



# **Lifting Limits Pilot Impact Evaluation Report**

**November 2019**

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## 1. Introduction

Lifting Limits is a non-profit organisation with a mission to deliver gender equality through education.

This report sets out findings from the evaluation of the Lifting Limits pilot which was implemented in five primary schools in the London Borough of Camden throughout the school year running from September 2018 – July 2019.

### 1.1 Aims

Lifting Limits aims to support schools to embed a whole school approach to challenging gender stereotyping and promoting gender equality, specifically to help schools to:

- Recognise and correct unintentional gender bias that can go unnoticed in the school environment, curriculum and routines; and
- Equip pupils to identify and challenge gender inequalities in the wider world, developing important critical skills through questioning and discussion.

### 1.2 About the pilot

The Lifting Limits model is based on literature evidencing the need for a whole school early intervention approach to addressing gender stereotyping in order to head off its harmful effects, which may not manifest until later in life but can take root from a young age<sup>1</sup>.

Lifting Limits' whole school approach includes the following elements in each school:

- Appointment of a Gender Champion to drive the programme in the school. The Gender Champion is supported by Lifting Limits to carry out the role
- An initial gender audit to identify and support areas of development in the school
- Delivery of an initial INSET presentation to all school staff
- Delivery of workshops for parents and carers
- A comprehensive package of resources for schools (including National Curriculum compliant lesson plans for each year group (years 1-6) for each of 12 subjects and for Early Years, assemblies, language guide for staff, discussion cards). Resources are designed to raise awareness of and challenge gender stereotyping, engender discussion amongst staff and pupils and to make visible women and men in non-traditional areas.

### 1.3 About the participating schools

The five Camden Primary schools that took part in the pilot year are all in the north of the borough and within 1.5 miles of each other. All are maintained schools under the authority of Camden Council and are members of Camden Learning, a local partnership between schools and Camden. Despite their proximity, there is variation in terms of their pupil characteristics. Four of the schools are two form entry and one is one form entry. One is a Church of England

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<sup>1</sup> Culhane, L. & Bazeley, A. (2019); Women and Equalities Committee (2016); DCSF (2009); NEU and UK Feminista (2017); Kings college London (2013)

school. For further information on the demographics of pupils attending the schools, please see Appendix 1.

### **1.4 Methodology of the evaluation**

The evaluation was conducted and compiled by an independent researcher, Tessa Horvath, who specialises in research and evaluation related to advancing gender equality. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach combining the following methods:

- A literature review to contextualise the pilot and inform evaluation methods
- A survey with staff members prior to the start of the pilot and at the end of the pilot to explore changes in staff views, confidence and practice
- A survey with pupils at the start and end of the pilot to explore changes in pupils' level of endorsement of gender stereotyping. This was divided into three separate surveys: Early Years (ages 3 - 5); years 1 – 2 (ages 5 – 7)<sup>2</sup>; and years 3 – 6 (ages 7 – 11)<sup>3</sup>
- Questionnaires with staff members and parents following specific presentations delivered by Lifting Limits
- Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 23 staff members across the five schools (including senior leaders, teachers and support staff)
- Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 20 pupils across the five pilot schools
- Qualitative interviews with Lifting Limits staff
- The evaluation also includes findings from gender audits carried out by Lifting Limits in each school at the start and end of the pilot.

A detailed methodology is available as Appendix 2, including information on data quality.

### **1.5 Report structure**

The next section of the report provides the context to the Lifting limits pilot, setting out an overview of the relevant literature and policy. Section three provides a brief summary of the activities that were delivered over the pilot year. Section four is the main body of the report and brings together qualitative and quantitative data showing evidence of the impact of the pilot on school staff, pupils, parents and schools as a whole. Section five provides some key learning points from the year which Lifting Limits can build upon to develop the model. Section six draws together conclusions from the evidence base and section seven makes recommendations for schools, policy makers and others. A detailed methodology, data tables and further information on the participating schools is provided in the appendices.

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<sup>2</sup> Key Stage One

<sup>3</sup> Key Stage Two

## 2. Context

This section provides a brief summary of the literature which underpins the Lifting Limits model and the policy context.

### 2.1 Literature summary

#### 2.1.1 Defining gender stereotyping

Gender Stereotyping refers to preconceived ideas about a person's characteristics, roles, behaviours and preferences due to their biological sex.<sup>4</sup> Gender stereotyping is based on a preconception that gender identities are biologically determined and 'natural'<sup>5</sup>. Common gender stereotypes include that boys will be strong, adventurous, practical, rough, leaders, non-emotional 'boys don't cry', dominant, decisive, logical and that girls will be sensitive, caring, gentle, weak, dependant, passive, kind, intuitive, submissive, emotional, giving, quiet.<sup>6</sup>

#### 2.1.2 Learning gender from a young age

Research suggests that our behaviour, traits and characteristics in relation to gender are learnt through interactions with the environment we are exposed to<sup>7</sup>. By the time children reach the end of infant school, they have already developed a clear sense of what is expected of boys and girls and how they are supposed to behave<sup>8</sup>. By the time they are seven, most children will be highly aware of gender and use it as a 'schema' through which they learn and come to understand their place in the world.<sup>9</sup> Children's attitudes about paid work, social relations, gender, race and class are being dynamically and actively formed even in the early years of education<sup>10</sup>.

#### 2.1.3 Impacts of gender stereotyping and inequality

Gender stereotyping puts pressure on boys and girls to conform to certain notions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' which can limit and restrict children.<sup>11</sup> The impacts of gender stereotyping include: segregated subject choices at schools and career aspirations, leading to segregated career choices which compound the gender pay gap<sup>12</sup>; low levels of wellbeing associated with pressure to conform to stereotypes<sup>13</sup>; and a stronger belief in gender stereotypes is correlated with being both a victim and a perpetrator of sexual violence<sup>14</sup>. Research also shows that gender inequality is embedded from a young age with sexism being common in primary and secondary schools<sup>15</sup>, limiting children's life chances.

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<sup>4</sup> Definition drawn from European Institute for Gender Equality: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1222>

<sup>5</sup> Connell (2003)

<sup>6</sup> Care Inspectorate & Zero Tolerance (2018)

<sup>7</sup> Rippon (2019)

<sup>8</sup> Bian, Leslie, and Cimpian, (2017)

<sup>9</sup> Martin & Ruble (2013), from Miller et al (2014)

<sup>10</sup> Martinez (1998), DeWitt et al (2014), Ofsted (2011)

<sup>11</sup> Culhane & Bazeley (2019)

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Kings College London (2013), Institute of Physics (2017)

<sup>13</sup> E.g. The Children's Society (2018)

<sup>14</sup> Women and Equalities Commission (2016) & Reyes et al (2016)

<sup>15</sup> NEU and UK Feminista (2017)

### 2.1.4 Addressing gender stereotyping in childhood

Breaking down gender stereotypes from a young age helps to stop the negative consequences of inequality and discrimination<sup>16</sup>. Gender stereotypes are pervasive and children are influenced by a range of factors including the family and the media<sup>17</sup>. Gender stereotypes are frequently inadvertently reinforced in schools<sup>18</sup> and, far from being gender-neutral environments, schools can be active agents in the gendering process<sup>19</sup>. The school environment can however provide a space to encourage non-gendered norms and expectations, enabling children to feel more accepted and celebrated for their individuality and broadening children's aspirations and opportunities.<sup>20</sup>

The Lifting Limits model builds on evidence based approaches to addressing gender stereotyping in schools. The evidence<sup>21</sup> highlights the importance of whole school approaches to challenge gender stereotyping and inequality involving students, teachers, senior leaders, parents and governors and covering school ethos, organisation and practices. Other aspects considered important are a strong focus on staff development to overcome unconscious bias among staff which reinforce stereotypes<sup>22</sup>; staff empowerment through support from good practice guidance<sup>23</sup>; a range of specific school and class-based strategies<sup>24</sup>; mixed groups activities to encourage cross-gender friendships<sup>25</sup>; and embedding approaches which take account of how ethnicity and social class intersect with gender to inform identity development and disadvantage<sup>26</sup>.

## 2.2 Legal and Policy context

The evidence summarised above shows clearly the harmful effects of gendered stereotypes across a number of areas, as well as the benefits to be gained from addressing them. Lifting Limits suggests that this evidence must be kept in mind by schools and others in considering their legal obligations towards pupils and in working towards best practice in safeguarding their pupils, promoting their wellbeing and healthy relationships, supporting their personal development and ensuring that a full range of opportunities are truly open to them.

### 2.2.1 Equality legislation

The Equality Act 2010 protects children, young people and adults against discrimination on the basis of aspects of a person's identity known as 'protected characteristics' – race; religion or belief; sexual orientation; sex; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; and age<sup>27</sup>. Under the Equality Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty requires any organisation carrying out a public function (including government

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<sup>16</sup> Care Inspectorate & Zero Tolerance (2018)

<sup>17</sup> NUT (2013)

<sup>18</sup> Chambers et al (2018)

<sup>19</sup> Lee et al (1994), Connell (1989)

<sup>20</sup> Care Inspectorate & Zero Tolerance (2018)

<sup>21</sup> Institute of Physics (2017), DSCF (2009), Women and Equalities Commission (2016), NUT (2013)

<sup>22</sup> Campbell (2015), NASWUT (2014)

<sup>23</sup> Scottish Executive (2007)

<sup>24</sup> Skelton et al (2002)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Marriage and civil partnership and age apply to schools in relation to staff but not pupils



departments, local authorities and maintained schools) to show ‘due regard’ when making decisions and developing policies to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (for example girls and boys); and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (for example girls and boys).

Having ‘due regard’ means having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages;
- Take steps to meet different needs;
- Encourage participation when it is disproportionately low.

In addition, schools have the following specific duties:

- To publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the equality duty; and
- To prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives.

### **2.2.2 Compulsory relationships education**

From September 2020 it will become compulsory for all primary schools to teach Relationships Education, under The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 (made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017).

Statutory guidance<sup>28</sup> requires that children be taught the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, relationships with other children and with adults. By the end of primary school, pupils should specifically know, in the context of respectful relationships, “what a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive”.

### **2.2.3 Safeguarding**

Various legal requirements relating to a school’s safeguarding obligations are brought together in Keeping Children Safe in Education<sup>29</sup>, the Department for Education’s statutory guidance, covering sexual violence and sexual harassment – what they are, how to reduce risks and how to respond when incidents are alleged.

The Department for Education’s Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges<sup>30</sup> also provides (non-statutory) advice, making clear that sexual harassment or sexual violence must not be dismissed or tolerated as ‘banter’ or ‘boys being boys’, that everyday sexist stereotypes and language can be factors in driving this behaviour

<sup>28</sup> Guidance available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

<sup>29</sup> Guidance available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

<sup>30</sup> Guidance available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/719902/Sexual\\_violence\\_and\\_sexual\\_harassment\\_between\\_children\\_in\\_schools\\_and\\_colleges.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719902/Sexual_violence_and_sexual_harassment_between_children_in_schools_and_colleges.pdf)

and that ‘harmful sexual behaviour’ exists on a wide continuum. A whole school / college approach (especially preventative education) is recognised as important, incorporating a curriculum that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain and tackling issues such as gender roles, stereotyping and equality.

### **2.2.4 Ofsted framework**

Under Ofsted’s new education inspection framework<sup>31</sup>, inspectors must assess the extent to which a school complies with its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, and there are significant overlaps for schools between fulfilling their obligations under the PSED and meeting the requirements of the school inspection framework.

Ofsted’s criteria for judgement<sup>32</sup> include:

- Pupils’ personal development, significant dimensions being promoting equality of opportunity and an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of sex or other protected characteristics; and
- The effectiveness of provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Evidence as to how equality and diversity are promoted in a school, and pupils’ understanding of the protected characteristics, will be used as evidence to evaluate personal development.

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<sup>31</sup> Available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/801429/Education\\_inspection\\_framework.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/801429/Education_inspection_framework.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> set out in the school inspection handbook

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/828469/School\\_inspection\\_handbook\\_-\\_section\\_5.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828469/School_inspection_handbook_-_section_5.pdf)

### 3. Lifting Limits pilot

Over the pilot year, the following elements of the Lifting Limits programme were implemented in the pilot schools:

- All schools received an INSET presentation to all staff at the start of the academic year to introduce the pilot and key concepts.
- All schools delivered Lifting Limits assemblies to pupils to introduce them to the concept of gender stereotyping and reinforce learning over the year through themes. Schools also delivered their own assemblies inspired by the Lifting Limits focus over the year.
- Workshops for parents and carers were delivered in each school to raise awareness of issues relating to gender stereotyping and its impacts on children. These were delivered by Lifting Limits staff, sometimes in partnership with a school's Gender Champion.
- Four of the five schools implemented visual displays related to Lifting Limits. In one school this was in the form of an interactive display to which pupils could add examples of gender stereotyping; another school implemented working walls in each classroom; and other schools had a range of displays in corridors showing areas of Lifting Limits work over the year.
- All schools taught some of the lesson plans produced by Lifting Limits. According to the end of pilot staff survey, 61% of staff delivered 3 – 5 Lifting Limits lesson plans over the course of the year and 20% delivered 6 or more.
- A range of additional resources were provided to schools, some aimed at informing staff and others for use with children, including a language guide; discussion cards; philosophy guidance; gender detective activities; and resources to highlight female artists, composers, explores and scientists.
- Ongoing advice was provided by Lifting Limits staff on an ad hoc basis to Gender Champions and Head Teachers where particular issues arose.

