ONE VISION, MANY EYES

A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO

EMBEDDING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND

EVALUATION IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL

Submitted by David Walters to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree
of Doctor of Education (Generic Route)

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been
identified and that no material has been submitted and approved for the award
of a degree by this or any University.

ABSTRACT

The theoretical framework for this empirical study extends a trail of thinking from a social constructivist view of learning to the areas of assessment, evaluation and leadership. The relationship between social constructivist learning principles, formative approaches to assessment and evaluation, and collaborative leadership styles is explored and discussed. Learning and teaching developments in secondary schools have often fragmented the intrinsic elements of learning, teaching, assessment, evaluation and leadership. As Palmer (2007) so aptly puts it: *'...we think the world apart.'* (p. 64). This study seeks to 'think education together' by taking a more integrated perspective.

The aims of this study were to add to the body of knowledge in the area of assessment and evaluation through the adoption of the aforementioned integrated perspective, develop formative assessment and evaluation policies and practices in a secondary school to the extent that they are embedded in the school's working culture and paradigm, and finally to chart the means by which change has been achieved.

The research is argued to be located in the critical paradigm, adopts an action research methodology in which the researcher assumes a participatory, practitioner researcher role in conducting an ethnographic case study of a secondary school. A social constructivist theme was retained throughout the research design and although both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered, the study was conducted within an interpretative framework informed by symbolic interactionism.

Data were gathered via a multi-method approach that included focus groups and semi-structured interviews, observation and accompanying field notes, document and classroom artefact analysis, and non-inferential statistics. Focus groups were used to check data sources, confirm interpretations, develop and disseminate new ideas and approaches, and refine developments based on feedback received. This process was informed by Gladwell's (2000) notion of ideas taking on the qualities of viruses which in turn develop into epidemics.

Participants' early reluctance to accept a need to change was overcome through an initial 'internal' audit of current policy and practice relating to learning, teaching, assessment and evaluation, the results of which confirmed the 'external' judgements made by OfSTED and the Local Authority (LA) in terms of the need for the school to develop formative approaches to assessment and evaluation.

A purposively selected assessment and evaluation focus group showed a commitment to formative ways of working, and was instrumental in defining and refining new policies for assessment and evaluation in collaboration with other focus groups, non-focus group colleagues, pupils and parents. Additional focus groups for pupil behavioural aspects and mentoring were embraced by the research rather than discouraged in order to retain an integrated 'real world' perspective.

The aims of the study are shown to have been met in that new formative ways of working are now embedded in assessment policy and practice and the researcher has developed a new approach to whole school leadership. This study proposes a new way of thinking that embraces paradox rather than preserving divisions. Moreover, it argues a case for transformative education being reliant on taking this stance. The study also presents a picture of leadership and research based on co-existence and proposes a new 'Stenhousian' philosophy where research becomes the basis for leadership.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

(a) The Problem - 'Who Killed the Thought-Fox?'

My research centres on the areas of formative assessment and evaluation in a secondary school. It has a number of dimensions. Research and literature has built up in these areas over recent years supporting strongly the *formative* use of both assessment and evaluation in the light of the learning benefits to be gained from such a focus (Black *et al* 2003, Clarke 2005, Black and Wiliam 2006, Harlen 2006, James *et al* 2006, Mansell 2007). Alongside this we are increasingly seeing at a macro-political level Government and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) support for the formative assessment practice known as 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) (Daugherty and Ecclestone 2006, Gilbert 2006). Ecclestone and Pryor (2003), with reference to assessment in schools, comment *'We would suggest that there is considerable scope for further research in this area'* (p. 485). Despite all of this, evidence suggests that formative assessment and corresponding formative evaluative practices are not embedded in the working culture of many schools at the micro-political level (Black *et al* 2003).

A pattern of working practices has emerged in the school in which I work where formative assessment and evaluation are limited in their usage and impact. This very issue has been strongly raised by two consecutive Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) reports (2002 and 2007), OfSTED subject review (2006), school self-evaluation findings (2007), Local Authority Review (2007), and Performance Management Reviews (2007) relating to the school. This, aligned to a three year trend of stasis and apparent plateau in terms of student attainment and progress, means that to *not* focus on the embedding of formative assessment and evaluation in the school would border on the negligent. I qualify this statement by measuring it against my own research philosophy and that of the EdD programme, both of which stress the practical application of research.

The stimulus for the research questions that follow stem from a poem written by a colleague (Maurice)[1] recently. In it he paints a picture of a working environment where mandated measures and accountability generated by policy makers, detached from the local context, restrict the thinking and subsequent learning of pupils and teachers alike. In my experience, Maurice has often been the *'voice'* of the school where the views of staff are expressed through the points he makes. Whilst leaders at all levels in my school struggle to encapsulate their current situation by their commentary in the school self-evaluation forms (SEFs), Maurice has given me a line of investigation and a question to pursue through a poem:

Who Killed the Thought-Fox?

Perhaps it is the decline of winter
as a season – and I imagine now
the paw-prints at their best in a
Christmas snow – but it is more
than this: a cruel warmth
melts the habitat, and freedom to
roam has been curtailed by trips and
traps set by new hunters who know
no better. If this is acceptable
then anything else that could be
imagined to the full might as well
die too, and the murderers can come
running with their measuring tapes
sizing up this final kill.
(Maurice)

I analyse this poem and others as part of the data analysis section of the thesis, but for now it serves to stimulate other questions of a research based nature.

The Nature of My Research Questions

I have chosen to approach the research questions by classifying them under three 'orders'. 'First Order' questions are those relating to establishing clear policy and practices for assessment. This initially requires the establishment of a common language for assessment, recording, reporting and marking. From here the specific research questions requiring shared and agreed answers from the research participants are:

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[1] 'Maurice' and all other names in my thesis are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants.

(i)   Why assess, record, report and mark pupils' work? For what purpose?

(ii)   What is to be assessed, recorded, reported and marked?

(iii) How will assessment, recording, reporting and marking be undertaken?

(iv) When will assessment, recording, reporting and marking be undertaken?

(v)   What are the barriers to successful assessment, recording, reporting and marking?

'Second Order' questions are those relating to the establishment of clear policy and practices for the evaluation of learning and teaching. Again, a common language relating to this area is established and specific research questions here are:

(i)   Why evaluate, record, report and mark pupils' work? For what purpose?

(ii)   What is to be evaluated, recorded, reported and marked?

(iii) How will evaluation, recording, reporting and marking be undertaken?

(iv) When will evaluation, recording, reporting and marking be undertaken?

(v)   What are the barriers to successful evaluation, recording, reporting and marking?

The first and second order questions are placed in the context of current, preferred and required policy and practice as the data unfolds, and this yields new policies and practice as required. This allows me to examine the extent to which the current, preferred and required school culture and associated paradigm match and whether the issue is one of a *change* of culture or merely a *recognition* of culture. The 'Third Order' question relates to the *process* of embedding, namely, how effective is a focus group as a research method and mechanism for embedding through dissemination and driving the principles, policies and practices generated by the answers to the first and second order questions? Through a focus on process, the third order question is concerned with leadership and change.

Aims

My primary aim is for my thesis to add to the body of knowledge regarding assessment and evaluation in education. The 'Gilbert Report' (2006), in its setting out of the vision for teaching and learning in 2020, has been an influence on my choice of research area in this respect. With reference to assessment that promotes learning, the report states:

> *We recommend that:*
>
> • *the government should take further action to ensure that assessment for learning is embedded in all schools and classrooms so that its benefits are fully realised*
> • *schools should identify their own strategies for embedding assessment for learning, reporting regularly to governing bodies on their implementation and effectiveness.*
>   (p. 43)

I strongly believe that this research project provides *a* strategy, and adds to the body of knowledge in the areas of assessment and evaluation, by facing up to the very real micro *and* macro political problem of ensuring that the use of assessment in the classroom, together with its use for evaluative or effectiveness measuring purposes, is such that it develops the learning of children, teachers and schools.

The second aim is that my research serves a *product* function by developing assessment and evaluation policy and practice to the extent that it is embedded in the culture and associated paradigm of the school. The third aim is that the research serves a *process* function by charting the means by which change has been disseminated and ultimately embedded. This not only reflects an *approach* to leadership but it also enables me to develop professionally as a senior leader. Underlying my third aim is my concern to breathe life back into the 'Thought-Fox' through the empowerment and emancipation of colleagues who feel trapped by policies, systems and practices they clearly do not believe in.

Finally, the thesis produced stands as a record of the school's development journey and provide 'stand-alone' evidence of the strategies adopted and their impact. It will therefore provide an internal professional development record for others to reflect on in terms of their own practice and also serve as an external accountability record for agencies like OfSTED.

(b) The Researcher and Views Shaping the Research

I feel that it is important to retain a high level of transparency throughout the research project and that my own biography and the views I have acquired 'along the way' needs to be explicit from the outset.

(i) Biography

I grew up in a mining village in the Midlands. All men in my family, father, grandfathers, cousins and uncles worked at or down the mine and the same pattern had been in place for generations. I went to a local comprehensive school and my 'O' level year coincided with Margaret Thatcher's final nail in the mining industry's coffin. For years employment had been guaranteed for a young man leaving school with family already employed at the mine. With Thatcher came instability and my thoughts turned to escape. Escape at that time went hand in hand with education. With exam grades, came alternatives and hope. Failure was *yours* and not the school's.

Motivation played a huge part in the lives of the children I went to school with. Most did not have it because their future was mapped out for them via the industry their family had been locked into. Those who were motivated, either to achieve or to avoid failure, had to run the gauntlet and try to avoid being seen as unusual, as playgrounds were not tolerant places. I set my sights on becoming a PE teacher as I loved sport and it was not seen as academic by my peers. It meant I could remain 'one of the lads' and still stand a chance of escape. I was successful with my 'O' levels, but the teachers were new to the teaching of 'A' levels and many of them became reluctant deliverers of lessons, and it showed. I came out with one 'A' level in English Literature – not enough to get me to the teacher training establishment of my choice. Failure hit me hard because I desperately wanted to get off the path my family had followed for

generations. My father said he was willing to give me one last chance to try for the grades at a city technical college but that if I failed then that would be an end to it. I passed an 'A' level in Maths and secured a place on my chosen BEd course.

I had never met anyone from a public school before, and being at university with people from a diverse range of educational backgrounds made me realise that for the first time in all our lives we were all going to share the same educational experiences and opportunities. There would be no excuses here for failure. My motivation and drive became stronger and stronger and it was definitely an eclectic mixture of a need to achieve and a desperate need to avoid failure. More importantly, I had developed a deep rooted thirst for knowledge fostered by inspirational lecturers like Ted Wragg, Richard Pring and Charles Desforges. This thirst for knowledge and the need to examine education critically, engrained in the ethos of the Exeter education degree course, has taken its grip periodically throughout my life since graduating with a newly titled BA (Ed) Hons. degree in the late eighties. In 1995 I gained an MPhil. in education from Exeter University, in 2003 I gained the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and I now find myself on the EdD programme at Exeter University.

My teaching career has always been in the state system and I have no desire to leave it. I began my career in the West Midlands in a 13 – 18 high school just as the 'tick box' approach to the National Curriculum took hold. I resigned after three years to return to Devon so that I could embark on my Masters studies and take up a post at a secondary school in South Devon. I found myself working with a newly appointed young Headteacher who set about the huge task of improving a school that would today have been judged to be failing. Over a period of seven years or so, I was part of that journey which culminated in the school growing from an 11 – 16 comprehensive with 600 pupils on roll, to a highly successful 11 - 18 specialist sports college with 1500 students.

My current school is probably best described as one which is desperately trying to hang on to the sound educational principles of the pre-1988 era. It is a 'satisfactory' place according to OfSTED but works hard to find an educational and sensible response to government policies and always endeavours to put the needs of the

children first. It is a frustrated institution, as the poem *'Who Killed the Thought-Fox?'* indicates. Talking to colleagues, it becomes clear that the frustration is born out of the conflict between their beliefs and values and those of the education policy makers. As one person commented recently: *'If only they (the Government) would ask the people who actually work in schools before coming up with yet another bright idea to make the job more difficult!' (Barry).* Another commented: *'What is the point of trying to innovate when they (the Government) just tell us what to do? No wonder people don't want to think any more' (Pat).*

(ii) Views Shaping the Research

The views shaping my research have their origins in my experiences as a pupil, student, teacher and leader. More recently these views have been influenced by my reading as part of the EdD programme. Indeed I would describe the EdD influences as sources of *inspiration.*

My views about educational research have been greatly influenced by Carr and Kemmis (1986), Biesta and Burbules (2003), Pring (2004), and Wragg (2005) in that I believe that it should hold onto pragmatic principles that fully utilize the experiences of those involved. It should lead to action, involve multi-methods and common sense should prevail over abstract detached data. It may sound obvious but I feel strongly that educational research should have a clear focus on learning and teaching. In other words it should develop and improve these fundamental aspects of education. If educational research does not achieve this then I can see little point in undertaking it.

The work of Dewey (1933, 1938), Piaget (1950), Bruner (1977), Vygotsky (1978), Popper (1999) and Illeris (2003) has reinforced my experiences of the learning and teaching process. I believe that learners come to the learning situation with prior experiences that need to be built upon through the skilful creation of learning opportunities by the teacher. This may take the form of scaffolding learning or helping the learner move from their 'comfort zone' towards taking on more challenging problems. Allowing the learner time for reflection is vital. Rushing through content is always at the expense of learning. Learning is a social process but it also involves a rich and complex interplay between cognitive, emotional and

environmental factors. Good teaching results in good learning. A poor teacher can destroy the learning of the children they teach. Poor parental support may well have the same effect.

Although assessment and evaluation have a close relationship, this closeness often distorts their unique qualities. There is still a need to clarify the terminology and get a common working definition of each to enable schools to develop both aspects in a way that supports learning. It is also important for schools to fully understand how failings in assessment processes might impact upon the evaluation of the school and vice versa. My thinking in assessment and evaluation practices has been greatly influenced by Black and Wiliam (1998), Wragg (2001), Black *et al* (2002), Gardner (2006) and Mansell (2007). I firmly believe that any assessment and evaluation policies and practices should be fundamentally formative in that they directly promote learning. I also believe that summative assessments should also be used formatively.

With what Mansell (2007) refers to as *'hyper-accountability'* (p. 3), we have a situation in schools now where teachers are working harder than the pupils in a bid to protect or enhance their positions in league tables and other summative measures. Despite overwhelming evidence in support of formative practices, summative aspects of assessment and evaluation still dominate. Many of the pupils I work with have become noticeably demotivated and their failure is often seen as the school's problem. My colleagues are quick to raise this issue during meetings relating to pupil attainment and achievement. Assessment and its use for accountability purposes are viewed by my colleagues as the cause of this phenomenon. It would be easy to give up under the pressure of this situation but I still feel that there is room to develop and embed formative policies and practices in schools. It is a cultural issue at a micro-political level, I would argue.

From a leadership and management perspective, my views have been influenced by Ackoff (1999), Schon (1971), Argyris and Schon (1996), Kuhn (1996), Gladwell (2000), Fullan (2001, 2003, 2005), Goleman (2002) and Coffield *et al* (2007). Like these authors, I am sceptical of the 'Superhead' model of leadership in that my own experience of this style has often resulted in superficial and temporary improvements in practice, even if this is not perceived by the leader. Also in common with these

authors, I believe that small groups of committed thinkers can create cultural responses to externally imposed or internally generated 'tipping points' (whether they be policies or systems) that identify current working cultures and also act as stimuli for cultural change where required. These small groups, through their 'local knowledge' and influence, can generate ideas, disseminate them and create an epidemic within an institution so that ideas become part of the working culture – they become embedded in practice.

The skills required of a leader adopting this style include knowledge of their people so that the thinkers can be blended together, a willingness to stand back and allow ideas to evolve, humility to change one's views in the face of emerging evidence and the ability to co-ordinate the spread of ideas so that coherence is maintained. It must also be said that leaders must be prepared for an initial stage of instability, confusion and associated 'dip' in performance when new ways of working are initiated. There is a need, therefore, to maintain focus, adapt when required and hold one's nerve. Charisma, it seems to me, often equates to didactic control and undermines such qualities. The use of focus groups not only adheres to this philosophy from a research method perspective, it also fits into this template for leadership.

The Context

To some extent the poem 'Who Killed the Thought-Fox?' has prepared the ground for the context of my research. This poem, allied to comments made by my colleagues, indicates there is an air of frustration, desolation and resignation in the school in which I work. I have often spoken to my wife about what I perceive as the restrictions placed on my fellow teachers. She has been my 'sounding board' since I began the EdD programme. My wife has recently been reading a novel by Brown (2001) called 'Angels and Demons' and gave me a passage to read. She felt it summed up what I had been saying for the last two years or more:

> *Science may have alleviated the miseries of disease and drudgery and provided an array of gadgetry for our entertainment and convenience, but it has left us in a world without wonder. Our sunsets have been reduced to wavelengths and frequencies. The complexities of the universe have been shredded into mathematical equations. Even our self-worth as human beings has been*

destroyed. Science proclaims that Planet Earth and its inhabitants are a meaningless speck in the grand scheme. A cosmic accident…Even the technology that promises to unite us, divides us. Each of us is now electronically connected to the globe, and yet we feel utterly alone. We are bombarded with violence, division, fracture and betrayal. Scepticism has become a virtue. Cynicism and demand for proof has become enlightened thought. Is it any wonder that humans now feel more depressed and defeated than they have at any point in human history? Does science hold anything sacred? Science looks for answers by probing our unborn foetuses. Science even presumes to rearrange our own DNA. It shatters God's world into smaller and smaller pieces in a quest of meaning…and all it finds is more questions.
(p. 419 – 420)

Education, at a macro and micro-political level, may seem to be locked into a scientific paradigm where statistics and measurement dictate who succeeds and who fails. This, I feel, is a rather myopic and jaundiced view of the sciences. To remain positive, one has to look more broadly at our *usage* of what we perceive as 'scientific' measuring instruments and the data they yield. If I can make a small empowering and emancipatory contribution to the body of research in terms of this, then my efforts will be worthwhile.

(c) The Approach

Part 1 looks at the literature and research in the areas of learning, teaching, assessment, evaluation, leadership and change. My personal commentary is included, where appropriate, to allow transparency in terms of beliefs and values. In Part 2, I discuss the practical implications springing from the literature and research in order to show how it informed my chosen methodology. Part 3 builds up a methodological stance commensurate with the literature and research and 'fixes' it within the context of my research project. It ends with an explanation and justification of the style of writing used to report the research process and outcomes. In Part 4 the research journey is traced, looking at processes undertaken together with the outcomes created. Part 5 is a reflection on the key processes and outcomes and how they relate to the literature and research in Part 1. It also takes a critical view of the research project and identifies the next steps in the school's evolutionary journey.

PART 1

Literature Review – What the Theory Suggests

Part 1   Literature Review - What the Theory Suggests

(a) Learning and Teaching

I propose that assessment and evaluation policy and practice reflect an intended or unintended learning paradigm. By approaching assessment and evaluation in a particular way, certain values and beliefs about learning become associated. By sketching out some of the popular notions about learning and then subsequently relating them to assessment and evaluation policy and practice, one can begin to align these areas and identify associations, contradictions and potential areas in need of development. If I am truly concerned with learning, then the threads and bonds that assessment and evaluation have with it need to be explicit. It, too, follows that if the enhancement of learning and teaching is pivotal to the research project, in that *formative* assessment and evaluation by definition have this as their primary aim, then to be successful one has to examine the principles that underpin effective learning and teaching to reaffirm this. In this way I believe that learning, assessment and evaluation should become synonymous. If the reality is that they are not, then we have a stimulus for debate and change.

My concern is that learning, teaching, assessment and evaluation have become disconnected. The poem 'Who Killed the Thought-Fox?' suggests that learning has become a victim of educational policy and practice at a school level. This phenomenon is illustrated by Illeris (2003):

> *Politicians, administrators, and managers seem at length to have realised that while what they grant money for is teaching, what they actually want to buy is learning, and that there is no connection between the two.* (p. 396)

These criticisms and those of my colleagues tend towards a perception that a total focus on outcomes undermines learning. It sadly reflects some of the long-standing practices in schools across the country as I will illustrate in subsequent sections. Illeris (2003) poses some crucial questions about learning that act as stimuli for re-orientating one's thinking:

> *What is learning? How does it come about? How can it be promoted? Why does teaching not always result in learning?* (p. 397)

Close examination of these questions through the exploration of some views of learning will, I feel, yield some useful insights into the relationship between learning, teaching, assessment and evaluation. I have chosen to explore some views of learning under the perspectives of behaviourism, cognitivism, humanism, social interactionism and social constructivism as outlined by Williams and Burden (1997). By doing this I hope to establish the characteristics of these perspectives that can then be traced not only through assessment and evaluation policy and practice, but also the research methodology in Part 3 of the thesis.

Behaviourism

Aspects of behaviourism are identifiable in the traditional view of learning as summarised neatly by Watts (1984) with respect to the teaching of science. This is illustrated below in Fig. 1:

Fig. 1

Raw Novice Pupils

+

Correct Science Concepts

+

Good Clear Teaching

↓

Correctly Learnt Concepts
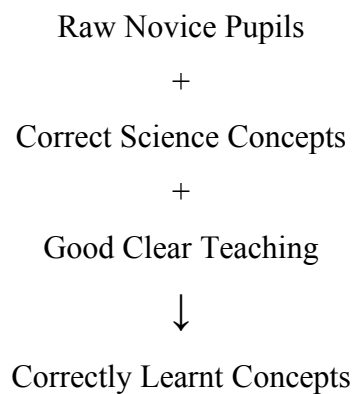
(Watts 1984, p. 5)

Behaviourist characteristics where tasks and information are presented to the learner by way of a *stimulus* to which the learner subsequently *responds* (Williams and Burden 1997) are characteristics of Watts' (1984) traditional representation. The neat and apparent formulaic structure of this model could be judged as undermining the complexity of the learning process by seeing the learner as a passive 'sponge' to pour

taught concepts into in order to saturate it with the knowledge, skills and understanding required. It might also be seen to assume that reception follows transmission as an automatic right of passage. Just as a measure of length only has one dimension, so too would this linear arrangement. The interaction, if one is to accept this interpretation, is in one dimension only, from teacher to pupil. Both Watts (1984) and Illeris (2003) argue that learning is far more complex than this: *'Learning can no longer be conceived as merely the acquisition of a syllabus or curriculum'* (Illeris, 2003, p. 397). Despite this, it is a common occurrence for me to witness this view of learning through the teaching approaches adopted by some of the staff I work with. Indeed, it has become a 'safe' mode of working when OfSTED or some other evaluative process invades the classroom.

Desforges (2000) suggests that it is the complexity of the learning process, the skills required of the learner and the required teaching response that results in this approach to teaching. He states that *'The fact is that we have not yet a clue how to teach any of these – hence we perseverate; like the ever nagging teacher we repeatedly do what we know does not work'* (p. 23). If this traditional view of learning and associated teaching does not work in the sense that transmission does not always lead to reception, and we accept this, then what are the alternatives? This is the question one needs to ask to move out of a pattern of working that we know is ineffective. To not explore this question inevitably means that we maintain our ineffectiveness rather than develop our children's learning and improve our own practice. To pursue this question means closer scrutiny of the learning process and how knowledge in particular is developed. It thus follows that if we understand how children learn, we can begin to teach them how to learn.

Cognitivism

From a cognitive perspective, Rumelhart and Norman (1978) present a constructivist view of learning in direct contrast to the passive traditional model. This view of learning is illustrated in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2

Learning

|

Accretion ——————— Restructuring ——————— Schema Tuning

|

Schema creation
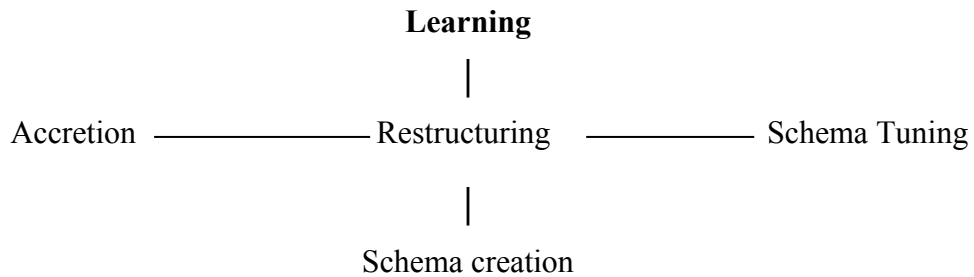
(Adapted from Rumelhart and Norman, 1978, p. 51)

Central to this is the part played by schema, consisting of organised sets of experiences, and it goes beyond the memory and information processing body of cognitive psychology as described by Williams and Burden (1997). As we acquire new information (accretion), build up new experiences and add to our schema, we naturally go through an active process as we endeavour to match new experiences with our existing ones. The result is that we undergo a process of restructuring, reorganising and reviewing. By using our learning and applying it, we begin to 'tune' our responses so that they become more accurate and effective. This active process sees knowledge as something that is not passed on but is actually added to through the active construction of meaning by the individual. Williams and Burden (1997) stress that *'One of the enduring aspects of Piaget's work has been his emphasis upon the constructive nature of the learning process'* (p. 21). In this sense, Fig. 2 may be viewed as neo Piagetian. Progress may be seen to take place by adding to existing perceptions and understandings. Bereiter and Scardamalia (2005) provide a useful analogy in this respect:

> *What comes to the silversmith's workbench is silver and what leaves it is still silver, but it is worth more than it was before. The silversmith's work has **added value** to the silver. Similarly, what comes to the knowledge worker's desk is knowledge and what leaves it is also knowledge, but the knowledge worker has done something to add value to it.* (p. 7)

The adding of value to knowledge and the creation of *meaning* through an active learning process is reflected in the work of Piaget (1970), Bruner (1977, 1990) and Popper (1999).

Whilst a constructivist stance extends the view of learning beyond the characteristics described under the behaviourist perspective, it is the absence of emotional and environmental factors that make associated models like Rumelhart and Norman's (1978) incomplete. Illeris (2003) refers to the two processes of learning as '*...an external interaction process between the learner and his or her social, cultural or material environment, and an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration*' (p. 398). It is clear that, whilst both the external and internal processes may be studied separately, it is their interaction that needs to be explored if we are to get closer to a more thorough understanding of learning and teaching, a view supported by Desforges (2000). With this in mind, a more integrated model of learning emerges as outlined by Illeris (2003) in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3

COGNITION   acquisition   EMOTION

INDIVIDUAL

Inter | action

ENVIRONMENT

(Illeris, 2003, p. 399)
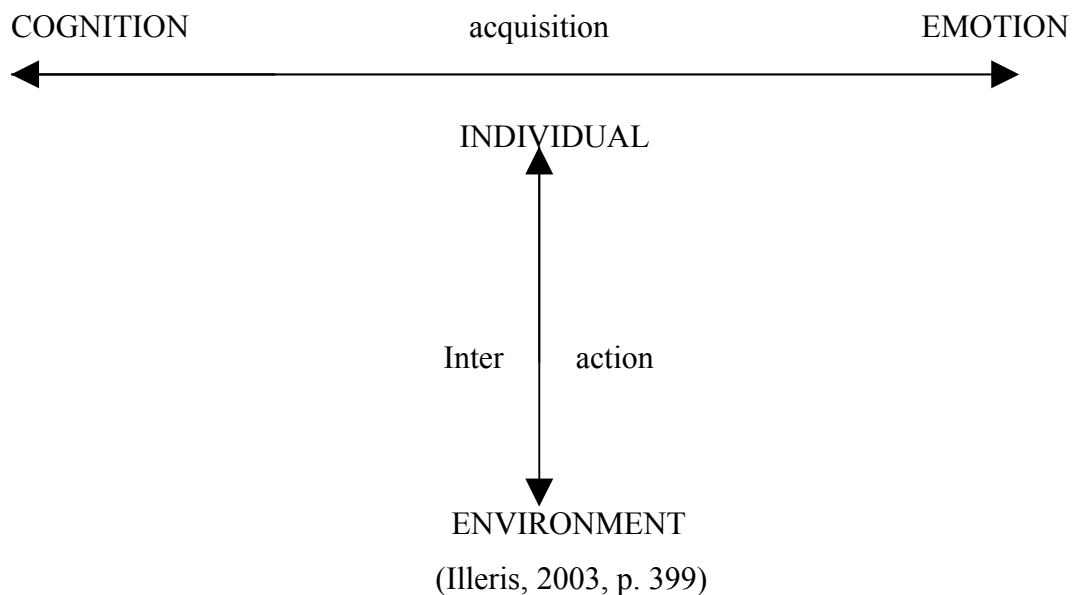
Humanism

Fig. 3 sees the individual involved in a learning process that indeed has a cognitive dimension but also an emotional and environmental strand. These factors are therefore

seen as interacting to enable learning to take place. Williams and Burden (1997) align this emotional element to humanistic approaches to learning that *'...emphasise the importance of the inner world of the learner and place the individual's thoughts, feelings and emotions at the forefront of all human development'* (p. 30). The part played by emotional factors is stressed by Weare (2004) with reference to emotional literacy and emotional intelligence together with a need to understand social situations and relationships. These points are further illustrated by Kagan (2007) who cites the complexity of the emotional experience based on the interplay of one's temperament and social circumstances. The DfES (2005d) refers to the fundamental social and emotional factors as *'...self awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy, social skills'* (p. 6) which have been based on the work of Goleman (1995).

The humanistic association of the world of the individual (particularly the emotional influences) and learning seems to me to be obvious but occasionally forgotten. I recently had to deal with my son's clear distress relating to a class move that had been conducted on the basis of a detached rescheduling exercise in the absence of dialogue between my son, his teacher and me. The emotional damage caused by feelings of failure, lack of reward and the sheer lack of appreciation of the individual, almost resulted in the destruction of a significant amount of my son's incentive to learn and develop. To me, it seems critical that the 'human factor' is preserved as a priority in all aspects of learning and education. Learning goes beyond individual existence, however, as I shall explore next.

Social Interactionism

Williams and Burden (1997) provide a pragmatic rationale for social interactionism and propose: *'For social interactionists, children are born into a social world, and learning occurs through social interaction with other people'* (p. 39). Dewey (1938) makes clear his belief in the value of creating productive social environments so that the social aspects of learning can be utilised.

The advocates of the importance of social interaction in the learning process also include Vygotsky and Feuerstein (Williams and Burden 1997). Dewey (1938) sees

social aspects of learning as part of the 'environment' along with elements of a more physical nature and with reference to teachers states:

> *Above all they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worth while.* (p. 40)

Thus, with reference to the model proposed by Illeris (2003) illustrated in Fig. 3, social and physical elements become sub-divisions of the environment. Fig. 3 may be refined to more explicitly show this, as outlined in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4

COGNITION   acquisition   EMOTION

          ◄─────────────────────────►

INDIVIDUAL

Inter | action

PHYSICAL   ◄──────── ENVIRONMENT ────────►   SOCIAL
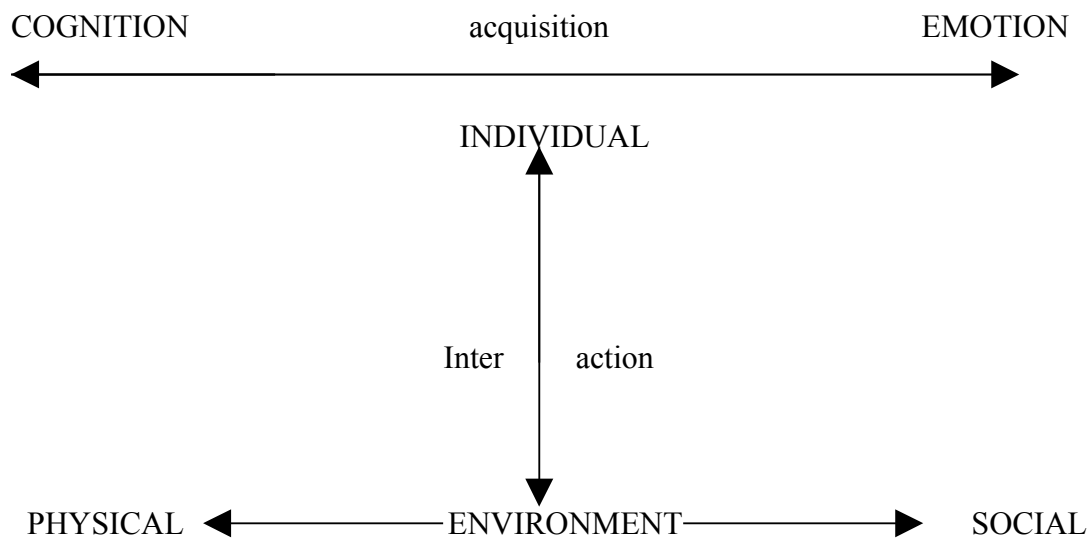
One also has to appreciate that when talking of one's environment, one has to be clear about whether we are referring to the 'here and now' current environment or the more stable 'everyday' home environment. The quality of latter has been clearly linked to success or failure of learning (Desforges, 2003). Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) refer to the 'Coleman Report' (1966) in the USA and the 'Plowden Report' (1967) in the UK in this respect.

To interpret these propositions as meaning that schools don't really matter would be to miss the point, I feel. Taking this stance would certainly be de-motivating for the teaching profession. A more realistic view, I suggest, is that success in the pursuit of learning relies not on schools and families working in isolation or in ignorance of the key parts they play in education. Instead, schools and families need to work in a

collaborative way that reinforces and reflects the responsibilities they have in relation to children's development.

Social Constructivism

Thus, if all who are involved in learning have an understanding that cognitive, emotional, social and environmental dimensions influence learning, then improvements to the learning experience can be undertaken by close examination of the quality of each dimension. Fig. 4 not only reflects these dimensions but also fits largely into the description of social constructivism favoured by Williams and Burden (1997) which has the dynamic interplay of learner(s), teacher, task(s) and context at its core.

Although Williams and Burden (1997) outline these general characteristics of social constructivist learning principles, a more nuanced understanding of the various 'branches' and the contested nature of associated terminology provides a clearer picture. Gergen and Gergen (2008) use the term *'.....social constructionist'* (p. 160) as distinct from social *constructivist* in order to stress the importance of human relationships in the former. Other authors (Cobb, 1994; Sfard, 1998; Shepard, 2000; James, 2006) see social constructivist theories of learning as a fusion of active meaning making and socially supported interactions – a joining of sociocultural and constructivist principles. Indeed Cobb (1994) suggests that constructivist and sociocultural perspectives are complimentary active processes with sociocultural aspects informing theories of the *conditions* for learning and constructivist aspects underpinning the *process* by which learning takes place. In short, a social constructivist view of learning, based on this discussion, removes the *forced* choice between sociocultural and constructivist perspectives in favour of a fluid interaction of both. This interaction tends to view learning as a process of individual construction *and* a process of enculturation into the practices of a wider community or society.

On a practical level, teaching becomes more about promoting learning by enabling the learner to access new information and concepts, apply them to varying situations to develop schemata and then refine responses through continued practice and usage. Group work, reciprocal teaching approaches and discussion work allied to sensitive

feedback about pupils' work may thus be utilised. A stimulating learning environment, where a range of resources spanning visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and ICT, can also enhance the learning environment. It also follows that learning should result in the development of what Goleman (1995) calls *'emotional intelligence'* (p. 34) and what Goleman (2006) calls *'social intelligence'* (p. 82).

When I explain to teachers how this actually works in the classroom, I often refer to 3D teaching as it reflects the 3D model of learning involving cognitive, emotional, social and environmental factors. The first dimension of teaching in the classroom is the line of communication from the teacher to the pupil. Clear explanations are fundamental to securing effective learning. Williams and Burden (1997) refer to Feuerstein's theory of *mediation* in this respect. In essence, mediating adults (at first parents, then the teacher, but also other perceived figures of importance) explain, intervene and encourage in order that learning is developed. The second dimension is the line of communication from the pupil to the teacher. Pupils need to feel able to ask the teacher questions and make their points clear. The third dimension is the line of communication between pupils. Sharing ideas, exchanging opinions, and discussing the quality of work produced are part of the social process that underpins effective learning.

Although the teacher by role is clearly able to guide learning (Dewey, 1938), other pupils may also be able to adopt a teaching role (Vygotsky, 1978). Much of what I have discussed, in terms of teaching, in this section could be said to reflect *techniques* that reflect an adherence to social constructivist ideology. I am aware of and share Palmer's (2007) view with reference to this as, however *'...good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher'* (p. 10). Palmer (2007) goes on to assert that *'Technique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives...'* (p. 6). Whilst techniques like 3D teaching and those that provide students with opportunities to share ideas, exchange opinions and discuss the quality of their work reflect my preferred social constructivist view of learning, I am also aware of the importance of the teacher as a *person* in this respect. I have experienced some outstanding teaching and learned a great deal from inspirational teachers who have adopted a 'lecture' technique. On the face of it, this would appear

to be contrary to social constructivist principles. However, it is the qualities of the *teacher* in this respect, rather than their techniques, that reflect social constructivism. As far as my research is concerned, I must retain a sense of realism. Whilst I may be able to influence teaching through the development of shared *techniques* underpinned by a social constructivist view of learning, the extent to which I can enable the *real teacher* to show up (Palmer 2007) may prove to be beyond the scope of my research.

Having identified some of the fundamental dimensions and factors that impact upon learning and teaching, the extent to which assessment and evaluation processes foster the development of learning and teaching now needs to be explored.

To Summarise

I have endeavoured to build up a picture of learning through the progressive development of behaviourist, cognitivist, humanist and social interactionist ideology to arrive at a view of learning that integrates the learner, teacher and context. This social constructivist view of learning, as illustrated in Fig. 4, will form the backdrop to the examination of assessment and evaluation policy and practice. By doing so I aim to create a synthesis of learning, teaching, assessment and evaluation that has a shared paradigmatic foundation. In addition to this I aim to align my research methodology with this paradigm in order to maintain consistency with my own learning.

(b) Assessment

Defining the term 'assessment' is the first step towards understanding how assessment might contribute to learning. Gipps and Stobart (1993) approach a definition from the perspective of what assessment *involves*:

> *We are using 'assessment' as a global term incorporating tests and examinations (whether oral, written or practical) and any other method of measuring pupils' learning.* (p. vii).

I am far more comfortable with my understanding of 'assessment' when I consider what the fundamental *purpose* of assessment is. In other words, identifying the

purpose defines the term. Desforges (1989) offers a clear, single purpose and states *'It is generally held that one of the main purposes of assessment is to provide information to help people make decisions'* (p. 3). I would take this term back a stage and simply define assessment as merely making a *judgment* from which decisions are then made. Harlen (2006) links judgments and decision making to create a definition of assessment that is clear in its simplicity but is comprehensive enough to avoid confusion when applying the term. With reference to this Harlen (2006) proposes:

> *It is generally agreed that assessment in the context of education involves deciding, collecting and making judgments about evidence relating to the goals of the learning being assessed.* (p. 103)

Often, the judgments and subsequent decisions are formulated from a variety of sources including testing (at Key Stages), informal questioning, examinations and coursework (Wragg 2001). McCallum *et al* (1995), outline different characteristics of teachers in addition to the differing *sources* of assessment evidence. In doing so, they describe three models of teacher. The first they call 'Intuitives' who *'...object to the imposed system of national assessment as a disruption to intuitive ways of working'* (p. 63).

Next, they refer to 'Evidence Gatherers':

> *The teachers in this group do not often plan assessment activities, but rely on assessment 'opportunities' to arise within their normal classroom teaching.* (p. 68)

On a practical level this would mean the teacher attempting to match the tasks set to the National Curriculum or exam board learning objectives once the activity has taken place. Finally, the authors refer to *'Systematic Planners'* (p. 78) who consciously devote some part of the school week to assessment and future planning. A worrying aspect of this last mode is that McCallum *et al* (1995) align it to a body of teachers who 'distil' attainment from attitudinal, contextual and biographical variables. This would undermine the social constructivist model of learning characterised in Fig. 4.

The overall point here is that we can gather and be gatherers of sources of evidence that can be used for assessment in a variety of ways. It is important to be clear that

how we use these sources of evidence defines what we are actually engaged in. If we are using the evidence to improve pupil achievement directly then we are indeed undertaking assessment. If, on the other hand, we are using evidence to make a judgment about how effective a school is or the extent to which policies have had an impact, then we are undertaking some form of evaluative work. Gipps and Stobart (1993) also support the linkage of assessment to pupil achievement and evaluation to school effectiveness/improvement. This linkage will be explored further when examining evaluation processes. Since the enhancement of pupil learning is pivotal to the research project, the linkage of assessment and learning needs to be explored.

Learning and Assessment

The linkage of assessment and learning is often cited. The Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) Report (1987) places great emphasis on the supposed linkage and states that *'Promoting children's learning is a principle aim of schools. Assessment lies at the heart of this process.'* (para. 3). Since the TGAT Report (1987) was instrumental in the design of what we now know as the National Curriculum, it is not surprising to find that assessment takes on a significant role in the lives of pupils, teachers and schools as a whole. Tierney (2006) illustrates a more recent support for the linkage of assessment to learning and states: *'The use of classroom assessment to promote student learning is strongly supported by current educational research'* (p. 239).

However, to assume that assessment and learning are intrinsically linked is, I feel, misguided. James (2006) makes this point very clear:

> *The alignment of assessment with learning, teaching and content knowledge is a basis for claims for the validity of assessments, but the relationship is not straightforward and cannot be taken for granted.* (p. 47)

Further to this, James (2006) makes the point that although there have been significant developments in our understanding of the learning process, developments in assessment practice have not evolved to the same degree. Wragg (2001) argues that it is the *approach* to assessment that either aligns it to or detaches it from learning. For example, Wragg (2001) indicates that *continuous* assessment may play a part in

promoting learning through increasing pupils' concentration and attentiveness due to regular feedback being provided. Through analysis of the various approaches to assessment and the views of learning they reflect, I hope to further illustrate the point that the *approach* to assessment is the key to securing the bond between assessment and learning.

Formative Assessment and the Social Constructivist View of Learning

Brooks (2002), Mansell (2007), DfES (2007), Black and Wiliam (2006), James *et al* (2006), Clarke (2005) and Black *et al* (2003) link *formative* assessment and learning. Formative assessment, or 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL), as it has become known (Clarke (2005); Harlen (2006)) is a continuous form of assessment that has the provision of feedback to the learner as key to future learning. The characteristics of AfL are summarized by James *et al* (2006):

> *In essence, AfL focuses on what is revealed about where children are in their learning, especially the nature of, and reasons for, the strengths and weaknesses they exhibit. AfL judgments are therefore concerned with what they might do to move forward.* (p. 8)

Here assessment takes the form of 'process indicators' rather than outcome measures, an emphasis supported by Petty and Green (2007).

Black and Wiliam (2003a) draw attention to research that illustrates that the practical activities used when adopting formative assessment actually result in the implementation of constructivist learning principles like learning action starting from the learner's existing knowledge, the need for active and responsible involvement of the learner, appreciating the role of meta-cognition, and the promotion of high quality social discourse. I would suggest that the fusion of meta-cognition, meaning and social interaction would tend to reflect the *social constructivist* dimensions inherent in the model of learning illustrated in Fig. 4.

In contrast, there seems to be little support for the notion that *summative* assessment (usually in the form of 'final' tests or exams as outcome indicators) aids learning to

the same degree as formative assessment (except where summative assessment is used formatively).

Summative Assessment and the Behaviourist View of Learning

Mansell (2007), Harlen (2006) and Brooks (2002) raise the association between summative assessment and high stakes testing in terms of the corresponding negative impact on learning. This would appear to reverse the TGAT (1987) ideal that assessment should be the servant and not the master of the curriculum. Many of the teachers with whom I work are continually looking to the next external test point for the children they teach. Tests dominate schools' thinking because England's children are now considered to be the most tested in the world (Mansell, 2007). Mansell (2007) goes on to suggest that *'England's education system is now an exams system'* (p. 3) and that high stakes testing has resulted in the *'hyper-accountability'* (p. 3) schools now face.

I would argue that the problems associated with summative assessment arise from the overuse of testing as a mechanism of accountability. I consider that this practice constitutes misuse of assessment as it disrupts the momentum and rhythm of learning and teaching by creating a distraction for teachers in the form of perceived risk of 'failure' on *their* part. This distraction, I suggest, removes attention from the learner to the teacher. This is a common criticism levelled at mandated assessment by my colleagues, who go on to say that they are wary of trying alternative teaching strategies for fear that the results of National Tests will suffer.

The linear input-output view of summative assessment together with its perceived emphasis on measurement, *could* lead to the assumption that assessment of this nature is aligned by default to the behaviourist view of learning. I would challenge this assumption on the basis that one must consider what learning outcomes are required from summative assessments. In short, it is the usage or purpose of the assessment that needs to be taken into account. This issue will be discussed later in terms of the formative and summative interface.

In contrast with formative assessment, it is the problems and pitfalls associated with summative assessment that are well documented (Mansell (2007),   James   (2006), Harlen (2006), Black and Wiliam (2006), Stobart (2006), James *et al* (2006), Clarke (2005), Brooks (2002), Wragg (2001), Gipps (1995), Torrance (1995), Gipps and Stobart (1993), Desforges (1989), Cockroft (1982)). The two recurring problems are those that relate to the validity and reliability of summative assessment. Indeed, Cockroft (1982) strikes a chord with most of the literature in stating:

> *However, a remark which has been drawn to our attention – "no one has ever grown taller as a result of being measured" – underlines the fact that testing does not of itself lead to learning or to the raising of standards.* (p. 123, para. 421)

Indeed this could be said to apply to all forms of measurement, not just testing. To assume that validity and reliability are implicitly part of assessment and that learning will naturally occur as a result would, I believe, be a mistake.

Validity and Reliability

Gipps and Stobart (1993), Wragg (2001), Frederiksen and Collins (1989) and Black and Wiliam (2006) relate validity to the question of whether the test actually tests what it claims to. My experience of the validity of summative assessment is that on occasions there can be a significant mismatch between the traits one would hope the assessment score indicates (deep learning) and those that actually materialise (shallow understanding). Frederiksen and Collins (1989) refer to a possible reason for this:

> *To introduce tests into a system that adapts itself to the characteristics of the tests poses a particular challenge to their validity and calls into question many of the current practices in educational testing.* (p. 27)

In common, practical terms this is called 'teaching to the test' and concerns about this phenomenon are raised by Gipps and Stobart (1993), Brooks (2002), Mansell (2007) and DCSF (2008).

Mansell (2007) draws attention to the result of the low validity of current summative assessment:

> *What lies behind the seemingly ever-tighter definition of exam syllabuses and the teaching material which accompanies them?...they have combined to produce a shallow, monotonous learning experience for students, in which education often means following the rules of the exam.* (p. 141)

This certainly matches some aspects of what I have seen in the school where I work. Re-organising groups, lesson content and teaching strategies in the Spring Term of Year 9 to prepare for 'National Tests' at the end of Key Stage Three (KS3)[2] is now embedded in the working practices of our core subjects. Mansell (2007) raises the issue of booster classes using resources from the 'National Strategy' and remarks *'Much of it is mind blowing in its precision and, I would contend, its banality'* (p. 55). Mansell (2007, p. 57) goes on to draw attention to the 'inflated' results that come out of this practice leading to pupils gaining short term learning that then seemingly dissipates markedly prior to entry into KS3.

However, I believe it would be wrong to assume that all 'formal' assessments (tests or examinations), however standardised, are essentially meaningless. Once again, I suggest that it is our choice of approach to the preparation of pupils for these assessments that is the key variable here. Our choices in part come from the structure and nature of the assessment, but they are also influenced by the time allocated to the preparation for the assessments and the pressure of accountability. Schools could look at the time issue and examine assumptions like all subject assessments at a particular stage requiring the same amount of teaching time to prepare. Is the preparation time required for 'A' Level Physics the same as 'A' Level Physical Education? Is the preparation time required for one examination board the same as another? I suspect that there are variations between and within subjects in relation to these questions. I am not so optimistic that a solution to the pressure of accountability can be found at school level, however.

The problems that we and other schools have endured in terms of National Tests in English have caused confusion throughout the county and the country as a whole. Recent problems have centred on the clear mismatch between the national programmes of study designed to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding tested by the 'National Tests'. This lack of test validity has yielded contradictions in

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[2] Key Stage 3 national testing was abolished in the period following my research.

the OfSTED evaluation of the school in which I work, such as teaching judged to be 'excellent' or 'outstanding' not producing 'excellent' or 'outstanding' test scores (measured in terms of attainment and value added). The validity issue in this respect also involves the difference between the nature of 'National Tests' taken at 11 years (end of Key Stage 2 (KS2)) and those at 14 years (end of KS3). Although the tests measure different knowledge, skills and understanding, they both classify the attainment of the pupils in terms of a National Curriculum (NC) Level. Therefore it is possible for a student to attain a level 5 at the end of KS2 and another to gain the same level at the end of KS3 but be poles apart in terms of what they know, understand and can do. It also means that progress from KS2 to KS3 can be problematic as the tests measure different qualities. Therefore, there are occasions where taking children's learning forward becomes guess-work in the initial months after transfer. Shaw (2000) also makes the point that differences in curriculum content make comparisons difficult and inaccurate. This has implications not just for assessment of pupils but also for school evaluation.

Newton (2005) starts from the premise that *'No set of results will ever be perfectly reliable; no set of results will ever be perfectly valid; and no two sets of results will ever be perfectly comparable'* (p. 438). Black and Wiliam (2006) on the subject of reliability, make the following point:

> *No test is perfectly reliable. It is highly unlikely that the score that someone gets on one occasion would be exactly the same as on another occasion, even on the same test.* (p. 120)

The authors go on to refer to the notion of a 'true score' (p. 120) which one can only really attempt to judge by pupils taking the same or similar tests on a number of occasions and an average result being obtained. Black and Wiliam (2006, p. 125) assert that in a single test for *most* students in a class of 30, their actual score will be close to their true score. However, they calculate that at least one pupil out of the class of 30 will get the 'wrong' result – lower or higher than their 'true score'.

Only by narrowing the scope of the test or by making the test longer do the authors believe that reliability can be improved. Wragg (2001) points to the danger of attempting to narrow the scope of tests and states that tests will *'measure the*

measurable' with the result that the focus will be *'...on what is easily measured, instead of what is important'* (p. 16). Desforges (1989) in relation to this issue argues that tests need to expand the view of learning, not narrow it.

In my experience, the reliability of formative assessment and teacher judgment can be addressed through professional dialogue where views are shared in a process we have come to refer to as moderation or standardisation. On the subject of the validity of formative assessment, Stobart (2006), takes the simple line that formative assessment is valid if it generates further learning. Thus threats to the validity of formative assessment are things that undermine learning. Stobart (2006), refers to classroom context, socio-cultural context, conditions for learning, quality of classroom interactions and feedback. In short, an appreciation of how learning may be promoted is required. Once again I am reminded of the social constructivist views outlined earlier.

Although there is much criticism levelled at the misuse of summative assessments, I believe that to judge all practices involving such assessments as fundamentally flawed, through aligning them to the behaviourist 'input-output' view of learning, is too simplistic. I believe that it is the *usage* of summative assessments not the practice itself that is the issue. It is this issue I wish to explore next through the examination of the formative and summative interface.

The Formative and Summative Interface – A Dimension not a Dichotomy

Harlen (2006), approaches the relationship between formative and summative assessment from a terminology point of view suggesting that the use of these terms tends to indicate that they are somehow different. She goes on to expand by proposing that it is *how* the information is used that is important and that the terms 'assessment for learning' (AfL) and 'assessment of learning' (AoL) might be preferred. Whilst I agree with the principle that it is the use of assessment that is important, I have real practical reservations about 're-branding' terminology. Many of my colleagues have found adopting AfL practices difficult to understand or have merely dismissed them as yet another 'additional new idea' purely because of the renaming of formative assessment as AfL. In some cases they have been unaware that they are indeed very

adept with AfL. This reluctance has also been in evidence among my colleagues when the DfES (2005d) introduced 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL). Again, the 'brand' or 'logo' masks the principles my colleagues are already familiar with and they often fail to understand that it is merely a way of reinforcing good practice in the classroom. Some might dismiss this as extreme cynicism and that the problem resides with the issue of the professionalism of teachers. However, I believe that on a practical level we should try to build on what colleagues already understand rather than 'fog' issues with additional terminology.

Semantics apart, Harlen (2006) does pose the telling question of whether efficiently and reliably gathered summative evidence can be used to help learning. James *et al* (2006) refer to this concept as the *'...formative use of summative data'* (p. 9). Harlen (2006) in pursuing this notion indicates that summative data can make a *contribution* to helping identify further learning but cannot take the place of formative (AfL) practices. Black *et al* (2003) take a similar stance and suggest that summative test should be used to chart pupils' learning.

James *et al* (2006) refer to the means by which this might occur as summative judgments indicating levels of achievement and by implication the next levels that need to be aimed for in order to progress. Lindsay and Lewis (2003) suggest that baseline assessments (pupil attainment on entry), now a compulsory part of school assessment practice, are designed to be used formatively and act as a spring board for future learning by indicating what is required to move to the next level. More importantly, with reference to this, James *et al* (2006) make the point that scores and levels need to be 'unpacked' to reveal qualitative information.

This has implications not only for the school's working paradigm but also the research project paradigm. Indeed, Broadfoot and Black (2004) pose a very interesting question in this respect and ask: *'Is it now time for the emergence of a new assessment paradigm born of the very epistemologies and needs of the twenty-first century?'* (p. 22). From a school perspective there is a need to look beyond the raw summative data and interpret it. From a research perspective, the methodological characteristics I adopt need also to reflect this qualitative dimension as they are part of the social constructivist stance I have chosen to take.

Looking at personal meaning relates to the lesser used assessment principle known as *ipsative*. Brooks (2002) defines this as:

> *Ipsative assessment is self-referenced encouraging pupils to pit themselves against their former achievements rather than comparing themselves with others.* (p. 47)

This is precisely the spirit in which I, along with many other practitioners use mentoring (individual learning conversations between teacher or mediator and pupil) and target setting to enable individuals to make progress. The *personal* meaning one extracts from the assessment data is the focus here. This is also the mechanism behind the individual pupil progress aspects of the 'value-added' measure (Shaw 2000). In this respect achievement by way of the learning distance travelled is the performance indicator rather than the standard achieved.

