

**INTERVENTION FOR LEARNING  
SUPPORTING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

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## **Abstract**

Bringing about school improvement has become a national focus for education. There has been little research into school improvement from the perspective of intervention, yet it has become an urgent issue due to the commitment to address under-performance in schools. This research provides insights into the use of research findings about school improvement and effectiveness in working with schools; and insights about how best to support schools in promoting a culture and ways of working in which development can be secured. It uses the development of two projects, in the first phase gaining insights from intervention with eight schools, and in the second phase gaining a closer look at the impact of interventions in two schools at the different levels of headteacher, deputy, subject leader, class teacher and children. The sample draws on schools from different contexts. In the first phase, schools were considered where intervention was welcomed, and the second phase included schools with more embedded difficulties and where intervention had not been sought.

The interaction between the impact of intervention at school, classroom and pupil level is explored, drawing out the inter-relationship between the elements of intervention in promoting improvement. The research drew upon a phenomenological perspective to consider the perceptions of those involved in terms of the interventions; methods of data collection were developed which drew upon both qualitative and quantitative processes, including narrative analysis.

A model for intervention is offered alongside the identification of the activities and skills of interveners working to promote school improvement. Aspects of change are identified in relation to the technical, cultural and micro-political development. A new identification of the phases of development is given, and aligned to the inter-related aspects of the change process. Turbulence and uncertainty had to be managed constructively as schools moved to the awareness that the skills of rigorous self-evaluation were a key lever for their improvement. Identification of the intervention which supports aspects of change and is phased for different stages of improvement is a recommended way forward.

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To my colleagues who provided a lively source of productive critical reflection.

And to my family, whose encouragement and goodwill has made this project possible, not least for their grace when weekends and holidays were put on hold.

### **Declaration.**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of this thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institute in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the college.

Signed

Jane C. Spouse

Date: December '01



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## **Abbreviations.**

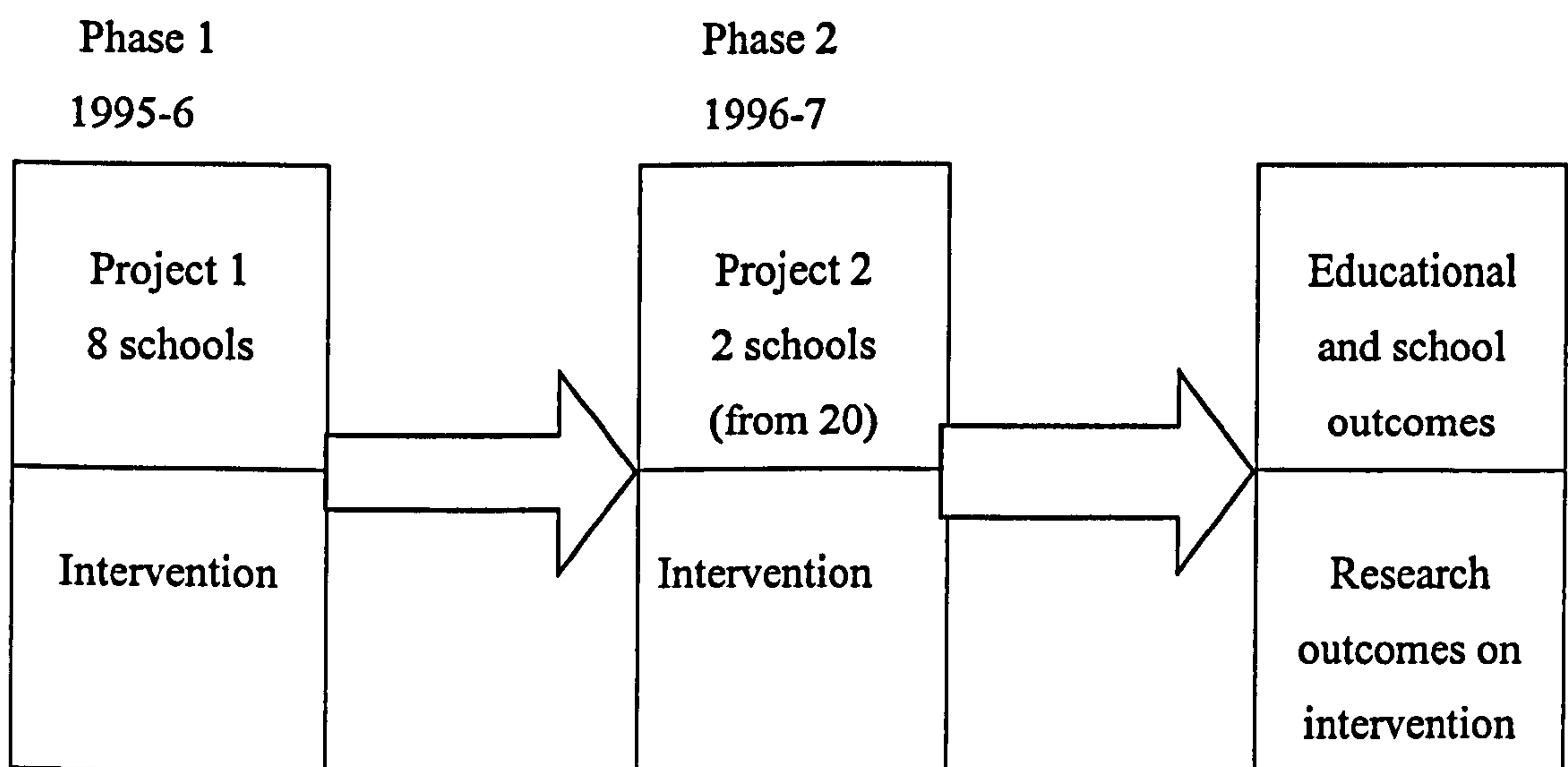
<b>AI</b>	<b>Assigned Inspector</b>
<b>DfE</b>	<b>Department for Education</b>
<b>DfEE</b>	<b>Department for Education and Employment</b>
<b>GEST</b>	<b>Grant related Education Standards Fund</b>
<b>HMI</b>	<b>Her Majesty's Inspectorate</b>
<b>IIP</b>	<b>Investors in People</b>
<b>IQEA</b>	<b>Improving the Quality of Education for All</b>
<b>LEA</b>	<b>Local Education Authority</b>
<b>NFER</b>	<b>National Foundation for Educational Research</b>
<b>OECD</b>	<b>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</b>
<b>OFSTED</b>	<b>Office for Standards in Education</b>
<b>QCA</b>	<b>Qualifications and Curriculum Authority</b>
<b>SATs</b>	<b>Standard Attainment Tests</b>
<b>SEAC</b>	<b>Schools Examination and Assessment Council</b>
<b>TQM</b>	<b>Total Quality Management</b>

