatch, 2001; Adelman and Taylor, 2007). Across Schools of Ambition this has been addressed by introducing leadership activities for staff and pupils, inclusive curricular and pedagogical developments, cross-curricular working groups with active involvement from promoted and non-promoted staff, CPD opportunities and fostering greater parental and community engagement. Over time, school leaders report that these measures have resulted in staff and pupils expecting to be involved in decision-making, wanting to take responsibility for transformational activities and becoming more involved in their school and community generally.

5.12 Cultural change of this kind has been greatest where pupils, parents and staff have felt that they are part of the initiative and receive constructive feedback and encouragement, for example, involving staff in initial and on-going planning, evaluation processes and appropriate and relevant CPD focused to their needs. Such an approach represents modest moves towards collaborative, rather than invitational or cooperative models of participation.

5.13 School-based CPD activities have played a role in helping staff to implement aspects of the transformational plans and to sustain successful measures. This reflects findings in the wider research literature which stress the importance of teacher quality for promoting pupil achievement (Hattie, 2009) and school change (Elmore, 1996). Where leadership and school ethos measures have become embedded in schools, senior staff reported that this facilitated greater collegiality and willingness to engage in peer learning. Sustained site-based collaborative CPD appears important in supporting teachers to experiment with, evaluate and embed new approaches to teaching and learning that are proven to be effective in their school setting. This echoes the findings of Earley, 2009 and Goodall et al, 2005).

Developing a culture of self-evaluation and critical reflection

5.14   The research team noted early in the programme that school evaluation capacity and activity was more likely to develop where there was management support for evaluation, a team of co-ordinated teachers responsible for evaluation and realistic evaluation aims built into, and informing, broader school planning. In addition, staff reported that having time to conduct evaluation activities was an important factor. Indeed a major inhibitor to evaluation activity was competing demands and priorities on teachers' time, which restricted the time available to plan and conduct evaluations. Staff apprehension (often misplaced) to apply research methods and analysis was also evident in the early stages.

5.15   The complexity of operationalising transformational plans meant that schools designated or recruited a person or small team of staff to act as coordinator. This was particularly apparent in those schools that worked together on joint transformational plans. For example, a retired headteacher was appointed to integrate and develop the joint working across the partner schools, while another joint Schools of Ambition project recruited a coordinator with experience of managing youth and community programmes that shared aspects of many of the schools' transformational activities. However, one challenge for schools that used part of their Schools of Ambition funding to pay for a designated coordinator was that as the programme came to an end these posts were unsustainable unless other sources of funding were located. Some schools had anticipated this issue and allocated responsibility for coordination and management of the transformation across existing members of staff. This approach was less vulnerable to staff leaving to take up other posts or prolonged periods of absence. It also promoted distributed leadership which helped to maintain progress.

5.16   Where staff were engaged in School of Ambition research that also contributed to the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) or the Chartered Teacher programme there was evidence from Research Mentor observation and self-reporting from those staff involved in such programmes that research and reflection could contribute to improved educational practice in their class and school. The rigour of the research process required as part of such professional programmes, and the fact that it often focused on the teacher's own practice, appeared to reinforce the impact in school. Some schools were particularly enthusiastic about involving pupils in their evaluation activity. With appropriate induction and attention to ethical safeguards this proved valuable in obtaining pupil perspectives while also developing the skills of these young people.   Such developments reflect aspects of the literature on school transformation which highlight the importance of schools as learning organisations as a factor in effective change (Senge et al, 2000; Coppieters, 2005).

5.17   The research team's experience suggests that more that needs to be done to support and develop a capacity for professional enquiry and evaluation among teachers and other stakeholders in schools. This will become more important with full implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* and the need for school professionals to critically assess the impact of the new curriculum

for pupils and staff in their schools. Indeed, the research literature stresses the importance of collaborative enquiry to inform learning and teaching and professional practice (Earl, Torrance and Sutherland, 2006). Further external guidance from appropriate sources would also be beneficial to build research and evaluation capacity among teachers, including help to make effective use of various school data to inform decision-making in school. As James et al, (2007) have noted, effective use of routine school data to inform decision making is a key factor in successful school transformation.