### 4. Impact of the Pilot

The purpose of the pilot, and external evaluation of it, were for Lifting Limits to test the impact of its programme against a set of intended outcomes, to seek detailed feedback on individual elements of the programme and to learn from pilot schools what works well, or not, to embed gender equality work in schools.

The baseline data collected for the evaluation adds to the existing evidence base demonstrating a need for interventions in primary schools to address gender stereotyping. The baseline data found that pupils' aspirations were highly gendered. Data also showed high levels of endorsement of gender stereotypes in relation to occupations, activities and objects, especially in Early Years. Similarly, the baseline data highlighted some level of agreement among staff that girls and boys have different natural tendencies, suggesting conformity to gender stereotyping, as well as a lack of confidence, particularly among support staff, to discuss and address gender stereotyping. It also showed that only 56% of staff were familiar with school equality policies and the extent to which it requires them to address gender stereotyping in schools, and only a third of staff had received previous training on gender stereotyping and inequality at the school and/or job role training.

This section of the report sets out the available evidence collated over the pilot year which illustrates where and how the pilot has had an impact in schools, comparing the post pilot data with these baseline findings. The evidence is explored in relation to the following intended outcomes of the pilot for staff, pupils, schools and parents:

#### **Outcomes for school staff**

- School staff have increased understanding of gender inequality and stereotyping and the importance of addressing it with pupils
- School staff have increased confidence and ability to address gender stereotyping and inequality with pupils and throughout their practice
- Staff practice throughout the school promotes gender equality.

#### **Outcomes for pupils**

- Pupils have increased awareness and acceptance of a more diverse range of roles and possibilities for women/girls and men/boys.
- Pupils are more able to question and challenge gender norms (for themselves and others).

#### **Outcomes for the school**

- Gender equality is promoted and gender stereotyping reduced across school systems, structures and materials.
- Gender awareness and addressing inequality is embedded throughout the school ethos and approach.

#### **Outcomes for parents**

- Parents and carers have increased understanding of gender inequality and stereotyping and confidence to discuss and address it with their children.

The data shows meaningful impact across each of these outcomes, as set out below.

## 4.1 Impact on school staff

This section presents an overview of the extent to which the intended outcomes related to school staff have been achieved. It draws on the qualitative evidence gathered from interviews and quantitative data gathered through baseline and post pilot surveys with staff members as well as questionnaires following the INSET presentation.

### Summary of impact on staff

Data gathered provides compelling evidence to support the following changes for school staff:

- Increased reflection by staff on their own unconscious bias, the messages they give children about what boys and girls can do, language use and the impact of their practices on children. For example, half of the respondents in the post pilot survey (50%) said they reflect on the messages they give boys and girls about what they can do *a lot*, up from one third of respondents (29%) in the baseline survey.
- Greatly increased staff confidence to address gender stereotyping and inequality with pupils, colleagues and parents. For example, there was a 60% increase<sup>33</sup> in staff confidence to explain the impacts of gender stereotyping to colleagues (48% in the baseline survey compared with 77% in the post pilot survey).
- A 22% increase in staff perceiving that they have the tools, resources and support they need to be able to address any sexism among pupils (with 74% agreeing with this statement in the baseline compared with 90% in the post pilot survey).
- Changes in attitudes, with staff holding less stereotypical views about gender at the end of the pilot. For example, 78% of staff disagreed with the statement 'boys and girls are naturally better at different things' in the post pilot survey, up from 66% in the baseline, an increase of 18%.
- Staff perceive the INSET presentation and the whole school approach to have been the key aspects of the model which have supported changes in awareness, confidence, reflection and practice.

### Strength of the data

Quantitative data shows shifts across all relevant indicators, giving clear and consistent results to suggest changes over the pilot year for staff. Statistical tests also found changes to be statistically significant, suggesting that the changes are not due to chance. The survey data is supported by the qualitative responses which attribute these changes to participation in the pilot, especially the INSET presentation.

### 4.1.1 School staff have increased understanding of gender inequality and stereotyping and the importance of addressing it with pupils.

There is evidence in both the qualitative and quantitative data to suggest changes in staff attitudes in relation to gender stereotyping and increased awareness of the importance of addressing it with pupils.

Across two indicators staff disagreed more strongly with statements suggesting that differences between girls and boys are natural in the post pilot survey compared with the

<sup>33</sup> Throughout the report data is reported in terms of *percentage change* rather than percentage point increase. Percentage change is the relative change between an original (in this case the baseline percentage) value and its new value (in this case the post pilot percentage), expressed as a percentage of the original value.

baseline survey. For example, 78% of staff disagreed with the statement ‘boys and girls are naturally better at different things’ in the post pilot survey, up from 66% in the baseline, an increase of 18%. The difference in the average (mean) scores for these questions were found to be statistically significant<sup>34</sup>, suggesting that the changes are unlikely to be due to chance. The results for these questions are presented in the graph below.<sup>35</sup>

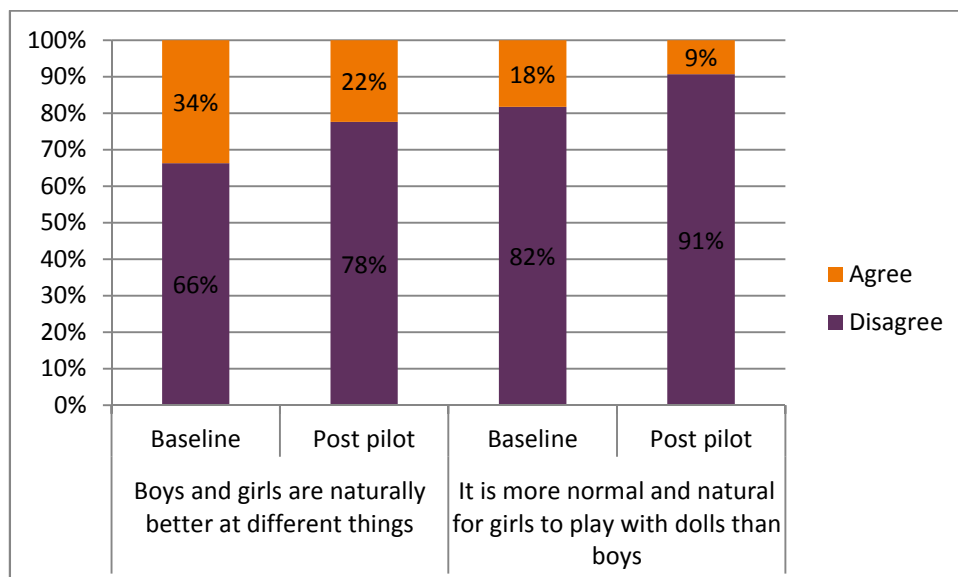


Figure 1: Extent to which staff perceive natural gender differences in baseline and post pilot surveys

Qualitative evidence also illustrates the way that the pilot has raised staff awareness of gender stereotyping and inequality and supports these quantitative findings. Teaching and support staff commented that being a part of the pilot opened their eyes to the extent and effects of gender stereotyping on children and illustrated the socialised nature of gender differences. They noted that the pilot has helped them to become more aware of their own unconscious bias in relation to gender stereotyping and the ways in which gender norms limit children.

*“I was shocked about how many things were putting limits on children without us even noticing them. I would say our school – as a person in general – has quite a good approach but there have been all these hidden things happening which have been quite good to challenge this year” (Teacher, Year 4)*

In particular staff highlighted the initial INSET presentation as an aspect of the pilot that they found influenced their understanding and awareness of gender inequality and stereotyping and the impact it has on children’s future choices and opportunities. One teacher, for example, noted that the presentation made her more aware of the relationship between the toys children play with and their future career choices:

<sup>34</sup> The results were tested using a T-test. Average (mean) scores are based on numerical coding of the data where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. Average (mean) scores and p-values are available in Appendix 3

<sup>35</sup> The graph shows the proportion of staff that selected either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ and the proportion that selected ‘disagree’ and strongly disagree’

*“The BBC documentary<sup>36</sup> was really powerful: looking at computers and those stats around if girls aren’t playing with the right things as young children then they lose the confidence to go into certain avenues. It can have a really big impact on the careers they go into...I found that really enlightening.”* (Teacher, Year 4).

This was also reflected in the inset presentation questionnaire results: 94% agreed ‘this presentation has encouraged me to want to reflect on gender stereotyping in my own practice’ and 95% agreed ‘this presentation has left me engaged in thinking about gender stereotypes’.

Alongside the presentation, staff members noted that engaging in the lessons and assemblies with pupils and having regular discussion with staff, added to their understanding and awareness of gender stereotyping and inequality over the course of the year. For example, one staff member reflected that it was through looking more closely at the books at school that she became more aware of the messages given to pupils and the effect she has in her role:

*“When it was first introduced I thought I was pretty on top of it but when you do look at books and things in the school and how they do portray boys and girls in certain roles and colours - I didn’t realise that it was probably having quite a strong effect on them and it made me reflect on my role teaching children”* (Teaching support staff)

There is evidence to suggest that there remained pockets of staff who were not convinced about the harmful impacts of gender stereotyping, however even in these instances, it was notable that the Lifting Limits pilot had led staff to consider and discuss the issues more.

*“I thought we were looking for problems that weren’t there...I’m still not 100% convinced”* (Teaching support staff)

## OUTCOME SUMMARY

In summary, both qualitative and quantitative findings suggest that for the vast majority of staff, the pilot has increased awareness of gender stereotyping and inequality and its impacts, suggesting that this outcome has been achieved.

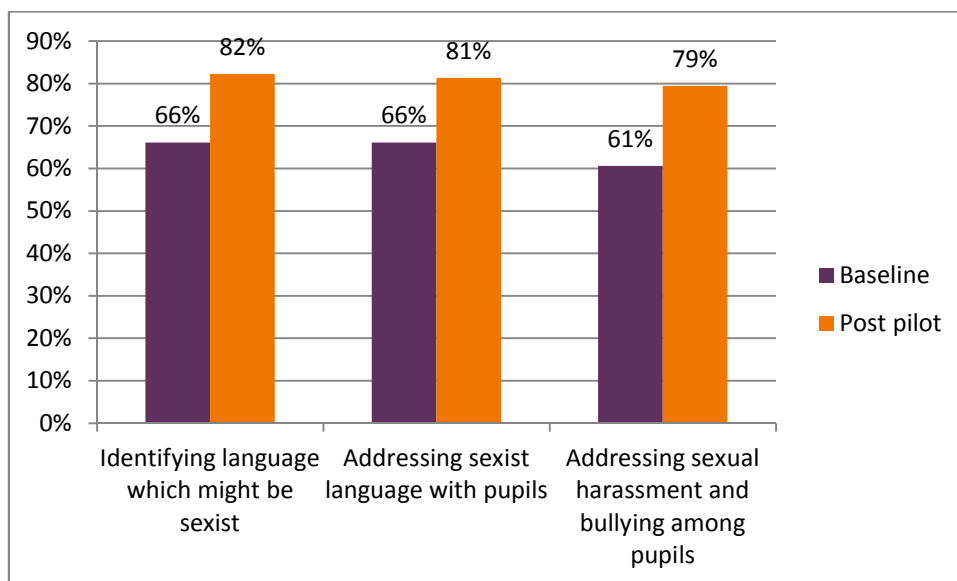
### 4.1.2 School staff have increased confidence and ability to address gender stereotyping and inequality with pupils and throughout their practice

The evidence to support this outcome includes quantitative data showing changes in staff confidence levels to identify and address gender inequality and stereotyping with colleagues, pupils and parents, alongside qualitative evidence providing examples of increased confidence.

