

Refugee Council

research report



Survey of secondary schools

Inclusive Secondary Schools Project

About the Refugee Council and the Inclusive Secondary Schools Project

As a human rights charity, independent of government, the Refugee Council works to ensure that refugees are given the protection they need, that they are treated with respect and understanding, and they have the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as other members of our society.

The Refugee Council's Research Unit was set up to encourage and undertake research that is informed by the experiences of refugee agencies and refugee community organisations and that engages refugees as partners in research. We work in partnership with universities, voluntary and statutory bodies and refugee community organisations to investigate policy options, collect and communicate data, identify good practice and assess policy impact.

'Inclusive Secondary Schools' is a three-year research project funded by the KPMG Foundation. Its aim is to research and pilot new ways of working that link schools and local authorities with refugee parents, carers and Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs). The project seeks to identify good practice and strategies for increasing the inclusion of asylum seeking and refugee children in secondary education and improving their educational achievement and attainment.

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Introduction and methodology

During February and March 2006, a survey of secondary schools was conducted for the Inclusive Secondary Schools Project. A questionnaire was distributed to secondary schools in the four project regions (London, Yorkshire and Humberside, West Midlands and the East of England). The aim of the survey was to gather information on existing practice in secondary schools relating to the parental and community engagement and involvement. The questionnaires asked about schools' practice in general, as well as activities introduced to assist the participation of refugee and asylum seeker parents, carers and communities.

Two different methods of survey distribution were adopted. The rationale behind this was to try to reach as many schools as possible as well as giving many recipients a choice of how they wished to complete the questionnaire. A paper questionnaire with a freepost return envelope was sent by post and an online survey was also available which schools were alerted to by e-mail. The URL of the online survey was included on the paper questionnaire so respondents knew they could use this method if preferred. Some of the schools who received the survey by e-mail contacted the project team to request a paper copy, which was then sent out to them for completion.

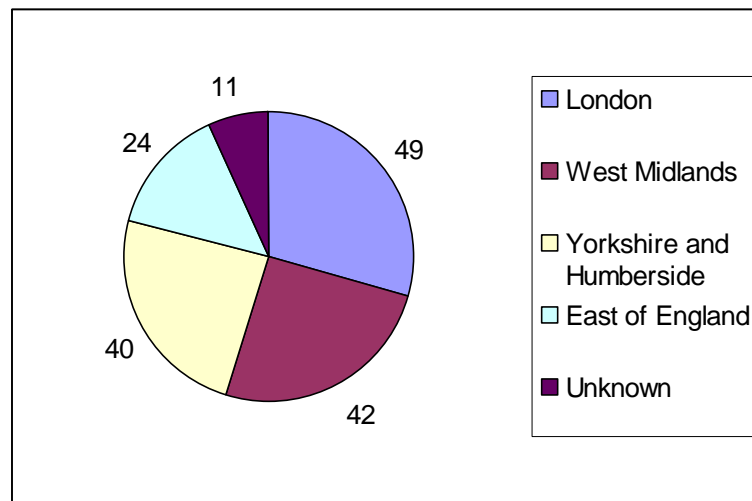
The project team compiled a database of secondary schools in the four project regions which came to a total of 2,422 schools. Every school for which the e-mail address was known (the vast majority) was sent a message explaining the purpose of the survey which also contained a link to the online version of the questionnaire. In addition to alerting people by e-mail, the project team posted paper copies of the questionnaire to over 650 schools. These schools were selected on the grounds that they were in local authority areas that have larger numbers of refugee and minority ethnic populations as it was practice relating to these groups that was of most interest to the project.¹ Overall, 166 schools responded to the survey, 51 online and 115 using the postal method. The project team considers this to be a healthy response rate as this was a survey intended to map practice rather than an opinion-based piece of research seeking a representative sample. As the questions were based around practice, those who are not engaged in particular activities are less inclined to respond, and those with few or no refugees in attendance are more likely to disregard the survey altogether.

Profile of respondents

Responses to the survey were received from schools spread across the four project regions. A total of 49 London schools, 40 from the West Midlands, 38 from Yorkshire and Humberside and 24 from the Eastern of England submitted responses.² The regional spread was fairly even, although the East of England generated fewer responses than the others. This is partly explained by there being both fewer schools and refugees and asylum seekers in this region.

¹ The Local Authorities were Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Brent, Camden, Hackney, Croydon, Haringey, Enfield, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow, Lambeth, Islington, Waltham Forest, Newham, Bedfordshire, Peterborough, Norwich, Ipswich, Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Coventry, Sandwell, Bradford, Rotherham, Sheffield, Leeds, Kirklees, Doncaster, Essex, Luton, Hertfordshire

² It should be noted that some of the questionnaires received had missing or incomplete information within them. As a consequence, some of the findings discussed below will not add up to the overall total of responses stated above. It is for this reason that we have included a 'not known' category in some of the graphs and tables below.



Responses were received from 47 different local authority areas across the four project, as illustrated in the table below.

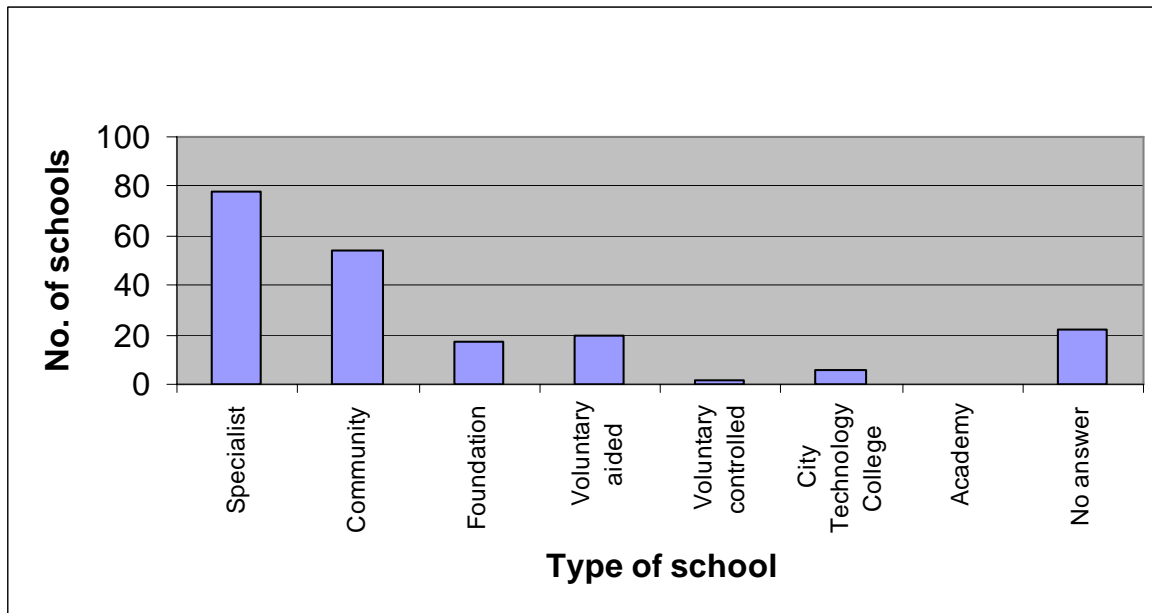
London		Yorkshire & Humberside		W. Midlands	
Hounslow	9	Leeds	16	Birmingham	10
Camden	6	Bradford	5	Coventry	6
Enfield	4	Sheffield	3	Sandwell	5
Croydon	4	Doncaster	3	Wolverhampton	5
Brent	4	Kirklees	3	Dudley	4
Ealing	4	North East Lincolnshire	3	Warwickshire	4
Redbridge	3	Rotherham	3	Stoke on Trent	3
Barking and Dagenham	2	Barnsley	2	Staffordshire	2
Barnet	2	North Yorkshire	1	Shropshire	1
Islington	2	Hull	1	Walsall	1
Newham	1			Worcestershire	1
Waltham Forest	1	East of England			
Hammersmith & Fulham	1	Bedfordshire	5		
Haringey	1	Suffolk	5		
Lambeth	1	Hertfordshire	4		
Southwark	1	Norfolk	3		
Greenwich	1	Peterborough	3		
Richmond upon Thames	1	Essex	3		
Wandsworth	1	Cambridgeshire	1		

The local authorities represented here are predominantly those encompassing major urban settlements, but schools in more rural authorities also responded, despite numbers of refugee and asylum seeking families being lower in these areas.

Type of school

The project team were interested in whether the types and governance arrangements of a school would have an impact on the methods of parental and community engagement undertaken. Respondents were therefore asked to specify the type of school they were (the categories are not

mutually exclusive so schools could select more than category) and the responses are illustrated below.³



Most responses came from specialist schools and there were no responses from Academies. The latter figure is unsurprising given that Academies were only introduced in the year 2000 and there were less than 60 nationwide at the time of data collection. The project team were also interested in whether Extended Schools status would impact on how schools work with refugee parents and communities. It is intended that Extended Schools will "provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of pupils, their families and the wider community" and can include activities such as childcare, adult and family learning and homework clubs.⁴ This work is sometimes conducted in partnership with other local organisations. Only 26 of the schools surveyed were Extended Schools, although four schools stated that they were planning to become one in the near future.

