

**Bradford Trident Learning Mentors:
Evaluation Report**

**A report prepared for:
Bradford Trident**

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative was launched by the Government in 1999 as one of its key policies for tackling low levels of educational achievement in secondary schools in some of the most deprived inner city areas in England. Learning Mentors constitute one of seven strands of the EiC programme. The objective of this strand is to support schools in raising standards by offering increased levels of support to students and thereby reducing barriers to learning. The launch of the programme in secondary schools was followed, in Autumn 2000, with the Primary Pilot which also contains a Learning Mentor strand.

Bradford is a Phase 1 Excellence in Cities (EiC) area with around 158 EiC Learning Mentors now employed in primary schools and 93 in secondary schools.¹ Learning mentors work with teaching staff in schools to support pupils' learning. Performance and attainment data is used to identify pupils who are achieving below their potential and then target their time to work with those pupils. They will help and support the young people, making contact with families where necessary and making links with Study Centres to ensure every opportunity to succeed is given. The Mentors work through intervention either in or out of school time to help with specific skills, behaviour problems or problems outside school which prevent pupils achieving. This may range from potential high achievers who need extra study support to those with learning difficulties who need specific skills training.

The EiC Learning Mentors planning guidance specified the following role for learning mentors:

“The role of learning mentors is to help individual pupils overcome barriers to learning, both within and outside school. Their role is to support those pupils who are at risk of underachieving or disengaging from learning for a variety of reasons. An important role of learning mentors is to assess why pupils are experiencing barriers to learning, which could include a range of factors such as pupils feeling demotivated, lacking self-esteem, having fallen behind in their work or who find communication difficult and to work with those pupils to support them, either in the school or outside school to address any problems and achieve their full potential.

¹ There is also a matched funding programme available for primary schools not involved in the EiC programme.

Learning mentors will:

- *Target help on those who need it most, especially those suffering multiple disadvantage*
- *Raise standards and reduce truancy and exclusion – helping pupils to make accelerated progress towards achieving local attainment, truancy, exclusion and other relevant targets*
- *Provide a complementary service to existing school staff, and to others providing services outside school, to help pupils to access the help that they need.” (Learning Mentors: Planning Guidance)*

1.1 Bradford Trident Learning Mentor programme

As part of its Support to Schools programme, Bradford Trident took the decision to extend EiC Learning Mentor provision by funding additional Learning Mentor time for primary and secondary schools serve the Trident community.

Baseline information from 1998 showed that children and young people living in the Trident area did significantly worse at school than other children and young people across Bradford as a whole (see table 1.1). The aim of project was to reduce under-achievement by allowing Learning Mentors to be appointed in each of eight primary and seven secondary schools attended by Bradford Trident young people. The Learning Mentors were to target their time towards specific pupils and, over the complete scheme, would be able to offer 25 hours per year of individual support for up to 20 percent of pupils in the schools. In addition a team of Bradford Trident Learning Mentors would be created, to be coordinated by the Grange School, for the exchange of information, training and sharing of best practice.

Table 1.1: Pupil attainment – Baseline data

	Trident	Bradford
Key Stage 2 average points score	3.52	3.83
Key Stage 3 average points score	18.5	41.2
% pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	12.3	28.6
GCE A level average points score	8.8	12.4
% of leavers in to college or university	6.8	14.5

The Learning Mentor project is the cornerstone of Bradford Trident’s support to schools. However the project was also intended to complement other Trident initiatives including the IT project, the Study Centres and the provision of higher education bursaries. Overall the work of the learning mentors is intended to

contribute to the Trident outcomes of: raising achievement in schools; more people going on to college, university or training; and reduced racial disadvantage.

The project was appraised for the duration of the Trident programme; however Learning Mentors were initially appointed for the period up until August 2004. Trident funding in 2002/3 and 2003/4 is shown in table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Trident Learning Mentor funding by school, 2002/3 and 2003/4

School	2002/3 allocation (£)	2003/4 allocation (£)
Primary Schools		
Marshfield Primary School	6152	6306
Newby Primary School	18452	18913
Bowling Park Primary School	5124	5252
Bankfoot Primary School	6152	6306
All Saints CE Primary School	8712	8930
ST Matthews CE Primary School	5124	5252
St Stephens CE Primary School	7688	7880
St Josephs Catholic Primary School	7688	7880
Secondary Schools		
Buttershaw High School	5124	5252
Wyke Manor School	5124	5252
Tong School	6152	6306
Grange Technology College	18452	18913
Dixons CTC	5124	5252
Bradford Cathedral Community College	5124	5252

These schools were selected because they all have more than 50 Bradford Trident young people on roll¹. The project is coordinated by Grange School, hence the relatively higher funding.

The project started in September 2001 although there was a delay in the effective start date because of the need to recruit Learning Mentors to the new posts created.

1.2 Aims and objectives for evaluation

The Learning Mentor programme is the main element in Trident's support for schools. The project is currently funded until the end of the 2003/04 school year; it is therefore timely for the project to be subject to evaluation now prior to decisions being taken about future funding.

¹ Yorkshire Martyrs Catholic College also has more than 50 Bradford Trident young people on roll; however they chose not to become involved in the Learning Mentors project.

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the contribution that Learning Mentors make to the raising of educational achievement of children living in the Bradford Trident area.

The objectives were to:

- Document the ways in which the Learning Mentors are deployed within schools
- Evaluate the impact of their work on:
 - The behaviour and achievement of the individual children with whom they work
 - The behaviour and achievement of other children in the class
 - The wider school community.

The key evaluation questions were as follows:

1. To what extent is the project successfully meeting its objectives?
2. In what ways, and how effectively is the project contributing to the theme and programme outcomes?
3. Has the project changed in any way since its commencement? If so, why was this? has the change been helpful in meeting objectives more effectively?
4. Is the project successfully reaching its target group/groups? If not, why not?
5. Which aspects of the project's delivery mechanisms are working well? Which are working less well?
6. What, if any, difficulties have been encountered in delivering the project? How have they been addressed?
7. Are relevant partners fully and appropriately involved?
8. In the light of available evidence on local needs and priorities, are the objectives and approach of the project still appropriate?
9. Is it possible to identify any impacts that can be attributed to the project?
10. What lessons have been learned and what improvements could be made in the future?

1.3 Challenges for evaluation

The Learning Mentor programme presents a number of challenges for evaluation. Ideally an evaluation of this kind should be capable of answering the following questions:

- How are Learning Mentors managed and deployed within schools? (Including time spent on one-to-one and group work, in and out of class; time spent on planning, administration, monitoring and review) (*Inputs*)
- What processes are in place to underpin the work of the Learning Mentors? (including referral; assessment; action planning; liaison with other staff; linkages with outside agencies; monitoring, review and evaluation) (*Process*)
- What is the profile of students receiving mentoring support? (Including year group, ethnicity, gender, reason for referral, type of mentoring support) (*Outputs*)
- How are learning mentors perceived by teachers, students and other support staff?
- What is the impact of mentoring support on individual students and the wider school community? (including attainment, behaviour, attendance, self-confidence/self-esteem) (*Outcomes*)

While some data can be obtained relatively easily in relation to some of these issues, this is not the case for all. For example it would not be easy on the basis of current information systems to link pupils in receipt of mentoring support with results achieved or improved attendance or behaviour. Schools collect and record this kind of micro-level data in different ways. Also you would either need to have 'before' and 'after' data for individual pupils collected in a standard format so that it was, for example, possible to say that whereas the expected level of achievement of an individual pupil was X prior to mentoring support, it was X+M after mentoring support. Alternatively you would have to compare the performance of students in receipt of mentoring support with a matched group of students who didn't receive such support. However the nature of the Learning Mentor programme is such that children in similar circumstances are all likely to receive mentoring support. Furthermore there would be serious ethical issues involved in not providing mentoring support for students clearly in need.

