

A Typology of School Cultures

Sinking – ineffective: norms of isolation, blame, self-reliance, and loss of faith powerfully inhibit improvement; staff unable to change; often in deprived areas where they blame parenting or unprepared children; need dramatic action and significant support.

Struggling – ineffective and they know it; expend considerable energy to improve; unproductive ‘thrashing about’; will ultimately succeed because **they have the will**, if not the skill; often identified as ‘failing’, which is demotivational.

Strolling – neither particularly effective nor ineffective; moving at inadequate rate to cope with pace of change; meandering into future to pupils’ detriment; ill-defined and sometimes conflicting aims inhibit improvement.

Cruising – appear to be effective; usually in more affluent areas; pupils achieve in spite of teaching quality; not preparing pupils for changing world; possess powerful norms that inhibit change.

Moving – boosting pupils’ progress and development; working together to respond to changing context; know where they’re going **and having the will and skill to get there**; possess norms of improving schools.

Norms of Improving Schools

- “We know where we are going.” (shared goals)
- “We must succeed.” (responsibility for success)
- “We’re working on this together.” (collegiality)
- “We can get better.” (continuous improvement)
- “Learning is for everyone.” (lifelong learning)
- “We learn by trying something new.” (risk taking)
- “There’s always someone there to help.” (support)
- “Everyone has something to offer.” (mutual respect)
- “We can discuss our differences.” (openness)
- “We feel good about ourselves.” (celebration and humour)