Specialist staff responsibilities

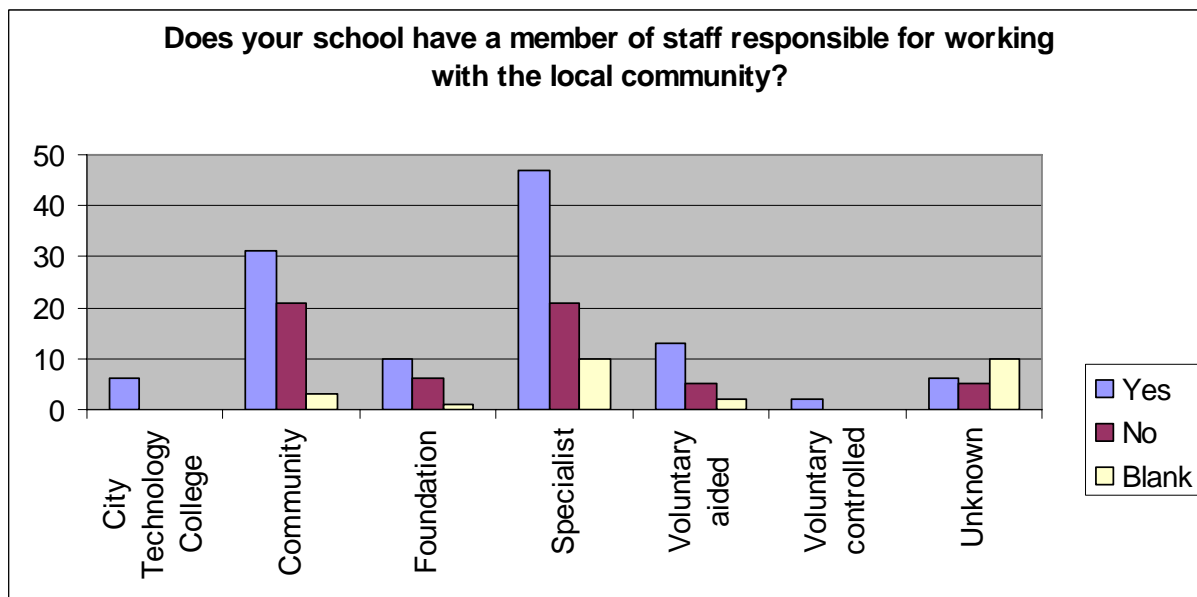
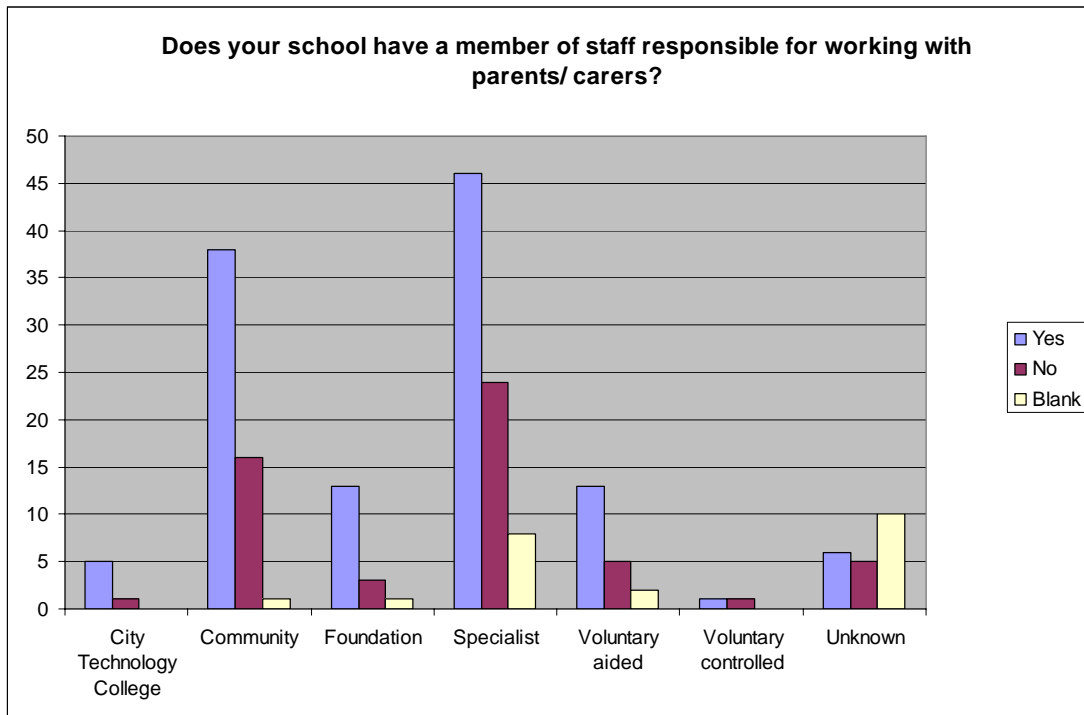
Respondents were asked if they had members of staff with specific responsibilities for working with both parents/carers and the local community. Having specialist staff in place could enable schools to better engage with these particular groups.

In both cases, a majority of schools who responded to this question had a member of staff in place with these responsibilities.⁵ In the case of parents/carers, specialist staff were present in nearly 69 per cent of schools and for community engagement this figure was nearly 64 per cent. When comparing these results to type of schools, some interesting patterns emerge.

³ For information of types of school, visit: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ChoosingASchool/DG_4016312 .

⁴ <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/impact/extendedschools>

⁵ A total of 19 schools did not answer the parents/carers question and 23 skipped the community question.



The graphs show that the majority of responses from all school types have a member of staff who is responsible for working with the local community. The question did not probe what type of activities this involved, so it is assumed that there is a range of work undertaken by these specific members of staff.⁶ It is interesting to note that nearly 40 per cent of community schools said they did not have a member of staff responsible for working with the local community, although this could be because these types of activities are more mainstreamed in that context.

⁶ The survey did ask schools to describe their links with local communities (not restricted to the roles of particular staff) and the findings from this question are discussed later.

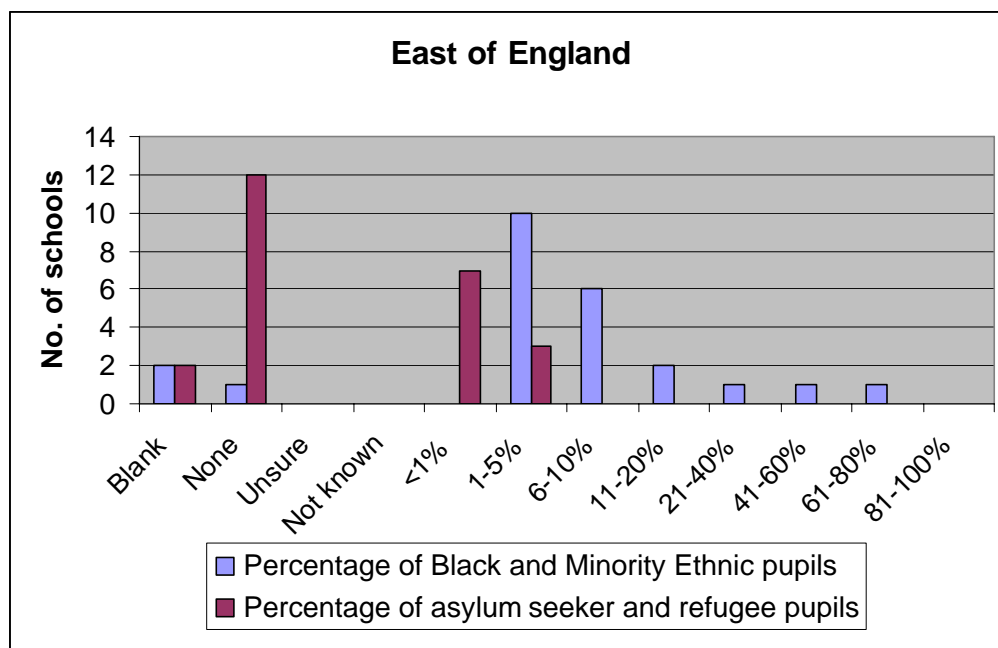
Profile of pupils

Respondents were asked to approximate the percentage of minority ethnic and refugee/asylum seeking pupils. The numbers of these particular groups of pupils may influence the ways in which schools attempt to engage families and communities.

Overall 18 schools did not answer the questions relating to percentages of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and/or refugee and asylum seeking pupils. Two schools stated that they were 'unsure' of the number of refugee and asylum seeking pupils and two reported this was 'not known'. In terms of knowledge of the numbers of refugee and asylum seeking pupils, these responses are not surprising as schools are under no statutory obligation to collect data on the immigration status of their pupils. The question asked for approximations so it is assumed that some schools made their estimates based on cultural or language groups, as well as knowing for certain about particular pupils due to disclosures from parents/carers and the young people themselves. The uncertainty about actual figures may also be reflected in the numbers of blank responses (a total of nine in this instance). The highest estimated percentage of refugee and asylum seeking pupils reported from a school was 25 per cent. A total of 47 schools reported having no refugee or asylum seeking pupils in their schools and 44 estimated their population as less than one per cent of all pupils. Of the 22 schools that had a population of refugee and asylum seekers that exceeded six per cent, 18 were based in London (the other three were in Yorkshire and Humberside).