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Origination of the research

This research originated through my responsibility, as a Local Education Authority (LEA) inspector, for an Improving Primary Schools project. This was introduced during the Summer term 1995. In December of that year the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) invited bids for national funding to support school improvement projects during 1996. A successful bid was submitted and, as a result, I was able to develop a second project, with different schools, refined in the light of the first. The focus of my research was twofold. Firstly I sought to use the existing research on school effectiveness and school improvement to develop the project. I then sought to develop my thesis on the nature of intervention which supported schools in securing improvement (Figure 1.1).



*Figure 1.1 A diagram of the relation between the school improvement projects and the intervention research.*

The aim of the projects in both phases (1995-6, Phase 1; 1996-7, Phase 2), was to work with schools in order to improve pupil achievement and the quality of education provided by the schools, whilst strengthening the schools' own capacity

for change and improvement. The focus of the research was to establish the nature of intervention to support this improvement.

## **1.2 Research questions**

The research sought to answer questions about a programme of intervention with schools, and, in particular, to identify which elements or combination of elements, prompted through external support, best support improvement and which do not, and to answer questions about the role of those who carry out the intervention. This includes in particular the role of Local Authority assigned inspectors, who are linked to individual schools and work closely with them, as well as those providing in-service training or who undertake a role of advising teachers about practice.

The key questions my research sought to answer were:

- how can the research findings about school effectiveness and school improvement be used to improve schools?
- how can schools be supported in managing a culture where review and development are promoted?
- how best can the use of assigned inspectors and external help be used to enable schools to sustain new understandings and expectations in the drive to improve a specific aspect of educational provision and to raise standards of pupil achievement?

Underlying these were the objectives to:

- develop a strategy for support for the improvement of learning in schools
- identify the sequence of change related to intervention
- establish methods for data gathering and assessing the culture of schools
- establish methods for data gathering and assessing the management of the micro-political dimensions of schools
- identify the activities and associated expertise and skills of intervention linked to the sequence for improvement



### **1.3 Research organisation**

The research drew from the two separate improvement projects, in 1995-6 and 1996-7, the second of which was informed by the evaluation of the first. Initially, funding enabled the involvement of eight primary schools, selected to represent a range of size and contexts. The resources available limited the number of schools participating in the projects. The analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the first phase led to a refined framework for the second phase project. The second was carried out with the involvement of twenty schools, but only two were utilised for the research. This was to enable more detailed collection of data within the time restrictions imposed by the resources available.

Each project was introduced and supported through a programme of intervention and was evaluated, drawing on a range of sources, within the following themes:

- the development of pupils' learning, (i.e. their technical skills);
- the development of teachers' technical practice;
- the social changes evident in the school's culture or ways of working;
- the micro-political changes of drive and influence through the school's management and organisation;
- the relationship, of those external to the school involved in interventions, to support the above changes.

I drew from sources of evidence within the schools, the perceptions of those who were experiencing the impact of the interventions and were the key players implementing changes. Those involved in the intervention are not included in the sample, as I was keen to use the evidence of those in the schools about their perceptions of the intervention, rather than the perceptions of those undertaking the intervention. Evidence was collected through a range of strategies: interview, questionnaire, documentation, observation, note taking, and data about pupil performance. Information was collected before the work was undertaken, during the course of its implementation and after the project had concluded.