Partnership working

5.18 The importance of partnership work was often crucial to the success of those transformational plans that sought to expand provision and support to make a positive difference to the achievement, life chances and health and well being of pupils. Partnerships were built with other schools, colleges, Skills Direct Scotland (formerly Careers Scotland), youth work and health and social services. Such partnerships were enhanced by Schools of Ambition funding which facilitated additional specialist and advisory staff input. The impact on achievement and positive destinations has been sufficiently pronounced in many of the schools that when the funding came to an end, schools and their partners have explored and implemented creative approaches to maintain successful aspects of joint programmes and systems. Where Schools of Ambition resources were used to fund external input to deliver one-off or discrete initiatives these were less likely to be sustained and benefit the school. The capacity for change and impact, however, was more sustained where there was systematic partnership working between schools and agencies and services to develop measures that were fully integrated into the curriculum and school systems.

5.19 Schools have also reported enhanced formal and informal networking with other schools both within and outwith their own learning community and local authority. As the Schools of Ambition programme has developed, networks of headteachers whose schools share similar transformational plans and contexts have established and maintained informal links to share ideas and good practice. Headteachers report that such networking has been facilitated by the regional and national Schools of Ambition conferences and events.

5.20 The range of partners that schools have been able to draw upon to support change and progress has often been influenced by the local availability of appropriate providers, services and employers. It is also evident that schools' efforts to engage employers and businesses to support their transformation efforts has been a challenge throughout the programme, yet some schools have been able to forge successful links with employers who have then, for example, played a role in supporting measures to promote positive destinations.

5.21 Experience of partnership working highlighted the need for good communication and mutual understanding of the various partners' working practices, commitments, and often differing protocols. School and external partners are vulnerable to changes in budgets and reductions in provision can inhibit the flexibility of schools to respond at previous levels. However,

schools and partners have worked creatively to adapt as far as possible to changes in funding. This has involved schools allocating a share of their budget to sustain effective partnership working and spreading responsibilities across existing staff who now have increased skills. School leaders have noted, however, that the goodwill of staff should not be taken for granted or seen as an alternative for providing adequate funding when necessary.

5.22 Activity to engage with parents has usually required substantial effort from schools but where this has been successful it is characterised by schools tailoring liaison and communication with parents to focus specifically on their child/children's progress and needs and using face-face meetings to discuss these issues. These meetings with parents require more time than standard parents' consultation evenings but are reported by school leaders as worth the effort given their success.

5.23 An aspect of successful partnership working across many Schools of Ambition has involved working with associated primary schools to promote transition, to provide targeted support for vulnerable pupils and implement specific learning programmes. The involvement of the schools' wider learning community has helped to embed strategies, structures and processes that improve transition from primary through secondary school and then on to post-school destinations. Evidence from schools suggests that focused interventions and learning programmes are more likely to have a positive impact when they are tailored to an individual's needs and introduced at an earlier stage in pupils' school careers.

External influences

Curriculum for Excellence

5.24 Implementing school change has been facilitated by the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence* which shares the same ethos as Schools of Ambition in promoting innovation, connections across the curriculum and flexibility to meet learners' needs and appropriate recognition of achievement. Senior staff within the Schools of Ambition reported that the programme has facilitated change to learning and teaching practices, supported curriculum development and paved the way for full implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Where this has worked well, the curriculum and support systems are flexible to meet the needs of all pupils including the very able and lowest attaining pupils and the school has resisted developing a tiered 'vocational' and 'academic' approach. Headteachers, particularly in Tranche 2 and Tranche 3, reported that *Curriculum for Excellence* had provided a stimulus for change and staff felt more confident because of the improvements in learning and teaching, staff capacity and supporting structures facilitated by Schools of Ambition.

HMIE inspections

5.25 Annual interviews with members of the leadership group in the Schools of Ambition and support meetings with staff in school sometimes made reference the fact that the initial transformational plans had been influenced by previous

HMIE inspection recommendations. HMIE guidance and requirements such as the increasing emphasis on self-evaluation in schools at all levels has also promoted monitoring and evaluation measures. This has complemented the Schools of Ambition mentor team's work in promoting greater awareness of the importance of critical reflection and self-evaluation in shaping practice.

Funding

5.26　Senior staff across the schools stressed that the Schools of Ambition funding had acted as a catalyst, providing the freedom to innovate and explore new ways of working. A recurring theme across the schools was that staff frequently stressed that some of the key sustainable developments required relatively little financial input. Quite often this was due to the programme promoting increased commitment and flexibility across staff and a greater willingness to lead activities and share responsibilities.