Secondly even if it were possible to obtain information on outcomes in relation to individual pupils it would not then be possible to attribute any improvement to mentoring input; there could be a range of different factors that have contributed to improved performance. Identifying the specific factors that have led to progress for a particular student is usually only possible through in-depth examination of the circumstances of that student.

Thirdly it is difficult to identify the additionality that the processes and outcomes of the learning mentor programme brings to schools and individual pupils, relative to what might be achieved through ‘normal’ school processes (so-called ‘deadweight’).

Finally Learning Mentors are engaged with such a diverse set of problems that it is difficult to come up with a small number of indicators that would capture the kinds of outcomes that they are working towards. This is especially the case in relation to self-esteem and self-confidence which are, in any case difficult to measure. While there are a number of different assessment tools used in schools to assess self-esteem and self-confidence, there is no standardisation that would allow comparison across schools or students or aggregation of data. Learning Mentors tend to record progress of individual students in a wide range of diverse and innovative ways (stickers, diaries, ladders of achievement) that have meaning for the individual students but are not amenable to analysis or aggregation.

However these difficulties are partially off-set by the fact that the DfES has commissioned a large national evaluation of EiC which has already published a number of reports on the Learning Mentor strand. These national studies could provide good practice benchmarks against which local Learning Mentor work might be compared. Thus, to the extent that national studies identify critical success factors for mentoring to have a positive impact, then it is reasonable to say that where local practice conforms to these success factors then we can assume that positive impacts are being achieved locally.

1.4 Methodology

The evaluation has involved an analysis of relevant documentation including the project appraisal, pupil performance data and data on pupils worked with by the Trident Learning Mentors. Background papers on Learning Mentors more generally have also been examined. In addition interviews have been conducted with the Trident Youth, Education and Community Programme Manager and the Education Bradford lead officer for Excellence in Cities. The main element of the work has been a series of visits to three primary and three secondary schools. Each visit has involved interviews with the head teacher or his/her nominee, Learning mentors and their line managers (where the line manager is not the headteacher). Documentation relating to the Learning Mentor’s role has also been sought from each school together with a series of case stories.

1.5 Structure of the report

The report draws on all the above-mentioned sources to answer the key evaluation questions identified above. In the next section we look at the way in which the Learning Mentor project is being implemented in the case study schools including processes for pupil referral, types of mentoring activities and intervention, management of and support for Learning Mentors, and systems for monitoring and evaluation. In section three we look at the evidence on impact and in the final two section conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

2 PROGRESS OF THE TRIDENT LEARNING MENTOR PROGRAMME

Trident have adopted a generally “laissez faire” approach to the way in which the mentor scheme is implemented recognising the need for the Trident Learning Mentors to work within the overall framework of school policies and processes. However schools are generally working within the EiC framework for Learning Mentors – Trident mentors work to a standard EiC job description and access all the EiC learning mentor training. Nevertheless there are variations across schools as this section shows.

2.1 Schools’ policy and objectives

All the schools visited had more or less clear objectives for their Learning Mentors that used words like “removing the barriers to learning”; “helping children access all that the school can provide”; and “keeping children at risk of disaffection within the mainstream”. However, there was considerable variation in the extent to which these objectives were linked to other school policies and objectives and to the School Improvement Plan. For example All Saints has a clear Learning Mentor policy linked to its wider inclusion policy and the school’s mission statement and is in the process of developing a Learning Mentor handbook. At Dixons the Learning Mentor is part of the Individual Needs team and all referrals go through the same process.

Example: Primary School Learning Mentor aims and objectives

- To remove the barriers to and promote inclusion
- To remove barriers to learning by improving key academic skills, social skills, attendance, etc
- To support the teaching and learning of all pupils
- To give children the opportunity to express their concerns, needs and feelings by having the time to listen
- To remove the barriers between home and school
- To set up after-school provision including study support, activity clubs etc.
- To make school a pleasurable experience for children
- To raise pupils’ individual aspirations and expectations of themselves by improving their self-esteem
- To raise the standards of attainment and achievement
- To raise the awareness of the value of learning
- To support the school in providing the children with a safe and secure environment
- To provide positive role models.

In most of the schools the Heads/Line managers and the Learning Mentors themselves, felt that the mentoring role had become embedded within the schools

and was understood by other school staff. However this had not always been an easy process. For example in one school the Learning Mentors' role had, initially been seen as “babysitting naughty children”. This perception had taken considerable effort to overcome.

Raising staff awareness of the Learning Mentors' role and encouraging appropriate referrals was ongoing in a number of the schools. This was particularly an issue in schools that were dependent on significant numbers of temporary staff. In some secondary schools teaching staff were reluctant to students being allowed to leave lessons to attend mentoring sessions.

2.2 Processes and procedures

All of the case study schools were using, more or less rigorously, EiC recommended processes and procedures or variations on these.

All of the schools has in place a system for making **referrals**. In primary schools referrals typically came from the class teacher to the Learning Mentor line manager; in secondary schools referrals typically come through the Head of Year. In some schools (eg Bradford Cathedral Community College and Dixons CTC) the same referral system is used for mentoring and other kinds of support. All schools use the EiC referral categories (see Annex). Some of the schools – typically secondary – allow students to self-refer. However even where this occurs the self-referral is then taken back to the Head of Year in order to generate a formal referral.

Following referral the Learning Mentor may then decide on a period of **observation** and **assessment** of the student. Following this an **initial meeting** then takes place between the mentor and the student during which the mentor's role is explained and ground rules discussed. As one might expect, this is a more formal process in secondary schools with, in some cases, the student formally agreeing to participate in the mentoring programme. In some, but not all, schools a formal **action plan** is then drawn up specifying short and long term targets and level and type of intervention.

At this point a letter is sent to the student's **parents** informing them that the student is receiving mentoring support.

There was considerable variation in the **length of time** mentors work with students. For example at Dixons CTC the mentor works with students for eight weeks at which point the case is reviewed. However at BCCC the commitment from the start is open-ended. At All Saints primary they also work to a fixed term of eight weeks initially while recognising that children may need more or less input. However they try not to continue mentoring support for more than two terms.

All schools visited keep good records of the work with individual students. The file for any individual student typically includes:

- The referral sheet
- Individual Action plan
- Mentor's log of sessions with students
- Details of contacts with parents and outside agencies
- Records of student's progress – these varied greatly and included, teacher assessments, student diaries, self-assessment questionnaires, sticker charts etc.

Example: Bowling Park – recording children's progress

Children fill in an evaluation sheet including:

- What went really well during the last week?
- What were you proud of?
- What did you achieve?
- Was there anything that did not go very well?
- Was there anything that you wish you had done differently?
- What progress did you make towards our agreed targets and objectives?
- How would you rate the last week on a scale of 0-10?