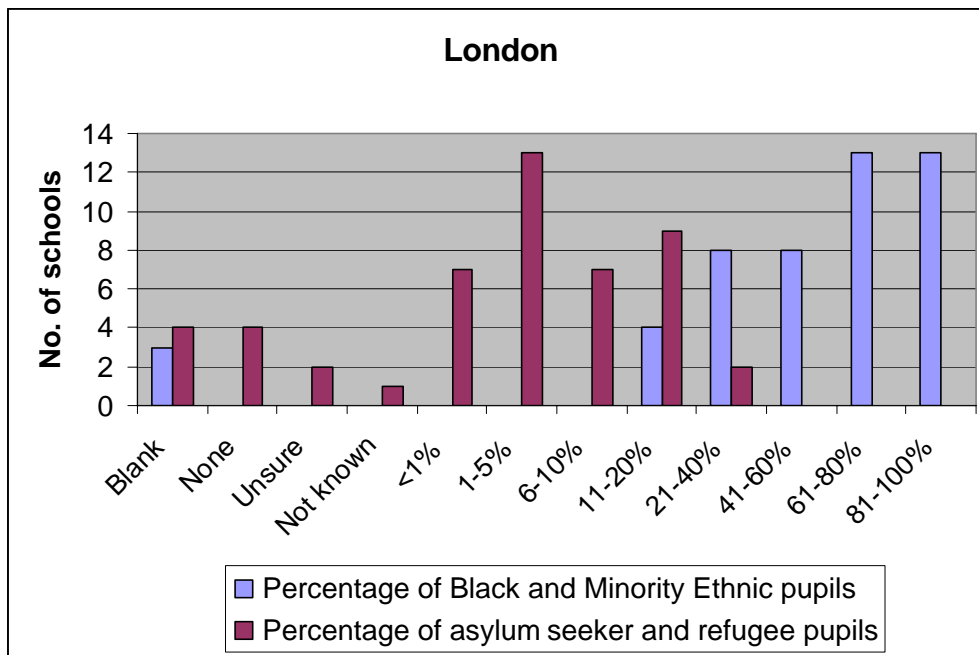
Whilst schools are not obliged to collect data on immigration status, they are required to gather information on ethnicity, mother tongue language and Pupil Level Annual School Census data help schools and local authorities gain an estimate of the number of refugees and asylum seekers in school. The accessibility of data on ethnicity is supported by the fact that no schools responded with 'unsure' or 'not known' to the question relating to Black and Minority Ethnic pupils. There were still nine non-responses to this question, but this could be attributed to the person completing the questionnaire not having access to the school's Management Information Systems. The highest estimated percentage of BME pupils reported from a school was 98 per cent and only one school reported having no pupils from BME groups.

The regional patterns are discussed below.

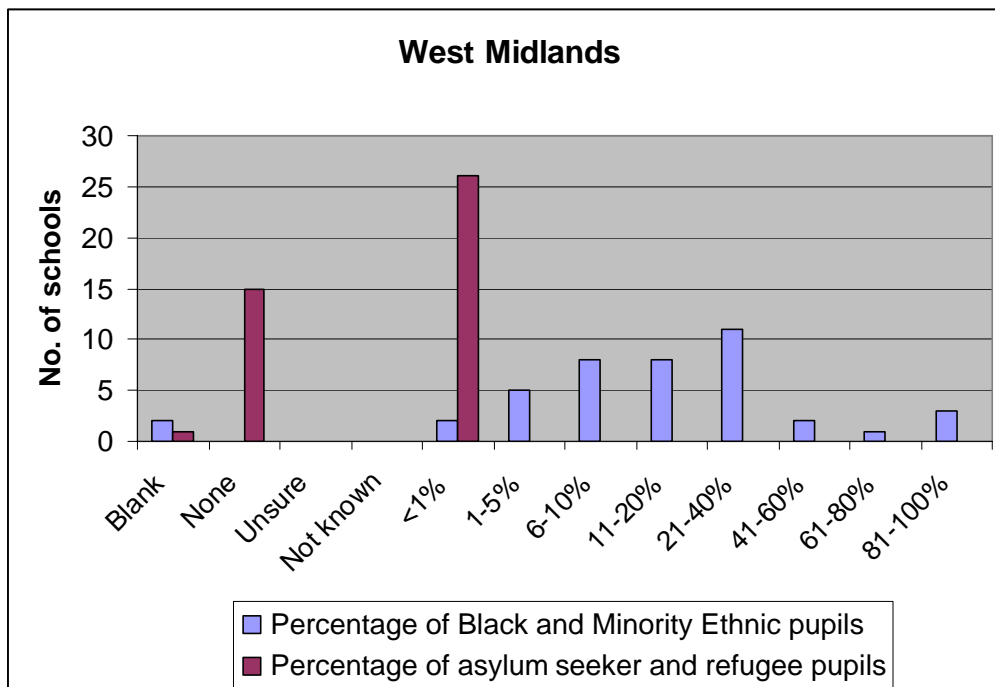


The pupil profile of responding schools in the East of England shows a pattern of few Black and Minority Ethnic and refugee and asylum seeking pupils. Twelve schools

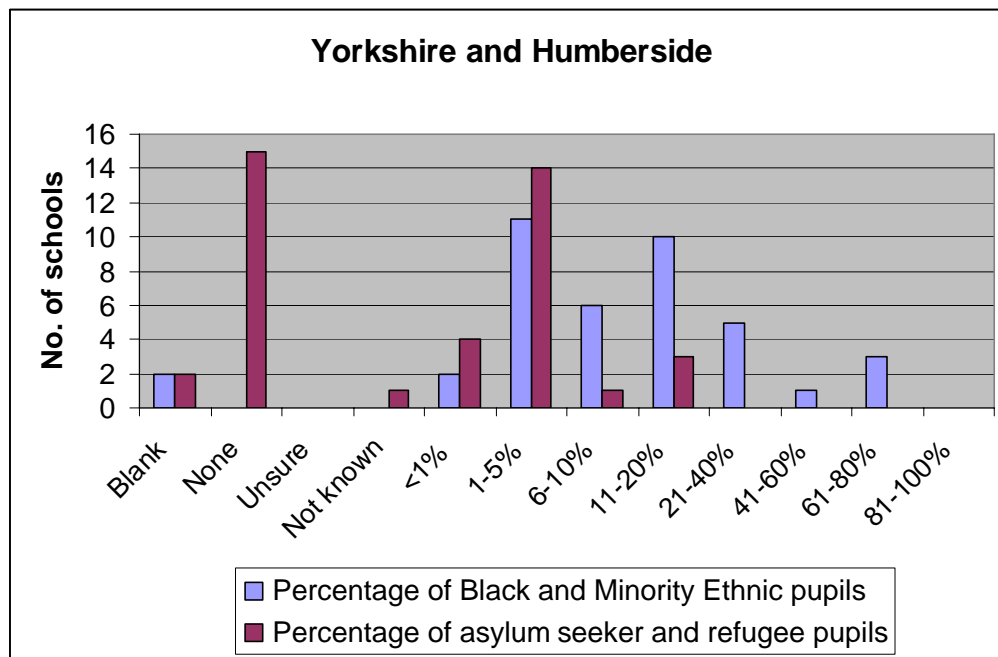
reported no refugee and asylum seeking pupils and the highest proportion of and East of England schools did not exceed five per cent. This region featured the schools with no BME pupils.



The responses from London school show high levels of refugee and asylum seeking and BME pupils. No London schools had less than 11 per cent BME pupils while 26 schools reported a BME population of over 61 per cent. The London schools that responded to the survey had a higher proportion of refugee and asylum seeking pupils than any respondents from other regions.



In the West Midlands, all 26 schools which reported having refugee and asylum seeking pupils on their roll said that they represented less than one per cent of the total school population. Fifteen reported no refugee and asylum seeking pupils. Schools in the West Midlands had a significant proportion of BME pupils.



Responses from schools in Yorkshire and Humberside show that 23 schools reported having refugee and asylum seeking pupils and 15 had none. No schools had a proportion of BME pupils in the highest bracket, with the majority of schools reporting levels of 20 per cent or less.

The pupil profiles, particularly in relation to refugee and asylum seeking pupils, should be borne in mind when considering the results reported below. For example, as 47 schools reported that they had no refugee and asylum seeking pupils, their engagement with refugee parent/carers and community organisations is going to be limited.