Sustainability

5.27　From the qualitative information gathered by the research team it is clear that most schools, particularly those in Tranches 2 and 3 have made efforts to address sustainability when planning and implementing their various measures and activities. For example, funding has been used to develop initiatives based on attitudinal, relational or pedagogical change such as Learn to Learn, or strategies based on changes to school policy such as parental engagement. Many schools have developed strategies for succession planning to ensure that successful innovations did not disappear when the funding ended, a factor emphasised in the wider research literature (Robinson et al, 2008). Attention to cultural and affective change has helped some schools to address challenging financial situations and other difficulties which may arise.

5.28　In addition, school management and teachers have reported that developments in the wider education policy landscape, particularly *Curriculum for Excellence*, include many of the priorities that underpin the Schools of Ambition programme. This, they hope, will mean that local authorities and their partners will prioritise funding and staffing that are in harmony with their school programmes.

Conclusion

5.29　The Schools of Ambition programme was an innovative way of providing support for schools going through a period of significant change, often in challenging circumstances. The programme was distinctive in promoting an action research model within a national programme for school change. Headteachers valued the opportunity to address specific local needs and educational priorities through devolved funding, within national guidelines and supported by national Advisers. As the programme progressed, many schools aligned their School of Ambition transformational plan with the school development plan, particularly in regard to the challenges presented by *Curriculum for Excellence*. Within this context, the Schools of Ambition programme has provided important lessons for schools which are now widely

disseminated in Leading Change 2 (Scottish Government, 2010). In particular, this focuses on the experiences of schools that have shown progress in developing a school culture that welcomes change, developing the professional capacity of teachers and innovating to meet the needs of young people.

5.30 Where successful, evaluation activities supplemented routine data gathering in schools, extended the range of methods available to teacher evaluators, and promoted the use of data to inform on-going developments. In a minority of schools, curriculum development was supported by teacher development and proceeded within a planned cycle of reflection and change. Whilst this model of collaborative problem solving proved a challenge in many schools, the majority of participants across the schools reported increased confidence in using a range of evaluation methods to assess progress towards locally defined goals. The capacity of the schools to link curriculum development and self-evaluation was noted by HMIE in their report, *Lessons learned from the Schools of Ambition initiative* (HMIE, 2010).

5.31 The Schools of Ambition programme is held in high regard by those teachers who contributed to the evaluation strand of Research to Support Schools of Ambition. Headteachers are keen to maintain the professional learning communities initiated through the programme.

5.32 The key features of the programme – innovation, flexibility, autonomy and professional accountability – are salient features of contemporary education policy for all schools.

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Appendix 1: Key themes within Transformational Plans

Tranche One	
Anderson High School	Building partnerships with other schools globally through themed curriculum development projects. Use of ICT to develop global learning through six interlinked projects with the theme of *'Living Locally, Learning Globally'.*
Arbroath Academy	leadership development; pupil and community confidence; enterprising teaching and learning.
Barrhead High School	confidence and resilience; attainment and achievement; citizenship; inclusion;
Blairgowrie High School	vocational education; learning and teaching/ICT; leadership development
Braes High School	Building a strong and positive school ethos; development of new technologies for learning; enterprise and citizenship
Braeview Academy	developing opportunities to engage with the Arts; developing a learning community; developing leadership; increasing confidence, aspiration and ambition.
Burnhouse School	school ethos/culture; coaching and peer mentoring; behaviour management; restorative justice
Cardinal Newman High School	Cardinal Newman High School focuses on two strands: enhancing enterprise (in its widest definition) and expanding its vocational curriculum as part of the middle school programme.
Castlemilk High and St Margaret Mary's	teaching for effective learning; curricular flexibility; enhancing employability; improving attendance.
Doon Academy Learning Partnership	numeracy; Arts across the curriculum; vocational learning (curricular flexibility); curriculum enrichment (PE/dance/drama); ICT emotional health.
Hawick High School	Hawick High School has four objectives: 1) raising girls' aspiration and motivation through the Girls of Ambition project; 2) using formative