In relation to identifying and addressing sexism among pupils, the results show an increase in confidence for each indicator with approximately 80% of the respondents reporting that they feel confident in each area after participation in the pilot (up from 61 – 66%). The difference in

<sup>36</sup> Clip shown during Inset presentation from the BBC documentary No More Boys and Girls: Can Our Kids Go Gender Free? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09202jz>

the average (mean) score was also found to be statistically significant<sup>37</sup>, suggesting that the change is unlikely to be due to chance. The results are presented in the graph below:



**Figure 2: Percentage of staff who feel confident addressing sexism with pupils in baseline and post pilot surveys**

Supporting these changes, staff also provided examples in the survey of ways that they have addressed sexism, inequality and stereotyping with pupils over the year through conversations in class. For example, one staff member gave an example of challenging the use of ‘crying like a girl’ as an insult: *“Children used the phrase you cry like a girl. Children were asked to describe the processes involved in crying, where tears come from, similarities/differences in male/female eyes etc. and where they think the phrase may have originated and why.”* (Survey participant)

Whilst overall an increase in confidence is being observed, there are disparities by job role. In both the baseline and post pilot data there are consistently lower levels of confidence among support staff compared with teachers and senior leaders. This was supported by qualitative findings which show awareness among gender champions of a need for specific approaches to build the confidence of teaching assistants (TAs). For example, when asked about confidence to challenge pupils, one Gender Champion responded:

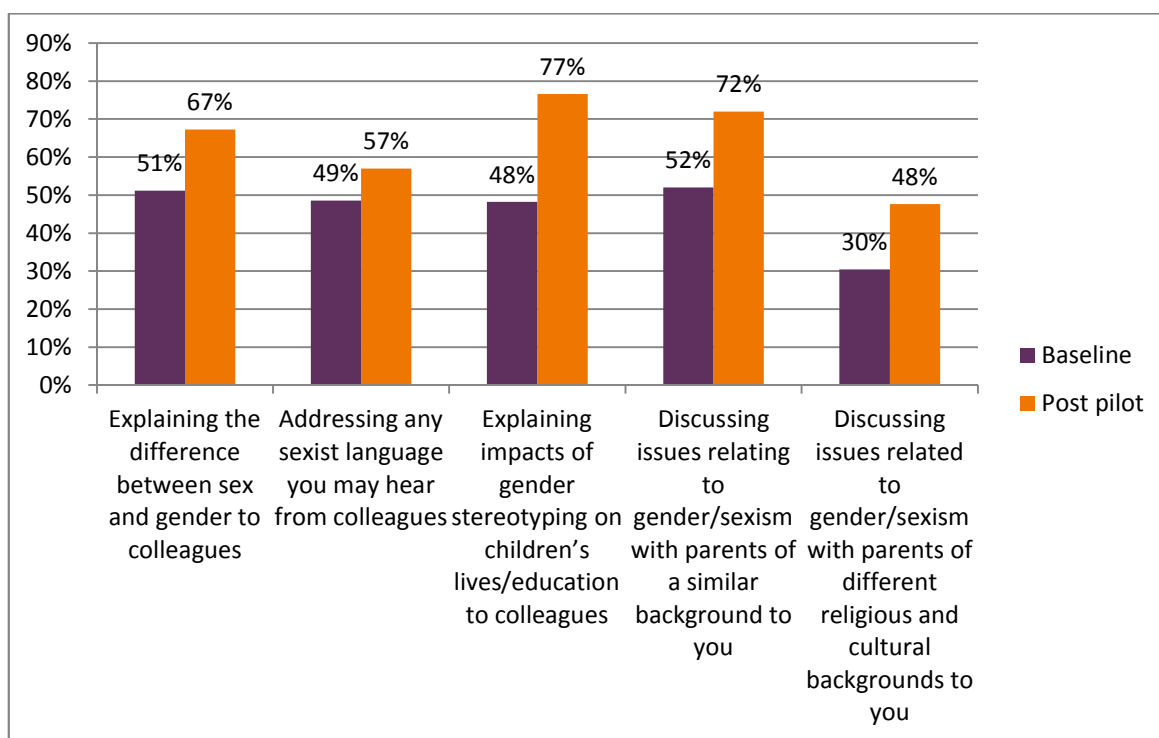
*“On the whole teachers are [more confident] and some teaching assistants are but it’s something that we need to continue to really work at: particularly supporting TAs on the playground...But I think many staff are having conversations with pupils that they weren’t having before.”* (Gender Champion)

In relation to discussing and addressing sexism and gender stereotyping with colleagues and parents, changes are evident across five indicators. The results are displayed in the table below showing changes in responses across all five indicators. The differences in average (mean) scores were found to be statistically significant for all but ‘addressing any sexist

<sup>37</sup> The results were tested using a T-test. Mean scores are based on numerical coding of the data where 1 = Not at all confident, 2 = somewhat confident, 3 = confident, 4 = very confident. Mean scores and p-values are available in the appendices



language you may hear from colleagues’, suggesting that the changes for the remaining indicators are unlikely to be due to chance.



**Figure 3: Percentage of staff who feel confident in explaining and addressing issues related to gender with colleagues and parents in baseline and post pilot surveys**

In relation to colleagues, the largest change is for the statement: explaining the impacts of gender stereotyping on children’s lives/education to colleagues. There was a 60% increase for this indicator (48% in the baseline survey compared with 77% in the post pilot survey). This reflects the increased awareness of the impacts of gender stereotyping on children’s lives through the INSET presentation (as described above).

Changes in confidence to discuss the issues were also reflected in some qualitative comments provided in the survey demonstrating that staff are thinking more about the issues and are more confident to discuss and address them: *“It has been a very positive aspect to our year. The children have taken on board the messages, as have staff. It makes me think as a practitioner about the language I use. I feel much more confident to discuss these issues with my colleagues”* (Survey participant)

Overall the area where staff report lowest levels of confidence is in discussing issues related to gender stereotyping and sexism with parents with parents of a different religious or cultural background to them. Despite this challenge, staff reported higher levels of confidence in the post pilot survey (48%) compared with the baseline survey (30%) in discussing the issues with parents of a different background.

Alongside confidence data, the survey also shows a 22% increase in the extent to which staff agree with the statement: ‘I have the tools, resources and support I need to be able to address any sexism among pupils’: 74% in the baseline compared with 90% in the post pilot survey.

Staff highlighted that the whole school approach and the perception from staff that it is a priority for the school has given them confidence, ability and permission to actively identify, challenge and address issues related to gender stereotyping in the school. It was noted that this also gave staff confidence to bring along other staff members who were more resistant to the pilot.

*“It’s definitely been seen as a big priority this year. So you feel like you can really get into it. I think if it would have been a sort of token effort we wouldn’t have...without the support of [senior staff] and some of the parents and staff. I think it had everything come together to drive it.”* (Teacher, Early Years)

### OUTCOME SUMMARY

In summary, there is strong evidence to support this outcome, with large changes in staff levels of confidence across seven indicators alongside qualitative evidence showing the whole school approach has driven staff confidence and ability to address gender stereotyping and inequality with pupils and throughout their practice.

#### 4.1.3 Staff practice throughout the school promotes gender equality

The evidence to support this outcome includes quantitative and qualitative data showing changes in staff levels of reflection and consideration of language use and messages they give pupils in relation to gender; findings from the gender audit; and qualitative findings suggesting a reduction in staff members separating pupils by gender for activities.

##### ***Reflection on messages and language use***

The post pilot survey shows notable increase in the levels of reflection reported by staff in relation to gender, compared with the baseline survey – an increase from under a third (29%) to half (50%) said they reflect on the messages they give boys and girls about what they can do *a lot*. Furthermore 59% of staff in the post pilot survey said they reflect *a lot* on the inclusivity of their language in relation to gender, up from 38% in the baseline.

This was noted by a teacher who said they were becoming more conscious of the words used to refer to pupils and the need for inclusive, non-gendered terms.

*“We’ve been thinking about the language we use. You sort of use words to refer to children sometimes and you might say ‘guys’ or you might say ‘lovely’. We’re trying to think about how we refer to children and the words we use around them and not necessarily specifying by gender.”* (Teacher, Year 2)

Another teacher described the way that increased awareness for both staff and pupils has led to considering gender messages throughout the class, in this example in relation to actions for le and la in French classes:

*“We’ve even changed some of our actions in French! We realised our actions for le and la were very gender stereotyped! It was so embarrassing. I started it and the children literally looked at me horrified... So we’re focused on the sounds of the words rather than assigning them gender actions now.”* (Teacher, Year 4)

### ***Considering gender in planning***

All teachers who responded to the post pilot survey said they deliberately try to present men and women in diverse roles to children to some extent compared with 93% in the baseline survey. Similarly, 100% of respondents in the post survey said they deliberately try to include examples of men and women when exploring influential people from history compared with 95% in the baseline survey. Although the baseline data here shows a large proportion of teachers reporting that they do already consider diverse role representation, the baseline gender audit showed that gender representations in schools were often male dominated and stereotypical across a range of fields. The closing audits showed much more equal and diverse representation of women and men. These findings, together with qualitative findings, suggest that participation in the pilot made staff more aware of unconscious bias in relation to gender representation.

Increased consideration of gender balance in planning was also illustrated by a Gender Champion who commented:

*“As part of our Inventions and Progress topic we were aware of ensuring there are female artists.... I think previously possibly there might have been lessons where there was an art project where there wouldn’t have been a woman included as well. That representation is definitely there now.”* (Gender Champion)

Some examples were also provided of the ways in which subject leads were taking more of a strategic approach to equal representation through curriculum planning:

*“The art coordinator – she went through and looked at all the artists and made sure there were some females. She’s really gone for it...so there’s an equal match of artists. She’s actually found them for us so we don’t need to be doing that hard work. So I think people have taken the idea of it and have tried to embed it as much as possible.”* (Teacher, Year 6)

### ***Reduced separation of pupils by gender***

There is evidence from the qualitative data to suggest that participation in the pilot has led some staff to stop organising pupils by gender for activities and instead to encourage mixing for activities:

*“There were occasions where I would say ‘girls over here and boys over there’ and it would probably be in a competitive way...we’ve stopped all that”* (Teaching support staff)

## **OUTCOME SUMMARY**

In summary, there is strong evidence to suggest that this outcome has been achieved. There are large changes in the extent to which staff report reflecting on language use and the messages they give pupils in relation to gender and changes in the extent to which staff report considering diverse and non-stereotyped gender representation in their planning. These findings are supported by qualitative evidence showing examples of changes in practice across these indicators.

#### 4.1.4 Staff case studies

The case studies below show how two staff members engaged with the pilot and the impact it has had on their thinking and practice.<sup>38</sup>

##### **Laila's Lifting Limits Year**

Laila is a Year 4 teacher. When she first found out that the school was going to be a part of the Lifting Limits pilot she was worried that the project may conflict with her own identity and choices:

*"I had a slightly negative knee jerk reaction at the beginning because I feel like I'm quite a girly girl and I was worried it was getting a bit ridiculous where you couldn't like pink"*

However, she found the INSET presentation and literature informative and she became aware of the limitations of gender stereotyping, particularly in relation to occupations. As a result of this awareness, she became an advocate for the project:

*"All the things about language that you don't notice how gendered it is – policeman, fireman – the language we use is already setting which gender would take those roles. So the more I got into the project the more I feel like I've done a 360 and now I'm such an advocate."*

Over the pilot year Laila implemented a number of the Lifting Limits lessons alongside the Gender Detective activities with her class. She reports that engaging in the Lifting Limits pilot has made her much more aware of everyday gender stereotyping and the messages children are exposed to. This has encouraged her to question stereotyping with both her daughter and her class:

*"Actually it's made me challenge all the small things that creep in when they start to go to nursery...[My daughter] she loves dresses and that's fine but if she says to me 'pink is just for girls' I'll say to her 'what do you mean? Pink is just a colour – it's for everyone. Daddy loves pink - he's got a pink shirt'. I'm doing that with her but similarly in class."*

##### **Ben's Lifting Limits Year**

Ben is a teaching assistant and PPA cover teacher. When he first found out that the school was going to be implementing Lifting Limits he was really pleased as he already believed in the need to challenge gender stereotyping among pupils:

*"I thought it was a great thing when it was suggested...It's something that I believe in"*

He has taught a number of the lessons in his class and most enjoys engaging with the material when he can have an open conversation with pupils:

*"For me, it's like teaching Year 6, where they already know what I'm talking about and it's being able to have an open conversation...it's having that discussion that means that the kids who aren't exposed to it, then they're exposed to it."*

Ben describes how the whole school has taken on Lifting Limits, noticing that gender is much more embedded in conversation among staff and giving examples of how staff have worked together to address unequal representation:

*"Last year, when it first got started...we were thinking about doing displays and stuff, and thinking there were no female composers on this display, things like that. Then we did some research and now there is an equal split of male and female composers."*

<sup>38</sup> Participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Through the pilot, Ben has become more aware of small everyday ways he can challenge gender stereotyping such as avoiding organising pupils according to gender:

*“Simple things when I teach, since I’ve had that presentation and it’s been implemented in the school, I never split up into boys and girls, and things like that.”*

## 4.2 Impact on pupils

This section presents an overview of the extent to which the intended outcomes related to pupils have been achieved, using the qualitative evidence gathered from interviews and quantitative data gathered through baseline and post pilot surveys with pupils.

### Summary of impact on pupils

Data gathered provides compelling evidence to support the following changes for pupils:

- Notable reduction of gender stereotypical attitudes in relation to occupations across year groups. For example, Early Years pupils were approximately twice as likely to say a nurse, cleaner, builder and doctor are ‘for everyone’ after the pilot.
- An increase in the proportion of girls (relative to the proportion of boys) aspiring to be a scientist when they grow up.
- An increase in pupils stating they could achieve gender a-typical job roles when they grow up. For example, the proportion of boys saying that they could be a teacher increased by 75% (from 24% to 42%) and the proportion of girls who selected they could be a footballer increased by 31% (from 36% to 47%).
- Notable reduction of gender stereotypical attitudes in relation to objects and activities across year groups. For example, more than three times as many Early Years children said that football is ‘for everyone’ and nearly twice as many children in years 1-2 said that dolls were ‘for everyone’ at the end of the pilot.
- Increased awareness of the negative impacts of gender stereotyping and inequality on girls/women and boys/men. For example, when asked what is hard about being a girl/woman, 8% of year 3-6 children referred to aspects related to gender inequality compared with 21% in the post pilot survey.
- Increased ability and confidence to discuss issues related to gender stereotyping and inequality, think critically and to challenge stereotyping in conversation.
- Some evidence suggests a reduction in polarisation between girls and boys at school, evidenced through increased mixing and examples of improved relationships and friendships between girls and boys based on respect and equality. For example, a larger proportion of pupils perceived there to be ‘more similarities’ (rather than ‘more differences’) between girls and boys at the end of the pilot compared with in the baseline surveys: a swing of 10% amongst year 1 – 2 children (from 53% to 63%) and a swing of 22% amongst year 3 – 6 children (from 58% to 80%).