Activities

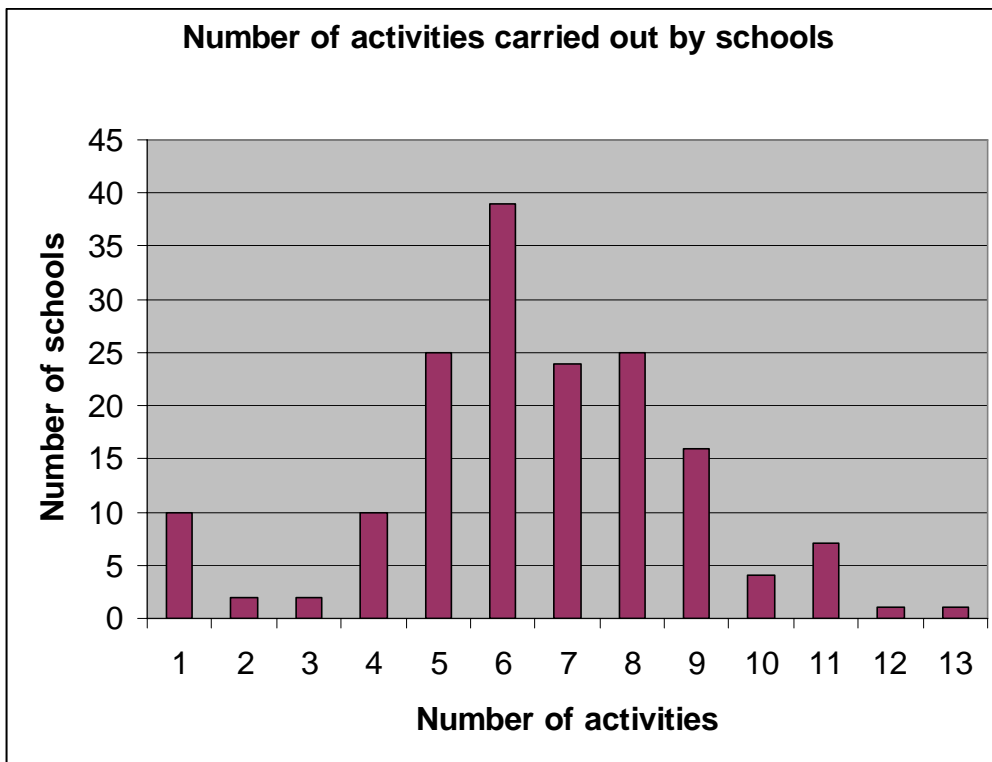
Schools were asked about the activities they undertook with parents and carers. The questions were designed to get an idea of general parental/carers engagement, hence the questions were able to be answered by schools which had no refugee or asylum seeking pupils. For each activity respondents were asked if they were mainstream or targeted, the level of participation of refugee parents/carers, strategies used to increase involvement, who was involved and how the activities were funded. An overview of the numbers of respondents running different activities is displayed below.

Activity	No. of schools
Parent/Teacher consultations	150
Information events (e.g. transition, literacy, numeracy)	139
Induction programme for parents of new pupils	115
Home visits	98
Informal events (e.g. coffee mornings, fund-raising)	82
Volunteering (e.g. homework club, talks, school trips)	79
Family learning activities	51
ICT for parents	49
Advice sessions (e.g. housing, benefits, health)	33
Parenting classes	26
'Other' activities	26
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes	17

The 'other' activities category represents a range of activities which include those relating to feedback forums (e.g. consultation and focus groups), learning (e.g. study skills sessions, family literacy and Saturday language schools), pupil-centred events (e.g. target-setting days) and general social activities (e.g. International evenings, music gigs and arts projects).

Almost all schools stated that they ran parent/teacher consultations which was anticipated as this is one of the most traditional methods of reporting young people's progress to parents/carers (along with written reports). Information events, induction programmes, informal events, home visits and volunteering were run by the majority of respondents. Family learning, ESOL, ICT for parents and advice sessions were less frequently cited. This is likely to be because these activities are not considered core activities of the school and would perhaps need additional/specialist funding and staffing to run.

The figure below illustrates the number of activities carried out by schools. Only ten schools in this sample ran one activity with parents/carers, with the majority of schools undertaking at least six different activities. Although in the minority, it is noteworthy that 29 schools conducted nine or more activities that involved parents and carers.

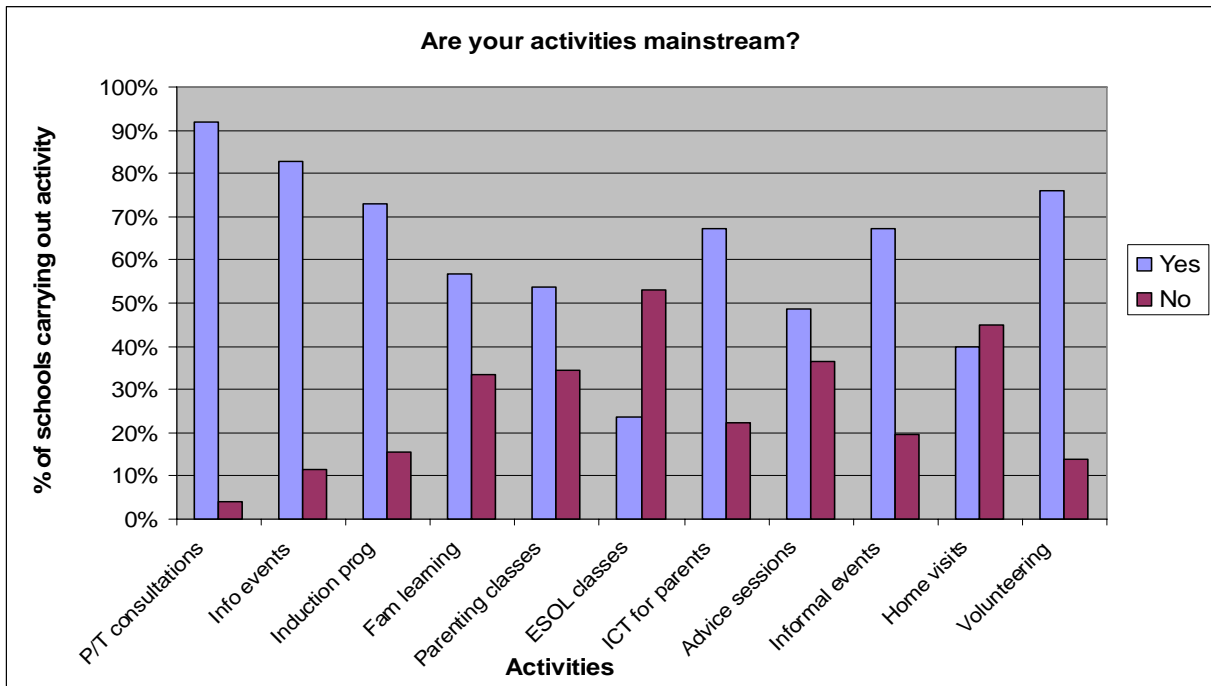


The data showed no link between the total number of activities and the type of school or proportion of BME or refugee and asylum seeking pupils. There was a suggestion that the medium-sized schools in this sample (those with pupil numbers between 801-1400) run a higher than average number of activities, but the sample size of these schools was the largest so this distorts the data slightly.

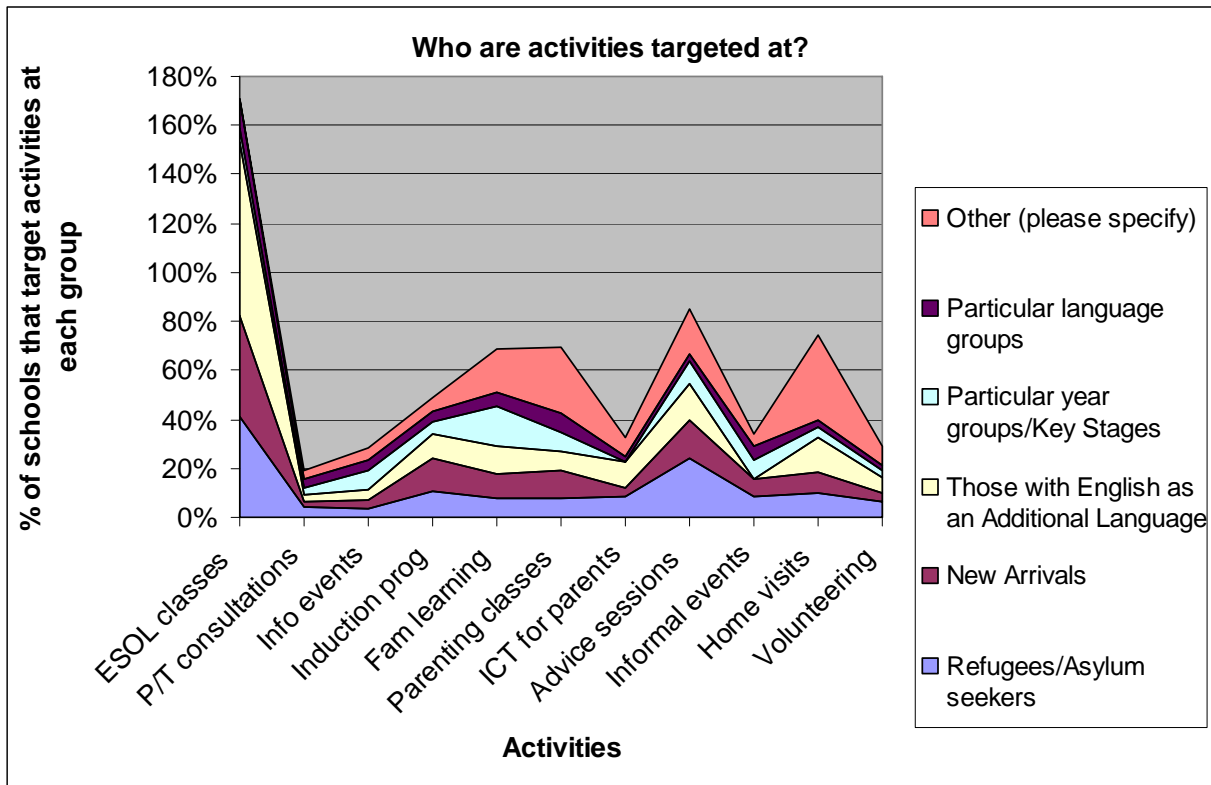
Proportion of mainstream and targeted activities

The survey sought to discover the types of activities secondary schools ran in order to engage parents and carers in general, as well as looking at what additional work may be undertaken to engage refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers in particular. As a result the project team received responses from many schools that had no refugee and asylum seeking pupils at all as these respondents were still able to fill out the questionnaire. The graph below

illustrates the types of activities that were mainstream or targeted to particular types of parents/carers.