	assessment to promote effective learning and, pupil attainment and achievement; 3) using ICT to enhance teaching and learning; 4) utilising the 'Heart of Hawick Regeneration' project to develop young people's self-esteem, motivation, sense of aspiration and a 'can do' culture.
Inverness High School	social enterprise; vocational learning; ICT.
Islay High School	development of new curriculum structures; learning and teaching/ICT; vocational education; leadership, ethos/culture.
Kirkland High School	use of drama/performing arts to enhance learning and teaching to promote pupil confidence and opportunities; promoting leadership for pupils and staff; enhancing the image of the school in the community.
Newbattle Community High School	improved leadership skills and opportunities among pupils and staff; strengthening the provision of Arts across the curriculum; consolidating pupil support mechanisms Cross-curricular sharing of good practice
Our Lady & St Patrick's High School	OLSP High School investigates the development of creative thinking through and across the curriculum to transform the attitudes (motivation, confidence, self-esteem) and qualities (citizenship, enterprise) of all pupils.
St Modan's RC High School	Curricular developments revolve around the Arts, culture and health
St Ninian's High School	St Ninian's High School has four strands: pupil motivation, confidence and self-esteem; formative assessment; modern languages development; and the use of ICT in school. It is seeking to change behaviour and attitudes, broaden ambitions of pupils and enhance pupil engagement. Good practice and innovation in Modern Languages are being used as a catalyst to support whole school developments.
St Paul's High School	effective pupil tracking; learning beyond the classroom.
Wallace Hall Academy	restructuring the curriculum; learning and teaching; raising attainment and achievement; ICT and e-learning

Tranche Two	
Brechin High School	development of leadership capacity; development of ICT and innovative approaches in the curriculum; provision of vocational courses across the curriculum for S3–S6 pupils.
Castle Douglas	Castle Douglas has three main objectives: to expand vocational learning appropriate to the needs of individual learners; to enhance the range of ICT courses to equip pupils with skills appropriate to work and study skills for the 21st century; and to develop ambition, self confidence and self esteem and entrepreneurial skills through enhanced art, music, drama and personal fitness provision.
Dunbar Grammar	The school intends to use participation in performing arts to develop pupil confidence, aspirations and give staff and pupils a shared sense of purpose and improve pupil engagement.
Fraserburgh Academy	There are three strands to the Fraserburgh Transformational Plan: promoting leadership and enterprise; challenge and support (self confidence, high expectations and personal responsibility); and the expansion of vocational opportunities.
Lossiemouth High	Lossiemouth is committed to: developing leadership capacity and opportunities for pupils and staff; the promotion of pupil-focused teaching and learning; and building a positive ethos and relationships in school.
Springburn Academy	The Transformational Plan at Springburn Academy is based on the following four strands: learning and teaching; raising the aspirations, ambitions and positive destinations of vulnerable young people; leadership development of staff and young people; and increasing parental involvement.
St Machar	The St. Machar Transformational Plan has the following objectives: to improve health and fitness activity levels of all pupils and staff with the aim of improving attainment and engagement with all aspects of school life; the development of pupil confidence, self-esteem and motivation through work on teaching and learning to raise attainment; and to develop further the school's ability to work with parents and the wider school community in Aberdeen City.

Tranche Three	
Alford Academy	successful leadership; effective learning experiences; high quality professional development; 21st-century curriculum.
Alloa Academy, Alva Academy and Lornshill Academy	The transformational for three secondary schools – Alva, Alloa and Lornshill – focuses on the adoption and implementation of restorative practice in association with nationally-recognised training organisations and schools with previous experience in the use of such practice.
Auchenharvie	raising pupil ambitions; enhancing the curriculum; improving the health of pupils; celebrating success (pupil reward system)
Carrick Academy	leadership, learning and community
Charleston Academy	improving health and well-being; increasing community use of Charleston campus; developing school ethos and promoting achievement; promoting effective learning and teaching; developing curriculum for excellence.
Gracemount High School	The Gracemount Transformational Plan has four strands: ethos for achievement (promoting confident individuals, ambition, high achievement and the determination to succeed); leadership and capacity development; promoting the effective use of ICT to enhance the learning experience, supporting learner independence and promoting successful learners; and pathway development to provide enhanced choice (a wider range of learning opportunities).
Kilsyth Academy	The Kilsyth Transformational Plan has three underpinning aims: the use of expressive arts and creativity to motivate the whole school community; the promotion of creative and active teaching and learning; and leadership development of both pupils and staff.
Kirkcaldy High School	Kirkcaldy aims to develop the leadership skills and abilities and attitudes in staff, pupils and parents through: the development of leadership programmes; facilitation of leadership opportunities at every level in the school; the development of pupils as Ambassadors for the school; and the development of a coaching and mentoring programme for staff and pupils.