Younger and Warrington (2005) draw attention to the benefits of mentoring as enabling students to address weaknesses through the discussion of targets and appropriate strategies for meeting them, but also stress that *'Not all volunteers **are** appropriate mentors'* (p. 95). I would endorse this as working in a state secondary school often requires a fairly challenging approach to students when discussing their attainment and targets. This is reflected in what Younger and Warrington (2005, p. 96), and Farrar and Judson (2007, p. 3) refer to as *'assertive mentoring'*. Here, a 'nowhere to hide' factor is employed, reminiscent of 'social loafing' interventions as described by Gill (1986, p. 215). The identifiability in mentoring comes from focussed discussion about the individual and close monitoring by a 'significant other'.

If the *use* and *effect* of assessment is to promote and enable learning to take place, then it follows that formative and summative aspects become a 'fit for purpose' issue. Therefore, as Harlen (2006) suggests, formative and summative assessment become a dimension rather than a dichotomy. Roos and Hamilton (2005) sum up my current thinking on this issue by concluding *'We felt that it was unhelpful to treat them as opposite sides of the same thing'* (p. 18). Taking this argument further, it would also call into question the linkage of summative assessment with a behaviourist 'input-output' view of learning.

The Formative-Summative Interface and the Social Constructivist View of Learning

If one adopts a 'fit for purpose' approach to assessment, then formative and summative policy and practice need to reflect the purpose or the intended outcome. If the purpose of assessment is to promote learning then choices about assessment need to support this. By using summative assessments formatively, through enabling the learner to interpret and attach meaning to the outcomes in a way that identifies directions for future learning, one can see links with constructivist ideology. If the meaning is fostered through the collaborative dialogue between the learner and teacher or mediator, or indeed between learners, then one can also relate this to the social interactionist perspective. Therefore, I propose that it is possible to associate both formative and summative policy and practice with the social constructivist view of learning I have chosen to follow.

Theory, Policy and Practice – The 'Real' World

The account presented so far, in terms of assessment, supports an ideal scenario as one where the formative dimension drives learning in a way that reflects a social constructivist perspective. I have argued that the more summative the assessment process, in terms of 'an end result', the less it contributes to learning in this way. Given this stance, I feel that it is important to examine these arguments in the context of the 'real world' to judge the extent to which the 'ideal' is actually a reality. In other words, it is important to test the current situation in schools in order to establish the relevance of research in my chosen area.

The formative dimension of assessment is very prominent in the 'National Strategy' as outlined in 'Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools' (DfES, 2004a). Although this document has twenty different units, it is 'unit 12' that has gained the most recognition, both at a Government and school level. This is the unit relating to 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL). It has risen to such prominence that a separate folder the size of all the other units put together has been produced (DfES, 2004b) with accompanying CDROM and DVD. The emphasis placed on assessment *for* learning (formative) as opposed to assessment *of* learning (summative) in this

respect does place assessment in the role of servant of the curriculum rather than master. When one examines the units within AfL, one could describe them as 'good teaching'.

To illustrate this it is useful to track the origins of the DfES (2004a and 2004b) publications. The Black and Wiliam (1998), Assessment Reform Group (ARG) (1999) and the Black *et al* (2002) publications relating to the 'Black Box' culminate in the identification of key elements of assessment practice that promote learning. These include questioning, feedback through marking, peer and self-assessment, and the formative use of summative tests (Black *et al* 2002).

The messages inherent in AfL do reflect the formative process focus of assessment, but in my experience the impact of AfL principles has been limited by the restrictions that National Testing at KS3 and the packed curriculum at KS4 and Post-16 place on teachers. The expansion of the 14-19 curriculum to include Specialised Diplomas, Functional Skills, revised GCSE specifications, extension awards at 'A' Level and the International Baccalaureate will, I feel, heighten this problem.

Changes to the KS3 curriculum have been initiated and piloted. QCA (2005) outlines the motives behind this as primarily to '…ensure that schools have the flexibility they need to better meet pupils' needs …' (QCA/05/1847). On a practical level, schools involved in the pilot scheme have considered following the KS3 programmes of study and associated assessments in two years rather than three. Various combinations of subjects and approaches have been trialled. Some schools have used a selection of subjects that would benefit from a more intense two year KS3 and some have applied it to all subjects. Some schools have run the KS3 curriculum and assessment in years 7 and 8 and 'freeing up' year 9 for more flexible approaches to learning and teaching. This would perhaps address OfSTED's (2006, p. 56) perceived 'drop' in attainment following the move from primary to secondary education. However, as already outlined, the 'drop' in attainment may only be a symptom of the lack of parity between a National Curriculum Level awarded in KS2 with one awarded in KS3. Other schools have 'freed up' year 7 for the flexible learning and teaching approaches and then raced through years 8 and 9.

My personal view of the current assessment situation in schools is that it is 'messy' and contradictory and that schools try their best to navigate a way through the barrage of Government initiatives and changes. To enable clarity, I believe that it is important to go back to some fundamental assessment principles. The questions of 'why?', 'what?' and 'how?' in relation to assessment need to be addressed. I have tried to present a case for 'why' as fundamentally being for the promotion of learning as defined by the social constructivist view. Wragg (2001) clearly identifies 'what' to assess as outlined below:

- *Knowledge and Understanding (Facts and Concepts)*
- *Skills (Techniques – Physical and Interpersonal)*
- *Attitudes and Values (About Learning, People and Society)*
- *Behaviour (Social Relationships)*
  (p. 14)

It is interesting to note how closely Wragg's (2001) list of what to assess reflects the elements in the proposed view of learning illustrated in Fig. 4. In my experience, however, most assessment practices in schools tend to focus on knowledge, skills and understanding rather than attitudes, values, emotional development and behaviour. Grimley *et al* (2004) suggest the use of an emotional and behavioural scale to promote discourse in schools about the emotional and behavioural development of pupils. Adding this dimension to assessment practices in schools would be a challenge, but nonetheless provide an opportunity to more closely align the process to the factors that underpin learning. It is also interesting to note how the 'Key Messages' relating to assessment in the DfES (2007) 8 Schools Project Report relate to Wragg's (2001) list and the proposed view of learning in Fig. 4. These key messages include pupils having a clear understanding of what they are trying to learn and why, when pupils are clear about how they are to be judged and how they can improve, the notion that learning happens in pupils' heads (although this is somewhat contentious, I feel), and classroom dialogue where pupils learn in a social environment being pivotal to successful learning. The ten points of 'putting it together' outlined by Williams and Burden (1997 pp. 204-208) adopt similar themes including the importance of personal meaning, social context and situational factors. The 'how' provides the methodology through which we can undertake assessment and relies on an understanding of the

blending of formative, summative and ipsative practices that allow learning to flourish.

Although, I believe that going back to these first principles helps to clarify assessment policy and practices, it is the part played by *evaluation* in education that stands to block the path of learning if its powerful influence is not appreciated, understood and developed in such a way as to place it in a formative role. It is this issue that I will explore next, again in the context of a social constructivist perspective.

(c)   Evaluation

In line with my opening analysis of assessment, I believe that to define what we understand by evaluation through the examination of its purpose enables us to focus on what we actually mean by it. A relatively recent historical political perspective provides a starting point. Shaw (2000) makes it clear that market forces were behind politicians' involvement in the evaluation of schools.

When one explores the discourse relating to evaluation in education, it becomes clear that the term is commonly related to the examination of *school* performance (Neil and Johnston (2005), Gipps and Stobart (1993), James (1987)). In considering the performance of schools, it is useful to reflect on the nature of research into this area as this serves to provide an insight into the nature of the evaluation process.

Much of the research into school performance is classified as School Effectiveness Research (SER), three strands of which are identified by Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) below:

- *School Effects Research*
- *Effective Schools Research*
- *School Improvement Research*
  (p. 3)

It would seem reasonable then to assume that if we are to examine a school's performance either as a researcher, practitioner, Local Authority officer or indeed OfSTED inspector, these three strands become pivotal to our work. Following this

line of argument means that examining schools' performance involves scrutiny of the effects of the school on the learning of those in it and the identification of the characteristics of effective schools and successful improvement mechanisms.

Aspinwall *et al* (1992) offer a concise definition of evaluation which ties the three strands mentioned together: *'At the most straightforward level it can be said that evaluation means placing a value on things'* (p. 2). The authors go on to expand this view and suggest:

> *Evaluation is part of the decision making process. It involves making judgments about the worth of an activity through systematically and openly collecting and analysing information about it and relating this to explicit objectives, criteria and values.* (p. 2)

Since placing a value on anything largely depends upon one's own values and beliefs, the process, principles and practices adopted in undertaking an evaluative exercise reflect a chosen paradigm. Once again one has to reflect on the purpose of evaluation. My research has the promotion of learning as its fundamental concept. Given this I am reminded of Shipman's (1979) proposal: *'If it is important it should be evaluated'* (p. 101). Learning is important but the *manner* of evaluation needs to be consistent with a chosen view of learning. It is this discussion that will be my next focus.

Evaluation Principles, Behaviourism and Social Constructivism

Aspinwall *et al* (1992) refer to two principles of evaluation that I have already identified in relation to assessment, namely the formative and summative functions of evaluation. The authors support the belief that it is formative evaluation that is the most important for teachers in that it leads to action. Aspinwall *et al* (1992) go further and state that we need summative evaluation less than formative. The formative dimension where judgments are made with a view to making decisions about future developments is associated with *self-evaluation*. Gipps and Stobart (1993) provide a clear justification for the focus on self-evaluation and the formative principle: *'For schools, however, the importance lies in the process, not the product'* (p. 42).

Parlett (1982), takes a critical stance in terms of summative evaluation and suggests that human factors make neat scientific conclusions difficult. He goes on to propose: *'The results are usually numerical in form, difficult to mesh with the 'qualitative' view of the world held by most of us'* (p. 186). Whilst I can identify with the sentiment that formative processes lend themselves more to the social constructivist perspective favoured by this research, I believe that to marginalise summative evaluation based upon a supposed product focus or alignment to a behaviourist ethos would be naive. It might also be seen as an accountability avoidance tactic.

Shipman (1979) with reference to this last point describes it as *'...fearing to provide ammunition to the enemies of a liberal education...'* (p. 101). In short, as with my point relating to formative and summative assessment, it is how we *use* summative evaluation data that either aligns it to a behaviourist or social constructivist view of learning. If we use summative data to measure outcomes purely for accountability purposes, then the scope and focus will be narrow and lead to a *'...dangerous oversimplification of education and evaluation'* (Simons in McCormick 1982, p. 120) and reflect a behaviourist view of learning. If, on the other hand, summative evaluation data undergoes shared interpretation where strengths and weaknesses in provision are identified and acted upon to enhance learning, then we again use summative data formatively as illustrated with assessment. As with assessment, the use of formative and summative evaluation is a dimension issue rather then a dichotomy. I would argue that both can be reliably employed within a social constructivist view of learning.

The new OfSTED framework has school self-evaluation at the heart of it. My own view is that the OfSTED model is an interesting hybrid of formative and summative evaluation. The formative process of gathering evidence, analysing, interpreting and making decisions rests with the schools, whilst the summative end product (the school Self-Evaluation Form – SEF) is scrutinised by the inspectors. My experience has been that the product (the SEF) assumes dominance and not the process of gathering evidence, analysing, interpreting and decision making. In this respect it is no different from the 'old' OfSTED regime where 'outsiders' take control from a detached vantage point and see evaluation in raw output terms. In this scenario, schools merely assume the role of evidence gatherers and the social constructivist view of evaluation

involving shared interpretations that lead to improved learning become lost to the behaviourist dominance.

I have illustrated that evaluation can have a formative and summative dimension, but it can also have an ipsative quality. Brooks (2002), with reference to this, suggests that ipsative approaches involve challenging oneself to improve on prior performance. The whole notion of improvement planning in schools is based on this principle. OfSTED reports on improvements since the last inspection. The problem is that in this application of the ipsative dimension, schools are still compared to other schools judged to be similar. Local authorities also receive this treatment, and their performance is judged against their 'statistical neighbours' (one of Devon's statistical neighbours is North Yorkshire, for example). Rather than taking a contextual local perspective and thus reflecting a social constructivist view of learning, this ipsative approach merely stretches out the behaviourist measures traditionally used. I would prefer to see what Bruner (1990) describes as a *'paradigm shift'* (p. x) where we look at the micro perspective and get back to concerns of a more human nature rather than trying to develop new mathematical measures.

Argyris and Schon (1996) refer to this principle as moving from single loop learning to double loop. I recently heard a speech by Sir John Jones who provided an analogy to more concisely represent the move from single to double loop thinking. He spoke of trying to find a shirt to match one's trousers and after trying a number of shirts in vain (single loop learning), resorting to changing the trousers instead (double loop learning) and finding that suddenly a number of shirts matched. Rather than persist with attempts to further refine techniques *within* a particular paradigm, it may well be more productive to adopt an alternative one.

Evaluation shares principles with other aspects of education. Eisner (1985), with reference to the use of scientific quantitative approaches to evaluation, states:

> *These methods participate in a tradition that has occupied a commanding position, not only in the field of evaluation, but in educational research as well.*
> (p. 147)

Although evaluation and research may be seen to share some common methods (questionnaires, interviews, observation, documentary and visual evidence – Aspinwall *et al* (1992)), it must be remembered that research does have unique qualities that set it apart from evaluation. Indeed I am reminded of Stenhouse's (1981) definition of research as *'...systematic and sustained enquiry, planned and self-critical, which is subjected to public criticism'* (p. 18).

To further illustrate the need to distinguish evaluation from research, Aspinwall *et al* (1992) propose:

> *It is not uncommon for people to undervalue the evaluative work they are doing because they are measuring themselves against a largely mythological spectre, that of 'real research'. This is seen to necessitate rigorous, in depth study involving large representative samples, using specific and often difficult techniques and resulting in some kind of formal report.* (p. 2)

Despite their differences, I feel that the similarities between evaluation and research lend themselves to a shared paradigm at least. To favour a social constructivist view of learning and associated paradigm in terms of evaluation, and then to deviate one's favour towards a research methodology aligned to an alternative paradigm, would undermine the consistency of one's research, I would argue. For this reason I address the associations of the research methodology and the social constructivist view of learning in Part 3 of the thesis.

Behaviourism and the Assessment – Evaluation Interface

Gipps and Stobart (1993) state: *'National Curriculum assessment results are going to be used to evaluate school performance'* (p. 40). The authors go on to cite the Assessment and Performance Unit (APU) as playing a pivotal role in this process. Although the APU has been superseded by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), in terms of control of national assessment, the drive for accountability has remained a fairly consistent government focus. Shaw (2000) traces the origins of this back to the previous Conservative government and points to results in the form of 'National Tests' being exposed to public scrutiny and market forces used to bring about school improvement creating an emphasis on raw output measures.

Shaw illustrates that 'New Labour' took this philosophy on and developed 'Targets' and 'Benchmarking'. The result of this has been a phenomenal escalation of assessment, data collection and evaluative procedures. This in itself is not a worry but the bias towards quantitative output measures or performance indicators is due to its symbiotic allegiance to a behaviourist view of learning. Wroe and Halsall (2001) with reference to this issue state: *'Largely as a result of statutory requirements, then, there has been a proliferation of data collection especially of quantitative performance indicators'* (p. 41).

It is the bias towards summative rather than formative values that leads Mansell (2007) to coin the phrase *'hyper-accountability'* (p. 3) with reference to the English education system. Wroe and Halsall (2001) share concerns over the behaviourist characteristics of evaluation processes commonly found in our education system and question the reliability and validity of the quantitative data used for evaluative purposes. The authors' research into the usefulness of quantitative data gives rise to the following conclusion: *'In short, whilst the quantifiable measures raised questions about how effective classroom practice had been, they did not help in interpreting why this was, and how the school should act to improve practice'* (p. 45). As with issues relating to a behaviourist view of learning, the complexity of schools and the social interactions implicit in their every day workings mean that a move towards a more social constructivist perspective is likely to yield deeper understanding and instigate improvement in practice through shared *interpretation* of measures used in education. My own view is that quantitative measures of attainment, evaluation and research only serve to provide a 'guess' at best as to what is actually happening. The rich data provided by more qualitative approaches give us the depth to take appropriate action.

To use assessments of attainment or achievement of pupils over time and then subsequently use them for evaluating schools' performance assumes that the cognitive, emotional and environmental influences on learning are stable and allow for projections and predictions to be made. If we look practically at the possible influence of individual children's emotional and environmental factors that might change over the course of a number of days, weeks, months and years, it becomes increasingly clear that the school needs to consider its place in the fostering of

learning with humility and realism. Marriage break ups, bereavements and a whole range of other traumas can occur at any time and with untold regularity.

Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) look to the future of 'School Effectiveness Research' (SER) and stress the need to embrace the complexity of the school environment and education. Recommendations include looking to multiple outcome measures (not just attainment and achievement). Factors such as attitudes of staff and students, the culture of the school, behavioural patterns, family influences, transitional factors (between phases) and the curriculum are all seen as future research foci. I do not conclude from this that these should be embraced entirely by assessment and evaluative processes, but I do argue that knowledge of them allow teachers and schools to look beyond the raw attainment and achievement data to put people and not measurement at the heart of assessment and evaluation. By doing this, I believe that we will reflect more closely the social constructivist view of learning I favour.

Theory, Policy and Practice – Evaluation in the 'Real' World

If we examine evaluation of schools' performance in terms of the formative (process) approach compared with the summative (product/output) approach, an interesting picture emerges from current practice. DfES (2005) outlines OfSTED's 'new relationship with schools' and the mandatory self-evaluation form (SEF) that all schools fill out to provide evidence of the school's performance. The 'ideal' is that this should be a formative process where sections relating to attainment and achievement, teaching, involvement of stakeholders and leadership and management fit into the school improvement cycle. The vision here is that it is the process of undertaking this task that is of value and not the summative document produced (DfES, 2005). MacBeath (2005) in a study commissioned by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) supports this vision.

In reality, the hectic nature of the school year means that updates to the SEF and input of evaluative data are infrequent and at best only done twice per year. In addition to this, although there is an opportunity to include qualitative evaluative data in terms of interview, questionnaires and observations, the raw assessment data and analyses of attainment and achievement measures still dominate the attention of inspection. This

has been my experience and that of colleagues in other schools despite the call for more process indicators to be used in evaluation (Ward Petty and Green 2007). Although Wrigley's (2004) comment: *'School effectiveness research implicitly builds upon a positivistic natural science in establishing conclusions about input-output relationships'* (p. 231) relates to school effectiveness research, it could be said to hold true for school evaluation also.

Although not mandatory, many schools have cascaded the SEF principles down to subject leadership levels. This has been encouraged by DfES (2005b) in their 'Middle Leaders' Self-Evaluation Guide'. The result is that subject leaders produce their own subject SEFs and go through the same process as the whole school at subject level. At my school we have followed this path and, although the formative process model would be our preferred way of working, the subject SEF is still perceived as a summative product by subject leaders. Lindsay and Lewis (2003) refer to *'...a conflict between purposes'* (p. 166) in this respect and make the point that *'While government seeks to have assessments available for managerial purposes (value-added analysis in this case), then their use for pedagogic purposes will be compromised'* (p. 166).

In Summary

It is clear to me, having carried out this examination of the issues associated with assessment and evaluation in schools, that they both exert a hugely powerful influence on educational policy and practice. This influence has been charted by DCSF (2008) who pull together a wealth of research and opinion spanning public and private sectors, academic institutions, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), teaching organisations/unions, General Teaching Council (GTC) and examination boards.

What we need here is a mind-shift and a move toward using formative assessment to promote learning and the SEF as a focus for whole school and department improvement agendas through careful scrutiny of a *balanced* range of both quantitative and qualitative indicators, which will include attainment and achievement data but also observations of lessons and students' work, together with questionnaire

and interview feedback. A narrow measure of performance does not reflect the quality of what is there.

Although the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee propose a 'decoupling' of the multiple purposes of assessment to free up schools so that development in learning and teaching can flourish (see DCSF, 2008), I believe that this will be some time in coming to fruition (partly because the DCSF rejected this argument). Despite the restrictions that Government assessment and evaluation policies place on schools and education, I feel that there is still some room to manoeuvre and make the policies fit in with the school and not the other way around. In this way both assessment and evaluation will be placed in their rightful position as *servants* of the curriculum and education and not the *master*. In order to achieve this, I believe that it is necessary to consider the issues associated with change since any manoeuvring and fitting will necessitate some form of disruption to the normal pattern of things. The following section deals with two fundamental aspects of change, namely leadership and management.

(d)   **Change – Leadership and Management**

This section explores the issues associated with change. In particular it looks at the necessity of change, the reluctance to do so and the implications for leadership and management. The notion of deep rooted change impacting upon culture will be considered along with the implications for leadership and management. I will examine the process of change together with different leadership and management approaches and how they relate to my favoured social constructivist epistemology. Throughout this section I will be taking Fullan's (2001) stance with regard to viewing leadership and management as overlapping in the sense that they both involve the solving of problems. However, leadership takes on a unique identity in the sense that it comes into play when the problems are not easily solved due to complexity, paradoxes and dilemmas (Fullan, 2001). Another way of looking at this is to look at leadership as making things possible, and management as making things happen as Fullan (1991) describes: *'Leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration. Management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done, working effectively with people'* (pp. 157-158).

Change – Why Bother?

West (2005) states:

> *We do not believe that any school can feel entirely satisfied with its current provision – even the most successful of our schools could, indeed must, continually seek out ways to improve the quality of outcomes and of experiences for its students.* (p. 99)

Whilst I admire the dynamic sentiment implicit in this view, one must bear in mind that change inevitably causes instability (Fink and Stoll, 2005). Clearly care must be taken to strike a balance between change for progress and the need to consolidate and stabilise. One must consider one's own circumstances at a micro level when macro issues emerge. Change may not necessarily be required. It may instead be more a *recognition* of what the school is doing in relation to the wider picture.

Keating (2005) sets out a need for potential change based on a move from what he calls the *'industrial age'* (p. 30) to the *'information age'* (p. 30). This is summarised in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5 Characteristics of Education in the Industrial and Information Ages

	Industrial Age	Information Age
Educational goals	Conceptual grasp for the few; basic skills and algorithms for the many	Conceptual grasp & intentional knowledge building for all
Anticipated workplaces	Factory models, vertical bureaucracies	Collaborative learning organizations
Nature of diversity	Inherent, categorical	Transactional, historical
Dealing with diversity	Selection of elites, basics for broad population	Development model of life-long learning for broad population
Pedagogy	Knowledge transmission	Knowledge building
Prime mode of learning	Individual	Collaborative

(Taken from Keating 2005, p. 30)

The move towards the information age supports the characteristics associated with the social constructivist view of learning through the focus on knowledge building and collaborative learning. Ackoff (1999) also outlines the need for a similar shift from what he calls the *'Machine Age'* (p. 6) to a *'Systems Age'* (p. 149). Both the Industrial Age and Machine Age treat knowledge as transmittable items. In support of moving away from this model, Ackoff (1999) suggests that we need to enable learners to

grasp the relationships between what is taught, so that *'...information can be transformed into knowledge, knowledge into understanding, and understanding into wisdom'* (p. 149). The pursuit of wisdom attracts me, due to Ackoff's (1999) definition closely mirroring the 'human factors' of social constructivist ideals. Therefore, one must reflect on the current working practices in one's own school in order to judge the need for change or its degree in the light of this. Fundamentally, I believe that there must be a shared belief in the value of working not just towards an information or systems age, but towards a 'wisdom age'.

Stability and the Pursuit of Stasis

Schon (1971) refers to the strength of our belief in what he calls *'...the stable state'* (p. 9) where uncertainty and a drive to protect ourselves from apprehension overrides the desire to actually engage in change activity. Kuhn (1996) with reference to scientific research also raises this issue in relation to the response of scientists: *'Though they may begin to lose faith and then to consider alternatives, they do not renounce the paradigm that has led them into crises'* (p. 77). Ackoff (1999) highlights the danger of being overtaken by events as associated with the pursuit of stasis. To move beyond stasis means that one has to understand change and prepare accordingly. One of the causes of anxiety about change may be the fear of things worsening under a new approach. Fullan (2001) suggests that we should *'...appreciate early difficulties of trying something new – what I call implementation dip'* (p. 5). Thus, there is a need to be resilient (Schon, 1971).

To traverse periods of uncertainty is seen by Fullan (2001) as being challenging but worth the effort: *'Yet when things are unsettled, we can find new ways to move ahead and to create breakthroughs not possible in stagnant societies'* (p. 1). For me, Handy's (1995) description of the 'Sigmoid Curve' represents an overview of the issues discussed here in relation to stability and the pursuit of stasis as shown in Fig. 6.

Fig. 6 The Sigmoid Curve

P
E
R
F
O
R
M
A
N
C
E

A   B

(Adapted from Handy 1995)

TIME
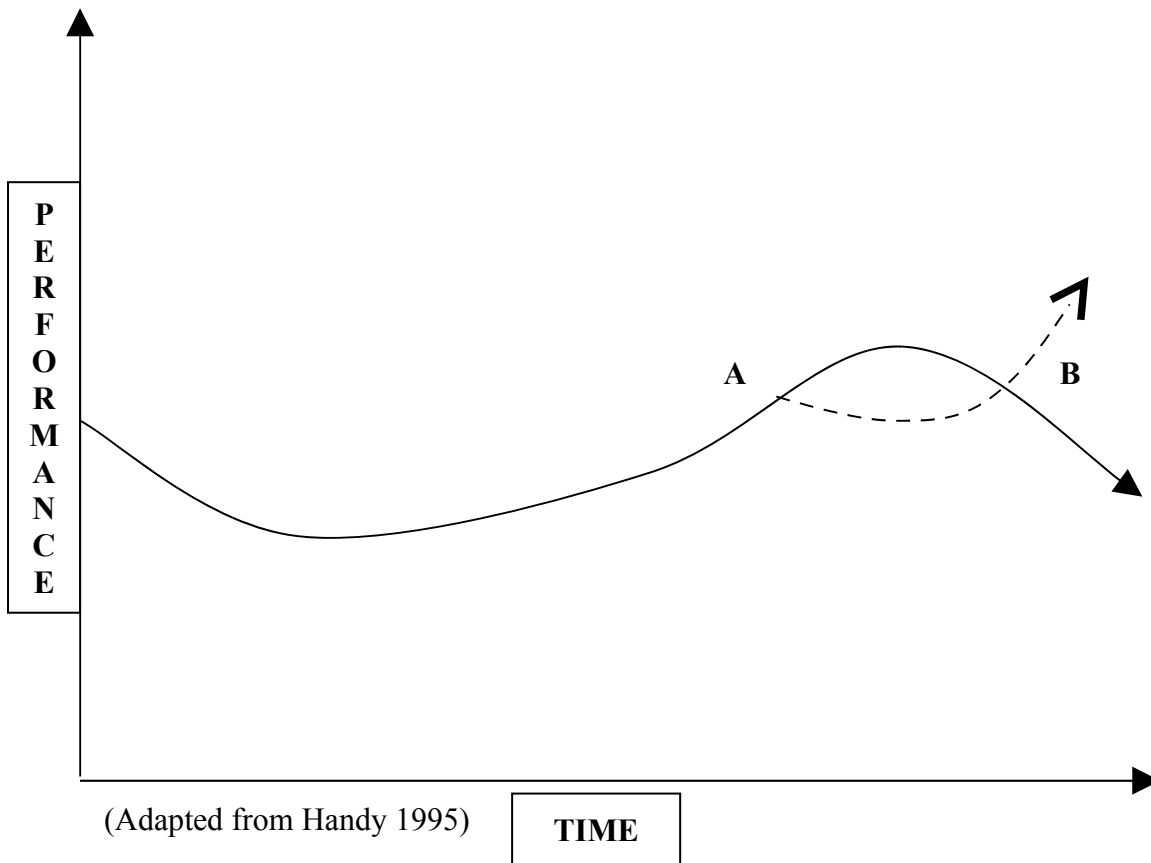
The curve represents an introduction phase where new ways of working are introduced, followed by a growth phase, a stabilizing phase, and finally a period of decline. What it represents is that things that were instrumental in achieving success are not necessarily the things that keep you on the road to improvement. It also shows that at the beginning of a new introduction phase there is a corresponding 'dip' in performance. The curve illustrates the concept that in order to maintain growth, it is desirable to start a new curve before the first one peters out (point A) even if this disrupts thinking. The problem is that at point A there will be initial confusion and crises as the new curve dips but to leave change to point B, however, may be too late. Second curve thinking embraces the point that what we have traditionally done is not necessarily best future practice and that a willingness to move before the 'stable state' is often the best option in a changing world. Point A in effect becomes a 'Tipping Point'.

Tipping Points, Viruses and Epidemics

The notion of tipping points being fundamental to change is stressed by Gladwell (2000), Fink and Stoll (2005), Fullan (2003) and Fullan (2001). A tipping point provides the impetus for change but can also initiate the development of new ideas and ways of working.

I am drawn to Gladwell's (2000) view of ideas as *viruses* emerging out of disturbances of stability because ideas on their own are not enough to provide change unless they are accepted by others and disseminated. In short, they need to be contagious and spread like an epidemic. Dekker and Feijs (2005) refer to the success of formative assessment practices in their study as being founded on *'...ideas 'travelling' to other curriculum areas as well as to larger groups of teachers and other grade levels'* (p. 252). The need to spread ideas in order to affect change is supported by West (2005) and Schon (1971). Indeed, Schon is very explicit with regard to this concept:

> *Here the central metaphor is not 'deciding' but 'spread', 'propagation', or 'contagion'. Diffusion of innovation is a dominant model for the transformation of societies according to which novelty moves out from one or more points to permeate the society as a whole.* (p. 80)

Both Gladwell (2000, p. 33) and Fullan (2003, p. 36) refer to *'The Law of the Few'* where small groups of influential people drive social epidemics. Working in a school with a diverse range of professionals, I am acutely aware of the huge influence that some colleagues have compared to others. The interesting thing for me is that it is not the same core unit of colleagues that tend to influence all aspects of the school's work. Clusters of professionals emerge as 'experts', 'role models' or 'experienced' depending upon the nature of the issue. Looking at groups from a 'fit for purpose' perspective may provide a powerful mechanism for change even if one has to work hard to get the group to agree on a direction. That said, I agree with Black *et al* (2003) in that middle leaders (Heads of Department) tend to be key figures in the change process. Once the virus emerges, it is the power of the few that will covert it into an epidemic via what Gladwell (2000) describes as their *'..rare set of social gifts'* (p. 33).

In terms of group size and creating ideas or viruses, Fullan (2003) and Harvey-Jones (1988) suggest that 6-8 people are most effective. Their argument is based on the need for productive social interaction and diversity of perspectives. Too many people and the scope for interaction is reduced; too few and the range of perspectives is narrowed.

Change from Without – A Top-Down Approach

Coffield *et al* (2007) point to radical government changes to public services which include education. The authors speak of the top-down approach to education as alienating professionals through mandated, rapidly introduced and weakly consulted reforms. Coffield *et al* (2007) use some interesting metaphors in describing the characteristics of top-down management which include *'...pulling appropriate levers'* (p. 67) and *'...applying sufficient pressure'* (p. 67). With exclusive top-down approaches, we have a system of stimulus and response. It may be judged to be behaviourist in the sense that it follows an almost linear format where a known input is followed by a predictable output.

In the same way that I have argued against a behaviourist approach to learning, assessment and evaluation, I argue that mechanistic and organisational changes characterised by top-down models (Smylie and Perry (2005)) come under the same critical radar. My criticisms are based on the social complexity of the change process. Indeed, this very point is raised by Smylie and Perry (2005).

I would argue that it is not just the teachers who need to be actively involved. Schools now have a large body of support staff who play an invaluable role in making processes work whether it be timetabling, processing data, finance, student support or general administrative work. Coffield *et al* (2007) also highlight the complexity of change and state *'Systemic reform must grapple with extensive local variation in provision and multiple layers of complexity within each local setting'* (p. 67). On the receiving end of top-down approaches, Coffield *et al* describe a practice I, along with many colleagues in leadership positions, identify with when they comment *'...schools have changed reforms rather than reforms changing schools'* (p. 69). Whilst I can see the potential risks involved with extreme top-down approaches to leadership, I feel

that one has to analyse the extreme opposite end of the continuum in order to more fully understand the practical implications.

Change from Within – A Bottom-Up Approach

Argyris and Schon (1996) contrast a typical top-down scenario with that of a bottom-up. With reference to the former, they provide the example of bosses who complain of the difficulty in getting their people to follow them and act upon lessons learned by those in charge. Argyris and Schon (1996) pursue the notion of *'...organizational learning...'* (p. 7). This is where individuals within the organisation seek solutions to problems that face the organisation as a whole.

In this way, the learning becomes part of the *culture* of the organisation. I base this argument on the definition of culture offered by Shipman (1975): *'This is the total of material objects, values, knowledge and techniques which persists while waves of individuals pass through'* (p. 25). That organisational learning, change and developments are linked to culture is also emphasised by Barber (2005), West (2005), Smylie and Perry (2005), Fink and Stoll (2005), Allen and Glickman (2005), Miller (2005), Fullan (2003) and Fullan (2001).

With a top-down approach to organisational learning, Argyris and Schon (1996) suggest that *'Bosses may follow one another in rapid succession, while the organization beneath them remains very much the same'* (p. 7). However, to assume, therefore, that the only viable alternative is a bottom-up approach is to view the problem as a dichotomy rather than a dimension, I would argue.

Argyris and Schon (1996) suggest that even when individuals or clusters of individuals in an organisation are involved directly in the development of an organisation, the result is not necessarily one of organisational learning. The authors make the following point in respect of this:

> *Organizations are not merely collections of individuals, yet there is no organization without such collections. Organizational action cannot be reduced to the action of individuals, even of all the individuals that make up the*

organization, yet there is no organizational action without individual action.
(p. 8)

Fullan (2003) provides an insight into the possible reasons for this and suggests that if one relies on bottom-up strategies exclusively the following scenarios could emerge: *'(a) not much of the bottom moves, or (b) some of it moves in the wrong way, or (c) some of it moves productively, but the good ideas don't get around, nor do they persist for very long'* (p. 33). For me, the problems relating to lack of coherence and co-ordination outlined by Fullan (2003) imply that the 'top' matters. If one is to accept this, one has to look at how both top-down and bottom-up interact.

**One Vision, Many Eyes – Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up**

If we are to accept that neither an *exclusive* focus on top-down *nor* bottom-up approach is viable to take organisations forward with genuine and lasting characteristics (affect culture), then we share the views represented by the DfES (2007) in its summary of the '8 Schools Project'. This is of particular relevance to my research as it reflects on leadership approaches in terms of the successful implementation of formative assessment (or AfL) in secondary schools. With reference to this the DfES (2007) makes the following observation:

> *To establish AfL whole school both 'top down' and 'bottom up' change processes must prevail as they fulfil different purposes. 'Top down' approaches can convey a clear message about expectations and focus for improvement but this alone does not win the 'hearts and minds' of all teachers or build internal capacity.* (p. 12)

Swaffield and MacBeath (2006) highlight the challenge for leadership as *'...resolving the tension between 'bottom-up' growth, and 'top-down' mandated change'* (p. 201). Learning about leadership in an assessment specific context may prove to be valuable in this respect. Carless (2005) singles out assessment as being particularly problematic and suggests *'All deep educational changes are challenging and assessment cultures seem particularly impervious to transformation'* (p. 52). West (2005), talks of the importance of school leaders establishing a clear vision *'...bringing together the "best team for the job"...'* (p. 105) and spreading leadership opportunities throughout the school. In short, West (2005) suggests a central group (*'...cadre group...'*, p. 113)

which co-ordinates work at a whole school, working group and individual teacher level. This model is represented in Fig. 7.

Fig. 7 Central Group Co-ordinating Work at a Whole School, Working Group and Individual Teaching Level
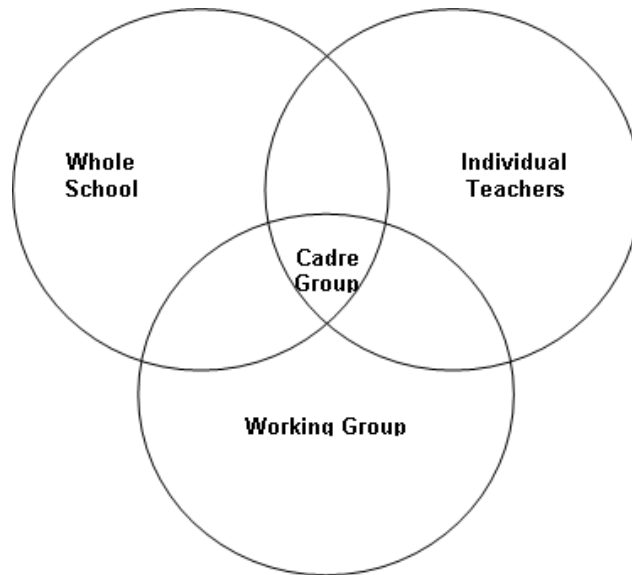
(Adapted from West in Fullan, 2005, p. 113)

Schon (1971) also illustrates the concept of a central group co-ordinating the work of 'satellite' groups. Schon (1971) refers to this model (shown in Fig. 8) as *'The proliferation of centers'* (p. 84).

Fig. 8 Proliferation of Centers Model
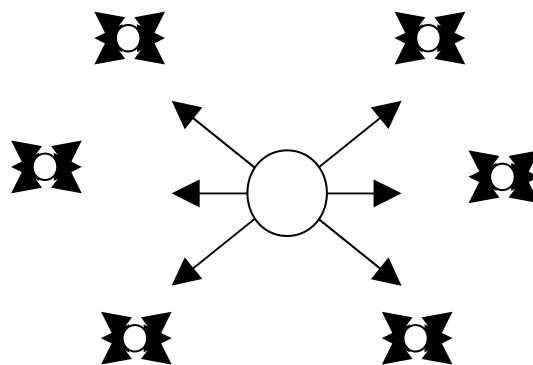
(Adapted from Schon, 1971, p. 84)

The potential problem with the model shown in Fig. 8 is that the secondary centres may get out of control unless the leadership from the primary centre is strong (Schon, 1971). This could result in the mutation of the initial ideas or viruses. The danger, however, is in order to combat this risk the primary centre may revert to an authoritarian, positivist stance. If this were the case, then rather than the model reflecting a social constructivist view of leadership where two-way communication and the appreciation of environmental, emotional and social factors blend to create a shared vision and direction, the model follows a behaviourist stimulus-response pattern. Indeed, in my view the model in Fig. 8 would benefit from a more clear illustration of the two-way lines of communication required for it to retain social constructivist characteristics. In short, the success of both the models in Fig. 7 and Fig. 8 means going beyond a social interactionist philosophy and personal meaning, towards the application of a social constructivist philosophy due to the importance placed on the *manner* of communication, emotional awareness and shared meaning through shared construction. I believe that only through shared construction will clarity emerge. It therefore becomes more of a case of one vision and many eyes.

The importance of *vision* for successful leadership is stressed by West (2005), and Harvey-Jones (1988). I view vision as being particularly important to the success of my research project particularly in the light of the point Swaffield and MacBeath (2006) make:

> *'Embedding' is a concept applied to a vision, a set of procedures which become integral to the structure and culture of the organization. Over time, sooner or perhaps later, new ways of seeing and acting become habitual, reflexive and ingrained in practice.* (p. 202)

However, it is the *process* of establishing the vision that I believe is important, not the vision itself. Pivotal to a social constructivist approach to leadership is, in my view, the awareness of the importance of relationships. To set out a vision from the top by-passes those who will ultimately turn the vision into working practices and ultimately part of the culture of the organisation. The complexity of relationships will naturally mean that leadership needs to rise to the challenges that occur as a result and not simply by-pass or ignore them.

If emotions run high, then it may follow that leaders need to exhibit qualities to deal with this. Goleman (1995) refers to these qualities as *'emotional intelligence'* (p. 34), which I have already described in relation to learning. In the same way that it follows that if we accept that emotional factors play their part in the learning process and so the development of emotional intelligence on the part of the learner needs to be considered, then we can argue the same for leadership and leaders.

Fullan (2001) specifically identifies self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills, adaptability, stress management and general mood as fundamental characteristics of emotional intelligence. I believe that if leaders model these characteristics then this will cascade throughout the organisation at all levels of leadership, a view supported by Fullan (2003). Interestingly, Goleman (2006) separates social skills from emotional intelligence, as I have already outlined in terms of learning and coins the phrase *'social intelligence'* (p. 82). At a leadership specific level, Goleman (2002) refers to the integration of emotional and social intelligence as *'Primal Leadership'* (p. 3). Leaders in this category exhibit high levels of emotional and social intelligence with the effect that it becomes contagious throughout the organisation.

Swaffield and MacBeath (2006) refer to a similar scenario with what they call *'cultural leadership'* (p. 210) (a style the authors link directly to the process of embedding) which they describe as *'...modelling behaviour and encouraging a permeating of ideas through developing and sharing understandings'* (p. 210). This further emphasises the importance of clear two-way lines of communication and the need for strong relationships between the centre and secondary centres in Fig. 8. If we extend the link between leadership and my chosen social constructivist view of learning, then a model of leadership emerges where cognitive, emotional and social intelligence interact to enable a coherent vision to emerge built on the strength of the relationships of those involved in its realisation. Therefore, leadership for me means actually reflecting the social constructivist view of learning on which my research is based. If we extend Ackoff's (1999) notion that the pinnacle of intellect is wisdom, then we may reasonably coin the phrase *emotional wisdom* in relation to leaders who operate at a level that acts as a role model for others to aspire to.

The value of emotional wisdom or high levels of emotional intelligence among school leaders is not necessarily a 'new' thing or exclusively linked to the work of Goleman (1995), however. Hay (1914) makes the following observations in respect of 'The Headmaster'[3]:

> *And above all, he has sympathy and insight. When a master or boy comes to him with a grievance he knows whether he is dealing with a chronic grumbler or a wronged man. The grumbler can be pacified by a word or chastened by a rebuke; but a man burning under a sense of real injustice and wrong will never be efficient again until his injuries are redressed. If a colleague, again, comes to him with a scheme of work, or organisation, or even play, he is quick to see how far the scheme is valuable and practicable, and how far it is mere fuss and officiousness. He is enormously patient over this sort of thing, for he knows that an untimely snub may kill the enthusiasm of a real worker, and that a little encouragement may do wonders for a diffident beginner…He can tell if a boy is lying brazenly, or lying because he is frightened, or lying to screen a friend, or speaking the truth. He knows when to be terrible in anger, and when to be indescribably gentle.* (pp. 31-32)

For me, a measure of the effectiveness of my research is the extent to which the research process fosters emotional intelligence or wisdom in me. My choice of research methodology needs to embrace this position.

Part 2 explores the practical implications arising from the literature and illustrates the direction of my methodology.

PART 2

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[3] The term is used here in the historical masculine context of Hay's, 1914, writings about life in public schools at the time.

Practical Implications

Part 2   Practical Implications Springing from the Literature Review

(a)   Learning and Teaching

Whatever policy and practice one adopts will reflect an intended or unintended learning paradigm. Therefore, it would be reasonable to attempt to align policy and practice to a *favoured* view of learning. It would follow that teachers and pupils need to be involved in debate about learning in order to establish a collective approach that can permeate through the culture of the school. Particular debate needs to take place regarding the practical relevance and appropriateness of a social constructivist approach to learning since this is my favoured stance following the evidence presented in the literature review. It may be necessary to convince colleagues or indeed change one's own perspective. Teachers and pupils also need to be able to identify matches and mismatches between current policy and practice and social constructivist principles so that current good practice can be reinforced and appropriate changes put in place if required.

From a teaching perspective, a three-dimensional approach to communication, built on strong teacher-student and student-student relationships, needs to be a fundamental part of classroom practice. In essence this involves clear explanations by the teacher, a climate where pupils feel able and secure in asking questions and making their points, and opportunities for pupils to interact with each other in order to share ideas, exchange opinions and discuss the quality of their work. The teacher, in creating this learning environment, will need to take on the role of *mediator*. This means explaining, intervening and encouraging so that pupil learning is developed fully. Another implication of a social constructivist approach to learning is that teaching is not the sole responsibility of the teacher. Other pupils may be able to adopt this role. Learning from a more capable peer and through skilful mediation by the teacher will form the basis of good teaching in this respect.

(b)   Assessment

In order that assessment is consistent with a social constructivist approach, teachers need to agree and be clear about what assessment, as a process, means. By *identifying* the many facets of assessment, professionals can ensure that coherence and consistency is maintained. Taking a social constructivist line means that one must appreciate that assessment involves judgements based on evidence from a variety of sources, not just testing. It is the use of these sources of evidence that defines whether we are engaged in assessment or some form of evaluation. To be engaged in the former, the evidence needs to be used to improve the achievements of pupils and not to identify the impact of teaching methods or policies.

Formative assessment practices seem to have strong links with social constructivist principles in terms of engaging pupils in an active dialogue about where they are in terms of their learning and where they need to move forward. Teachers need therefore to start from the learner's prior experience and knowledge, and work to exploit this to its full through the development of high quality discourse relating to future learning needs.

The overuse of summative tests, particularly for accountability purposes, needs to be guarded against, I feel. By not doing so, learning becomes the slave to the test and the momentum and rhythm of teaching falters. It may be preferable, therefore, to have *core assessment tasks* of a variety of forms that are planned carefully to fit in with programmes of study for each year group. These core tasks may include projects, tests, practical work, group work, oral presentations or other activities designed to allow pupils to show what they have learned up to that point. Getting a balance of tasks that provide opportunities for children to demonstrate their learning in a variety of contexts will more closely link summative assessments with a social constructivist approach. In order for assessments to be meaningfully recorded and reported, outcomes need to be consistent. Teachers, therefore, need to be involved in shared interpretations of judgements through moderating and standardising pupils' work. This is an example of teachers engaging in a learning activity involving shared construction of meaning via a social process.

To view formative and summative assessments as two opposing forces could undermine the potentially productive relationship between them. Although adopting

an AfL perspective, where assessments of whatever form are designed specifically to feed into the learning process rather than merely present a standard achieved at any one point may alleviate this, the potentially damaging and confusing effect of a new educational 'brand' being presented to staff needs to be considered. Therefore, it may be preferable to present the use of formative and summative assessment as a dimension rather than a dichotomy where both can be used to inform future learning.

Many of the formative principles discussed have been practically translated into the AfL resources produced through the 'National Strategy'. It would make sense to use or adapt some of the ideas relating to working formatively in the classroom and also those relating to recording and reporting. The AfL materials include guidance and associated templates for reviewing current provision in classroom based work concerning objective led lessons, oral and written feedback, peer and self assessment and classroom dialogue. Training materials also exist for these aspects so that developments across the whole curriculum can be developed. Whilst the materials may not necessarily be readily applied in their original format, there may be scope for adaptation and refinement as one's research develops. The process of refinement will necessitate collaborative work in order that colleagues 'buy into' the processes involved. This would tend to reflect the social constructivist position favoured by my research. To enable clarity with respect to school and Government initiatives and guidance (including the 'National Strategy' materials), I believe that it is important to go back to first principles and ask 'why?', 'what?' and 'how?' questions about the nature and use of assessment. These questions need to stimulate whole school debate and act as the initial tipping point.

(c)   Evaluation

Although I have argued in favour of a more formative and qualitative approach to evaluation in order to more closely align it to the social constructivist view of learning, the formative use of summative data outlined with regard to assessment could be applied to evaluation also. Typically, summative data for school evaluation tends to involve quantitative output measures. To use this kind of data in a formative way means that it needs shared interpretation where strengths and weaknesses in school provision are identified and acted upon to enhance learning. In this way

qualitative interpretations of statistical data serve to give meaning by exploring the validity, reliability and 'human' factors that lie behind the numbers, tables and points on graphs. Therefore, the data needs to be understood by those who engage in the process of interpretation and a rich background of the children needs to be available and known. This means that the data needs to be presented in a clear transparent format where depth, trends, progression and standards are evident. The other practical issue, with respect to evaluation, is that qualitative and quantitative data and interpretations need to be compiled as a working process and document if it is to be truly formative.

If opportunities really do exist to include qualitative data in the form of interviews, questionnaires and observations, then efforts need to be made to balance it with quantitative data derived from statistical analyses of examination and assessment data. This means that the quality of qualitative data needs to be high if it is to stand up to comparisons with the sophisticated statistical data now common in schools. Clearly the robustness of the data from the DCSF or OfSTED may be seen to be high in comparison to alternative sources unless the latter has proven credibility. Anecdotal commentaries will not satisfy this criterion, I would argue. In this way, the issue is very similar to the issues that surround validity and reliability in research processes.

(d) **Change - Leadership and Management**

Since change often leads to periods of instability, one must be prepared for the turbulence that may occur as a result of this. To assume that change is required could prove to be a mistake as one needs to examine current policies and practices and judge the extent to which they match the proposed vision. In line with a social constructivist approach, the identification and recognition process needs to be a collaborative exercise involving leaders and classroom teachers so that shared understandings can emerge. If change proves to be required, then people need to not only prepare for instability, but also for periods where things actually worsen.

Tipping points in the form of new policies, practices and systems could serve to act as the impetus for change. In my view, the most important thing here is the *selection* of the tipping points. By this I mean not only the type of policy, practice or system but

also the number chosen. To introduce too many will undoubtedly prove difficult to manage and results may suffer as a consequence. Picking the less influential ones, or those that do not cascade or enable ideas to permeate throughout the organisation, may lead to similar results. Ideally, the tipping point needs to be something that *has* to be done but has scope to adapt it to the context in which it is to be sited. If influential colleagues 'buy into' developments, then they also become a mechanism for contagion. It is therefore important to know who these people are and blend them to create teams and lines of dissemination so that their rare social gifts can be utilised. The danger here is to become too close to the process of identifying who these influential people are with the result that one's own values and preferences contaminate the selection. It is often also the case that influential 'experts' and 'role models' come from all quarters of the institution including leaders, teachers, administrative staff and support staff. When blending groups of people together it is important that the number of individuals involved is productive. Groups of 6-8 people would appear to be an effective model.

An exclusive top-down approach to leadership needs to be avoided to retain consistency with social constructivism. This does not mean ignoring mandated reforms, but rather working them into the context of the school in a way that takes into account the diverse range of cognitive, emotional, social and environmental factors of the school. Similarly, with regard to exclusive 'bottom-up' approaches, I feel that it is important not to let things become vague and fragmented. The implications of this are that teams of people need to be co-ordinated by a core group which remains true to the social constructivist ideology. The members of this core group need to demonstrate that they not only consult, but they allow the free flow of ideas so that refinements and even abandonment can occur without prejudice. Getting a shared vision is the objective in this respect and the measure of the quality of the core group is the extent to which it acknowledges and embraces the vital role that *relationships* play in this.

With relationships being pivotal to a social constructivist approach to leadership comes the need for leaders to exhibit high levels of social and emotional intelligence in addition to the cognitive qualities one would expect from them. Although this needs to be evident in the core group, those involved at all levels would benefit from

either having or acquiring these facets. If the senior leaders and those in the core group can demonstrate high levels of social, emotional and cognitive intelligence then one may foster these qualities in others. This means that one has to realise and identify with the notion that schools cannot be led or run on cognitive intellect alone. Given this stance on leadership and management, it follows that one's research methodology and tools need to reflect the social constructivist approach inherent in it so that consistency is retained. This issue is explored in Part 3 as part of the discussion relating to my chosen methodology.

PART 3

Research Methodology

(a)   Similar Studies – Treading the Well Worn Path

As someone who was relatively new to the process of research at Doctorate level, I felt that it was important to learn from the craft of others. My rationale was that one needs to learn from practitioners who have undertaken studies into their own working practices and that of their colleagues. I also argued that it was equally important to learn from university based inquiry where 'academics' conduct 'external' research, and also collaborative projects where teachers and 'external' researchers work together on a shared project. This was not to say that one looks to replicate or 'cut and paste' a methodology but more a case of locating one's own research in the greater body of knowledge in one's chosen field of study. Thus, treading the well worn path became a useful metaphor in helping to establish a starting point in the research process. It also lent itself to the notion of being able to stray from the path as new and alternative routes emerge, whilst at the same time having the option to return or locate one's new direction in the context of the original journey. In this sense, I would argue that research adds to established bodies of knowledge rather than growing in an isolated and fragmented way. By looking at how related projects are conducted in terms of the approaches and techniques used, I was able to orientate them in relation to the paradigm they implicitly reflect. Thus a route-map of ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods, interests, outcomes and pedagogical aims emerged.

There are numerous examples of educational research located in the context of working practices in schools. Research by James *et al* (2006), DfES (2007), Bartlett and Burton (2006), Frankham and Howes (2006), Swaffield and McBeath (2006), Wiliam *et al* (2004), Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2003) and Torrance and Pryor (2001) share this characteristic but are also related to my chosen research areas. One fundamental aspect common to the research cited above is that all are concerned with the development of practice and the *solving* of *particular problems* at a school level rather than seeking solely to obtain measurable judgments or 'thick' descriptions of phenomena observed. In this sense, they are applied, pragmatic and practical in nature. Also apparent in the research cited above is the adherence to an action

research methodology and approach where multi-method data collection techniques are utilised including questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observations, field notes, document analysis and non-inferential statistics. Finally, another common theme within the cited research is that it aims not to generalise results from particular cases to a wider setting. It instead seeks to add to the body of knowledge so that, as Stenhouse (1983) suggests, case studies can build up to allow others to generalise to their own circumstances from a rich pool of examples. I took the view that my research would build upon previous research through adding views of learning to the mixture of assessment, evaluation, leadership and change. My premise was that by establishing a shared view of learning, one can align other developments to it and therefore maintain a sense of consistency, coherence and relevance.

(b)   **Methodology**

(i) Rationale for my Research

The rationale for my research had personal origins. For me, research had to have a direct link to my professional practice. Ideally, it would be an intrinsic part of it. This last point arises partly from a philosophical perspective, but also a pragmatic one. As an Assistant Principal in a large secondary school, I had an extremely intense schedule of duties spanning teaching, leading and managing. My motive for undertaking this course of study was that I wished to forge a link between my practice and the theoretical discourse in education so that I could more readily make sense of what I was doing and, where required, improve it. In addition, I wished to follow a paradigm and methodology that was pragmatic and did not add to or detract from my daily working practices. Having a young family, working full time and undertaking Doctorate study, meant that this last point was a matter of necessity if nothing else. It sounds like a cliché, but I wanted to make a difference to my working context and also add to the body of knowledge in my chosen area of study. In short, I wanted to address a whole school problem in a particular context that may then allow others to reflect upon the outcomes in a way that may help *them* in their own specific circumstances. In this sense my research needed to not only offer a 'thick' description of a particular case, but also be *applied* to problems in a bid to solve them.