#### **1.4 The importance of the study**

At the time, important questions were surfacing nationally about raising the performance of under-performing schools. Reynolds (1996) cites the then Conservative government's interest in school variability and the range of work published by OFSTED (the Office for Standards in Education) as related to effectiveness research and international comparative studies.

Under-performance was identified as a too large a percentage of pupils not attaining standards expected for their age group in national tests, and schools achieving less well than others with similar intakes and working in similar contexts. The LEA sought to promote improved achievement in such schools, with this project as one part of other strategies. It was important to me and to the LEA to conduct the project as rigorously as possible, so the opportunity to do this was taken through aligning it with a programme of research.

Whilst there have been many studies of school improvement which take as a focus the within school processes, understandings about the contribution of those charged with working with schools to support improvement have been limited. Extending and developing these could provide important considerations for those planning and providing such support. This is an important topic both nationally and locally.

In my own role as a local authority assigned inspector it was also a unique opportunity to develop understandings about practice. As the research developed I was promoted to a more senior position within the authority, with overall responsibility for those providing support to school improvement and working as assigned inspectors. Clarifying the goals, principles, and activities underpinning support for school improvement, and sharing this with others, became even more crucial to me as the analysis moved forward.

### **1.5 Limitations of the study**

The research is limited by the size of the sample and by the nature of a case study approach. Therefore findings that are generally applicable in wider contexts are not claimed. However, within its limitations there are additions to the existing knowledge base through providing an in-depth analysis of processes.

The study does not seek to include details of all the activities undertaken, as this would make the scope too unwieldy. The perceptions of those working as interventionists are not sort, although they were used as reference groups during the course of the research as the analysis developed. Whilst a wealth of data was generated, it was selected from in order to present the final analysis.

### **1.6 Claims to originality**

Whilst the research rests on existing literature in the fields of improvement, effectiveness, change, and teaching and learning it seeks to develop this through its creative application at the interface between externally applied pressure and support, and the school itself.

The first phase schools were selected to represent a range of sizes and contexts, but where involvement in the project would be welcomed. Whilst resourcing enabled twenty schools to participate in the second phase, my research focus led to more detailed scrutiny of two schools. For this phase schools were selected which had not sought assistance with improvement, which is a significant dimension to the research. Most research to date has focused on working with schools which have sought the assistance of consultants or sought to be involved in such projects.

Whilst in depth studies have been undertaken of school improvement, the ability to do this with two schools, developing the work from the initial eight schools, allows more detailed comparisons to be made. One of the two was a large urban school with a reluctant staff and a headteacher aware of the urgent need for improvement; the second a rural primary school which initially found the relevance of an improvement project to them difficult to accept. These case studies are an original addition to the existing literature.



The development of a model which clarifies the sequence and process of leading and developing staff in schools to be successful change agents with the ability to secure their own improvements, and the identification of factors which help or hinder this process is also an addition to the existing literature. Furthermore, within the research I developed methodologies to give quantitative measures of change related to the social and micro-political dimensions of the schools. This is an original contribution to the methodology of research into school improvement.

There has been little recent research on the role of the intervener, particularly in the context of school effectiveness literature, and I add to this the analysis of the skills and elements of intervention which appear to support improvement over time. This includes the role of LEA assigned inspectors and external consultants.

Finally, the outcomes of this research contribute to understandings about the nature of intervention with schools, which can be provided through sensitive attention to the needs of a school, and through greater awareness of the complexities of the school's own stage of development.

### **1.7 Outline of subsequent chapters**

In Chapter 2 I consider the research in which mine is located. I outline international perspectives on school effectiveness and school improvement, before examining national and local contexts for the research. I draw from recent work into school change and development of schools as learning organisations. I consider recent work on school consultancy and support before drawing implications for the school improvement project development and my research into intervention.

In the next chapter I detail how I defined the framework for the research. I identify the paradigm, which informs the perspectives used to approach the material. I consider my own role as a researcher and how I dealt with my own involvement with the project to support the research. I explain how I will use a case study approach to access the perceptions of others, and consider representation and presentation of these perceptions. This leads into the next chapter which details research methodology. I identify how the primary schools in each of the two phases of the

project were selected as the 'case' for my research. Whilst all eight schools in the first phase were used for my research, two of the participating twenty schools were used in the second phase. I detail the range of mainly qualitative methods I used to access perspectives of those in the schools to the intervention which they experienced.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 detail the outcomes for the first and second phases of the project. Chapter 5 details the implementation of the project and the outcomes of the analysis of the changes that took place in the eight schools. The research analysis considers what aspects of intervention supported those changes, as perceived by the headteachers. In Chapter 6 I identify the changes made to the project as a result of the first. I examine the outcomes of the involvement of two of the schools, before considering in detail the perspectives of a Chair of governors, headteacher, deputy head, subject co-ordinator and a teacher from the two schools, into the ways intervention supported their changes in technical, social and micro-political development. I identify four stages of development as the schools moved to achieve their intended improvements, and the characteristics of schools' technical, social and micro-political aspects at each of these stages.

Chapter 7 considers the stages of change schools moved through during the projects in relation to the interventions that took place. I then consider two themes which ran through the research findings. The first theme is cognitive dissonance, which resulted from pressures to improve, and I identify how managing this enables changes in the technical, social and micro-political development of the schools. The second theme is the development of school self-evaluation for sustaining improvements. This leads to the identification of key principles for effective engagement with schools as an interventionist.