Learning Mentors fill in a Review sheet including:

- Progress made/targets achieved
- Student's view
- Mentor's views/evaluation
- Parental views
- Future action

Profile of Pupil Inclusion completed for each child – 10 categories as follows:

- Attendance
- Family participation
- Cultural links
- Physical safety
- Emotional security
- Peer relations
- Adult relations
- Self-esteem
- Learning activities
- School engagement

In all schools visited caseloads are subject to regular **review** although the frequency of reviews was variable. For example at All Saints weekly meetings between the Mentor and their line manager are held to review cases and consider new referrals. Similarly at Dixons the Learning Mentor attends weekly Individual needs meetings at which she provides feedback on her caseload. At BCCC cases are reviewed half termly.

2.3 Deployment and resources

In all of the schools visited the Learning Mentors worked to a **timetable**; in some cases this was drawn up by the mentors themselves, in others it was agreed with their line manager. In all cases there was time allowed for administration and planning, although it was felt that this was not always sufficient. However all the Learning Mentors stressed the importance of working flexibly in response to the needs of students and the school more generally. This meant being available to respond to students as and when required and also being available to respond to specific crises within the school. As one line manager said: “Sometimes the Learning Mentor is the only person available to do a particular job”.

All Learning Mentors in the schools visited had access to dedicated space (although this was not always ideal) and appropriate resources and equipment including ICT and access to pupil records.

2.4 Mentoring support provided

Learning Mentors work in a wide range of different ways with children and young people depending on the needs of the individual student and the wider needs of the school.

One-to-one work can take place in or, more commonly, out of class and can focus on a wide range of issues including: personal care, confidence building, organisation of work, support in specific subjects, behaviour and attendance. Work within the classroom is with targeted children to support their learning under the guidance of the class teacher.

Mentors also run a wide range of **groups** focussing on issues such as: bullying, anger management, sexual health, behaviour. At All Saints the mentor also runs Circle Time in Reception and Nursery.

Mentors are also involved in organising a wide-range of extra-curricular activities. For example at Newby Primary the Learning Mentors run drama, physical activities and cookery clubs and a Summer School. Mentors at Newby and All Saints run Breakfast Clubs. At Bowling Park the mentors are involved in a lunchtime Friendship Club offering a wide range of different activities and a football club. In addition they provide study support in different subjects on different days.

These group activities provide opportunities for mentees and others to develop social and life skills in a less formal and non-stigmatising environment.

2.5 Support for learning mentors

All the Learning Mentors that I spoke to in the course of this review were extremely positive about the support they received from colleagues within school especially heads and line managers. There were also clear advantages where mentors worked as part of a team in terms of the opportunities for advice and support from peers. For example at BCCC all the mentors work as a team and discuss their caseloads together so that another mentor can step in if the lead worker for a child is not available; this is especially important where mentors work part time.

The Trident mentors also attend the regular half termly network meetings.

All the Trident mentors have taken part in the five day national training programme designed to ensure that all learning mentors working in EiC schools have the skills they need to carry out their duties effectively and understand the objectives of the programme. All EiC learning mentors are expected to participate in this locally-delivered training course and this has been extended to Trident-funded learning mentors.

The course consists of four modules:

- The primary school as a learning organisation
- The role of the Learning Mentor
- The nature of children's learning
- Supporting children and families.

Perceptions of the training programme were mixed with some mentors having found it useful and others taking a less positive view. A number of mentors commented that it had been disorganised and some who had submitted their portfolios last August were unhappy that they had not, as yet, been assessed.

In addition to the national training programme the mentors are also able to take advantage of other training opportunities provided by or through Education Bradford.

2.6 Monitoring and evaluation

The original project appraisal specified that included in the funding to the schools is an allowance for providing information on the progress of Bradford Trident pupils. This will include the numbers of pupils supported by the Mentors and SATS, GCSE, GCE and GNVQ results when they become available each year. Although data is provided on a regular basis on the numbers of pupils mentored broken down by age, gender and ethnicity, data is not collated in school on the educational performance of these children, although in one school at least, it was acknowledged that this would be possible to extract from the SIMS system. It should be noted that pupil level data is not currently available to the EiC programme either.

The Trident Learning Mentors are coordinated through a mentor located at Grange School which receives additional funding to support this coordinating role. The Coordinator convenes the regular half termly network meetings of the Trident mentors and collates the data on students in receipt of mentoring support which is sent to the Trident Programme Manager.

The EiC Learning Mentor programme is performance managed by means of a self-audit consisting of nine categories of information. This is then intended to feed into a costed action plan and the identification of whether the school is low, medium or high intensity. This then is used to direct the time of the cluster mentors who can then offer intensive support to where it is most needed. Although all schools have completed the Learning Mentor Audit, in only one of the schools visited was mention made of the Action Plan.

2.7 Linkages with parents and other agencies

The extent to which the Learning Mentors work directly with parents or make links with external agencies that might be involved in working with the child or his/her family varied considerably among the schools visited. For example, in one primary school the mentors do not undertake work “beyond the school gates”; where other agencies are involved in supporting a child or the family then the line manager would represent the school. Other work with parents is undertaken by the Home-School liaison officer. By contrast, in another primary school the Learning Mentor is seen as

the first port of call in relation to work with parents. A similar variation exists among secondary schools too. In one the Learning Mentor represents the school in relation to a child subject to care proceedings; in another the Learning Mentor has no contact with any external agencies – all such contact being undertaken by her line manager.

In schools where there are a number of different support staff undertaking different roles there is the potential for overlap and lack of clarity about who does what. This can occur especially in relation to Attendance Officers and Home-School Liaison officers.

2.8 Pupils receiving support

The project appraisal gives the target numbers for pupils mentored each year as approximately 1000 primary and 1500 secondary each year. These targets are based on the approximate number of Bradford Trident pupils currently at the relevant schools. However these output targets are misleading; in fact, as the appraisal also states, in practice mentoring support will be targeted in the much smaller number of pupils who are felt to be underperforming.

Tables 2.1 to 2.8 show the numbers of Trident young people in receipt of mentoring support for each term since the Learning Mentors began work broken down by reasons for referral, year group, ethnicity and gender.

2.8.1 Primary schools

Table 2.1: Numbers of mentored students by reason for referral

Reason for referral	Summer 2002	Autumn 2002	Spring 2003	Summer 2003	Total for 2002/3 School Year
Exclusion	7	0	0	8	8
Behaviour	60	23	29	38	90
Non-attendance	20	3	6	9	18
Attainment	28	25	37	23	85
Welfare	13	3	10	7	20
Transition	1	0	0	2	2
Self-esteem	11	27	26	30	83
Other	0	8	0	3	11
Total	140	89	108	120	317

Table 2.2: Numbers of mentored students by Year Group

Year Group	Summer 2002	Autumn 2002	Spring 2003	Summer 2003	Total for 2002/3 school year
Nursery/Reception	28	4	21	5	30
Year 1	7	6	9	7	22
Year 2	9	8	6	10	24
Year 3	11	13	14	9	36
Year 4	13	13	15	16	44
Year 5	12	10	9	15	34
Year 6	10	9	6	23	38
Total	80	63	80	85	228

Table 2.3: Numbers of mentored students by ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Summer 2002	Autumn 2002	Spring 2003	Summer 2003	Total for 2002/3 school Year
White – UK	18	23	17	41	81
White other	1	0	0	0	0
Black – Caribbean	6	6	6	7	19
Pakistani	38	29	56	29	114
Bangladeshi	3	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	1	0	0	1
Other	3	2	0	0	2
Total	69	61	79	79	217