Of the 11 activities, nine were run as mainstream by the majority of schools and were therefore operated for all the parents/carers of pupils in the school. The two that were identified by the majority of schools as 'targeted' activities were ESOL classes and home visits. ESOL classes were the activity that was most targeted towards specific groups. Home visits are typically quite resource-intensive activities for families where the pupils have particular issues that need to be worked through individually. In addition to the groups identified in the graph below, schools also stated that home visits were mainly conducted where there were concerns about attendance, progress or behaviour, and are often undertaken by Education Welfare Officers. Parenting classes, advice sessions and family learning were also run as targeted activities by a large number of schools (although they were not in the majority). Responses in the 'other' category suggest that, in addition to those outlined below, parenting classes are often targeted at parents of children with behavioural difficulties and family learning activities focus upon families of children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.



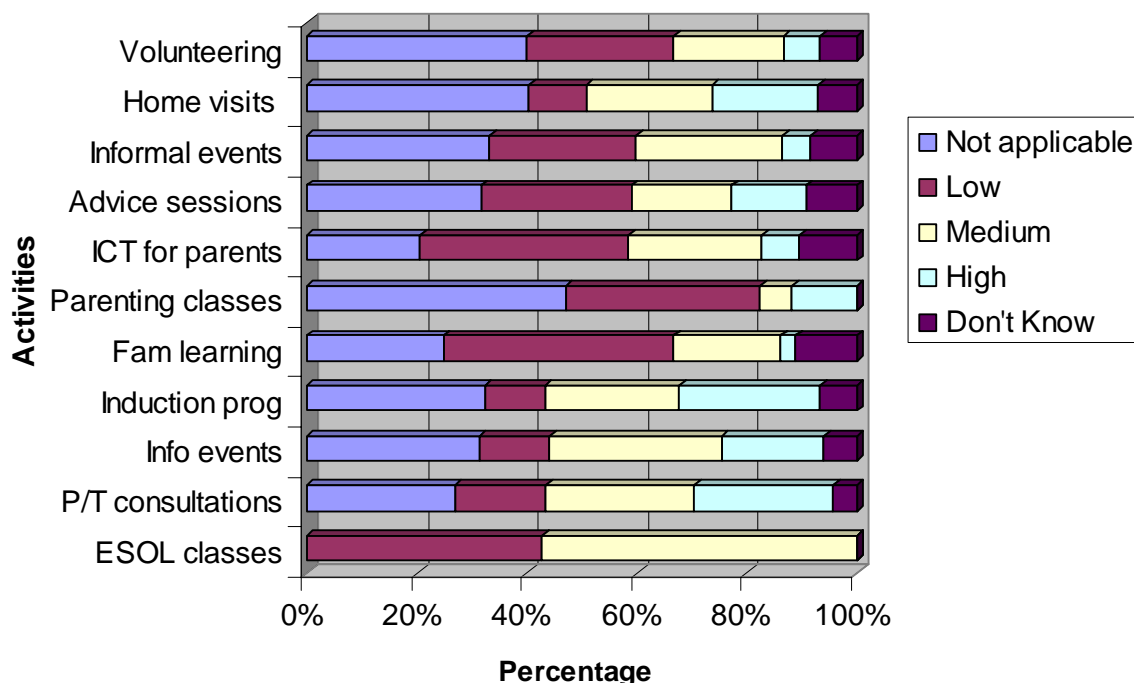
The graph above suggests that few schools run targeted activities for refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers. However, taken in the context of the fact that many respondents had few or no refugee pupils on their roll, this is not a surprising finding. There are peaks around ESOL classes and advice sessions for refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers.⁷

Participation of refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers

The survey asked for schools to assess the levels of participation of refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers in activities, irrespective of whether these were mainstream or targeted activities. The fact that many schools that responded to the survey had few or no refugee or asylum seeking pupils accounts for the large 'not applicable' response against most activities.

⁷ Please note that respondents could 'tick all that apply' so the percentage figures are cumulative. The proportion of each target group can be seen by assessing the height of their band of colour at each activity point.

Level of participation of refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers in activities

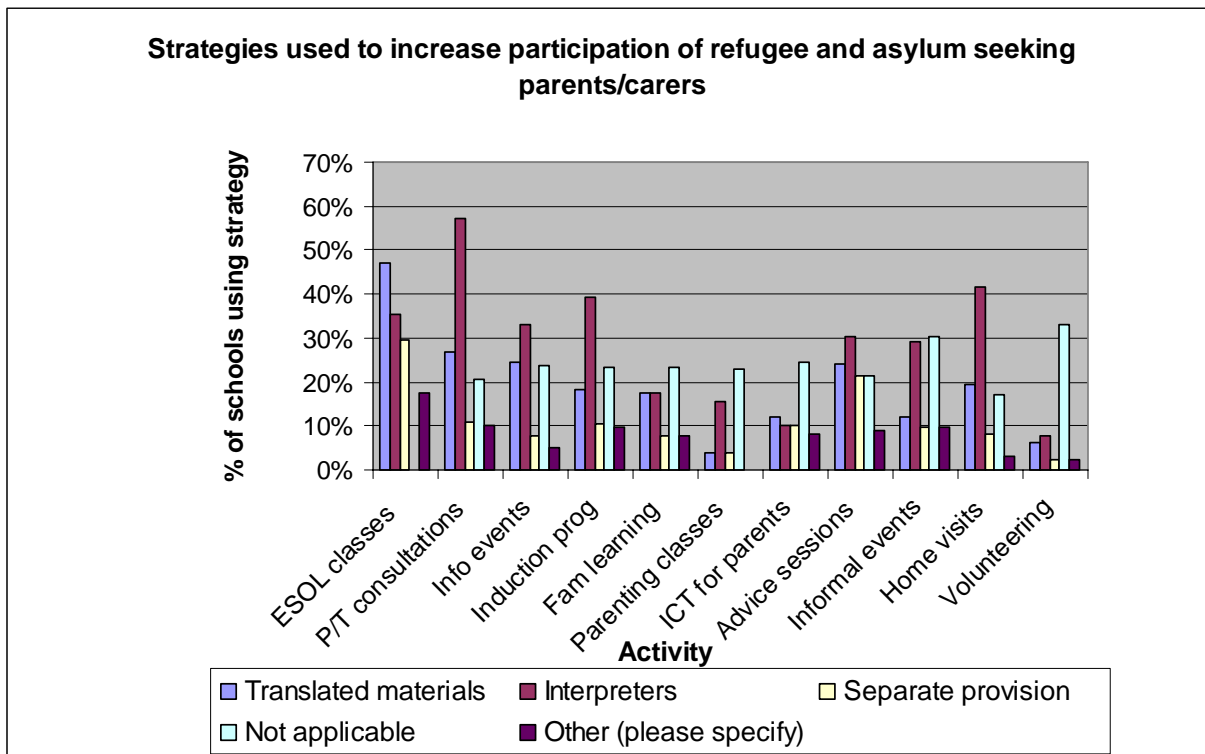


The results show that the activity that had the highest levels of refugee and asylum seeking parent/carer participation was parent/teacher consultations with nearly 20 per cent of schools reporting this. Induction programmes were also well-attended by this group, but this could perhaps be anticipated as being a popular way for parents to find out about the English school system in general and their school in particular. The findings suggest that the lowest level of participation tended to be in activities that can be considered as not specifically relating to the pupils, for example ESOL classes, ICT for parents, family learning and parenting classes. The fact that these provide opportunities for broader parental involvement could be a cause of concern as it would appear that schools are not as successfully engaging refugee and asylum seeking parents in their own learning. No school reported high levels of participation in ESOL classes, and low figures exceed 40 per cent. This may be due to parents taking ESOL classes elsewhere, but given the recent restrictions placed upon access to English language classes in contrast to the increasing demand, provision such as that provided by schools might become increasingly important.⁸

⁸ Further information on changes to ESOL provision by the Learning and Skills Council can be found on www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/briefings/2007/esolfunding.htm.

Strategies to increase participation of refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers

Even if an activity is mainstream, some schools do put additional support in place to help parents/carers from particular groups to be able to engage in activities. Respondents were asked what strategies, if any, they adopt to increase the participation of refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers in each activity.