The final chapter summarises the main findings and revisits the original research questions to show how I have answered them. I show that the methodological and analytical processes I used have supported my research aims. I consider implications for the LEA and detail the impact of the research. I include a discussion on the tensions and ethical issues raised by my involvement, discuss the limitations of the research and how it could be developed, and implications for future research.



## **Chapter 2**

### **The research in context**

#### **Introduction**

In this Chapter I shall consider the place of the research I conducted within the context of the research already available.

Firstly, I shall explore some international perspectives on the school effectiveness and school improvement fields and the contribution these have made to policy and intervention. I shall then move to the national level and explore the English political agenda and how the current thrust on raising standards in schools is influencing the role of LEAs. I shall then explain in more detail the context of this research within the local authority.

Secondly I shall examine the research into school effectiveness, justifying how I drew on this to develop the project, before moving into a similar exploration of the school improvement field. Drawing on linkages and aspects of both paradigms I shall then examine the relationship to the project's development.

An important element of the research is that relating to aspects of change. I shall explore the need to manage change in schools. I shall define the aspects of change which I took as the basis for examining the impact of the interventions on the schools, that is the technical, social and micro-political changes.

The move towards supporting schools in developing their own abilities to manage improvement led to the consideration of the development of learning organisations, and schools as places where teachers themselves developed as learners. I shall consider how this relates to the development of the project.

Finally I shall link these to the considerations for the intervention that took place in terms of the role of the LEA and the role of external consultants, to include the concept of 'critical friend'. I will explain how I developed the focus of the research to promote further understandings of the contribution of intervention to school improvement.



## **2.1 The political context**

International, national and local dimensions of school effectiveness and school improvement research show varying degrees of links with policy development. The link between the national context and local imperatives and opportunities, in particular those leading to the context for this research, are important as they influenced the ability to pursue the research. The fact that at a national level funding became available to support the project in its second year stemmed from a national Improving Schools programme which was launched by the Secretary of State in 1995. Its publicity pamphlet (DfEE, 1995) states that the programme 'brings together the agencies of central and local government, universities, schools and others in a programme to raise school standards'.

This emphasis on standards is one which may give too narrow and simplistic a view of improvement (Gray and Wilcox, 1995). Whilst the DfEE defined improvement in terms of raising standards, the concept of effectiveness raises issues about both defining quality and measuring quality. Schools may prefer to use other measures than performance data, relating to within school processes and pupil satisfaction (Bolam, 1997). Schools promote opportunities related to intellectual learning but include the fulfilment of social and personal potential. Promoting 'quality' also implies the development of abilities to make informed choices, communicate well, work with others and the development of the self-esteem and confidence to do so (Feinstein, 2000). What could research tell me about the ways in which schools were perceived to be effective and to secure improvement, whilst promoting a view of quality which embraced their values? How has that linked to development in a way which is constructive for schools and enables them to move forward productively?

### **2.1.1 International perspectives on school effectiveness and improvement linked to policy and intervention**

The research fields of school effectiveness and improvement have burgeoned in recent years (Jansen, 1995). In 1994 the International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre was set up at the Institute of Education in London. The 1998 international conference involved eighteen countries providing reports describing current issues relating to school effectiveness and school improvement. The growing

range of contributors to The International Journal of School Effectiveness and School Improvement, established now for over nine years, includes those from Australia, Singapore, Netherlands, the United States of America, Pakistan, Germany, Holland, Spain, Israel and the United Kingdom.

The differing levels of relationship between research and national policy, research and educational practice, and different emphases within the research can be seen in contributions to the above mentioned journal. Whilst the fundamental concepts within the research spheres of effectiveness and improvement cross international borders, there are important differences. For instance, Reynolds (1996) identified a closer relationship between school effectiveness and school improvement research in Australia than the United Kingdom, and a greater relationship between educational research and educational policy in the United Kingdom and Australia than in the Netherlands. In the United Kingdom and Australia there is greater evidence of national policies that relate to and draw on research knowledge bases.

Recently, the search for more effective schools, the shift to school based management, and an emphasis on strategic management in schools represent the typical political thrusts, including in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia and Hong Kong (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988; Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991; Scheerens, 1992). Governments, identifying effective education as a vital component of economic viability, have justified promoting changes which can be related back to findings in effectiveness research. For instance, more local decision making at the school site reflects the research from Caldwell and Spinks (1988, 1992) which introduced an emphasis on self-managing schools. Chapman's work for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Organisation has contributed to the debate on leadership (1985, 1991a), decentralisation (1992) and resource allocation (1991b). In Australia, Townsend (1996) reports the movement of all states towards decentralisation and devolution of decision making in some form or another.

In the United States there has been a focus on instructional programmes, for instance the 'Success for All' programme led by Slavin (1996) which demonstrated sustained improvement of achievement in reading. The New American Schools Development



Corporation is promoting the development of diversity in school restructuring (Stringfield and Herman, 1996). In the Netherlands national policy has emphasised structural and administrative reform rather than consideration of primary processes, such as teaching and learning (Scheerens and Creemers, 1996).