Table 2.4: Numbers of mentored students by gender

Gender	Summer 2002	Autumn 2002	Spring 2003	Summer 2003	Total for Year
Male	47	29	49	56	134
Female	22	17	35	25	77

2.8.2 Secondary schools

Table 2.5: Numbers of mentored students by reason for referral

Reason for referral	Summer 2002	Autumn 2002	Spring 2003	Summer 2003	Total for 2002/3 School Year
Exclusion	0	0	2	8	10
Behaviour	23	40	30	38	108
Non-attendance	11	7	13	9	29
Attainment	13	13	30	23	66
Welfare	9	9	11	7	27
Transition	8	5	9	2	16
Self-esteem	0	0	1	30	31
Other	1	0	0	3	2

Total	65	74	96	120	289
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Table 2.6: Numbers of mentored students by Year Group

Year Group	Summer 2002	Autumn 2002	Spring 2003	Summer 2003	Total for 2002/3 School Year
Year 7	7	15	18	9	42
Year 8	13	7	10	8	25
Year 9	8	10	5	7	22
Year 10	20	10	14	32	56
Year 11	8	10	15	20	45
Year 12	1	1	0	0	1
Total	57	53	62	76	191

Table 2.7: Numbers of mentored students by ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Summer 2002	Autumn 2003	Spring 2003	Summer 2003	Total for 2002/3 School Year
White European	22	29	41	18	88
White other	6	0	0	0	0
Black – Caribbean	0	0	0	1	1
Black – African	2	3	13	14	30
Black other	1	0	0	2	3
Pakistani	17	15	13	24	52
Chinese	6	3	1	2	6
Other	0	0	1	0	1
Unknown	2	2	0	0	2
Total	84	52	69	61	183

Table 2.8: Numbers of mentored students by gender

Gender	Summer 2002	Autumn 2003	Spring 2003	Easter 2003	Total for Year
Male	50	33	34	43	110
Female	21	10	28	29	67

This data has been collected from the participating schools by the Trident Learning Mentor coordinator. However There are clearly some problems with the data. Firstly the data is incomplete; the total figures for the number of students by gender, by ethnicity and year group, are different. Secondly, one would expect there to be a higher number of cases represented when analysed by reasons for referral because students are likely to be referred for more than one reason; however this data does

not make clear how many students tables 2.1 and 2.5 refer to in total. Finally, and most seriously, the figures do not distinguish between new referrals and continuing mentored students. Furthermore it is clear that, especially in the primary schools, Learning Mentors are engaged in a wide range of group as well as one-to-one activities. Again it is not clear whether or not those students participating in group activities are included in these figures.

Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings it is possible to make the following observations:

- If the totals for the year represent the total number of Trident students receiving mentoring support at any time during the year, then the figures suggest that just over 20 per cent of primary and 10 percent of secondary students are in receipt of mentoring support.
- Roughly twice as many boys than girls are in receipt of support.
- Learning mentor support is predominantly concentrated on White-British, Pakistani and Black [Caribbean or African – the data in the two tables is contradictory]. However there is an interesting difference between primary and secondary. There is an increase in the proportion of white students being mentored in secondary and a quite large increase in the proportion of Black students – almost double. By contrast, as a proportion of the total number of mentored students, the proportion of Pakistani students in receipt of mentoring support decreases from 52.5 percent in primary to 28 percent in secondary.
- Mentoring support is spread across all year groups with a concentration of support in the key transition and exam years. This was reinforced by the case study visits which showed concentration of support in accordance with the school's priorities and perceptions of where the need was the greatest.
- Among primary school pupils the majority of referrals are fairly equally spread across the categories of behaviour, attainment and self-esteem. Among secondary school students, while these three categories still account for a large proportion of referrals, other categories including attendance and welfare are more significant.

It was intended that the Learning Mentors would work only with children and young people from the Trident area. In practice this is not the case. In schools where there is more than one Learning Mentor, the Trident-funded mentor generally works as one member of the mentoring team and, as such, undertakes work with whichever

children demonstrate the greatest need. In schools where there is only the Trident-funded mentor no distinction is made between Trident and other children and the mentors work with whichever pupils demonstrate the greatest need. However there are some exceptions eg Bradford Cathedral Community College where the Trident funded Learning Mentor tends to work exclusively with Trident students.

EiC guidelines suggest that full time Learning Mentors should have caseloads of no more than 15 one-to-one students. In the schools visited the mentor caseloads varied but were not significantly different from the recommended figure.

2.9 Summary of key points

- The Learning Mentors are now well-established within their respective schools and their role is increasingly understood by other school colleagues.
- There is some variation as to the extent to which schools have an explicit Learning mentor policy which is linked to other school policies and to the School Improvement Plan.
- The Trident Learning Mentors have well-established systems and procedures for referrals, assessment, record-keeping and review of the progress of individual students.
- These systems in broad terms conform to EiC criteria although there are some differences between schools especially in relation to the way in which the progress of individual students is recorded.
- The Trident Learning Mentors do not, in all schools, work exclusively with Trident students; however there is no reason to doubt that Trident students in need of mentoring support are in receipt of it.
- The Learning Mentors generally feel well supported within school and have access to appropriate equipment and resources.
- The support provided to students is wide ranging and includes one-to-one work both in and out of class; group work on specific issues; and the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Students in receipt of mentoring support are drawn from all year groups but with a concentration in transition and exam years; around twice as many boys as girls receive support; referrals tend to be for reasons of attainment, behaviour and self-esteem; in primary schools a relatively high proportion of Pakistani pupils receive mentoring support while in secondary more Black students and correspondingly fewer Pakistani students receive support.

3 IMPACT OF LEARNING MENTORS

A recent Ofsted report¹ concluded that the Learning Mentor strand of the EiC programme was the most successful and popular with schools. The report found that:

- Learning mentors are making a significant effect in the attendance, behaviour, self-esteem and progress of the pupils they support.
- The support of learning mentors is valued highly by pupils and their parents.
- The learning mentor scheme enables schools to provide appropriate and flexible support for pupils when they need it.
- Headteachers and other staff welcome the presence and contribution of learning mentors in the school, and their work is popular with the pupils and their parents.
- In a survey of EiC schools inspectors judged that in 95% of schools the mentoring programme made a positive contribution to the mainstream provision of the school as a whole, and had a beneficial effect on the behaviour of individual pupils and on their ability to learn and make progress.

3.1 Evidence available

As indicated in section 1 above, the evaluation of the Learning Mentor programme presents some challenges owing to the absence of reliable and consistent data for all schools, the wide range of issues covered by the mentors and the difficulty of attributing changes in performance to mentoring input. As a result, in this report we are forced to rely on three kinds of evidence of impact. Firstly, in relation to the [progress of individual students I include a number of case studies which are indicative of the range of problems and issues with which mentors are working and the kinds of impact their intervention has. Secondly, where schools have recently had an Ofsted inspection, I have searched through the relevant reports for inspectors' comments about the role of Learning mentors and these are also included. Thirdly I include observations of the Learning mentors themselves and their line managers as to how well their work is progressing.

¹ Ofsted (2003) Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones: management and impact

Difficulties of measuring impact: Ofsted report on the learning mentor strand of EIC

It is difficult to demonstrate the effect of learning mentors on performance at a whole-school level, particularly that on pupils' attainment. This is because mentors support the pupils who need it most, sometimes for a comparatively short period of time, and not necessarily those in examination classes. The effect of the mentor in such cases would not become apparent in the school's results. It is equally true than those schools which are successfully raising the attainment of pupils manage to do so through a range of strategies, the contributions of which are difficult to separate. (page 51, para 178)

Performance data for children in the Trident area shows XXXX

However there are a number of factors other than the work of the learning Mentors that could account for this improvement.