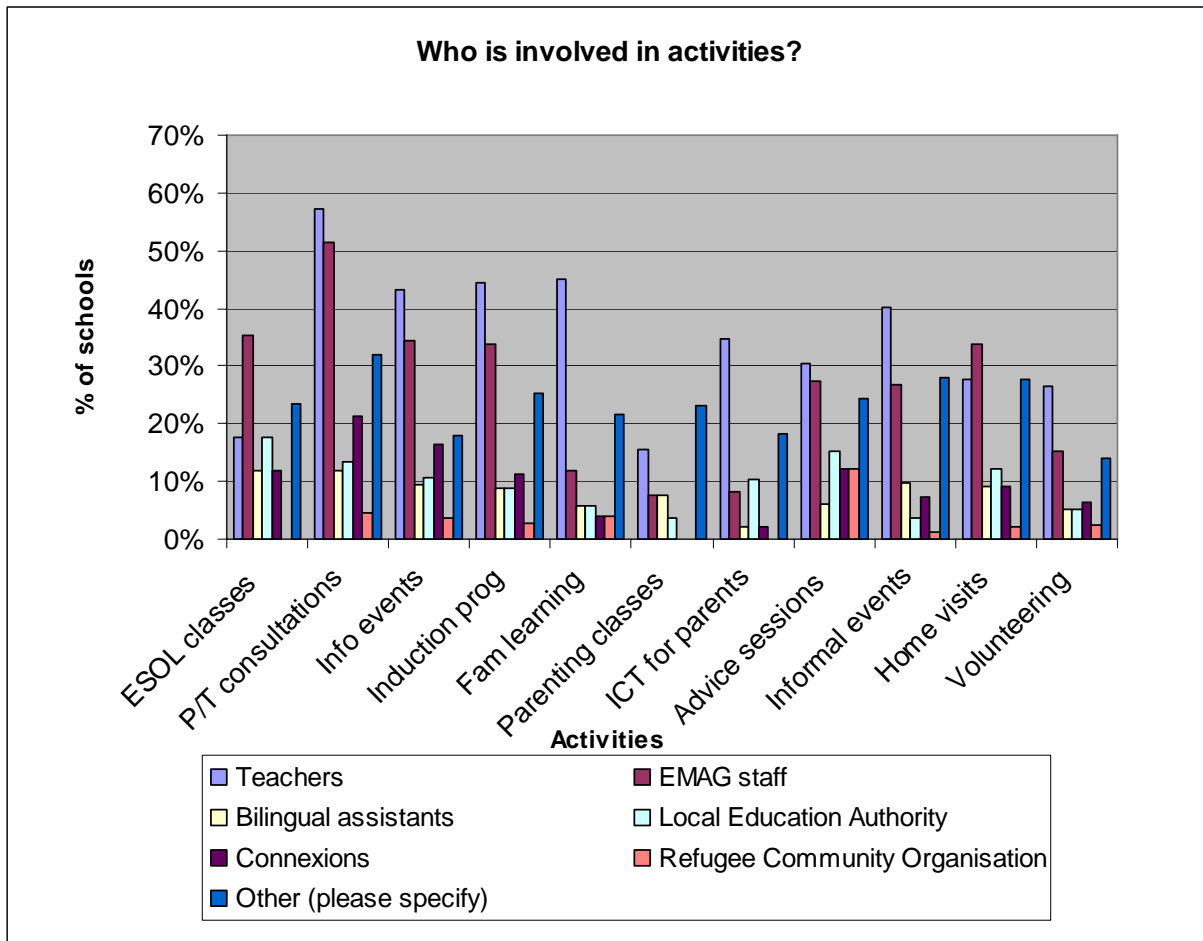


The results show a significant use of interpreters to support activities such as parent/teacher consultations, information event, induction programmes, advice sessions and home visits. Translated materials are used to support over a quarter of parent/teacher consultations and in nearly half of ESOL provision (which would be expected given the nature of the activity). Translated materials were used in less than 20 per cent of induction programmes which is lower than the project team anticipated as these activities are often organised for newly-arrived families and therefore present a good opportunity to distribute information about schooling to those in attendance.

Delivery of activities

Many of the activities covered by this survey cannot be considered as 'core' activities expected of secondary schools. Running these activities requires additional resources in terms of both staffing and funding. The survey asked respondents to identify who was involved in delivering each activity to ascertain the staffing used and the extent to which other organisations might work together with schools to deliver specialist programmes more effectively.⁹

⁹ Funding sources are discussed in the following section.



The findings show that teachers made a significant contribution to all activities, with their involvement being the largest proportion in eight of the 11 activities identified. EMAG staff were involved in over half of parent/teacher consultations and over a third of ESOL classes, information events, induction programmes and home visits.¹⁰ This suggests that many schools are ensuring there is support in place for particular parent/carer groups to enable them to engage in activities. The level of involvement of Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) in all types of activities was low. There were only 17 cases of RCO involvement cited (and some of these were from schools who work with them on several projects which means the number of organisations is probably lower than the count highlighted here). The highest proportion of RCO involvement in any activity was advice sessions where the figure reached 12 per cent.

In several of the activities there was a large proportion of 'other' responses. The details of the most commonly involved groups and their frequency in relation to specific activities are outlined in the table below. Others that were only mentioned once or twice included SureStart, Somali home-school link worker, health and youth workers, Education Welfare Officers and educational psychologists and these tended to work on quite specialised projects.

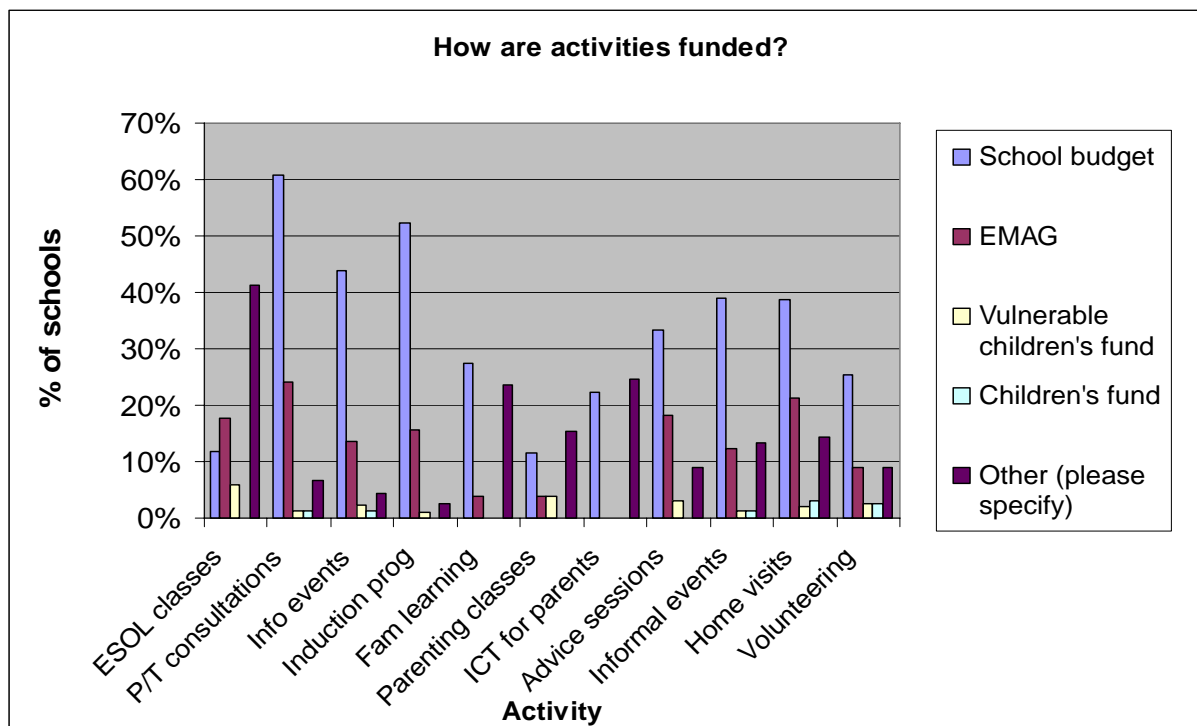
¹⁰ The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) is a Government funding source which is often used to fund staff to support pupils who have English language support needs.

	P/T consultations	Information events	Induction progs	Family learning	Parenting classes	ESOL classes	ICT classes	Advice sessions	Informal events	Home visits	Volunteering
Teaching assistants	32	10	22	3	1	-	1	3	7	8	5
Older pupils	5	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	-	-
Mentors	5	2	3	1	-	1	-	1	2	5	2
Special Educational Needs Staff	2	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community workers/tutors/mentors	1	2	1	3	2	-	1	3	3	-	-
Adult education staff	-	-	-	2	1	3	-	1	-	-	-
Support/specialist staff	2	4	4	1	-	-	3	-	2	3	-
Community/BME organisations	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Parents or Parent/Teacher Assoc.	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	5	-	1

Teaching assistants appear to be very involved in much of the work that schools do to engage parents/carers. Participation from community workers/tutors/mentors and community/BME organisations shows that some schools are connecting with their local communities on these activities, although the numbers are quite low (not exceeding five for any activity).

Funding

The availability of funding is a key consideration when developing programmes and initiatives to increase the involvement of parents and carers. It was expected that some engagement would take place as part of the usual work of the school, but the project team was aware that schools sometimes draw upon specialist funding streams to resource their activities. The findings are displayed below.



The most common source of funding was the general school budget. This was the highest funder of all activities except for ESOL, parenting and ICT classes for parents. The exceptions here are programmes that are specialist and therefore sit outside of what could be considered core provision. Many schools seemed to use the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant to support more 'mainstream' activities, suggesting that they provided increasing levels of support for parents/carers from minority ethnic groups. Incidents of funding activities using the Children's or Vulnerable Children's Fund were very low.¹¹ This is likely to be due to the fact that these funding schemes are only available for schools with very high percentages of BME pupils or are based on complicated funding formula.¹² For some activities there were significant 'other' funding sources identified, the details of which are outlined in the table below.

¹¹ The Children's Fund was launched in November 2000 as a part of the Government's strategy to assist students at risk of social exclusion. Funding for this scheme is scheduled until 2011. Further information can be found on www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/childrensfund/. The Vulnerable Children's Grant was created in 2003 and was built on the existing Standards Fund grants to assist vulnerable children and young people, especially those unable to attend school. Further information can be found www.dfes.gov.uk/sickchildren/Pdfs/RR592.pdf

¹² Schools which apply for the Vulnerable Children's Grant (VCG) uses the Standards Fund formula funding mechanism which includes indices of social deprivation. This somewhat complicated procedure may deter some schools from applying for the fund.