### Strength of the data

Quantitative data shows shifts across all relevant indicators, giving clear and consistent results to suggest changes over the pilot year for pupils. Statistical tests used on four point scale questions also found changes between mean scores to be statistically significant, suggesting that the changes are not due to chance. The survey data is supported by the qualitative responses which attribute these changes to participation in the pilot, especially the whole school approach to empowering teachers and implementing a wide range of activities for pupils. Findings related to improved relationships and critical thinking among

pupils are based on qualitative methods and extent of impact is not known, however enhanced critical thinking was highlighted as a key outcome by many staff members as well as pupils themselves.

#### 4.2.1 Pupils have increased awareness and acceptance of a more diverse range of roles and possibilities for women/girls and men/boys.

There is strong quantitative data to support this outcome from pupil surveys, alongside data from qualitative interviews with 20 pupils. This outcome is broken down into three areas: evidence relating to reduced job role gender stereotyping; broadening of personal aspirations and possibilities; and reduced gender stereotyping in relation to activities, objects and traits.

##### **Reduced job role stereotyping**

Evidence shows reduced job role stereotyping across year groups. For each survey there are changes across all indicators designed to understand if pupils perceive occupations as being for a particular gender or available to anyone. For example, amongst Early Years children, 71% organised an image of a cleaner into the ‘for everyone’ bowl (rather than ‘for boys’ or ‘for girls’) in the post pilot activity, up from 40% in the baseline (an increase of 77%). In years 1 – 2, 82% of pupils said that being a builder is a job ‘for everyone’ at the end of the pilot compared with 55% in the baseline survey (an increase of 49%).

The results for the Early Years (in Figure 4) and Years 1 – 2 (in Figure 5) surveys for each occupation indicator are presented below:

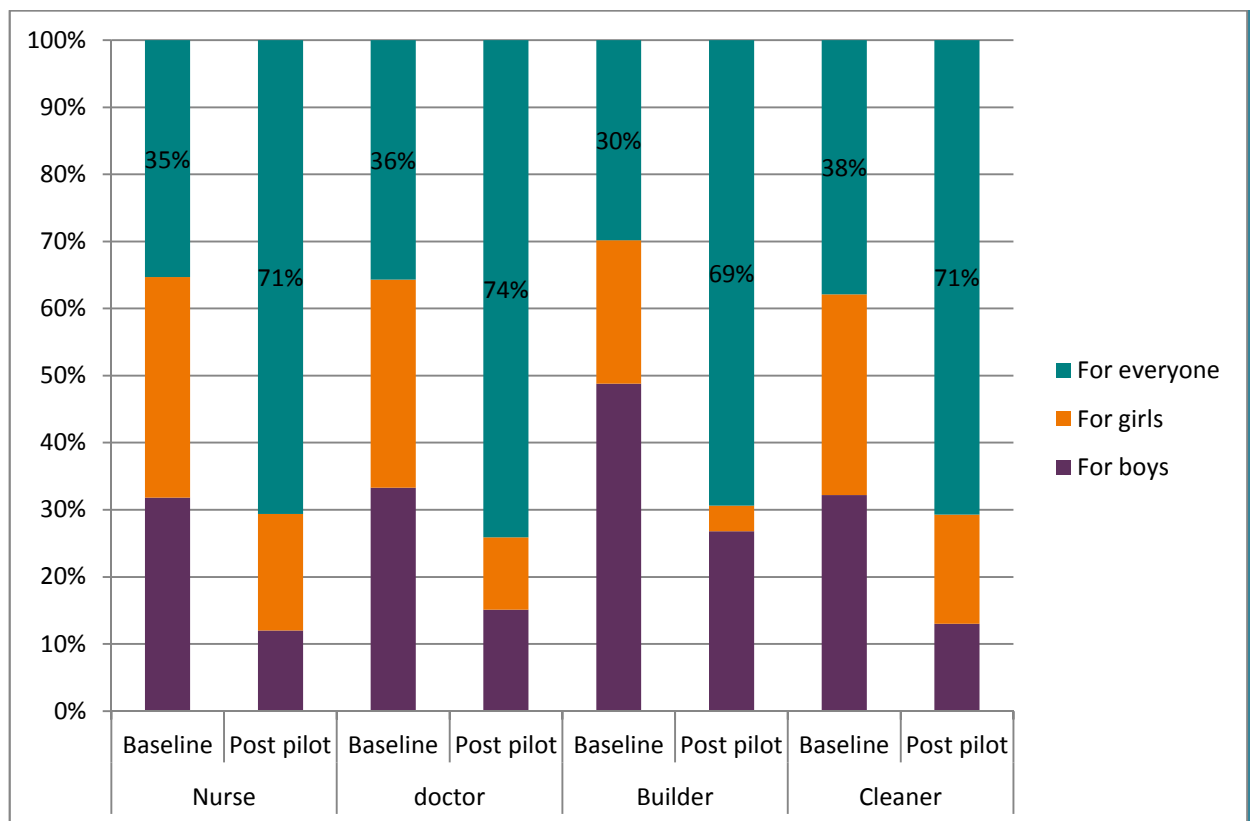
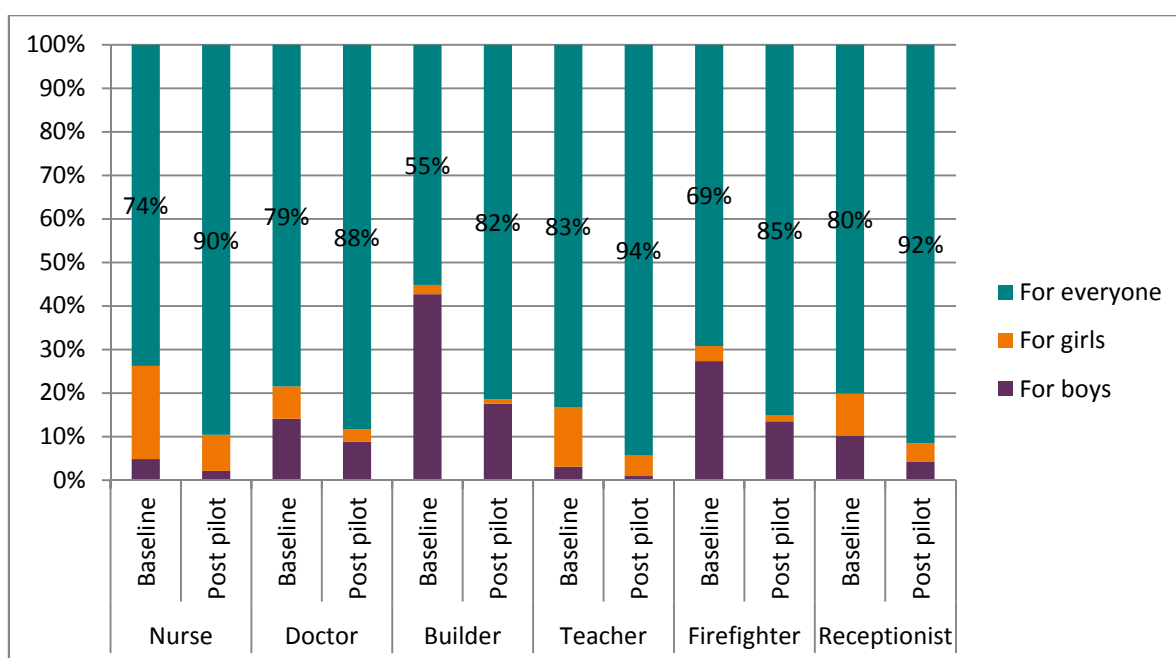


Figure 4: Categorisation of occupations by Early Years pupils in baseline and post pilot surveys



**Figure 5: Categorisation of occupations by Years 1 - 2 pupils in baseline and post pilot surveys**

In the Years 3 – 6 survey, 93% disagreed with the statement ‘nursing is a job for women’ in the post pilot survey, up from 86% in the baseline. Similarly, 95% disagreed with the statement ‘being the boss is a job for men’ in the post pilot survey, up from 87% in the baseline. The difference in the average (mean) scores for these questions were found to be statistically significant<sup>39</sup>, suggesting that the change is likely not due to chance.

Given that older children have often internalised unconscious gender stereotypes, yet have learnt not to explicitly endorse gender stereotyping, the survey sought to test unconscious associations to gain a more accurate picture of pupils’ gender biases. Results in the years 3 – 6 survey suggest changes in pupils’ unconscious occupation gender associations. For example, when asked to choose from a list of names to ascribe to a firefighter, 43% chose women’s names in the post pilot survey, up from 29% in the baseline survey.

Findings suggest that for all three key stages pupils endorsed a wider range of occupations for women and men at the end of the pilot than at the outset.

### ***Personal aspirations and possibilities***

Survey findings suggest an increase in pupils considering job roles not stereotypically associated with their gender after the pilot, with a particular change apparent in relation to the proportion of boys and girls expressing science aspirations. In the baseline surveys around two-thirds of those choosing science related jobs were boys for each age group. However in the post pilot survey this disparity was not apparent: of those wanting to be a scientist, 53% in the year 1 – 2 survey and 43% in the year 3 – 6 survey were girls.

<sup>39</sup> The results were tested using a T-test. Mean scores are based on numerical coding of the data where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. Mean scores and p-values are available in Appendix 3



In addition, there are changes in the job roles that year 3 – 6 pupils believe they could achieve when they are adults if they work hard. The results show increases for most occupations in the proportion of both boys and girls who think they could achieve them with some notable changes by gender. The proportion of boys who selected that they could be a teacher increased by 75% (from 24% to 42%) and those that said they could be a nurse increased by 56% (from 18% to 28%). The proportion of girls who selected they could be a footballer increased by 31% (from 36% to 47%) and those that said they could be a lawyer increased by 42% (from 31% to 44%).

These findings appear to fit with the interventions of the pilot which have had a strong focus on challenging gender stereotypes in relation to occupations. For example, the more equal distribution of pupils selecting they want to be scientists may be related to the role of schools in emphasising female scientists over the course of the pilot year, supported by high usage reported of the Lifting Limits 'Female Scientists' resource (51% of staff survey respondents) and various Lifting Limits lesson plans profiling the work of female scientists. Furthermore one school in particular instigated a whole school area of work dedicated to raising the profile of female scientists.

*“There have been a lot more references to women scientists and engineers and we had so many different people [visitors] here. We had Ada Lovelace Day...We did a lot on Ada and everyone - all of the children through the school - studied her...what she stood for and the impact of her work” (Head Teacher).*

Further examples from the qualitative data show activities schools implemented to address gender stereotyping in relation to job roles which may have influenced pupils' aspirations and the job roles they perceive to be possible for them. Gender Champions highlighted the efforts made to promote sports participation and jobs for girls through raising the profile of events in school such as the Women's World Cup and inviting female guest role models to the school.

*“We had an opportunity to have a team GB athlete in school and [the P.E. coach] made a specific decision to request a female athlete and again it's another way of sending the message through to the whole school community” (Gender Champion)*

### OUTCOME SUMMARY

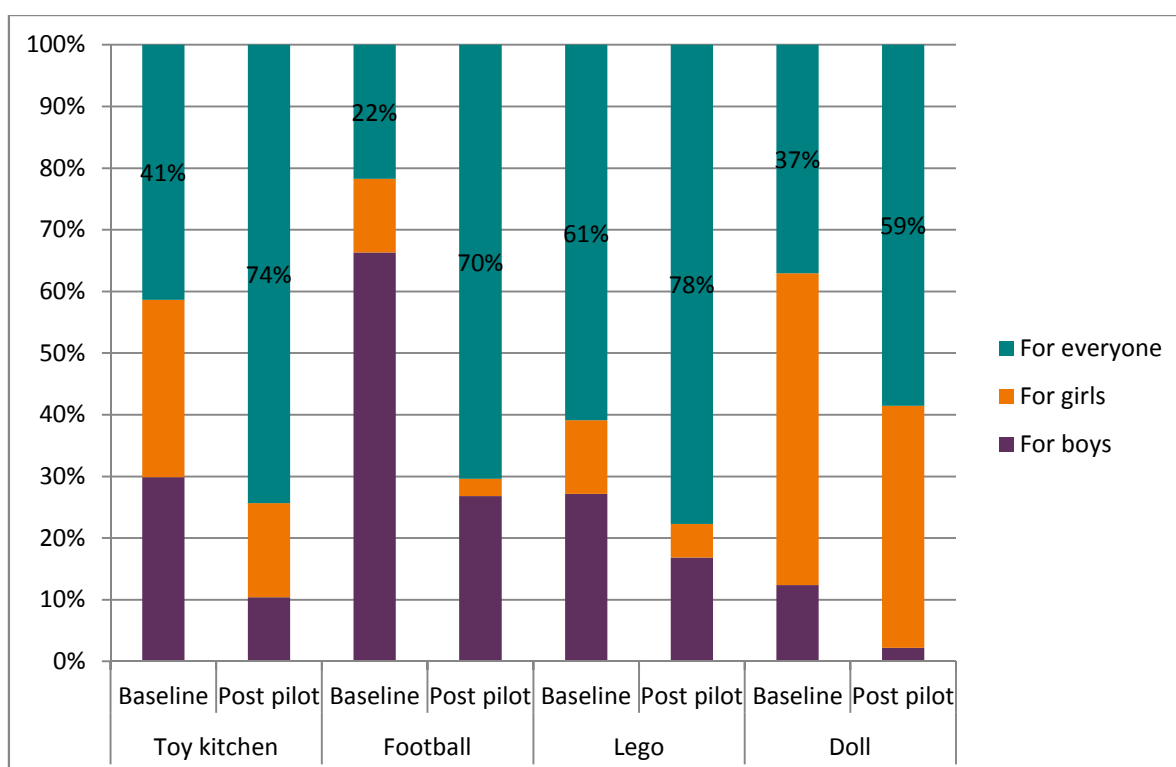
In summary, evidence suggests that pupils have a broader view on the job roles available to both themselves and others which is less influenced by gender stereotypes. This is evident both in reduced levels of job role stereotyping by gender in the surveys as well as in findings showing that pupils perceive a wider range of job roles to be available to them personally. Qualitative and quantitative evidence shows a strong focus on dispelling gender stereotyping in relation to occupations by schools (especially related to science and sports), suggesting a possible relationship between an active approach to challenge gender stereotyping in relation to occupations and a broadening of pupils' views on what roles are possible for them.