3.2 Impact on individual children worked with

The following case studies provide real but anonymised stories of individual children and young people who have received mentoring support. They have been written by the Learning Mentors themselves or prepared on the basis of written records; as a result they are not presented in a uniform style.

Case study 1:

Child referred to Learning Mentor because of evidence of difficulties coping within the school environment. The teacher described the problem in the following terms:

S. is very anxious in any new situations. She is reluctant to play out if a familiar adult is not present. When invited to have a turn in class she frequently refuses due to anxiety/lack of confidence. Reluctant to join in general... S. has also missed a lot of school since starting in September.

Following mentor involvement the teacher evaluation was as follows;

Attitude to work: *much improved. Keen to do well and to please. Responds well to praise. Is definitely trying.*

Standard of work: *Improving. Her fine motor control has improved dramatically. She can now write her name clearly.*

Behaviour: *Well-behaved. Behaves appropriately for situations.*

Confidence: *Has improved a lot. Will now enter classroom in morning without mum chaperoning. Gets pumps on etc independently. Now joins in with PE lesson.*

Motivation: *Improving. Positive feedback helping a lot here.*

Attendance: *Still below expectations.*

Other comments: *S. has improved a great deal as a result of mentoring. If her attendance was consistent she would have a chance of achieving her potential. I would recommend that S. be removed from the mentoring programme but that attendance is followed closely.*

Case Study 2

Child referred because of poor fine motor skills.

Referral form states:

J. finds handwriting extremely challenging – consequently loses interest in his work and never completes any written task. Finds it challenging to hold pencil when writing. J needs 1 to 1 support when recording anything.

Following mentoring support the teacher evaluation of progress was as follows:

Attitude to work: *J. has a much improved attitude towards his written work – he has enjoyed working with his “writing buddy” (mentor).*

Standard of work: *Presentation of written work has greatly improved when writing with “writing buddy”. It is not yet fully entrenched, however, and he forgets eg finger spaces when working independently.*

Behaviour: *still has a tendency to waste time before settling.*

Confidence: *Excellent progress – J is very proud of the written work that he now produces. So are the class!*

Motivation: *Excellent when working with his “writing buddy” in the classroom. J. is more willing to settle down to work independently than he was in September.*

Other comments: *J. was referred because, although he is a very capable child, he found it extremely challenging when he had to record anything. His fine motor skills – cutting, colouring, writing – were not well developed. This was beginning to get in the way of his learning, attitude towards written work, and the attitude towards his work of other class members. He is making excellent progress at the moment but still needs the adult input to maintain his momentum.*

The above two case studies are typical of the kinds of referral within primary school. In the first case the barrier to the child’s learning was her lack of confidence and inability to adjust to the school environment. In the second case the child was referred because of a specific skill that needed to be developed in order for him to progress. In both cases the children have responded positively to relatively short periods of mentoring support.

Case Study 3

Year 8 student referred because “Tends to repeat negative patterns of behaviour” (D1) and “Disorganised and lacks essential equipment” (C1).

The mentor assessment of this student and his progress is as follows:

I knew this student because I had provided support in his class. I picked up on S’s behaviour then, when he was in Year 7. I spoke to the Head of Year about my concerns and we kept an eye on him.

Because he was in trouble regularly we finally got to the bottom of it. His mum and dad had separated and mum had a new partner (who got on really well with S) but S’s brother stayed with dad and he hadn’t seen them for a year. This was upsetting him because he had moved out of the area where his friends were.

His Head of Year contacted his mum about his behaviour... Simon settled down and carried on through the year without any problems.

This year, however, S seems to be going back down the same route as last year. After receiving numerous red H’s (no homework) and red B’s (no book) he was referred to Individual Needs. Because I work alongside them and go to their weekly

meetings we thought it better if I could work with S first. S and I have done an action plan together and have set long-term and short-term objectives. S comes to see me every week for a one-to-one meeting. In this meeting we are aiming to achieve his short term objectives ie no red H's or B's, friendships and general behaviour in lessons.

I've only been seeing S for 6 weeks and already we have been getting less red B's and H's, maybe just one a week. But the biggest achievement is that we are now getting at least two merits in his diary every week. I feel that S is doing a lot better because he feels like there is somebody on his side.

Now his work is improving I'm trying to work on his next target of which friends he hangs around in the playground with and to try to keep out of trouble. S prefers to hang around older boys, so I'm trying to encourage him to stay away from them and keep to his own age group. I have noticed a difference ... there are more encouraging reports about S. now that he has been on the mentoring programme. Hopefully by the end of the year I will have him focused on school.

Case study 4

L. is a year 9 student who was referred to the LM because she was having trouble coming to school and there were problems at home. The following is the LM's description and assessment:

My line manager referred L. to me. She was finding it difficult to settle in college at the beginning of term 1. L. cries all the time. Her mum and dad separated a while ago and L. and her sister were living between parents' houses. This was upsetting for her and she was finding it difficult to control her organisation with books and equipment often leaving books at the wrong house when needing them for school.

When I started seeing her the situation at home had changed. She only goes to Dad's on a Thursday and at weekends.

At the first meeting I introduced myself and explained my role. I then told her that I would send home a letter to her parents (both parents). L. knew at the end of the session that it would be an eight week programme and it would help her deal with coming to school and with organisation.

At the next session we sat down and write an action plan where we discussed the long-term objectives and short-term targets. We both signed her action plan and worked together to achieve them.

I emailed all staff to find out what subjects she was struggling with and we concentrated on those. I organised for her to have a computer booked in the library every Tuesday night to do any home work she had. We talked about how she felt about school and what was upsetting her.

After eight weeks of seeing me we have discussed home life and I discovered Mum was having a baby and L. felt pushed out because she couldn't have the time with Mum. We've discussed ways in which she can have time with Mum. She also tells me that the reason she cries is because home feels safe. After talking this through she only feels upset until break time and then she's fine and she doesn't cry any more. Her work is fine now.

*When I told L. that the eight week programme was coming to an end, she said that she felt she still needed to come for reassurance, so I told her that I would discuss her continuing the sessions with my Line Manager.
We discussed than and both felt L. was benefiting from the sessions and, because she had asked to keep coming, we would continue for another eight weeks. We had already met the short term objectives and we are continuing to work on the long term objectives.*

In these two cases the students were both facing problems at home that were affecting their ability to work effectively at school. For the mentor to have an impact work was necessary on a range of different issues relating to home, school, and peer relations.

Case study 5:

K. is a year 11 student; he was referred to the Learning mentor by his Head of Year because he was under-achieving in some of his subjects. Following discussion with the Line Manager, it was decided that the LM should provide one-to-one support in some lessons. The LM emailed all staff to find out what subjects K was behind in. The main concern was ICT. The LM's description and assessment follows:
K. was a little lazy but could actually do the work. We had a meeting where we put together an action plan discussion long term objectives and short-term objectives. I sent a letter home to parents to let them know that I would be supporting K.

I worked with K in his ICT lessons, liaising with his teacher and making sure he met deadlines. I found that I would have to sit him at the end of the row and sit next to him so that others didn't distract him.

When I first went into K's class he was working at nearly a pass; by his final exam he achieved a merit and came back to further his education in ICT in the sixth form.

