Promoting equity within education systems:

Collaboration for success

Mel Ainscow

The argument for equity

'The highest performing education systems across OECD countries are those that combine high quality and equity. In such education systems, the vast majority of students can attain high level skills and knowledge that depend on their ability and drive, more than on their socio-economic background'

OECD, 2012

Agenda

- How can we promote equity in our schools?

- What are the implications for leadership practice?

What do we mean by equity?

An ecology of equity

- *Within schools -* issues that arise as a result of school and teacher practices

- *Between schools -* issues that arise from the characteristics of the local school system.

- *Beyond schools -* issues related to the wider context within which schools operate

Within-school factors

The development of inclusive teaching

- **Schools know more than they use**

- **Practice is largely intuitive**

- **The development of a language of practice**

- **Inquiry leads to 'interruptions'**

- **Overlooked possibilities for moving practice forward**

'Making the familiar unfamiliar'

- **Starting with statistics**

- **Taking a learning walk**

- **Scrutinising students' work**

- **Mutual observation**

- **Lesson study**

- **Listening to learners**

'Inclusive Inquiry'

Students and teachers collaborating to promote inclusive learning

Preparing students to be researchers

Gathering the views of classmates

Planning the research lesson together

The research lesson

Time to analyse and adapt the lesson plan

Impacts include:

On students:
- **Engagement in lessons**
- **Improvements in confidence**
- **Integration of children with history of difficult behaviour**

Improved relationships:
- **Between children**
- **Between teachers**
- **Between children and teachers**

Teacher development:
- **Focus on details of practice**
- **Becoming more sensitive regarding individual pupils**
- **Sharing techniques**

With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union

Reaching the 'hard to reach':
Inclusive responses to diversity through child-teacher dialogue

Erasmus+ Key Action 2
School Education Strategic Partnerships
2017–2020

Re Ha Re

Reaching the 'Hard to Reach'

For more information: https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/

Between-school factors

Schools working together

'…studies indicate that collaboration between schools has an enormous potential for fostering the capacity of education systems to respond to learner diversity. More specifically, they show how such partnerships can help to reduce the polarization of schools, to the particular benefit of those students who seem marginalized at the edges of the system, and whose performance and attitudes cause increasing concern.'

An example: the Central South Wales Challenge

- **Launched in January 2014**

- **A partnership of just over 400 schools, across five local authorities, including the capital city, Cardiff**

- **Instigated by the Directors of Education and endorsed by local politicians**

- **Home to the highest number and the largest proportion of children living in poverty**

- **Historically the region has underperformed against schools elsewhere in Wales**

Strands of activity
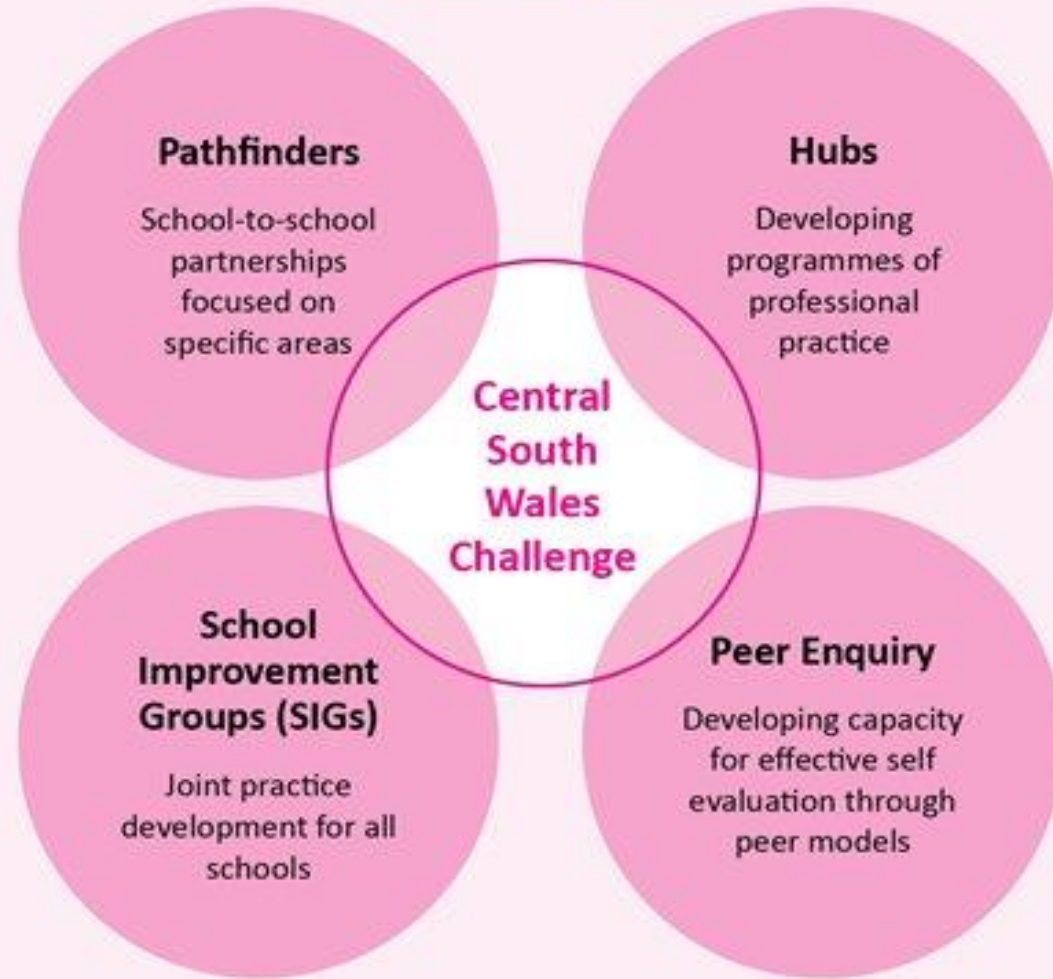
Assessing the impact