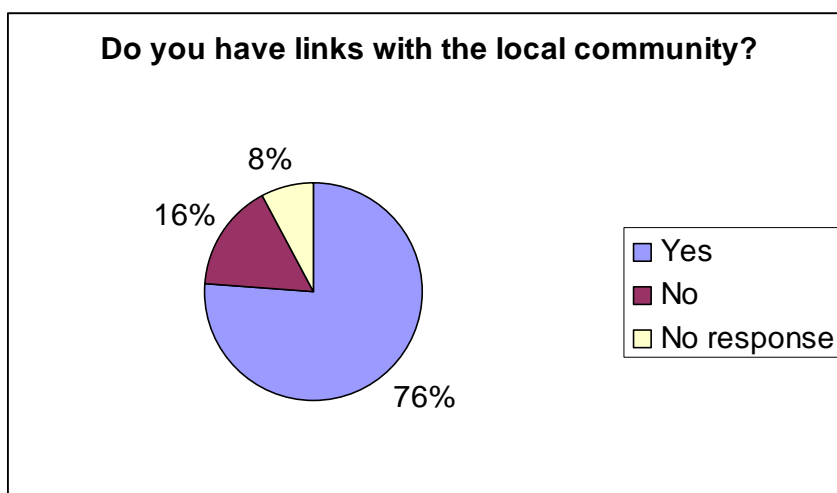
	Informal events	Home visits	Family learning	Parenting classes	ESOL classes	ICT classes	P/T consultations	Information events	Induction progs	Advice sessions	Volunteering
Local authority	-	5	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-
Parent/Teacher Association	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	3
Minority Ethnic Achievement Project	-	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	-	-
Education Action Zone	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Family learning fund	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Specialist/Extended school funding	1	-	4	2	-	3	2	-	-	2	-
Adult education	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Learning and Skills Council	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
Excellence in Cities	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Refugee Community Organisation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
New Opportunities Fund			1	1							
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund				1					1		

The source that was mentioned on most occasions in the 'other' category was specialist/Extended Schools funding. Given that one of the remits of Extended Schools is to provide a range of services to the wider community, this would seem an obvious source of financial support for activities that engage parents and carers. Local authorities and Parent/Teacher Associations also supported a range of activities, the latter particularly relating to informal events and volunteering. The findings show that schools had also taken advantage of specialised funding streams to deliver some activities, such as the Family Learning Fund for the provision of family learning.

School links with local communities

Alongside the focus upon parents/carers, the survey also sought to find out what links secondary schools had with their local communities in general. Schools were asked what links they had with the local community and were asked to describe what these were (and to highlight if these included refugees and asylum seekers).¹³ The initial responses are displayed in the chart below.

¹³ The second question was phrased "If yes, please describe the activities (e.g. use of school facilities). Please tell us if any of these are refugee community organisations or groups that work with asylum seekers and refugees".



Just over three-quarters of schools said they had links with the local community and described these activities. The answers to this open-ended question have been categorised below. It should also be noted that some schools had multiple links with different groups within their local communities and therefore many individual schools will appear in more than one category.

Type of link	Total
Links with faith groups	43
Use of facilities by local community	22
Supplementary schooling ¹⁴	20
Sports clubs/activities	15
BME groups/community	14
RCO	13
Adult education	12
Refugee community (general not through RCOs)	11
Community groups (general)	8
Other schools	7
Counselling/therapy/mental health services	6
Advice services	4
Music/drama groups	4
Community language classes	3
Member of local committees/forums	2
Member of local refugee committees/forums	2
Older people's groups	2
Women's groups	2
SureStart	2
Men's group	1
Family learning	1
Primary Care Trust	1
Citizens Advice Bureau trains staff on refugee issues	1

This list displays far-reaching engagement across local communities. The most popular link reported related to links with faith groups. As this question called for an open-ended response, it was not always clear what the nature of the links were. Some schools were specific and stated, for instance,

¹⁴ This category includes Saturday schools, homework clubs for particular groups, summer and evening classes and community language schools.

that faith groups used school facilities or they arranged visits to religious buildings, but in many cases it was not possible to determine what activities take place. The different faiths specifically mentioned included Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism, although some descriptions were vague and merely described 'faith/religious groups'.

Incidences of local community groups using school facilities were the second most numerous responses. The nature of this engagement was not clear and this arrangement could involve groups hiring facilities to the school being involved in the work of the groups that use their resources. It should also be noted that some of the other responses in the list could only involve the use of facilities, but this was difficult to decipher from the responses.

Of particular interest to the project team were the links schools had with RCOs. Thirteen schools reported having links with RCOs, although it should be noted that some responses alluded to links with particular community groups that could have involved some working with refugees and asylum seekers and these appear under the 'refugee community' category. The description of one school's work with RCOs was:

"We work in partnership with the RCO in home visits and reporting on educational aspects. We also act on information given about the settlement of older students when they leave foster care to make sure they can cook something and shop. (Life classes.) We listen with an empathetic ear to the problems that arise and support students on visits. We were prepared to have a mentor in the school for students that have no other same language students around. Organised by RCO but did not happen."

This excerpt shows the kind of activities that are carried out in such partnerships, but also indicates that things do not necessarily all work out as originally planned. Another school noted the desire to work with a particular group, but their efforts were thwarted due to concerns over funding:

"We have tried to involve our local Somali women's association in our [particular] project but they were unwilling as they feared they might lose funding."

The activities described above appear quite formal and directly related to the education and welfare of refugee and asylum seeking pupils. It was clear from responses that some of the other activities undertaken with RCOs were much more related to informal cultural awareness-raising. For example, one school reported working with a Congolese community group to run traditional cookery classes.

It is clear from some of the responses that some schools do engage in activities to reach out to different parts of their local communities. The following quote illustrates an example of a school which clearly has a well-developed approach to working on multi-cultural and multi-faith issues.

"The school is used by Gujarati Saturday school, a Catholic church group and Buddhist group. We are developing links with the Turkish Cypriot community centre where students have attended work experience along with a Somalian Community organisation. We have a bilingual Teaching Assistant (Turkish speaking) who contacts families by phone prior to target setting days or parent consultations, as well as to encourage attendance at After school GCSE classes in Turkish."

This type of approach will not be appropriate for all and will reflect the composition of the local population. However, it does illustrate that some schools do develop differentiated and targeted activities to engage particular groups in their areas.

It should be noted that 20 schools reported being linked with supplementary schooling. Again, as this was an open-ended question, it was unclear what the precise nature of the links were as some responses were vague. Some schools reported that organisations that

delivered their supplementary classes used their premises, while others outlined more formal links, as illustrated below:

" The EMAS Department has links with the [particular] Tamil school who provide us with teacher for after-school classes. "

This arrangement goes beyond the provision of physical space and shows that the school is linking with particular communities.

Many schools also cited links with community sports clubs and activities. This may have been evidenced more frequently than other types of activities because sports can be an area where many parents and carers feel more inclined to engage with the school. This may be especially true, as with arts in education, because it is an aspect of the school culture where English language does not necessarily act as a barrier to participation.

School links with local authorities

Respondents were asked whether their school worked with their local authority on issues relating to linking parent and/or communities. A total of 98 schools in the sample reported links, with 53 reporting no links at all.¹⁵ This was an open-ended question and responses fell within the categories outlined in the table below.

Type of link	Total
Links with specialist local authority staff ¹⁶	15
Local authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Team	12
Translation/Interpretation	12
Other support (e.g. induction, EAL, Information)	12
Involvement in meetings/steering groups/forums	11
Specialist projects/initiatives	10
Extended schools	8
Parent Involvement Team/Parent Partnerships	5
Educational Welfare Services	5
Adult Education	5
Local authority host/involved in events	4
Special Educational Needs	4
Local authority provides training	3
Parenting classes	3
Involvement in local refugee forum	2
Family learning	2

None of the types of links reported happened in more than 15 schools. Some schools did have multiple links with their local authorities on this issue, but the responses suggest that local authorities could play a bigger role in helping schools link with their local communities and parents, particularly as 53 reported having no links.

Those that did outline the joint working outlined a range of activities which display different levels of engagement. For instance, working with specialist local authority staff is likely to be a more bespoke relationship than sitting on steering groups for instance. The responses suggest that the schools

¹⁵ A total of 15 schools did not answer the question.

¹⁶ This category included staff such as Local Authority refugee co-ordinators, Traveller education advisers and community mentors.

worked with the local authority on specific issues relating to particular groups so they are used as a source of specialist expertise or support. For instance, the responses below outline the kind of work two schools engage in with local authorities which target refugee and asylum seeking communities specifically:

*"Have worked with LEA on specific issues to do with individual students/groups of students LEA have advised on our programme for EAL students We have hosted Moving There exhibition twice and worked with LEA on curriculum materials We have specific project for Liberian students - now have started one for Somali students."*¹⁷

"We have instituted an annual poetry evening which has been run for the past five years, involving parents and refugee communities. It is an inter-school and college event that is Borough wide. We are also organising a video conferencing link with a school in Mogadishu so that our Somali pupils and others can communicate with their compatriots."

These examples indicate the breadth of services local authorities can offer schools to enhance their provision of services especially to refugee and asylum seeker parents and carers. They also suggest that a sharing of human and material resources can help improve targeted activities.