### ***Reduced stereotyping of activities, objects and traits***

Across year groups, survey results show that pupils endorsed a considerably wider range of objects, activities and traits for boys/men and girls/women after the pilot, with changes particularly marked for younger children. For each survey there are changes across all indicators designed to understand if pupils perceive objects, activities and traits as being for a particular gender or available to everyone. For example, amongst Early Years children, the percentage organising an image of a football into the ‘for everyone’ bowl, more than tripled (from 22% in the baseline to 70% in the post pilot activity) and in the Years 1 – 2 survey, the percentage of children saying that the doll is ‘for everyone’ nearly doubled (from 30% to 59%).

The results for the Early Years (in Figure 6) and Years 1 – 2 (in Figure 7) surveys for each object/activity indicator are presented below:



**Figure 6: Categorisation of objects by Early Years pupils in baseline and post pilot surveys**

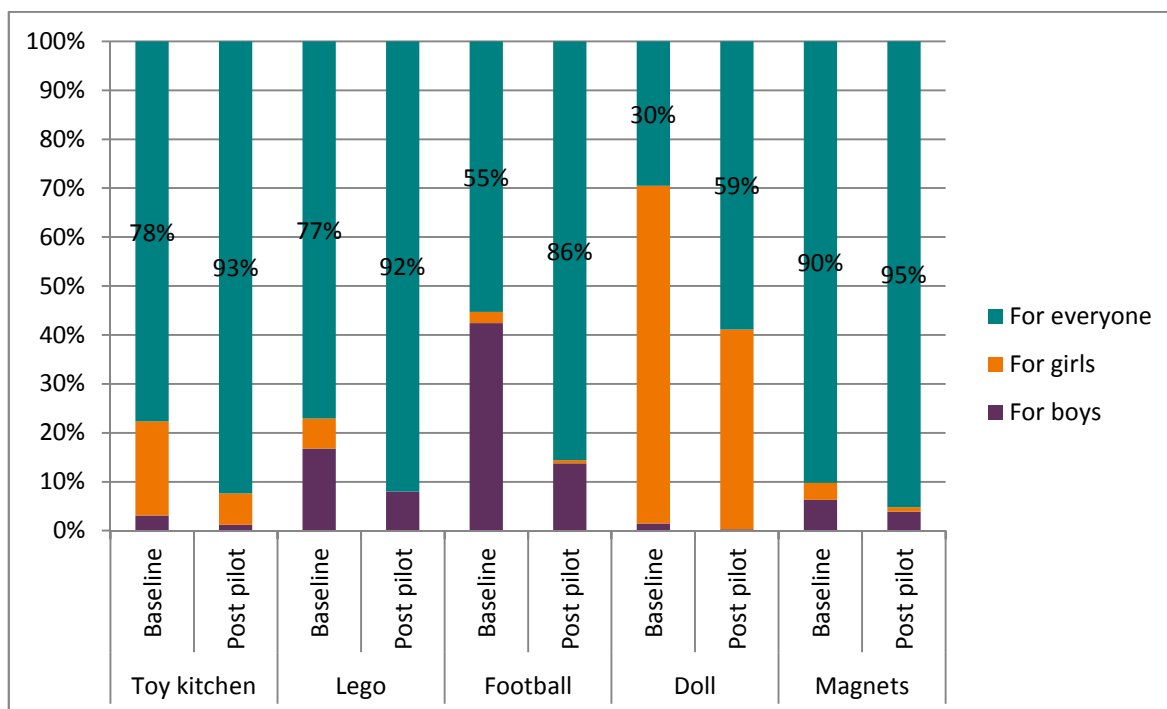


Figure 7: categorisation of objects by Year 1 - 2 pupils in baseline and post pilot surveys

In the years 3 – 6 survey, 95% of pupils disagreed with the statement ‘pink is for girls’ in the post pilot survey (compared with 84% in the baseline) and 96% disagreed with the statement ‘Lego is for boys’ in the post pilot survey (compared with 88% in the baseline). The difference in the average (mean) scores for these questions was found to be statistically significant<sup>40</sup>, suggesting that the change is unlikely to be due to chance.

When comparing the baseline findings for Early Years with Years 3 – 6 pupils, it is evident that children in the Early Years were more likely to explicitly perceive objects and activities to relate to a specific gender. These findings suggest that, to some degree, children learn to unpick explicit gender stereotypes as they get older. However, findings showing the large changes in perceptions among Early Years pupils’ level of endorsement of gender stereotyping post pilot shows the potential to change these associations at a young age, preventing the internalisation of implicit gender stereotyping as children grow older.

Staff and pupils noted particular Lifting Limits lessons that encouraged them to become more aware of gender stereotyping in relation to toys, clothes and traits and to broaden their view. One teacher described a lesson on advertising for toys which they perceived to be impactful for pupils:

*“In year 4 we looked a lot at advertising for toys geared towards boys or girls and then making our own adverts that were gender neutral – because that’s around them a lot. They’re*

<sup>40</sup> The results were tested using a T-test. Mean scores are based on numerical coding of the data where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. Mean scores and p-values are available in Appendix 3

*surrounded with it. So I think those sort of lessons have made a really big impact.” (Teacher, Year 4)*

Another teacher gave an example of pupils becoming more aware of limitations for women and men in relation to trait stereotypes around strength and weakness through a Lifting Limit art lesson activity.

*“The art lesson was quite interesting. We looked at really sexist 40s or 50s pictures...and how men and women are presented in that...We had a really interesting discussion...Some of them wanted to find pictures of men crying and being emotional.” (Teacher, Year 6)*

In one school, there was evidence of lots of discussion related to gender and examples of pupils deliberately choosing gender atypical clothing and activities in response to taking part in the gender detective activities:

*“One year 4 boy bought some sunglasses that were in the girls section of the shop and he thought actually ‘Why? These are great, they go with my hat!’” (Gender Champion)*

In another school, there was a concerted effort to address gender stereotyping in Early Years and this included efforts to ensure equal participation in activities, equal use of toys and the opportunity to take part in a play in gender atypical roles. The accumulative impact has been an observed change in the activities and objects that pupils engage with and more acceptance among pupils of boys and girls taking part in a broader range of activities.

*“Actually there’s been none of that stuff that there was at the beginning: ‘Oh you’re [a] boy you can’t wear a dress’. They’re sort of accepting it more. So I think that is huge progress...And actually we’ve made a real concerted effort to make sure that when they’re playing like the boys don’t dominate the bikes or the girls don’t dominate the writing table.” (Teacher, Early Years)*

## OUTCOME SUMMARY

Overall therefore, evidence from the survey and qualitative findings suggests that pupils have a broader view on the objects, activities and traits available to both themselves and others which is less informed by gender stereotypes. This is evident both in reduced levels of stereotyping by gender in the surveys in relation to a range of objects, activities and traits as well as qualitative findings showing a strong focus on dispelling gender stereotyping through class and whole school activities.

### 4.2.2 Pupils are more able to question and challenge gender norms (for themselves and others)

The evidence to support this outcome includes quantitative and qualitative data showing changes in pupils’ awareness of gender inequality and stereotyping; and qualitative data showing pupils’ ability to discuss, think critically, and challenge others on the issues.

### ***Awareness of gender stereotyping***

When asked what is hard and good about being a boy/man or being a girl/woman (years 3 – 6 pupils), answers reflected greater awareness of gender stereotyping in the post pilot surveys.

For example, 16% of answers in the baseline survey referred to pressure to conform to masculine stereotypes as something hard about being a boy/man<sup>41</sup>, increasing to 26% of all responses in the post pilot survey. A positive aspect of being a boy or man was considered to be having fewer expectations in relation to appearance in both the baseline and post pilot surveys.

When asked what is hard about being a girl/woman, 8% referred to aspects of gender inequality in the baseline<sup>42</sup>, increasing to 21% in the post pilot survey. Similarly, 7% of answers in the baseline survey referred to negative impacts of gender stereotyping compared with 11% in the post pilot survey. When asked what is good about being a girl/woman, a slightly higher proportion of pupils in the post pilot survey highlighted being free from masculine stereotypes such as having more freedom than men/boys to express emotions and be yourself. These findings suggest that pupils have a higher level of consciousness of gender stereotyping, inequality and the limitations and challenges it presents for both boys/men and girls/women.

This is supported by qualitative data showing pupils' ability to define gender stereotyping, name the challenges with it, as well as a heightened awareness of gender inequality.

*"We've learnt a lot more about it this year. So before I thought it doesn't happen anymore - now everyone's equal. But then this year I realised we're not."* (Girl, Year 5)

Pupils gave examples of how particular lessons had encouraged them to be aware of gender stereotyping. For example, one pupil noted that a lesson focused on film posters made him aware of how men and women are represented in films and this had led him to pay more attention to gender stereotypes and to question them.

*"Before I wasn't really paying attention [to gender stereotypes]. I'd just look at a [film] cover and say 'yes this is good' or 'no this is bad'. And now I pay attention to it"* (Boy, Year 5)

### ***Enhanced critical thinking and confidence to challenge gender stereotyping***

As a result of increased knowledge and awareness, pupils and staff also noted that pupils have developed more sophisticated language to be able to talk about gender stereotyping and inequality as well as enhanced confidence to discuss and challenge it.

*"They jump on it when it happens and now they have the language to talk about it – they say 'Look, Lifting Limits'. I think they know how to discuss it a bit more now rather than just [saying] 'that's not fair'."* (Teacher)

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<sup>41</sup> These included not playing with dolls, not showing emotion, liking sport, having a good job and being good at maths

<sup>42</sup> These included the gender pay gap, having fewer opportunities to men, experiencing sexism, experiencing abuse, awareness of wide inequalities in other countries, the history of women's oppression

Qualitative findings highlight that the critical thinking element of the pilot, encouraged through the lesson plans, philosophy guidance, discussion cards and other resources, has empowered pupils to reflect on society's gender norms, giving them tools to overcome their limitations. A comment from one member of staff encapsulates how children's acquisition of knowledge and critical thinking skills can empower them to bring about change:

*"The Lifting Limits pilot challenged and broadened children's ideas about sex and gender. This resulted in more children being able to reflect on the past and think critically about the present. This gives them the means to change the future"* (Teaching support staff)

In turn, pupils also report feeling more confident to challenge gender stereotyping in conversation as they have the awareness and the language to be able to do so.

*"I feel confident to speak about gender stereotypes because you shouldn't be ashamed of it. There's nothing to be ashamed of. We just want this world to be a fairer and a nicer place to live in so you should speak out and stop people and make sure they don't do it again because it's wrong"* (Girl, Year 6)

*"When someone said it last year I sort of said 'that's not right' and they said 'why? why? why?' and I couldn't think about it my mind would go blank, but now I have things to say"* (Girl, Year 5)

## OUTCOME SUMMARY

In summary, quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrates that pupils have increased awareness and understanding of gender stereotyping and inequality through the activities they have taken part in at school over the pilot year, resulting in pupils having a more sophisticated vocabulary and enhanced critical thinking skills to discuss the issues as well as increased confidence to promote equality and challenge stereotyping in conversation.

### 4.2.3 Additional outcome: improved relationships between girls and boys

Although not defined as an intended outcome for the purposes of the pilot, qualitative findings suggest that particular interventions have encouraged an improvement in the relationships between girls and boys in the school. For example, a teacher noted that due to actively encouraging collaborative play they have observed that pupils no longer organise themselves according to gender divisions during play time.