Research, from both the USA and Australia, is limited in relation to the role of external support linked to school effectiveness and improvement. This aspect, central to my research focus, has not been a major area of enquiry. Nevertheless, Stringfield and Herman (1996) have argued from the USA that a combination of school and district attention to the conditions necessary to provide highly reliable support for schooling is an essential and understudied area. In Australia the report from the Good Schools Strategy of the Australian Education Council (McGaw *et al.*, 1992) suggested, as part of their findings, that the role of central administrators is not only to set broad policy guidelines within the context of increased autonomy and higher accountability at local levels, but to support schools in their efforts to improve through the provision of professional services.

Several North American studies have demonstrated the importance of external school district support to successful school change (Rosenhaltz, 1989; Coleman and LaRocque, 1990; Stoll and Fink, 1994) There are strong arguments that schools need connections with outside agencies. Fullan (1993) views the seeking of outside help as a sign of the school's vitality: 'It is the organisations that act self sufficient that are going nowhere' (p. 86).

### **2.1.2 The English national political agenda**

My own opportunity for research was located within the political system in which I work. Attention to standards and quality in schools has increased in recent years. From 1979 the Conservative government had shown concern about the variability in school quality and effectiveness. This led to the monitoring of schools through the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The 1944 Education Act (Ministry of Education, 1944) had given LEAs the statutory right to inspect their schools, although different authorities gave differing degrees of emphasis to this role, with many preferring to act solely in an advisory rather than inspectorial capacity (Maychell and Keys 1993). The Education Act of 1992 (DfE, 1992) reduced the size

and role of the existing inspection body, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI), and brought into existence OFSTED, which was funded in part from resources previously allocated to LEAs. The White paper, Choice and Diversity (DfE, 1992) was intended, according to Cordingley and Kogan (1993), 'to cause the LEA as a significant entity to wither away' (p. 43).

OFSTED, in its Framework for the inspection of schools and accompanying handbook (1995), established criteria for the inspection of schools relating to the outcomes of academic and personal achievement of pupils and the factors which contributed to these. OFSTED utilised academics in the fields of school effectiveness and improvement, such as the commissioned literature review 'Key characteristics of effective schools' (Sammons *et al.*, 1995). It commissioned work from research bodies, such as reviewing data available for value added studies (Sammons *et al.*, 1994) or involving the Audit Commission in a review of school governance (1995). The Department for Education and Employment established a School Effectiveness Unit in 1994 which sought to learn from the research on school effectiveness and improvement and to influence policy on schools judged by OFSTED as failing to provide an acceptable quality of education for its pupils.

The Labour Government continued to place education firmly in the forefront of its concerns. The Prime Minister made very clear the government's policy links between economic viability and educational effectiveness early in tenure. The Government's education White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' (DfEE, 1997) was prefaced by David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education: 'I ask you to join with us in making the crusade for higher standards a reality in every classroom and in every household in the country' (p. 3).

This White Paper drew heavily on Barber's book 'The Learning Game' (1996). The relationship with leading academics closely involved in the fields of school effectiveness and improvement continued, with, for instance, Barber leading the literacy task force, and Reynolds leading the numeracy task force.



One of the main thrusts of the raising standards initiative has been to identify and turn round underperforming schools. Michael Bichard, (1997) as Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education and Employment, wrote:

For the first time ever we have national data available to see clearly the results achieved by all schools at all stages and phases throughout the system. We can compare the detailed results of one school against another; of one class against another. With detailed testing throughout schooling we can now calculate the value added by each and every department and by each and every teacher. And professionalism is about using this information to identify success and weakness and responding to each - in the one case by exchanging and celebrating good practice and in the other by confronting the inadequacy it exposes. (p. 50)

Whilst many of the reforms have brought greater autonomy and accountability to schools, for instance with regard to admissions, resourcing, personnel, and governance, this was accompanied by a move towards less autonomy at curriculum level with, for example, a national curriculum, national literacy and numeracy projects and national target setting. Whitty (1989) identified the contradiction between a drive for decentralisation and a statutory national curriculum. These tensions exemplify the wide debate in the eighties about the rise of 'New Right' thinking, where the two strands of neo-conservatism emphasising authority and tradition, and neo-liberalism, emphasising free market and parental choice, influenced the Education Reform Act (DfE, 1988). Similarly, there are tensions between the reduced capacity of LEAs and their increased accountability. The LEA's historic role was the responsibility for managing an integrated schools service within its area. The LEA owned buildings, employed staff, determined admissions and made the key educational decisions. The result of the removal of these responsibilities and the reduction in direct funding led to both diminished powers and diminished levels of staffing in LEAs. Alongside this came greater accountability, both for the progress of failing schools in their area and for the overall raising of standards. The White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' (DfEE, 1997), stated that 'the government expects all LEAs to play their part in raising standards' (p. 3). Subsequently, the LEA role has been outlined in the Code of Practice for LEAs (DfEE, 1999), with expectations for monitoring school performance, challenging and intervening in those which underperform. The challenge to provide efficient and focused intervention to schools



where standards and provision were unacceptable was clear. The specific strategies to do so required further consideration.