- **In 2014, overall student performance below the national average. Three years later, overall performance had improved, so that in key stage 4 (students aged 14-16) their performance in national tests was above the national average**

- **Improvements in all five local authorities, with the two most underperforming improving to the greatest extent and the other three performing above the national average**

- **Encouraging trends in relation to the average progress of pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils.**

Making better use of expertise within school partnerships

- **Shared responsibility for improving outcomes amongst the partner schools**

- **Mutually supportive relationships, particularly between senior staff**

- **Involvement at different levels of the organisations**

- **Using differences to challenge thinking and practice**

- **Occasional involvement of an 'outsider' who can help facilitate, monitor and support collaboration**

What are the challenges?

- **It may lead to lots of nonproductive time**

- **A fad that goes well when led by enthusiastic advocates but fading when spread more widely**

- **Schools may collude with one another to reinforce mediocrity**

- **Those schools that most need help may choose not to get involved**

- **Some head teachers may become 'empire builders', who deter others from getting involved**

Beyond-school factors

'….. closing the gap in outcomes between those from more and less advantaged backgrounds will only happen when what happens to children *outside* as well as *inside* schools changes…. we have seen encouraging experiences of what can happen when what schools do is aligned in a coherent strategy with the efforts of other local players – employers, community groups, universities and public services…..'