*"And when they're playing they do play a lot together. I think that's because we've done a lot of work of developing friendships and developing interests and collaborative play. So you'll find boys and girls all sat at the writing table drawing together and boys and girls on the climbing frame. And there's not a division. I've had other reception classes where the girls were always in the home corner and the boys always in the sand pit. And the boys never touch the writing table because that's what the girls do."* (Teacher, Early Years)

At another school which has emphasised equal participation in P.E., pupils interviewed noted that they have developed better mixed gender relationships in this context:

*"It's very fun with the sports as both the boys and the girls go and I think that makes a better relationship between the boys and the girls. For example, me and some other girls now we*

*play with the boys sometimes and I don't think we used to and it actually feels very fun. We used to play by ourselves but now we've made a better relationship – we treat each other better.”* (Girl, Year 4)

Pupils also noted that through learning about the impacts of gender inequality and understanding the effects of sexism there have been some changes in how boys relate to girls, suggesting enhanced understanding and respect:

*“Now I'm probably treating girls a bit better than I was before”* (Boy, Year 4)

These findings on improved relationships are supported by quantitative data suggesting that pupils are less polarised in their views of gender. A larger proportion of pupils perceived there to be ‘more similarities’ (rather than ‘more differences’) between girls and boys at the end of the pilot compared with the baseline surveys: a swing of 10% amongst year 1 – 2 children (with ‘more similarities’ increasing from 53% to 57% and ‘more differences’ reducing from 47% to 43%) and a swing of 22% amongst year 3 – 6 children (with ‘more similarities’ increasing from 58% to 69% and ‘more differences’ reducing from 42% to 31%).

## OUTCOME SUMMARY

In summary, findings suggests links between a concerted focus on challenging gender stereotyping in schools and the creation of some more positive relationships between girls and boys. This is also supported by evidence suggesting a reduction in the extent to which pupils polarise each other by gender, reflected in higher proportions of pupils perceiving there to be more similarities between boys and girls, rather than differences, after the pilot.

### 4.2.4 Pupil case studies

The case studies below show how two pupils from different schools experienced the Lifting Limits pilot year and what they learnt from it<sup>43</sup>.

#### **Amira's Lifting Limits year**

Amira is in year 5. She has been very aware of the various Lifting Limits activities that have happened in the school over the year and feels that the focus has been important for her education.

*“I think our school has been thinking about it a lot. It's helped our education to go a bit further and think about what's happening”*

In particular she remembers being shown a video in class which showed how people treat boys and girls differently. This helped her to become more aware of gender stereotyping and notice it in her daily life and to understand the limitations it places on boys and girls.

*“Now I notice it more as I know what's happening more and I take more notice and it's bad that it's happening. It seems so wrong. Why should they be treated differently?”*

A key area of learning for Amira over the year has been gender inequality in relation to race and global injustice, as highlighted in a homework activity she was set:

<sup>43</sup> Participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

*“We did homework about black women especially and how in this country we are very privileged and in other places it’s not good.”*

She also noted that she has joined the girls’ football team at school and is pleased that more people are talking about the women’s world cup.

*“Well we do a lot about it at school. We do about it in P.E. sometimes. You have what are to be considered ‘boys sports’. So I joined the girls’ football team and lots of people are talking about the women’s world cup. For a long time it was just for men and barely anyone talked about it”*

### **Jack’s Lifting Limits year**

Jack is in year 6. He was already very passionate about equal rights prior to the pilot and feels that the focus on gender over the year has enhanced his knowledge and ability to talk about the issues.

*“I was very passionate about equal rights for both genders and I think learning about more of this definitely helped me to understand it a bit more. And I think added to my knowledge about gender stereotyping”*

Jack has been aware of lots of activities happening in his class related to gender stereotyping over the year, including general conversations with the class teacher and learning about stereotyping through looking at statistics, images and videos.

*“We talk about it a lot and we get educated about this kind of subject...We learnt about the statistics about boys and girls, and common stereotypes and then we did some things where we looked at photos – saying boys don’t cry and then we looked at a picture of a boy crying. Trying to make sure that gender stereotypes don’t affect us”*

Jack feels very confident to point out gender stereotyping when he notices it and to articulate to others the problems with it. He also discusses the issues with his friend and notes that they can have more in-depth conversations about it as a result of the learning over the year.

*“We notice [gender stereotyping] me and my friend...we have a discussion. We can say more now because we’ve been educated about it and we can use common examples that we’ve learnt about”*

## **4.3 Impact on schools**

This section explores the impact of the pilot on the participating schools as a whole. It looks at the extent to which gender stereotyping and inequality is reduced across school systems, structures and materials; and the extent to which gender awareness can be said to be embedded within the schools, drawing on observations in schools from gender audits and interviews with school staff.



### **Summary of impact on schools**

Data gathered provides evidence to support the following changes in schools:

- Curriculum changes are starting to be seen which bring a 'gender lens' and increased gender balance across pupils' learning
- More diverse and equal representation in relation to gender is apparent in school displays and materials
- Enhanced collective awareness and lateral thinking about issues relating to gender stereotyping and inequality across staff teams
- Long term commitment from senior leadership in schools to continue to embed a gender aware approach throughout the schools
- Gender champions and school staff were explicit about the value of a whole school approach

### **Strength of the data**

It is difficult to quantify the impact on school systems, structures and gender consciousness, so data has been collected through observations and qualitative interviews. These methods are sufficient, however, to illustrate changes in the desired areas and findings suggest these changes are likely to be related to taking part in the pilot.

#### **4.3.1 Gender equality is promoted and gender stereotyping reduced across school systems, structures and materials.**

For this outcome indicators were explored in relation to whether gender awareness is embedded in the school curriculum, displays and books, and in staff meeting and forums.

##### ***The curriculum***

All schools expressed intention to review the school curriculum to embed gender awareness and equal representation across pupil learning in time for the next academic year and perceived this to be crucial for embedding the approach.

*"I think the curriculum is a key thing. Ofsted have changed their focus onto curriculum and it seems like a good opportunity to look at our curriculum and see that's challenging gender stereotyping."* (Head Teacher)

At the time of the gender audits one of the five schools had already completed a full curriculum review which provided evidence of greater awareness of gender balance across every year group and topic, explicitly introducing women into areas of the curriculum which opening audits had shown to be male-dominated.

##### ***Displays and books***

Interviews with Gender Champions and Head Teachers suggested that most schools had implemented specific Lifting Limits displays and/or ensured more diverse and equal representation in relation to gender. This was evident in the end of year gender audits which showed a range of displays in schools including:



- Displays of female scientists and composers to raise profile of influential women in traditionally male-dominated fields
- Female role models and historical figures included alongside male examples (for example in classroom timelines)
- Corridor displays promoting engagement and interaction from pupils including a gender detectives display that pupils could add to
- Classroom and corridor displays relating to specific Lifting Limits lessons taught
- One school implemented working walls in each classroom to display ongoing work related to gender stereotyping and equality over the year and to link gendered messaging across different areas

In addition, participating in the pilot has encouraged schools to review their book stocks. Several school staff reported the book list provided by Lifting Limits to be useful and found literature to be an effective method to generate discussion. In some schools this led to staff reviewing their books and purchasing new books that did not reflect gender stereotypes. In other cases, where schools did not have the resource to purchase new books, they concentrated on challenging messages related to gender stereotyping in the existing books.

### ***Meetings and staff forums***

There is some evidence to suggest that challenging gender stereotyping and promoting equality has become a routine part of staff meetings and forums. Qualitative findings suggest that gender awareness has permeated staff meetings and INSET sessions, both as an explicit item and as an intrinsic part of the questioning that takes place in these forums.

*“I think we’ve just had this complete open conversation all year that we’re all responsible for it. And so, it’s permeated assemblies, curriculum planning, lots of Insets, there’s always something that’s brought to our attention through that.”* (Head Teacher)

Staff also noted that calling each other out in relation to gendered language and stereotyping has become a normative aspect of their interactions.

*“A lot of people talk about it a lot more in conversation...There’ll be something said in the staffroom and there will be something as simple as someone saying, ‘that wasn’t very Lifting Limits’.”* (Teaching support staff)

*“If we hear something that we want to challenge it’s like ‘hashtag lifting limits’: that person shouldn’t have said that.”* (Gender Champion)

## **OUTCOME SUMMARY**

In summary, these findings show that gender equality is being promoted through some key structural aspects of schools, including the school curriculums, visual displays around school, materials used and through the meetings and forums that staff participate in.

#### **4.3.2 Gender awareness and addressing inequality is embedded throughout the school ethos and approach.**

Qualitative findings suggest that an embedded approach means that gender stereotyping and awareness is routinely considered throughout all aspects of the school, with both an explicit focus on challenging stereotyping and an implicit focus in the messages the school and its staff give pupils and one another in relation to gender.

*“You don’t want it to feel like it’s this isolated thing that you do. It needs to be embedded in everything that you do.”* (Gender Champion)

For this to occur staff reflected that it needs to be a whole school approach and reflected that the Lifting Limits pilot has enabled them to take this approach by encouraging schools to consider gender throughout all aspects of the school and engaging all staff members in the process.

*“In general, because the staff have been informed of it and aware of it, the children are going to experience more of it all the time. We have displays about it, we have lessons and it’s everywhere in the school now, which is good. I think that that is what you need to make it something that is just normalised.”* (Teaching support staff)

Findings suggest that this approach has led to gender awareness becoming embedded in the collective consciousness of staff teams, with a critical mass of staff in schools championing the approach.

*“I just think, in general, the impact that it’s had is that it has made the whole body of staff aware of the concept. I think that it is an idea that is now just in the collective mind of the staff. It’s something that now gets talked about a lot more.”* (Teaching support staff)

There is also evidence of school staff thinking laterally about the issues and embedding a ‘gender lens’ throughout their practise, independently of the Lifting Limits resources. Examples include staff members encouraging class-based discussion, deliberately exploring gender in their assemblies and researching and implementing gender balance in subject representations.

*“There have been quite a few assemblies that have had a Lifting Limits link. Not just Lifting Limits assemblies, but the way that we’ve made the link there. We did one on identity recently to do with boxing, challenging gender stereotypes. And we did one on the World Cup recently.”* (Head Teacher)

There are variances in schools in the extent to which they have been able to embed addressing gender stereotyping and inequality in the school over the course of one year, with schools starting from different levels of awareness and taking the pilot at difference paces depending on their circumstances. Nonetheless, all schools noted that they had intentions to continue to embed the approach throughout the school. All Head Teachers reported that they are committed to keeping it a priority for the school, reviewing the curriculum through a gender lens and to building on the work of the pilot, suggesting an ongoing legacy from taking part in the pilot that will continue to develop within each school.

*“I think that having done the project this year, we want to make it our own. Think about whether we’d have a series of assemblies or whether it’s part of every assembly almost; how it fits into*

*our new approach to the curriculum; thinking about the vision and values that we're creating in the autumn term.*" (Head Teacher)

## OUTCOME SUMMARY

These findings suggest that all schools are well on the way to embedding an approach to promoting gender equality and addressing gender stereotyping throughout the schools. This has been enabled through the whole school approach and is evidenced in the reported heightened awareness across staff teams as well as the ways that staff are independently embedding it in their own practise in a variety of ways alongside the specific Lifting Limit activities and materials.

### 4.3.3 School case studies

This section provides two case studies showing the journeys, approaches and key areas of impact within two of the pilot schools.

#### School A

The ethos of school A resonated well with the aims and objectives of Lifting Limits and as such, the Head Teacher was very keen to be a part of the pilot.

*"I think that a project that challenges gender stereotyping is very 'us' – it's something that we really believe in."* (Head Teacher)

The start of the pilot coincided with the school taking on a lot of new staff and there was some initial reticence to the pilot among staff. In response, the approach in the school has been to take the pilot at a pace that feels manageable for the school.

*"We've made a decision because we've got quite a lot of new staff to go quite slowly with it. The initial training day with governors and staff in the autumn term, staff found it really challenging, which is good."* (Gender Champion)

The school has fully engaged with the pilot and implemented many activities over the year. Some key successes in the school include:

- Several staff members have delivered additional assemblies inspired by Lifting Limits. These have focused on challenging the role of girls in traditional stories, highlighting female role models and casting pupils in counter-stereotypical roles for school plays
- Parents were engaged in a number of morning and evening workshops in collaboration with Lifting Limits, leading to parental involvement in delivering an assembly on global access to education for girls
- A strong focus on promoting girls' participation in sports through a proactive approach to make sports more accessible for girls by the P.E. lead
- With a strong emphasis on pupil voice in the school, pupils have come forward to suggest their own activities and events, such as a sponsored silence to raise awareness of girls' unequal access to education globally

As a result of taking part in the pilot, there has been much more discussion about gender equality among staff and there are examples of staff reflecting more on their practice and becoming more confident and explicit in challenging gender stereotyping.

*"What Lifting Limits has done is highlighted an issue that is always there but it's empowered teachers to be explicit in their challenging of stereotypes"* (Gender Champion)

A teacher reflected that an area where she has seen most impact is in relation to challenging stereotypes in traditional tales, where they may not have done previously: *“Where it’s a more traditional tale perhaps historically it might have been a while before we got round to talking about why does this princess need rescuing again, so I think it’s impacted there.”* (Teacher, Early Years)

Pupils highlighted particular areas that influenced them over the year, including learning about gender inequality globally.

*“In terms of different countries...we learned about Malala. She got shot in the head because she wanted education for girls. There are some countries where girls can’t go to school”* (Boy, Year 4)

Future plans include to keep the focus on gender equality as an explicit part of the school development plan; to develop work to address the links between mental ill-health and masculinity; and to support teaching assistants to grow in confidence in promoting gender equality.