### **2.1.3 The Local Context**

I was employed as a local authority inspector, assigned to forty primary schools to monitor and support their performance. I was one of a team of ten colleagues with a similar role. We were also trained OFSTED inspectors, and as part of our work undertook inspections for OFSTED with schools that we were not assigned to, either within the county or outside it. Part of the role with the LEA was to initiate development work, and in 1995 the LEA accepted my proposal to develop a school improvement project with primary schools. I took the opportunity to do so as a research project, with a particular aim to explore the effective use of intervention with primary schools. This would also enable me to ensure that the improvement project was conducted in a rigorous manner and could support the LEA in developing methodologies for intervention, which were scant in recent available literature.

The project with the eight schools was underway when the DfEE invited bids, in December 1995, under the then new category of grants for school effectiveness, for funding which would support a small number of LEA-led projects to raise standards in schools. The proposal was welcomed, and a successful bid to the DfEE enabled the project to be developed the following year with a further twenty schools, two of which I selected for more detailed analysis.

This then was the political context in which my research was undertaken. My next concern was to locate my research within the relevant fields of school effectiveness, improvement and change.

## **2.2 The research context**

### **2.2.1 School effectiveness research**

#### **2.2.1.1 Historical development of the research field**

School effectiveness research came about in part as a reaction to the view that the greatest influence on school success was the home background of the child. The school effect, or quality of education provided by a school, was at the time seen to be of less consequence than the socio-economic status of pupils which,

deterministically, defined their progress (Coleman *et al.*, 1966; Jencks *et al.*, 1972). The contextual influences on schools serving severely disadvantaged communities are high, but some schools do better than others serving similar communities (Sammons *et al.*, 1998).

According to Scheerens (1992), the key concerns of the school effectiveness research have been:

- research into equality of opportunity and the significance of the school in this;
- economic studies of education production functions;
- the evaluation of compensatory programmes;
- studies of effective schools and the evaluation of school improvement programmes;
- studies of the effectiveness of teachers and teaching methods.

Early effectiveness research required choices to be made with regard to which pupil outcomes were selected for measuring effectiveness, and whether the focus would be on pupils who underachieved, or on the standards for all pupils (Bliss *et al.*, 1991). The research base, according to Reynolds (1996), includes work on value added comparisons between different educational authorities; comparisons of comprehensive and selective secondary school systems; differential effectiveness between size of school, between departments within schools, contextual effects and the effectiveness upon pupils of different characteristics; and small scale studies focusing upon a selected outcome related to within school processes.

More recent research has focused on the achievements of all pupils and consideration of the stability and consistency of effects over time rather than on snapshots at given points in time (Goldstein *et al.*, 1993, 1995; Thomas *et al.*, 1994; Sammons *et al.*, 1995). The significance of school effects, that is the attribution of variance in pupil achievement to educational influence, has been a key area in suggesting that the size of effects for primary schools may be greater than for secondary (Sammons *et al.*, 1993, 1995). The development of sophisticated research designs which address a range of outcome measures, the extent of the educational effect and the long term impact of schools, the measurement of processes at different levels of the educational

organisation, the particular context of schools, the differences in effectiveness, and the stability and continuity of effects at different levels of the educational system continue to be the focus of attention (Mortimore, 1995; Reynolds *et al.*, 1996; Creemers *et al.*, 1998).

#### **2.2.1.2 Definitions and findings**

An effective school has been defined by Mortimore (1995) as 'a school in which students progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake' (p. 7). School effectiveness essentially centres upon measuring pupil outcomes and quantifying those factors which contribute to the outcomes in reliable and appropriate ways, establishing determinants of effectiveness. The school which is effective will add extra value to its pupils' outcomes, compared with schools which have similar intakes but where progress is less rapid. Mortimore (1998) later suggested that a balance lies somewhere between the potency of the school and the limitations of its social context, a balance difficult to ascertain. The concept of 'value added' has influenced the drive to make more sophisticated but fairer comparisons between schools in relation to the prior attainment of pupils.

Literature reviews of the area (Sammons *et al.*, 1995) provided similar conclusions about the key findings, the central characteristics of the effective schools and their exemplification (Table 2.1). The reviewers pointed out that the characteristics could not be regarded independently of each other and indeed the links between them might give a better understanding of effectiveness mechanisms. Whilst findings, from different countries and using different methods, show a level of congruity, and therefore a likelihood of significance (Mortimore, 1995), they were more useful as a background than as a prescription for effectiveness (Sammons *et al.*, 1997).