I feel with my input and patience K. achieved what he deserved and that if I had not supported him he may just have scraped a pass.

In this case the mentoring support required related to specific subjects in which the student needed extra support in order for him to reach is potential.

Case study 6

D is a year 6 pupil who was referred to the Mentor Programme because of concerns about his welfare. He is a reasonably able boy with no learning difficulties but is on the Special Educational Needs Register at 'School Action'. There are also concerns about attendance and punctuality for D and other siblings. The family receive input from the Education Welfare service. The following is the learning mentor's description and evaluation.

When first referred D was a very angry boy often involved in fights in the playground and in school. He continually engaged in name-calling and arguments with other children. These incidents were more to do with his life outside of the school. D gave

the impression of being extremely unhappy with life but would never complain about his home situation. He rarely laughed and would occasionally smile when passing in the corridor. There seemed to be no input or encouragement from parents when it came to school issues. D. would often arrive to school late, wearing dirty clothes, and not having the correct equipment and most of the time he would not have had breakfast or the previous evening meal. Although his attendance was not at the expected level his parents refused to acknowledge the issues of his persistent lateness, when he often missed the first hour of school on more than one occasion a week. This concerned the Class Teacher, as D. was an able boy who enjoyed all aspects of the curriculum and was progressing well when in school.

Mentor programme

D was placed on the mentee list and work began almost straight away. On entry to the programme we assessed D's immediate need which was to be in school on time. Arrangements were made with his mother for him to be collected from home each morning and brought to school to attend the Breakfast Club where he was given food and equipment. He would then be offered the chance to shower and was given a clean uniform and his clothes from home were washed and dried for him. This proved to be an enormous task as D was not only an academically bright boy but also very proud and thought it not right for someone other than his family to be doing these sorts of things for him. He was very loyal to his parents and saw the help from ourselves as being an admission from him that things were not right at home, thus betraying his family. We had long chats with D and we worked together to achieve a compromise. He would take the clothes and equipment at the beginning of the week and would try to come to school on time without the aid of the mentor Team.

The next step was to assess what D thought of the school and what the Mentors could do to help him. D. filled in several questionnaires, which outlined his views about himself, the school and other children. We used the information to set up an individual action plan which included action taken by staff, long and short term objectives and all other agencies involved with the family. When filling in the personal questionnaire D stated that his 'bad habit' was fighting and he would like to receive help in this area. He also showed an interest in attending the other clubs being run in school, including the Homework Club as he wanted to use the equipment provided to present his work in the best way possible.

D then began sessions out of class three times a week; we used the time to fill in his personal diary in which he writes his successes and short-term targets for the week. D also completed worksheets on activities to develop self-esteem which were an extension of PSHE work. After completing these sheets, D would fill in an evaluation sheet of things that went well the previous week in order for us to plan the following week. It was decided that D's attendance and punctuality be tracked using the Traffic Light Initiative which gives set periods of monitoring to ensure attendance reaches 95% during a four week block.

Celebrating success

D is still receiving mentor time and will need the support until after Transition. Nevertheless he has made an immense amount of progress whilst being on the programme. He is achieving the targets set for him and has progressed academically throughout the year. He is making new friends including younger children, with whom he plays at break and dinnertime. D is now a paired reader two lunchtimes a week, reading with children from the lower end of Key Stage 2. In January D was chosen by the Deputy Head for The Buddies Scheme, where he patrols the playground three lunchtimes a week and gives support and a friendly ear for listening to any child who

needs his skills. At present D is forming a cricket group with other boys from the Friendship Club to play the game with children from Key Stage One.

D's class teacher has given positive feedback to the mentor team with regard to his progress in lessons and has predicted that on a good day D could achieve a 4C in Numeracy and 3A in Literacy and Science, but on occasion he still shows signs of being unhappy.

The problems recorded by the Head teacher for D have gone down from 10 serious incidents from September to February '02 to 2 serious incidents for the same period in September '03 to February '04.

The staff in school are aware of D's progress and most have played a part in his getting to where he is today. D. still has the same problems at home as he did when he began the mentor programme, but he has found the strength to break the cycle and make changes in himself, for himself. We are very proud of him.

Case Study 7:

C. is a thirteen year old boy in year 8. He is the oldest of five children with many responsibilities for his siblings. His parents are drug addicts with very few parenting skills.

C. came to [secondary school] after being mentored at his primary school and during transition both schools agreed mentoring should be continued. His younger sister, by 11 months. Transferred at the same time and mentoring for her was also continued. She came onto my caseload. I met Christopher on the day he came to visit the school in July and on the first day of term in September.

In July 2002 I attended a child protection meeting where the progress made since all the children of the family were put on the Child Protection register in February 2002. Little progress had been made. Concerns were appearance, cleanliness, lack of clothing and shoes, attendance at school and hunger. C. and all the other children were in need of dental and medical checks.

At the next meeting in October of the same year no improvement had been made. My report was that C. was later most mornings (he had to get two younger brothers ready for school). He had looked very smart and clean at the start of the term, but by now his appearance had deteriorated, personal hygiene had slipped and he was beginning to be isolated by others.

I had an initial 1-1 with C the first week of term and weekly thereafter. C. explained he was late out of bed and then had to get the others ready for school. After a discussion with head of Year, it was decided not to use the usual sanctions for lateness with C. and his sister.

I wrote to their Mum at the end of September asking her to wash the children's clothes at the weekend. There was no response to this. After a chat with C. he tried very hard to get to school earlier with some success.

By November C. was responding well to our 1-1 sessions; however it would have been nice to see him smile. All his teachers felt, and still do, that academically he has great potential. C. had a spell where his work deteriorated and when we talked about this it was because he was being isolated and so if he did not work he hoped to be

put down a class where he would be with his friends. Since this C. has had many and varied problems and overall nothing has improved and a lot of his life has deteriorated. Every Child Protection meeting has had reports of little or no improvement from all agencies involved. All the children were on the child protection register for neglect; this has been extended to include emotional neglect.

C. has been involved with YouthBase, a church-based group, both within school and after school. He has been away with them and in their words, he “blossoms” whilst away.

Father has used bring taken into care as a threat with C. and mum has told him she is going to die.

I feel a lot of time has gone into working with C. and this will continue for the future as recently all the children have gone into care. C, unfortunately, has been separated from the others. As he is a long way from school we are hoping he will still be able to come here not only so that we can support him, but so that the can see his sister daily.

These two case studies demonstrate the wide range of activities that Learning Mentors can be involved in with, or on behalf of, a particular child or young person. In this case the Learning Mentors have in each case provided emotional and practical support; liaised with the family; and represented the school at Child Protection meetings. However the nature of these children’s problems are such that it would be very difficult to capture the impact that this involvement has had. As the Learning Mentor herself states, in relation to the second story, in many ways this boy’s life has got worse not better. However, one can only speculate how much worse it might have been without the support of a Learning Mentor in school.

Case Study 8:

H. is a sixteen year old pupil. She was referred to me last year by the Head of Year. At the time she was very upset and was going to run away from home. H. and I had a long talk and her reason for leaving home was that she was not allowed any freedom. She had a boyfriend but mum and dad had said she was not allowed one until all her exams were finished (a year ahead). The boyfriend didn’t want her to leave home. We talked about where she would go and once she realised there was nowhere to go we could move on and look at all her problems.

She went home to talk to her parents and came back the following morning happier although her parents were still adamant that she could not have a boyfriend. H. had decided to carry on seeing him; however this relationship soon finished.