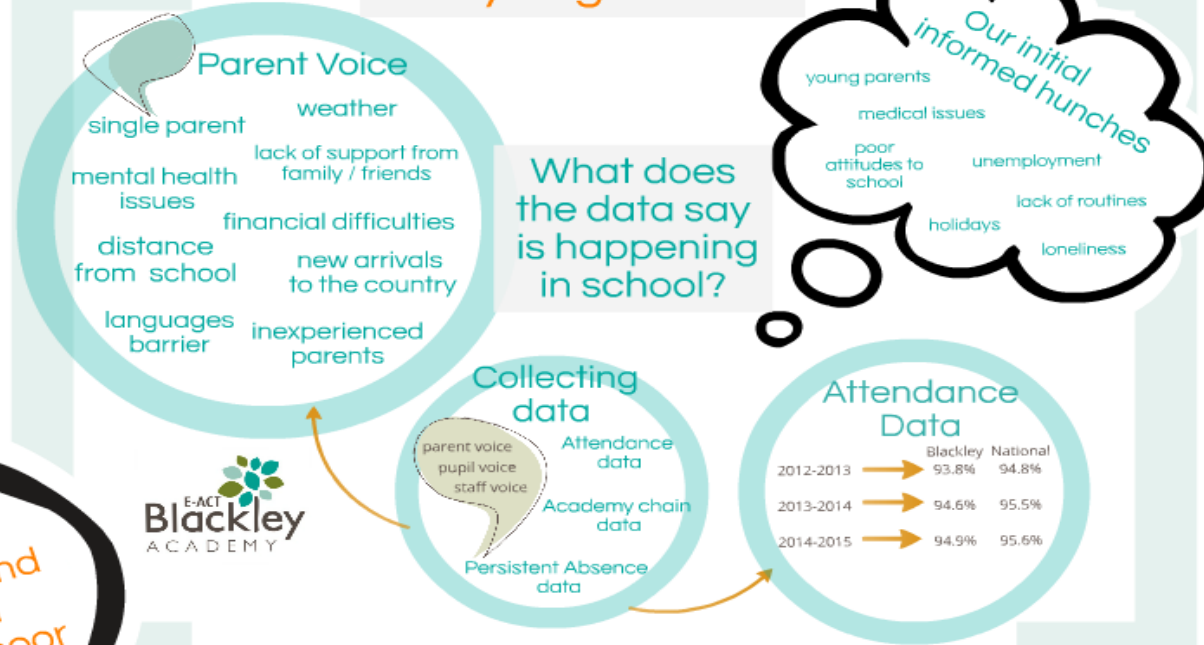Ainscow, M., Dyson, A., Goldrick, S. and West, M. (2012) *Developing Equitable Education Systems.* London: Routledge
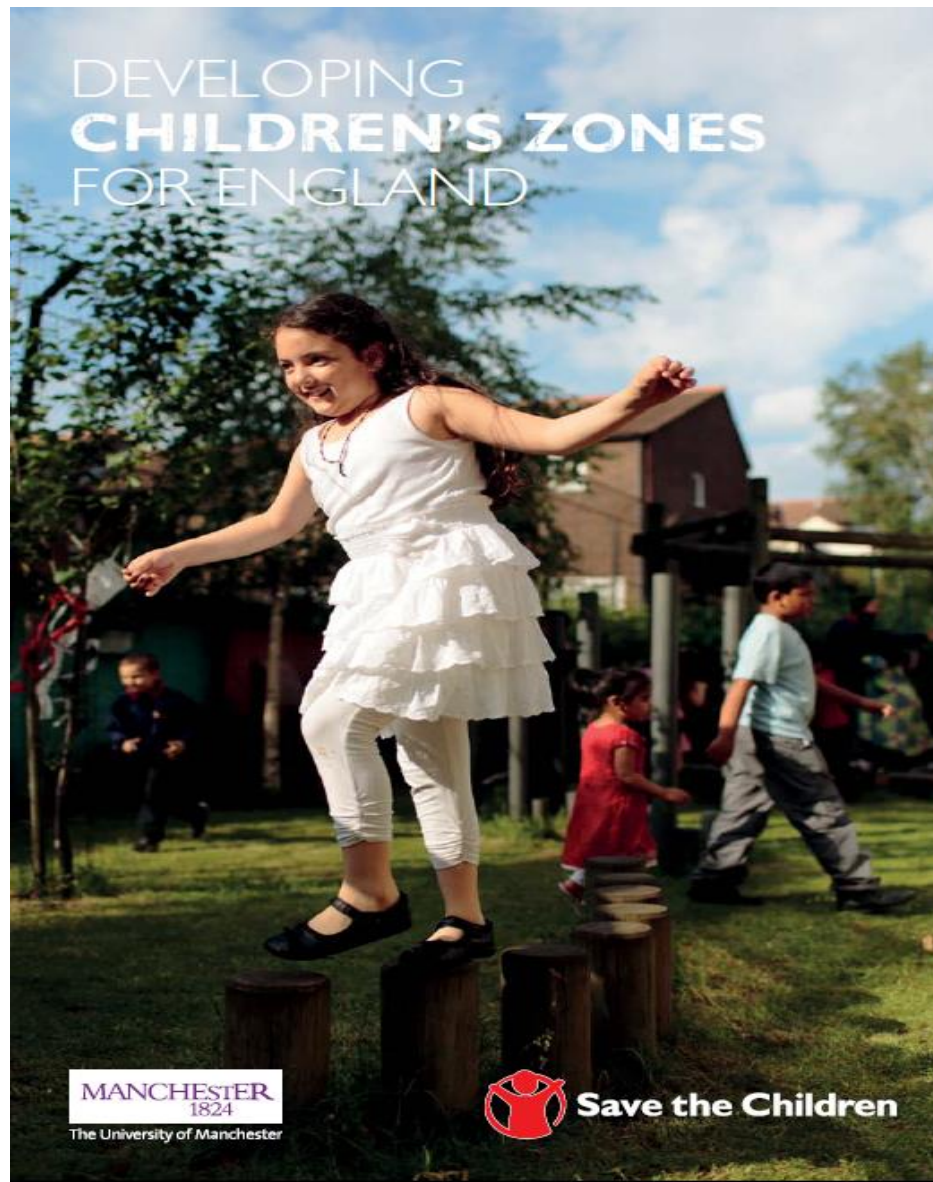
Dyson, A. and Kerr, K. (2013) *Developing children's zones for England: What's the evidence?* **London: Save the Children**