	There are four core themes to the plan: effective leadership, motivational environments, aspirational learning and enhanced collaboration.
Lanark Grammar School	staff and pupil development; ICT; communication and sharing good practice; rich tasks; pupil progression and decision making; and baseline performance and progress
Orkney: Kirkwall Grammar School, North Walls Community School, Pierowall Junior High School, Sanday Junior High School, Stromness Academy and Stronsay Junior High School	Enhancing Skills - maximise the impact of learning and leadership opportunities; Transforming the curriculum- parity of curricular opportunity for all pupils in Orkney, enhanced e-learning opportunities; Celebrating Success - e-recording of achievement. Connecting with others - active participants in the global educational community.
Queensferry	The Transformational Plan addresses culture and ethos, learning and teaching, community engagement and leadership.
Renfrew High School	Renfrew High School's Transformational Plan has four strands: to develop Renfrew High School as a learning community; to enhance the use of ICT in the learning process; to develop the leadership of pupils and staff; and to develop the creative abilities of the pupils.
Rothesay Academy, Bute	improving attainment; recognising wider achievement; improving pupil support and engagement in learning; pursuing excellence;
St Stephen's and Port Glasgow	strengthening leadership skills across the schools' communities; maximising pupils' learning by raising confidence and self esteem; improved well-being through health education and participation in sport, music, art and drama.
Taylor High School	The school will use technology in all aspects of learning and teaching using co-operative learning approaches for the benefit of all pupils.
The Nicolson Institute	Pupil confidence and self-esteem, school ethos, leadership and vocational education.

Appendix 2: Guidance on Telling the Story

Schools of Ambition: Telling the School's Transformation Story

Background
There are 52 Schools of Ambition now in place across Scotland, all of which are undertaking a range of different activities and interventions, and are at different stages in their journey. As you are aware all of the SoA have been undertaking evaluative Action Research on the impact of interventions within schools, and a number of schools, (especially in the first tranche) have been asking for some guidance on how they might present not only these outcomes, but the key learning points for the school, staff and pupils. This document presents a suggested format for the presentation of your school's transformation story that outlines the key elements to be considered for inclusion, but is hopefully flexible enough to allow each school to adopt their own individual ways of sharing experiences. The length of your account will depend on the format you choose to adopt, but it is suggested that you ensure that what is produced will make sense to the wider educational community who may not have been directly involved in the SoA initiative.

Objective
The purpose of the feedback on the SoA outcomes is twofold. It will be a celebration of achievement, contextualising the transformational plans and the activities, and it will also document the progress and impact over the three years. However, it is recognised that this part of the story can only ever be a snapshot of the impact of the changes introduced and that there may well be additional outcomes in the years to come. For this reason we would like the evaluative research to be presented as part of a reflective document which highlights the key learning points for the school, and which will provide a marker or foundation stone for continued school development.

Suggested Structure

Introduction
- Narrative, giving an outline of the vision and Transformational Plan, contextualised in terms of the school's challenges.
- Activities undertaken by the school, including commentary on the challenges, processes, difficulties etc.

Reflection on interventions
- How far have you come in achieving your vision?
- What worked well and why?
- What didn't work?
- What changes were made from the original plan?
- What still needs to be done?
- What would you change if you were starting again, and what advice would you give to other schools?
- What changes do you expect to see in the future?
- What were the key learning points for the school?
- Reflection on the teacher researchers' 'journeys'

Evidence of impacts and outcomes

- What research questions were addressed and how do they relate to the goals in the transformational plan?
- What methods were employed and why?
- How was the research undertaken?
- What evidence was gathered and analysed?
- Were there aspects of the research that were not completed or were not successful?
- What were the impacts on teachers, pupils and wider community? - presentation of evidence.

Routine monitoring and evaluation data may be attached in appendices to this account of the research and enquiry activity in school. This section is primarily concerned with the rationale for the investigations undertaken, the choice of methods of enquiry and the claims that can be made on the basis of evidence gathered.

Sustaining the change

- What are you doing to sustain the changes?
- What will influence the sustainability of the changes?
- What will you continue to do differently?
- How will you know if the vision has been achieved?
- Has the process promoted teachers'/others' capacity to evaluate?
- How has what you have done prepared the school for *Curriculum for Excellence*?