My rationale for conducting this research was inspired by the work of Dewey (1933), Stenhouse (1975), Schon (1983), Biesta and Burbules (2003) and Pring (2004). Indeed, I was drawn to Stenhouse's (1975) view in particular: *'It is not enough that teachers' work should be studied: they need to study it themselves'* (p. 143). Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983) both stress the importance of reflection for our thinking processes. It would have been easy for me to cite lack of time and high intensity working practices as barriers to reflection. I believed that this attitude would undermine my research.

For Schon (1983), there is a need to look beyond systems and seek out opportunities for colleagues to work collaboratively on projects. Indeed this reflected the social constructivist view of learning I favoured. Biesta and Burbules (2003) and Pring (2004) stress the need for pragmatism and common sense in research. Drawing on the rich sources of practical experience in schools seemed to me to be of huge importance to obtaining a 'thick' contextual understanding of a particular case. Pring (2004), with reference to this, stresses the need for *'…cumulative knowledge…'* (p. 5). I felt that by building on the work of others, extending the body of knowledge through reflection and action and applying common sense drawn out of experience, I could forge the next step in the knowledge base and formulate a method of inquiry that reflected *me*, my *context* and what I *believed* in. I took the position that it was for others to reflect on the transferability of my research to their own circumstances.

(ii) Rationale for Working in the Critical Paradigm

Paradigms have become part of the natural discourse relating to research (Kuhn 1970, Carr and Kemmis 1986, Bruner 1990, Sparkes 1992, Ernest 1994, Crotty 1998, Seale 1999, Wellington 2000, Cohen *et al* 2000, Denzin and Lincoln 2005, McKernan 2008). If I were to be true to the notion of 'treading the well worn path' it would have been unwise to deviate from placing my research in the context of this discourse. I was aware that there were authors who questioned the suitability of paradigms or indeed the structure and nature of them for exploring issues relating to educational research (Biesta and Burbules 2003, Bloomer 1999). However, as a relatively new researcher, it was useful to orientate my thinking about research using a *personal paradigmatic framework* whilst accepting that it may not necessarily be recognised as

the definitive model. This relates to the issue of relativism as outlined by Bruner (1990) where our views are best thought of in relation to some perspective rather than being offered as absolutes. My thinking on this subject was also influenced by Grant (2000), McLaughlin (2004) and Sternberg (2007) and their discussions relating to studies in comparative education. Grant (2000) stresses the need for *'A Framework for Analysis'* (p. 315) and makes the point that: *'It is possible to examine one's own system critically from the inside, but it is more difficult without a comparative perspective'* (p. 315). McLaughlin (2004) refers to the evaluative importance of comparing *'like with like'* (p. 476), whilst Sternberg (2007) addresses my chosen area of research by making the following point: *'Instruction and assessment need to be understood and thought about within the cultural context in which they occur'* (p. 5). Thus a paradigmatic framework served not only to clarify my views in relation to the research process, it also enabled developments in assessment and evaluation to be placed and framed accordingly.

Although one's chosen paradigm or one's perception of a paradigm may vary, it is one's allegiance to what counts as educational research that needs to remain consistent. I support the definition of educational research offered by Stenhouse (1981) in this respect:

> *Research, I have suggested, is systematic and sustained enquiry, planned and self-critical, which is subjected to public criticism and to empirical tests where these are appropriate.* (p. 18)

It is the extent to which my research holds true to this definition, together with its *consistency* and *transparency* within my chosen paradigm, that provide an indicator of success, I would argue.

Paradigms – Whose side am I on?

Although rather simple, the question I have chosen as a sub-heading to this section came from the debate surrounding the nature, suitability and value of paradigms. Indeed the discourse surrounding the term paradigm has 'conflict' as a key characteristic. This is illustrated, I believe, when one goes back to the origins of the term 'paradigm': a term credited by many (Carr and Kemmis 1986, Sparkes 1992,

Ernest 1994, Crotty 1998) to the work of Thomas Kuhn (1970) in his book *'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions'*. The use of the term 'revolution' lends itself to the notion of paradigms requiring some kind of allegiance on the part of the researcher. I thought that this, too, was rather a basic stance on the issue. For me, it was more a case of seeking *consistency* with my research aims which were based on a social constructivist view of learning. If finding consistency led me to a particular paradigm, this was the 'side' I adopted.

Before one could evaluate one's stance in relation to the paradigms debate, I felt that it was again necessary to make clear and define what we mean by the term. The key components drawn from then literature are conceptual framework, a model and set of beliefs (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kuhn, 1970; Crotty, 1998; Cohen *et al*, 2000; Thomas and Nelson, 1990).

As a newcomer to the wealth of terminology that surrounds paradigms and related aspects, it was encouraging to read Sparkes' (1992) confessed confusion. To analyse the fine distinctions between the paradigms is necessary but, for me, they needed to be easily understood for reasons of pragmatism and clarity. Crotty (1998), Sparkes (1992), Ernest (1994) and Cohen *et al* (2000) all seem to adopt a reasonably consistent model for analyses of paradigmatic differences. All include *epistemology* (Ernest, 1994, subdivides this however into *views of knowledge* and *theory of learning*) and *methodology* as key elements. Also included is *ontology*. Crotty (1998) refers to *methods*, Ernest (1994) and Sparkes (1992) refer to *interests* and Ernest (1994) extends the paradigm elements through reference to *intended outcomes* and *pedagogical aims*. All focus on three main paradigms, namely *Scientific (Objectivist, Positivist, Normative)*, *Interpretive (Interpretative)* and *Critical*. Thus, the summary shown in Fig. 9 serves to illustrate the combined approach to the analysis paradigms based on the work of Sparkes (1992), Ernest (1994), Crotty (1998) and Cohen *et al* (2000).

Fig. 9 Comparison of the Three Main Paradigms – A 'Personal' Framework

	SCIENTIFIC PARADIGM	INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM	CRITICAL PARADIGM
ONTOLOGY	Objects in Physical Space, External - Realist	Subjective Reality, Internal-Idealist, Relativist	Persons in Society, External-Realist or Internal-Idealist
EPISTEMOLOGY – VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE	Absolutist, Objective Knowledge, Behaviourism	Personal Knowledge, Subjectivist, Interactive, The Individual	Socially Constructed Knowledge, Subjectivist, Interactive Societies, Groups and Individuals
EPISTEMOLOGY – THEORY OF LEARNING	Cognitivist	Constructivist, The Individual, Interactive	Social Constructivist, Interactive, Societies, Groups and Individuals
METHODOLOGY	Quantitative and Experimental Seeking General Laws, Nomothetic, Manipulative, Research from the Outside, Macro	Qualitative Case Studies of the Particular, Ideographic, Hermeneutical, Dialectical, Research from the Inside, Micro	Critical Action Research on Social Institutions, Ideographic, Participative, Transformative, Participant Researchers, Macro and Micro Concepts
METHODS	Sampling, Measurement and Scaling, Statistics, Experiments	Non-statistical, Questionnaire, Observation, Interview, Interpretive Methods, Document Analysis, Conversation Analysis	Non-inferential Statistics, Questionnaire, Observation, Interview, Interpretive Methods, Document Analysis, Conversation Analysis, **Focus Groups**
INTEREST(S)	Prediction and Control of the World, Technical	To Understand and Make Sense of the World, Practical	Social Justice, Emancipation, Criticism and Liberation
INTENDED OUTCOME	Objective Knowledge, Truth and Laws	Illuminative Subjective Understandings	Intervention for Social Reform, Social Justice
PEDAGOGICAL AIMS	Subject Centred or Social Utility	Child Centred	Empowerment and Critical Citizenship

My personal paradigmatic framework is a hybrid construction generated out of the work of Crotty (1998), Sparkes (1992), Ernest (1994) and Cohen *et al* (2000). I tried

to pull together consistencies in thinking but readily accept that when one creates a hybrid framework, it becomes a mutation that others may not identify with. It therefore must be stressed again that it became a *personal* mechanism for ordering my thinking. Interestingly, a 'Focus Group' method did not feature in the 'methods' section of my original framework based on my initial reading relating to the aforementioned authors. However, in the light of further reading (Parker and Tritter 2006, Lankshear and Knobel 2004, Bell 2005, Silverman 2006, Cohen *et al* 2006, Fontana and Frey 2005) I chose to include it within the critical paradigm due to its links with interactive epistemology, participative and transformative methodology, emancipatory interests and its aim of empowerment and critical citizenship.

Although Fig. 9 provided a useful tool for establishing my own personal allegiance to a particular paradigm and its associated components, the process of reflection and linkage to one's own situation may seem rather mechanical and definitive. However, I would argue that this process was based on rationalising and ordering my thoughts in order to resolve my own confusions. In the same way that I have argued that developments in assessment, evaluation and leadership need to reflect a chosen view of learning, I would also argue that my research also needed to be consistent with my allegiance to a social constructivist stance. For me, this is vital in order to preserve the consistency and coherence of my work.

Although I am aware of Bloomer's (1999) criticism relating to critical theory gaining paradigm status, I was drawn to its characteristics and alignment to a social constructivist epistemology. I do not hold with the view that the critical paradigm is merely a blend of two other paradigms and therefore not distinct. I would argue that the product of the blend creates a new set of beliefs and principles that do not appear jointly elsewhere in the same way that mixing two different colours creates a new one. For me, the main distinguishing feature of the critical paradigm is that it has the practical application of understanding to the solving of problems at its core. Applying understanding to problems *may* be a feature of the scientific or interpretive paradigm but not necessarily an implicit quality. In short, my own view sees the scientific and interpretive paradigms aiming to deduct and determine, and induct and inform respectively. I would argue that the critical paradigm is distinct in that it is concerned

with seeking out solutions to particular questions in order to intervene, change, reform and transform in a way that requires a political stance to be adopted.

I am also aware that the various 'isms' (Pring, 2004) associated with epistemology add depth to our understanding and can relate my own ideas to elements of Constructivism, Interpretivism, Symbolic Interactionism and Post-modernism (Crotty 1998). My allegiance to a social constructivist view of learning led me to recognise the need to embrace the notion of actively constructing meaning through my chosen research paradigm and methodology (Williams and Burden, 1997). I also recognised a need to gain 'thick' descriptions of particular cases symbolic of interpretivism (Seale 1999, Wellington 2000). Bloor and Wood (2006) characterise symbolic interactionism as follows:

> *A theory of social action that views actors' behaviour as shaped by the interactive construction of meaning. Meanings are seen as collaborative, provisional and contingent, and social structures are the emergent and shifting products of such meaning construction.* (p. 159)

This definition has a clear linkage with a social constructivist view of learning through the emphasis on the active and collaborative understanding of the particular. Blumer (1969) in this respect emphasises the reciprocal relationship between the self and society as being a characteristic. Post-modernism celebrates the particular and challenges the notion of absolute reality (Crotty 1998, Bloor and Wood 2006). This too is an intrinsic feature of a social constructivist view of learning. To have delved into the finer details of these 'isms' would have detracted from the clarity of picture I wish to present. Suffice it to say that my research both drew upon and was informed by them.

If I extend my epistemological stance to methodology, the critical paradigm is characterised by the 'involved' researcher actively searching for practical responses to problems at a local level. It therefore goes beyond the 'macro' search for general laws associated with the scientific paradigm and also the extreme 'micro', particular methodology common in the interpretive paradigm. The fusion of macro and micro perspectives offered by the critical paradigm creates for me a picture of education where government policies are being applied in different ways by different teachers

and schools based upon the values of the people involved. I believe that this is at the heart of the challenges facing the teachers I work with in terms of making the latest 'must do' from government fit in with what we 'know works' in our school with our children and staff. This has links with the 'Interests' section of Fig. 9.

What I find particularly interesting is the cited (Carr and Kemmis 1986, Denzin and Lincoln 2005) emancipatory qualities of the critical paradigm through the methodology known as Action Research (AR). Although Crotty (1998) has misgivings in relation to the ability of Action Research to fulfil an emancipatory brief at macro level, he gives an acceptance that this could be achieved at micro political level. It is this interest that I am drawn to, given the apparent acceptance in the school I work in that teaching is very much a mandated profession. If the outcomes of research go some way towards the improvement of practice and the aims of empowerment and 'critical citizenship' are achieved, then I can see a real purpose to my research. It is one where teachers can regain their professionalism and move away from the 'delivery' model in which they sometimes find themselves.

The methods employed within my chosen methodology reflect the participative, transformative nature of curriculum development and school improvement at the 'chalk face'. The non-inferential use of statistics interests me as much of my current dealings with statistics relating to children's attainment seeming to indicate that they provide 'the truth'. Measures like Contextual Value Added (CVA) proclaim that they take all relevant things into account to produce the measure (socio-economic, school location etc.). I am encouraged by Sparkes' (1992) reference to Smith (1988) in terms of stressing that statistics rely on interpretation and only contribute to the construction of social reality. Silverman (2006) also lends weight to the argument for looking beyond quantification and statistics. These points support the notion that statistical methods used in isolation can be merely a guess as to what is really there. I prefer to see methods as tools to help create an image or define what is actually happening. One can 'borrow' from methods associated with the scientific and interpretive paradigms and use them as part of one's action research as appropriate. I would argue that 'borrowing' from methods associated with alternative paradigms allows different lenses to be applied to the research process (Brookfield, 1995). The appropriate

borrowing of methods is supported by Wragg (2005). A more in-depth analysis of the issues surrounding AR forms the basis of the next section.

(iii) Choice of Methodology
- **Action Research (AR)**

Corey (1953) was one of the first scholars to draw attention to AR as a mechanism for developing practice in education. Rather than research being the domain of the external 'expert', Corey's notion was one where teachers become the researchers. Since these initial 'in-roads' AR has gained momentum and become an accepted methodology for education research (Carr and Kemmis 1986, Elliott 1991, Pring 2004, McKernan 2008). I believe, therefore, that by having an historical link and being located in the present, the adoption of an AR methodology is consistent with 'treading the well worn path'.

In choosing AR as my research methodology, I was influenced by its characteristics and association with a social constructivist perspective. Many of these characteristics are presented in Fig. 9 through it being located within the critical paradigm. However, more specific characteristics are explored by Bloor and Wood (2006), McKernan (2008) and Elliott (1993). One salient feature emerges from Elliott's (1993, p. 65) and McKernan's (2008, p. 88) reference to AR as the *'Practical Science'*. Pivotal to McKernan's (2008) view of AR is the notion of an *applied hermeneutical* function. This relates to my previous contention that although following the interpretative paradigm *could* involve practically addressing problems, it is not implicit in the same way as I would argue it is with the critical paradigm. Thus, McKernan's (2008) use of the term practical/applied hermeneutics creates an interesting synthesis of action AR and hermeneutics. In discussing reflexivity in the context of AR, Hall (1996) makes the point: *'As I explore the concept of reflexivity I am working within a broad field of educational research which draws from hermeneutics'* (p. 30). I can readily identify with this definition in that hermeneutics forms the 'borrowed' mechanism by which AR is undertaken.

I am inclined to relate my own view of AR for the purpose of my research to the definition offered by Elliott (1991):

> *Action research might be defined as "the study of social situations with a view to improving the quality of action within it. It aims to feed practical judgement in concrete situations, and the validity of the 'theories' or hypotheses it generates depends not so much on 'scientific' tests of truth, as on their usefulness in helping people to act more intelligently and skilfully. In action-research 'theories' are not validated independently and then applied to practice. They are validated through practice.* (p. 69)

By identifying the characteristics of action research, I was able to extend my understanding of the above definition and more readily establish how this particular methodology translated into the field.

Bloor and Wood (2006) refer to a key feature of AR as adopting *'...a dynamic, cyclical process which moves through phases of planning, action, observation and reflection'* (p. 10). Zuber-Skerritt (1996) also refers to AR following a *'cyclical process'* (p. 3) and uses the same terminology to describe the phases. When represented diagrammatically, the process looks very straightforward as shown in Fig. 10.

Fig. 10 Action Research Cycle
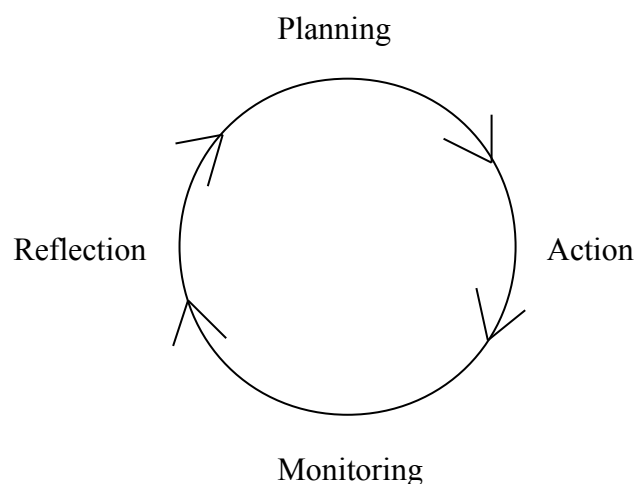
In my view, this basic representation over-simplifies the social context of my research. Whilst my research undoubtedly involved a planning phase, it was not necessarily the *first* phase. At times I undertook a great deal of monitoring and

observation to establish current working practices *before* any plan for change was established. As a practitioner researcher, I tried to balance the demands of undertaking research with those of my professional role as teacher and leader. This practical problem is highlighted by Winter (1996).

The intensity of my day required me to be able to 'think on my feet' in this respect. Thus, I am reminded of Schon's (1983) fusion of reflection and action via *'Reflection-in-Action'* (p. 49). The cycle became more stable as my research progressed, however, and therefore the model in Fig. 10 is useful in terms of the basic components. This provided me with reassurance as my research took unpredictable turns. Indeed, McNiff (1988) refers to the inherent chaos of AR and the need to acknowledge this facet. Bloor and Wood (2006) draw attention to this also.

To hold credibility, my research needed to be rigorous and systematic in terms of both the gathering and analysis of data relating to practice. In terms of ownership, I have already established my stance in that the process and product of my research belong to those directly involved – the practitioners, of which I am one.

And links with a social constructivist ideology….

McKernan (2008, p.84) draws out some key characteristics of what he calls the *'process-inquiry model'* of curriculum development. McKernan (2008), in setting out his model, echoes much of what I have become to associate with social constructivist views.

One key feature of McKernan's (2008) interpretation of AR aligns it quite strongly to social constructivist views and involves the use of what he calls *'the action research seminar'* (p. 140). I will explore more detailed features of this aspect in my discussion of focus groups as a research method in the section on 'Methods Used', but for now it is pertinent to refer to one of its main features as it relates to social constructivism. McKernan (2008) refers to this key feature as *'…characterized by group collaboration and sharing as distinct from authority-expert models of teaching'* (p. 140).

A more explicit linkage of social constructionist views with AR is provided by Gergen and Gergen (2008) who comment: *'In effect, the growth of action orientated research is simultaneous with the emergence of a social constructionist view of knowledge'* (pp. 159-160). The authors (*ibid* 2008) acknowledge the interchangeable use of social *constructionism* and social *constructivism* but also provide a useful distinction proposing that the former is linked to human relationships and the latter the processes of the mind. Whilst I can see that drawing this distinction may prove useful in analysing these separate components, my research takes a more integrated view of the mind and relationships. For the purpose of my research, I use the terms interchangeably.

Based on this discussion, I believe that action research and social constructivist views take their place under the umbrella of the critical paradigm as illustrated in Fig. 9 and that both are *consistent* features of my research in that they relate to my research aims and underlying philosophy. My views in relation to the qualities inherent in the critical paradigm shown in Fig. 9, also draw on the Frankfurt School as discussed by Kemmis (2008). With reference to these qualities Kemmis (2008) mentions that research in this sense is collaborative, involves critical collective reflection, includes intervention, wisdom through experience, and has emancipatory aims. In short, I believe that AR was a suitable mechanism for addressing the specific issue of embedding formative assessment and evaluation in the school in which I work through its focus on practical application and contextual problem solving. However, I am aware that AR has been the target of criticism amongst the research community and it would be unwise not to consider my position in relation to this. The next section will explore these issues together in the context of my research.

- **A Critical Review of Action Research**

To assume that one's research will *automatically* 'hold weight' if one simply chooses a methodology consistent with one's research aims, rationale and literature, belies the possibility of the social context in which one's research takes place having a powerful influence on the whole process. It is with this in mind that I have chosen to include a discussion relating to the potential problems associated with AR in order to illustrate

my reflections both during and following the research process. I will focus on general issues here in this respect, but will devote specific discussion to issues concerning reliability and validity, as they relate to reflexivity and the narrative, in the latter sections of Part 3.

The first issue I wish to explore concerns the claims by authors such as Carr and Kemmis (1986), and Denzin and Lincoln (2005), that AR can serve an emancipatory or empowering function. This is of particular relevance to my research as adopting a social constructivist stance relied upon collaborative and distributed ways of working. For this to be successful, key players in the research process, of which I am one, needed 'head room' in order for ideas to evolve and develop. This issue has been the focus of my discussions relating to Leadership and Management in Part 2. Indeed, I am of the opinion that AR may even assume the role of research methodology *and* leadership approach. This position is endorsed by Torbert (2004) in relation to AR and the transformative effect it can potentially have as a leadership approach. However, the extent to which AR can fully serve an emancipatory role is questioned by Crotty (1998). Although Crotty (1998) has misgivings in relation to AR fulfilling an emancipatory brief at a macro level, he gives a clear acceptance that this could be achieved at a micro-political level. Since breathing life back into 'The Thought-Fox' is an identified aim of my research (see introduction), I am keen to explore the extent to which emancipation and empowerment can be achieved through more flexible approaches at a local micro level.

The next issue I wish to discuss does not relate to AR per se, but to any form of inquiry that may be described as participatory practitioner research. Weiskopf and Laske (1996) refer to the influence of one's power base in the research process, particularly in relation to emancipatory AR. The authors' discourse with reference to this issue indicates their perception of how this might be embraced positively within the research process. Weiskopf and Laske (1996) use the terms *researcher* and *facilitator* synonymously and outline three functions that this person needs to fulfil in order to minimise the negative influences of power base.

The first function stresses the importance of maintaining the facilitator role where actions in the field contribute to *'...politicisation of the organisation'* (*ibid*, p. 132).

The aim here is to foster reflective processes in the field in a collaborative and discursive manner. The second function of the researcher is to *'...reveal the consequences of actions that the members of the field are not aware of'* (*ibid*, p. 133). Here, the aim is to provide information that may serve to facilitate discussion and debate. However, it is important, I would argue, to be transparent and balanced in terms of the nature and content of the information provided in order to avoid potential bias. Thirdly, Weiskopf and Laske (1996) see the researcher's role as enabling colleagues to see that *'...structural conditions are not only restrictions to but also resources for action'* (p. 133). This last point relates to Gladwell's (2000) notion of tipping points discussed in Part 1 in that mandated macro policy could serve a positive effect by stimulating a school based micro response that may well take the organisation forward. At the very least, a local response could serve to contextualise national policy.

Another problem relating to the researcher's power base, and that of those involved in the research, centres on the flow of information as part of the research process (Cohen *et al*, 2000). In both my introduction and Part 1, I have stressed my research aim of embedding formative assessment and evaluation in the working practices of the school in which I work. The flow of information is pivotal to dissemination and adoption of new ways of thinking and working so that developments are indeed embedded and become part of the culture of the school. My own role as senior leader in the 'researched' school *could* have artificially influenced and contaminated my research and resulted in it taking a pre-determined trajectory. Cohen *et al* (2000) note the exact tension between AR and the way schools might operate as follows:

> *...action research and schools are often structured differently, schools being hierarchical, formal and bureaucratic whilst action research is collegial, informal, open, collaborative and crosses formal boundaries.* (p. 239)

The extent to which a school reflects the above dichotomy will vary of course, and I would tend to view this as a possible change agent and one that could break down the restrictive formal boundaries. Cohen *et al* (2000) stress the need to pursue collegiality in this respect.

In Part 1, I have drawn on the work of Argyris and Schon (1996) in terms of single-loop and double-loop learning. With reference to this, Zuber-Skerritt (1996) points to single-loop learning as a barrier to emancipatory AR. This stems from the author's suggestion that single-loop learning is generally *'...technical, functional and short-term oriented'* (*ibid*, p. 91): whereas emancipatory AR relies upon the more engrained cultural changes relating to *'...values, strategies and behaviour'* (*ibid*, p. 91), characterised by double-loop learning. In my experience, it is not always appropriate to separate the technical, functional and systems from cultural elements. Quite often a change of system, functional in nature, can provide the tipping point that activates change at a cultural level through the disruption of stability. As a result of the turbulence caused by technical changes, one is thrown into a position where one has to re-examine one's values, beliefs and behaviours. Therefore, I would argue that a change of culture *could* occur as a result of this. In order to preserve this possibility, it is important, in my view, to 'facilitate' or 'mediate' the responses of one's team rather than direct. In the same way that social constructivist approaches to learning and teaching rely on good quality mediation by the teacher to empower the learner, so too does emancipatory AR in my opinion. The alternative is a directed learning environment that becomes stifled by pre-determined learning objectives or outcomes.

The task of conducting AR in a way that fulfils an emancipatory brief is a challenge to the involved, participatory, practitioner researcher, I believe. Increasingly, colleagues express a desire to be autonomous on the one hand, and be told what to do and how to do it on the other. Balancing this is problematic and one has to be careful that attempts to *delegate* are not viewed by others as attempts to *abdicate*. Zuber-Skerritt (1996) refers to similar problems where participants in the research process want *'...to get on with the job, rather than spending time on reflection, team building and group discussion'* (p. 91) which leads to resentment of the facilitator. If balancing these issues was easy to accomplish, it would not have presented me with the challenge or capacity to develop professionally. As Zuber-Skerrit (1996) points out, it is a case of moving people *'...from efficiency to effectiveness orientation, and from operational to a strategic approach to organisational development'* (p. 91).

My conclusion from this discussion of problems associated with emancipatory AR is that, whilst I can accept that one's influence on the macro-political arena is negligible

for the practitioner involved in small scale educational AR, one may still facilitate and mediate significant developments at the micro-political level in one's school.

(iv) Methodological Issues

- **Access to Data Sources**

Being in a school setting as a practitioner researcher involved in participative inquiry and practice, I had access to numerous sources of data including colleagues, students, documents and classroom artefacts. AR typically makes use of this phenomenon and a multi-method approach to research is common practice in this respect (Winter 1996, Cohen *et al* 2000, Lankshear and Knobel 2004, Pring 2004, Bell 2005, Bloor and Wood 2006, Levin 2008, McKernan 2008). A more detailed account of the methods of data collection associated with these sources is discussed in section (v). Immersed in this rich pool of data, one could find oneself forgetting that educational research in this setting involves people and not mere data from passive, detached and unfeeling sources. With this in mind, I believe that it is important to be secure in one's knowledge, understanding and application of ethical protocols so that one's research does not become just a tool to secure a 'pass' for a thesis, but more a *human* response to *human* interactions.

- **Ethical Considerations**

When one considers the ethical implications of educational research, it seems to me to be of paramount importance that the research process should not interrupt, undermine or dilute learning and teaching. In my view, this is the *minimum* requirement. It follows, for me, that to ensure that educational research does indeed impact upon learning and teaching, means that this very issue becomes one of ethics. To adopt research practices that undermine, detract or even harm the learning and teaching process therefore become unethical. Following a positivist, scientific and experimental design for educational research, where harmful treatments are introduced or potentially beneficial ones are withheld against the backdrop of a control and treatment group, *could* run the risk of ethical ignorance.

I do not judge particular research methods to be unethical per se. Rather it is their *use* in certain contexts. This stance is supported by Cohen *et al* (2000) who point to potential ethical hazards stemming from the nature of the research project, the context, procedures, data collection, participants and publication. Using a multi-method approach, as characterised by AR, meant that it was important to adhere to established ethical protocols that span all research techniques. Literature on this subject include protocols that secure informed consent, avoid deception, minimise intrusion, ensure confidentiality, minimise risk or harm, demonstrate respect, avoid coercion and manipulation, and prioritise a reciprocal two-way process (Wellington 2000, Cohen *et al* 2000, Radnor 2002, Lankshear and Knobel 2004, Bell 2005, Silverman 2006)[4]. I would argue that, by holding true to these ethical protocols, my research process was less technique driven and more a way of working with people.

That said, I had two main ethical concerns. The first was that as a 'partner school' of the examining university, the research setting and context ran the risk of undermining the anonymity of participants. In short, my concern was that through their in-depth knowledge of the school, the examining body (ie, supervisors, internal examiner, lecturers) may 'connect' with my research in a way that was ethically dubious. However, I took all reasonable steps at my disposal to preserve the anonymity of the research participants and the school as a whole.

My second concern related to my perceived tension between writing a thesis with my name explicitly cited as the author and my desire to retain the collaborative quality of my research. In other words, how could *'I'* preserve the *'we'* so that it was not a case of my voice alone. I decided to address this particular issue by continuous member validation during the data analysis and writing up process. I also chose to write up the fieldwork in a narrative style in order to represent the voices of the research participants.
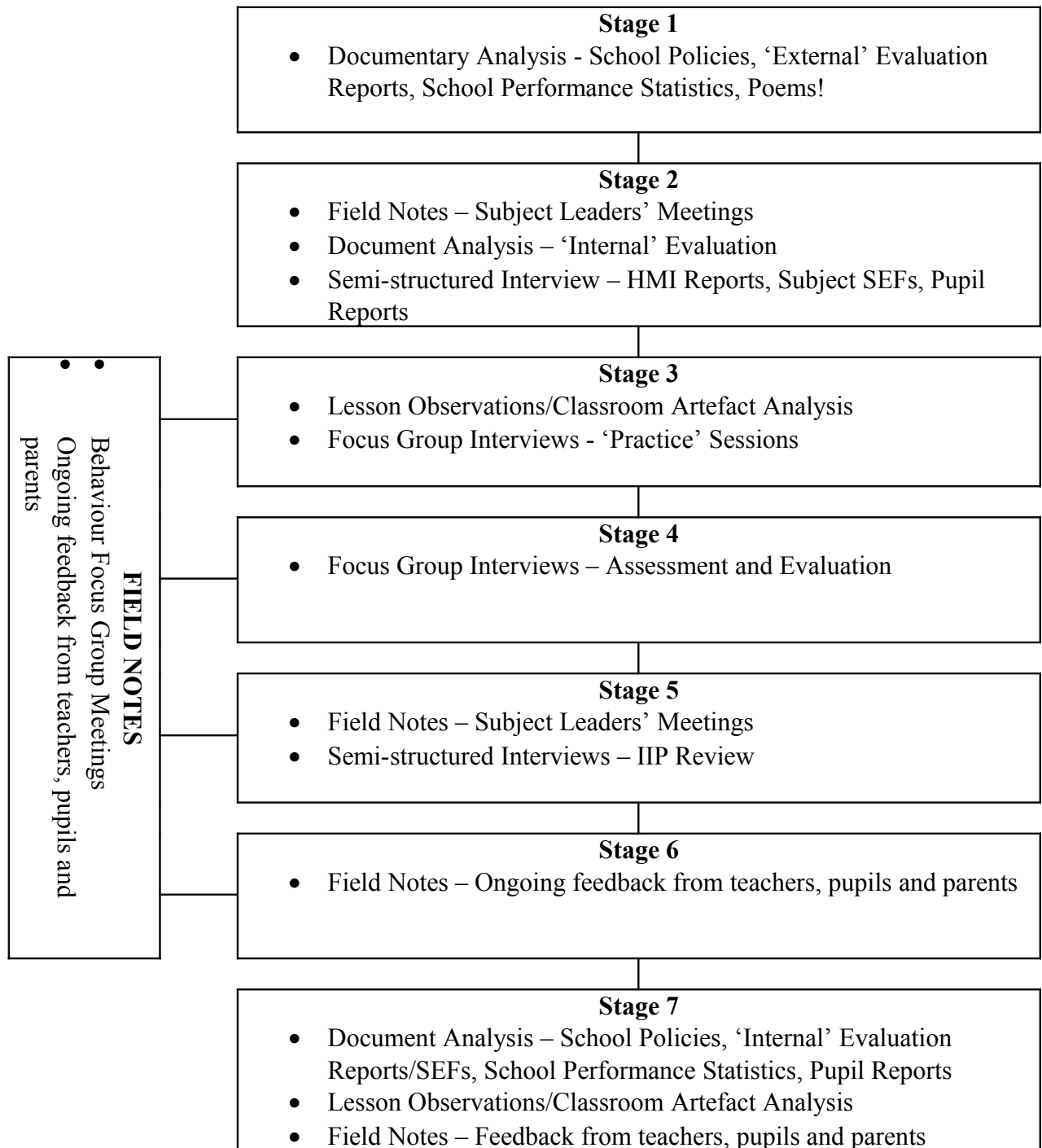
(v) Methods Used

Figure 11 is a diagrammatical overview of my research methods and charts sequentially their application in the field.

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[4] Appendix I illustrates the information and consent form provided for research participants.

Fig. 11 Research Method Overview

Stage 1
• Documentary Analysis - School Policies, 'External' Evaluation Reports, School Performance Statistics, Poems!

Stage 2
• Field Notes – Subject Leaders' Meetings • Document Analysis – 'Internal' Evaluation • Semi-structured Interview – HMI Reports, Subject SEFs, Pupil Reports

Stage 3
• Lesson Observations/Classroom Artefact Analysis • Focus Group Interviews - 'Practice' Sessions

Stage 4
• Focus Group Interviews – Assessment and Evaluation

Stage 5
• Field Notes – Subject Leaders' Meetings • Semi-structured Interviews – IIP Review

Stage 6
• Field Notes – Ongoing feedback from teachers, pupils and parents

Stage 7
• Document Analysis – School Policies, 'Internal' Evaluation Reports/SEFs, School Performance Statistics, Pupil Reports • Lesson Observations/Classroom Artefact Analysis • Field Notes – Feedback from teachers, pupils and parents

FIELD NOTES
• Behaviour Focus Group Meetings
• Ongoing feedback from teachers, pupils and parents

The following sections describe more fully the research methods used and Part 4 illustrates how they were applied in the field.

- **Focus Groups and Semi-Structured Interviews**

Interviews and the Spoken Word

The use of interviews, by the sheer fact that they involve 'talk', has great potential to not only elicit information but also provide the impetus for action. This technique therefore had the potential to address all three orders of my proposed research questions. Action, however, was dependent upon interaction and it was therefore important to look closely at interviews and research to select a mode of interview that maximised interactive exchange of views, beliefs and opinions such that the behaviours of those involved were influenced; a process that can be aligned to social constructivism, I would argue.

Elliott (1991) recommends using unstructured interviews in the preliminary stages of action research, then moving towards semi-structured and finally a more structured approach. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) present a similar picture and suggest that semi-structured and open-ended interviews allow the collection of perspectives on issues. Radnor (2002), with reference to this last point, also shows an allegiance to semi-structured interviews and presents guidance on how to conduct interviews that allow the interviewee's interpretation of the situation under study:

> *A number of open questions are devised as a result of seeking to find a useful way to elicit responses to the research question. However, within each open-ended question there is information that I would clearly like to pick up on in all the interviews.*   (p. 60).

These 'pick-up' issues form prompts to ensure that key areas are covered. This semi-structured approach is also supported by Bell (2005). The main factor that underpins the success of this research method seems to be acknowledged as the skill of the interviewer (Lankshear and Knobel 2004, Radnor, 2002). The potentially rich, 'thick' sources of data that may be gathered through interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2005) may not emerge if the interview is not handled skilfully. Thus the benefits may be

lost. Radnor (2002) suggests that 'active' listening is the main skill required of the interviewer. I can identify with this as I often checked understanding through reiterating what had been said when I interviewed children, parents and colleagues. If I had not done this, I would have risked losing meaning.

Cohen *et al* (2000) clearly outline strengths and weaknesses of a range of interview techniques. Since I set my position mid-way between the structured and unstructured parameters (semi-structured) to gain the best of both, I was more concerned with the strengths of comprehensive, situation specific data collection offset against the weaknesses relating to time involved and interviewer skill. The time issue is not necessarily linked to the interview itself, although Lankshear and Knobel (2004) do suggest that adults take on average 1 hour and children 30 minutes, but to the transcription of the recorded data. Bell (2005) with reference to transcribing states that *'...you can count on at least four hours work for every hour of interview'* (p. 165). Elliott (1991) does feel that the time taken to transcribe is worth the effort in that it *'...concentrates the mind on what is happening'* (p. 79). This, perhaps, would be the weakness of giving this task to someone else in a bid to speed up the process.

At times it was easy to become consumed by the quest to obtain the 'correct' transcription. Kvale (1996) points to the futile nature of this quest and suggests that *'...- there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode'* (p. 166). In this respect, I was drawn to the 'common sense' question Kvale (1996) poses to address this issue: *'A more constructive question is: "What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?"'* (p. 166). I would argue that it was more important to think of usefulness in terms of asking 'what *questions* do I ask in the interview that will enable me to address the research questions?' since one *has* to transcribe accurately what was said by the participant.

Focus Groups and Group Interviews – Are they the Same?

In my own particular circumstances the main priority with interview techniques was maximising the amount of interactive discourse in the time available to me. I considered the use of group interviews but by strict definition they did not yield the result I was searching for. Individual interviews seemed limited by the social

exchanges that are possible between two people. A focus group method on the other hand offered far more potential to achieve interaction at a minimum time cost and the possibility of a more dynamic and productive result more representative of the social constructivist approach I wanted to adopt. My initial problem was a blurring of the distinction between these two techniques.

Lankshear and Knobel (2004) blur the boundaries between the techniques when they say *'...small group/focus group interviews are gaining in popularity in qualitative research studies'* (p. 208). Bell (2005) also combines the terms group interviews and focus groups. Kamberelis and Demitriadis (2005) continue to fuse group interviews and focus groups by outlining that *'...at the broadest possible level, focus groups are collective conversations or group interviews'* (p. 903). Cohen *et al* (2000) move away from the 'broadest' towards a distinction between the terms when they describe focus groups as an *'adjunct'* (*ibid*, p. 288) to group interviews. It is only when one scrutinises these techniques even further that a real distinction emerges.

Silverman (2006) with reference to focus groups draws a clear distinction by saying that in contrast to group interviews the focus group researcher *'...acts more as the facilitator of a group discussion than a questioner'* (p. 110). This view is supported by Parker and Tritter (2006).

It was the potential power of the social dynamics associated with focus groups that appealed to me from the perspective social constructivism and my third order research questions which were related to the processes of dissemination, embedding and driving the research project.

The link between a focus group method and my push towards social constructivism, pragmatism, the critical paradigm and action research unified in my personal paradigmatic framework (Fig. 9) is highlighted by Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) where they align a focus group method to an intersection of pedagogy, politics, the 'real world' and interpretive enquiry. Furthermore, its survival as a method of qualitative research is shown in Fig. 12.

Fig. 12 Discursive Formations and the Deployment of Focus Groups over Time

Discursive Formation	*Pre-World War II*	*1950 - 1980*	*1980 - 2000*	*2000 -*
Military intelligence	X			
Market research	X	X	X	X
Emancipatory pedagogy		X	X	X
First-wave feminism	X			
Second-wave feminism		X	X	
Third-wave feminism			X	X

(Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005, p. 888).

As a method, focus groups appear to not only be 'established' but are linked to the emancipatory, collaborative and interactive process I prefer.

In addition to this there is evidence of the successful use of a focus group method in recent research that is closely related to my research areas and questions. Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2003) used a focus group called the 'Effective Learning Group' (ELG) to help teachers develop more effective approaches to teaching and learning. The essence of the group is described by Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2003) as *'...a collaborative action research group'* (p. 424). Indeed the link between focus groups and Action Research is explicitly characterised in what McKernan (2008) refers to as *'The action research seminar'* (p. 139).

The key processes of mediation, facilitation and critical stance attracted me to the 'Action Research Seminar' as a *working* definition of a focus group for my research. It embraces the key features of focus groups already mentioned (Silverman 2006, Parker and Tritter 2006) and also maintains the coherence and consistency of my research through its linkage to my chosen action research methodology. Another example of focus groups being used in studies similar to my own is provided by

Swaffield and MacBeath (2006) in their 'Learning How to Learn (LHTL) project. This involved the setting up of focus groups to embed LHTL in schools.

In the cases of focus groups cited in similar studies, the issue of getting the right group size and blend is stressed. The ELG and the LHTL project involved focus groups of around a dozen members. My concern was that as group size increases, individual contributions tend to decrease. I have seen this in my own practice when I lead subject leaders' meetings of twenty or more colleagues. This may be down to social loafing and what has become known as the 'Ringelmann Effect'(Gill, 1986), where individual contributions decrease as group size increases, or it may be due some members taking over the discussion (Lankshear and Knobel 2004, Bell 2005). Harvey-Jones (1988) refers to effective group sizes being between six and eight people. McKernan (2008) refers to the 'Action Research Seminar' as ideally comprising between six and twelve, Wellington (2000) suggests a focus group size of six to ten, and Greenbaum (1998) opts for eight to ten (with a discussion time of between 90 and 120 minutes). I decided that the six to eight model proposed by Harvey-Jones (1988) was probably more likely to straddle the interaction/efficiency of data collection divide, particularly as Harvey-Jones (1988) successfully applied this principle to large organisations like ICI. It also reflects the views outlined by Morgan (1997): *'Below 6, it may be difficult to sustain a discussion; above 10 it may be difficult to control one'* (p. 43).

Whilst common features may prove an advantage to the smooth running of debate, I would argue that it may also prove beneficial to have a rich selection of *differences*. Winter (1996) makes the following observation in respect to this point:

> *Rather, other groupings which include both enthusiastic and cynical members are potentially more interesting, because it is within those aggregations that there is more potential for change of the overall workgroup.* (p. 21)

It was with this in mind that I viewed the blend of the group as being important. The ELG group was initially self selecting but then moved to a situation where members became coerced (Haggarty and Postlethwaite, 2003). The LHTL groups varied from members being coerced or expected to take part to a more voluntary approach (Swaffield and MacBeath (2006). Either way, I felt it important to step back in order

to check one had the correct blend. Gladwell (2000) calls this the *'Law of the Few'* (p. 33) and refers to *'social epidemics'* (p. 33) being based on this.

Since my third order research questions relating to dissemination, embedding and driving the research project relied on the 'spread' of ideas and practices across the school, the notion of epidemics was an interesting one and tended to support the use of a focus group method. Both the ELG (Haggarty and Postlethwaite, 2003) and the LHTL projects (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2006) draw attention to the fluid and seemingly variable approaches to achieving the blend of focus group members.

Gladwell (2000) has a more considered view however and identifies three key types of people that may work well as a mix. Gladwell (2000) refers to *'connectors'* (p. 38) (people who know lots of people), *'mavens'* (p. 62) (people who like telling other people things) and *'salesmen'* (p. 83) (people who have a persuasive personality). Although I could see the rationale behind this, I did not attempt to apply too rigid a formula and preferred to rely on my own knowledge of people and how a certain mix might facilitate my research aims. It has to be recognised however that one's own experiences and knowledge of people can sometimes contaminate the social picture. Morgan (1997) in respect of this last point outlines the following caveat:

> *Focus groups are frequently conducted with purposively selected samples in which the participants are recruited from a limited number of sources (often only one). Such 'bias' is a problem if ignored - that is, interpreting data from a limited sample as representing the full spectrum of experiences and opinions.* (p. 35)

Whilst I agree that it is important to acknowledge 'bias', I would argue that it is important to take active steps to practically address this issue. 'Dropping' ideas generated from the focus group into larger groups so that they might then be refined seemed an appropriate strategy in this respect. Ultimately, I agree with Greenbaum's (1998) sentiment in that *'The ultimate aim is to configure the groups with persons who are capable of providing the highest quality discussion about the topic being researched'* (p. 2). If one, as researcher, is part of the focus group, one must also acknowledge, and seek to minimise, the effects of one's own power-base as Weiskopf and Laske (1996) point out: *'Obviously, however, power cannot be excluded from the research process and is **reproduced** in various forms rather than **reduced**: it is a*

constitutive feature of every social relationship' (p. 132). Litosseliti (2003) extends the appreciation of power base to the multiple interactions within the group as a whole. This issue is picked up later in this section in relation to the skill required of the *'moderator'* (Morgan 1997, pp. 48-49; Morgan 1998, p. 47; Krueger 1998, p. 56; Wellington 2000, p. 125; Litosseliti 2003, p. 54) in focus group research.

Although getting the right blend of people in the focus group is important, it is the use of the focus group to generate ideas, disseminate them and embed them that is key. Swaffield and MacBeath (2006) suggest that cultural change often comes about as a result of an organisational or structural change. This could be said to be a 'tipping point'. The cultural change occurs when this becomes embedded via the spread of the ideas and practices. The problem of fuelling the 'epidemic' and spread of ideas generated by focus groups is referred to by Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2003). I believed that it was important to 'drop' the ideas into gradually ever increasing groups of people in order to stimulate further debate and refinement. In reality this involved taking the ideas from the focus group to subject leaders and then on to subject teams. Whatever the approach, one has to be mindful of the perceptions of those people 'outside' the focus group. If they see the group as an elite, select few, then resentment and resistance may emerge (Haggarty and Postlethwaite 2003). Once again, this is where group selection/blend is important but also the *way* in which the group is allowed to work in order that ideas may emerge. It is this latter issue that I explore next.

The Skill of the Moderator

I have already positioned *my* working definition of focus groups alongside that of the action research seminar as outlined by McKernan (2008). Here the idea is that the 'leader' *'guides and facilitates'* (*ibid*, p. 141). Since, as Litosseliti (2003) points out, *'Interaction in focus groups is of utmost importance'* (p. 14), the achievement of this rests in the manner in which the focus group is conducted. This is where the role of *moderator* rather than *director* emerges (Morgan 1997, pp. 48-49; Morgan 1998, p. 47; Krueger 1998, p. 56; Wellington 2000, p. 125; Litosseliti 2003, p. 54) and where the processes of *guidance* and *facilitation* are practiced. Retaining these qualities was important for my research in order that it remained consistent and true to social

constructivist approaches, I would argue. Litosseliti (2003) outlines the specific qualities required of the moderator: *'A good moderator has good personal, interpersonal communication and managing skills, is a good and non-judgemental listener and is confident and flexible at the same time'* (p. 54). I hoped, by developing these qualities through my research, I could develop professionally as a leader as well as researcher, thereby meeting this particular research aim. In short, I hoped to apply the skills I developed through my research to enhance my future leadership qualities. Such are the skills required in terms of good mediation, I adhered to the recommendation of Litosseliti (2003), who suggests that it is a good idea to undertake 'pilot' interviews as trial runs. Although good moderating is important, focus groups also rely on certain practical issues to be addressed in order to be effective.

Practical Issues

Careful planning is required in order to remain focussed (Wellington, 2000), but I feel it is important to retain flexibility so that alternative directions may be explored. On this basis, I support Litosseliti's (2003) suggestion: *'A topic guide or questioning route is essential, and may include topics, questions, timings, prompts and stimulus materials'* (p. 67). I also agree with Morgan (1997), that it is important to introduce topics in a general manner in order to open up avenues that are not too prescriptive. If, as Morgan (1998) suggests, focus groups are best considered when one needs *'...a friendly, respectful research method'* (p. 59), the environment needs to reflect this. Thus I sought '…*a convivial setting'* (Wellington 2000, p. 125), ideally in a neutral location (Litosseliti, 2003), with established ground rules and honesty as a pre-requisite (Morgan, 1997). Having stressed the importance of informality, I am not suggesting that conflicts are to be avoided. Morgan (1998), with reference to this last point states: *'Focus groups have a unique ability to provide needed information as tensions between opposing parties begin to rise'* (p. 59).

Good data gathering tools are also important and I used a high quality tape recorder and microphone (Wellington 2000, Krueger 1998), and detailed notes, including a flip chart (Krueger 1998). Indeed, Krueger (1998) stresses the value of flip charts as part of the moderator's 'tool kit':

Flip charts, which are prepared by the moderator during the group discussion, can be helpful in capturing the range of participant responses, in tabulating results of response forms, or in summarising different points of view. (p. 56)

Regardless of which method of data collection is employed, one must appreciate Krueger's (1998) warning below:

The amount of data collected in focus group discussions is considerable. For example, a transcript from one focus group can easily consist of 30 to 60 single-spaced pages. In a series of four focus groups, the researcher may be confronted with more than 200 pages of single-spaced transcripts, 8 hours of tape recordings, and field notes from four discussions. (p. 53)

Data saturation was picked up early so that I did not become too swamped. The analysis techniques for interviews were also pivotal to the smooth running of my research. In using categorical analysis (grouping of like data - Lankshear and Knobel 2004, Radnor 2002), discourse analysis (focus on purpose and meaning – Lankshear and Knobel 2004) and other forms of content analysis, I was aware of the risk of losing meaning. The avoidance of this is stressed by Cohen *et al* (2000). Going back to the data and checking meaning in collaboration with those involved became almost a habit.

Because interviews generate a huge amount of data, it would have been easy to look to technology for a helping hand. Webb (1999) suggests that although computer packages may be useful for large scale studies, manual approaches are best for small scale research projects characterised by Doctorate studies. Bell (2005) also draws attention to the pitfalls of using computers for qualitative analysis:

*It's easy to become seduced by yards and yards of computer printouts, but they have to be filtered to get to the **meaning** of all those figures and sheets, to understand what can be claimed from them and what can't.* (p. 119).

My own view reminds me of my DIY experiences where it is quick and easy to 'slap on' paint but the time taken to prepare the walls and woodwork usually results in a better finish. I found the *time* devoted to analysing interview data no different and I took the longer journey by transcribing and analysing data by hand.

Although I chose to use a focus group approach to drive my research, I have also illustrated in Fig. 10 that action research typically involves a multi-method approach (Sparkes 1992, Ernest 1994, Crotty 1998, Cohen *et al* 2000, Pring 2004, Gorard and Taylor 2004, Wragg 2005). Partly, I was drawn to the use of multi-methods for data collection in order not to over-rely on time-consuming techniques like focus groups. Thus it was based upon pragmatism. On a more philosophical level, my choice was consistent with AR and my chosen title ('One Vision, Many Eyes'), which has its roots firmly in the social constructivist camp. Indeed, Gorard and Taylor (2004) suggest that there should be considerable *ethical* pressure put on educational researchers in order that they use the best blend of methods. I discovered that there is a significant art to this; the aim being to *efficiently* gather rich data.

The following sections explore a range of methods of data collection and analysis that I used in addition to focus groups.

- **Observation**

Observation of activity to provide data is a well established method of data collection. Bassey (1986), Elliott (1991), Cohen *et al* (2000), Radnor (2002), Lankshear and Knobel (2004), Bell (2005), Silverman (2006) and Angrosino (2005) refer to the collection of data using observations recorded using field notes, video, journals and check lists. One clear merit of using this technique is stressed by Lankshear and Knobel (2004) who state that it *'Emphasises collecting data in real life, everyday contexts'* (p. 35).

Radnor (2002) suggests that being 'known' as an educator may result in participants being less likely to view the researcher as someone who is checking up on them. Since embedding formative assessment and evaluation required shared understandings, beliefs and practices, I needed to be part of the staff and not merely act as a detached outsider. Silverman (2006) with reference to this last point states:

> *Some contemporary researchers share the early anthropologists' belief that in order to understand the world 'firsthand', you must participate yourself rather than just observe at a distance.* (p. 68)

There is a caveat, I would argue, in that one must be aware of, and keep transparent, one's own power base and the influence this may have on the dynamics of the social situation one is a part of. The awareness of the potential social turbulence created by participant observation and the 'blurring' of what is actually happening is also highlighted by Cohen *et al* (2000).

When one looks at the product of observation in terms of the data generated and the systems of analysis employed, we see other potential hazards. Observations result in *'...detailed and often complex slabs of written descriptions and interpretations of an event, process, phenomenon etc.'* (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p. 35). Lankshear and Knobel (2004) give the example of pattern analysis for data collected via observation. The aim here is to identify patterns in what is observed in terms of what is going on, to who, and why? I see a link here with pragmatism, experience and common sense especially when the authors make this explicit by suggesting:

> *Identifying patterns in data requires researchers to draw on prior reading, previous research and classroom experiences, and their common sense in ways that make the process of justifying patterns relatively obvious and straightforward.* (*ibid* p. 306).

I used open coding overall (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004) to break down data in order to identify similarities and differences. This was made more consistent through the use of observation pro formas based on National Strategy materials (DfES, 2004b). Although I can relate to the use of observation as a method in terms of its association with pragmatism and the critical paradigm (and more specifically action research methodology), and to the possibility of it providing data relating to my first order and second order research questions (related to assessment and evaluation policy and practice), I did not see its use in isolation driving the research in the same way as focus groups.

- **Document Analysis and Classroom Artefacts**

Lankshear and Knobel (2004) suggest that documents provide *'...historical background to an issue, problem or event; they can be used to examine parallel event information...'* (p. 35) and artefacts help to *'... construct contextualising data for a*

study…' (p. 37). With reference to this latter point the authors suggest that the objects found in a classroom tell you something about a person's or group's interests. I would agree with this and used displays, the way the tables were arranged and the materials available in a classroom to indicate the nature of the learning opportunities.

Bell (2005) stresses the importance of not taking documents at 'face value' but to ask one's self questions relating to the kind of document in represents, what it says, who produced it, its purpose, when it was produced, whether it is typical or unique, its completeness, who the author is, the status/experience of the author, the trustworthiness of the author and how long after the event the document was produced. The need to appreciate these issues is also highlighted by Poulson and Wallace (2004).

I would argue that all of this impacted upon my analysis of documents in that I constantly asked critical questions relating to the authenticity and trustworthiness of the messages they conveyed. Perakyla (2005) suggests that often qualitative researchers who use documents as their materials for research do not attempt to follow rigid protocols for analysis. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) and Poulson and Wallace (2004) refer to specific analysis techniques like content analysis (messages in the text and the associated social norms and ideologies), word count analysis (looks at the frequency of appearance of words), content categories analysis (categorising similar words/meanings according to shared characteristics) and definitional content analysis (where the meaning is considered at the word level and looks at the words around the focus word to place it in context). My chosen approach was one of content analysis.

Although I perhaps favour the more qualitative methods within a multi-method approach to AR, I am aware of the potential contribution statistics can make. The following discussion explores the nature of the statistical data I used and its purpose.