Characteristic	Exemplification
1. Professional leadership	Firm and purposeful A participative approach The leading professional
2. Shared vision and goals	Unity of purpose Consistency of practice Collegiality and collaboration
3. A learning environment	An orderly atmosphere An attractive working environment
4. Concentration on teaching and learning	Maximisation of teaching time Academic emphasis Focus on achievement
5. Purposeful teaching	Efficient organisation Clarity of purpose Structured lessons Adaptive practice
6. High expectations	High expectations all round Communicating expectations Providing intellectual challenge
7. Positive reinforcement	Clear and fair discipline Feedback
8. Monitoring Progress	Monitoring pupil performance Evaluating school performance
9. Pupil rights and responsibilities	Raising pupil self esteem Positions of responsibility Control of work
10. Home-school partnership	Parental involvement
11. A learning organisation	School based staff development

*Table 2.1 Key characteristics of effective schools. (Sammons et al., 1995, p. 8)*

### **2.2.1.3 Implications and limitations**

The limitation of these findings is that whilst factors linked with effectiveness are identified, there is no identification of the likely pathways to achieving them. The research provides a 'vision of a more desirable place to be but little insight as to how best to make the journey to that place' (Lezotte, 1989, p. 18). Some of these characteristics may cause effectiveness, and some may be an effect of effectiveness. Effectiveness research has been concerned to 'celebrate the end state of describing what effective schools are actually like rather than a concern to discover what it is that has been done to bring schools to that state' (Stoll and Reynolds, 1997, p. 17).

The factors are also very broad, distilled from a wide range of international and social contexts, from different phases of education, and therefore applicability to specific contexts is problematic.

My initial concern to promote quality in schools which was more than the achievement of higher test results leads to significant concerns about the reliance on academic correlates (Stoll and Mortimore, 1995), rather than social/affective outcomes, and the pre-occupation with school effects rather than classroom processes (Sammons *et al.*, 1995). There is little to illuminate the school and classroom processes which promote academic outcomes together with those social and affective outcomes such as motivation, attitudes, behaviour and self esteem, which may be equally important to supporting the progress pupils make (Feinstein, 2000). Finally scant detail about the role of those external to the school exists: this could not arise as a correlate where it had clearly not been part of the research remit or design. Could these queries be answered within the literature on school improvement?

## **2.2.2 School improvement research**

### **2.2.2.1 Historical development of the research**

School improvement research was initially centred upon initiatives emanating from within schools, such as the teacher as researcher movement (Elliott, 1980, 1981), and the school self evaluation movement (Clift and Nuttall, 1987). Reynolds (1996) gives a rather scathing overview of the early improvement movement as one which believed in schools owning improving ‘attempts’ and tending to celebrate the practical knowledge of practitioners rather than research based knowledge, and as focusing on changes to educational processes rather than school management.

### **2.2.2.2 Definitions and findings**

The definition of school improvement used most widely is:

a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing education goals more effectively.

(van Velzen *et al.*, 1985, p. 48)

which acknowledges the range of organisational aspects within a school and a centrality in linking teaching and learning, or learning conditions, to educational

goals. The link with change and a systematic approach to this is also highlighted. The use of the word 'effort' acknowledges that the process is not always an easy one, but requires the commitment of all in making changes to existing practices. Educational 'goals' suggests a wider view of quality than test results alone. The definition has been developed by Hopkins *et al.* (1994) with one which has a rather different emphasis but is also frequently used:

a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's own capacity for change. School improvement is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching-learning process and the conditions which support it.

(p. 3)

Here again the emphasis is on student achievement and the learning process, not just academic attainment. The supporting roles of relationships and structures, identified in the first definition as 'internal conditions' become more clearly defined as 'the school's own capacity for change'. This is often referred to as the school 'culture' which appears as a key aspect of the process within school improvement.

School improvement strategies, according to Barth (1990) and Fullan (1991), usually fail unless they address the distinctive culture or ethos that is to be found in each school. Joyce (1991) defined five 'doors' to school improvement each of which he claimed, gave an entrance to the culture of the school. These are defined as firstly, collegiality, that is the development of professional relationships between staff which gives evidence of support for the long term vision and goals of the school through upholding the daily tasks and activities which will realise them. Secondly, acquainting staff with relevant research. Thirdly, site specific information through encouraging the collection and interpretation of performance data within the school either through informal or systematic evaluation. Fourthly, curriculum initiatives that introduce change within or across subject areas, and fifthly, instructional initiatives that promote staff development in teaching skills and strategies.

School improvement initiatives often combined more than two of these 'doors'. There are many and widespread examples: the Halton Effective Schools project in Ontario, (Stoll and Fink, 1992), the Improving the Quality of Education for All



(IQEA) project based at the Cambridge Institute of Education, (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994) and The Schools Make a Difference project (Myers, 1995). A range of initiatives continues to be identified through the School Improvement network established by the Institute of Education in London.

In the 1990s research focused on the development from school based review to the process of change, involving the measurement of pupil outcomes and concerning processes at both school and class level. Mortimore (1995) developed Joyce's list of internal doors to include the external ones of inspection, the provision of value added data, quality approaches such as Total Quality Management (TQM) or Investors in People (IIP), national initiatives and local projects. Such projects involve practitioners and experts from outside the school as part of the process. The IQEA project (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994) has been an exemplification of this approach. It emphasises working with practitioners, and supporting the ongoing process of change within a complex organisation. The intervention is one which occurs within and external to the school, that is support balanced with a degree of pressure through encouraging reflection and evaluation. This improvement approach was not about the uncritical implementation of policy, but sought to use the impetus of reform to encourage schools to develop themselves. Reflection and evaluation, based on clear evidence of what works for young people within the school, was encouraged (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994).