External support

- Input from the Local Authority
- Input from the university research team
- Input from the Senior Advisers
- Input from other sources (including partner organisations)

We would like the Local Authority also to outline what they feel are the key learning points, and how they are going to disseminate the lessons emerging from the school's involvement in the Schools of Ambition programme.

Format of the feedback

This is really up to the schools, but ideally we would like the presentation to reflect the innovative nature of the programme, with use of multi-media, photographs, recordings etc., anything in fact that the school can include that demonstrates the impact of the Schools of Ambition initiative in their school. Schools might also consider for instance, including accounts or outputs from Pupil Conferences.

To ensure that the lessons and good practice of the schools can be shared as widely as possible, all schools are asked to produce their portfolios in an electronic format, with the aim of hosting the stories on the school's own website[14]. The website will then be signposted from the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) Schools of Ambition website.

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[14] Where schools do not yet have a website, alternative arrangements will be made.

Audience

As outlined earlier, the target audience for the portfolio should be both other Schools of Ambition, and those who have not been part of the initiative. Many of the emerging lessons from the Schools of Ambition are very transferable to other schools. For this reason, all schools are asked to include as part of their portfolio, a final personal statement from participating individuals in the school, indicating which activities, methodologies or changes of practice that they would definitely take with them to other schools if they moved on.

Preparation of Telling the Story

You may wish to seek advice from your university research mentor and the SoA Senior Advisors in preparing your submission. You may also make use of the VRE to compare notes with colleagues in other Schools of Ambition.

It is anticipated that the work may be undertaken and submitted as soon as it is completed but no later than the end of March 2010 for Tranche 3 schools.

This document was prepared by Deirdre Kelly, SoA Research Co-ordinator, in collaboration with the Research Support Team. Updated March 2009 to incorporate 'Further Guidance'

Appendix 3: The Schools of Ambition 2005/10 by tranche

Tranche One	
1. Anderson High School	Shetland
2. Arbroath Academy	Angus
3. Barrhead High School	East Renfrewshire
4. Blairgowrie High School	Perth and Kinross
5. Braes High School	Falkirk
6. Braeview Academy	Dundee City
7. Burnhouse School	West Lothian
8. Cardinal Newman High School	North Lanarkshire
9. Castlemilk High	Glasgow City
10. Doon Academy Learning Partnership	East Ayrshire
11. Hawick High School	Scottish Borders
12. Inverness High School	Highland
13. Islay High School	Argyll and Bute
14. Kirkland High School	Fife
15. Newbattle Community High School	Midlothian
16. Our Lady & St Patrick's High School	West Dunbartonshire
17. St Margaret Mary's	Glasgow City
18. St Modan's RC High School	Stirling
19. St Ninian's High School	East Dunbartonshire
20. St Paul's High School	Glasgow City
21. Wallace Hall Academy	Dumfries and Galloway
Tranche Two	
1. Brechin High School	Angus
2. Castle Douglas	Dumfries and Galloway
3. Dunbar Grammar	East Lothian
4. Fraserburgh Academy	Aberdeenshire
5. Lossiemouth High	Moray
6. Springburn Academy	Glasgow
7. St Machar	Aberdeen City
Tranche Three	
1. Alford Academy	Aberdeenshire
2. Alloa Academy,	Clackmannanshire
3. Alva Academy	Clackmannanshire
4. Auchenharvie	North Ayrshire
5. Carrick Academy	South Ayrshire
6. Charleston Academy, Inverness	Highland
7. Kilsyth Academy	North Lanarkshire
8. Kirkcaldy High School	Fife
9. Kirkwall Grammar School	Orkney
10. Lanark Grammar School/Learning Community	South Lanarkshire
11. Lornshill Academy	Clackmannanshire
12. North Walls Community School	Orkney
13. Port Glasgow	Inverclyde
14. St Stephens	Inverclyde
15. Taylor High School	North Lanarkshire

16. Pierowall Junior High School	Orkney
17. Sanday Junior High School	Orkney
18. Stromness Academy	Orkney
19. Stronsay Junior High School	Orkney
20. Renfrew High School	East Renfrewshire
21. Rothesay Academy, Bute	Argyll and Bute
22. The Nicolson Institute, Stornoway	Western Isles
23. Gracemount High School	Edinburgh
24. South Queensferry	Edinburgh

Appendix 4: Dissemination

Conference presentations
- The Scottish Educational Research Association Conference, 2007, 2008, 2009.
- The British Educational Research Association Conference, 2007, 2008 (including contributions to the practitioner research day), 2009.
- The European Conference on Educational Research, 2008, 2009
- The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 2008, 2009.
- Teacher Education and Teachers' Work conferences, Universities of Glasgow/Strathclyde 2007, 2008, 2009.
- Collaborative Action Research Network annual conference, Liverpool, 2008 and workshop, Glasgow, 2008.
- Leeds Metropolitan University international symposium 2008, and research seminar, 2009.

The 2009 SERA presentation was a keynote which explored the links between *Curriculum for Excellence* and the Schools of Ambition experience.

There has been considerable international interest in the work and links have been made in Norway, Sweden, Slovenia, England and the USA with teams undertaking projects of a similar nature.

Journal articles
Publications deriving from the work have appeared in the following journals:

- *Education in the North* (Menter and Hulme 2007; Hulme and Menter 2008)
- *Journal of Education for Teaching* (Hulme, Baumfield and Payne, 2009)
- *Teacher Education and Teachers' Work* (Hulme, Lowden and Elliot, 2009)
- *Vzgoja Isobrazevanje* (Menter and Hulme, 2008)

Book chapters
- *Connecting Inquiry and Professional Learning in Education* (Menter and Hulme, 2009)
- *Partnership in Education – theoretical approach and case studies* (Baumfield, Hulme and Menter, 2009)
- *Collaboration in Education* (Hulme, Menter, Kelly and Rusby, 2010)

Book
The experience of this work is also providing much evidence for a practitioner research handbook currently being written for Sage (Menter et al, forthcoming).

Appendix 5: Interview schedule for case study key informants

As the Schools of Ambition programme is coming to an end we are working on the final evaluation report. Recent discussions with the Scottish Government have highlighted the value of conducting reflective interviews with key staff in a limited number of Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schools. The aim of these interviews is to gather insights from Headteachers and other relevant staff/ partners on the impact of the Schools of Ambition programme on the more quantitative measures such as positive destinations, attainment and school roll. This information will supplement the wide range of other data and evidence on the impact of the programme.

We have selected a small number of schools to reflect the range of geographic and demographic contexts.

All reporting of the findings from this strand of the research will not name any individual or school.

1. **Identify key informants' positions and role played in the SoA. Were they involved in SoA evaluation activities?**

2. **Looking at the printout showing data for your school, what effect do you think the SoA project has had on:**

   • *Positive destinations of pupils*

      Probe: whether SoA focus in school focussed on this

         - other factors that might have influenced this dimension

         - if appropriate, why quantitative measures might not tell the full story concerning impact here.

   • *Pupils' attainment*

      Probe: whether SoA focus in school focussed on this

         - other factors that might have influenced this dimension

         - if appropriate, why quantitative measures might not tell the full story concerning impact here.

   • *School roll*

      Probe: whether SoA focus in school focussed on this

         - other factors that might have influenced this dimension

         - if appropriate, why quantitative measures might not tell the full story concerning impact here.

3. Overall, how would you summarise the difference the Schools of Ambition programme has made to the:

- the pupils and staff within the school?

- the wider community (including parents, primary schools, partner organisations, colleges and employers etc)?

- culture of the school?

4. Do you feel the changes are sustainable?

Probe: *If yes*, what factors are contributing to supporting sustainability?

If no, what would be helpful (assuming it's not just money) or needs to be in place to ensure sustainability?

5. Are there any particular factors that have helped or hindered the effectiveness of:

- Transformational Plan development activities?

- evaluation activities?

6. Finally are there any other comments you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix 6: Parameters of the literature review

Date limitations	2000-09
Geographical limitations	International literature, UK and beyond
Sector/pupil age range	Middle school Secondary/High school
Language	English language publications
Key words	(Comprehensive or whole) school reform School restructuring School system redesign School transformation System leadership **Transformational change**
Broader terms	School effectiveness School improvement
Related terms	Best practices Change agents Change strategies Educational development Educational innovation Educational reform Effective schools research Instructional effectiveness Instructionally effective schools Leadership effectiveness Organizational effectiveness
Truncation	- Transform$ - System$
Excluded	Policy documents Book reviews Not research-informed

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