### **School B**

The school had already explored gender inequality through a previous project and they were interested in having an opportunity to reflect more on their practice as a staff body and build on the work they had already done.

*“The school wanted to know how far into the journey they were...confirmation of the good work they’ve done so far but also to look at the future and to see what we could do to improve further”* (Gender Champion)

The school has a focus on oracy which has provided a good basis for implementing the pilot as the pupils are developing their skills in articulating themselves.

*“And I think the Lifting Limits approach and oracy together is really key because they need to be able to think of what their idea is and then be able to articulate it.”* (Teacher, Early Years)

The school has implemented a wide variety of activities over the year with a number of key successes:

- A concerted effort to address stereotyping in Early Years, including reviewing and obtaining new books, encouraging collaborative play, talking to pupils about gender stereotypes, weaving messages into the curriculum and encouraging pupils to take on gender atypical roles in a school play.
- Taking a whole school approach to raising the profile of female scientists. Starting with a day event dedicated to Ada Lovelace, and exploring role models throughout the school related to STEAM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths).
- Staff implemented the Lifting Limits lesson plans but they have also been focused on how they can adapt their existing curriculum to embed gender awareness in what they are already doing
- The school promoted gender equality through inviting in guest speakers, including gender equality specialists and role models for children to show people in gender atypical job roles.

Engaging in the pilot has raised the level of consciousness of school staff in relation to gender stereotyping and inequality. The Head Teacher reflects that it has encouraged staff to reflect on their role and impact both as teachers and more broadly.

*“I think it’s been really reflective, not just in terms of as a teacher but as a parent or as an employer, as a member of society.” (Head Teacher)*

Staff perceive there to be a noticeable impact on pupils in Early Years due to the concerted effort made by the school in this area.

*“Early years has been a massive impact. So much work has been done in early years, right through from nursery. It’s in the classrooms and planning and activities and use of language, working with parents. It’s been huge.” (Head Teacher)*

Pupils noted that the activities they have taken part in over the year have made them more aware of gender inequality, the gender pay gap, the struggles women have face historically, and more aware of female role models.

*“I always thought that that was a thing of the past and they were equal but it kind of baffled me to know that it was still going on. When I learnt about the pay gap, I thought it was completely unequal and disgraceful for something like that to be going on.” (Boy, Year 5)*

#### 4.4 Impact on parents and carers

This section presents an overview of the extent to which the intended outcomes related to parents and carers have been achieved using quantitative data gathered from questionnaires administered at the end of workshops for parents and carers, and some reflections from interviews with staff.

##### Summary of impact on parents and carers

Data gathered provides evidence to support the following impact on parents and carers:

- Nearly all parents attending Lifting Limits workshops (86 in total, a small proportion of parents across the schools) reported increased understanding of gender inequality and stereotyping and confidence in discussing it with their children. For example, 95% of parents agreed with the statement ‘After this presentation, I feel more able to talk about gender stereotyping with my children’.
- Examples of conversations between parents and their children about gender stereotyping and inequality following pupil participation in relevant activities at school.

##### Strength of the data

It has not been possible to assess the extent of impact on the parent body as a whole due to challenges in engaging parents in evaluation activities. Findings, therefore, are mostly limited to the impact of the workshops on parents who attended and present a partial understanding of the impact of the pilot on parents and carers.

##### 4.4.1 Parents and carers have increased understanding of gender inequality and stereotyping and confidence to discuss and address it with their children.

The primary intervention for parents was through invitation to workshops delivered by Lifting Limits (alongside senior school staff in some cases). Questionnaires completed by parents and carers after the workshops suggest that the workshops led to increased awareness and understanding of the issues as well as giving parents and carers the tools to discuss and

address gender stereotyping with their children. This was reflected in the data and comments collated from parents after the workshops:

99% of parents agreed with the statement ‘the presentation has encouraged me to think about challenging gender stereotyping with my children’, as reflected in the comment below:

*“Brilliant! Inspiring - I'm learning new ideas of how to empower both my son and daughter.”*

95% of parents agreed with the statement ‘after this presentation, I feel more aware of the impacts that gender stereotyping can have on boys and girls:

*“I am very pleased I attended this presentation because it makes me realise how much I've been influenced by society on gender stereotyping myself toward my male son.”*

95% of parents agreed with the statement ‘after this presentation, I feel more able to talk about gender stereotyping with my children’:

*“Very helpful tools to discuss with my child.”*

In addition, schools reported that they had noticed parents and carers who came to the workshops asking questions during the session about how they can address issues with their children, and that the workshops had encouraged them to think more about the issues.

*“There were some really interesting questions asked and two parents came to me this morning on the gates and said they really enjoyed it, it got them to think. That's what we want.”* (Head Teacher)

School staff noted, however, that it is likely to be parents who are already engaged in the issues that attend the workshops and that it is harder to reach those who are less engaged. One school ran coffee mornings to introduce the themes in a more implicit way as part of a wider discussion and found this to be an effective approach to encourage equal participation and opportunities for girls and boys.

*“A lot of the parents won't respond to a presentation but actually a cup of coffee and a chat is the way in. We had an Eid party recently and I went and talked to them about the curriculum so I drip feed them constantly and my big thing is your daughters and sons should be treated exactly the same and coming to school and being educated opens doors and offers them life choices.”* (Head Teacher)

Interviews with pupils and questionnaires completed by parents also suggest that the activities pupils have taken part in related to Lifting Limits over the year have led to some discussions at home about gender.

*“My children told us about the discussions held at school and that I found very valuable and it provided an opportunity to speak about as a family and at the dinner table.”* (Parent survey respondent)

Whilst only a very small sample, 63% of parents who completed the survey (15 of 24) agreed with the statement ‘Due to learning from the Lifting Limits pilot, I am having more conversations with my child/children than I used to’.



## OUTCOME SUMMARY

In summary, these findings suggest that the workshops have raised awareness among parents who attended of the limitations of gender stereotyping and empowered those parents to discuss and challenge stereotyping with their children. There is also some evidence to show that the activities pupils have engaged in at school have generated some conversations in the home environments. Findings highlight challenges in engaging and influencing parents on a larger scale and in collating evidence in relation to the impact on parents due to their relatively removed position from the school environment, however useful learnings have been shared by schools as to what they find works to engage with their school communities.

## 5. Key Learning

The evidence demonstrating impact of the pilot highlighted above illustrates the success of the pilot. This section presents some of the key learning that has emerged from the pilot year about the Lifting Limits model itself. Learning to inform the development of the Lifting Limits programme was shared internally.

### 5.1 Strengths of the Lifting Limits model

There is strong evidence to suggest that the Lifting Limits model comprises the essential elements to implement a whole school approach to addressing gender stereotyping and gender inequality in primary schools. Qualitative findings suggest that the following elements of the pilot have been crucial in bringing about change:

- **Whole school approach:** Taking a whole school approach which explores gender messaging in relation to *all* aspects of the school and engages *all* staff members in the school
- **INSET presentation:** The whole school INSET presentation was consistently highlighted as essential for involving and getting the whole staff base engaged in the issues
- **Assemblies:** assemblies were highlighted as vital for engaging pupils in the issues and reinforcing key messages for pupils and staff
- **Resources:** The Lifting Limits resources were generally perceived by school staff to be of high quality, easy to use and a very valuable element of the pilot. The wide range of resources available enabled staff to select those which are relevant to the curriculum. The provision of discrete lesson plans as well as resources which encourage critical thinking and discussion more generally with pupils were both valued by different staff members, highlighting a need for both types of resource.

*“They have produced brilliant resources. They’re split into year group and they’re split into subject areas...so they’re all tailored to what is in the national curriculum so that work has already been done for us. We don’t have to map it to year groups and map it to subjects.” (Gender Champion)*

- **Gender Champion:** The Gender Champion role has been a key component for successfully implementing the model and supporting colleagues in implementing change

- **Curriculum review:** Undertaking a curriculum review, as encouraged by Lifting Limits, was understood as a key component for embedding an approach to challenging gender stereotyping in the school and is therefore another core aspect of the model.

### 5.2 Learning from schools

Whilst each school implemented the core elements of the Lifting Limits model, variation across schools in specific focus and use of the resources shows adaptability in the model, enabling schools to 'make it their own' and fit the approach with their specific needs. This diversity of implementation also provides opportunities to share good practice across schools from different approaches tested and the pilot schools have offered invaluable learnings as to what has worked well, or not so well, and particular areas of challenge, in implementing the programme.

Learnings from the pilot schools and specific feedback from staff on individual resources has been invaluable in enabling Lifting Limits to continue developing its programme.

## 6. Conclusion

There is strong evidence to suggest that the Lifting Limits pilot has achieved its intended outcomes in relation to impact on school staff, pupils and the school as a whole, showing that the limiting gendered norms children learn young can be disrupted through the school environment. The core components of the Lifting Limits model were successfully implemented in schools. The whole school approach – which addresses gender stereotyping in a variety of ways and throughout school structures, ethos and day to day practice – has been critical for driving the desired change.

### ***Impact on staff***

Evidence shows that the pilot has had a significant impact on school staff levels of awareness and attitudes in relation to gender stereotyping and inequality, as well as increased confidence and ability to address gender stereotyping and inequality with pupils, colleagues and parents. Key aspects which have driven change include: the INSET presentation; the permission granted to staff to drive change through senior leadership support; the whole school approach; and the resources produced by Lifting Limits. These have all contributed to staff gaining the knowledge, tools and confidence to be conscious of the messages they give children in relation to gender, to implement a range of discrete learning activities for pupils and to embed a gender informed approach in their practice, illustrated through examples of lateral thinking and use of initiative to challenge gender stereotyping and inequality. Even where some staff are resistant to the approach, findings suggest that as long as senior leadership is on board and gender champions are encouraged within the staff base, a critical mass can drive change within the school, leading to challenging gender stereotyping and inequality becoming the normative culture.

### ***Impact on pupils***

Evidence shows that the pilot has had a significant impact on pupils' level of awareness of gender stereotyping and led to a reduction of gender stereotyping among pupils in relation to occupations, objects, activities and traits, including pupils' own perceptions of what job roles are available to them. Evidence suggests that children have gained valuable critical thinking skills and confidence in challenging gender stereotyping and inequalities, together with the language to enable them to do so. In addition to the desired outcomes, evidence suggests



that challenging gender stereotyping among pupils and encouraging a view of shared humanity has reduced polarisation between boys and girls and improved relationships.

The data collected for the evaluation shows the largest changes in children's gender stereotypical attitudes for Early Years pupils. Furthermore qualitative evidence suggests that targeted interventions for Early Years pupils can have a marked impact on reducing gender segregated play and increased acceptance of a wider range of roles and behaviours for boys and girls. These findings suggest that interventions for this age group can bring about large changes in pupils' level of endorsement of gender stereotyping during a time when their attitudes are forming and may be particularly effective in preventing gender norms and attitudes becoming entrenched.

Overall, these findings corroborate evidence<sup>44</sup> that gender norms are learnt during childhood and introducing alternative messages early and consistently can alter children's understanding and behaviour in relation to gender.

### ***Impact on schools***

A key area that is considered important to embedding a gender aware approach in a school is developing a curriculum which brings a 'gender lens' and increased gender balance across pupils' learning. The commitment to reviewing the curriculum in each school as well as long term commitment to the issue by senior leaders suggests that the pilot has laid the foundations for ongoing and embedded approach in schools to tackling gender stereotyping and inequality. The perception in schools of a critical mass of staff who are on board with the approach and a heightened collective awareness of the issues also suggest that challenging gender stereotyping and inequality has permeated schools as a whole.

## **7. Recommendations**

In light of the policy context set out in section two and evaluation findings demonstrating the impact that a whole school approach can have in challenging gender stereotyping, the following recommendations are made to Government, Ofsted, middle tier organisations, training providers and schools.

### ***Government***

- Conduct a larger-scale evaluated trial testing a whole school approach to challenging gender stereotyping in primary schools nationally, across a broad range of school types and demographics, to inform policy.
- Use the introduction of Relationships Education in primary schools to promote teaching about gender stereotypes as part of a whole school approach.
- Allocate funding for specialist organisations to support schools and middle tier organisations in building their capacity to challenge gender stereotyping and promote gender equality.

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<sup>44</sup> See Section Two

### **Ofsted**

- In recognition of the harmful effects of gender stereotyping on children, introduce specialist training for Ofsted inspectors to equip them to bring a 'gender lens' to inspections so as to ensure all schools are meeting their obligations under the personal development criteria and under the Equality Act.
- In assessing Initial Teacher Education, in particular the quality of training, assess whether specialist training on unconscious bias and gender stereotyping is a core and substantive part of the training so that trainee teachers are equipped to recognise the impact of gender stereotyping on children and to challenge it their practice and in the school environment.

### **Middle tier organisations (such as local authorities and multi-academy trusts)**

- Build expertise and capacity within the organisation to actively promote a whole school approach to gender equality throughout their school networks, and facilitate school staff in gaining the skills and knowledge to actively challenge gender stereotyping.
- Review training, policies, resources and schemes of work made available to schools through a 'gender lens' and ensure that policy, practices and materials when supporting schools do not reinforce gender stereotypes.