- **Non-inferential Statistics**

Schools are data rich in terms of quantitative output measures and Wroe and Halsall (2001) state: *'Largely as a result of statutory requirements, then, there has been a proliferation of data collection especially of quantitative performance indicators'* (p. 41). I have explored this aspect in detail in Part 1, but I feel that it is worth noting again here that there is a real sense of too much emphasis being placed on the use of this type of data in schools. Barker (2007) refers, in the Times Educational Supplement, to John Dunsford (general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders) telling his union members to refuse to provide data that is not readily available. I would go further to say that we should not only look at the availability aspect but also consider the relevance of what we can interpret from the data.

Practically, I found it difficult to extract meaning from the varied representations of our children's attainment and achievement and the associated trends in school performance. I could infer from them but needed to check and authenticate with other data sources gathered and processed in different ways. One might link statistical performance indicators with the effectiveness of the overall project in terms of the contribution to raising attainment and achievement, but it would be unwise to draw concrete conclusions from them. I certainly did not see the use of statistics driving the research or contributing directly to the embedding of formative assessment and evaluation in my school context.

As the third order research questions were my priority, I needed to look to focus groups as my main method of research. It must be said, however, that I do not deny that statistics may be useful in condensing large amounts of data as outlined by Lankshear and Knobel (2004). In this sense they become more of a tool to aid analysis and interpretation of such data, and one I employed where appropriate. The key, of course, rests with *interpretation*. With interpretation come issues relating to reliability and validity (although the appropriateness of these terms for my research will be disputed in the next section). Exploration of these issues forms the basis of discussion in the following section.

(vi)   *Validity and Reliability or…Credibility, Dependability, Trustworthiness and Transferability – The Search for 'Truth'*

There is an uneasiness that creeps into the mind when one finds oneself working in the qualitative research domain when faced with the 'stark' terminology of validity, reliability and triangulation. It would be easy to gloss over them and dismiss them as being *'folk devils'* (Lomax (1998), p. 3) best banished to the realms of positivist, scientific enquiry. Sparkes (2002) does not shy away from this issue but instead draws one's attention to the differences in the way they manifest themselves in the scientific paradigm compared to the interpretive and critical paradigms:

> *When it comes to telling alternative tales, orthodox 'scientific' views of validity (and reliability and generalisability), based on positivistic epistemological assumptions that adhere to corresponding notions of truth, make little sense.* (p. 201)

Miles and Huberman (1994) offer a comprehensive breakdown of how we might approach these issues (and more) within a qualitative framework. They begin by addressing Objectivity/Confirmability (sometimes labelled external reliability) and talk of freedom from bias. I prefer to look at this as 'putting one's cards on the table'. To declare one's bias puts the research into context and its limitations can be clear and explicit. Reliability gets a more candid reception from Miles and Huberman (1994) in terms of their definition:

> *The underlying issue here is whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods…Remember that a broken thermometer is 100% reliable – but not very valid.*   (p. 278)

Clearly repeatability is not validity as one can be repeatedly wrong as Thomas and Nelson (1990) outline. They do however give a common sense solution that appeals to me and suggest that *'The researcher can become more reliable through practice'* (p. 356). The division by Thomas and Nelson (1990) (p. 357) of reliability into *'external'* (declaring the context of the data,) and *'internal'* (getting others to look at the data to check the conclusions/interpretations) crystallises this aspect for me. In terms of this latter point, it is worth noting that if different people check data for 'correct interpretation' different interpretations are likely to emerge. I would argue that

'checking' should be more about me (the researcher) asking others to read my interpretation and to tell me if the evidence I have provided supports *my* interpretation. Indeed, this became a regular process throughout my research.

To dwell too much on what Kvale (1996) calls *'The Trinity of Generalizability, Reliability and Validity'* (p. 229) seems to me to be a move away from the 'human' aspect of research. Kvale (1996) makes the following point in relation to the aforementioned 'Trinity':

> *They appear to belong to some abstract realm in a sanctuary of science far removed from the interactions of the everyday world, and to be worshipped with respect by all true believers in science.* (p. 229)

Since my research is based predominantly on qualitative principles, I support the argument presented by Seale (1999) in that issues relating to reliability and validity need to be replaced with those of credibility, dependability, trustworthiness and transferability.

My aim was to rise to the challenge described by Kvale (1996) who states with reference to good research:

> *Ideally, the quality of the craftsmanship results in products with knowledge claims that are so powerful and convincing in their own right that they, so to say, carry the validation with them, like a strong piece of art.* (p. 252)

In Kvale's (1996) terms, *'Valid research would in this sense be research that makes questions of validity superfluous'* (p. 252). I would argue that success in this respect is based on the quality of ones writing to a degree.

(vii) Reflexivity and the Narrative

Throughout Part 3, I have endeavoured to outline my chosen methodology in a way that retains coherence and consistency. I have made it clear that I hold an allegiance to the critical paradigm and action research methodology, although within this I am drawn towards *applied* hermeneutics and qualitative methods. To follow a style of writing that does not reflect or sit consistently within this framework would therefore

be inconsistent. It is with this in mind that I wish to explore and justify my chosen narrative style of writing.

The phrase at the beginning of Part 3 holds true here in that consistency, to a certain extent, benefits from 'treading the well worn path'. With this in mind, the point made by Hannu *et al* (2007) is a useful starting point: *'Action research reports are often narratives, located in the context of the evolving experiences of those involved'* (p. 5). To simply rely on the *typical* without exploring the benefits and potential problems (mainly those surrounding validity and reliability), however, seems to me to be lacking justification.

Bruner (1990) refers to the term *'folk psychology'* (p. 13) where subjectivity and cultural influences join to create 'thick' interpretations of social interactions. Bruner's (1990) premise is: *'Given that psychology is so immersed in culture, it must be organised around those meaning-making and meaning using processes that connect man to culture'* (p. 12). I have argued, in Part 1, that schools have a strong and influential cultural dimension ('the way things are done around here'). Therefore for others to connect with that culture one has to adopt a form of writing that allows this connection to take place. Bruner (1990) provides a useful distinction with reference to this evoking folk psychology and proposes that it follows *narrative* principles rather than *conceptual*. This assertion is based upon Bruner's (1990) question in relation to relativism as follows: *'Is what we know "absolute", or is it always relative to some perspective, some point of view?'* (p. 24). In Part 3, I have already argued in favour of the need to place one's research in some kind of theoretical framework or paradigm in order that consistency and transparency are maintained. Therefore my argument follows the line that if we do not agree with the notion of absolute concepts, then narratives may provide a suitable alternative direction consistent with my chosen paradigmatic stance.

The following sections provide a more detailed account of the narrative and use the five principles outlined by Hannu *et al* (2007) to illustrate the qualities I tried to secure in my writing.

The Principle of Historical Continuity

Hannu *et al* (2007) suggest that *'...good action research recognises the historical evolution of action both as a general macro-level phenomenon and as micro-level continuity of historical action'* (p. 9). Whilst I can see the importance of continuity in terms of macro and micro phenomenon, a quality Bruner (1990) describes as 'sequentiality' (p. 43), I feel it would be naive to assume that presenting them in an ordered way reveals the full picture.

Bruner (1990) proposes that it is when events deviate from the sequential pattern that the narrative's qualities are called into play in terms of *'managing departures from the canonical'* (*ibid* p. 50). When the non-canonical occurs, Bruner (1990) sees the narrative as the vehicle for providing reasons and explanations.

The Principle of Reflexivity

Bloor and Wood (2006) define reflexivity as *'...an awareness of the self in the situation of action and of the role of the self in constructing that situation.'* (p. 145). For me, the key aspect here is the role of the *self* in terms of the meanings presented through narrative methods. That the 'story' is a *construction* is an issue highlighted by Hannu *et al* (2007).

I would prefer to think of explaining *how* I have constructed meaning as *transparency*. To go back to social constructivist principles, whilst my voice as author is integral to the report, it is important not to neglect or marginalise meanings expressed by others.

Since I have argued my allegiance to social constructivist principles in earlier sections, I believe that they can also be applied to the use of the narrative. Gergen (1994), with reference to *'A social constructionist view of the remembered self'* (p. 88), makes the assertion that engagement in social interaction may secure multiple voices in the narrative.

The Principle of Dialectics

This relates directly to my argument in favour of a social constructivist approach to reflexivity but is more to do with the *quality* of a report based on multiple perspectives. (Hannu *et al* 2007).

Wellington (2000) offers the following technique that may contribute to the authenticity of the voices presented: *'Detailed notes will also be needed. Ideally, a written account of the meeting(s) should be fed back to the group members for comment.'* (p. 126). I have already mentioned the importance of getting the right 'blend' of people together to form focus groups and the importance placed on having individuals with alternative view points in order that they can 'spark' off each other. Hannu (2007) *et al* make a similar point in relation to dialectics and the narrative:

> *This principle means, in practice, that the researcher does not base his/her research text on his/her own monologous voice, but combines in the text different interpretations and voices – even the dissonant ones.* (p. 13)

I would argue that it is pointless getting the correct blend of people together for a focus group if the subsequent report does not allow the fruits of the discussion to be presented, and the varied voices to be heard.

The Principle of Workability

Hannu *et al* (2007) refer to the potential practical consequences of a well written narrative report:

> *Sometimes the main consequence might be a critical public discussion or debate on such issues as power, domination or coercive ideologies or social structures. A practical consequence of an action research project might be empowerment or emancipation of the practitioners.* (p. 14)

In the aims section of my introduction, I outlined my wish for my thesis to act as stand-alone evidence of the school's evolutionary journey for others to reflect on and debate. I believe that this is best achieved through the skilful use of the narrative, particularly if one can demonstrate that constraints that have a macro and micro historical origin can be overcome through collaborative work.

The Principle of Evocativeness

Hannu *et al* (2007) suggests that: *'In the narrative framework, science comes close to art'* (p. 16). Bruner (1990) goes beyond reference to the move from science to art and as a result of narratives becoming *'caught up in the clash of alternative meanings'* (*ibid* p. 52) makes the following statement: *'In this respect, life must surely have imitated art by now'* (p. 52). Good art evokes feelings. Bruner (1990) also makes reference to *'verisimilitude'* (p. 61) in relation to the way we interpret stories. In my writing I have tried to present my story in a way that adheres to Hannu *et al's* (2007) notion of verisimilitude: *'Verisimilitude means that the story reminds the listener or reader about something that he/she has experienced in real life'* (p. 17). In this way, I hope that there may be some link with art via evocativeness.

Part 4 illustrates how I applied the research concepts and principles outlined in Part 3 to my 'live' research.

PART 4

FIELDWORK
(Presentation and Discussion)

Part 4 Fieldwork (Presentation and Discussion)

(a)The Starting Point
(i)Assessment and Evaluation Policy and Practice at the Beginning of the Project

My story began in the Autumn term of 2007 with an analysis of documentation and observation of practice in the school in which I work, with a specific focus on assessment and evaluation. I chose to begin with the school's most recent OfSTED reports (2002 and 2007) and two recent subject reviews, one undertaken by OfSTED in 2006 and the other by the Local Authority (LA) in 2007. I felt it important to get an 'outside' perspective from the outset in order to avoid 'internal' bias or contamination.

In 2002, OfSTED noted, in relation to assessment at the school, that *'Although some departments have good procedures in place, this is not consistent across all subjects'* (p. 23, para. 51). Further to this, it was noted (*ibid*) that *'...unsatisfactory use is made of the assessment information that is now available to guide planning and to set subject specific targets for students'* (*ibid*, p. 23, para. 51). In the section of the report identifying what the school should do to improve further, the assessment-evaluation interface was targeted as a key action point in that the school needed to:

> *Develop systems and procedures so that assessment information is used to set individual targets for all pupils, to plan carefully the next steps in learning for all and to review and adapt the curriculum in response to changes in the skills and knowledge of pupils in different year groups* (*ibid*, pp. 27-28, para. 72).

In 2006, an OfSTED subject review of Art at the school also made recommendations for improvement in relation to assessment in that the school needed to *'Improve students' analytical and diagnostic skills within self-assessment, particularly in Years 7 to 9'* (p. 5). Similarly, an LA review of the Physical Education department at the school in 2007 revealed assessment elements in the form of the development priorities overleaf:

- *The department should establish systematic use of medium term planning sheets to help embed assessment for learning in every day teaching.*
- *The department should collect and make more robust use of Key Stage 3 data in order to track underperformance.*
       (p. 3)

The return of OfSTED in 2007 for the most recent whole-school inspection also revealed that assessment and evaluation aspects were priorities for development at the school:

- *Increase the proportion of good or better lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4.*
- *Make greater and more consistent use of assessment information to monitor students' academic progress.*
       (p. 5)

The first point was qualified by OfSTED as '*...learning that students are expected to make is not always made sufficiently explicit by the teacher*' (*ibid*, p. 6) and '*... excessive teacher direction provides too few opportunities for students to work independently or collaboratively*' (*ibid*, p. 6). In Part 1, I have shown how these particular characteristics align with and reflect formative assessment/AfL principles. Although the second point OfSTED (*ibid*) highlighted related to assessment also, I felt that it was more to do with the *use* of assessment in terms of monitoring and evaluation that was the real issue. With this in mind, I followed up additional lines of inquiry relating to assessment as part of classroom practice, recording and reporting assessments, and monitoring/evaluation of progress. My starting point for this stage was an analysis of the school's *policy* in relation to these aspects.

Policy Relating to Assessment as Part of Classroom Practice

Although the school's policy made reference to assessment in the classroom as allowing '*...staff to diagnose weaknesses and assess strengths*' (p. 1) and informing pupils of '*...their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them opportunities to respond and set targets*' (p. 1), the only *practical* guidance provided related to marking students' work. The key features in relation to this included the following:

- *Work should be marked sufficiently frequently to maintain a pupil's motivation and to provide information for the subject teachers.*
- *Individual comments should praise strengths and, constructively, identify weaknesses.*
- *Attainment and effort should be clearly indicated with a common format for each subject.*
- *Professional judgement must be used to determine the extent to which detailed corrections should be made.*
- *Common mark schemes should be used within a subject area for year group tests and examinations.*
        (p. 2)

In other words, the only reference to formative assessment as part of classroom practice related to written feedback provided for the learner. Formative qualities were evident in the guidance for written feedback through the identification of strengths and weaknesses. However, no reference was made to other key elements of formative assessment embedded in the literature (see Part 1). For example, objective led lessons, oral feedback, peer and self-assessment, and teaching strategies for effective dialogue were not included anywhere in the school's assessment policy.

Other key features of assessment as part of classroom practice were mentioned in the school's assessment policy and good practice was identified as being *'...integrated into a wide range of activities'* (p. 4), drawing upon *'...a wide range and variety of evidence'* (p. 4), allowing *'...scope for reflection and review'* (p. 4), and forming *'...the basis for discussing future teaching and learning developments'* (p. 4). These qualities reflected the formative nature of assessment practices drawn from the literature (see Part 1) in that it did not promote a narrow evidence base from which judgments were to be made and it also had a focus on assessment being directly linked to the next stages of pupil learning.

Recording and Reporting Assessments

Formative elements appeared in the policy section relating to recording in that the guidance recommended that records should *'Demonstrate useful directions for future work'* (p. 5), *'...indicate a pupil's achievement level within all applicable areas'* (p. 5), and *'...show individual pupil progress in all applicable areas'* (p. 5). More specific guidance on *how* to include these formative aspects as part of recording

systems did not appear in the school assessment policy, however. In fact, the section of the policy relating to recording opens with *'There is no prescribed form in which records should be kept…'* (p. 5).

The section of the school's assessment policy relating to reporting also mentioned formative aspects and its aims included *'...highlighting strengths and particular achievements and identifying any particular weaknesses so that future targets can be set'* (p. 7), and introducing *'...pupil self-assessment and recording and tutor/pupil negotiation'* (p. 7). With reference to this latter point the school's assessment policy stated that it would take the form of *'...a prose statement, both within the formal academic curriculum as well as activities, interests and experiences outside the classroom'* (p. 7). The report structure was summarised as including subject reports (to include course content, teacher comment, assessment grading), Tutor report (to include attendance record, Tutor comment, Year Head comment) and pupil personal statement (this to take the form of a negotiated statement between the pupil and Tutor). The school's assessment policy showed differences in the way assessment results were to feature in the report. For example, in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science this involved *'...both the pupil's test results and the teacher's assessments of the pupil's level of attainment'* (p. 7). In the non-core subjects, however, this involved *'...the pupil's teacher assessment subject level **or** a commentary on the pupil's attainment in relation to the end of key stage descriptions'* (p. 7). This latter point indicated that there was a core subject and non-core subject divide and also that there was more scope for diversity in the non-core subjects.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Although there was no separate policy for monitoring or evaluating the performance of groups of students, departments and the whole school, the school's assessment policy included reference to these aspects. Formative aspects comprised utilising *'...the SIMS system for the transfer of assessment information'* (p. 3), Key Stage (KS) 2 teacher assessment and test results being collated to *'...help provide a basis for "value-added" calculation at the end of KS3 and 4'* (p. 3). In addition to this it was also mentioned that *'NFER Cognitive Ability Tests have also been introduced to assess the year 7 as an intake group'* (p. 3) and that *'NFER tests are intended to*

provide an indication of potential' (p. 3). The *'Schools' Information Management System'* (SIMS) software was cited as offering *'...a detailed analysis of results for subjects, classes and individuals'* (p. 5). The policy went on to suggest, with reference to this last point, that the suggested use of data should illustrate the following:

- *extent of match between curriculum provision and Attainment Target levels*
- *subject performance over a given period (minimum 3 years)*
- *comparison of sub-group performance*
- *comparison between other schools of broadly similar size, type and intake.*
        (p. 5)

Initial Thoughts Based on the School's Policy for Assessment and Evaluation

Having set out with evidence from 'external' reviews indicating that assessment and evaluation at the school was an area in need of development (particularly in terms of the formative aspects), I found it hard to match this with the school's policy in relation to these areas. Although the policy had areas that could have had a sharper formative quality (e.g. more reference to objective led lessons, oral feedback, peer and self-assessment, and teaching strategies for effective dialogue), there was evidence in the *policy*, at least, that formative principles were to be used (e.g. marking to diagnose strengths and weaknesses, records that identify pupil progress, reports that identify strengths and weaknesses, and evaluation based on the analysis of prior attainment/progress). This led me to exploring more fully what was actually happening in *practice* in relation to assessment and evaluation at the school and the extent to which the 'external' reviews were representative of what was actually going on in relation to these aspects.

Practice Relating to Assessment in the Classroom

As lesson observations were already scheduled to take place across the school in the first half of the Autumn term (2007) for staff Performance Management purposes, I decided to put it as a one item discussion point on the agenda for our subject leaders' meeting in September 2007. I requested that staff come with, or be prepared to discuss, potential proformas, approaches and foci so that we could particularly

prioritise assessment as part of classroom practice in response to apparent weaknesses in this area, as illustrated by OfSTED and other 'external' reviews.

We had already had quite a lot of input from the Local Authority (LA) relating to the National Strategy relating to Assessment for Learning (AfL) and this was reflected in the suggestion by the leaders of the core subjects that we use the National Strategy materials for lesson observation purposes. However, all core subject leaders and several foundation subject leaders (Physical Education, Music, Drama, History, Geography and Art) were concerned that a total focus on AfL for lesson observations may lead to 'other' aspects of the lessons being overlooked. One subject leader commented that they were also keen to comment on *'...things that don't fit the tick boxes'* (Cathy). This view was endorsed by all the subject leaders. It was at this point that I first became acutely aware of my own power-base in relation to a decision on this matter. It would have been easy to have forced through an exclusive National Strategy focus on AfL in my capacity as Assistant Principal responsible for the co-ordination of the group of subject leaders. However, 'backing off' and letting the discussion evolve allowed another colleague to take a lead.

The acting Head of History had been seconded from the LA to cover a colleague on maternity leave and his previous role in the LA had been to take the lead on the development of AfL approaches for foundation subjects. He sustained the focus on using the National Strategy materials by commenting that they could *'...easily be adapted and used with other comments perhaps attached to them'* (Shane). When the Head of Science suggested: *'If we put the strategy stuff on the network to fill them in rather than fill it in by hand, we can use an accompanying e-mail comment to refer to the qualities that don't fit the boxes'* (Barry), we struck a compromise. Exploring this further, we settled on using a slightly adapted version of the DfES (2004b) National Strategy materials relating to objective-led lessons, written feedback, oral feedback, peer and self-assessment, and teaching strategies for effective dialogue. Within each of these areas progression in terms of the standards observed was obtained by keeping the DfES (2004b, p. 34) National Strategy scale of *'Focusing'*, *'Developing'*, *'Establishing'* and *'Enhancing'*. This was seen as preferable to using the OfSTED *'inadequate'*, *'satisfactory'*, *'good'* and *'outstanding'* terminology. As one subject leader remarked: *'At least the National Strategy terminology has a degree of encouragement. I'd rather be 'Developing' than 'Satisfactory'!* (Maurice). Another

subject leader made the point: *'Let OfSTED translate to their language if they need to. There are four increments in each scale. It can't be beyond their wit to do that!'* (Mary).

When one subject leader commented: *'How will we know whether what we have observed fits the Focusing or whatever box?'* (Malcolm), it was suggested that we *'... could keep the explanations on our pro-forma under these headings to act as criteria'* (Jerry). Although this meant that we ended up with a pro-forma that was five pages of A4 in total, it was agreed that this would help to *'...keep our judgments consistent'* (Eileen). Another subject leader with reference to this suggested that *'Where possible we ought to try to do some joint observations'* (Barry). An example of a completed pro-forma and accompanying e-mail can be seen in Appendix II. Also, in terms of consistency, another subject leader suggested that we should agree *'...a protocol for observing lessons so that we give all teachers and pupils an equal opportunity to show their work'* (Mary). At the very least it was felt that the observer should *'...read the AfL pro-forma before going into the lesson so that they are clear about what they are looking for'* (Patrick). It was also suggested that the *'...observer should not adopt the role of OfSTED inspector and should be part of the lesson where possible'* (Cathy). In terms of eliciting information about pupils' learning, it was proposed that the observer should *'...ask the students to explain what they are trying to do and why they are doing it'* (Shane), and also *'...ask them if they know their level or grade and how to move up to the next one'* (Barry). A complete copy of the agreed protocol for observing lessons can be seen in Appendix III.

During the Autumn term of 2007, 77 teaching staff were observed in lessons spanning Key Stages (KS) 3, 4 and 5. Teachers were asked to provide a selection of lessons from which the observer might choose. Thus, although they did not know exactly which lesson would be chosen, they *did* have some scope to put their best practice on show. The urgency of the observation deadlines meant that there was limited scope for departmental discussion about the exact nature of formative assessment practice in the classroom, although the staff were aware that this was the main focus. Fig. 13 illustrates the pattern of classroom based formative assessment practices across the school at the beginning of my research and Fig. 14 shows this graphically.

Pattern of Classroom Based Formative Assessment Practices at Beginning of Research – October 2007 (77 lessons observed in total)

Fig. 13

ASPECT	Focusing	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Objective led lessons	8 lessons (10%)	49 lessons (64%)	16 lessons (21%)	4 lessons (5%)
Written feedback	12 lessons (16%)	48 lessons (62%)	15 lessons (19%)	2 lessons (3%)
Oral feedback	0 (0%)	41 lessons (53%)	26 lessons (34%)	10 lessons (13%)
Peer and self-assessment	57 lessons (74%)	11 lessons (14%)	7 lessons (9%)	2 lessons (3%)
Teaching strategies for effective dialogue	**Eavesdropping on group dialogue** 16 lessons (21%)	**Wait time after a teacher question** 23 lessons (30%)	**Rich questions** 27 lessons (35%)	**No hands-up questioning** 12 lessons (16%)
	Questions linked to resources or task 72 lessons (94%)	**Big questions** 23 lessons (30%)	**Prompts and body language used to encourage continuation** 18 lessons (23%)	**Peer discussion** 17 lessons (22%)

Fig. 14

OBJECTIVE LED LESSONS

WRITTEN FEEDBACK

ORAL FEEDBACK

PEER AND SELF ASSESSMENT

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE
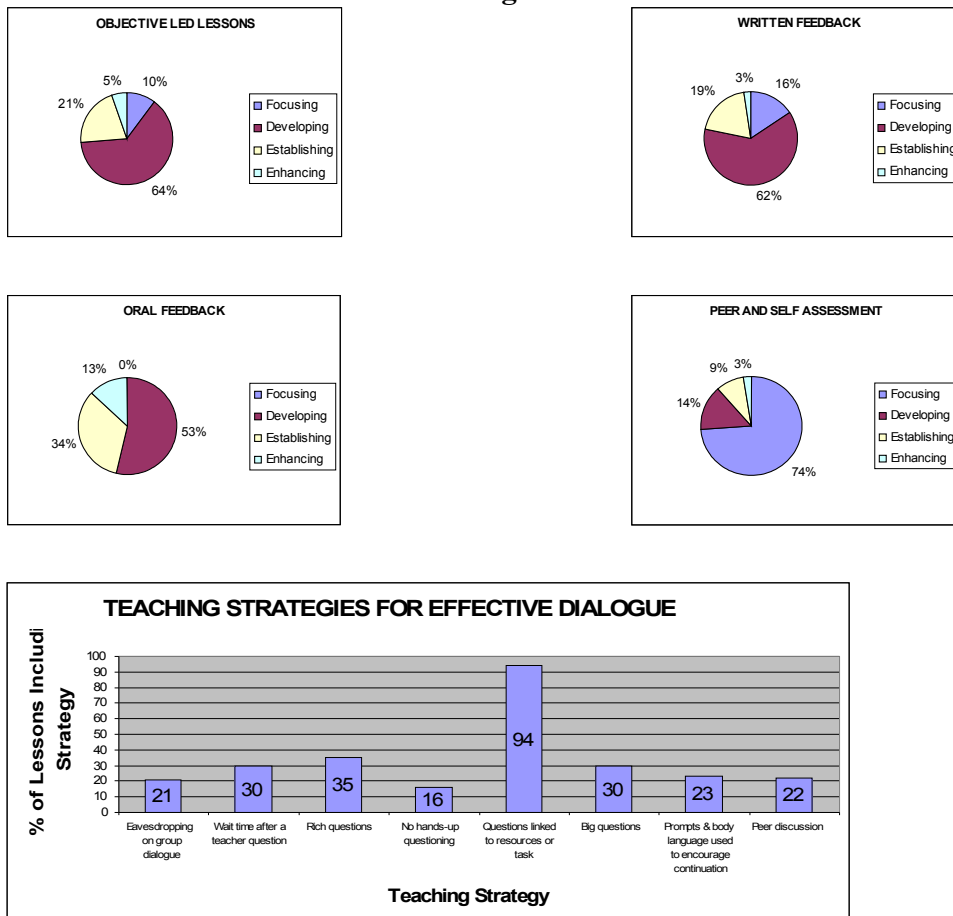
When, at the subject leaders' meeting in October 2007, we examined the data relating to objective led lessons, written feedback, oral feedback, and peer and self-assessment, it appeared that these aspects of formative assessment practice were weighted more towards the 'Focusing' and 'Developing' categories than 'Establishing' and 'Enhancing'. When we then analysed the criteria relating to these categories, a more *qualitative* picture of classroom formative practice emerged. This was characterised by *teaching* that had *some* evidence of planning using learning objectives, written feedback to pupils that did not always clarify what they needed to do to improve, oral feedback provided by the teacher that reinforced learning objectives but did not encourage pupils to offer extended answers or ask questions of the teacher or each other, and little opportunity for pupils to assess their own work or that of their peers against clear success criteria. Correspondingly, *learning* seemed to be characterised by pupils having some *limited* understanding of what they were trying to do (but not knowing *why*), showing some understanding of the written feedback provided (but not always responding to it), expecting some specific oral feedback as a class, individual or small group and acting upon it, lacking the skills and dispositions for peer and self-assessment.

When we explored the data relating to teaching strategies for effective dialogue, the bias appeared to be towards teacher questioning using resources (worksheets, pictures, video, demonstrations etc.). However, the use of *'big'* and *'rich'* questions, to elicit breadth and depth respectively, was not common practice. As a result, pupils were rarely required to *develop* their answers and teachers did not appear to encourage this quality through prompts and body language. The relative infrequency of peer discussion and group dialogue seemed to indicate that lessons were often teacher-led and rapid questioning techniques were more likely to be used leaving little time for pupils to reflect on their answers. At our subject leaders' meeting in September 2007, several subject leaders felt that the term *'no hands-up questioning'* needed clarification. We decided as a group that the principle behind it was that the teacher should select the pupil who will respond to a question (i.e. they are conscripts rather than volunteers), and that the insistence on pupils not putting their hand up to answer need not necessarily be used. Therefore, it was decided that the teacher should be judged in relation to the extent to which all pupils are given an opportunity to answer

questions. However, it appeared from the lesson observation data that certain pupils were given more opportunities than others to answer questions.

I felt that the process of analysing the lesson observations as a group allowed a shared view to emerge, whilst also providing an opportunity for some useful individual insights. As one subject leader put it: *'No wonder we are all so knackered! We seem to be working harder than the kids!'* (Jack). This comment sparked off a debate about how best to get the pupils more involved in their learning and taking more responsibility for it. As the debate progressed, the need to synthesise and condense the information we had relating to formative assessment practice in the classroom emerged. Whilst subject leaders could see the merit and benefit of the formative assessment practices of objective led lessons, written feedback, oral feedback, peer and self-assessment, and teaching strategies for effective dialogue, as one colleague put it: *'It's all a bit of a mouthful'* (Grant). Our discussion led to an approach to teaching we decided to call *'3-Dimensional (3D) Teaching'*. On the basis that the dominant line of communication in lessons appeared to be from the teacher to the pupils, we decided that this should be extended to include communication lines from the pupils to the teacher and also between pupils. Thus, the notion of 3D teaching emerged in terms of ensuring that these three lines of communication were developed and preserved.

Our discussion also revealed a strong opinion that we should retain our focus on formative assessment in terms of lessons observations, but that that we did *not* need the criteria with the proformas. As one subject leader put it: *'We all seem to have the pitch right. We ought to think of it like GCSE coursework where you mainly use the criteria to check your judgement, not make it'* (Maurice). Another subject leader commented that they *'felt too constrained by just having the AfL tick boxes'* (Cathy). *'We also need to consider pupil attitude and behaviour more'* (Ruby) suggested another. We concluded that a modified pro-forma for lesson observations would help. Appendix IV illustrates our revised version.

Overall we agreed that our observations seemed to support the external reviews judgements that, whilst there was good practice across the school in terms of teaching and learning, this was not consistent. We arrived at this conclusion by aligning the

OfSTED judgement categories of *'inadequate'*, *'satisfactory'*, *'good'* and *'outstanding'* with the AfL categories of *'focusing'*, *'developing'*, *'establishing'* and *'enhancing'*. The lesson observation data shown in Figs. 13 and 14 were judged to support this conclusion on that basis. We also agreed that we should endeavour to raise all teaching to a *'good'* standard. However, our working definition of *'good'* was agreed to be formative assessment practices that fall into the *'Establishing'* or *'Enhancing'* categories used in our initial review of practice. This way our preference for *'...non-OfSTED speak'* (Maurice) would be retained.

Practice Relating to Recording and Reporting Assessments

Although formative elements relating to recording appeared in the school's assessment policy as discussed earlier, the statement in the policy: *'There is no prescribed form in which records should be kept...'* (p. 5) seemed to be reflected in the *range* of practices I observed at the beginning of my research in September 2007. At an individual teacher level, ongoing records of pupils' assessments were kept in 'traditional' paper based mark books. Although this allowed the individual teacher to monitor the progress of specific pupils and groups, it only allowed comparisons of marks so that improvement or deterioration in attainment could be detected.

Most of the teachers I spoke to admitted that they routinely kept pupils' scores but, as one member of staff commented, *'We rarely use them for anything other than transferring marks onto reports or covering our back in case anyone checks up'* (Colin). Some departments (notably Mathematics, Science, English, Art and Physical Education) used 'core' assessment tasks throughout the year to gauge pupils' attainment at key points. In the case of Mathematics, Science, English (KS3) and Physical Education, individual staff were expected to put their scores, levels or grades for their classes into an electronic central recording system or spreadsheet. These spreadsheets varied in complexity, and analysis of the data were, at best limited to upward or downward trends in attainment. The other departments left record keeping in the hands of the individual teacher and their mark book and did not attempt to collate assessment data centrally.

Although the school's assessment policy had formative qualities in terms of reporting assessments (namely, *'...highlighting strengths and particular achievements and identifying any particular weaknesses so that future targets can be set'*), these qualities were not consistently translated into the school's report templates (blanks) or content when completed. The picture across the school was diverse and inconsistent. Appendix V provides a typical example of reports that illustrate this diversity. At Key Stage 4 (KS4) reports had a course content description at the top linked to the assessment objectives. These varied in terms of style and quality of information. At Key Stage 3 no course content appeared. Grades were typically reported at GCSE across all subjects, but National Curriculum (NC) levels were not used by all subjects consistently. Foundation subjects (those other than the core subjects of English, Maths and Science) showed the most variation in this respect with some reporting levels and others reporting grades. The subjects that did report NC levels also showed variation in the *way* the levels were reported. Some subjects reported whole levels, core subjects reported sub-divisions of levels using letter (e.g. 5C, 5B, 5A) and others used a decimal notation to indicate increments within levels (e.g. 5.2, 5.5, 5.8).

Teacher 'comments' on reports also showed variation, with some subjects referring to *'Strengths'*, *'Areas for Improvement'* and *'Targets'*, and others just referring to *'Strengths'* and *'Targets'*. Judgements relating to non-subject based personal qualities were consistently reported via a 'tick-box' grid where judgement relating to *'Behaviour'*, *'Effort'*, *'Speaking and Listening'*, *'Independent Learning'*, and *'Organisation'* were referred to. Some reports had comments relating to attitude, behaviour and personal qualities in the teacher comment section but this was not consistent practice. The result of all of this was an overall pupil report document that, as one parent put it at a parents' evening, *'...is very hard to understand because every page has different things in it and has a different style. You can't compare how your kid is doing in one subject with another'* (PaA). Another parent commented that they found the content of the reports *'...very confusing'* (PaB) and went on to say *'What's all this level 5.2 and 4.8 all about?! When I asked my son he didn't have a clue either!'* (PaB). In terms of the formative dialogue based on the reports at parents evening, one disillusioned parent remarked: *'I don't see the point in coming to parents evening. Teachers only tell us what we already have on the report. I can read that myself!'* (PaC). One could argue that by asking and gaining informed consent

from these parents to use their words as evidence perhaps made them inclined to put a less than positive 'spin' on their opinions. My own knowledge and experience of the parents, however, indicated that their views were measured and balanced.

In short, the school's assessment policy's aim in relation to reporting: *'To provide consistency of interpretation for both parents, pupils and teachers'* (p. 7), appeared to fall well short of achieving it in practice. Thus, the formative nature of reports seemed to be undermined by problems associated with their interpretation and ability to evoke meaningful dialogue between parents, teachers and pupils.

Practice Relating to Monitoring and Evaluation

The school had recently (Spring term 2007) introduced department Self-Evaluation Forms (SEFs) based on the statutory whole school SEF. Like the whole school SEF, it was designed to be a *'working document'*. Judgements relating to *'Characteristics of Your Subject'*, *'Views of Parents and Carers'*, *'Achievement and Standards'*, *'Personal Development and Well-Being'*, *'Quality of Provision'* (including the quality of teaching and learning), *'Leadership and Management'*, and *'Overall Effectiveness and Efficiency'* were to be routinely compiled by subject leaders, in collaboration with their teams, at appropriate times in the school year. The *intended* process was formative in nature in that each of the sections was structured so that strengths and weaknesses could be identified and then priorities for development could be established and put into an action plan. It was intended that a regular cycle of monitoring (by subject leaders and their teams) would be used to generate qualitative and quantitative data (assessment data, lesson observations, student and parent questionnaires/interviews, pupil work scrutiny, feedback etc.) for the appropriate sections of the SEF. In other words, the SEF was intended to be a central storage and retrieval mechanism for evaluative data. It was also intended that the subject SEFs 'feed into' the whole school SEF in a *'bottom up'* style as discussed in Part 1 and so the process stood as a symbol of the school's leadership style. A year earlier the school had taken the decision to dismantle the 'Faculty' system of middle leadership in favour of a more distributed subject-specific model. Subject SEFs were introduced by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as a means of promoting distributed leadership.

The subject SEFs actually went beyond the college *policy* on evaluation in that they included dimensions other than assessment data from which to make judgments, draw conclusions and identify priorities for development.   Indeed, the SEFs were a more complete illustration of the school's policy for the evaluation of its work than the policy itself. When I examined the practice of subject evaluation and associated SEF compilation, the formative qualities I expected to find were not clearly evident or they varied in quality. My main areas of focus in this respect were the sections of the SEFs that related to *'Achievement and Standards', 'Teaching and Learning'* and *'Leadership and Management'*.

When I analysed the *'Achievement and Standards'* section, I found a wide variation between subjects in terms of the assessment data they were using to make their judgments, their focus and also the way they presented their conclusions. Some subject areas focussed almost entirely on attainment data (e.g. % of students gaining A*-C at GCSE) and others made reference to attainment *and* value-added measures as an indicator of achievement. Some subjects put additional measures like *'residuals'* into their accounts but did not comment or interpret what they actually showed. Others traced the pattern of assessment data over a six year period to illustrate trends. When asked about groups of students, the analysis tended only to go as far as differences between girls and boys. Overall, this section tended to be an inconsistent mix of mainly numerical/statistical data unaccompanied by qualitative interpretation. The result was a mis-match between the data presented and the judgements and priorities for development. Fig. 15 illustrates a typical example of this.

Fig. 15 *Achievement and Standards in Your Subject*

GCSE results for Summer 2006 were above the national average of (66.6% A*-C). 100% A*-G and 68.4% A*-C. There was a difference between girls and boys results. Girls achieved 78.79% A*-C while boys achieved 54.17% A*-C. This 24.6% gap compares to a national average of 5.6%.

2006 residual 1.01

Three students were entered for and achieved passes for Entry level certificate in History

At the end of KS3 2006 63% of pupils achieved a level 5 or above

Key Priorities for Development

- *Increase the focus on key skills required for GCSE at KS3, particularly in the common assessments*
- *The breakdown of results at GCSE shows that the coursework element is strong and that more focus should be on exam technique*
- *New GCSE course introduced for examination 2008*
- *Introduce some lessons in year 12 focussing on general skills e.g. Note taking*
- *Spend more time in year 12/13 on exam technique and timed questions*

Some subjects adopted a cynical but humorous approach to the process of analysing exam results and making evaluative judgments as shown by the following entry in one subject SEF:

Recent episodes of Eastenders have been quite poor and the show has, overall, lost the soap opera edge it once possessed. This is partly due to a significant dip in the quality of acting, but a paucity of believable and engaging plots is mainly responsible for this decline.

One storyline, however, that hasn't completely assaulted my suspension of disbelief is Dot Cotton's promotion to Manager of the launderette. Dot has taken to her position with a zealous obsession for performance management strategies, gleaned from some cheap paperback and manifested in the posting of graphs and banal mission statements around the workplace. Poor Pauline. In

Dot's sudden apprehension of the absolute worth of facts and figures, she has forgotten the personal qualities of her loyal (and forbearing) friend. Dot has forgotten the value of the work ethic, honest endeavour and even frailty. She has forsaken a trust in humanity for humbug.

OK. I may be giving this storyline a sense of reality it doesn't fully deserve, but it has affected me when I inevitably connect its general implications to recent press coverage of this year's exam results which are linked relentlessly to past facts and figures, targets, performance criteria and the typically carping reappraisal of standards and the presumed reasons for their decline. (Maurice).

Another subject leader ended with an *'...anecdotal account of exam result evaluation'* (his own words) and commented: *'This isn't the kind of analytical detail you'd like, so I'm happy to be advised on other approaches to interpretation'* (Grant). In both cases there seemed to be not only a mistrust of statistical exam data, but also a lack of confidence in the ability to 'unpick' it to reveal accurate and meaningful interpretations. Because of the variations in the way subjects approached the task of evaluating exam results, it was difficult to get an idea of whether their judgments supported or contradicted the judgments of others (OfSTED, LA etc.). Although, I have presented only two examples, this pattern was evident across the full range of subjects to varying degrees.

When I examined the SEF sections relating to teaching and learning, there was considerable variation. Some subjects with apparent underperformance both in terms of attainment, achievement and the focussed lesson observations (Figs. 13 and 14) were judging their teaching as 'good'. Others lay claim to having highly developed formative assessment qualities and stated:

Class and homework is marked with a formative comment to encourage/aid improvement whilst half termly end of topic assessments are levelled. Students receive 'pupil friendly' descriptors of how to progress through levels tailored to each piece of work (Doug).

 Subsequent lesson observations (see Figs. 13 and 14) revealed that there was little evidence to support these claims. Furthermore, the overall judgements did not match with the more focussed lesson observations shown in Figs. 13 and 14 with 75% of the teaching and learning judgements in the SEFs indicating 'good' or better learning and teaching. In addition there was little consistency in terms of what aspects of teaching and learning were being used to make judgements. Some subjects referred to good

aspects as teaching that passed *'...information to students in a structured format'* (Alan), others commented: *'The quality of teaching and commitment of teachers is good'* (Malcolm).

The leadership and management sections of the SEFs were very similar in that they all cited tasks or processes that they had in place and claims included entries like: *'We continually review the work of the department via regular meetings'* (Barry), *'All schemes of work have been upgraded and put onto a central, online system'* (Doug), and *'The department shares an inclusive policy'* (Sharon). There was little reference to the real essence of leadership and management as contained in the prompts provided for subjects to reflect on. These prompts contained reference to the following:

- *how effectively leaders and managers at all levels set **clear direction** leading to improvement and promote high quality of provision*
- *how effectively performance is **monitored and improved** to meet challenging targets*
- *how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential (i.e. **inclusion**)*
- *the adequacy and suitability of staff, specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation*
- *how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed*
  (SEF section 6a)

In short, as the phrase goes, 'They didn't answer the question!'.

Having looked at the formative nature of the subject SEFs I got a strong sense that they were lacking in terms of critical reflection and basic usefulness in taking subjects forward. I was aware, however, that my own personal preference and understanding may well not be fully representative of what I had read, analysed and concluded. In other words, I was aware that my view may be contaminated. With this in mind, I decided to seek a more objective opinion in order to provide a more credible picture. This took the form of an 'expert' in the field of school self-evaluation (a Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) with over ten years recent experience in this particular aspect) 'moderating' my analysis and conclusions in September 2007.

Having gained informed consent to use the HMI's words as evidence for my research, our initial conversation centred on the extent to which subject leaders had engaged with the process of self-evaluation. When I showed her some of the subject SEFs and illustrated the examples of cynicism, mistrust in statistical and comments like: *'We didn't come into teaching to do this!'* (Pat), the inspector responded by saying: *'We are not talking about teachers here – we are talking about leaders earning their leadership allowance!'* (Cynthia). Having set the tone she went on to create a picture of how this might occur via more *'...formative and collaborative approach to the process of self-evaluation'* (*ibid*). On the issue of collaboration, the inspector commented that:

> *...the SEF is only an illustration of leadership and management at middle level if the process or construction of the SEF has involved input from the individual team members. Having co-ordinated the SEF input, leadership and management then involves co-ordinating a team response where priorities for development are addressed as a team through the allocation of key staff to key areas of development. This has implications for the regularity of team meetings and the ability of the team to tackle weaknesses in learning and teaching.* (*ibid*)

Thus, the SEF was seen merely as a means of capturing the qualities of teamwork and collaborative improvement work. The emphasis seemed to be on the *processes* implicitly involved and demonstrated via the SEF and not the SEF as a finished *product* in its own right. Indeed this point was made more explicit by the inspector who went on to say that the subject leaders *'...must avoid seeing the SEF as a product and plan its input as an on-going process'* (*ibid*).

The HMI went on to refer more specifically to the content of the subject SEFs examined and stressed that there was a need to more strongly *'...ensure that the data supports the judgments being made'* (*ibid*), and that subject leaders *'...didn't seem to be clear about the difference between attainment and achievement'* (*ibid*). When it came to evaluating the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils and the trends shown, the HMI argued that a broader perspective needed to be taken. With reference to this issue she commented that *'...account needs to be taken of the different Key Stages, and trends in relation to different groups (girls, boys, pupils with special educational needs (SEN), travellers and 'looked after children' (LAC))'* (*ibid*). When I looked at the SEFs, I had also noticed that even if subjects analysed the performance of particular groups, it was limited to a comparison of girls and boys

only. Finally, I had read over 20 subject SEFs and couldn't quite put my finger on the quality I felt was lacking until the HMI drew my attention to a selection of entries of which the following is a typical example: *'Students frequently work in paired and group situations, sometimes producing work to be displayed in the classroom'* (Doug). Her view on these entries was very clear: *'No point saying 'We do this…' and then not referring to the **impact**! Much better to say: 'We do this, which has resulted in…' and refer to evidence'* (*op cit*).

(ii) Associated Culture and Paradigm

Having compared assessment policy and practice at the school, I tried to formulate a picture of the school's culture and paradigm. I had already found that there were differences in what the school had written into policy documents and what actually translated into practice. The assessment policy, whilst lacking in detail and explanation in certain areas, was essentially supportive of the formative nature of both assessment and evaluation practices. However, when I looked more closely at what was actually happening in practice, the use of formative assessment and evaluation practices was weak. Moreover, practice tended to be of a non-formative nature in both cases. The use of assessment tended to be of learning and not for learning in that it took the form of a summative judgement of student attainment at a specific time. This took the form of a test score, project mark, practical grade or essay score. Teaching tended to be very teacher dominated and was characterised by rapid questioning techniques. Records of pupils' performance were very traditional and on the whole confined to paper mark books, and reports either were too full of grades/levels or full of lengthy general narrative. Evaluations of assessment data tended to be limited to charts and tables unaccompanied by interpretation. On the rare occasion that data were interpreted, this was undertaken in a very superficial and sometimes cynical fashion.

Against this backdrop, I got the feeling that teachers were willing to embrace the formative nature of assessment and evaluation as they had been genuinely involved in the development of the school's assessment policy which had formative qualities, albeit general in places. I also detected that they had a mistrust of numerical measures, government targets and their application to assessment and evaluation.

Maurice's poem, *'Who Killed the Thought-Fox?'*, discussed in my introduction, illustrates this through the line *'...and the murderers can come running with their measuring tapes, sizing up this final kill'*. Aligned to this, I found evidence of concern that with the emphasis on measurement and targets there is a potential risk that we forget the most important part of education – the child. I found Maurice's poem: 'A Student is Singing', very powerful in this respect:

A Student is Singing

A Student is singing
And nobody listening
But the student who is singing:

Philistines grab the earth and shower it.
The school is on fire.
Politicians wet the earth and flower it.
The school is on fire.
The schools are on fire.
Fetch the governors; the governors are on fire.
We will have to hide in a hole.
We will burn like coal.
All the students are on fire.

And a student is singing
And nobody listening
But the student who is singing.
(Maurice)

When I considered these issues I concluded that I had a real *paradox* to deal with. In short, the *preferred* working culture seemed to reflect the characteristics of the critical paradigm in that where numerical assessment and evaluation data were to be used, it was only of benefit if accompanied by critical interpretation that allowed positive, practical action to take place ultimately for the benefit of the pupils. However, the *actual* working culture of assessment and evaluation practice seemed to be illustrative of either the scientific or interpretative paradigm in that practice was either quantitative *or* qualitative. In both cases they lacked a truly formative dimension as quantitative aspects were rarely *'unpicked'* or interpreted, and qualitative reporting of assessment and evaluation results were too 'general' in nature. In both cases it was difficult to see how they could be used effectively to promote the next stages of learning and school development. I could find little evidence of the quantitative-qualitative divide being bridged so that the strengths of each approach could be

utilised to improve the formative dimension of assessment and evaluation at the school.

I decided that I needed to explore my interpretations further through the setting up of a focus group that would have assessment and evaluation as its key topics. The processes undertaken and corresponding outcomes of this group are charted in the following three sections.

(b) Cultural Recognition and Paradigm

My reading about the use of focus groups in research indicated that an optimum group size would be between six and eight and that the blend of people needed to be such that the group dynamics would suit the aims of the research project (see Part 3). In addition, the literature (*ibid*) indicated that great skill was required of the *moderator* (myself as researcher in this case) in order that the members of the focus group would be able to contribute ideas, exchange views and where necessary engage in argument. The alternative was that the focus group reverted to merely being a group interview.

The group size was less of an issue as I felt that I could work within the literature suggested size of between six and eight people. Getting the correct *blend* of people was the main concern for me at this point. I was aware that if I asked for volunteers, I might not get the vibrant social dynamic I wanted. On the other hand, I was aware that constructing a purposive group may lay my research open to bias in terms of presenting data generated by the group as being representative of the full range of experiences and opinions. I decided to select the group members purposively but to take all ideas generated by the group to larger groups so that they could be adapted and refined. Having worked in the school for ten years, I had good knowledge of the research context and believed this to be a strength rather than a problem, but only if I kept the issue of potential bias as part of my thinking and research process.

Developing the skills required of a successful moderator worried me from the outset. My track record as a leader was based around what I would describe as a direct approach to leadership. I would do the research and groundwork for developments and then present the way forward. The main hurdle was to convince others that the new direction was the right one. I had found this approach effective in my role as

middle leader where initiatives only involved the subject area I was in charge of. My recent experience of senior leadership, together with the reading I had undertaken (see Part 1), indicated that to transfer this approach to *whole* school leadership would be a mistake. This was one of the main reasons for choosing a focus group approach as a research method as it would put me in a position where I had to learn to take on the role of mediator or facilitator rather than director. Suffice it to say, I had to learn a new range of moderator skills before I attempted to use them for the purpose of my research. I decided that I would have several trial runs before I went 'live' with my field work so that I could get my own feel for what was required.

It seemed to me that the most obvious group to use as a means of developing my skills as moderator was a group of seven newly qualified teachers (NQT) with whom I met weekly for a professional development session. The session lasted for around an hour each time and we had already discussed a need to change the format of the meetings in order that it became more about 'sharing good practice' than a briefing based on a pre-determined list of topics. Ethically, I was not comfortable with the idea of withholding my own motives for adopting this change of approach to our meetings, although we had agreed in principle that the sessions should be more about them, not me, providing the direction. When I asked the NQTs individually if they minded me getting some focus group practice as a result of the change in meeting style, they were bewildered that I had asked. One colleague responded *'I thought you were going to ask me about something really serious. We all came to you anyway to say that we would prefer to run the sessions as a mutual sharing of ideas and experiences.'* (Rebecca).

My starting point with the NQT group was to agree some ground rules so that good quality social exchange was maintained without 'order' deteriorating. We decided that only three main rules were important. The first was that we would not talk over each other or have 'side' conversations. The second was that we would qualify any argument with a reason. The third was that we would allow the moderator to bring other people into the discussion at his discretion if he felt that they were finding it difficult to contribute.

The 'practice' sessions with the NQTs were conducted over a period of three weeks at the beginning of October 2007 and ran concurrently with my analysis of assessment and evaluation policy and practice. The result was a very intense period of data collection and interplay of research methods. However, the practice focus group sessions enabled me to develop an approach I could consistently apply. The first aspect in relation to this was that I found that it was better to have a list of broad headings for discussion at the beginning rather than working through a list of questions. I found that often the questions I wanted answering were dealt with through natural discourse. Where this was not the case, I was able to raise questions at suitable junctures. This approach also allowed for topics to emerge that I had not considered. For example, when we were talking about behaviour management and disciplinary procedures one NQT colleague raised the issue of how the school managed good behaviour. We then had a very dynamic and productive discussion about *rewards* and how this was an underdeveloped aspect of the school's work.

As I did not intend to use the outcomes of the practice focus group sessions for my research, I decided not to record the discussions. Instead, I used a flip chart to record the headings as we went along (even the headings were open to change and discussion) together with the main points that emerged. Where possible we tried to get a group consensus rather than just a list of varying opinions. Sometimes this was not possible and issues would then be placed on a 'need to follow up' list for future debate. Once we had finished the session, I typed up the flip chart notes and gave each group member a copy. I then destroyed the original and deleted the file on my computer. The idea was that the process and outcomes were for the benefit of the professional development of the group members and not for wider distribution. Ethically, I felt that this was the most appropriate way to manage the practice sessions.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that the main quality I needed to maintain when using a focus group for my 'live' research was awareness and ability to know when to intervene and when to 'step back'.

(i) What are we about? The 'Live Focus Group' – Many Eyes

At the beginning of October 2007, I had an idea of the size of the assessment and evaluation focus group and the likely blend of colleagues it would contain. By the end of October 2007, I felt confident that I had the skills to embark upon this method of research following the lessons learned from the practice sessions undertaken earlier in the month. I decided that the focus group would comprise six subject leader colleagues from English, Mathematics, Science, Physical Education and Art, together with an administrative colleague with responsibility for examinations and assessment data and reporting. My thinking was that this would retain the optimum group size theory and also have a good spread of perspectives from the core and foundation subjects. I judged the fact that the teachers were subject leaders as an important factor in lending professional weight to any outcomes that emerged as a result of the focus group sessions. The inclusion of the exams and assessment administrator was to provide a practical application perspective so that any 'blue sky thinking' could be realised in terms of the systems and technology we had at our disposal. Finally, my personal knowledge of the research context meant that I knew that the focus group members had strong opinions, particularly in relation to assessment and evaluation, and that they had all come into conflict with each other on issues relating to these areas on various occasions. Their passion for their subject area of responsibility meant that they had developed good policies and practices in their field. However, they had little tolerance for mandated policies or practices of a whole school nature. In short, I felt the group had a diverse and volatile composition that I had not experienced elsewhere in my career. In my view it was unique.

The assessment and evaluation focus group (AEFG) sessions took place at the end of October 2007 and were organised on a full day schedule. Three days were set aside over a two week period to avoid creating pressure to rush through discussions and make decisions. I arranged for the teaching members to be released from their teaching commitments and booked a large meeting room in the school with projector, laptop, flip chart, pens and paper. In order to avoid the participants feeling under pressure to take part, I arranged to meet each member individually so that I could explain the nature of my research and their part in it, including my intention to record the sessions using a voice tracer. Once I had their approval, I then asked them to read and sign the 'Informed Consent' forms (see Appendix I). Ethically, I believed this to be a less threatening environment than handing out the forms to the whole group at

the first session. It also allowed me to go through the format of the focus group sessions individually and brief them on the nature of the topics we would be exploring. I did not provide a traditional agenda. Instead, I used a list of topics as a reflective focus prior, during and after the sessions. No breaks were scheduled and I left the decision about when to take them to the group. The only pre-determined stopping point was lunch as I had booked this at a local pub so that we could relax and get to know each other away from the school environment.

Session one began with a discussion about how we would tackle the list of topics and in what order. We came up with a re-ordered list (see Appendix VI) and added *'our view of learning'* to it as the first item for discussion. As Maurice put it: *'The bloke at my local 'Quick Fit' garage has a view of how cars work and whatever job he does on a car fits in with that view. Unless we can get some agreement on learning we are knackered'.* Malcolm indicated an alternative approach by saying: *'You could also look at it as agreeing on what we don't think helps learning'.* The issue quickly got around to whether schools, with clusters of pupils in classrooms with teachers, were the best environment for learning. Jerry commented: *'It's like justifying our existence'.* Cathy brought the discussion down to earth by saying: *'We are committed to working in schools with pupils in classrooms. Surely, the issue is how best to do this here at this school! I think that Malcolm is right. We should ask ourselves what makes learning less effective'.*

The subsequent discussion culminated in an agreement that pupils don't learn particularly well when *'...class control is weak and pupil behaviour is poor'* (Barry), *'...teachers dominate the lesson'* (Cathy), *'...pupils aren't given an opportunity to work with each other and share ideas'* (Maurice), *'...explanations are unclear'* (Jerry) and *'...the classroom environment is shoddy and the resources are poor'* (Malcolm). These comments seemed to be consistent with the issues and recommendations arising from our OfSTED inspection (2007) and our own processes of self-evaluation. Maurice stressed the importance of communication for effective learning and stated that: *'It has to come from three directions. From the teacher to the pupil, the pupil to the teacher, and between pupil and pupil.'.* We all agreed on this and once again stressed the importance of thinking about this as '3D Teaching', a notion already established at a subject leaders' meeting earlier in the month.

We agreed that whatever came out of our meetings should embrace our views of learning. I was particularly intrigued by the class control and pupil behaviour being the first factor to emerge at this point. Initially, I thought of this as a distraction but I chose to step back from influencing any move away from this topic to see what developed. Again, I became aware of my own power base as a member of the school's senior leadership team (SLT). It was quite common for our SLT to bemoan teachers who brought every discussion back to pupil behaviour. In fact, the SLT would cite teachers who referred to pupil behaviour in this way as *blocking* school development. At this point, I had to remind myself that my role here was that of action researcher and not a member of the SLT following the 'party line'.

Before we went further, I asked the group what they felt we should be aiming to get out of the focus group process. Barry's answer was met with approval from the rest of the group: *'I think we are looking at getting a draft assessment policy out of it. We can then look at implementing it across the school.'* (Barry). Maurice went further to suggest that: *'We might even get a learning and teaching policy out of it as well. I don't think we have one at the moment do we?'* (Maurice). Since none of the group had actually seen a learning and teaching policy for the school, we thought this to be a good idea. When we checked through the list of school policies, we found that indeed the school did not have one.

Our starting point with assessment was to agree a common language for the terms 'assessment', 'recording', 'reporting', 'marking' and 'evaluation'. More than this however, Cathy remarked that *'...we ought to get clear in our minds why we are doing them.'*.

Agreeing the Language

When looking at the term assessment, there was a common agreement that it was a *process* of *'...making a judgement and feeding it back to the pupils.'* (Jerry) and that the most important form of assessment was formative. With reference to this last point, there were some quite strong opinions: *'For me it is all about formative assessment. The daily feedback in lessons that makes up good teaching'* (Maurice),

and *'Most of the important stuff for us is the formative assessment'* (Malcolm). Although the group agreed that formative assessment was the most valuable in terms of promoting learning, they also believed in the importance of summative assessment allowing the teacher to *'...take stock of where the pupil is at that time'* (Barry). Angela (our assessment and examinations administrator) had an alternative perspective relating to assessment and commented: *'...from where I sit it is all about grades because I deal with the reporting side and that's all the parents want'*. I found this view interesting as it served to show how one's role and daily practices influence the importance we place on things. As teachers we were in agreement that formative assessment was the most important part of our work, but Angela reminded us not to assume that this necessarily transferred to other groups of people both within and outside the school.

When the topic turned to recording, the group felt that this was less continuous as a process and the danger was that: *'...you can get too bogged down in actually recording'* (Cathy). At a fundamental level the group felt that recording was important in that: *'At some point I kind of draw breath and take stock just to help me 'cos I know I'm going to have to report this stuff.'* (Malcolm). In other words: *'Recording becomes a 'jog' to the memory to help you report.'* (Barry). Maurice also pointed out that although records tend to be summative in nature, their *usage* is best viewed as formative: *'We talk to the pupil also because at the point of making those summative judgments you are also setting the pupils some targets to help them go beyond that. That's the purpose.'* (Maurice).

When looking at reporting, it became evident that the issue was mainly about the question, *'For whose benefit?'* (Cathy). The conclusion was that the report should be an account of the pupil's performance for the benefit of the parents and that they should not contain too much technical language.

In terms of marking, the focus group argued that its purpose was mainly to provide the pupil with feedback from the teacher. All teachers in the group said that their departments asked pupils to mark their own and others' work a times but that *'...it should not be the dominant form of marking. Partly this is a PR thing with parents I suppose but it is important that teachers actually look at the work of their pupils!'*

(Malcolm). Whilst there was agreement that the best marking was formative in nature, there was debate about whether this had to be in the form of narrative comments, numbers or grades. One thing was consistent however, and that was that all agreed on the importance of the teacher marking work. As one member of the group commented: *'If I mark their homework they do it. If I don't some won't bother'* (Barry).

The group were very clear about what they understood by evaluation. At first I thought they had a distorted view of it. This was as a result of Malcolm's comment: *'It's the same as assessment'*. Again, I was tempted to interfere and question this stance but Barry went on to add to Maurice's initial remark by saying: *'Yes. Instead of it being about individuals it's about groups, subject areas or whole college performance. We have had a lot of county input into this aspect of our work'*. Jerry continued the explanation and made the point that: *'It is still about interpretation and making judgments so that you can develop things'*. In that sense it seemed that the group saw the formative aspect as being an important part of evaluation. When I questioned this they all agreed.

The 'What?' Questions

When our attention turned to what we should assess, there seemed to be a consistent view that pupils should be assessed against the strands of the subject as illustrated by the NC and exam specifications. To not follow this line would seem to ignore the statutory framework in which we worked. As Maurice commented: *'We are tied to the NC strands at KS3, 4 and 5 and we have to prepare the kids for by following them. This is not really open to discussion'*.

All members of the focus group felt that attitude, effort and behaviour should feature in our assessments of pupils but it was argued that this was an area of confusion at the moment. Maurice commented: *'Didn't we have a whole school policy for giving an effort grade? I'm not sure we stick to that'*. This sparked off a debate about whether the term 'effort' was appropriate in terms of encapsulating the personal qualities the group seemed to value. Alternatives were explored and Barry posed the question: *'Wouldn't 'application' be a better word?'*. The group felt that more work was

needed on this area to do it justice and that current practice was: *'...a bit hit and miss'* (Malcolm).

In terms of what the group believed should be recorded, all members went back to the notion of strands. Cathy described her department's approach: *'We have six points where we summarise our judgments so that an overview is available. Whether you do your recording fortnightly or half-termly doesn't matter so long as you can summarise it'*. The issue here seemed to be one of whole school efficiency as Maurice argued:

> *At the moment we are getting a lot of repetition and clashes where you have just made an assessment and then you are asked to make a very similar one for another reason. We are not very good at organising that. It could reduce our workload if we got that sorted.* (Maurice)

Angela reinforced this argument and suggested: *'We really do need to match it all up so that our records can serve several purposes'*. Cathy illustrated a current weakness in this respect: *'What we are not doing very well is making that information available to tutors'*.

It was agreed that the increments .0, .3, and .7 be recorded at KS3 but that C, B, A increments be reported. The argument behind this was illustrated by Barry who commented: *'This will bring our numerical system in line with the national'*. The proposal by Angela that we have a fixed point in the year/term where we recorded our assessments centrally, was initially met with resistance. Malcolm argued: *'I think if you had a fixed point it would take away the flexibility and you would end up trying to squeeze work in'*. Other group members varied in terms of the regularity of their formal recording processes. Some summarised their assessments and recorded half-termly, others were more frequent, and some less. It was agreed that all subjects should be able to summarise their assessments and record once per term as a minimum and that those who wanted to do this more frequently had the flexibility to do so. Planning assessments was also highlighted. Jerry made the point that: *'We need to have 'core tasks' to help judge the standards at these key points'*.

Session 2 began with discussion about reporting. The increments C, B, A had already been agreed in terms of reporting at KS3 and the group then agreed that grades should

go out on the reports at KS4/5. All group members argued that the report should not be too detailed. Jerry made the point: *'We are not going to provide parents with the detail we have in our own records'*. Maurice remarked: *'Actually, you have to leave yourself with something to write about'*.

The inclusion of statistical predictions in the reports based on prior attainment caused some debate. Maurice commented:

> *I would always dispute the statistical predictions based on prior attainment, particularly in my subject. I would always trust professional judgment as being more reliable in terms of forecasting where they are likely to be in the future.* (Maurice)

The group agreed that if statistical predictions were included in the report they should be accompanied by the teacher's prediction based on his/her professional judgement. It was also agreed that the predictions should have clearly different names. It was agreed that the statistical prediction be called the *target*, and the professional judgment the *forecast*.

The group felt that the question of *what* we would mark was self-evident. Barry argued: *'It's obvious isn't it? You are marking books, tests and things'*. Malcolm added: *'I know some subjects have orals and practicals as well'*. Equally, the group argued that what we were evaluating was: *'...implicit in the structure of the SEF'* (Maurice).

The 'How?' Questions

The debate now focussed on how this central recording process would take place. Angela outlined the capability of 'Assessment Manager' (AM) software that utilised the data already stored on the school's information management system (SIMS). Indeed, the school used the system called 'SIMS' for this purpose. Angela explained: *'The beauty of using AM is that it can pull in pupil data like teaching group, tutor group and anything else you have in SIMS automatically. Also, when pupils leave or enter the school the lists etc. get updated for you'*. Angela went on to describe the setting up of electronic marksheets for staff to record assessments for each group they teach. It all seemed very simple until Cathy raised the following issues:

> *My only concern is that it does not manipulate the data as well as Excel. My other slight concern is I know the people in my department can easily put data into Excel and if I've got to do lots of training to use AM how am I going to get everyone to the level that they are now with Excel?* (Cathy)

Other subject leaders in the group also had their own Excel spreadsheets and agreed that this may prove to be a disruptive move. Again, I was tempted to intervene and provide a possible solution but Angela got there first and said: *'That's not a problem, you can put it into Excel and we can import it into AM'*.

As far as how to report was concerned, the group referred back to the suggested report content already discussed. However, discussion took place at this point about getting data from the AM mark sheets onto the reports. Angela said that the report templates could be pre-printed with the mark sheet data already on so that teachers could then add their comments. Jerry commented with reference to this:

> *It would be great to get the reports to us with the data already on it because that would be even better when you are writing the reports. My staff wouldn't then have to go fishing for the data as it is headed at the top.* (Jerry)

At this point, Barry asked: *'Why don't we send out the data on the AM mark sheet on a separate report every term as we are recording it anyway?'*. There was some debate over whether this was too much but all eventually agreed that we ought to try it. As Maurice pointed out: *'We aren't far off doing this with the interims anyway. All we need to do is put out the reports once a term and then write one narrative report per year group'*. We decided to go with this idea and Cathy suggested we call the termly progress reports TPRs. Although we agreed overall, Barry questioned whether we really needed the narrative. We decided to get parental feedback following the first of the new reports and discuss further at a later stage.

When we discussed how to mark, the group argued that grades alone should be avoided unless the pupil has been made clear as to how to progress to the next one. There was some debate about whether the pupils actually read the comments provided. Maurice suggested a possible way forward:

> *When marking, illustrate the strengths of the work followed by the weak areas. Do not provide a third statement to say how to improve though. Let the pupils write this when the work is given back and give them an opportunity to do this as part of the lesson.* (Maurice)

This proved to be a popular suggestion and supportive additions followed like: *'It would be a good starter to a lesson. You could ask pupils to read out their statement about how they are going to improve'* (Barry), and: *'At least this might make them read what we have written'* (Malcolm). In addition to these points, the group agreed to continue to use the corrective codes as outlined in the 'literacy policy' and that it was not necessary to write a comment on every piece of work. With reference to this last point Malcolm argued that: *'The core assessment tasks should guide this and be the main piece of work we should comment on'*. The group agreed with this and Jerry summarised by saying: *'That way the comment can feed into the next core assessment task'*.

In order to evaluate, the group felt that it was necessary to look at a range of data sources. Lesson observations were already in place and had a focus on formative assessment practices and this was viewed as already providing valuable information. Barry commented in relation to this: *'The new lesson observation format has already been of great benefit and has shown us that we need to get the pupils working with less reliance on the teacher'*. Other suggested evaluative practices included sampling pupils' work, analysing assessment data, questionnaires and interviews.

The 'When?' Questions

Session three began with a review of previous discussions. The group agreed that many of the 'When?' questions had already been covered. In terms of when to assess, Cathy reminded us that: *'We are assessing continuously as part of everyday teaching but we have said that we need to do a 'take stock' formal assessment using a 'core task' at least three times per year'*. The group argued that the only real issue left was to ensure that the core assessment tasks, recording and reporting points are organised. Maurice suggested that: *'...they should appear on the school calendar so that everyone can work to them'*. Marking was viewed to be a continuous process but would also be part of the calendared 'core assessment task' process. The *main* topic of

discussion in this session related to the *barriers* to our work as perceived by the group.

The group was unanimous in its view that agreeing standards was a crucial area in need of development in terms of assessment. Jerry made the point: *'We need to moderate our marks so that they are correct and there are no discrepancies'*. This was judged to be of particular relevance at KS3, an issue supported by our external reviews by OfSTED and the LA. It seemed to be more of an issue in the foundation subjects than core in that core subjects had National Tests to cross-check standards and foundation subjects were totally reliant on the teacher assessment. With reference to this latter point, Jerry remarked that he sometimes felt that: *'...pupils were being given higher marks because they were 'nice kids' rather than because they had met the required standards of the course'*.

Another issue raised was that of 'split' classes where more than one teacher took the class for a unit of work. Malcolm made the point: *'Split classes make it more difficult as we don't see enough of the kids to make an accurate judgement'*.

When attention turned to barriers relating to recording assessments, there was also a sense of a shared opinion. It was felt that staff lacked confidence in the use of ICT to fulfil this task. Barry pointed out: *'There are always some people who are genuinely scared of using any kind of spreadsheet or putting stuff in'*. Cathy added: *'It's important that the teachers have access to ICT for it to work'*. This point met with the agreement of the group and all agreed that staff were more likely to use it and gain confidence the easier and more available the ICT system was. Maurice pointed out:

> *We were in the same boat with e-registration. Once we all had it on our laptops we got used to it quick enough because we were using it every lesson. We need something like that here.* (Maurice)

In addition, the group argued that the transfer of data to tutors and year heads was a problem in that each department tended to keep their own records/spreadsheets and there was little scope to share them wider. Angela made the point that using SIMS 'Assessment Manager' software may help this but staff would need support and training to get it right.

Barriers to evaluation were judged to include problems of finding time to observe lessons. Cathy commented that: *'Block timetabling is a problem'*, where all teachers are teaching a particular year group at the same time. In addition to the problems associated with lesson observations, the group seemed to be confused about how to use and interpret data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. Barry remarked: *'There are so many things you could write about the data because there is no standard'*.

Cathy argued:

> *Interpretation is our job. What we don't want is to have to go looking for the data and not really know where it is or its relevance. I've looked around the LA data and keep trying to find things without really knowing what I'm looking for.* (Cathy).

(ii) Change of Culture/Paradigm?

The focus group sessions reinforced the conclusions I had drawn from analysing data relating to assessment and evaluation policy and practice in section (a) of Part 4, in that, whilst there seemed to be a commitment and desire to adopt formative processes, this desire was not translating into practice. There were clear barriers to be overcome in this respect as outlined in the previous section, but the indications at this stage supported the conclusion that the formative culture was there in the beliefs and values held by the staff but it was not evident in the behaviours shown.

I also got the sense that colleagues believed in the value of blending the qualitative and quantitative educational measures. This was evident in the desire to *use* summative assessment and evaluation formatively with a view to improving and developing provision. In that sense, I would argue that there was evidence of an allegiance to the critical paradigm on which my research was based. This gave me reassurance that although there was still a mountain to climb, there was at least the shared will to climb it. Therefore, I concluded that a change of culture and/or paradigm was not the issue.

(iii) Change of Policy?

Although I had found evidence of formative assessment and evaluation principles in the existing school policies relating to these aspects, I had concluded that there was a need to 'sharpen them up'. The outcomes from the three focus group sessions tended to support this conclusion. Suggested developments arising from the sessions such as subjects developing termly core assessment tasks on which to base their judgements about pupil performance, recording assessments using AM software, termly progress reports (TPRs) being issued to parents, and clear assessment data provision on which to base evaluations, were additions that fulfilled a 'sharpening up' brief. Thus, the focus group sessions became instrumental in providing the missing elements in the school's assessment policy.

(iv) Change of Practice?

In addition to the changes in practice discussed earlier in Part 4(i), such as 3D teaching being used more consistently, the focus group sessions indicated that there was a need for staff to consider how pupil behaviour can be monitored so that patterns and interventions can create a learning environment where formative practices can flourish, moderate and standardise their judgments relating to pupil attainment and progress more effectively. There was also a need to become more systematic in the way staff record their judgments, are able to report and enter into meaningful dialogue with pupils and parents about a range of attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance data, improve their competency in relation to their use of new technologies on assessment and evaluation developments were to be based, and become more familiar with the interpretation of data and linkage of developments to the *impact* on pupil learning. It was at this point that I realised that these were at the heart of the criticisms levelled at the school by our most recent OfSTED inspection. We were now in a position, I felt, to move forward on these issues rather than stick to our defence of current practice in response to OfSTED's judgments. These judgments were now our *own* and not those of a 'detached', 'outside' agency.

The following two sections outline the emerging assessment and evaluation policy together with its dissemination and refinement.

(c) Emerging Assessment and Evaluation Policy

Appendix VII represents the emergent assessment and evaluation policy based on the focus group sessions held in October 2007. At this point, the policy was 'sharper' in content than before. However, the focus group (me included) believed that it needed to undergo a process of wider consultation, refinement and Governors' endorsement culminating in it being re-written in a 'policy' format. This was achieved through a process of 'high profile' dissemination. This process is outlined further in the next section.

(d) Dissemination

Although, I believed we had made rapid progress through what I would argue as a 'middle-up' leadership approach, it had bypassed both 'top' (senior leadership team – SLT) and 'bottom' (classroom teachers) on the whole. Even the middle leadership element as represented by the focus group members was not representative of the whole of the middle leadership section of the school. I therefore set about a process of dissemination to include these missing elements but starting with the SLT. My rationale here was that I firmly believed that the backing of the SLT was crucial in giving developments authority and professional 'weight'. I was acutely aware that although I was a member of SLT, this did not necessarily mean that the entire senior team would see the new proposals as a main priority for development.

As it turned out, the evidence base brought to the SLT meeting at the end of October 2007, was clear in its focus on the need to develop formative assessment and evaluation policy and practice at the school. The recent OfSTED inspection was instrumental in providing *some* of the weight for this argument but our *own* data based on policy and practice analysis undertaken at the beginning of October 2007 was the real tipping point. As the Principal put it: *'We have identified this as our number one priority. The days of defending the party line are over'* (Norman). This view was unanimously endorsed by the rest of the team. It was duly placed as the

school's 'number one' priority on its development plan for 2007/2008, a decision ratified by the Governing body at the beginning of November 2007. The school's SLT were keen for all subject leaders and their teams to play an active part in the refinement of the emergent assessment and evaluation policy and as a result we allocated this issue a 'single item' status at the next subject leaders' meeting at the beginning of November 2007.

(i) Refining the 'Virus' and Agreeing the Policy – Even More Eyes

The aspects of the assessment policy that related to formative practices in the classroom had been agreed by subject leaders and their teams at an earlier meeting in October 2007 where we established the AfL lesson observation focus. The debate at the subject leaders' meeting in November focussed on three areas of refinement in terms of the emergent assessment and evaluation policy.

The first aspect of discussion concerned the issue of pupil behaviour. The subject leaders argued that this aspect needed to be an *intrinsic* part of our assessment and evaluation process. This emerged out of a comment made by one subject leader who remarked: *'I don't know about 'Assessment for Learning': what about 'Behaviour for Learning'?'* (Eileen). The group of subject leaders agreed that if we were seeking to develop our systems and technologies that would allow us to more systematically monitor attainment and progress, it also should include such things as behaviour (good and poor), attendance and punctuality. The latter two aspects were systematically recorded but were not regularly and routinely shared with pupils and parents in a *formative* way, either through the reporting or tutorial process. One subject leader summarised the debate surrounding this issue by saying: *'We need to integrate all these things into our assessment, recording and reporting systems so that we have a more complete picture of our pupils'* (Ruby). Another subject leader stated: *'Year Heads and us need to look at a range of information about pupil performance so that we can improve what we do. The behaviour and attendance stuff is all part of that'* (June).

The second area of refinement identified by subject leaders at this meeting concerned the use of increments within levels at KS3. The focus group had recommended that

we *record* increments using the decimal notation .0, .3 and .7, and *report* increments as letters 'C', 'B' and 'A'. The majority of subject leaders argued that this was likely to *'...confuse what should be a straightforward process'* (Grant). Fortunately, Angela, our assessment and examinations administrator (also a member of the assessment and evaluation focus group) attended this meeting and was able to answer the fundamental question relating to this issue namely: *'Can we record increments using letters and still analyse them numerically in terms of averages and degrees of progress?'* (Patrick). Angela pointed out that:

> *Each level with a letter as its sub-level, and each grade at GCSE has a points tariff associated with it anyway. We could use the points to number crunch the results if we wanted to and still just record the level in the same way as we report it – with a letter* (Angela).

It was therefore agreed that we would use letters 'C', 'B' and 'A' for recording *and* reporting NC sub-levels or increments.

The next issue to emerge was that of whether we needed to have narrative reports at all given that we were now going to report termly using the TPRs. The group were split on this issue. Some subject leaders supported the point that:

> *The TPRs contain all the information in a concise format and any additional explanation should come through ongoing communication with parents either by letter or telephone. Parents' evenings are there as well, so we have another opportunity to give more explanation about the TPRs. What is the point of writing this down on a narrative report? You end up just repeating yourself!* (Barry).

Other subject leaders were more supportive of retaining narrative reports and aligned themselves to the argument that: *'Writing narrative comments about my pupils shows them and their parents that I know their child as an individual rather than a number'* (Maurice). As the division in opinion held firm, it was agreed that we would continue with issuing the TPRs termly, together with one narrative report at an appropriate stage in the year. However, it was also decided that we would review the situation in the light of feedback from parents and pupils.

Finally, the discussion turned to problems associated with evaluation; namely interpreting assessment data. In the light of our recent OfSTED inspection one subject

leader posed the question: *'What did OfSTED judge us on? Surely we ought to use the same kinds of data!'* (Eileen). As the entire SLT were at this meeting, the question was easily answered:

> *They (OfSTED) look for attainment and progress. So, for attainment, it is a case of % level 5 or above at KS3, % A*-C at GCSE, and % A-B at 'A' level. For progress, they look for the value-added (achievement relative to pupils' starting points) mainly from KS2-KS4, but also KS2-KS3. At 'A' level they look at value-added from KS4-KS5. In addition to this they look for three year trends and how different groups of pupils are doing; like girls compared to boys.* (Norman)

At this point the subject leaders were unanimous in their support of the point: *'Well, it seems blindingly obvious that we need to get our data in the same format!'*. (Grant).

The feedback from this subject leaders' meeting allowed the emergent assessment policy to be refined and put forward to the governing body for ratification. The policy was officially adopted by governors at the end of November 2007 (see Appendix VIII for a copy of the adopted assessment policy).

(ii) Starting the 'Epidemic'

My research had already established that the creation of a policy did not necessarily transfer into practice (see Part 4a (i)). Therefore, I retained the 'epidemic' metaphor outlined in Part 1 and set out a series of staff and pupil briefings relating to the intended developments in assessment and evaluation practices as outlined in the 'new' assessment policy. The aim here was to get the policy 'out there' and into the daily working practices of the school by giving it a high profile and public 'airing'. In short, the word needed to be spread.

Because the developments in formative assessment and evaluation had been placed at the top of the school's priority list, I believed that the briefings should be led by senior staff. However, I also recognised the influence that middle leaders had already demonstrated in terms of these developments. The middle leader members of the assessment and evaluation focus group had been particularly influential. In addition, I was aware of the implications that developments would have for the administrative staff at the school, particularly in terms of the new technologies we would be relying on for recording and reporting purposes. Therefore the staff briefings were led by a

team of colleagues including members of the SLT, middle leaders and administrative staff. Although I was involved in the briefings as a member of the SLT, the sessions were always opened by the Principal with subsequent inputs from the rest of the briefing team. I hoped that this would go some way towards bringing authority to the developments as well as providing a collegiate quality.

The whole staff (teaching, support and administrative staff) were given a general briefing at the beginning of December 2007 and this was followed by more precise 'team' briefings led by the member of the 'briefing team' whose role best matched the smaller teams. The teams for the more precise briefings were identified and categorised in terms of teaching and non-teaching staff and the content of the briefings were tailored to the assessment and evaluation developments that would impact directly on the working practices of that particular group. In addition to staff briefings, pupils were also made aware of our intended developments in school assemblies, again led by a combination of senior and middle leaders.

Although I was confident following the briefings and assemblies that the word had indeed 'gone out', I was not entirely sure of how it had been received. In a way, our approach had been akin to the traditional view of learning outlined in Part 1 (a) where there is an assumption that transmission is automatically followed by reception. I was particularly keen that the staff had at least 'received' and understood the messages.

The next section begins by exploring the extent to which the assessment policy was 'received' by staff and pupils, and then goes on to follow the process of embedding the 'new' assessment policy and practices.

(e) Leadership and Change – Focus Groups and the Power of the Few

The assessment and evaluation focus group had played a pivotal role in the progress made so far. The group had not only generated ideas, they had also been an integral part of refining developments and disseminating them. The group members *appeared* to be influential in terms of starting an epidemic of new assessment and evaluation processes, but at this point I could not be certain of the extent of their influence. In short, I questioned whether the epidemic of new ideas had spread wide enough. I

considered interviewing a range of teaching, support and administrative staff together with a selection of pupils in order to gauge whether the 'transmission' of ideas via the briefings had been 'received'. The prospect of conducting more interviews and the time involved in their transcription seemed a daunting prospect and time was not on my side. Had I delayed at this point I would have run the risk of losing momentum and staff support. However, I felt that I needed to establish how the briefings were received in order to avoid future problems and risk staff and pupil disillusionment. The solution to my problem came in the form of the school's renewal of its Investor in People (IIP) quality mark.

As part of the process of IIP re-designation, the school was visited by the assessor two weeks prior to the assessment visit. The 'pre-visit' took place in the middle of December (2007) and the review was carried out at the end of the Autumn term 2007. When I met the assessor on the 'pre-visit' he began by asking me whether the school would be interested in being a pilot case study for a new IIP development called a 'Themed Profile Review'. When he explained that the purpose of the profile review was to establish, via interviews with staff, the institution's capacity to deliver its development priorities, I saw an opportunity to use our IIP review as an indicator of the extent to which the new assessment and evaluation developments had been received. This move was made more attractive when the assessor said that the school would be the first educational institution to undertake such a review.

The themed IIP review was conducted over a 4 day period during the penultimate week of the Autumn term. The interview sample comprised the Principal, two other members of the leadership team, three middle leaders, sixteen teaching staff, three teaching assistants, three classroom support staff, three administrative staff, and two governors. The sample was selected by the reviewer and also had a spread of part-time, full-time, male, female, recent starters, union representatives, and governors. The full interview sample grid can be seen in Appendix IX. Questions asked were designed to test the extent to which all staff understood the school priorities for development as outlined in Appendix X.

With regard to formative assessment (AfL), the headline verdict in the themed IIP review report read: *'Evidence from this review suggests that the school is entering the*

'establishing' phase in the progression table for AfL' (p. 10). Based on the alignment of the AfL terminology and OfSTED categories (discussed earlier in Part 4), this tended to support the conclusion that we were moving out of the 'satisfactory' and into the 'good' phase of development. In addition to this the report indicated:

> *SLT support for AfL is seen to be excellent…Confidence in implementing AfL is high amongst the teaching staff and people indicated that it is becoming established practice within their roles. They are motivated to develop innovative techniques, some of which have been used by the LA as examples of good practice. People feel that activities to meet their development needs for AfL have been effective in terms of giving them the knowledge to use AfL techniques and materials, and support within teams to improve practice is very good.* (p. 10).

There was, however, one area in need of development identified in terms of formative assessment (AfL). This related to strengthening the awareness of support staff and their roles in the development of formative assessment (AfL).

The formative evaluation strand, focussed on tracking and monitoring (T&M) systems. The report commented:

> *As with AfL, support for staff development in this area has been effective, with individuals developing good practice and sharing this across the school, for example, in making better use of SIMS software in providing relevant data.* (p. 12).

In addition the report cited the following comment made by one of the teaching staff: *'Support for tracking and monitoring has been excellent – it's more prescriptive now. The school has improved considerably through T&M, but in a humane way'* (Terry). As with formative assessment (AfL), the report suggested that the clarity of what is expected *'…could be reinforced with classroom support staff'* (p.12).

Based on the themed IIP review findings, I concluded that we were in a strong position to move forward and that we needed to keep the profile of formative assessment and evaluation high. In addition we needed to address the issue of everyone knowing and understanding their roles, particularly support staff, and continue to develop the technologies that underpinned our developments. In order to make everyone clear about their roles we developed a concise overview (see Appendix XI) and put it out to all staff, students, parents, and governors. It provided

a useful reference point and was regularly used to keep the profile of formative assessment high. In the IIP debrief, the reviewer also suggested that formative assessment and evaluation elements be clearly identified in the school's policies relating to learning and teaching, and continuous professional development (CPD). These were reviewed as a result of this feedback in consultation with pupils and staff respectively.

(i) Embedding Policy and Practice

Having reviewed and updated policies relating to assessment, evaluation, learning and teaching, and CPD, the next stage was to direct attention to *practice* and begin the process of embedding.

Earlier in Part 4, I outlined how subject leaders agreed that the original AfL lesson observation proformas needed to be made more concise and that the criteria was no longer required on the forms themselves. Appendix IV illustrates our response to this and the new proformas were used throughout the Spring and Summer terms in 2008 for all aspects of lesson observation in the school, including performance management, NQT induction, interviews for new staff, subject reviews and peer CPD. The school calendar was completely redesigned so that key dates relating to assessment and evaluation were clearly identified. In fact the calendar was totally structured around these aspects (see XII). As a result of this we put ourselves in a high risk situation in terms of having to honour the dates by getting the associated tasks done by the allotted time.

As the technologies we required for recording and reporting were in the developmental stage also, the intensity of my research became enormously high as the first termly progress report (TPR) was to be issued at the end of the Spring term, with the next one at the end of the Summer term. In order for assessment data to be printed on the TPRs, staff needed to have a centralised system for recording their judgments and also have a core assessment task on which to base their assessment decisions. As a result of the work undertaken by the focus group and subject leaders in the Autumn term, the core assessment tasks were well underway. The central recording system was the next task.

SIMS Marksheets

As all teaching staff had their own laptops and access to SIMS for pupil registration, subject teams agreed to adopt Angela's recommendation that we use SIMS for recording, reporting and evaluation purposes. Angela had already explained that those subject areas with their own spreadsheets could 'import' data into SIMS without radically changing systems that were currently meeting their needs. We had also established through the focus group and subject leader consultation, that statistically generated targets (like 'Fischer Family Trust' (FFT)) were at best a guess as to the likely pupil outcomes and that the professional judgement of teachers should also appear on the SIMS marksheet. Therefore staff would be expected to manually input the current level (with lettered increment) or grade for each pupil, together with a 'forecast' of what the teacher would expect the pupil to attain at the end of the key stage. Angela was able to produce marksheets for each member of staff for each group they taught (see Appendix XIII) and staff were able to access their marksheets directly through their SIMS homepage, along with their register.

All staff received initial training and ongoing support from Angela and her team and I became confident that the data would be recorded by the calendar deadline. There was little room for 'slippage' as the TPRs were to be printed and reported the week after the deadline for recording. However, two problems emerged. The first was that although the deadline was on the calendar and reminders were sent out, a trial report print run indicated that, whilst most assessments had been recorded, there were some gaps on the reports. As not all reports had been printed in the trial run, it was difficult to see how extensive the problem was. We needed a quick way of getting an overview of all marksheets to see who had not completed them. As this particular part of SIMS software was relatively new, we had to get urgent assistance from the SIMS support agency which in turn got the software developers to modify the technology to suit our purposes. This took two days. As if this was not enough, when I was able to get an overview of the marksheets, I detected that the problem was spread at random across a selection of teachers and year groups. The outcome was that I had to produce a list of teachers and their groups and chase them down.

The second problem emerged after the entire collection of TPRs had been duly printed. Not only had they all been printed, but they had all been carefully placed in addressed envelopes ready for postage. The problem concerned Maths levels and grades. When the Maths levels and grades were 'exported' from the Maths spreadsheet into SIMS, some of the pupils' names did not export into the same order on the marksheet. The result was that some pupils had been awarded a level that should have been assigned to another pupil. Although SIMS automatically updates lists when pupils move groups, join or leave the school, the Maths spreadsheet did not and so lists did not correspond. It was the Maths member of the focus group that brought this to my attention a matter of hours before the TPRs were to be posted. We had no alternative but to open them all up, check the alignment of the lists, and then re-seal the envelopes for posting. Again, we sought the advice of the SIMS support agency and the problem was subsequently solved by ensuring that the lists are imported, re-aligned through a SIMS 'sort', and then placed into the marksheets. Although these were minor problems located in one subject area only, they were enough to potentially damage the impact of the new developments.

Termly Progress Reports (TPRs)

The TPRs went out to parents at the end of the Spring term 2008 and they contained pupil data relating to attainment, progress, statistical targets for the end of the key stage, forecasts for the end of the Key Stage (based on teachers' professional judgment, punctuality, attendance, and behaviour (see Appendix XIV). The behaviour data took the form of 'praise' and 'consequence' points and this development will be discussed in greater detail in the next section. All the data were integrated through SIMS and its input and retrieval was an integral part of every teacher's SIMS home page (see Appendix XV**)**.

The TPRs were accompanied by a letter explaining the data and how it was designed to stimulate dialogue between pupils, parents and school in order that future progress could be secured. The letter also explained that there would be an opportunity to discuss the TPR further at parents' evening, and that pupils would also receive one

narrative report per year. What happened next took most of the people involved with our new developments by surprise.

The first thing to happen was that I received a 'flurry' of e-mails and letters from parents saying how much they preferred the new style reports to the old ones. When I contacted parents it became clear to me that they had mis-understood the accompanying letter and interpreted the TPRs as replacing the narrative reports completely. As one parent put it at a subsequent parents' evening: *'I can see the point in coming to parents' evening now. Before the teachers just read the report to you and so what was the point in coming? I can read the report myself!'* (PaD). This point was reflected in the increased attendance at every parents' evening following the Spring Term issue. Attendance % went from an average of 66% to 83%. Following the issue of the Summer TPRs, I received more e-mails and letters from parents praising the 'new' system. One parent wrote:

> *Firstly the introduction of the Termly Progress Reports – having a report every term that clearly enables you to see the specific progress (or not) for each subject is so helpful. It allows you to feel more confidently in touch with how they are doing throughout the year, rather than waiting for parents' evening or end of year reports. I'm sure that these create more work for all the staff but they are most appreciated – Thank You!* (PaE)

Incidentally, teachers reported that they found them less taxing than the narrative reports! When I shared this more widely with teachers, they too were somewhat surprised. Our assumption had been that *formative* and *qualitative* meant *narrative*. The reality was that the more quantitative assessment data of the TPRs was received by parents and pupils as *stimulating* formative and qualitative dialogue. Pupil feedback through the college council reflected the points made by parents. A typical comment was that they felt that they could see at a glance where they needed to improve rather than wading through pages of narrative comments that were too general to be of much use.

I received only two negative comments from parents and they related to small % pupil attendance figure errors (3% and 5% respectively)!

Evaluation Developments – Organising Data to Aid Interpretation

Subject leaders had already outlined that they thought that assessment data should be presented and organised to reflect the OfSTED foci in its reporting of school performance. Data were therefore organised in three broad categories. The first related to standards (attainment) and illustrated the raw outcome measures of percentage level 5+ for KS3 and A*-C for KS4, for example. Three year trends and girl/boy differences were provided in each case along with national and local comparisons. The second category related to achievement (progress) and consisted of numerical and graphical representations of the distance the learners had travelled (as measured by their summative assessment results at the end of the Key Stage) in value-added terms (whether they achieved in line with, above, or below what one would expect them to get given their starting points). The third category related to the relative performance of a subject compared with other subjects in the school. A residual measure was used to indicate whether pupils tended to do better in one subject compared to another. A positive residual was used as an indicator of good performance relative to other subjects, and a negative as an indicator of poor performance (a value of +/- 6 would indicate that pupils did better or worse respectively by a grade). Again, three year trends and girl/boy differences were illustrated along with national and local comparisons.

Appendix XVI shows an example of the typical format used for the presentation of standards and achievement data. In addition to the simplified format for the data, subject leaders were given specific guidance in the form of structured questions to aid the interpretation of the data and allow judgments relating to the impact of initiatives trialled (see Appendix XVII). The guidance was linked directly to the subject self-evaluation form (SEF) in order that interpretations could be narrative and not merely replications of the numerical data.

(ii) Mutating the 'Virus' and Controlling new 'Epidemics'

Earlier in Part 4, I outlined how pupil behaviour was viewed by staff as a key factor in the development of formative policy and practice. It came out of both the focus group interviews and also subject leaders' meetings in October 2007. At this time I was acutely aware that I had embarked upon an already massive area of development with assessment *and* evaluation as my research focus. I viewed my direct involvement with

any developments in the way the school recorded, monitored and tracked behaviour (good and bad) would be a step too far for me. I simply did not have the capacity. On the other hand, it had become clear that staff felt that it should form an intrinsic part of our proposed developmental work in the areas of formative assessment and evaluation. I needed to somehow delegate the leadership of development in the area of behaviour recording, tracking and monitoring whilst retaining oversight in order that new ways of working could be integrated into our formative assessment and evaluation developments.

SIMS Behaviour Project

The temptation to become directly involved myself was great as I was aware that a new SIMS behaviour module was now available. My view was that this could fit in with our planned assessment and evaluation developments as they too were reliant on the SIMS software. In short, I saw an opportunity to integrate behaviour with our formative assessment developments. The answer to my problem came in the form of a meeting I had arranged with a recently appointed 'Fast Track' (FS) colleague as part of my role as mentor. The FS scheme was geared towards selected NQTs being involved in planned professional development activities designed to prepare them for senior leadership positions within a five year time frame. In essence, the meeting was arranged in order for us to jointly decide on a 'Wider School Focus' (WSF) project the FS teacher (Abi) would lead. Abi had already made clear her intention to pursue a 'pastoral' career path and so when I suggested taking a lead on behaviour recording, tracking and monitoring systems development, Abi quickly agreed.

At the time, the school ran a paper based system of recording, tracking and monitoring behaviour. Using SIMS was therefore a radical change as it was electronic in nature. We decided that it would be a good idea to pilot the scheme with Abi's year team (a team of seven tutors and their Head of Year). The tutors in the year team were all within their first two years of teaching. However, the Head of Year (HoY) was very experienced having taught in five schools over a thirty year period, the last ten years as HoY. Both Abi and I believed that this group could be instrumental in the development and adoption of the SIMS behaviour system as a result of bringing inexperience and experience together. There were high levels of mutual respect

between the tutors and their HoY (Colin). Colin would openly remark how much he valued his team and praised their commitment to the role of tutor. They were equally supportive of Colin and as one tutor commented: *'Colin is fantastic. He knows when to step in and when to leave you to it'* (Brian). When Abi approached the year team and Colin, they agreed to trial the SIMS system in November 2007 and run it through until the end of January 2008. My involvement was to oversee developments to ensure that they complemented the work relating to formative assessment and evaluation. I met with Abi every two weeks to monitor progress. In Abi, Colin and the year team, I had a 'spin-off' focus group.

Toolbars, Drop-down Menus and Customisation

The first task Abi and the year team had to address involved establishing a straightforward way of navigating around the SIMS toolbars on the teacher homepage (see Appendix XV). Accessing the behaviour module from the homepage was a straightforward case of clicking on the green flag for good behaviour and red flag for poor. This proved to be easy for recording individual instances but rather 'long winded' for multiple cases involving more than one pupil. After much trial and error, the year team found that it was quicker to highlight the pupils involved on the register and then access the good behaviour (Achievement) or poor behaviour (Behaviour) from the appropriate link (see Appendix XVIII pp. 227 and 231). In each case, the drop-down menus needed to be modified to suit the particular context of the school. For example, the 'location' needed to reflect the particular facilities of the school. In addition, we were able to set an automatic points tariff for 'Achievement' and 'Behaviour' (Appendix XVIII p. 232 shows how this was applied to the latter and its link to the school's class code). In short, as soon as a particular 'Achievement' or 'Behaviour' type was selected from the drop-down menus the points were automatically awarded.

The criteria for the award of 'Behaviour' points was implicit in the school's class code (see Appendix XVIII p. 232). The award of 'Achievement' points was based on the school's classroom expectations of pupils being 'Purposeful', 'Considerate' and 'Co-operative' (PCC) (see Appendix XIX). In terms of the latter, good PCC qualities would be rewarded with three points, and outstanding PCC qualities with five points.

In the case of 'Achievement' and 'Behaviour', a narrative comment was also recorded as part of the input (see Appendix XVIII pp. 229 and 233).

Once the year team had modified and customised the drop-down menus and toolbars, the input of data became straightforward. The problem they came across next was that of creating 'Achievement' and 'Behaviour' reports (see Appendix XVIII p. 234). When staff tried to run reports through SIMS, there were too many reports to manipulate and many of them did not work correctly or relate to our specific needs. The year team benefited enormously from another colleague joining the team as a focus group member. The new colleague (Wayne) was another year head and wanted to become familiar with the developments so that he could apply it more effectively with his year team when it was 'rolled out' to the whole school. His understanding of the way the SIMS software worked allowed us to customise reports for our own purposes and needs. To this effect we created the following types of report:

- Individual pupil 'Achievement'/'Behaviour' *report* (narrative)

- Year group 'Achievement'/'Behaviour' *point* summary

- Tutor group 'Achievement'/'Behaviour' *point* summary

- Subject 'Achievement'/'Behaviour' *report* (narrative) by class

- Subject 'Achievement'/'Behaviour' *points* summary by year group and class

Appendix XX illustrates some examples of these reports. The reports were used by the 'Behaviour Focus Group' (BFG) for rewards, sanctions, tutor group competitions, assembly announcements, parental feedback, monitoring patterns of behaviour and self-evaluation.

By the end of January 2008, the BFG had not only 'ironed out' most of the problems associated with the SIMS behaviour module, they had produced their own staff user guide (see Appendix XVIII). This guide was subsequently used by the BFG to train the rest of the staff as we 'rolled' the SIMS behaviour initiative out to the rest of the staff at the beginning of February 2008. We started this 'rolling out' process by a whole staff presentation where we were able to illustrate the problems and solutions we had experienced in the pilot phase. This was then followed by small group and individual training led by initially by the BFG and then in addition by other staff who gradually became proficient in the use of the SIMS behaviour module.

The use of the school's classroom expectations for the awarding of 'Achievement' points and class code for 'Behaviour' points meant that staff had clear criteria to work from. There were *some* issues relating to *consistency,* however but these were picked up quickly by the year heads and subject leaders who were given this particular brief as part of their initial training. By the end of the Spring term we were in a position to try to integrate the 'Achievement' and 'Behaviour' points into the TPRs. For reporting purposes we decided to call 'Achievement' points 'Praise' points, and 'Behaviour' points 'Consequence' points. This was in response to staff feedback at the initial 'rolling out' training session in February 2008.

After a few technical problems, we managed to get a successful TPR run for all year groups that integrated attainment, progress, attendance, punctuality, praise and consequence data (see Appendix XIV).

Aside from the TPRs, all data were routinely accessed by all staff through their SIMS homepage for intervention work like mentoring, letter writing, telephone calls to parents etc. In short, it increased the *formative* dialogue between school and home.

(f) New Policy *in* Practice

In Part 1, I argued that the process of embedding means that what is written in policy had to actually translate into the working practices of those involved with its application. I also argued that the implementation of policy should have an observable result and impact. Having outlined the process of embedding formative practices in the previous section, the next challenge was to identify the key *indicators* of them being embedded in practice.

(i) Indicators of Formative Assessment and Evaluation Policy Being Embedded in Practice

The first indicator I looked for related to what was actually going on in the classroom. At the beginning of Part 4, I illustrated the pattern of formative assessment in the classroom as illustrated by the AfL lesson observation proformas. I decided to revisit

this process during the Summer and Autumn terms of 2008 to get an idea of how things had developed through comparing patterns with those detected during the Autumn term in 2007. To aid this, I analysed the lesson observation data using the same format as illustrated in Figs. 13 and 14. Observations were conducted by experienced paired observers (as in October 2007) where possible in order to provide as much consistency as possible. A spread of lessons across the Key Stages was evidenced as in 2007. The revised lesson observation proformas were used for the 2008 observations (see Appendix IV) with the old proformas (see Appendix II) used to provide the criteria for judgments. Figs. 16 and 17 illustrate the resulting pattern of classroom based formative practice in October 2008, and Fig. 18 shows a comparative picture of 2007 and 2008 data relating to teaching strategies for effective dialogue.

When, at the subject leaders meeting in November 2008, we examined the data relating to objective led lessons, written feedback, oral feedback, and peer and self-assessment, the trend appeared very positive. In contrast to the 2007 data where the bias in each aspect was towards the 'Focusing' and 'Developing' strands, the 2008 data indicated a shift in bias towards the 'Establishing' and 'Enhancing' strands (as seen in the move from the dominant coloured pie chart sectors blue and purple in Fig. 14, towards dominant sector colours green and yellow in Fig. 17). This shift indicated a trend where these formative assessment practices were well developed across the school. A similar improvement trend was evident in our analysis of 'Teaching Strategies for Effective Dialogue' (see Fig. 18) where improvement was illustrated in every aspect. Although, there were areas still in need of further development (e.g. use of 'rich' and 'big' questions), areas like 'wait time after a teacher question', 'eavesdropping on group dialogue', 'no hands-up questioning', 'prompts & body language used to encourage continuation', and 'peer discussion' all showed marked improvement. In short, the evidence relating to formative assessment practices in the 'classroom' supported the notion that these practices were indeed embedded to a greater degree in October 2008 than in October 2007.

Pattern of Classroom Based Formative Assessment Practices at End of Research October 2008 (73 lessons observed in total)

Fig. 16

ASPECT	Focusing	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Objective led lessons	2 lessons (3%)	5 lessons (7%)	31 lessons (42%)	35 lessons (48%)
Written feedback	2 lessons (3%)	13 lessons (18%)	33 lessons (45%)	25 lessons (34%)
Oral feedback	0 (0%)	10 lessons (14%)	20 lessons (27%)	43 lessons (59%)
Peer and self-assessment	2 lessons (3%)	22 lessons (30%)	24 lessons (33%)	25 lessons (34%)
Teaching strategies for effective dialogue	**Eavesdropping on group dialogue** 46 lessons (63%)	**Wait time after a teacher question** 42 lessons (58%)	**Rich questions** 33 lessons (45%)	**No hands-up questioning** 47 lessons (64%)
	Questions linked to resources or task 72 lessons (99%)	**Big questions** 30 lessons (41%)	**Prompts and body language used to encourage continuation** 65 lessons (89%)	**Peer discussion** 53 lessons (73%)

Fig. 17
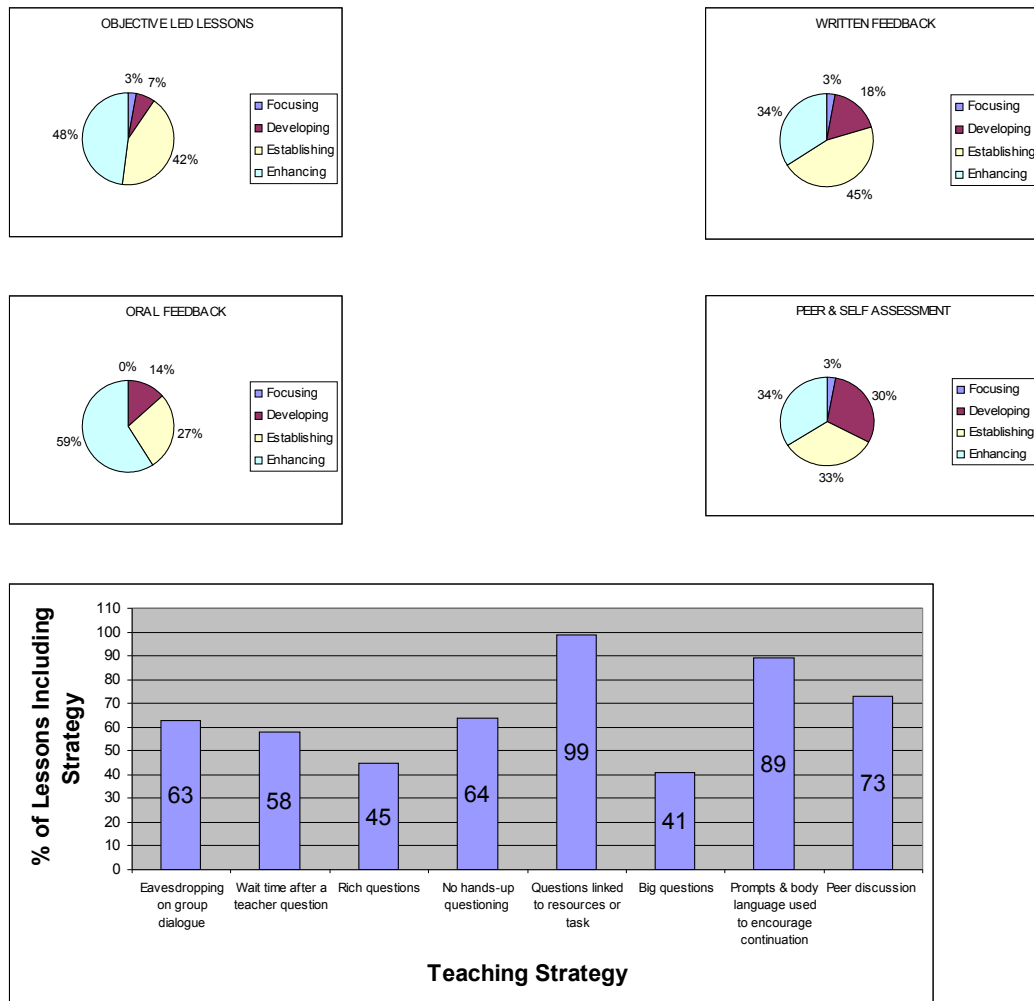
COMPARATIVE GRAPH SHOWING TREND FROM

OCTOBER 2007 TO OCTOBER 2008

Fig. 18
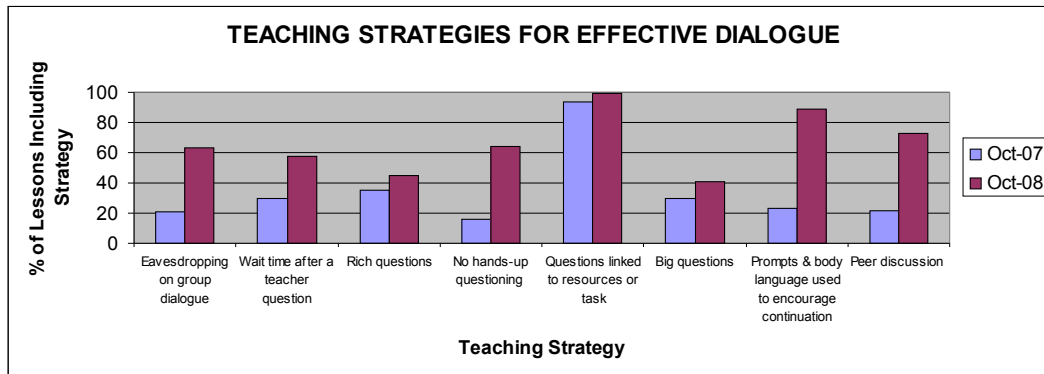
When I looked for further evidence of formative assessment and evaluation policy being embedded in practice, a number of evidence sources emerged to support a claim that the school had indeed developed between the start of my research (October 2007) and its completion (December 2008). By September 2008 the new SIMS assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems were part of teachers' daily working practices. Teachers were now routinely inputting data relating to pupil attainment, achievement, behaviour (good and bad), attendance and punctuality. Teachers were also tracking pupils' performance in these areas and developing interventions (e.g. mentoring). Because all these systems were integrated through one source (SIMS), the SLT and middle leaders could access mark sheets and teacher records to check that staff were indeed routinely recording, monitoring, reporting and evaluating pupil performance data.

Also, by September 2008, formative assessment and evaluation stages were a standard feature on the school calendar (see Appendix XXII**)** and reminders were included on teachers' homepages in SIMS. TPRs were part of the 'normal' vocabulary in school whether and they were used for all aspects of monitoring and evaluation. Indeed, data relating to attainment, achievement, behaviour, attendance and punctuality, compiled through TPRs and other SIMS applications, were routinely shared with pupils, parents and other interested parties through assemblies, letters, phone calls, and tutor group competitions. Assessment data were now presented in a more concise and accessible

format (see Appendix XVI) to aid evaluation processes. By September 2008, subject SEFs showed evidence of a more systematic and evidenced based approach to subject evaluation. A balance of qualitative and quantitative data analysis could be detected in the subject SEF commentaries and the cynicism and scepticism of data evident in October 2007 was no longer detectable. An entry in the science SEF was typical of the new style where commentaries rather than statistical data replication was the norm:

> *Boys and girls achieve well in Core and Additional Science. Core Science is particularly good with both sexes gaining a grade and a half against national benchmarks. Additional Science shows a slightly less positive residual, but once more, there is little gender difference. In the separate sciences, girls do marginally better than boys in Biology, but boys show a clearer gain in Chemistry and Physics. This is most marked in Physics, however it is worth noting that all subjects show a positive residual against national benchmarks.*
> (Science SEF, September 2008).

A system of subject and year reviews were in place by September 2008 in order to validate the judgements made by middle leaders in their SEFs. The reviews were scheduled throughout the school year and were carried out by the school's SLT.

By September 2008, formative assessment and evaluation processes were an intrinsic part of the school's recruitment process and candidates on interview would be expected to demonstrate formative qualities in their teaching session together with a secure knowledge of formative principles as evidenced in their response to questions at interview. In addition, candidates for leadership positions would be expected to demonstrate a secure understanding of how assessment data could be used to evaluate subject or team effectiveness formatively. Also, by September 2008, the induction programme for new staff (including NQTs), and professional development sessions relating to trainee teachers from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) institutions, had formative assessment and evaluation processes as fundamental elements.

Overall, the data indicated that, by September 2008, formative assessment and evaluation was embedded in practice.

PART 5

CONCLUSION

(a) Reflections on the Processes and Outcomes in Relation to my Research Aims and the Literature and Research in Parts 1 and 3

From the outset I maintained that my primary aim was to add to the body of knowledge in my chosen field of assessment and evaluation in education. Although the *product* of this may come in the form of new knowledge or ways of working/understanding, I also aimed for my research to fulfil a *process* function where my *approach* to embedding formative practices might add to and inform the practices of others engaged in the challenge of leading change in schools. Finally, by charting the process of change in my own particular context, I set out to produce a thesis that may be used not only for colleagues and others to reflect upon, but also one that may serve an external accountability record of the school's development. Thus my reflections are based on these fundamental aspects.

The Whole is Greater than the Sum of its Parts

Throughout my research, new ways of working and understanding aspects of assessment and evaluation emerged. Although my going back to the first principles of locating my research within my chosen view of learning did not yield a radically new *theory* of learning or teaching, new ways of thinking about working formatively in the classroom *were* created. An example of this was the way the concept of '3D-Teaching' became the working template for securing the social constructivist principles that I argued were aligned to formative assessment practices. Since much of the literature in the area of formative assessment is linked to the work of Black and Wiliam (1998), formative assessment practices in the classroom have tended to be viewed in relation to the concept of 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) which has a number of facets including objective-led lessons, oral feedback, written feedback, peer and self assessment, and strategies for effective dialogue. I would argue that the notion of '3D-Teaching' provides a simplified way of viewing the aforementioned AfL strands by reducing them to the lines of communication from the teacher to the pupil, the pupil to the teacher and between the pupils themselves. As one of my colleagues put it: *'It's less of a mouthful'* (Grant).

I would argue that the refinement of AfL materials was a research outcome in itself and as such adds to the body of knowledge in this area. The evolution of the lesson observation proformas as illustrated in Appendices I and III together with the developed protocol for observing lessons (Appendix III) are illustrations of this. These developments also allowed a more sophisticated formative evaluation of classroom practice to be developed as shown in Figs. 13, 14, 16 and 17. The literature relating to AfL practices in the classroom seemed to neglect the processes of lesson observation analysis.

Whilst the evidence sources developed in order to make judgements about pupil attainment and progress were consistent with the literature and research in Part 1 (in terms of a variety of sources, not just tests being used), I would argue that the developments in scheduling, recording and reporting of judgements provide additional dimensions. At a whole school level, once formative assessment practices become part of daily classroom practice, there comes a time where a formal 'taking stock' of attainment and progress needs to take place. Tying this into a school's cycle of recording, reporting and parental consultation (see Appendix XXII) may appear to be an operational and managerial problem-solving task, but I believe that the relatively small amount of literature available relating to this aspect for schools to refer and reflect on, make this particular research outcome a valuable addition to the body of knowledge also.

The *inclusion* rather than *exclusion* of data relating to behaviour, attendance and punctuality as part of the assessment, recording and reporting processes sets my research apart from much of the literature, I would argue. There were times when I thought of 'dropping' these aspects from my research, but they seemed to permeate most aspects of the data I collected and as such I retained them, despite the extra volume of work this decision created. The development of the associated systems and technology required to integrate these aspects did not play a major feature in the literature I encountered and, as such, much of my work on recording and reporting systems was undertaken from scratch. This meant that new developments in software and its usage were undertaken and achieved (see Appendix XVIII).

Much of the literature relating to AfL has an emphasis on the qualitative and narrative dimensions of recording and reporting (Black and Wiliam 1998, DfES 2004a, DfES 2004b), although there appears to be some acceptance of the formative use of summative data including quantitative sources (Harlen, 2006). The developed practices and systems relating to recording and reporting, although apparently *quantitative* in nature, show evidence of effectively stimulating *qualitative* formative dialogue between teachers, pupils and parents. I would argue that this re-emphasises the need to be open-minded about our assumptions relating to formative processes and explore how a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators might be used together.

There is evidence in the literature of mistrust in terms of using pupil outcome data to evaluate the work of teachers and schools (Mansell 2007) and that numerical results are at odds with a qualitative view of the world (Parlett 1982). The complexity of pupil performance data emerged as a barrier to the evaluative work of teachers involved in my research. Through a process of simplification and contextualisation of quantitative performance indicators, I would argue that my research has enabled and facilitated qualitative interpretation in a way that I have yet to encounter in the literature. This, coupled with the inclusion of data relating to behaviour, attendance and punctuality, has allowed a more complete picture of pupil performance to emerge (see Appendix XXI). As the performance data presented in my research (see Appendix XVI) has been generated by the school as part of the research process, it represents a useful *addition* and *alternative* to the data provided by the DCSF and LAs.

Although I would argue that my research has contributed to the body of knowledge relating to the separate elements of formative assessment and evaluation practices already outlined, I see my research as making more of a contribution in terms of the way it *integrates* the individual elements. In this way I would argue that my research makes a contribution greater than merely the sum of its parts.

Where Leadership Becomes Research and Research Becomes Leadership

In writing this I can't help but be reminded of Stenhouse's (1981) view that teaching should be a research based profession. Through engaging in the *kind* of practitioner action research I undertook, I would argue that I have gone some way to extending Stenhouse's (1981) philosophy to: 'Research as a basis for *leadership*'. Since 'embedding' has become the new mantra in education (Gilbert 2006, DCSF 2008a), I believe that my research has a valuable *process* based contribution to make.

My stance throughout my research has been one of close alignment to social constructivist approaches. In Part 1, I illustrated the tension between bottom-up growth and top-down mandated change (Swaffield and MacBeath 2006). I would argue that the adoption of an action research methodology and use of a participative, practitioner focus group approach for my research resulted in a 'middle-out' leadership strategy that goes some way towards resolving this tension. My entire research methodology was born out of the construction of a *personal* paradigmatic framework (see Fig. 9) from which I sought to marry the demands of being a practitioner and leader with those of researcher. Although not the definitive overview of research paradigms, I believe that it may provide others with a useful reference point if they were to find themselves in similar circumstances to mine. I would argue that the skills I developed in order to become effective as a mediator of a focus group allowed me to develop an alternative approach to leadership where middle leadership colleagues became the key 'drivers' of the research in ways similar to some of the social constructivist leadership models discussed in Part 1 (West 2005, Schon 1971).

I would argue that involvement in the first piloted 'Investors In People Themed Profile Review', together with the adoption of a model of dissemination based on Gladwell's (2000) notion of viruses and epidemics, allowed a consultative approach to co-exist within a decision-making structure. In short, I would reason that it follows and adheres to a social constructivist approach to both leadership and research. By the end of the research process I found it hard to distinguish between these two terms.

In Summary - Reflecting on my Research Aims

I believe that my aim of contributing to the body of knowledge relating to assessment and evaluation has been met as outlined in this section. Moreover, I would argue that through the pursuit of a strategy for embedding formative assessment and evaluation, I have contributed to the body of knowledge relating to leadership and research. The research outcomes of new assessment and evaluation policies and practices have been supplemented with those relating to learning, teaching and continual professional development, areas that I had not considered at the outset of my research.

The extent to which my thesis provides a record of the school's development journey will be for others to judge and reflect upon over time. The participants in the research have been involved in an ongoing process of consultation and verification at all stages of the research process. To date, I have received no criticism of this final draft of my thesis despite my own puzzling longing for someone to provide alternative interpretations that have thus far lain undetected. This last point relates to my own professional learning and that of others involved in my research. It is an issue I will explore in the following section, the last. It is the section that I have become more upset at the prospect of writing the nearer I get, and one that illustrates the emotional power of the practitioner research process and the challenges it presents.

I started with Maurice's poem, 'Who Killed the Thought-Fox?' and a desire to breathe life back into it through the empowerment and emancipation of colleagues who appear trapped by mandated policies, systems and practices they do not believe in. The final section takes a critical view of my research and the lessons learned. In addition it explores the professional growth of those involved and throws light on the next steps in the school's evolutionary journey.

(b) A Critical View of the Research Project

Throughout my research I became aware of the sheer size of my chosen areas of study, namely assessment and evaluation in schools. Each of the separate areas were large in their own right and the literature review spanning learning, teaching, assessment and evaluation is testimony to this. Despite several attempts to disentangle

these components in a bid to focus on a smaller area of study, I found that they were so interrelated that the removal of one area created a void of uncharted ground that held questions my research needed to address. In Part 1, I argued that the relationship between assessment and evaluation was one of mutual influence and co-existence. On a more practical level, when I undertook the fieldwork for my research, it became almost impossible to put in interventions for assessment policy and practices without them impacting directly on evaluation policy and practices. Not only that, as my research developed, other areas became drawn into the melting pot. The inclusion of a behavioural dimension in assessment and evaluation developments is an example of this.

One may criticise my research for not setting boundaries to prevent new elements being added and my greatest battle throughout was that of dealing with the tension this created. I would argue that to have adopted a more reductionist approach would have been at the expense of theoretical and practical relevance and coherence. Furthermore, I would argue that to divorce assessment, evaluation and behavioural dimensions would be to present a picture that was far removed from the 'real world' education situation my colleagues and I face every day. In Part 4, I referred to the notion of new ideas and elements being viruses that needed controlling, not eliminating. When I reflect on the outcomes of my research, in terms of the developments now in place at the school, I am reassured that my decision to embrace the complexity of my chosen areas of study was right, and that I grew as a person and professional as a result of developing the skills required to control the epidemic of new ideas. It is the transformative nature of my research that I will explore next.

(i) Lessons Learned and the Next Steps in the School's Evolutionary Journey

There were numerous occasions during my research where I encountered a tension between certain concepts and practices. This was the case right from the outset when I began the process of locating my research within a particular paradigm. In Part 3, I outlined how people's views about the very existence of certain paradigms varied and concluded that there were no absolutes in this respect. In resolving the tension between the scientific and interpretative paradigm, I found myself drawn to the critical paradigm. During my fieldwork, I found myself trying to resolve the tension

between pupil reports that were essentially quantitative in content with the pursuit of formative assessment and evaluation dimensions. When the behavioural dimension of assessment and evaluation emerged, I found myself trying to balance the tension between assessment/evaluation as a curriculum development and behaviour as a pastoral area. From a paradigmatical and methodological perspective I was looking for a way of working that was both interpretative and scientific when the need arose. With pupil reports, I questioned whether it was possible for quantitative pupil performance information to be formative. In the case of curriculum versus pastoral, I questioned whether there really was a division. In short, I was immersed in paradox and increasingly sceptical of viewing the world from an 'either-or' perspective.

It was only when my research was drawing to a close, and I had managed to balance the tensions created by the paradoxes I encountered, that I began to frame my new way of thinking. Clarity emerged from a number of sources. The first was Palmer (2007) who comments: *'We see everything as this or that, plus or minus, on or off, black or white; and we fragment reality into an endless series of either-ors. In a phrase, we think the world apart'* (p. 64). Handy (1995) struck a chord with me by stating:

> *Living with paradox is not comfortable nor easy. It can be like walking in a dark wood on a moonless night. It is an eerie and, at times, a frightening experience. All sense of direction is lost; trees and bushes crowd in; wherever you step you bump into another obstacle; every noise and rustle is magnified; there is a whiff of danger around; it seems safer to stand still than try to move.* (p. 19)

When I read the above passage I felt that it not only summed up my experiences of research, it also illustrated the way of thinking I had become familiar with, albeit confusing at times. Palmer (2007) refers to a way of thinking called *'Paradoxical thinking...'* (p. 69) where *'...we embrace a view of the world in which opposites are joined, so that we can see it clearly and see it whole'* (p. 69). Palmer (2007) goes on to propose: *'When we think things together, we reclaim the life force in the world, in our students, in ourselves'* (p. 69). Nagel (1986) further reinforced my understanding of thinking paradoxically in describing the fusion of subjective and objective elements. What Nagel (1986) added to my clarity of this issue was a degree of 'common sense' by stating: *'It is based on a deliberate effort to juxtapose the internal*

and external or subjective and objective views at full strength, in order to achieve unification when it is possible and to recognize clearly when it is not' (p. 4).

Having read the work of Palmer (2007), Handy (1995) and Nagel (1986) I found myself thinking: 'If only I had thought this way from the beginning'. Ironically I developed my paradoxical title 'One Vision, Many Eyes' early in my research. However, this way of thinking had only really developed as a result of the process of undertaking my research. Reading about paradox merely framed my experiences. I would argue that, in this respect, the process of *research* was *transformative* for me in that I viewed things differently at the end of the process than at the beginning. For me, reading about paradoxical thinking was not quite the same as living it.

The Transformative Nature of Education and Research

In May 2008 I went on a study tour to Michigan and, whilst at Michigan State University, I met with Professor John Dirkx. Sitting in one of his lectures I found myself watching an extract from the film: 'Educating Rita'. It was my first introduction to the concept of the *transformative* quality of education. When I look back at my research, I am reminded of how the people involved changed over its duration and how transformative the processes of education and research can be. It would be a mistake to assume that learning is automatically transformative. Mezirow (1991) suggests: *'Not all learning is transformative. We can learn simply by adding to our meaning schemes or learning new meaning schemes with which to make interpretations about our experiences'* (p. 223). Mezirow (1991) goes on to illustrate that: *'Transformative learning involves reflectively transforming the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions that constitute our meaning schemes or transforming our meaning perspectives'* (p. 223). I would argue that my chosen research methodology and method did much to transform those involved through an emphasis on practical application and collaborative work.

When I reflect on the use of a focus group method, I remember how a cluster of diverse individuals from an equally diverse set of working backgrounds became involved in a *shared* project. The eight people involved constituted a small group.

With reference to the transformational potential of collaborative work in small groups, Boyd and Dirkx (1991) remarks:

> *The small group, in the form of work groups, social groups, learning groups and families, represents a very common context for social relationships in all cultures. Unlike the one-to-one or group analytic session, these groups represent potential contexts for natural, everyday transformations of personality* (p. 42).

Whilst it would be misleading to assume that transformation occurred as a result of using a focus group method of research, the comments made during and after the research by those involved indicated that a degree of transformation had occurred. For example, Barry commented following the research: *'It's amazing when you think of how the project has brought people who ordinarily had little time for things outside their own little world together'.* Dirkx (2000) explains the transformation of the individual involved in small groups in terms of the process of *'...individuation'* (p. 1) where one's *self* is oriented as a result through the involvement in small groups. My deliberation regarding the size and nature of the focus group membership as outlined in Part 3, would appear appropriate on reflection as the composition of the focus group appears to impact upon the degree of transformative potential it has.

On a more practical level, the participants in my research (myself included) developed a new range of skills. I learned the skill of mediation through conducting focus group interviews that I hope to retain as part of my leadership approach in the future. The new skills required of teachers and support staff across the school in order to fully utilise the new technologies that our new assessment and evaluation systems were based on meant that rapid skill development took place out of necessity. As Cathy put it: *'We've now got staff who could barely switch a laptop on using them without blinking'.* In addition to the development of technical skills, participants indicated a development in their ability to make judgments about pupils work, evaluate performance data and monitor patterns of pupil behaviour. With reference to this Jerry commented: *'We seem to have gone from 0-60 in 3 seconds and I bet there is still more to come'.*

The Future

New developments are now happening almost as I write this last section. Only last week a SIMS software update provided a new way of integrating pupil attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance data to create a 'live' pupil profile (see Appendix XXI). The demise of national testing at the end of KS3 announced by Ed Balls in October 2008, did not throw our work into turmoil and we were able to respond quickly to the proposed new ways of tracking pupil progress outlined by DCSF (2008a). Our revised SIMS mark sheets were adapted to embrace the notion of pupils progressing by three levels between KS2 and KS4 (see Appendix XXIV).

Whilst the future is somewhat of an 'unknown' in education, I believe that the school is better placed to deal with change now than before my research. Will my research impact upon the results pupils attain? The answer to that question requires the undertaking of a whole new thesis. A project for someone else to undertake perhaps! With the fiascos of national testing and marking this year, I am not sure a study of that nature would be particularly reliable or valid. My views on this subject go back to my cautionary comments regarding pupil outcome measures in Part 1. I am more optimistic now about the school's capacity to *respond* and *adapt* to the challenges of what appears to be an ever changing educational landscape, however. My confidence is partly fuelled by the fact that Maurice hasn't written a single poem this year lamenting the state of education. I assume that some life has been breathed back into the 'Thought-Fox' at last.

PART 6

APPENDICES

List of Appendices

EdD - INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Project Title: ONE VISION, MANY EYES. A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO EMBEDDING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL.

Researcher: David Walters

Supervisor: Professor Bob Burden

Project Aims

The research project aims to **develop** policy and practice relating to formative assessment (commonly known as AfL) and evaluation. It also aims to **embed** policies in practice so that agreed principles become part of the culture of teaching and learning at <name of school>. The research focus has been selected as a response to;

- College improvement priorities established through the whole college and subject based self-evaluation (SEFs)
- The Gilbert Report (2006, p. 43) where OfSTED recommend that *'... assessment for learning is embedded in all schools...'* and that *'...schools should identify their own strategies for embedding assessment for learning...'*
- The potential development opportunities that may be provided
- College's 2007 OfSTED report where AfL strategies and monitoring of student progress are judged to be areas where the college should improve further.

It is hoped that the research report will provide an internal development record for people to reflect on and also provide an external accountability record for agencies like OfSTED where the college's response to OfSTED report 2007 is charted.

Participant Requirements

Interviews, questionnaires, observations, document analysis, classroom artefacts (student's work, displays) and college data/statistics will be used to inform the research. Where interviews are used, participants will not have to give up their 'free'

time. Questionnaires will be short and quick to complete (10 mins. maximum). Lesson observations will be within the college's structure for Performance Management and Self-Evaluation and therefore not be in addition to the three hours per year maximum. Documents will include evaluative records (eg. SEFs), impact reports, minutes / meeting notes, policy documents, review reports, student reports and OfSTED reports/feedback.

Confidentiality and Security

All information given will be treated as confidential and the researcher will make every effort to preserve participant anonymity. Data will be stored securely (electronic copies will be password protected, hard copies will be in locked storage). Only the researcher and participant will have access to personal data. All personal data will be destroyed on completion of the research project and therefore be stored for a maximum of three years before destruction. Any information will be used solely for the purposes of the research project which may include publications. All publications will preserve the anonymity of participants.

Withdrawal

Participation in the research is completely voluntary and participants are at liberty to withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences.

Potential Risks, Harm and Benefits

The research project will not impose on participants any additional risks, sources of harm or personal benefit that would not normally be part of the daily workings of the college.

Contact Details

Researcher: waltersd@******** Supervisor: R.L.Burden@exeter.ac.uk
University's Data Protection Officer: C.H.Dominey@exeter.ac.uk

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: ONE VISION, MANY EYES. A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO EMBEDDING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL.

Researcher: David Walters

Supervisor: Professor Bob Burden

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project and have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it and I agree to take part.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential. I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

I may be audiotaped during any interviews I take part in

data will be stored securely (electronic copies will be password protected, hard copies will be in locked storage) and that the researcher and I will have sole access to my personal results

all personal data will be destroyed on completion of the research project and therefore will be stored for a maximum of three years before destruction

I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the University's Data Protection Officer if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

...................................………………..   ....
(Signature of participant (and Parent/Carer if under 18)   (Date)

………………………….. (Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s).

Contact Details

Researcher: waltersd@*********

Supervisor: R.L.Burden@exeter.ac.uk

University's Data Protection Officer (Caroline Dominey): C.H.Dominey@exeter.ac.uk

Section 3   Subject Leaders - Overview of the Lessons

Judgements are based on observations of individual teachers through Performance Management or 'drop-ins' throughout the year.

Objective led lessons - monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in the classroom				Tick the statements that best represent what you have witnessed. No tick = not evident
Teacher: Shane	*Subject: Science*	*Class: 8*	*Date :19/10/07*	

	Focusing	**Developing**	**Establishing**	**Enhancing**
Teachers	The teacher is aware that: • lesson planning should be objective rather than task driven • learning objectives and learning outcomes should be routinely shared with students before beginning tasks • feedback should relate directly to learning objectives and learning outcomes The teacher is seeking to develop practice in relation to the above.	Some lesson planning focuses on learning objectives. There is some exemplification of the learning outcomes linked to standards in the subject. Sometimes the teacher distinguishes between the task and learning objectives. The teacher is beginning to share learning objectives and learning outcomes with students prior to carrying out the task. The teacher attempts to explain the longer-term purposes of the learning. Teacher feedback sometimes relates to learning objectives.	Lesson planning focuses on learning objectives and intended learning outcomes linked to standards in the subject. Learning objectives, intended learning outcomes and the bigger picture are shared effectively with students. Learning outcomes secure progression in some specific aspects of the subject and are linked to subject standards. Teacher feedback typically relates directly to the learning objectives and learning outcomes. ✔	Learning objectives and outcomes are an integral feature of all lesson planning. Objectives and intended outcomes are routinely shared, discussed and understood by students in all lessons. Learning outcomes secure progression in specific aspects of the subject and are linked to subject standards. Review of learning in relation to objectives is a routine part of lessons and its outcomes inform future planning. The teacher involves students in establishing success criteria and actively involves them in determining progress, through peer and self assessment.
Students	The teacher has identified that: • students find it difficult to explain what they are trying to learn and the purpose of the task	Most students understand what they are trying to learn in the lesson and can explain this with limited use of the subject-specific language. Some students understand how they can show success, but others are unclear about what is expected of them. Some students understand the longer-term purpose (big picture) of what they are learning. ✔	With some prompting, all students are able to explain clearly what they are trying to learn, how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students are increasingly confident in discussing the progress they are making, against the learning objectives, with each other and with their teacher. Students, when supported, are able to recognise and improve their achievements against predetermined criteria and some are beginning to contribute to determining the criteria.	All students understand what they are trying to achieve and why, and routinely review their progress against the learning objectives for the lesson. Students are aware of a range of possible learning outcomes and are able to determine and improve their achievements in relation to success criteria. Students are able to independently identify their achievements against criteria they have collaboratively agreed.

Written feedback - monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in the classroom *To be used in conjunction with the objective led lessons review sheet*			Tick the statements that best represent what you have witnessed. No tick = not evident
Teacher: Shane	Subject: Science	Class: 8	Date: 19/10/07

	Focusing	**Developing**	**Establishing**	**Enhancing**
Teachers	The teacher is aware that: • there needs to be a consistent approach to written feedback across the department and the College • written feedback needs to relate directly to the learning objectives and learning outcomes • they should provide students with opportunities to act on their own feedback The teacher is seeking to develop practice in relation to the above.	The teacher provides written feedback in line with policy (departmental and whole College). Written feedback usually directly relates to the learning objectives and outcomes. Written feedback increasingly clarifies for students precisely what they need to do to improve. Opportunities for students to act on teacher feedback are usually provided.	The teacher marks in detail the learning milestones and key assessment tasks identified by the department. Written feedback helps all students understand what they have done well and how they can improve. The teacher routinely provides time for students to reflect on, and respond to, written feedback. ✓	Written feedback is based on learning objectives and outcomes and focuses on improving standards in the subject. Written feedback informs student target setting in the subject. Written feedback clearly identifies next steps for learning and regular opportunities are provided for students to consider and act on it.
Students	The teacher has identified that: • students cannot connect the written feedback to the learning objectives for the lesson • students typically do not understand the feedback given • students tend not to act upon written feedback	Most students understand that written feedback is related to the earning objectives and outcomes of the lesson. Most students can explain what the written feedback means and can act upon it. ✓	All students act on written feedback provided. All students routinely use written feedback to improve their work. Student work shows evidence of a response to written feedback.	Students routinely use written feedback to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their work and to identify ways in which they can improve. Students understand how feedback relates to their longer-term goals and can set their own targets for improvement. Students are clear where in their work they have improved it in response to feedback.

D Walters EdD Thesis

Appendix 11

Oral feedback - monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in the classroom *To be used in conjunction with the objective led lessons review sheet*				Tick the statements that best represent what you have witnessed. No tick = not evident
Teacher: Shane	*Subject: Science*	*Class: 8*	*Date: 19/10/07*	

	Focusing	**Developing**	**Establishing**	**Enhancing**
Teachers	The teacher is aware that feedback needs to: • relate to the lesson learning objectives • be planned for as well as spontaneous • be provided for whole class, groups and individuals as appropriate • be varied in type • involve student/student dialogue The teacher is seeking to develop practice in relation to the above.	Planning for oral feedback is becoming more focused on learning objectives and outcomes. The teacher is beginning to use different types of oral feedback. The teacher is beginning to use questions to probe progress against the learning objectives and outcomes to help students improve their work. The teacher sometimes targets specific individuals and groups of students for feedback in lessons. The teacher provides opportunities for students to give feedback to their peers (in relation to learning outcomes).	Planning for oral feedback is securely focused on learning objectives and outcomes. Oral feedback opportunities are integral to medium and short-term planning (schemes of work and lesson plans). The teacher uses a varied repertoire of types of oral feedback (fitness for purpose). Feedback helps clarify the next steps for students. The teacher structures and models student oral feedback in relation to learning outcomes. ✔	Planning for oral feedback is an integral feature of teacher preparation. The teacher ensures that oral feedback from student to teacher, teacher to student, and student to student forms part of a dialogue that relates directly to learning objectives and outcomes. The teacher confidently and skilfully judges where and when to use different types of feedback in response to evidence of learning. Feedback is insightful, constructive and informative and enables students to take the next steps in their learning.
Students	The teacher has identified that students: • recognise most teacher feedback to be about effort or behaviour • do not view oral feedback as an essential part of learning • judge oral feedback to be secondary to written feedback • offer comments on each other's work which lack clear focus and are usually unchallenging.	Most students expect feedback to relate to their learning and listen to and respond to what is said. Most students know when to expect specific oral feedback as a class, individually or in a small-group setting. Students are beginning to see oral feedback as having a distinct value. Most students are able to provide useful feedback to other students and similarly respond to feedback from their peers. ✔	Students recognise fully the value of oral feedback and know it is related to their learning. They listen careful and respond appropriately. Students recognise the strategies for different types of oral feedback. Students will readily engage in focused peer feedback, in relation to learning outcomes, and are beginning to develop a vocabulary to do this. Student work shows evidence of a response to oral feedback.	All students recognise that oral feedback is focused on their learning and is as important as written feedback. Students know that feedback is valuable and listen carefully to each other and their teachers. They respond to feedback to engage in dialogue about their learning. Students understand well established strategies for group and guided work that involve feedback. Students give regular detailed oral feedback related to learning objectives and outcomes to peers and teachers. Students are clear where in their work they have improved in response to feedback.

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Peer and self assessment - monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in the classroom *To be used in conjunction with the objective led lessons review sheet*				Tick the statements that best represent what you have witnessed. No tick = not evident
Teacher: Shane	Subject: Science	Class: 8	Date: 19/10/07	

	Focusing	**Developing**	**Establishing**	**Enhancing**
Teachers	The teacher is aware that feedback needs to: • plan for peer and self assessment opportunities • make learning objectives and outcomes explicit so that students can identify how well they have met the success criteria • encourage students to discuss and reflect on their learning in a focused and constructive way. The teacher is seeking to develop practice in relation to the above.	The teacher is beginning to plan for peer and self assessment. Learning objectives and outcomes are made explicit and transparent so that students can identify how well they have met the success criteria. The teacher is gaining confidence in providing peer assessment opportunities.	The teacher effectively plans for peer and self assessment opportunities. The teacher provides success criteria which describes progression in aspects of the subject against which students assess and improve their own work. The teacher selects from a range of peer and self assessment strategies and uses them with confidence. Time is provided for students to reflect independently or collaboratively on what they have learned and how they have learned. The teacher trains students to work effectively in group discussions and models how to give constructive and informative feedback. ✓	The teacher works with students to identify success criteria related to progress in the key concepts and skills for the subject. The teacher orchestrates and maintains student dialogue with timely interventions to accelerate understanding and develop independent learning. The teacher continues to explore with students how they can learn most effectively and how they can apply this. Planning enables success criteria for cross-curricular initiatives to be identified and used for peer and self assessment.
Students	The teacher has identified that students: • students lack the skills and dispositions for peer and self assessment and struggle to provide constructive feedback to each other • peer assessment discussions lack focus as students cannot judge the strengths and weaknesses of their work.	Some students are beginning to assess their own work and that of their peers against the learning objectives and learning outcomes. Some students are gaining confidence in paired and group discussion and are beginning to provide constructive feedback. ✓	Students can use success criteria to assess and improve their own and their peers' work. They recognise the standards they are aiming for in the subject. Students are increasingly confident in assessing their own work and provide informative and constructive feedback to others.	Students can independently identify how to move their learning forward. Students readily relate success criteria to progression in the subject. Students can engage in extended and focused dialogue about their learning. Student apply an understanding of how they learn to make better progress in different contexts.

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Teaching strategies for effective dialogue		Tick the statements that best represent what you have witnessed. No tick = not evident
Teacher: Shane	Subject: Science	Class: 8	Date: 19/10/07	

Eavesdropping on group dialogue

Teacher listens for evidence of learning either to transfer ideas from one group to another or to feed into later whole-class dialogue. Here they can plan the order in which groups feed back to orchestrate rich whole-class discussion. They may prime students in preparation for this. Sometimes they may intervene to stimulate more effective group discussion. ✔

Rich questions

Open-ended, higher-order questions used which require learners either to link or to apply ideas, give reasons, summarise or evaluate. Sometimes they force students to ask themselves further questions to qualify what the question is actually asking them to explain. The answers to such questions generally require extended answers.

Questions linked to resources or tasks

A resource is used to help open up an issue through a specific question. Resources are chosen to set up and complement both challenging questioning and learning. ✔

Teacher models prompts and body language to encourage continuation

Use of body language or verbal prompts to encourage students to develop their answers. For example 'Go on…' or nodding when the student stalls. By making these explicit the intention is that students adopt similar strategies in their group dialogue. ✔

Wait time after a teacher question

Students are given time to reflect independently on a question, to think and formulate ideas before being asked to answer. ✔

No hands-up questioning

Teacher selects the student who will respond to a question, i.e. they are conscripts rather than volunteers. By watching students' body language it is often possible to identify those who have ideas to contribute. ✔

Big questions

A significant question that cannot be answered immediately. By its nature, it draws answers from many students and encourages them to come up with a list of smaller questions they need to answer before an answer to the big question can be formulated. Sometimes the 'smaller questions' are provided by the teacher. ✔

Peer discussion

Teacher prompts dialogue, often via a question, to enable peer interaction to support learning. The opportunity to discuss ideas within pairs or small groups helps students articulate and check ideas before they reveal their group's answer to the whole class. Answers are better formed through the group talk.

Shane,
Thankyou for letting me observe your lesson. It was a real pleasure to see a group of students so engaged and motivated to succeed last thing on a Friday afternoon. Clearly, you have developed an excellent working relationship with the group and they respond well to the behaviour cues and expectation that you provide.

The questioning at the start of the lesson was excellent and allowed students to be introduced to the task they were to do, and allowed you to establish their overall level of understanding. Their approach to the task was purposeful, safe and sensible, again a testament to your setting clear expectations on previous occasions. When I spoke to the students they were very focused on what they were doing, although some were slightly less certain as to <u>why</u> and what the significance of the outcome was, even though you had explained this verbally at the start. Perhaps some students require a more direct overview in written or diagram form to refer to on paper.

The worksheet you provided allowed students to record their findings and consider the implications of their results but for some, there could have been some extension work, perhaps involving a different decomposition reaction. This did not prevent these more able students from asking very pertinent questions however!

The levelled task at the end was rushed due to the late arrival of the group from assembly which led to some giving up too easily and opting for a lower level task than they might have been capable of. You may find that it won't accurately reflect the ability of the students concerned. A homework slot for this may have yielded better results. As we discussed, the levels that we are trying to feed back to students are now sub-divided into a, b and c, which you should now try and start using in your feedback. More open ended levelled tasks will allow for this grading to happen much more easily.

You have settled in very well and the respect that the students have for you is evidence of the efforts you have put in to help your students progress. I look forward to working with you over the coming months.

Barry

PROTOCOL FOR OBSERVING LESSONS – AfL FOCUS

1. Read the AfL pro-forma before going into the lesson to make sure you are clear about the areas involved (objective led lessons, written feedback, oral feedback, peer and self-assessment, effective dialogue).
2. Do not take pro-forma or laptop with pro-forma on into lesson to be observed as this detaches you from the lesson. The idea is that the observer should be 'part of' the lesson where possible.
3. Let the teacher get the lesson going and then move around the group to look at what the students are actually doing.
4. Ask the students to **explain what** they are trying to do.
5. Ask the students to **explain why** they are doing what they are doing.
6. Ask the students if they **know** the current standard of their work (NC level, GCSE/AS/A2 grade). Get them to **explain.**
7. Ask the students if they **know** what they need to do to take their learning forward (move to next level/grade). Get them to **explain**.
8. Arrange to meet the teacher after the lesson to **jointly** fill out the AfL pro-forma and identify/agree how they might develop their teaching in the light of this.
9. Write a narrative, qualitative covering e-mail to the teacher with the AfL pro-forma 'attached' and **also send a copy of the e-mail with attachment to DW who will then collate.**

WHERE POSSIBLE ARRANGE SOME JOINT OBSERVATIONS WITH YOUR SLT LINK. THIS WILL HELP TO GET CONSISTENCY AND ALSO BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR COACHING!

DW

COLLEGE
LESSON OBSERVATION

Date:	Teacher:	Group:	Subject:
Length: ___mins		No. Present:	

LEARNING: Progress in knowledge skills/ideas/understanding; productive; students show interest; sustained concentration and can think independently; understand their work, progress and how they can improve; appropriate standards attained.

TEACHING: Subject knowledge; technical competence; planning and objectives; challenge; appropriate methods; personalisation; learning support; expectations; pace; use of resources (human and ICT); assessment; homework/extended learning; classroom/behaviour management.

SEAL/ATTITUDES/ BEHAVIOUR: Students behave well; show respect; form constructive relationships; reflect on their work; respect differences; show initiative and take responsibility; show self-awareness and empathy; manage feelings; motivated.

COLLEGE PRIORITY THEME: AFL (FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT)

ASPECT	Focusing	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Objective led lessons				
Written feedback				
Oral feedback				
Peer and self-assessment				

Teaching strategies for effective dialogue	Eavesdropping on group dialogue	Wait time after a teacher question	Rich questions	No hands-up questioning
	Questions linked to resources or task	Big questions	Prompts and body language used to encourage continuation	Peer discussion

SUMMARY:

Observer:

Name: ▇▇▇▇▇▇	▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇
Tutor Group: **09AT**	**YEAR 9**
Teacher: ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇	**English**

Overall performance shows characteristics of National Curriculum Level : 6.5

Based on prior attainment, progress is:

significantly above:		above:		in line with:	✓	below:		expectations

TEACHER'S COMMENT:
Strengths:

A strong candidate in this subject, ▇▇▇ shows a competent understanding of the key concepts in English. Her assessment pieces always contain good quality work that reflects her assured style and confident use of language.

▇▇▇ works tremendously hard at the tasks she is set and this has ensured that her skills and her knowledge are always improving.

Although she is quiet in class, her oral skills are well developed and in line with her reading and writing skills.

Targets:

▇▇▇ should concentrate on sharpening her skills in preparation for the SATs. She would benefit from wider reading and access to topical issues..

She will need to sustain her concentration and hard work in preparation for the SATs.

- Revise thoroughly for the SATs.
- Ask for help if you are unsure of anything.
- Engage in wider reading outside of class.

Behaviour	Excellent		Good	✓	Sometimes less than satisfactory		Bad enough to distract learning	
Effort	Always works to the best of his/her ability		Usually works hard	✓	Sometimes works hard		Needs to improve effort considerably	
Speaking and Listening	Highly co-operative		Joins in sensibly	✓	Needs prompting		Often disrupts activities	
Independent Learning	Always completed thoroughly		Usually completed	✓	Sometimes completed		Rarely completed properly	
Organisation	Highly organised		Usually organised	✓	Some problems		Often forgets equipment	

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE: ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ DATE: FEBRUARY 2007

Name: ██████████	**YEAR 9** **Art & Design**
Tutor Group: 09AT	
Teacher: ██████████	

Overall performance shows characteristics of National Curriculum Level **6C**

Based on prior attainment, progress is:

significantly above:		above:	✓	in line with:	✓	below:		expectations

TEACHER'S COMMENT:
Strengths:

██████ has produced a wonderful sketchbook of work, so much so she has received 9 good work stamps so far. I am delighted with the progress she has made this year as she has clearly understood our work on Surrealism. I particularly liked her Metamorphosis work and her surreal landscape compositions. ██████ has excellent observational skills and her drawings of artwork were very sensitive and accurate. She also writes about artists in an articulate and intelligent way. ██████ is a very capable artist who I hope will consider art as a GCSE option next year.

Areas for Improvement:

- Listen to instructions carefully and ask for help if stuck.
- Make sure all tasks set in class are completed, come to art club if they are not.
- Come along to art club to improve knowledge and practical skills.
- Practise observational drawing more to improve level of skill.

Targets:

Targets are very much centred on acquiring the skills needed to complete a successful surreal final piece. With all the groundwork covered it is important that students achieve success in this final piece of work. Listening to instructions, using materials well and following carefully worked out plans should ensure this. This year students are assessed on four key areas: Quality of artwork and use of materials, looking at artist's work and responding, presentation and organisation of work and finally effort and quality of homework. Students are expected to set themselves a new set of targets after having reviewed their work and understood where their strengths and weaknesses lay.

Behaviour	Excellent	✓	Good		Sometimes less than satisfactory		Bad enough to distract learning	
Effort	Always works to the best of his/her ability	✓	Usually works hard		Sometimes works hard		Needs to improve effort considerably	
Speaking and Listening	Highly co-operative	✓	Joins in sensibly		Needs prompting		Often disrupts activities	
Independent Learning	Always completed thoroughly	✓	Usually completed		Sometimes completed		Rarely completed properly	
Organisation	Highly organised	✓	Usually organised		Some problems		Often forgets equipment	

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE: ██████████	DATE: FEBRUARY 2007

Name: ████████████

Tutor Group: **10ZB**

Teacher: ████████████

████████████████████████

YEAR 10
English

Judgements about performance are based on the essential skills and processes for English Language and English Literature, which students need to learn to make progress. For this subject the key skills and processes relate to:

- AO1 – Speaking and listening
- AO2 – Reading
- AO3 – Writing
- AO4 – Responding to texts critically
- Social, cultural and historical contexts and traditions

Year 10 exam result: B

On track to fulfil potential?   Yes ☐ No ☐

TEACHER'S COMMENT:

Strengths:

████ is a bright student who can produce an excellent standard of work. He concentrates fully in lessons and always engages with the content of a lesson. He is a confident and articulate speaker and has completed all of his speaking and listening tasks to an excellent standard; the grades for these tasks make up a significant proportion of the GCSE grade. Although ████ can be inconsistent in his efforts and organisation, he has completed several good pieces of coursework so far this year. His writing skills are good and his essays often coherent and engaging. ████ reads with understanding and insight and can convey his ideas clearly in writing. ████ was disappointed with his exam result but should still regard this grade as an achievement and learn from the mistakes he made. ████ is a delightful student and with continued commitment and hard work, will continue to make good progress in this subject. A good year ████ well done.

Targets for Improvement:

To ensure that ████ continues to work to the best of his ability and toward his full potential, he should aim to do the following:
- Complete all tasks on time
- Arrive at every lesson with the correct books and equipment
- Plan and proof-read all written work
- Continue to make positive contributions to class discussions
- Continue to take a conscientious approach to lessons and learning.

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE: ████████████   DATE: July 2008

Name: ███████	**YEAR 10**
Tutor Group: **10ZB**	**Science - Physics**
Teacher: ██████	

Judgements about performance are based on the exam board assessment objectives for Science - Physics. For this subject the key skills and processes relate to:

AO1 – knowledge and understanding
AO2 – application of knowledge, understanding, analysis and evaluation
AO3 – investigative skills

On track to fulfil potential?   Yes ☑ No ☐   Year 10 exam result: A

TEACHER'S COMMENT:

Strengths:

████is a well mannered and polite student who is working hard this term. He is cooperative and will always put forward his ideas and ask relevant questions. He generally works hard independently and has shown good practical skills. I have been impressed with his conscientious attitude towards science

Targets for Improvement:

████ has achieved a very good set of exam scores. It is important that ███ensures he does well in his coursework to maintain his grade. ███ can improve further by widening his use of scientific keywords and vocabulary when answering longer style questions

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE: ███████   DATE: July 2008

ASSESSMENT, RECORDING, REPORTING, MARKING AND EVALUATION WORKING GROUP OUTLINE
Probably best thought of as an AfL group.

Introduction

One of the main aims of the group is to develop clear 'common sense' policies and practices that satisfy statutory requirements, recognised good practice but ultimately make sense! The assumption is that teachers are totally familiar with the language relating to assessment, recording, reporting, marking and evaluation and that there is agreement about the use of this language. Currently this is not the case at college. The confusions over data analysis for SEFs, the increments used for recording and reporting sub-levels at KS3, the issues of marking loads and the sense that this is all just too much is a signal that we need clarification, training and time to discuss, argue and fit this to our purpose. I am acutely aware that a good proportion of staff view assessment, recording, reporting, marking and evaluation as a series of disconnected packages. Any attempts we make to introduce things like 'Assessment Manager', marking policies, new ways of reporting and recording are doomed to fail if we continue to just 'drop' more stuff into what is already a confusing area. The purpose of the day is to clarify what the processes of assessment, recording, marking and evaluation actually mean and to look at how 'Assessment Manager' and data analysis fit in. I would like to think that we could meet like this every half term with a view to using our 'off timetable' time in the future to work alongside other subject leader colleagues in what is now commonly called a 'coaching' role. I'm sure this may need some further thought.

The reason I have asked you to be involved is that you span the core and foundation subjects, administrative area and you have something to say! I'm working on 'the rule of the vital few' where a small group do something that might be spread to others. The huge group format of intermittent subject leaders' meetings will get us nowhere in comparison. Ethically, I also need to make you aware of the fact that although I hate the areas we are going to discuss, I have chosen them as the focus for my own research. This is mainly due to the fact that it will force me to read the huge amount of material that relates to the areas and allow me to explain the issues and practices to you without placing the burden of reading on you. There may be times where I record meetings or conversations (with your knowledge) so that I can go back and interpret what has been said or

discussed. Any written outcomes from this will be given to you to check for accuracy and authenticity and the usual protocols for confidentiality will be applied. Please feel free to voice any concerns over this prior to or during our meeting.

Rough Agenda

1. Agreeing a common language for assessment, recording, reporting, marking and evaluation and our rationale for each of the processes. (Why, in our minds, should we do them?)
2. Identification of what we assess, record, report, mark and evaluate.
3. Identification of how we assess, record, report, mark and evaluate.
4. Identifying suitable times to assess, record, report, mark and evaluate. (Can they be calendared?).
5. Identification of the barriers that current practice presents.
6. Assessment for Learning and the student/classroom.
7. Assessment for Learning and the teacher, department and school – this is probably better thought of as 'Evaluation for Learning' although this term does not really exist at the DfES.
8. Data interpretation and the SEF/Action Plan (Smiley, Raiseonline)
9. Assessment Manager – can it help? How do the results from points 1-8 fit in? Will it mean scrapping what we do already?

I'm sure that it will be a 'lively' debate!

Dave

MAIN POINTS, ISSUES AND PROPOSALS ARISING FROM THE AfL FOCUS GROUP
Autumn 2007

1. **Assessment:** Assessment is a process of making a judgement. Formative is the most valuable, although summative ('taking stock') is necessary to inform recording of attainment at key points and for the tracking of progress. The informal feedback provided to students as part of the every day discourse in lessons is extremely important for learning. Judgements based loosely on the characteristics of level descriptors or assessment objectives are more commonly used now at KS3 and KS4/5.

2. **Recording:** Although assessment is a continuous process it does not follow that recording should be continuous. It follows that it is not necessary to record everything that we assess or make a judgement about. Professional judgement about standards is good enough. Records that merely state numbers or grades only go 'part way'. The use of narrative comments alongside marks or grades provides a more complete picture to enable the monitoring of progress, checking of standards and formulating targets. It is possible to include this through Assessment Manager (AM).

3. **Reporting:** For whose benefit? This is the real issue. Students are already provided with detail of attainment, achievement and targets for improvement via their teacher. Therefore, the report should be geared to the parent and the overuse of National Curriculum or exam board speak should be avoided. Reports at college are too 'studenty'. Reporting is pulling everything together to create a profile of the student in a subject. Too much technical language (pre-printed or otherwise) means the picture is inaccessible for the parent. Reports do not have to include all information recorded. There is a huge variety among reports written by staff at college. Some are vague and too general. Personal qualities should appear as a narrative.

4. **Marking:** This is student feedback from the teacher. Self marking and peer marking of value but should not be overused. If marking is feedback then it can be applied to a product (written work, or physical item) and a performance. The best marking is formative. Summative is of less value. Can still use grades formatively to move learning on by illustrating what is required to achieve the next grade. Narrative is clearly effective in this respect as it is on its own. Corrective marking is formative as mistakes highlighted trigger corrections.

5. **Evaluation:** This is the same as assessment but at a group, subject area or whole college level. It is still about interpretation and judgement making in a way that allows development.

6. **What to assess?** The strands within a subject as illustrated by the NC at KS3 and the assessment objectives at KS4/5. Modules or 'chunking' of topics sometimes means that it is necessary to wait until a full complement of evidence is available. In other cases, strands are not separated in the tasks set but judgement in relation to strengths and weaknesses can still be made. Judgements about the amount of effort and time spent on homework should be made as should judgements about attitude, behaviour and other personal qualities.

7. **What to record?** Strands at KS3, KS4 and KS5. These can be aggregated to provide an overall result also. Increments at KS3 to be ·0, ·3 and ·7 to be recorded but c, b and a will be reported. This brings our numerical system inline with the national. This means ·0 is a solid level, ·3 is showing a move to the next one and ·7 is just short of the next one. Need to identify fixed points in the year/term for recording. Input of records could be either via department members or via OMR – subjects to choose. Narrative comments and personal qualities to be recorded as agreed by individual subjects.

8. **What to report?** Attainment using c, b, a (low to high) at KS3 and the current grade or standard at KS4/5. Progress/Achievement but must specify in each year the source of the baseline (i.e. in year 7 KS2/CATs results? In years 8/9 based on last report? In year 10, based on KS3 results? In year 11, based on year 10 report?). Issues of apparent stability or regression between year 6 and 7 to be clearly explained in an accompanying sheet. This would outline that although the level may be the same or lower in year 7 as in year 6, that this is due to the difference in programmes of study and assessment in KS2 compared to KS3. Therefore a level 4 at KS2 cannot be compared directly with a level 4 based on KS3 study. The reports should have two narrative boxes, one for 'Strengths' and one for 'Targets for Improvement'. Strands or assessment objectives for the subject should be simply outlined at the top of the report to act as prompts for the two narrative boxes. Again, personal qualities to feature in the narrative.

9. **What to mark?** Students' written work and practical work. Marking could be written or verbal.

10. **What to evaluate?** The SEF categories provide the answer to this.

11. **How to assess?** Continuous observation, tests, exams, projects, coursework and practical tasks. 'Core Assessment Tasks' should be built into the programmes of study for each year. There should be a minimum of three such tasks per year for each subject.

12. **How to record?** Although frequent teacher records in mark-books are a feature of all subjects, subjects should look to formally record assessments via 'Assessment Manager' at least 3 times per year.

13. **How to report?** Use the content described in point 8 as a guide.

14. **How to mark?** Grades alone to be avoided unless the student has been made clear as to how to progress to the next one. Narrative formative comments should be the dominant feature. When marking, illustrate the strengths of the work first, followed by the weak areas. Do not provide a third statement to say how to improve - let the students write this when the work is given back and give them the opportunity to do this. If practical work, get them to tell you how they are going to improve. It is a good starter to a lesson following the written marking of work to also get students to read back to you their statement about how they are going to improve their work next time. This will ensure that they at least read or take in what the teacher has spent time writing or feeding back! Corrective codes as outlined by 'literacy policy' to be used only when it contributes to the progression and overall attainment in the subject. It is not necessary to write a comment every time a piece of work is examined. Again, key assessment tasks guide this. Any comment should relate to the next related piece of work.

15. **How to evaluate?** Lesson observations, work sampling, data, questionnaires and interviews.

16. **When to assess?** We are assessing continuously as part of everyday teaching but we need to do a 'take stock' formal assessment of a 'core task' at least three times per year.

17. **When to record?** Each subject should calendar when they are to record their 'core tasks' and ensure that they record a minimum of three times per year. The calendar of recording needs to fit in with the calendar of reporting which also needs to fit in with the calendar of the exam boards – SLT to look at this!

18. **When to report?** See point 17

19. **When to mark?** See point 14

20. **Barriers to assessment:** Agreement of standards at KS3. Some wild variations within subjects also at national/local level. Split classes make assessment difficult. Networking with colleague in college to sample work from the same students across subject areas would be useful (akin the 'old' OfSTED process) as would networking (forgive the jargon) with colleagues from other schools.

21. **Barriers to recording:** Time, staff reluctance, ICT ability, problems with the 'narrative' and transfer of data to year heads and tutors a problem. Assessment Manager has the capability to address these problems but still need training.

22. **Barriers to reporting:** Current format, scheduling and value to parents questionable. The recommendations in point 8 will go some way to addressing these. In addition to this it would be useful to get parental feedback about their preferred style of report by asking them to pick a favoured style from two alternatives.

23. **SEF barriers:** Drop-ins difficult to manage. Cover an issue as is block timetabling. Learning difficult to judge and students themselves are not always able to articulate their learning. More training on what illustrates a particular standard (video perhaps) might help. Problems of data interpretation and knowing what to comment on. KS3 data more problematic than KS4/5. Difficult to navigate the variety of data that comes out. Splitting the analysis/comments into 'Attainment' (raw standards - A*-C) and 'Achievement' (value-added) and then looking at KS3, KS4 and KS5 within these is best. Three year trends for overall, boys and girls within these two comments can then be looked at. As new data becomes available you need to ask yourself whether it is attainment or achievement data and then add to your existing commentary if necessary. The key questions already provided to subject leaders also give a guide. This will continue to evolve. There are questions over who judges 'Leadership and Management'. Suggest SLT Link does it and acts as a subject SIP.

Additional

1. Smiley disc illustrated. Attainment related to the GCSE button and value-added to the GCSE/VA button. This is a good place to focus without getting bogged down with the rest.

2. Assessment Manager illustrated. 'Aspects' relate to the column headings subjects choose for recording the 'core assessment tasks'. (These may be a combination of 'strands', personal qualities and anything else a subject area requires.) 'Result sets' relate to the time of recording. For example, if recording 3 times per year, a year 7 result set may be 'Autumn Year 7', 'Spring Year 7' and 'Summer Year 7'. AfL group to let Amanda know of their preferred 'Aspects' and 'Result sets' after discussion with their teams.

3. Next meeting will be towards the end of the Spring term – agenda to follow when I have got my head around this lot!

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSESSMENT POLICY

Definitions

This policy covers both assessment of learning and assessment for learning. Assessment of learning, or summative assessment, is to judge how well a student is performing, usually reported in grades, marks or levels. Assessment for learning, or formative assessment, is in reality an overarching approach to teaching and learning; it goes on all the time in the classroom, and focuses on using information to improve learning.

The College recognises the following definitions of assessment:

"Assessment is the judgement teachers make about a child's attainment based on knowledge gained through techniques such as observation, questioning, marking pieces of work and testing." (The Dearing Report, 1994)

"Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there." (The Assessment Reform Group)

"All those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes formative assessment, when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs." (Black & William, Inside the Black Box)

Purpose

A key aim of the College is that every student will achieve to his or her full potential. Essential in this is students taking responsibility for their own learning, supported by highly motivated, highly skilled staff and well-informed parents working in partnership. The purpose of this assessment policy is to help students know their level of progress and what they need to do to improve. The knowledge gained will be used to inform teaching and to direct learning. It may also be used, as appropriate, to place students into ability groups. This policy places a strong emphasis on "Assessment for Learning" as a vehicle and framework for improving learning.

Roles and responsibilities

The **Principal** will ensure that:

•   students will only follow syllabuses or be entered for external examinations approved by the governing body; this includes those registered students studying in other schools and colleges where a subject does not have national standards as a reference, then school standards will be provided and standardised, and common assessment tests will be used to inform teacher assessment of student progress

•　　　　　　　National Tests are applied in accordance with the statutory framework.

•　　　　　　　all teachers are encouraged to use formative assessment to inform lesson planning - this will include setting learning objectives, observing students working, discussion and questioning, and giving feedback

•　　　　　　　support will be given to teachers wishing to engage in peer observation and professional dialogue with other colleagues developing Assessment for Learning approaches

•　　　　　　　marking of work is used to motivate students, and to provide them with specific guidance and targets, where appropriate, on what further development is required

•　　　　　　　a database of student attainment will be used to track individual progress, but information about individual students will only be made available to them or their parents/carers

•　　　　　　　all students will receive a 'Progress Report' (PR) via SIMS three times per year outlining attainment, attendance, praise worthy actions and unsatisfactory behaviour

•　　　　　　　all students will receive a written report for each subject once per year in accordance with agreed procedures

•　　　　　　　parents are informed, at least annually, about the results obtained by their children in National Tests and examinations

•　　　　　　　any changes required to this policy in the light of practice and changes in national requirements are reported to the governing body.

Roles and Responsibilities

Subject Leader	Subject Teacher
☐ Develop an assessment policy for the subject in line with College policy	☐ Implement assessment **for** learning within the classroom
☐ Ensure schemes of work include clear learning objectives and a range of strategies for assessment within the subject	☐ Enable students to develop the skills of self-assessment
☐ Ensure the focus within the classroom is upon assessment for learning	☐ Identify students in need of support. Liaise with SENCO (IEP)
☐ Check that assessment and marking procedures are implemented effectively	☐ Use agreed range of assessment methods and techniques to gather and use information in line with College's policies
☐ Develop consistency of judgements through agreement of standards and generating portfolios of moderated students' work	☐ Record significant progress
☐ Analyse and interpret data with the subject team to monitor standards and set appropriately challenging targets	☐ Review evidence and finalise Teacher Assessment
☐ Use data to review the curriculum with the subject team	☐ Implement College based and/or national statutory tests/tasks
☐ Ensure progress towards targets is regularly monitored	☐ Contribute to departmental discussion on performance data
☐ Report to SLT and Governors on standards	☐ Report to parents – student progress, attainment, next steps
	☐ Ensure information is available for next teacher or school

SENCO

- ☐ In liaison with other staff, identify students with SEN and assess their specific needs
- ☐ Work with other staff to develop and support appropriate assessment methods and differentiation for students n the SEN Register
- ☐ Liaise with external agencies over normal assessment for statementing
- ☐ Monitor and evaluate performance data for students on the Register
- ☐ Arrange appropriate adaptations to end of Key Stage assessments

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through:

• assessing their own work and, where appropriate, the work of other students

• setting targets for their own learning as part of the school's review and reporting system

• asking for help and advice in improving their work.

The **governing body** is responsible for ensuring that the annual report to parents and the prospectus include information about the school's National Curriculum assessment results and GCSE, AS and A Level results and that national comparative data is provided for similar schools and national averages.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

Subject leaders or heads of department will oversee marking and assessment practice within their areas of responsibility. Lesson observation and work sampling will be part of this process. The leadership team and the governing body will evaluate the success of the policy by asking for feedback from students, teachers and parents, including the use of student tracking groups. The governing body will receive regular reports from the Principal to provide information about:

• the outcomes of monitoring, and changes in practice that have resulted from them

    • the overall standards achieved in each subject by year group

    • the overall standards achieved at the end of each key stage compared with national and local benchmarks

    • the standards achieved by students with special educational needs

    • the impact of national strategies on standards

    • the views of staff about the action required to improve standards

    • feedback received from students and parents

Marking

In as far as is reasonable, the College has a common, manageable policy on marking that is implemented by all the teachers. The policy states whether to use stickers, praise, levels, percentages, grades/marks, comments, etc, or a combination thereof, and at what stages of student development. As well as helping students to achieve higher levels of attainment in a specific subject, good marking also aids the development of 'basic skills', e.g. Literature and Numeracy are developed and enhanced in all curricular areas if students receive praise when:

- they keep a folder of their own work (from planning to the finished piece of work) in order to show progression, and to build upon their own achievements and development.
- their work is marked or discussed by a teacher who asks questions such as 'How?', 'Why?' and 'When?', etc. to expand on the child's use of language

Assessment of day-to-day progress depends heavily upon the marking and correction of written work and other tangible forms of student response. The main purpose is formative - helping students to see how their work can be improved and developed, identifying weaknesses and uncertainties as a basis for remedial action, and major and effective practical means of establishing suitably high expectations of each student.   Most   students want to please and believe the marking of their work to be worthy of your time. Thorough, effective marking can improve student motivation and ineffective erratic marking can most certainly have the opposite effect. **In order to keep the marking load down to an effective minimum staff can use selective detailed marking of key pieces of work supported by a lighter scrutiny of other work.**

All staff need to ensure that:

- Marking is regular and thorough enough to spot errors and inaccuracies.
- Marking is fully integrated with the system of rewards, e.g. SIMS Praise Points.
- Particularly in the early years, marking needs to be simple, positive and student friendly. This can be helped by the use of stars and commendations.
- Written comments and oral feedback communicate clearly to individual students and their parents the student's strengths/weaknesses and level of performance where appropriate. **Students need to write how they are going to improve their work.**
- They do not readily accept inaccurate or inadequate responses to written or practical tasks.
- Steps are taken to act on missing, incomplete or poorly presented work - see table on next page.
- Work is returned promptly to students.
- Corrections are carried out by the student. Parents may take an active role in this activity.
- The marking/recording process allows for an easy transfer of marks from the students' work, to their National Curriculum records; e.g. SIMS Assessment Manager.
- They implement the common grading systems throughout the College. Students in years 7, 8 and 9 have been informed of the common grading system through their planners. Similar systems based on departmental and GCSE criteria are practised throughout Years 10 - 13. Staff need to ensure that students clearly understand the criteria that are used to award the grades and are aware why one piece of work might attract a higher grade than

another

- They use, as far as is possible, the following symbols and comments in addition to stars/commendations, to promote:
  i.   consistency between departments and within one department;
  ii. clarity in our marking for the students;
  iii clarity in our marking for parents.

Writing

To help me understand mistakes I make:

/ For correct sentence punctuation, put in a capital letter and a full stop. For example:
I went to the zoo the last time I went was in the holidays.

___ For a spelling mistake, the word will be underlined, as in <u>speling</u>.

To start a new paragraph.

○ For a subject specific mistake, as in grammar errors in French. Ask your teachers what they are using this symbol for.

Use these symbols to help you understand the mistakes you make and to correct them.

Expectations of classroom practice encouraged by Assessment for Learning (AfL)

TRY TO ACHIEVE 3 DIMENSIONAL DIALOGUE WHERE; (1) CLEAR EXPLANATION/COMMUNICATION FROM THE TEACHER TO THE STUDENT IS THE NORM (2) STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO VOICE THEIR VIEWS AND DIRECT QUESTIONS TO THE TEACHER (3) STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH EACH OTHER

<u>Objectives</u>
- Make the objectives **and** intended outcomes explicit
- Ensure all students know what they are trying to do and **why**

<u>Questioning</u>

"The only point of asking questions is to raise issues about which the teacher needs information or about which the students need to think" [*Working Inside the Black Box*]

- increasing wait time
- conscious use of open questions, closed questions, unfinished statements and other strategies to promote extended verbal responses
- planning the purpose of questions in a lesson
developing "no hands up" approaches
- levelling questions and responses; recording as appropriate

<u>Oral Feedback</u>
- Judge when and where feedback is required and build opportunities for oral feedback into planning
- Ensure that students act on feedback

<u>Feedback Through Marking</u>

"The central point..is that, to be effective, feedback should cause thinking to take place" [*Working Inside the Black Box*]

- comment-only marking is the norm
- **comments should identify what has been done well and what still needs improvement**
- **students should write down how they are going to improve their work in response to this to ensure that they read, understand and act upon comments made by the teacher**
- opportunities for students to follow up comments should be planned as part of the overall learning process
- numerical marks or short-answer tests where used must be followed by a structured opportunity for discussion to enhance students' learning
- some pieces of work are marked particularly thoroughly, e.g. core assessment tasks
- written tasks should encourage students to develop and show understanding of what they have learnt

Peer Assessment and Self-Assessment

"Peer and self-assessment make unique contributions to the development of students learning – they secure aims that cannot be achieved in any other way". [*Working Inside the Black Box*]

- encourage students to take an overview of their learning
- develop the skills of self-assessment with all students
- make students familiar with grade or level descriptions
- make students familiar with the criteria for assessment
- develop modelling of good answers

Formative Use of Summative Tests

"Summative tests should be...a positive part of the learning process. By active involvement in the test process, students can see that they can be beneficiaries, rather than victims, of testing". [*Working Inside the Black Box*]

- encourage reflection and review following tests and exams
- encourage peer-marking of tests to identify group areas of weakness
- encourage students to generate and mark their own questions as preparation for exams

Key Statutory Requirements for Secondary Schools

• In England the assessment of students in National Curriculum subjects at the end of key stage 3 through National Curriculum tests and teacher assessment, and at the end of key stage 4 through GCSE and/or other approved courses.

• The publication in the Annual Report of target levels of achievement at key stages 3 and 4. For key stage 3 this is the percentage expected to reach level 5+ in English, maths, science and ICT. For key stage 4 the school must publish the percentages expected to achieve grades A* - C in five or more subjects in GCSEs/GNVQs; the percentages expected to achieve grades A* - C in one or more subjects, including English and maths, in GCSEs/GNVQs; and the average points score for the school to be achieved by those students. The actual results must be published in the annual report and the prospectus.

• The keeping of records on every student and the transfer of such data when students change schools.

• Provision of written reports on progress and attainment annually to parents, and to students themselves if 18 or over.

Annual Cycle Of Assessment

Summer Term

- Y7 & Y8 optional test
- KS3 Tests
- KS4 public examinations
- Post-16 public examinations
- Receive and check KS3 Test results
- Finalise KS3 reports to meet statutory requirements
- Review students' progress
- Update individual students' records
- Receive preliminary information from feeder schools
- Finalise Teacher Assessment results
- Annual reports to parents/leavers in line with statutory requirements

LA College specific activities:

Receive A-level exam results

Receive GCSE results

Receive KS3 results

On-going

- **Assessment for learning**
- **Monitoring to ensure that assessment procedures are carried out**
- **Monitoring assessment practice in the**
- **classroom**
- **Supporting the target setting practice at student, teacher, departmental and school level**
- **Developing consistency of judgements**

Autumn Term

- Publish assessment and reporting calendar for the College Year
- Analysis of data received from previous teacher or feeder school
  - to set student level targets
  - to plan for teaching and learning
  - to monitor students' progress
- Analysis of school and subject/departmental performance against:
  - National results
  - benchmark information
  - value-added information
  in Autumn package, interim Panda raiseonline data and using LA analyses (Smiley)
- Set statutory and other school level targets
- Receive and check information for publication of performance tables
- Check current regulations and prepare exam results for publication in Governors' report to parents
- Key Stage 3 'Assessment and Reporting' arrangements arrive in schools
- Order Test papers, including modified papers

Spring Term

- Applications for Special Arrangements submitted
- Final decisions for entries for exams and tests
- Analysis of RCA Standards reports - identification of issues
- Interim monitoring of student progress towards achieving targets; use to inform curriculum planning
- Final Panda data and DES Statistical Bulletin available
- In-school review of assessment policy and practice to identify priorities for school improvement plan including training needs
- Further analyses including value-added data and performance against

Assessment Principles – How? When? What?

How is Assessment Undertaken?
- Shared reflection about students' progress.
- Observation of students' work.
- Talking to students and listening carefully to what they say about their work and that of others.
- Reflecting on statements made by students through self-assessment/marking of their work.
- Using end of Key Stage 3/4/5 assessment criteria. These are based on end of Key Stage descriptions (KS3) and GCSE/GCE assessment criteria (KS4/5).
- End of topic/unit tests or assessment tasks.

When is Assessment Undertaken?
- Ongoing leading to the end of a unit of work (formatively).
  (Whenever assessment is undertaken, the chosen criteria is shared with students at the start of the unit of work).
- Prior to Reporting (summatively).

Recording Judgements/What is assessed?
Broad 'Aspects' of attainment and associated levels/marks have been prepared in order to help teachers make appropriate judgements. These have been linked to National Curriculum strands for years 7, 8 and 9 and the GCSE/GCE mark schemes (KS4/5). The criteria may be used as basis for reporting written teacher comments both during and at the end of the key stages. Additional 'Aspects' relating to personal development have also been included. Judgements will be recorded in Assessment Manager 7 (SIMS) at least once per term for each year group.

✹ Moderation and Standardisation of judgements is achieved through professional dialogue and external standardisation material/processes.

Recording of Assessments - Assessment Manager 7
Every student at College appears in Assessment Manager 7. The following details are available:
- Name
- Tutor Group
- Class
- Medical Concerns/Special Considerations
- National Test scores (Maths, English, Science)
- Reading Age
- CATs score
- Personal Development Score
- Overall attainment level/grade and subject attainment levels/grades. For years 7, 8 and 9 levels will be **recorded** using the increments C, B and A where C = 'just' attained the level, B = 'solidly' attained the level and showing signs of moving to the next level up, and A = 'just short' of the next level up.
- Attendance

Records allow analysis of:

- Academic development against personal development
- 'Value added'
- Student strengths/weaknesses
- Links between attainment and attendance
- Links between attainment and disciplinary record
- Links between attainment and success record

Reporting Procedures

Reports

These contain details of progress in learning and performance through:

(i)   Attainment levels/grades. For years 7, 8 and 9 the level increments will be **reported** as C, B and A.

(ii)   Achievement classification based on prior attainment.

(iii)   Overall Summary Judgement using KS3, KS4 and KS5 assessment criteria as a basis which includes strengths, areas for improvement and targets.

(iv)   Personal development and learning qualities.

Informing Teaching and Learning

Assessment have been designed to inform teaching and learning on four levels:

(i)   Verbal feedback during lessons based on judgement of performance.

(ii)   **Detailed** teacher comments on reports based on assessment criteria.

(iii)   Assessment used to group students to prepare them more adequately for the next stage in their learning.

(iv)   More precise information discussed at parents' evening regarding specific areas of student attainment.

Complied by	**Revision No**
Approved by	**Revision Date**

SAMPLE DETAILS

Grade/Function of Employee (and any other People 'in scope')	Number Employed	Number Interviewed
Principal	1	1
Other Leadership Team	4	2
Head of Subject / Year	20	3
Teaching staff	56	6
Teaching Assistants	21	3
Classroom support	18	3
Admin and buildings support	19	3
Governors (non-staff)		2
TOTALS	139	21 +2
		= 15% (employed)

Category of Employee	Number Employed	Number Interviewed
FULL TIME	100	16
PART TIME	39	5
MALE	41	6
FEMALE	98	15
RECENT STARTERS	24	4
REPRESENTATIVES	2	1
GOVERNORS		2

NUMBERS INTERVIEWED BY EACH METHOD:			
		Individuals	13
		Pairs	10
		Groups	
		By Telephone	
TOTAL NUMBER OF SITES:	1	NUMBER OF SITES COVERED:	1

PRIORITY FOR IMPROVEMENT 1: EMBEDDING ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING (AfL)

Success measures: Contextual value added KS2-KS4 overall percentile rank movement from 53 to 30 over the next 3 years

How our people can influence success	What performance measures are used to track this	IiP framework topics that may impact on achieving success
Using AfL techniques: • Formative and summative assessment to inform learning • Making learning objectives explicit and sharing them with students • Written and oral feedback clarifies the next steps for learning • Encouraging peer and self assessment through careful selection of strategies • Undertaking curricular target setting Working collaboratively to develop our approach to AfL and coaching / cross subject networking proactively supported and facilitated by the leadership team. Coaching is used to drive developments, share and embed good practice	All classroom staff have attended appropriate training and are confident with AfL Classroom observations, planning documentation, student's work, subject SEFs, Performance Management documents, student interviews / surveys identify that AfL techniques are being implemented Progression maps are used to track at a whole college, subject and lesson level Data to monitor student progress is consistently generated and acted on at a whole college, subject and lesson level and SEF's used to collate data and provide priorities for improvement	Having clear strategies, objectives and plans, into which people have input, and are clearly understood Planned learning and development in order to work with AfL. Leaders are effective in supporting staff to implement AfL and encourage good teamworking. People are involved in decision making, take ownership for AfL and contribute to continuing improvement. Learning and development is effective. The college achieves the desired performance improvements

PRIORITY FOR IMPROVEMENT 3: IMPLEMENTING TRACKING AND MONITORING SYSTEMS

Success measures: Contextual value added KS2-KS4 overall percentile rank movement from 53 to 30 over the next 3 years

How our people can influence success	What performance measures are used to track this	IiP framework topics that may impact on achieving success
Key staff involved in the setting up of the SIMS Assessment Manager 7 (AM7) and Behaviour module	All subjects have AM7 mark sheets and use them for recording overall attainment at least once per term	A clear strategy for improving the use of data to track and monitor attainment, achievement and behaviour is defined and understood
Staff record, as a minimum, one overall attainment level/grade per pupil, per subject, per term (KS3 and KS4)	Mark sheets are up to date and entries are done by deadlines	Learning and development activities have been planned to enable the successful use of SIMS AM7 and Behaviour module
Staff use SIMS behaviour module as the sole mechanism for recording achievement and behaviour	SIMS behaviour module shows consistency of entries for praise and consequence points	Staff who are familiar with the use of AM7 and SIMS behaviour module are identified and used to support others
Staff regularly analyse assessment and behaviour data to identify trends which can then be addressed at a student, class, subject and whole college level	SEF's show trend analyses of attainment, achievement and behaviour based on data entered and link priorities for development to key issues identified	Leaders are effective in supporting and developing people
Staff are aware of how the systems integrate and fit into the reporting process	Reports show attainment, achievement, praise and consequence points	People learn and develop effectively
		The performance of the college shows improvement

Action Plan 2007-8:Everyone has a Responsibility

	1. Assessment for Learning	2. Behaviour	3. Citizenship (Cz)	4. Data & Target-Setting	5. S.E.A.L.	6. Specialist School
All	What do you/I need to do to improve your work?	Did you/I behave like a good citizen?	What would a good citizen have done?	What level/ grade are you working at?	Have I used the language of SEAL?	Understand and recognise the benefits
Leaders	Provide training and guidance	Provide a clear policy	Model good citizenship, explain GCSE short-course	Provide training and guidance; provide headline statistical information	Use and encourage SEAL approaches. Provide time, training and resources	Encourage and deploy resources to support Specialist activities
Teachers	Build AfL into lesson plans	Follow the policy consistently	Cz opportunities in subjects	Use data explicitly	Build SEAL activities into lessons	Support specialist subjects as appropriate across the curriculum
Support Staff	Efficient systems support: AM7	Efficient systems support	Model good citizenship	Efficient systems support	Awareness and use as appropriate of SEAL	Understand and recognise the benefits
Students	Remember you're here to learn; read comments on your work, listen how to improve	Show respect to all; do not stop anyone else learning	Read a newspaper Watch factual TV	Remember what your potential is predicted to be	Reflect on behaviour, language, and identify when others need support/ peace	Understand the importance of Sc, Ma, ICT knowledge and skills; think about related careers
Parents	Check exercise books and planners	Promote good citizenship; clear boundaries	Encourage Cz: talk about the news, watch TV news	Monitor the termly Progress Reports closely	Promote the discussion of feelings	Be positive about, encourage interest in Science, Maths, ICT

Mar 2008			Assessment/Recording/Reporting/Parents' Evenings							Meetings	Evenings/ Events for all	SEF/Performance Management
			Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13			
Fri	21				Good Friday			Bank Holiday				
Sat	22											
Sun	23											
Mon	24					Easter Monday			Bank Holiday			
Tue	25	B		Y8 reports to Year Head						Support Staff Team Leaders 2 – 4pm Year teams 3.30-4.30pm		
Wed	26											
Thu 27							Y11 ROA presentation 2.00pm			Subject Leaders 3.30-4.30pm		
Fri	28		Termly Progress Reports (TPR) issued								DOE Woodbury (Silver practice) dep: Fri ret: Sun	Deadline for Subject SEF section 5
Sat	29											
Sun	30											
Mon	31	A								SLT Full Governors 6pm		
April 2008												
Tue	1						Y11 practical dance exam			Support Staff Team Leaders 2 – 4pm Heads of Year 3.30-4.30pm		
Wed	2	A	Y7 Parents' Evening		Y9 theatre presentation 'What's love got to do with it?' (JH)						Post-16 Sep 2008 Interviews for 3 days	
Thu	3			Y8 reports issued				Deadline for assessment data Y12	Deadline for assessment data Y13			
Fri	4		Training Day									
Sat	5											
Sun	6					Holiday						
Mon	7											
Tue	8											

SAMPLE SIMS MARKSHEET

SAMPLE TPR 2007/2008

Subject	Current National Curriculum Level	Target National Curriculum Level for End of Year 9	Forecast National Curriculum Level for end of Year 9	Number of Lessons late
English Writing	5C	5A	6C	0
Maths	4A	6B	6A	0
Science	4B	6C	6C	1
Art	4C	5A	6C	0
Beliefs & Values	4A	5A	5A	0
Design & Technology	4C	6B	6A	0
Drama	3A	5A	6C	0
Food & Nutrition/Textiles	4C	5A	6C	0
French	3C		4A	0
Geography	3A	5A	6C	0
History	4B	5A	6C	0
Information Technology	4A	6B	6A	0
Music	3C	5A	5A	0
Physical Education	4B	5A	5B	2

Overall Praise Points 53

Overall Consequence Points 5

Attendance %	Sessions (Possible)	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
95.7	138	4	1

Key

	Student Details
	Staff
	School Diary
	Student Behaviour
	Contacts
	Agents
	Design Report
	Run Report
	Marksheet Entry
	List Entry
	SEN
	Take Register

SIMS HOMEPAGE

223
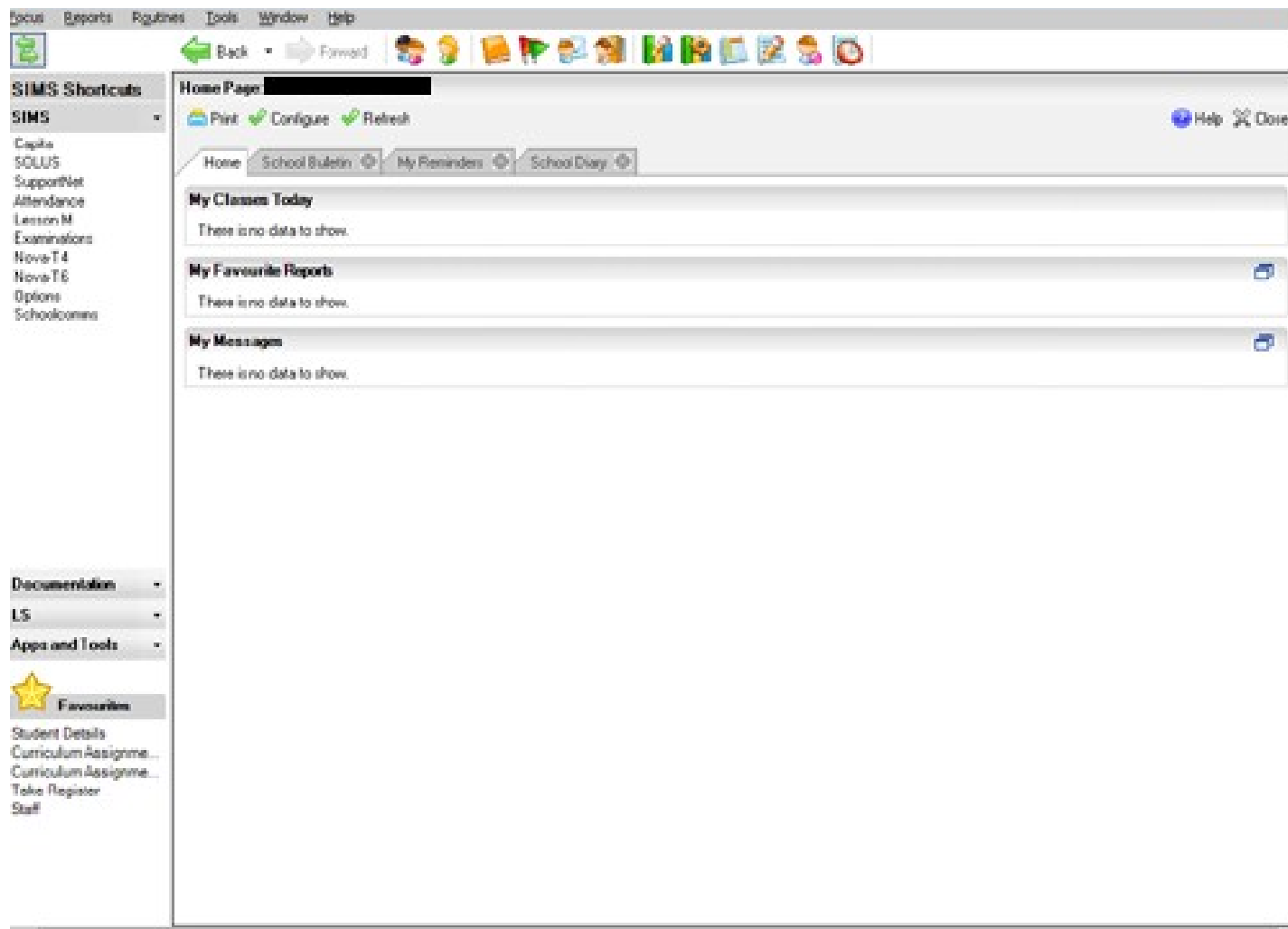
ATTAINMENT IN KEY STAGE 4　　　　　　　　　SUBJECT ART

GCSE RESULTS - SUMMER 2008

	College	National	Local Authority
% of all students achieving A*-C	80.3	74.1	78.9
% of all students achieving A*-G	100	99.7	100
% of girls achieving A*-C	91.6	80.7	85.2
% of boys achieving A*-C	66.66	63.5	67.5
% of girls achieving A*-G	100	99.8	100
% of boys achieving A*-G	100	99.4	100
Average Point Score	42.45		42.4

COMPARISON WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL
　　AVERAGES - TRENDS OVER TIME

Trends over 3 years	2006			2007			2008		
	C	N	L	C	N	L	C	N	L
All % A*-C	95.2	71.5	77.20	91.7	72.7	78.3	80.3	74.1	78.9
All % A*-G	100	99.7		100	99.7	100	100	99.7	100
Girls % A*-C	97.6	79		100	79.6	85.5	91.6	80.7	85.2
Boys % A*-C	92.1	60.5	64.30	79.2	62.3	67	66.66	63.5	67.5
Girls % A*-G	100	99.8		100	98.8	100	100	99.8	100
Boys % A*-G	100	99.3		100	96.8	100	100	99.4	100
Average Point Score	45.6	40.18	42.22	45.6		42.04	42.45		42.4
Subject Residual	3.92	3.38	1.00	7.18		1.52	3.55		

Name of Analysis: KS2 APS TO GCSE ART

Group Details:

Group: Curriculum Year 11(All)

Group Membership: 03/09/2007 To 23/06/2008

Grid Contents:

Percentage

=Grade

	Q	X	U	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	A*
Actual Outcome	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	6.06	13.64	33.33	28.79	16.67	1.52
Expected as per Benchmark	.00	.00	4.55	.00	.00	6.06	16.67	56.06	16.67	.00	.00
Difference	.00	.00	-4.55	.00	.00	.00	-3.03	-22.73	12.12	16.67	1.52

Input Result Filters:

Input Aspect: KS2 AvPoint Score

Result Type: Highest

Result Dates: 03/09/2007 To 31/08/2008

Outcome Result Filters:

Outcome Aspect: EDEXL/GCSE 1027 ResGF

Outcome Result Set: Summer 2008

Benchmark Lines:

04QCA KS2 Av-Ar/De GCSE A

Curriculum Year 11

Curriculum Year 11 Group Outcome - Actual v/s Expected
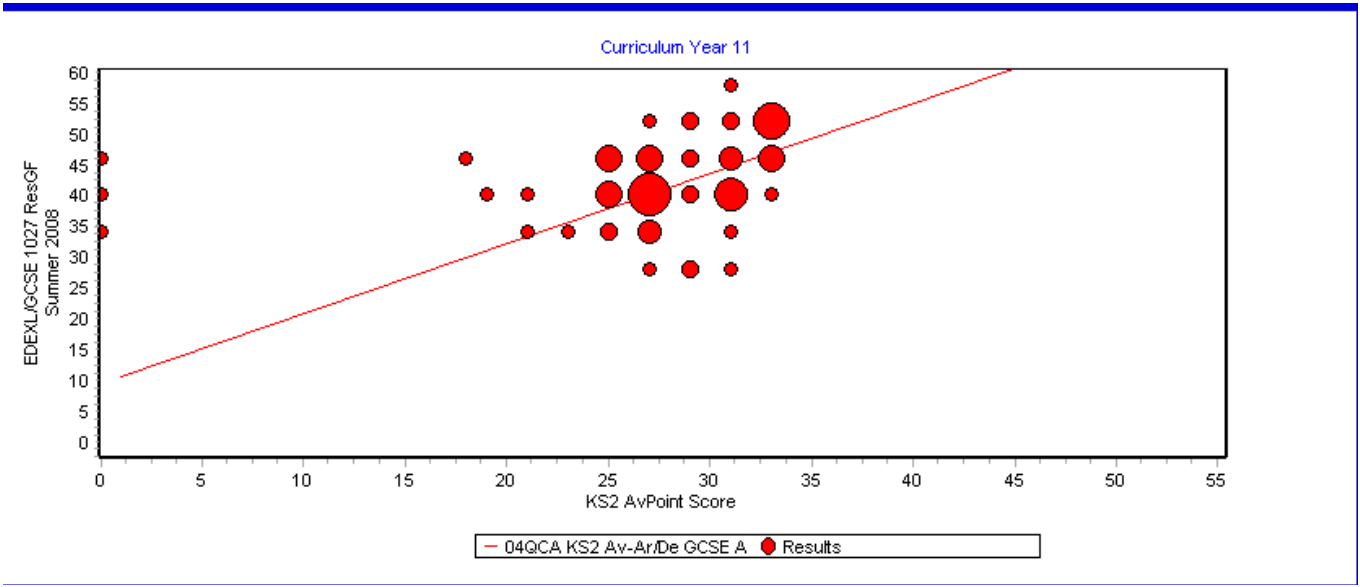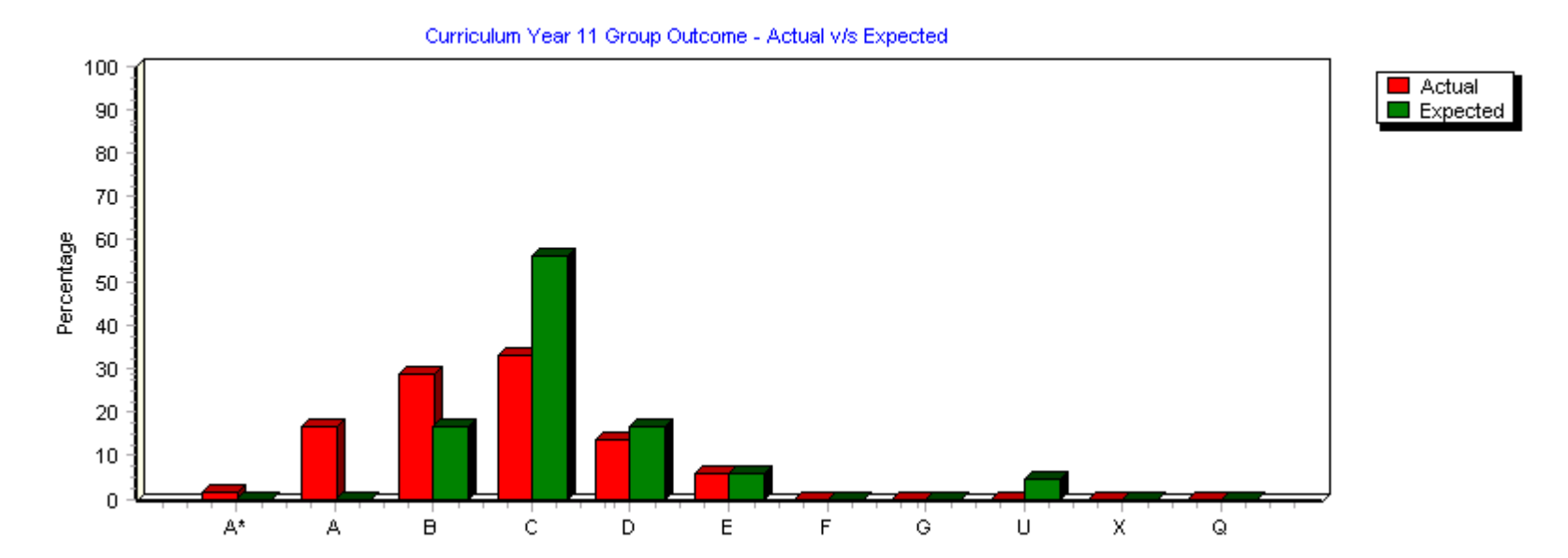
SUBJECT LEADER GUIDANCE ON ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS ABOUT STANDARDS (ATTAINMENT) AND ACHIEVEMENT (PROGRESS) TO HELP WITH THE SEF

Reflect on the following questions using the SEF data so that you can put the narrative into your SEF section 3.

STANDARDS (SEF section 3a)

Key Stage 3

1. How do overall standards compare with national standards and local schools?   (Overall, girls, boys, SEN/Hearing Impaired, G&T)

2. What is happening to standards over time (three year trend)?

3. What are the standards of current student work in KS3? (You will need to reflect on internal records until Assessment Manager 7 runs its course)

Key Stage 4

1. How do overall standards compare with national and local schools? (Overall, girls, boys, SEN/Hearing Impaired, G&T)

2. What is happening to standards over time (three year trend)?

3. How are you doing compared to other subjects (Residuals)

4. What are the standards of current student work in KS4? (You will need to reflect on internal records until Assessment Manager 7 runs its course.

ACHIEVEMENT/PROGRESS (SEF section 3a)

Key Stage 3

1. What is student achievement and progress like relative to their starting points? (Value-added KS2-KS3 where data available) (Overall, girls, boys, SEN/Hearing Impaired, G&T)
2. Are there any groups that are underachieving and could be doing better?

Key Stage 4

1. What is student achievement and progress like relative to their starting points? (Value-added KS3-KS4, KS2-KS4 where data available) (Overall, girls, boys, SEN/Hearing impaired, G&T)
2. Are there any groups that are underachieving and could be doing better?

IMPACT OF INITIATIVES (SEF section 3a)

Key Stage 3

1. Can you see the impact of new initiatives on attainment?
2. Can you see the impact of new initiatives on achievement?
3. What are your key strengths and how do hope to maintain them?

Key Stage 4

1. Can you see the impact of new initiatives on attainment?
2. Can you see the impact of new initiatives on achievement?
3. What are your key strengths and how do you hope to maintain them?

POST – 16 ATTAINMENT / STANDARDS (SEF section 3b)

AS

1. How do overall standards compare with national standards and local schools? (Overall, girls, boys, SEN/Hearing Impaired, G&T)
2. What is happening to standards over time (three year trend)?
3. What are the standards of current student work at AS level? (You will need to reflect on internal records until Assessment Manager 7 runs its course)

A2

1. How do overall standards compare with national and local schools? (Overall, girls, boys, SEN/Hearing Impaired, G&T)
2. What is happening to standards over time (three year trend)?
3. What are the standards of current student work at A2 level? (You will need to reflect on internal records until Assessment Manager 7 runs its course)

POST – 16 ACHIEVEMENT / PROGRESS (SEF section 3b)

AS

1. What is student achievement and progress like relative to their starting points? (Value-added KS4-AS) (Overall, girls, boys, SEN/Hearing Impaired, G&T)
2. Are there any groups that are underachieving and could be doing better?

A2

1. What is student achievement and progress like relative to their starting points? (Value-added KS4 – A2) (Overall, girls, boys, SEN/Hearing Impaired, G&T)
2. Are there any groups that are underachieving and could be doing better?

IMPACT OF POST-16 INITIATIVES (SEF section 3b)

1. Can you see the impact of new initiatives on attainment and/or achievement at AS?
2. Can you see the impact of new initiatives on attainment and/or achievement at A2?
3. What are your key strengths and how do you hope to maintain them?

PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (SEF section 3c)

1. What are your priorities for development at KS3?
2. What are you priorities for development at KS4?
3. What are your priorities for development at AS?
4. What are your priorities for development at A2?

What about the involvement of class teachers? What questions do they need to ask in relation to the students they teach?

1. Do I know students' prior attainment scores?
2. Is achievement (progress) good enough? (Look at value added graphs)
3. Are students of all abilities making suitable/appropriate progress?
4. Are my teaching approaches appropriate for all students?
5. What are the barriers to learning?

SIMs.net

Staff User Guide

1 Recording Achievement
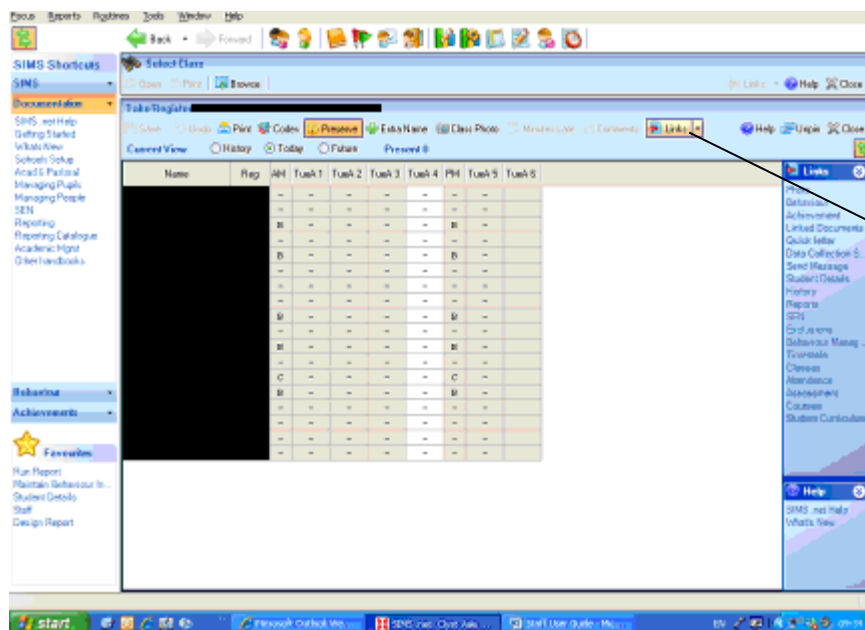
From the class register, select the relevant names by holding down **Ctrl** and selecting the names from the register. Then click on **Links**.
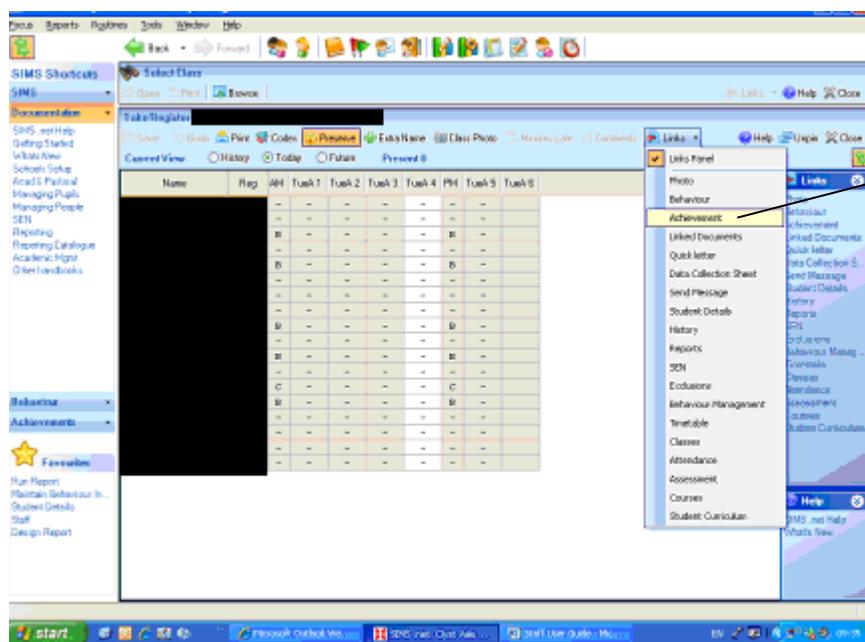
Select **Achievement** from the drop down menu to open a new window.

Choose the appropriate **Type** of Achievement from the drop down menu.

Notice that the staff and students involved are automatically added. To add extra people click on **New** on the right hand side and look up a name in the same way as you do for using the school email.
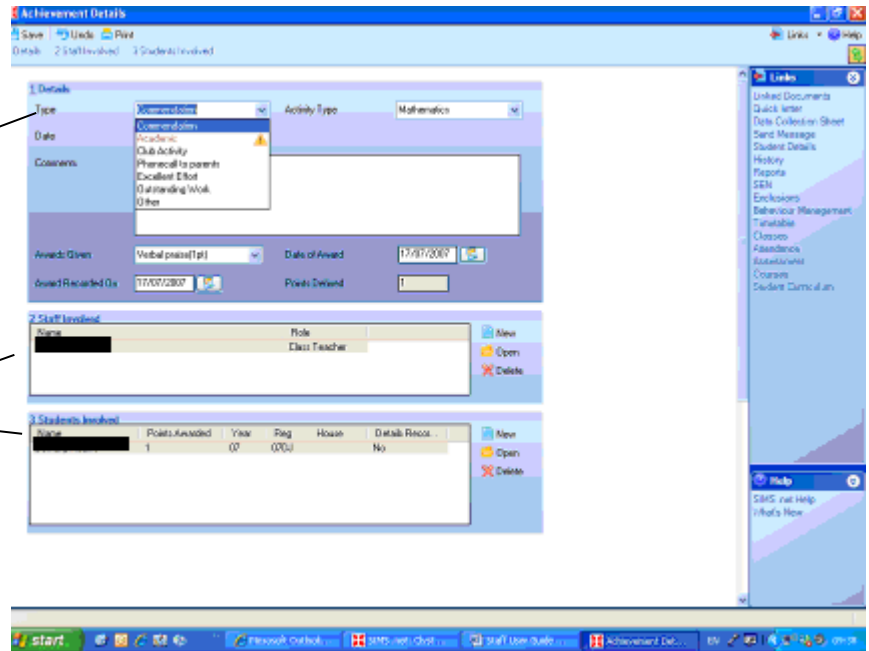
The **Date** can be selected by clicking on the *calendar icon* beside the **Date** box and double clicking on the correct date. The arrows, Today and Cancel icons can be used to scroll through the calendar.
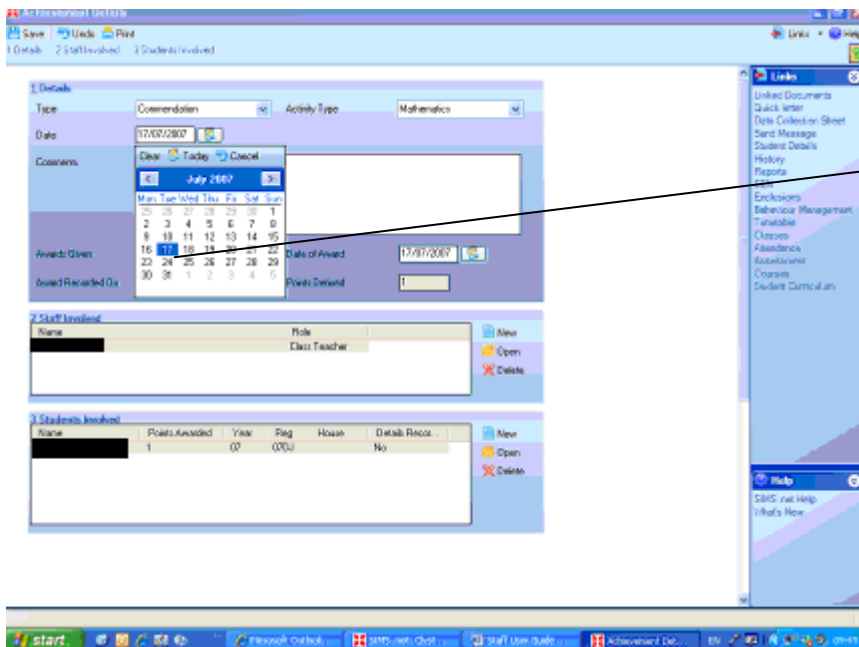
The text box allows a detailed comment to be written. Bear in mind that these comments will be saved on the student's file, and can be used for reports in the future.
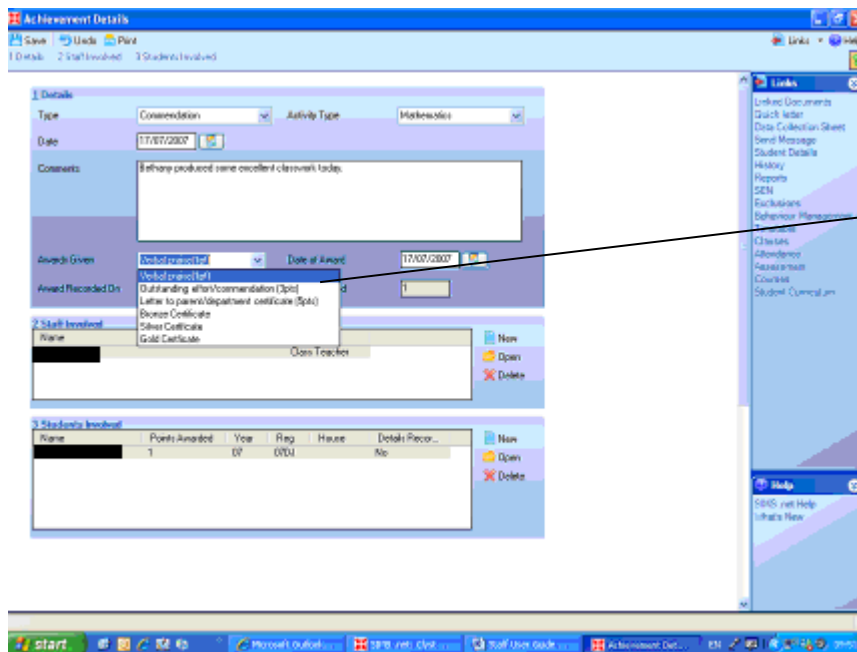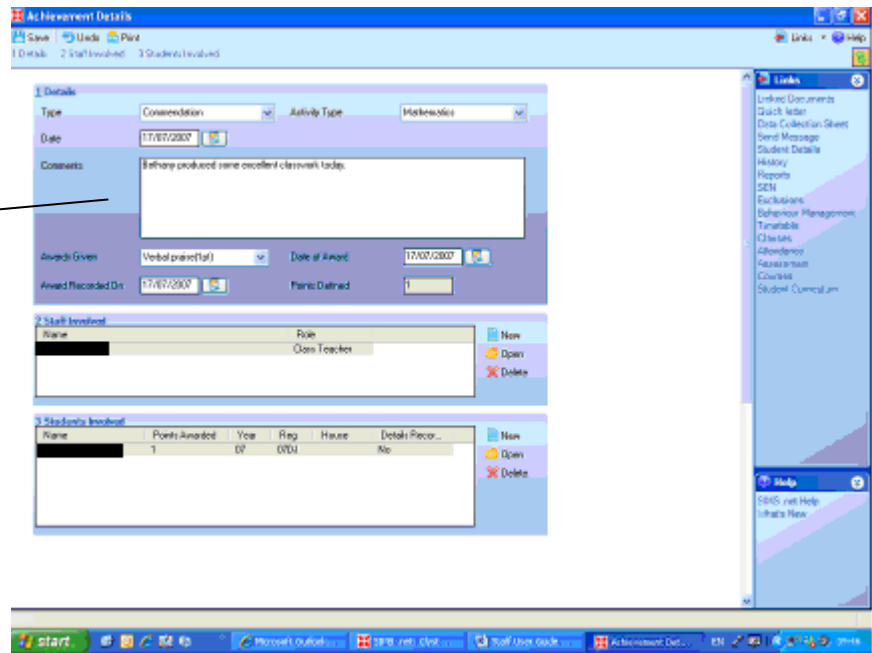
The type of award can be selected from the drop down menu. These options have tried to mirror the behaviour points set out in the Class Code

Appendix XVIII
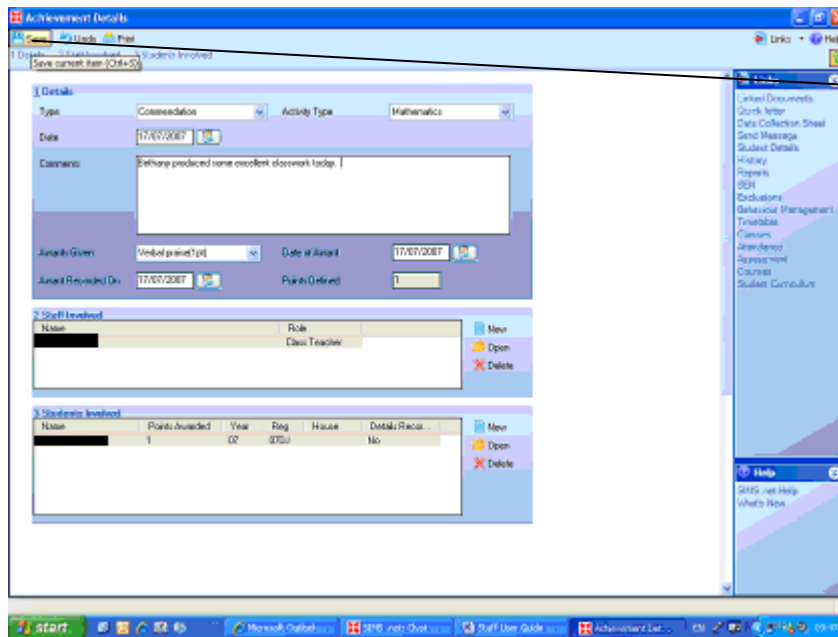
Once all the details have been added, the incident can be saved to the system by clicking on **Save** in the top right corner.

If you try to close the window without saving the details you will be prompted to save changes, as in a Word document.

2   Recording Behaviour
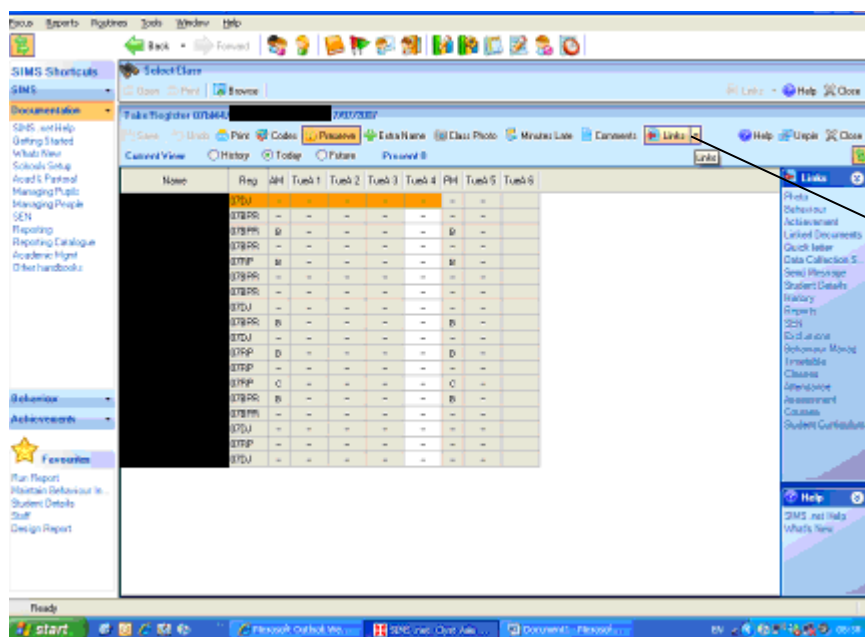
Select the relevant students by holding down **Ctrl** and clicking on the relevant names. Then click on **Links**.
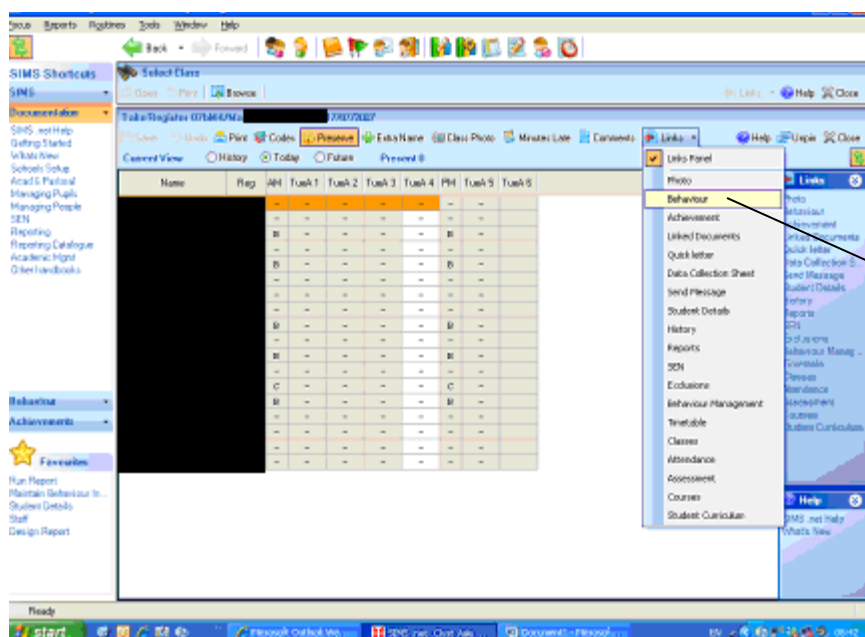
Select **Behaviour** from the drop-down menu
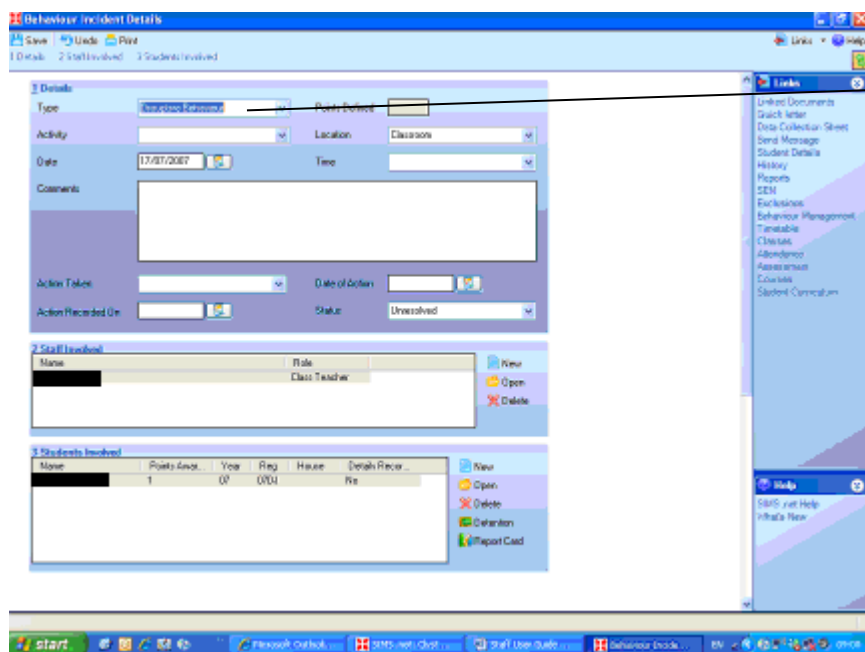
A new window will open as shown. This is where you will input the details of the incident.

