

Twelve outstanding secondary schools

Excelling against the odds





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Foreword

Why do some schools succeed brilliantly against all the odds while others in more favourable circumstances struggle?

This report provides some evidence-based answers to this question. It draws from the practice, experience and ambition of 12 consistently outstanding schools to identify how they:

- achieved excellence
- sustain excellence
- share excellence.

The schools are chosen from the small number that have been judged outstanding in two or more inspections, which serve disadvantaged communities and which have exceptionally good results. Some of the schools – and their headteachers – are well known; others less so. They are straightforward maintained schools, included on merit, without any evident advantages except the quality of their leadership, their staff, and the teaching and learning provided in them.

Although there has been some improvement in the last year, two secondary schools out of five are still judged to be no better than satisfactory. I commend this report to those who lead and govern these schools, as well as to the many good schools that aspire to become outstanding. Every child deserves an excellent education. The schools described here show that excellence does not happen by chance. It is found in schools which have leaders of vision, courage and conviction, and the ability to create and inspire teams whose members work consistently for each other, as well as for the students and communities they serve. No effort is

spared in the search for ways of doing things better. There is passionate belief that all young people can be helped to fulfil their potential and become successful. No challenges are regarded as insurmountable; indeed, they generate innovative and effective responses. Staff are trusted and supported. They are highly motivated, enjoy their work and have access to a wealth of opportunities to develop as professionals. The schools have the hard-won respect and confidence of their communities. Most importantly, students emerge as confident and capable young people, well equipped for the next stage of their lives and highly unlikely to join the ranks of those not in education, employment or training.

I hope that the example shown by these schools will be the subject of considered reflection and discussion by leaders and staff within other secondary schools. Much of what they do may be widespread practice but, in each of these schools, they do everything very well. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. They would all claim that they learn much from other schools. They do not see themselves as elite or exceptional islands, but as professional providers of a high-quality service to their communities.



Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector