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The Impact of Asylum Seekers

Summary

1. The annual report for 2001-2 of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, David Bell, highlights some of the problems which schools face through having large numbers of refugees and children from asylum seeker families who "can put pressure on specialist resources and disrupt the continuity of teaching and learning."
2. The report also discusses the need, especially in London, to fill teacher vacancies by recruiting from overseas. It states that "this has brought problems as well as solutions". Overseas teachers "are not usually familiar with the National Curriculum or the national strategies, and some have significant problems with classroom management and control".
3. This note summarises the main points of the report relating to asylum seekers.

Detail

4. Each year Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools produces a report summarising the findings of OFSTED in its inspection visits throughout the year. It is clear from the 2001-2 report, produced in February 2003 that schools which have a large number of refugees or children of asylum seekers face a number of challenges.
5. "Schools receiving pupils from families of asylum-seekers face particular difficulties and challenges. In these schools, the head teacher and senior staff are crucial in ensuring efficient admissions procedures, effective initial assessment, the sensitive induction of pupils into their classes, and additional learning support. The coordinated assistance of different agencies of the Local Education Authority (LEA) is also important in helping schools manage the successful integration of pupils and their families into school and local community".
6. Migration Watch understands the difficulties. Not only are the schools often situated in deprived parts of our cities but they are trying to cater for children who have been uprooted from their home and who, in most cases, do not speak English. This requires considerable input of specialist resources as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools recognises:
7. "For pupils with **English as an additional language** (EAL), the best teaching is characterised by joint planning between class teachers and support staff which clearly focuses on pupils' language needs and their access to the curriculum. The best teaching of children in the

Foundation Stage and pupils in Key Stage 1 with EAL usually takes place where there are staff who speak the children's first language and who work alongside the children, individually or in small groups. Access to support staff working alongside the class teacher, however, is often only available to help pupils in the early stages of learning English. The quality of teaching of more advanced bilingual learners, particularly those in Years 5 and 6, is less well structured and less systematically planned."

8. This specialist support is obviously costly and it is also often difficult to recruit the specialist staff. The additional costs are reflected in the additional allowances which Local Education Authorities (LEAs) normally allocate to schools which have pupils who have English as a second language [1]. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector reports that "there is a shortage of teachers with more specialist qualifications, for example in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages."

9. Together these problems can contribute to make the overall performance of a school poor: "In some schools there are seriously low and worsening rates of attendance, particularly in Years 10 and 11. These schools often have high mobility rates, perhaps including large numbers of refugees and children from asylum-seeker families, who can put pressure on specialist resources and disrupt the continuity of teaching and learning."

10. The report notes that a third of LEA's surveyed during the year have been actively pursuing the recruitment of overseas teachers. "In London, in particular the recruitment of overseas teachers has been vital to fill teacher vacancies." Such teachers "are not usually familiar with the National Curriculum or the national strategies, and some have significant problems with classroom management and control". In one LEA, one primary teacher in every six had been trained overseas. The report also points out that 32% of school staff in primary schools inspected had left during the previous two years, while for secondary schools the equivalent figure was 30%. "The greatest turnover of teachers in primary and secondary schools was in inner and outer London LEAs, where about 40% of teachers changed. High staff turnover is often found in schools where a high proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals."

Commentary

11. Inner city schools are therefore locked in a vicious circle. The normal problems which would be experienced by schools in deprived areas are compounded by the demands placed on them by having large numbers of children of asylum-seeking children and other immigrants to deal with. This in turn puts extra pressure on teachers and increases teacher turnover rates. The recruitment problem is, in turn, dealt with by recruiting from overseas creating extra difficulties as a result of large numbers of teachers being foreign trained. This places further pressure on the remaining British-trained staff and this continuing cycle is fuelled by further large-scale influxes of asylum seekers.

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NOTES

- 1 Schedule 2 to Statutory Instrument 2000 no 478 - The Financing of Maintained Schools (England) Regulations 2000