We moved on over the next two weeks to talk about school and exams. H. was predicted to get all A-C’s in her GCSE exams. Her parents expected that every report had only As on it.

I made a point of meeting her parents at the next parents’ meeting and when H. went for a drink we discussed the pressure on young people and how hard it is to get a balance between school work and social activities.

H. soon worries about her work and if she doesn’t think it’s perfect, she always wants to begin it again. Sometimes it has been hard to keep H. positive. Now just a few

weeks away from exams, H is on course to achieve her expected grades. Her future as either an architect or an interior designer is possible and, with support from her family, I am sure she will achieve.

This case study illustrates the provision of support to a young woman who has personal problems that are affecting her school work. In this case learning mentor intervention has helped address the problems, thus removing the barriers to learning and enabling her to achieve her potential. However it should be noted that evaluation that focused solely on achievement would only register that this student had achieved the grades that she was predicted to achieve. In fact learning mentor input had been necessary to help maintain progress.

Case study 9:

Reason for referral:

Student X [Year 7] was referred for a number of reasons, but the main target areas were attendance, behaviour in some lessons and attitude towards certain members of staff. Information had been given during transition as her problems were also evident at primary school. Student X had poor attendance and when she was in school she displayed a poor attitude. Parents were informed/called into school on a number of occasions and also home visits were carried out.

Action taken:

Student X was also placed on a pink behaviour/blue attendance report. During the two weeks of using the report it became clear that some of the problems were still evident, namely lateness to schools and lessons. After a meeting with parents/HoY, a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) was put in place. This involved a daily report card being given to the mentee that had to be shown to every subject tutor and then to her mentor or Head of Year at the end of the school day.

Where is student X now?

She has shown great improvement in behaviour and attendance, this has been recognised by positive comments on her attendance report and the PSP. The level of mentoring is still high and as she can still be influenced negatively by her peers. Family are continuing their support but also feel student X will benefit from remaining on the reports. Mentoring is part of student X's school life, in order to ensure a positive attitude towards school. She is aware that if she does experience any difficulties, her mentor will be available to offer support. However it is important that the student realise that she is in control of her own actions, and determines whether or not her time spent at school will be spent positively.

Case study 9:

Reasons for referral:

Student X [Year 11] was referred for mentoring initially in September 2002. The main areas of concern highlighted were:

- Poor attitude and behaviour
- Possible risk of exclusion
- Low motivation
- Concerns about academic progress

- Poor attendance and truancy.

After interviewing it was identified that student X would need support in the following areas:

- Study skills
- Organisational skills
- Preparation
- Anger management
- Peer relationships
- Teacher relationships
- Course work
- Problems at home
- Confidence building
- Emotional support.

Student X was made aware of the full support services that would be offered to him whilst he was being mentored. This included:

- One to one counselling
- Tutor support
- Academic support
- Parental involvement
- Target setting
- Rewards.

From the outset Student X made good progress and responded to mentoring in a positive manner. Identified as a child with high priority mentoring, student X showed the necessary commitment to work on his weaknesses. Through regular meetings, strategies were put in place to help student X cope with the issues that were affecting him both in school and at home.

After an initial period of high priority mentoring where a concentrated effort was afforded to him, it was decided to allow student X to work more independently. Student X was seen on a medium priority needs basis.

The initial focus of work was targeted at an observational level and on several occasions class room behaviour reports were completed. At this stage it was identified that student X had poor class management skills. Strategies were put in place to help Student X improve on these. Class support was given to student X in those subjects where problems seemed to surface on a regular basis. As a strategy this proved effective in that an immediate improvement was noticed in behaviour.

Student X was also placed on attendance report and again an immediate improvement was noticed. Regular monitoring by the mentor ensured that student X remained in school.

Initial meetings with Student X were centred on building up a positive relationship. It was through this that progress was made and Student X started to think about his future in realistic terms. The student's strengths were identified through regular meetings and praise was given at every opportunity.

At the same time student X was referred to a key worker on the Youth Offending Team based within the Trident area. Whilst there several citizenship programmes were completed by the student. This included anger management, conflict and resolution, consequences of crime, ad so forth.

Whilst on the mentor programme Student X has shown the willingness to learn and succeed albeit through a highly concentrated effort on behalf of the mentor. In terms of academic ability much more needs to be done by the student if he wants to succeed at a higher level. However the mentoring input has helped focus Student X's perception about what he wants to do about his future. At the start of the programme Student X was convinced that a life of crime would be the way forward for him. Now he is committed to finding work-based training.

3.3 Impact on wider school community

Three of the schools visited had had recent Ofsted inspections that mentioned the Learning Mentors. For example in the Grange report of 2003 the inspectors write:

“A valuable contribution to the pastoral system is made by the learning mentors, whose role it is to support students in overcoming barriers to learning.”

The Bowling Park inspection report of 2002, in assessing the teaching of pupils with special education needs, states:

“Most pupils try hard, especially when they work in small groups and are supported by an adult. A few lose concentration quite quickly or have difficulty in settling to learning. Here, the learning mentors play a valuable role by working individually with the pupils, talking through their difficulties and keeping them focused on the learning they would have been doing had they stayed in class. They encourage pupils to reflect on their learning and they fill in diaries to help them keep track of improvements in behaviour as well as reminding them of what they have learned in different subjects. This is a very good teaching partnership that supports the pupils in most need very well.”

And, in relation to school-community links the same inspection report states:

“The school's learning mentors make very effective links between the school and the community. These two members of staff are a vital contact between home and school especially where pupils' well-being and home circumstances are concerned. The learning mentors have had a significant effect on pupils' welfare, their attitudes to school, their attendance and the quality of behaviour by ensuring that they are supported very sensitively. They are part of the school's very good overall provision to ensure pupils' equal access to the curriculum.”

And, in relation to pupils' moral and social development:

“Learning mentors make a very important contribution to an improved atmosphere in school and higher standards of behaviour”.

And, more generally:

“[The school] uses the funding for employing learning mentors to ensure that pupils who have significant barriers to learning are very well supported in overcoming them and that other pupils in the school are not held back”.

All Saints Ofsted inspection report states:

“The school makes effective use of learning mentors, funded through the Excellence in Cities Initiative, to provide targeted support for pupils to raise their self-esteem and improve their learning opportunities. Their work is carefully monitored and its impact on [pupils’ learning is evaluated regularly to ensure they benefit from the extra support. Parents are involved at all stages and are supportive of the programme. Relevant training has been provided for the learning mentors who are also involved in other aspects of school life, running extra-curricular clubs and supporting the monitoring of attendance. This is having a positive impact upon the work pupils do, and the progress they make. They make good links with teachers and pupils to provide support. They organise homework clubs for those who need that extra support or who do not have the space and facility to do their work at home.”

Also, on attendance:

“Absence is followed up on the first day by the learning mentors and they meet regularly with the home school liaison teacher and the education social worker to follow up problems. These procedures have resulted in small improvements in attendance this year”.

When line managers and headteachers were asked about the impact of the Learning Mentors on the schools, they were overwhelmingly positive. The most common response was “we don’t know how we ever managed without them”. More specifically they identified the flexibility of Learning Mentors and their ability to work in different ways to focus on a wider set of issues other than those relating solely to education.

Although ‘hard’ evidence was not generally available, it was clear that heads/line managers felt that the Learning Mentors were contributing to improved behaviour in

the schools and a calmer atmosphere in lessons that allowed the teaching staff to “get on with the job of teaching”.

3.4 What is working well

The Ofsted report into EiC identified the following features of successful use of learning mentors:

- Clearly defined roles for mentors and systems for referral to them
- Comprehensive staff briefing and training
- Good links with pastoral and academic staff
- Definite targets for pupils, with regular review
- Adequate time for regular meetings
- Well-organised records
- Manageable caseloads
- Regular liaison with parents.

These headings are used as a framework for assessing how well the Trident Learning Mentor project is doing.

3.4.1 Clearly defined roles for mentors and referral systems

In general the Trident mentors’ roles are clearly defined although there is possibly some scope for further clarifying their role in schools that also have Attendance officers and/or Home-School liaison officers. Referral systems appear to be working effectively.

Clarity of Learning Mentor role: Ofsted report on EiC Learning Mentor strand

Good management ensured that the learning mentor had a clear role, and that this was firmly linked into the established pastoral and academic provision. This enabled the mentor to liaise effectively with subject teachers and pastoral tutors, and avoided unnecessary repetition, for example when contacting parents and outside agencies. In this way the mentor knew about work assignments and approaching deadlines, and could help the pupils to prepare for them. Equally the academic staff became aware of pupils’ problems in their subjects and could help the mentor to provide effective support. (p. 48, para 167)

3.4.2 Staff briefing and training

The role of the Learning Mentors has now become embedded within schools. However most mentors who I talked to felt that they were engaged in a continuous process of briefing and raising the awareness of staff.

3.4.3 Good links with pastoral and academic staff

In most of the schools visited links with teaching and non-teaching staff are good. There is still a minority of teaching staff who do not fully understand the role of the Learning Mentors.

3.4.4 Targets for pupils and regular review

In all cases pupils are set targets and their progress is kept under review. However there are differences across schools as to how formal the process of target-setting and review is.

3.4.5 Adequate time for regular meetings

In most cases the Learning Mentors were happy with the way they were deployed and their timetable managed.

3.4.6 Well organised records

In most cases the Learning mentors keep very good records on individual pupils. However there are significant differences between schools as to record-keeping creating difficulties in relation to aggregating data.

3.4.7 Manageable caseloads

The Learning Mentors in the schools visited appear to have manageable one-to-one case loads. However time pressures become apparent when one takes into account the numbers of groups and extra-curricular activities that Learning Mentors organise together with the requirement to work responsively and flexibly to meet the needs of individual students and the school. This is an aspect of the Learning Mentors' role that is particularly valued by Heads/Line Managers.

Example: Flexibility

A child with multiple problems returned to primary school after a period of absence. The Learning Mentor's timetable was adjusted to accommodate this child's need for almost full-time support for the period of time necessary for him to adjust to returning to school. Without this intensive support it was felt that the child would not be able to manage the return to school.

3.4.8 Regular liaison with parents

In all the schools visited systems were in place to keep parents informed; however direct contact and communication with parents was not always the responsibility of the Learning Mentor.

3.5 Conclusions

The evidence from this review indicates that overall the Learning Mentor project is working well and is contributing to Trident's wider objective of improving educational attainment.

More specifically the review shows:

- The Trident Learning Mentors are a talented, enthusiastic and dedicated group who have developed wide-ranging skills to enable them to work effectively with children and young people.
- The Learning Mentors are fulfilling a useful and necessary role in schools by working with individuals and groups on an extremely wide-range of issues that act as barriers to learning.
- Learning mentors work with an extremely wide range of children with diverse needs and problems that require very different kinds of intervention and support.
- Trident mentors do not, typically, work solely with Trident children and young people. This is not a problem provided the monitoring data supports the claim that all the Trident children requiring mentoring support receive it.
- In general the Learning Mentors are well-integrated into the life of their schools and their role is becoming better understood by other members of school staff.
- Generally the schools have adopted processes for referral, assessment, action planning and review. However these have been adapted to the particular needs of the school and so vary quite considerably from school to school.
- At the same time, the Learning Mentors also provide a flexible and responsive resource allowing them to deal with issues as and when they arise without going through the bureaucracy. This role is clearly valued enormously by teachers and heads as it allows the teacher to carry on teaching with minimum disruption to the class without having to call on the headteacher.
- As well as one to one support for individuals, In most of the schools the Learning Mentors are also engaged in programmes of activities for groups of children that allow those children to participate in enjoyable activities that at the same time help to enhance their social and life skills. This also provides an opportunity for Learning Mentors to work with children in a lower key, less intensive way. The range of activities provided by the Learning Mentors together with the enthusiasm of the Learning Mentors themselves makes them very attractive to children.

- Lack of standardisation of monitoring and evaluation systems across the Trident schools makes aggregation of data on outcomes extremely difficult.
- However, on the basis of the case study evidence, comments and observations of headteachers and school staff, and learning mentors' own stories there is a strong indication that Learning mentors are making a positive contribution to the achievement of Trident pupils and the wider school community.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the project evaluation it is recommended that:

1. Bradford Trident should continue to fund the Learning Mentor project.
2. Bradford Trident should, in partnership with the schools, Learning Mentors and EiC team at Education Bradford, seek to develop standard systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress of mentored students so that monitoring data is more reliable and data on outcomes is capable of being aggregated.
3. The ethnicity of students receiving mentoring support needs to be carefully monitored and explanations found for the significant change in the profile of mentored students between primary and secondary.
4. The Programme Coordinator should periodically review Learning Mentor case loads to ensure that Trident children and young people are receiving appropriate support.
5. The Bradford Trident Learning Mentor Coordinator role and terms of reference would benefit from being reviewed in the light of experience to date. In particular consideration should be given to including within the Coordinator's job description the following tasks:
 - Help develop a new system for monitoring and evaluating progress
 - Collect and collate reliable monitoring data from all schools
 - Provide support to other Trident Learning Mentors and, in particular, ensure that best practice is shared.

ANNEX A SCHOOLS VISITED

All Saints Primary School

Bowling Park Primary School

Newby Primary School

Bradford Cathedral Community College

Dixons CTC

Grange Technology College

ANNEX B – EXCELLENCE IN CITIES REFERRAL CATEGORIES

Punctuality		Behaviour	
A1	Poor attendance	D1	Tends to repeat negative patterns of behaviour
A2	Often late	D2	Has difficulty verbalising problems
A3	Late for lessons	D3	Behaves better in structured situations
		D4	Unable to work in a group
Self-esteem		D5	Tends to dominate or manipulate relationships
B1	Dismissive of own good work	D6	Behaves inappropriately to gain peer approval
B2	Has little confidence in ability	D7	Submits to pressure to behave badly
B3	Appears anxious when faced with new tasks	D8	Argumentative in class
B4	Unable to accept criticism of behaviour		
B5	Difficulty accepting own talents and strengths	E	Bereavement
B6	Often appears withdrawn		
		F	Poor peer relationships
Approach to work			
C1	Disorganised and lacks essential equipment	G1	Being bullied
C2	Difficulty working alone, needs frequent supervision	G2	Being a bully
C3	Frequently seeks reassurance		
C4	Avoids work whenever possible	Other reasons	
C5	Refuses to follow instructions	H	
C6	Slow to start work		
C7	Easily distracted	I	
C8	Rarely finishes a task		
C9	Rushes through work with little care	J	
C10	Over anxious about mistakes		
C11	Not listening to instructions given	K	