### **Initial teacher training providers**

- Ensure that lecturers and others responsible for training teachers for qualified teacher status are themselves not reinforcing stereotypes through their practice, including by providing specialist CPD addressing gender stereotyping and unconscious bias.
- Incorporate specialist training on unconscious bias and gender stereotyping as a core and substantive part of initial teacher training (whatever the training route to attain qualified teacher status) and ensure that associated resources have been reviewed through a 'gender lens'.

### **Schools**

- Implement a whole school approach, covering school ethos, organisation, teaching practices and curriculum, to challenge gender stereotyping and promote gender equality, with explicit and visible support from school leadership.
- Recognise the Early Years stage as an opportunity for early intervention and, within the whole school approach, ensure that Early Years staff receive the training and resources they need to take this opportunity.
- Appoint a Gender Champion with a brief to drive change in school and encourage staff ownership of the gender equality agenda across subject areas and key stages.
- Ensure that data is gathered from which to identify specific gender issues (for example gendered participation or outcomes relating to sporting activities, literacy or behaviour) and consider using the school's specific equality objectives<sup>45</sup> to prioritise addressing these issues.
- When reviewing the school's curriculum in light of Ofsted's new Education Inspection Framework<sup>46</sup>, apply a gender lens and take the opportunity to improve gender balance across areas of the curriculum.

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<sup>45</sup> required to be published under the Equality Act 2010

<sup>46</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/801429/Education\\_inspection\\_framework.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/801429/Education_inspection_framework.pdf)

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## 9. Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix 1: School profiles

A summary of the profiles of the five participating schools is provided below:

#### **Brookfield Primary School**

A 2 form entry school with 423 pupils on the roll, 49% girls and 51% boys. It has higher than national number of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) pupils (46%) and its disadvantaged, Special Educational Needs (SEN) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupil numbers are close to national. Its largest pupil populations by ethnicity are White British (54%), Mixed (14%), White Other (10%), Bangladeshi (6%) and Black African (5%).

#### **Carlton Primary School**

A 2 form entry school with 331 pupils on the roll, 46% girls and 54% boys. It has significantly higher than national numbers of BME pupils (83%), disadvantaged (61%), EAL (75%) and SEN (31%). Its largest pupil populations by ethnicity are Bangladeshi (26%), Black African (25%), White British (17%), Asian Other (10%) and White Other (8%).

#### **Gospel Oak Primary School**

A 2 form entry school with 470 pupils on the roll, 50% girls and 50% boys. It has higher than national numbers of BME pupils (63%), disadvantaged pupils (42%) and pupils with EAL (49%) and close to national numbers of pupils with SEN (15%). Its largest pupil populations by ethnicity are White British (37%), Bangladeshi (16%), White Other (15%), Mixed (14%) and Black African (8%).

#### **Kentish Town Church of England Primary School**

A 1 form entry school with two additional Resource Bases, one for children with autism and another for children with physical disabilities. The children in the bases are fully included in school life and are taught alongside their mainstream peers. The school has 236 pupils on the roll, 44% girls and 56% boys. It has higher than national numbers of BME pupils (54%), disadvantaged (35%), EAL (43%) and pupils with SEN (21%). Its largest pupil populations by ethnicity are White British (46%), Mixed (14%), Bangladeshi (13%), White Other (12%) and Black African (8%).

#### **Torriano Primary School**

A 2 form entry school with 443 pupils on the roll, 44% girls and 56% boys. It has higher than national numbers of and BME pupils (70%), disadvantaged pupils (46%) and EAL (50%). Pupils with SEN are just below national (13%). Its largest pupil populations by ethnicity are White British (30%), Black African (21%), Mixed (15%), White Other (13%) and Bangladeshi (11%).

### 9.2 Appendix 2: Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach to assess the extent to which the Lifting Limits pilot met its intended outcomes and to generate learning on the strengths and challenges over the pilot year to feed into internal development. Methods included an initial evaluation framework development phase including a literature review to define the desirable outcomes and design research tools; surveys with staff and pupils to measure indicators related to the

intended pilot outcomes; questionnaires to explore the impact of particular Lifting Limits interventions; a gender audit to track representation of gender in the schools; and qualitative interviews with five staff mid-way through the pilot and 23 staff and 20 pupils at the end of the pilot.

A detailed description of the methods is provided below:

### **Evaluation framework development**

- Interviews with project staff to understand the key components of the Lifting Limits model, its aims, intended outcomes - resulting in the development of a logic model to test over the course of the pilot
- A literature review to understand definitions of gender stereotyping, key components of gender stereotyping, the way gender stereotyping and inequality is learnt by children and what works in challenging it
- Survey tools were devised based on age appropriate methods, informed by previous survey methods to test gender stereotyping endorsement (Bian et al 2017, Shutts et al 2017)

### **Surveys with staff and pupils**

Surveys were administered to staff and pupils before the start of the pilot and again at the end of pilot to track distance travelled across a number of indicators.

The staff survey explored attitudes in relation to gender and level of gender stereotyping endorsement, perceptions about the extent of gender stereotyping, confidence to identify and address sexism and gender stereotyping; and practice in relation to gender (such as the extent to which staff reflect on language use in relation to gender and extent to which they consider diverse and atypical gender representations in the examples they use in their practice).

The staff survey was made available to all staff members at all five participating schools to achieve as large a sample size as possible. The response rate for the baseline survey is approximately 63% (n = 170) and the response rate for the post pilot survey is approximately 40% (n = 107). The sample is self-selected.

Three separate pupils' surveys were developed in order to be appropriate to different age groups. The Early Years survey (for ages 3 - 5) included two activities for pupils: the first to draw a picture of what they want to be when they grow up to test aspirations. The second activity involved pupils organising images of different occupations and objects into three categories to show if they think they are 'for boys', 'for girls' or 'for everyone'.

The years 1 – 2 surveys (ages 5 - 7) were completed on paper. Pupils were asked a number of questions and asked to circle or colour in their response. Questions focused primarily on whether they see certain occupations and objects as being for girls, boys or everyone. The years 3 – 6 surveys (ages 7 - 11) were completed by pupils online using Google Forms. The survey included a number of questions including extent of agreement with a number of gender stereotypical statements, questions to test unconscious links pupils may make between occupations and gender by asking them to select a name from a list to assign to people doing different occupations, perceptions of the job roles that pupils perceive they could do when they grow up, and some open qualitative questions exploring what pupils think is good or hard about being a boy/man and a girl/woman.

Data were collected from four of the five participating pilot schools. In total there are 1243 pupil responses for the baseline surveys and 1150 responses for the post pilot surveys. The response rate for the baseline survey is 74% (n = 1243) and 68% (n = 1150) for the post surveys based on an approximate total of 1680 pupils across four schools. Pupil response rate is dependent upon staff ability to administer the surveys.

Analysis was conducted of both surveys using descriptive statistics. Statistics were rounded to the nearest whole percent. T-tests were run on questions that were based on a 4 point scale to test for statistical significance.

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were also designed to test the impact of specific interventions, specifically the INSET presentations and workshops with parents and carers. All participants completed the questionnaires at the end of the activities. The questionnaires asked participants to rate the extent to which they agreed with a number of statements related to awareness and learning points from the activity. Analysis was conducted of both questionnaires using descriptive statistics. A questionnaire was also circulated to parents at the end of the year to understand their engagement and perceptions of the pilot, however the response rate was low (24 responses) and so quantitative findings from this survey were not included in the evaluation.

### **Gender audit**

A gender audit was conducted in each school at the start and end of the pilot. This was designed to gather additional information on gender awareness and representation in the schools. The audit looked at language use, visual displays, whether pupils are organised by gender, materials, curriculum maps and school policies and included interviews with staff and Year 6 pupils. The audits were conducted by Lifting Limits staff members and a summary of the audit provided to the evaluator.

### **Qualitative interviews**

To gather qualitative data and add a layer of meaning and interpretation to the available quantitative data, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were also conducted with school staff, pupils and Lifting Limits staff:

- Interviews were conducted mid-way through the pilot with the five Gender Champions across the schools. These were designed to generate learning about how the pilot had been implemented in each school, the strengths and challenges in each school and perceptions of the impact of the pilot so far. These findings informed an interim evaluation report.
- Interviews were conducted at the end of the pilot year with 23 staff members across all five schools. These included interviews with the Head Teachers and Gender Champions at each school alongside interviews with a range of teachers and support staff. These interviews explored perceptions of the overall impact of the pilot in the schools and upon staff practice and perceptions of the strengths, challenges and impact of different elements of the pilot. Staff were selected by the Gender Champions to participate and were chosen to represent a range of year groups and roles.
- Interviews were conducted with 20 pupils (four pupils at each of the pilot schools). Pupils took part in paired interviews to encourage discussion among them. Interviews explore pupils' understanding of gender stereotyping, the activities they have done in school related to gender stereotyping and inequality and what they have learnt from



- them. Pupils were invited to take part by the Gender Champion. Most pupils (except for 2) were in year groups 4 – 6 (ages 8 - 11).
- Interviews were also conducted with project staff at the beginning, middle and end of the pilot to generate understanding of the pilot progression, to inform the research tools for the interviews with staff and pupils and to understand perceptions of strengths and challenges of the pilot over the year.

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted to draw out themes relating to the impact of the pilot as well as the strengths and challenges of the pilot to inform internal project development.

### **Data quality and limitations**

- Staff survey: The total number of staff across the schools is approximately 270. The response rate for the baseline survey is approximately 63% (n = 170) and the response rate for the post pilot survey is approximately 40% (n = 107). Participation was self-selecting to some extent depending on individual staff members' motivation, however the sample size is consistent with recommendations for the population size. Findings from the staff survey can be generalised to the whole staff base but caution is necessary when exploring breakdowns in the data by school or by staff role.
- Pupil survey: The response rate for the baseline survey is 74% (n = 1243) and 68% (n = 1150) for the post surveys based on an approximate total of 1680 pupils across four schools. These are high response rates and consistent with recommendations on sample sizes for the size of the population. Participation may include an element of selection bias as participation is dependent upon school staff having the motivation, capacity and support to be able to administer the surveys. Despite this, the high response rates suggest that these findings are generalisable up to the whole population of the four schools that participated in the survey.
- Statistical tests were run for some of the indicators to understand if differences in mean scores before and after the pilot are statistically significant. Results that were found to be statistically significant suggest that the changes in score were not likely to be a result of random chance. This data coupled with qualitative findings provides strong evidence to suggest likelihood that Lifting Limits interventions contributed to these changes.
- However, as with most social research, there exists a challenge around attribution, due to other existing variables that can also influence outcomes which means it is not possible to solely attribute the activity of the project to the changes for participants. Therefore, whilst there is strong evidence to show influence of Lifting Limits, it must be noted that it was not possible to test results in light of any additional variables which may have been present (such as the influence of messages from home) and claims made about impact must bear this in mind.
- Qualitative participants were invited by the Gender Champion to take part in interviews as this process was most practical. The sample therefore is influenced by the selection of the Gender Champion as well as self-selection by staff according to motivation and availability to participate. Findings from the qualitative data, therefore, are not representative of the whole staff and pupil base.



### 9.3 Appendix 3: Statistical tests tables

The tables below show the results of T-tests used to calculate the statistical significance of data where the answers are based on a 4 point scale.

1 = I don't agree at all, 2 = I don't really agree, 3 = I agree a bit, 4 = I agree a lot

	Pre mean	Post mean	p-value (significant at $p < 0.05$ )	Significant?
Nursing is a job for women	1.49	1.28	0.000016	Yes
Being the boss is a job for men	1.4	1.21	0.00008	Yes
Pink is for girls	1.5	1.22	0.00001	Yes
Lego is for boys	1.38	1.19	0.000024.	Yes

1 = I don't agree at all, 2 = I don't really agree, 3 = I agree a bit, 4 = I agree a lot

	Pre-mean	Post mean	p-value (significant at $p < 0.05$ )	Significant?
Boys and girls are naturally better at different things	2.19	1.93	0.026231.	Yes
It is more normal and natural for girls to play with dolls than boys	1.97	1.7	0.006758.	Yes
Boys will be boys	1.94	1.63	0.00562.	Yes

1 = Not at all confident, 2 = somewhat confident, 3 = confident, 4 = very confident

	Pre-mean	Post mean	p-value (significan t at $p < 0.05$ )	Significant ?
Identifying language which might be sexist	2.79	3.16	0.000284	Yes
Addressing sexist language with pupil	2.79	3.19	0.000229	Yes
Addressing sexual harassment and bullying among pupils	2.79	3.01	0.049663.	Yes
Explaining the difference between sex and gender to colleagues	2.45	2.86	0.000935	Yes
Addressing any sexist language you may hear from colleagues	2.49	2.69	0.070938	No
Explaining the impacts of gender stereotyping on children's lives/education to colleague	2.42	3.04	0.00001	Yes
Discussing issues relating to gender stereotyping and sexism	2.46	2.94	0.000056	Yes

with parents of a similar background to you				
Discussing issues related to gender stereotyping and sexism with parents of different religious and cultural backgrounds to you	2.08	2.49	0.001242	Yes

	Pre-mean	Post mean	p-value (significant at $p < 0.05$ )	Significant ?
I have the tools, resources and support I need to be able to address any sexism among pupils	2.85	3.1	0.001949	Yes
I actively look out for sexist language and behaviour among pupils	2.75	2.9	0.08825	No



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