One respondent detailed the difficulties faced in some local authority areas when trying to increase parent and community participation:

"The LEA often trials initiatives to increase parent participation in school life, raising awareness of cultural differences, INSET for staff, new opportunities at college or training establishments for BME students. We always participate. Few are sustained...The best events were the ones held in the local community, preferably in people's homes. Transport was a constant problem, few people on the poverty line having their own, and working shifts/unsociable hours...Schools try to be a focal point for communities, but catchment areas are wide and refugees are dispersed across several high schools. There has to be some planned, centralised initiative to bring people to a venue which is a 'haven' for all - men and women- young and old...There is no teacher in the LEA currently, qualified to teach EAL to Secondary School pupils. I agree completely that parents/carers play an invaluable role in their children's education and should be provided for, and included. However, a bigger issue for us is appropriate provision of skilled language teaching for the increasing number of students arriving with English Language needs."

This response highlights an issue of priorities in area where the local authority infrastructure is not particularly well developed, sustained or resourced. Schools located in areas where there is not a high proportion of minority ethnic groups may find that resources are not allocated to support schools in fully engaging with particular communities. This could result in the increased marginalisation of particular pupils and families.

Unaccompanied children

Approximately 3245 children claim asylum without their parents or usual carers in 2006.¹⁸ The project team was interested in finding out how schools work with separated children. Fifty-two schools reported having unaccompanied children in their schools. These schools were asked to describe how they worked with these pupils, and their answers are categorised in the table below.

¹⁷ The abbreviation LEA stands for local education authority.

¹⁸ 2006 statistics on Unaccompanied Children from the Home Office Annual Statistical Bulletin

People responsible	Total
Designated staff for Looked After Children	18
Ethnic Minority Achievement Team	12
Designated staff	8
English as an Additional Language Team	6
Inclusion Team/Manager	2
Key worker	2
Student support officer	2
Induction mentor	2
Refugee Co-ordinator	1
Somali link worker	1
Child Protection Officer	1
Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator	1

When answering this question, most schools described particular people within the school who had responsibility for looking after the needs of individual separated children. The most common response was the school's designated staff member who worked with Looked After Children. Staff within Ethnic Minority Achievement teams and English as an Additional Language departments also had some involvement. For most schools in this survey, there was not a large number of pupils within this category. One school reported having a relatively high number of unaccompanied children, and they had developed quite a sophisticated programme of support:

"About 30 - Somali and Afghanistan the main groups. Refugee [co-ordinator] is responsible for them. Liaises with Senior Leadership Team member who is responsible for Young People, Child Protection and Social Services. Lunchtime clubs have been set up specifically with these children in mind. Students are able to share concerns, make friends and ask for help with their course work, immigration, and health issues. Bengali, Somali and Afghan sessions currently running. Students monitored and communication with social workers/tutors/other groups essential. Students drop into EMAG office in Learning Development Department, which provides support and monitoring of ethnic minority and achievement."

This provision goes beyond liaising with Social Services and foster carers, and recognises the specific needs that these young people have. Another school described its work below:

"Mentoring, English language induction course, homework sessions, helping them establish links with their communities, organising community support groups, meetings with the teacher responsible for Looked After children and through the school support forum to provide extra support for them."

This school is working to link their pupils with people from their communities which can help to combat the isolation young people can feel when they first arrive in the UK. These two examples also show approaches that deal with the welfare of the young person as a whole, rather than solely focusing on their school performance.

Other issues

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to give information about how they worked with parents/carers and their local communities. Many schools took this opportunity to expand upon some of the programmes and initiatives they had touched upon in other parts of the survey. Some also reported other specific activities they engage in to improve relationships with parents/carers and communities. Some of these are outlined below:

"We have a thriving Saturday school, after school classes and a Mother & Baby Group- on a Thursday morning. We particularly focus on the women and children of our refugee families, enabling them to feel more secure and have confidence in the school system. We have classes for children from 3 - 18 and for women only. We open throughout the holidays and have a strong bond with our local community especially the Somali community."

"We have a bilingual Teaching Assistant (Turkish speaking) who contacts families by phone prior to target setting days or parent consultations, as well as to encourage attendance at After school GCSE classes in Turkish. We have launched a Black British Pupil Programme for boys in year 8 in which there has been a specific parents meeting."

"We have started a Somali Parent Support Group with funding from MEAP. This has resulted in parents requesting information about the English education system, so we have a programme of coffee mornings where they are given information about SATS and all subjects of the curriculum, explaining how they can become involved in their son's education. It has been well attended and allowed the parents a space to voice their concerns and receive advice. We work with the African Children's Club who feed into many areas of the curriculum with projects. Depts who have been involved: Textiles; History; PSE; Science."

These schools highlight some interesting practice and show how particular efforts have been made to engage specific groups of parents who may face difficulties in participating in their children's education. These schools help the parents to understand the school system and are given support and advice. Other schools who responded to this question described the types of work they were hoping to do in the future. Even those who had good engagement recognised the need to continue working on these issues and expanding them to other ethnic groups:

"We have long-standing links with Iranian, Kosovan and Somali families rather than community associations. More recent arrivals - Zimbabwe, Congo - are not yet established. WE HAVE MUCH STILL TO DO."

This school's response refers to the changing profile of pupils joining them. This was something that was noted by several respondents who highlighted that the rate of change was also posing them some problems. For example, one school representative stated:

"We get more and more children from other countries and expected to cope with less money for staff. In our school alone I am having to give priority to y11 & y9 as it is our exams that the school is judged on and yet we accept these students, enter them for the exams and get penalised for the new arrivals results. Most of whom then are able to go onto further education which is advantageous to their parents."

The issue of impact on exam results is likely to be a concern for many schools, so the need to provide increased levels of support for particular pupils is identified by many schools. Putting such support in place is not always a straight forward process, as illustrated below:

"There is little LEA direction or management of pupils and parents. All activities are now school-centred. Two [Learning Support Assistants] are now developing a policy with myself to address EAL pupils needs in school."

"There are very few support facilities e.g. community organisations at this end of the borough. Also our students often travel considerable distances to come to us. We are also under considerable pressure given large numbers of EAL casual admissions."

"We have recently started to improve our admission procedures to ensure that we

know more about the identity and status of pupils who have very little English, and to attempt to formalise review meetings. It would be helpful if we had access to free translation/interpreters."

These schools' inability to draw support from their local authority or community organisations has hampered their efforts to support refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers and young people. Without increases in funding, it is difficult for schools to provide the increased levels of support some of their pupils and their families will need.

This survey has illustrated that many schools are engaging in a range of activities that will help to increase the engagement of refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers. It should not be assumed that all of these programmes are necessarily successful in their aims. One school reported that:

"We worked with the local Multicultural Education Service (now called EMTAS) to inform asylum seeking parents about the curriculum e.g. inviting them in to a science course during school time to tell them about science lessons - poor response. We also tried to increase participation of British boys and girls of Asian origin in after school activities, using outside agency support - also poor response."

This is an interesting response and highlights the fact that engaging marginalised communities is not a straightforward task. It is unclear why these attempts were not particularly successful, and perhaps highlights the need for some guidance for schools in trying to set up such initiatives. This data also corresponds to research findings in previous sections, for example in relation to local authority links, which suggest that effective participation between the school and local authority services can benefit the wider community including parents and carers.

Some of the schools who had no refugee and asylum seeking pupils used this opportunity to explain the work they do on awareness-raising and minority ethnic issues:

"At present, you can see we only have 3 per cent ethnic minority pupils but this number is likely to rise in 2009, when we get our new build and numbers increase to 1200 pupils. The number is already rising, hopefully because parents recognise we do a good job. Although we have no asylum seekers at present and only 3 per cent ethnic minority, we recognise our responsibility to prepare our pupils to their place in a multi-cultural and inclusive society."

"We are a school in a semi rural area, we have no contact at all with asylum seekers or refugees. However, we do host the exhibition 'Escape to Safety' every year. Aimed at Y7 and any other students we can fit in. We have had the exhibition on site for the last 2 years."¹⁹

Given the negative media backlash that refugee and asylum seeking groups have experienced over recent years, it is encouraging to see that schools are working on these issues even if it does not directly affect their pupils and are aware of the need for better integration of these individuals and their parents and carers.

Conclusion

The survey revealed that a majority of schools across the four regions engaged in a wide range of activities to link with parents and carers and the wider community.

The most frequently cited activity to engage parents and carers was the parent/teacher consultation. Information events, induction programmes, and home visits were also cited as important activities.

¹⁹ This interactive exhibition shows young people what it is like to have to flee your country and seek asylum. Further information can be found at <http://www.globallink.org.uk/exhibitions/e2s/>

However education programmes relating to parents and carers, such as ESOL and family learning classes, had a much lower participation rate among parents and carers which indicates that schools could possibly do more to engage this group. Most activities were run as mainstream and the use of interpreters was cited as a central strategy used to engage parents and carers. Other outreach methods, such as the use of translated materials, were less frequent as schools cited a lack of financial resources to develop them. Insufficient funding was highlighted as a barrier to effectively engaging with the wider community. Schools could also benefit from closer links with community services and resources and RCOs.²⁰ The data suggests that RCOs could play a bigger role in targeted assistance to parents and carers. There is some evidence of good practice in schools and RCOs across the regions but closer links between the two could foster more effective engagement of refugee and asylum seeker parents, carers and the wider community.

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²⁰ Only 10.7% of all respondents mentioned working with RCOs in all questions.