Who was involved?

Pupils

School staff

Research Team

Diverse members of staff bringing different perspectives on school life.

Rhonda
Senior Family Support Worker

Chloe
Class Teacher

Elisabeth
Vice Principal

Tahnee
Reading Lead

Matthew
Attendance Lead

Parents

Parent Ambassadors

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

E-ACT Blackley ACADEMY

Analysing context

Parent Voice

single parent
weather
lack of support from family / friends
mental health issues
financial difficulties
distance from school
new arrivals to the country
languages barrier
inexperienced parents

What does the data say is happening in school?

Our initial informed hunches

young parents
medical issues
poor attitudes to school
unemployment
lack of routines
holidays
loneliness

Collecting data

parent voice
pupil voice
staff voice

Attendance data

Academy chain data

Persistent Absence data

Attendance Data

	Blackley	National
2012-2013	93.8%	94.8%
2013-2014	94.6%	95.5%
2014-2015	94.9%	95.6%

FOCUS

To understand the main causes of poor attendance

Coalition of Research Schools 2016

What actions did we take?

Walking bus

We set up two Walking Bus routes, employing parents to run the scheme and a guide was written to share with other schools.

Brew and Biscuits

We established a weekly parent group to help tackle parents feeling isolated or lonely. We did it outside so that we could access all parents and carers as they dropped their children off in the morning.
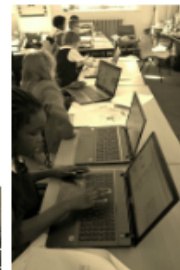
TEA & TOAST
every friday
find us via the office

Celebrating Attendance

We raised the profile of attendance throughout the school by planning exciting free trips and events.

Code Club

A parent who attended Brew and Biscuits expressed an interest in coding and we have now collaboratively set up a Code Club for Key Stage 2.

code club

How did we monitor progress?

The statistics

- Improved attendance since beginning of project from 94.9% to 97.0%

- Reduced Persistent Absence from 14.15% (44 children) to 3.87% (13 children)

- Social media - Twitter -
increase in followers from 270 to 413
increase in number of tweets 196 to 573
increase in retweets from 87 to 282
increase in likes from 199 to 716

Changes in practice

- New software application bought in for monitoring attendance.
- Regular data collection from across the academy trust.
- Increased rigour regarding processes.
- Tracked the number of letters to parents, fines, meetings, lates, medical appointments
- Holidays no longer approved unless special circumstances agreed by Head of School
- Worked with Early Help Hub following attendance referrals

⭐ A case study

- KS2 Child PA for 3 years
- Following being on the Walking Bus he attended for consecutive weeks with full attendance - something never previously achieved.
- Mum attended Parents Evening for the first time
- Behaviour improved at both home and school
- Class teacher noticed a great improvement in his attainment

Reading with **your child for ten** minutes a day **will make a difference**

ReadManchester.org.uk

#ReadMCR

Implications for leadership

- Demonstrating a commitment to collaboration

- Encouraging an inquiring stance

- Using difference as a resource

- Dealing with turbulence

- Promoting inclusive values

Things to think about

- **Does your school provide opportunities for staff to share their expertise?**

- **Does your school collaborate with other schools in exploring ways of promoting the learning of all students?**

- **Is your school active in involving the wider community in supporting its work?**

The most important factor: the collective will to make it happen