Note that the Behaviour **Type** automatically shows *Disruptive Behaviour*. Please change this according to the **Class Code** or other relevant circumstances.
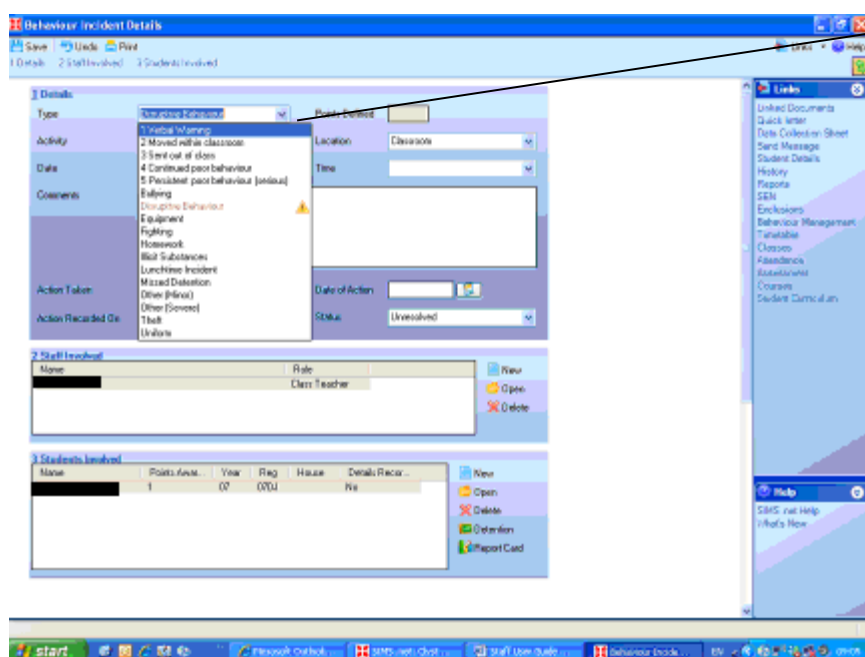
According to the **Class Code** you can select the type of behaviour you are reporting. Each 'stage' in the **Class Code** has a number of points attached to it:

Verbal warning
        – 1 point
Moved within Classroom
        – 2 points
Sent out of class
        – 3 points
Continued poor behaviour
        – 4 points
Persistent poor behaviour
        – 5 points

There are other behaviour types which also have points attached to them.

The whole basis of the Class Code is to improve the series of steps teaching staff go through when dealing with disruptive behaviour. It aims to provide a clear set of consequences for students, and using this framework consistently across the whole school will help to make behaviour management more effective in the long term, please use it! Display it clearly in your classroom and refer to it as you go through the various steps in dealing with disruption.

Once the type of behaviour has been selected, the **Activity** and **Date** can be added using the drop-down menus

Similarly the Location and the Time can be selected from the drop-down menus

This text box is where you can input the details of the incident. This is what replaces the paper Incident Form and should include as much detail as possible!

The name of the staff and students involved will come up automatically when inputting an incident directly from the class register

The old paper Incident Slip has been replaced by the SIMS system and so when inputting behaviour incidents please bear in mind that what you are putting onto the system may be required as evidence to support an exclusion so must be as detailed and accurate as possible. You have only 500 characters to write an accurate account, but additional documents can be attached to the incident at a later stage.

Once all the details have been recorded, click on **Save** to save the incident on the system.
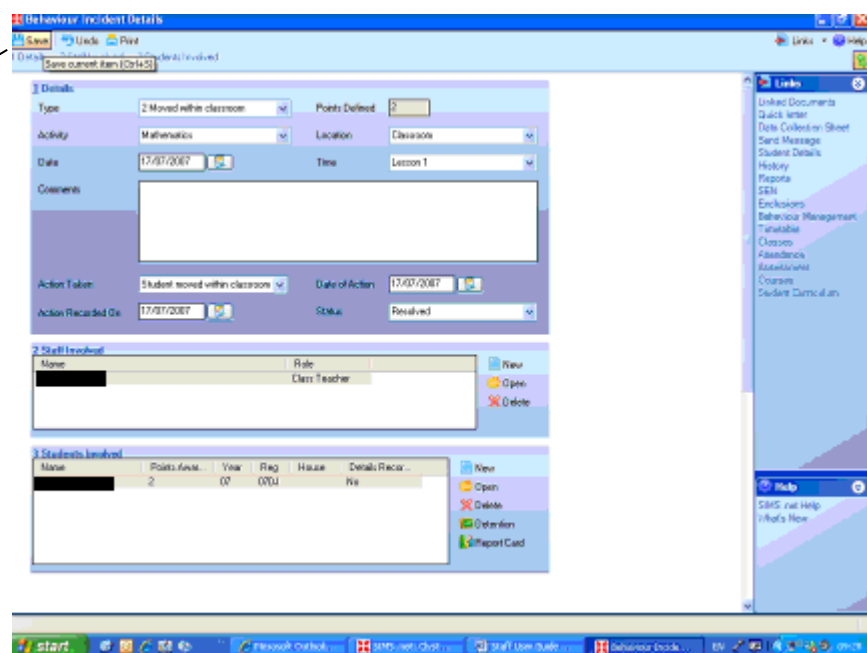
# 3   Monitoring Achievement and Behaviour – Using SIMS Reports

The Achievement and Behaviour reports have been set up to be of maximum use to the tutor in terms of monitoring what goes on with each individual student in the tutor group throughout each day. Having a system which allows all staff to run a report on a class or on a single student will help to tighten the strings of dealing with consistent bad behaviour in class as well as providing positive feedback and support for students who consistently work hard and behave perfectly.

Adding the Achievement and Behaviour Reports to your Favourites (for future ease of use!)
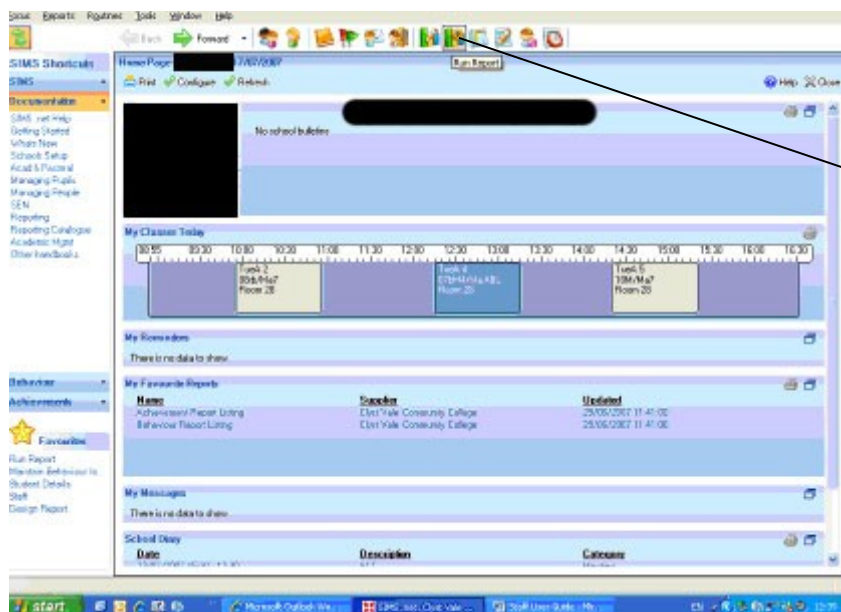
From your **Home** page click on the **Run Report** icon as shown.
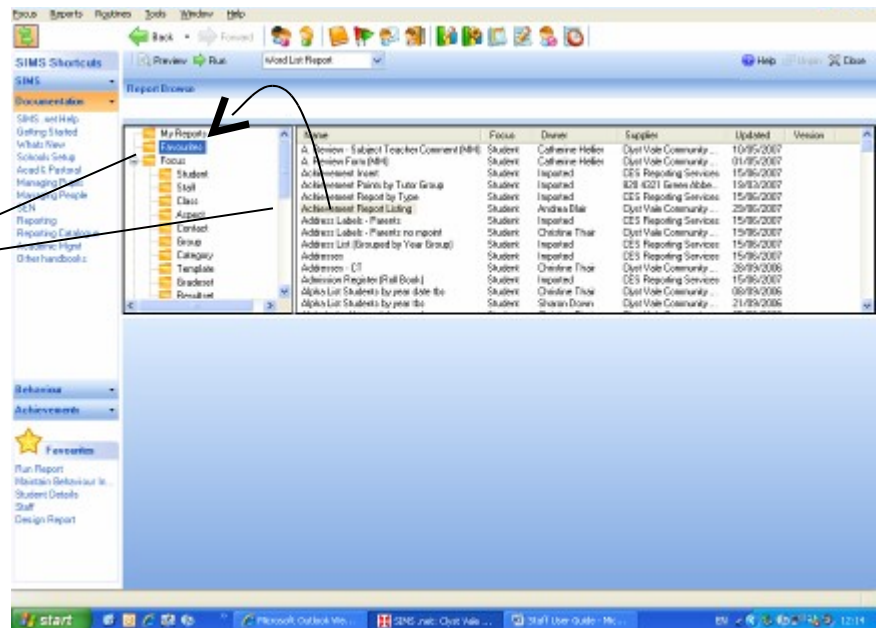

Open the **Focus** folder by clicking once on the **+** symbol
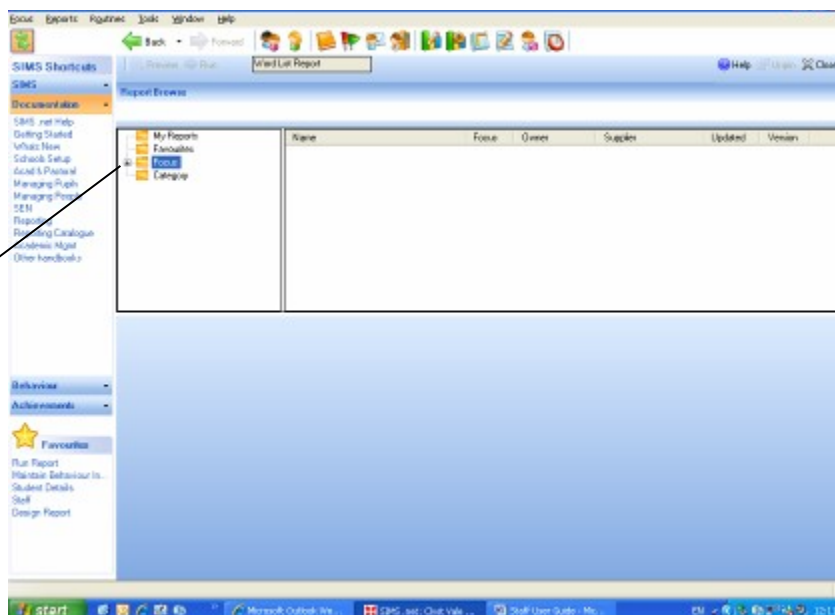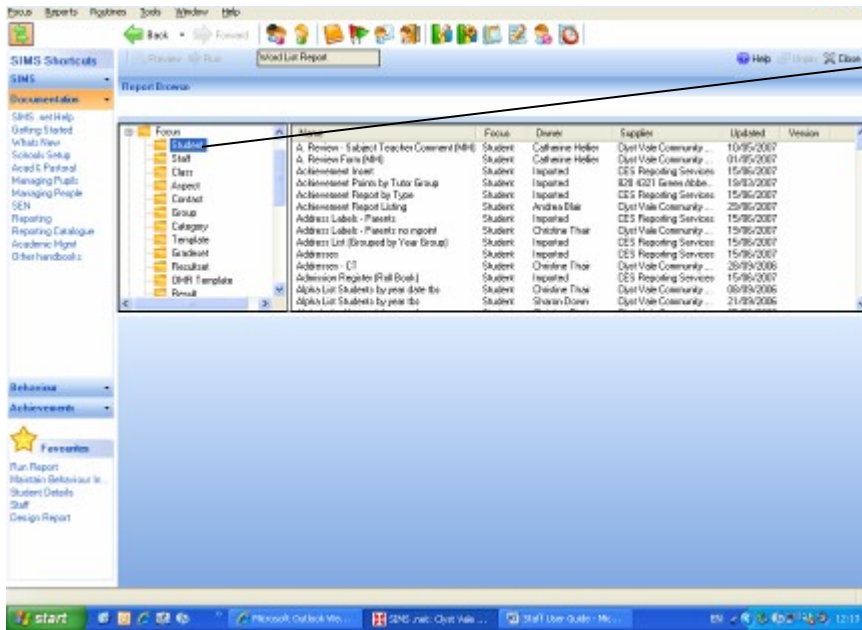
Select the
Student folder
and this will open
a huge list of
reports as shown.

Drag and drop
**Achievement
Report Listing**
and (scroll down)
**Behaviour
Report Listing**
from the
Focus/Student
folder into the
Favourites folder
(one at a time!)

This means that when you open your Home page you will see links to these two reports which you can click on directly to open a new Achievement or Behaviour Report.
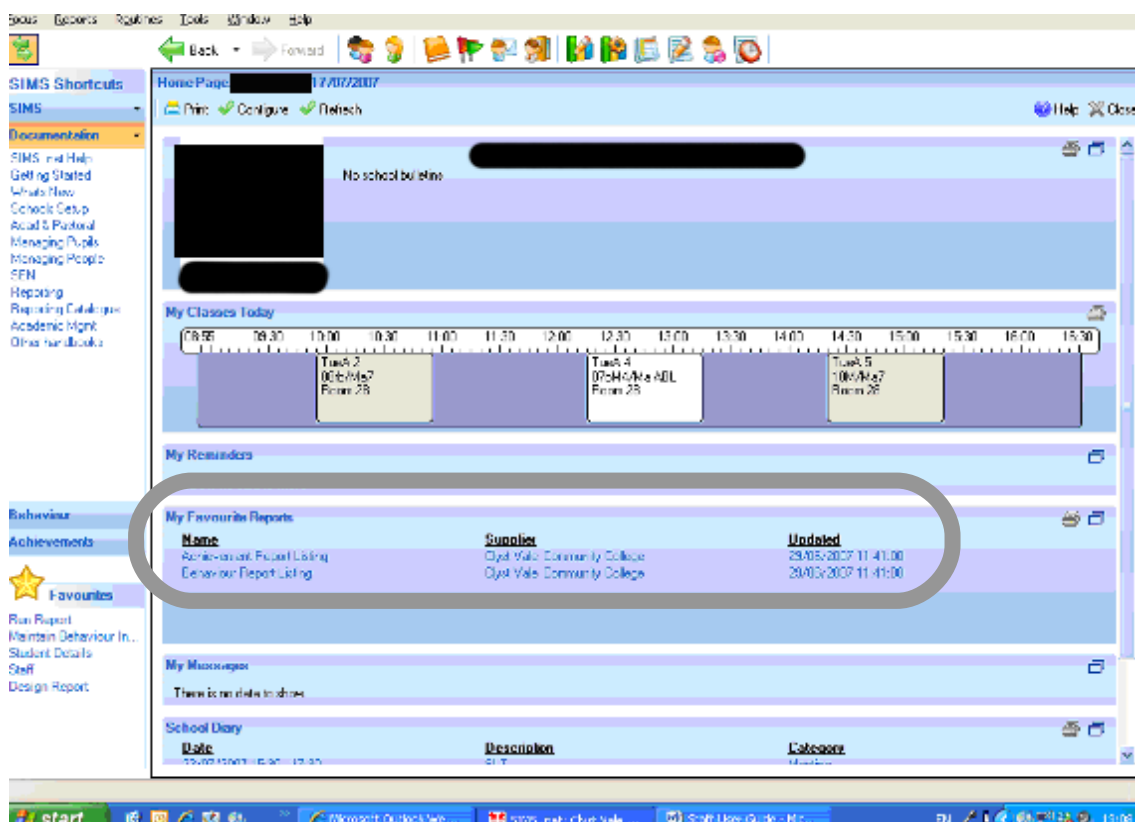
Using the reports

Clicking on the shortcut shown above will launch a new window where you input the date, year group and registration group which you want to run the report on:
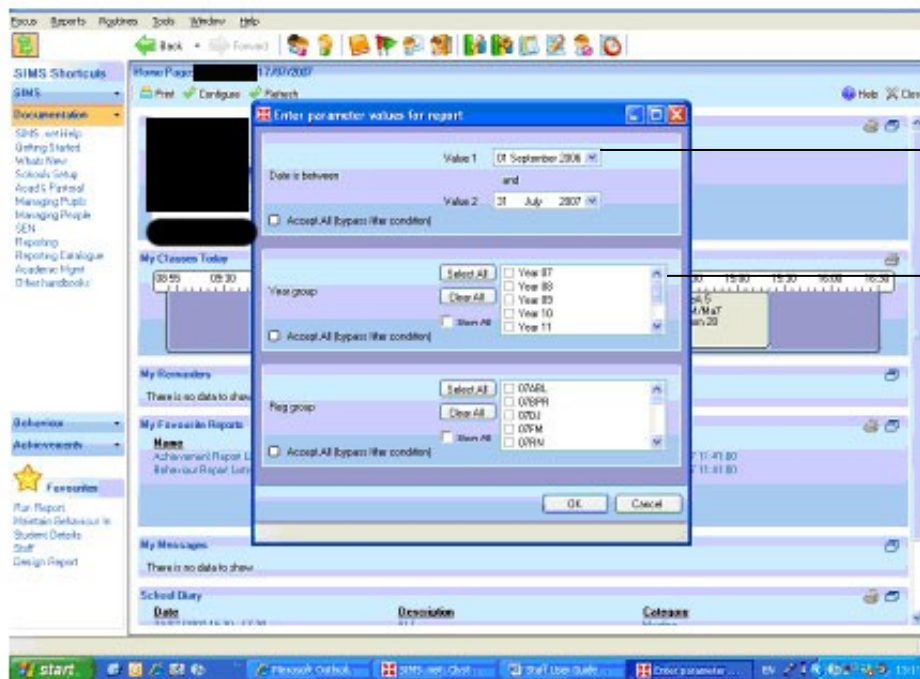
The **date** can be selected from the drop down menus.

The **Year group** and **Reg group** can be selected by ticking the appropriate boxes.

Click **OK**.

Please note: the report will not run unless you have set these parameters.

The report will then open in a Word document, and will list:

Name
Reg
Date of incident
Outcome
Points
Subject
Incident details
Staff involved

These reports can be saved or printed at the tutor's discretion and the use of sanctions and praise can be prompted by these reports. Some tutors look at these reports every morning and hand out a 5 minute detention at break for any Behaviour Incidents, others use the report at PM Registration to write a comment in a planner or put commendations on the class chart. The information is available for the tutor to follow up with the necessary phone calls home, discussion with the pupil, discussion with the Year Head etc. It is intended to be useful, so use it!!

4   Looking Up Student Details

Details of a student's Achievement and Behaviour can be found by looking up the student details as if you had their paper file to hand.
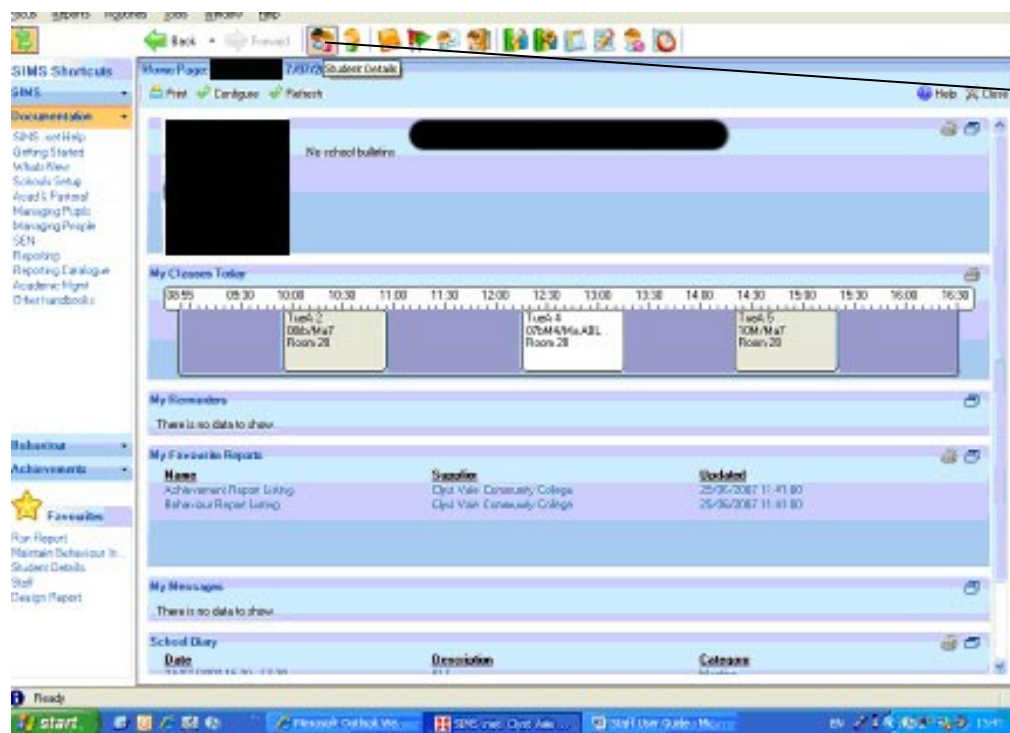
Begin in your **Home** page and clicking on the **Student Details** icon as shown.

Type in the student's **surname** (or first few letters of) and hit **Enter** on your keyboard.

This will bring up a list of students as shown.

Double click on the student whose records you wish to see

Appendix XVIII
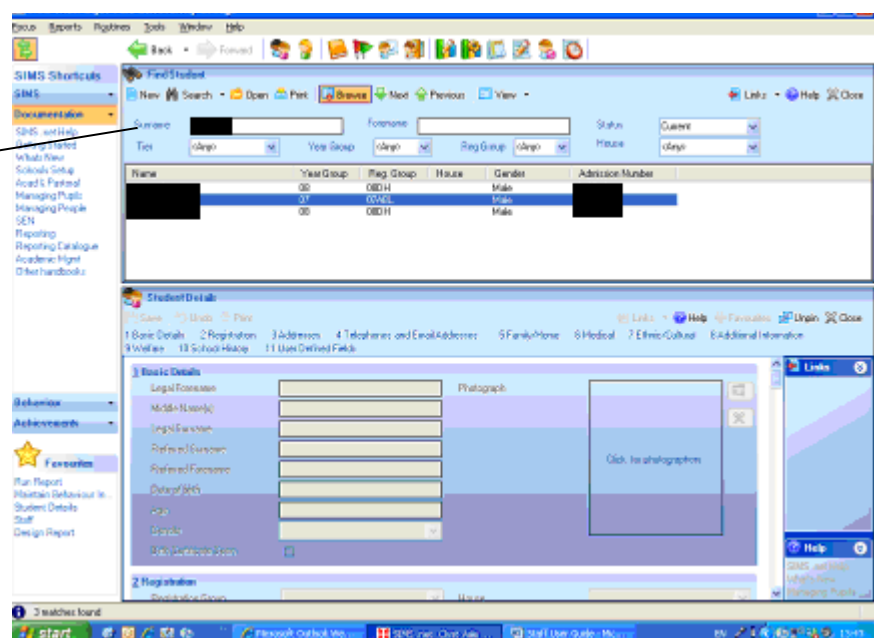
This will then bring up the student's general details. To see the Behaviour and Achievement records click on the **Behaviour Management** link on the far right.
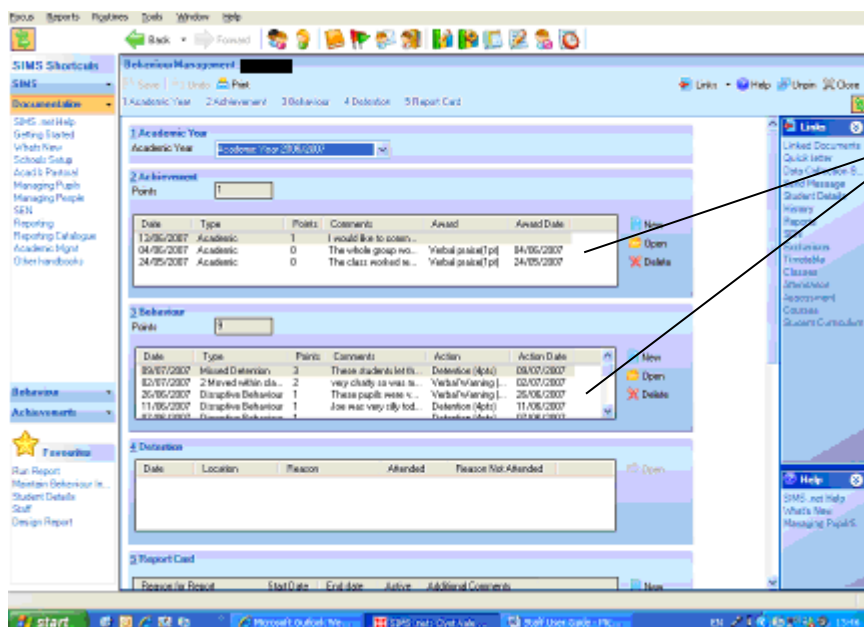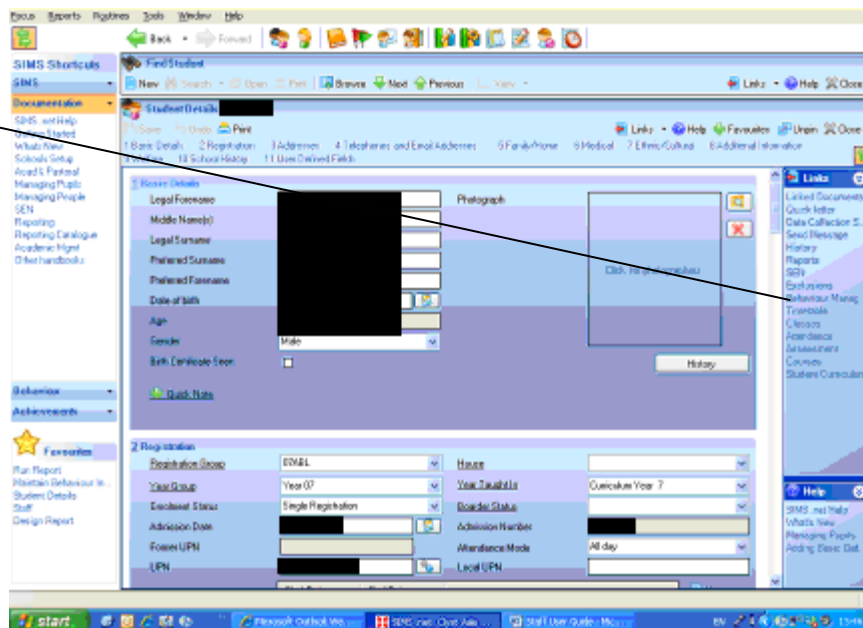
This will open a window which will allow you to scroll through all of the Achievement and Behaviour incidents recorded against that particular student.

To see the details of an incident, or to add retrospective details just double click on the relevant incident and this will open a new window shown below.

Documents, details, staff involved can all be added from this window
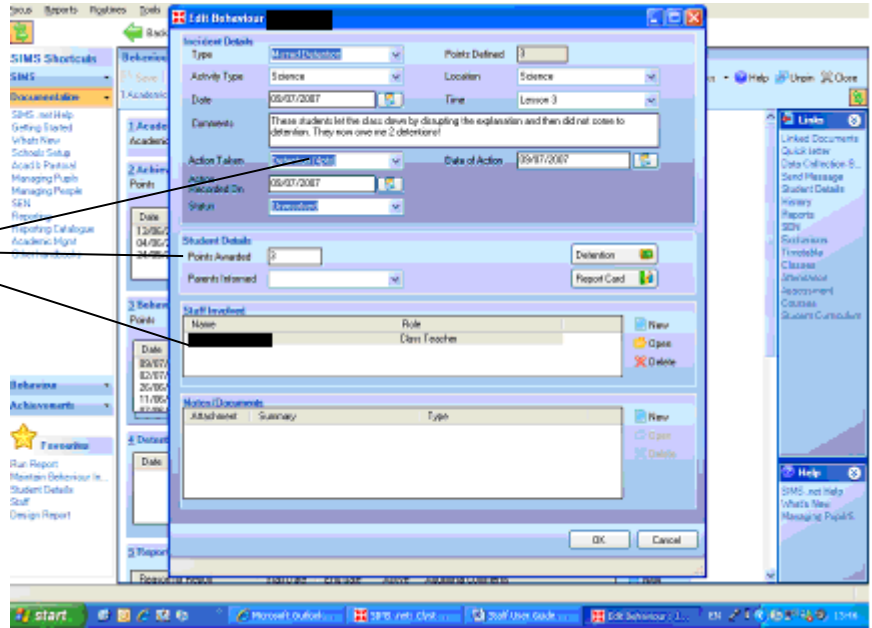
5   Sending Messages on SIMs.net

It is possible to send a message to another member of staff regarding an individual student.
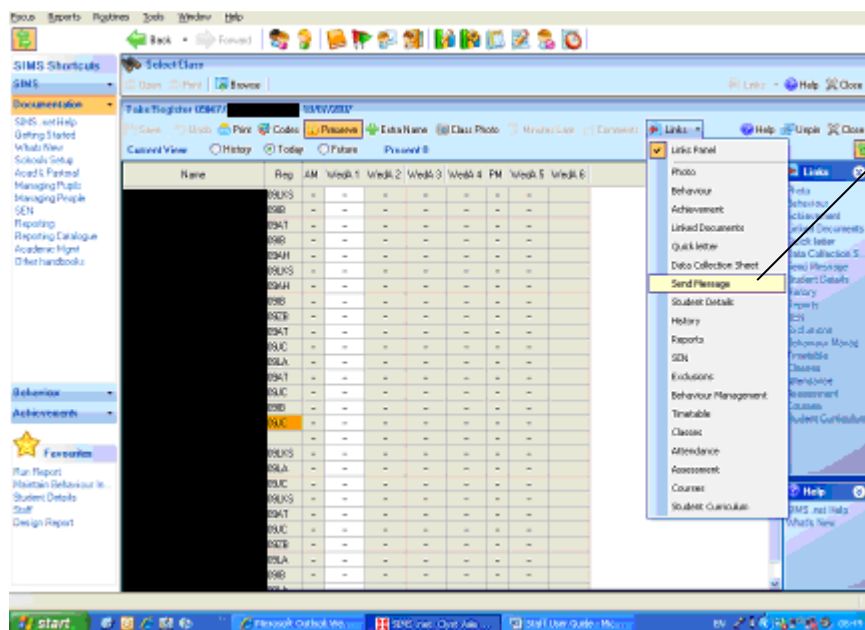
As with recording the achievement and behaviour, select the relevant name from the **register** and click on **Links**. Select **Send Message** from the drop down menu as shown.
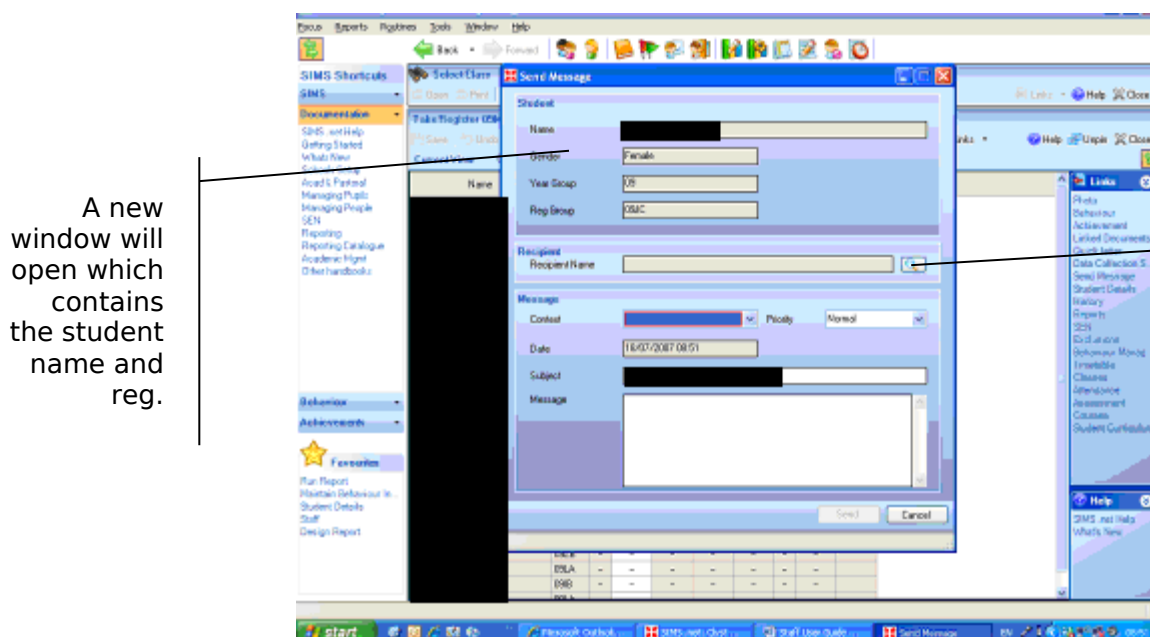
A new window will open which contains the student name and reg.

Click on this icon to look up the message recipient
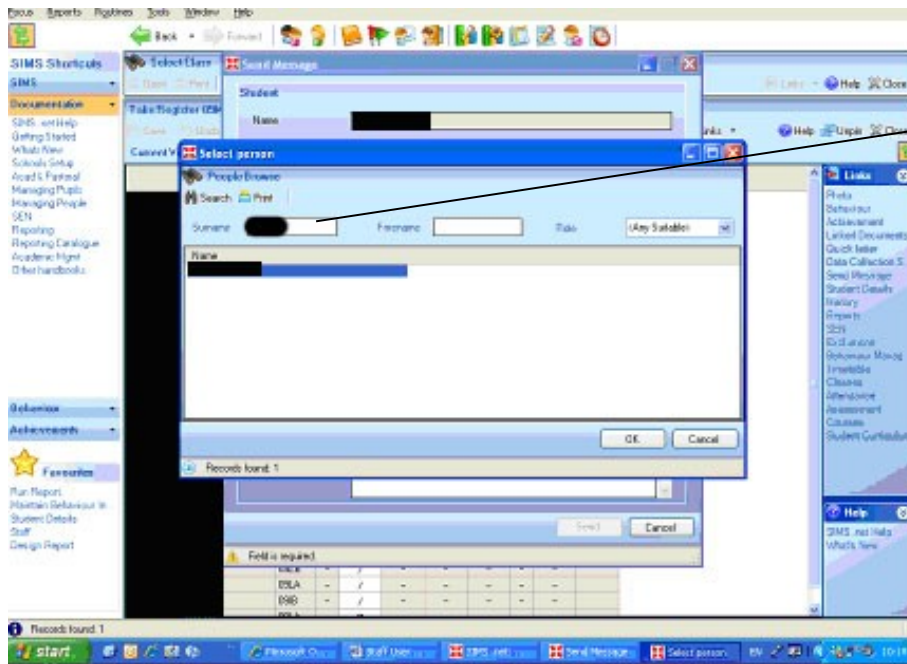
For example, if you wanted to send a message to **** ******, type the surname and hit search. A list of names will appear; double click on the name you wish to use.

You can select the **context** of the message from the drop down menu.

Choose from:
Student detail message
SEN message
Behaviour message
Exclusion message

Appendix XVIII
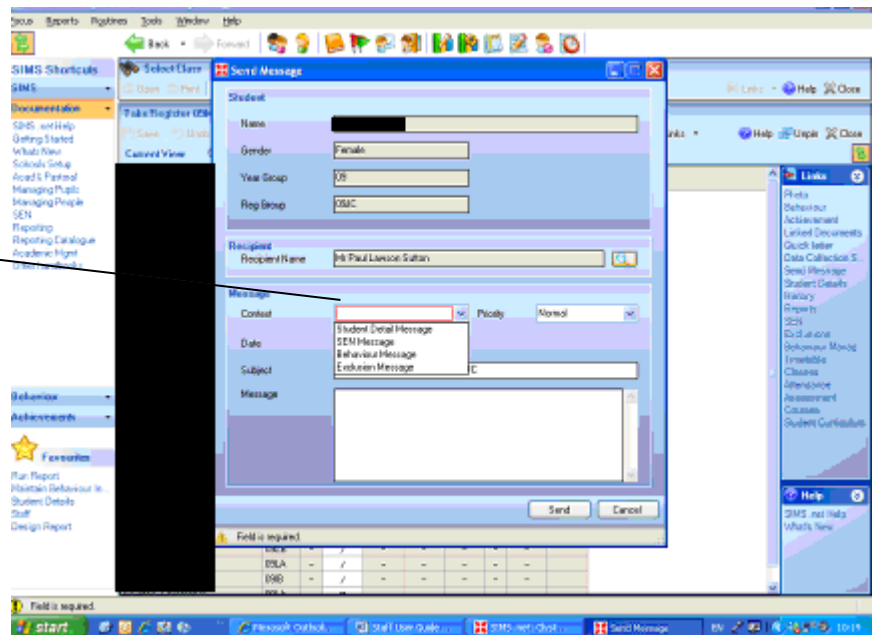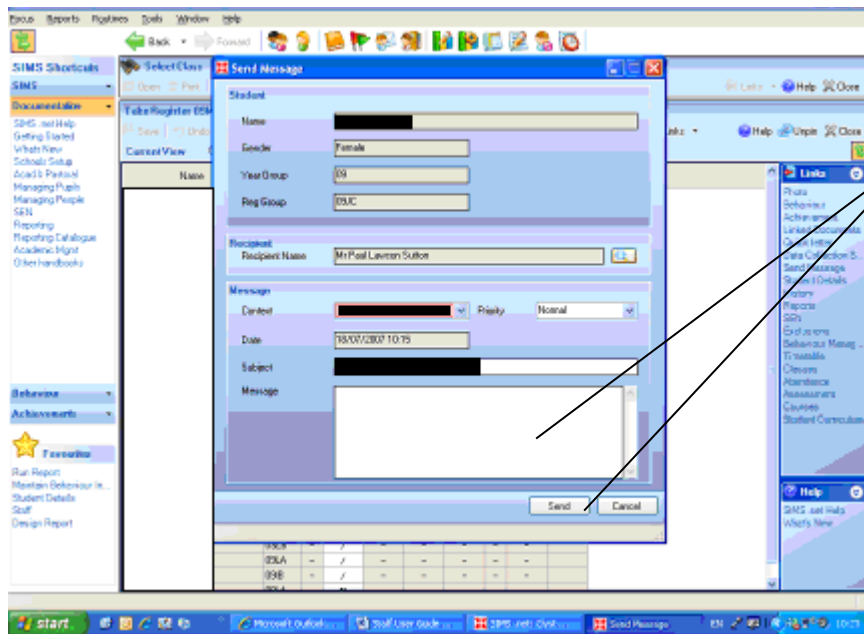
Similar to recording achievement and behaviour there is a text box where you can type your message (max 500 characters).

Once you have completed the message click **Send**.

███████████████████████
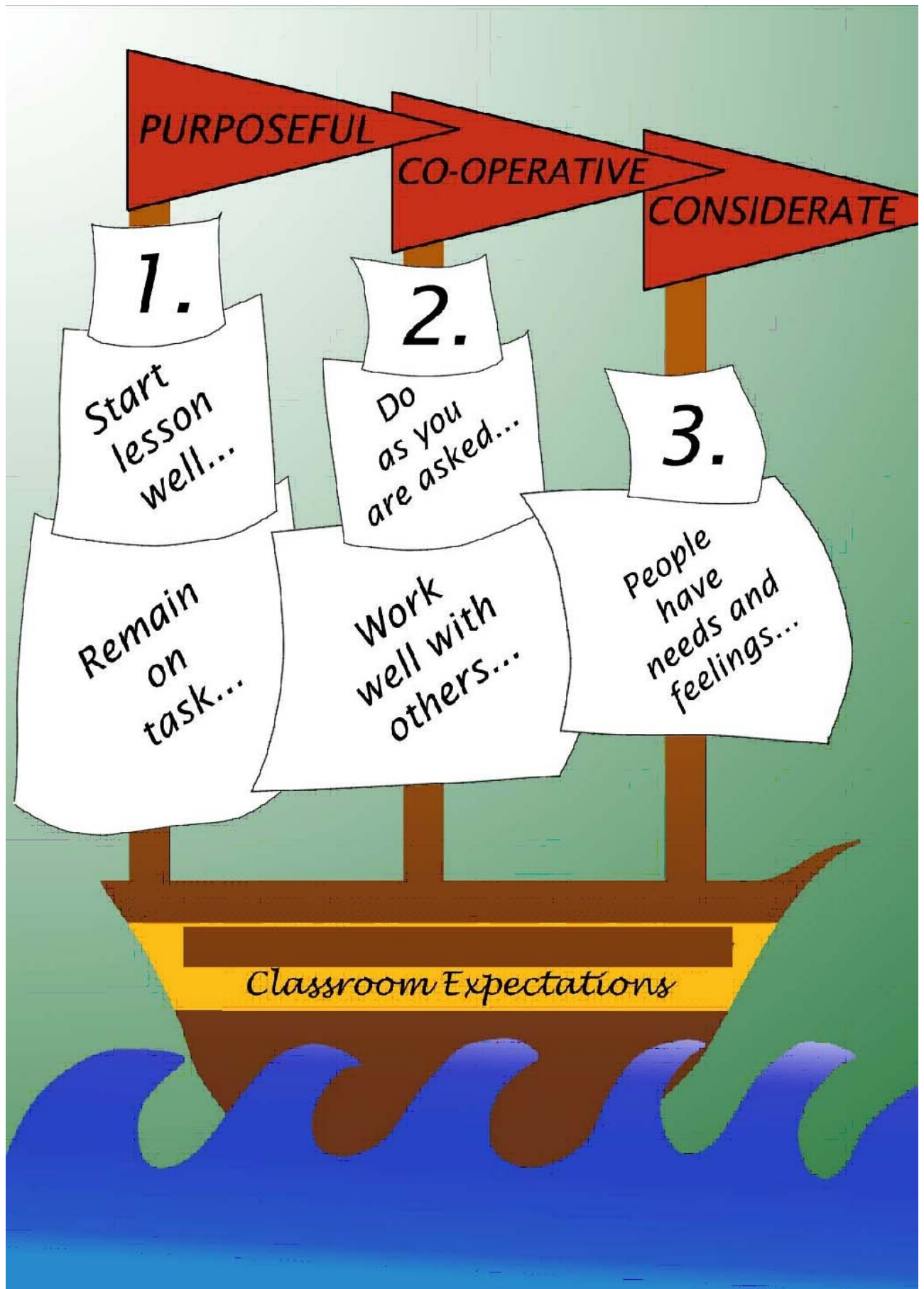
Individual Achievement Report for: Harry 08

Date	Subject	Description	Outcome	Staff Involved	Points
10-09-2008	Physical Education	Good purposeful work in rugby. Full effort and clear improvement in handling skills.	Verbal praise	DW	3
				Total Achievement Points	0
11-09-2008	Physical Education	Brilliant PCC, skill development and games understanding in Basketball.	Verbal praise	DW	5
				Total Achievement Points	0
11-09-2008				PD	1
				Total Achievement Points	0
15-09-2008		A fantastic start to the new term with great effort	Commendation	MH	3
				Total Achievement Points	0
16-09-2008				PD	1
				Total Achievement Points	0
17-09-2008	English	Brilliant work on chapters 1-3 of Buddy.	Verbal praise	IQ	3
				Total Achievement Points	0
24-09-2008	Physical Education	Good PCC qualities in the game situation (rugby). Full commitment and tactical application leading to effective team play.	Verbal praise	DW	3
				Total Achievement Points	0
07-10-2008	English	Brilliant reading skills - volunteered to read a whole page aloud. Well done!	Verbal praise	IQ	3
				Total Achievement Points	0
09-10-2008	Physical Education	Excellent PCC qualities shown in basketball. Full attention and good leadership shown when others found it difficult.	Verbal praise	DW	5
				Total Achievement Points	0
09-10-2008	History		Commendation	HP	5
				Total Achievement Points	0
10-10-2008	Mathematics	good manners.	Verbal praise	RF	3
				Total Achievement Points	0

Individual Behaviour Report for: Harry 08

Date	Subject	Description	Outcome	Staff Involved	Points
13-10-2008	Beliefs & Values	Did not hand n homework on the the names of Allah. 5 minute breaktime detention.	Detention	TLA	1
					0
20-10-2008	French	lack of focus today	Verbal Warning	JC	1
					0
21-10-2008	History	Harry made comments and noises when I was speaking. He dropped his pen very noisily on the flloor. Low level disruptive behaviour	Student moved within classroom	HP	1
					0
10-11-2008	French	silly and chatty	Detention	JC	1
					0
26-11-2008	Beliefs & Values	Unfocussed and not purposeful. One chance left to prove themself before they have to sit away from their friends.	Verbal Warning	TLA	1
					0
05-12-2008	Geography	rainforest animal	Detention	PS	1
					0
08-12-2008	French	silly and immature . Then failed to come to detention	Detention	JC	4
					0
16-12-2008	French	too noisy and chatty which disrupts learning	Verbal Warning	JC	1
					0

Name	Reg	Behaviour Points	Achievement Points
Terry	07M		70
Joe	07M	2	91
Fred	07M	28	69
Jason	07M	1	93
Jack	07M		98
Daisy	07M		103
Karen	07M	2	64
Marc	07M		97
Henry	07M	1	90
Amelia	07M	1	85
Hannah	07M		76
Enid	07M		85
Sharon	07M		68
Emma	07M		91
James	07M		69
Georgia	07M	2	46
Joshua	07M	1	77
Tania	07M		50
Ellena	07M	4	60
Jake	07M		153
Edward	07M		77
Jordan	07M		78
Sam	07M		78

Basic Details

S

Quick Note

Emergency Contacts

Priority	1
Home No.	
Mobile No.	
Work No.	
Mother	

Key Indicators

Attendance	Behaviour	Exclusions	Achievements
97.9 %	26	0 Day(s)	13
Assessment			

Current Class	Reg Tutor	Head of Year	Report Card
	11VO	11	No

Timeline (08:30 – 15:30):

| 3 KK 11q/Sc4 [N] | 60 KBA 11y/Cz2 [N] | 64 VO 11C/Ms1 [N] | JP 11q/Pe4 [N] | 39 RM 11y/Bv2 [N] |

Attendance — Pie Chart

Description	Sessions	%
Present	137	97.9
Authorised Absence	1	0.7
Unauthorised Absence	0	0
Possible Attendances	140	0
Approved Educational Act...	19	13.6
Late before reg closed	4	2.9

Behaviour

Date	Type	Points
08/12/2008	Inappropriate use ...	2
05/12/2008	3 Sent out of class	3
21/11/2008	Other (Severe)	5
14/11/2008	4 Continued poor ...	4
24/10/2008	5 Persistent poor b...	5
08/10/2008	5 Persistent poor b...	5

Achievements

Date	Type	Points
21/11/2008	Student of the We...	0
22/10/2008	Outstanding effort...	5
22/10/2008	Good work - verb...	3
16/10/2008	Outstanding effort...	5

Assessment

Aspect	Result	Date	Re
Current Pred Sc ...	D	11/12/2008	Ye
FFT 2-4 Eng Lit	B	10/12/2008	
Yr 11 Mock B&V ...	G	08/12/2008	Ye

SEN Needs

Ranking	Need Type	Description	
1	Autistic Sp...		
2	Behaviour, ...		

Classes

Description	Supervisor	
11A/Ls2		
11B/Ls2		
11C/Ms1		
11IB/Tu3		

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			Assessment/Recording/Reporting/Parents' Evenings						Meetings	Evenings/ Events for all	SEF/ Perf. Management/ Exams
			Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13			
Wed	Dec 10				Y9 Magazine Day (MF)					8.55 SLT 3.30 NQT		
Thu	11					Y10 (x5) Cultural Ambass. Proj – Bristol Academy (ZB) Y10 Badminton Tournament, QECC (PE)		Y12 Physics Met Office Visit (SP/BG)	Y13 B&V Enrichment Day			PE Review Week (SLT'
Fri	12							Deadline Y12-13 Assessment data			11.00-15.00 Broadclyst Primary Nativity Play (Hall)	Deadline Y12-13 Assessment data Y7-11 TPR Issued by post
Sat	13											
Sun	14											
Mon	15	A			Y9 Review Week	Y10 C5I Day	Y11 Work Exp			9.45 Calendar Meeting 3.30 SLT	7pm Carol Service, All day rehearsal in church	
Tue	16					Bicton College Cohort 7 term finishes	Exeter College term finishes	Y 12 A5 Revision Maths – Exeter Univ (MP) Y12 Engineering Education Scheme Residential Plymouth Univ (SP)		2.00-4.00 SSTL 3.30 SEAL Working Parties/Case Conference		

10

Issue Date: 27 July 2008
Updated: 02 December 2008

					Assessment/Recording/Reporting/Parents' Evenings					Meetings	Evenings/ Events for all	SEF/ Perf. Management/ Exams
			Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13			
Wed	Jan 14									8.55 SLT 3.30 NQT		By half term subject SEF updates
Thu	15					4.30-7 Y10 Parents Evening Y10 (pm) GCSE Science Unit 2 B2, C2, P2 Y10 (pm) GCSE Triple Science Unit 1 C1, C2, C3)						
Fri	16											
Sat	17											
Sun	18											
Mon	19	B				Y10 (am) GCSE Triple Science Unit 1 P1, P2, P3 Y10 (am) GCSE Triple Science Unit 1 B1, B2, B3	Y11 (am) GCSE Science Unit 3 B3, C3, P3 (catchup)	Y12 Blanks issued		9.45 Calendar Meeting 3.30 SLT		Drama Review Week (SLT)
Tue	20									3.30 Subject Teams		
Wed	21						Y11 (pm) GCSE Science Unit 1 B4, C4, P4 Y11 (pm) GCSE Triple Science Unit 2 B4, B5, B6			8.55 SLT 3.30 NQT	7.00 Grimm Tales (AR)	GCSE entries by forecast grade to AJ

Issue Date: 27 July 2008
Updated: 02 December 2008

Focus Group 3

Maurice – I think the education system in this country has gone down hill since they introduced the testing regime. I mean we are talking about assessment. We are doing 'The Tempest', just trying to get them to enjoy the play and someone asks, 'Sir, what are the set scenes for the study?' I just want to shout, 'Just enjoy the play!' I haven't encouraged that question. Where does that come from? The parents? The media?

DW – Let's start off with barriers. Are there any barriers to assessment?

Jerry – We need to moderate our marks so that they are correct and there are no discrepancies. So we need some time to sit down and look at classes together, perhaps a video of a class in a sport we are all familiar with.

DW – Is that a problem more for KS3 than KS4?

Jerry – Yes KS3 is the real problem.

DW – So KS4 and post-16 is not such a problem?

Barry – In terms of the end product then yes. I'm speaking from the stand point where we have had GCSE grade descriptions change literally within the last term so with KS4 we are less secure at the moment as to what a grade A, C and E looks like. So, for us at the moment it is the other way around. We are perhaps more solid at KS3 than KS4.

DW – Anything else to do with assessment barriers?

Cathy – Barriers that stop us assessing?

DW – Yes. Things that make it problematic.

Jerry – Split classes make it difficult as we don't see enough of the kids to make an accurate judgment. There's more of that now in PE it seems.

Maurice– A fundamental barrier for us would be when Irene and Amelia attended a course with the new secondary adviser, they did not agree with the standard he was displaying. That's fundamental isn't it? Based on our experience we have produced our own standardisation material for KS3 and we feel confident about it. I would say there is a gulf. I think that gulf is shared by other English teachers. We were not on our own. I don't know if he had a different agenda but there is real conflict there. That has actually undermined us a bit.

Malcolm – Was he saying you were wrong?

Maurice – He was saying the exemplar was a level 3 and both Irene and Amelia were shocked because they could see level 5 in the work. But you know he is meant to be establishing a standard in Devon. I would say that is a real barrier.

Marksheet Entry : AAAAAA TESTER 2 please ignore : Maths (KStg3)

💾 Save | ↩ Undo | 🖨 Print | ➡ Export ▾ | 🐞 Calculate | ❓ Help | ➕ Favourites | ✖ Clos⸱

1 Basic Details   2 Marksheet

∠ Marksheet

Result Date 19/12/2008 🖼   Group Membership Date 19/12/2008 🖼   🔄 Refresh ⓘ Summary ⯮ Narrow 🔍 Zoom

Group Filter [   ] 🔍

Students	Year / Summer	Current NC Levels Maths Year 8 Autumn	Current points	Pts Progress	Add pts to KS3	Forecast KS3 Maths	Add pts to KS4	Forecast GCSE Maths	Forecast Yr 8 autumn 3LP	Diff Curr pts & forecast	On Target
▆▆▆▆▆		5A	35.00	0.00	42.00	6A	53.00	A	35.00	0.00	ON TARG
▆▆▆▆▆▆		4B	27.00	-2.00	34.00	5B	45.00	C	31.00	4.00	BELOW
▆▆▆▆		4A	29.00	0.00	36.00	5A	47.00	B	33.00	4.00	BELOW
▆▆▆▆▆		4A	29.00	0.00	36.00	5A	47.00	B	31.00	2.00	BELOW
▆▆▆▆▆		6C	37.00	2.00	44.00	7C	55.00	A	37.00	0.00	ON TARG
▆▆▆▆▆		6C	37.00	2.00	44.00	7C	55.00	A	37.00	0.00	ON TARG
▆▆▆▆▆		4B	27.00	-2.00	34.00	5B	45.00	C	31.00	4.00	BELOW
▆▆▆▆		5B	33.00	0.00	40.00	6B	51.00	B	33.00	0.00	ON TARG
▆▆▆▆▆		6C	37.00	2.00	44.00	7C	55.00	A	37.00	0.00	ON TARG
▆▆▆▆		3B	21.00	-4.00	28.00	4B	39.00	D	19.00	-2.00	ABOVE
▆▆▆▆▆		4A	29.00	0.00	36.00	5A	47.00	B	35.00	6.00	BELOW
▆▆▆▆▆		6C	37.00	2.00	44.00	7C	55.00	A	35.00	-2.00	ABOVE
▆▆▆▆		4A	29.00	0.00	36.00	5A	47.00	B			
▆▆▆▆▆		5A	35.00	0.00	42.00	6A	53.00	A	31.00	-4.00	ABOVE

PART 7

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