The propositions from this research provide a useful starting point for developing work with schools. They were given as:

1. Without a clear focus on the internal conditions of the school, improvement efforts will quickly become marginalised.
2. School improvement will not occur unless clear decisions are made about development and maintenance.
3. School improvement involves adapting external change for internal purposes.
4. School improvement will remain a marginal activity unless it impacts across all the levels of the school.
5. Data about the school's performance creates the energy for development.

6. Successful school improvement efforts engender a language about teaching and change.

The link between school improvement strategies and the culture of the school was seen as crucially important. Hopkins (1996) defined three major components for school improvement: educational givens, a strategic dimension and a capacity building dimension. Existing context and knowledge is made explicit, priorities are defined and strategies for implementation are put in place. The capacities of staff and the school overall are enhanced through the process of improvement. Yet again, the role of those working with the school is implied rather than explicit.

### **2.2.2.3 Implications and limitations**

The criticism of the school improvement field is usually focused on the manner in which theoretical notions have been developed from a range of described projects rather than developed as empirically validated theories. The methodologies used in the literature on school improvement are criticised for showing little systematic testing of improvement theories (Creemers and Reezigt, 1997). Methodologies for analysis show a preference for qualitative rather than quantitative measures (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Much of the literature is descriptive, and the relation of school culture (Hargreaves, 1995), and the change process (Fullan, 1991) to enhancing student outcomes is not always clear. The external change facilitator appears to play a role in school improvement, as shown through the design of projects and the ongoing support and challenge as the process is underway, yet research attention has, in the main, focused on the within school processes. This gap was also identified at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement conference in March 1998. A summary of the final discussion notes that, amongst other aspects for development, was 'the need to focus more on District or LEA influences' (Creemers *et al.*, 1998, p. 131).

## **2.2.3 Links between the school effectiveness and improvement paradigms**

### **2.2.3.1 Historical Context**

There are clear links between the two research fields of effectiveness and improvement: both were concerned with linking theory and research with practice and policy making (Creemers and Reezigt, 1997) but the separation of the two in Britain has been well recorded (Mortimore 1991; Stoll and Fink, 1992; Hopkins *et al.*, 1994). There had been an intellectual reluctance between the two communities to join forces (Reynolds *et al.*, 1993). Literature at the time of the development of the project (Reynolds, 1996; Stoll and Fink, 1996) acknowledged the missed opportunities that occurred where these two important fields of research are applied without reference to each other: greater synergy between them was urged.

The differing perspectives for each tradition do have much to offer each other. Applying the strengths from the other can to some extent, compensate the shortcomings that have been identified for each. School effectiveness research can bring a focus on academic outcomes, the use of data to support decision making, quantitative research methodology and a knowledge of what effectiveness looks like. School improvement research can give insights into the strategies to change schools towards greater effectiveness, bringing a focus on the process, an understanding of contexts, of school culture and its importance, a focus on teaching and a focus on learning, and qualitative research methodologies.

There have been school development and improvement programmes, which do show a growing integration of the two perspectives of effectiveness and improvement research. Reynolds *et al.* (1996) identify several examples where blends of approaches and methods have been successfully and usefully applied. A survey of school improvement initiatives (Barber, 1994) showed that, whilst the aims for these were broadly about school improvement or development, the key foci for improvement were those frequently used within the school effectiveness paradigm, for instance raising standards in literacy or numeracy, under-achievement, assessment and the identification of value added effects.



An interesting separation of the key differences between the two fields is shown by Creemers and Reezight (1997). The divergence (Table 2.2) shows the acceptance of a dynamic nature of focus within school improvement, with a focus on research which accepts, and to a certain extent embraces, the unpredictable nature of the process. The school effectiveness paradigm has an emphasis on stability, and by implication the search to replicate findings elsewhere.

School effectiveness	School improvement
1. Programme for research	Programme for innovation
2. No time limits	Need for immediate action
3. Focus on theory and explanations	Focus on change & problem solving
4. Searching for stable cause and effects	Dealing with changing goals and means
5. Searching for objective knowledge	Dealing with subjective knowledge
6. Strictness in methodology and analysis	Design/development instead of evaluation
7. Focus on student learning/classroom level	Expanding universe of factors/ participants

*Table 2.2 Differences between school effectiveness and improvement. (Creemers and Reezight, 1997, p. 399)*

### **2.2.3.2 Implications for the project**

Whilst I started my work firmly within the improvement paradigm, I moved towards incorporating more of the effectiveness research in the development of the project in its second year, and the work both of the project and its evaluation stemmed from influences between each field. Within the analysis above I was developing a programme for innovation alongside a programme for research. There was a focus on change and problem solving, but additionally I was concerned with evaluation, theory and explanations. I was dealing with changing goals and means, whilst seeking to identify causes and effects, particularly with reference to the intervention aspects of the programme. I would be dealing with subjective information, which would be gathered systematically from a range of participants, and be informed by measures of achievement that might give a level of objectivity. The design of the project and the design of developments within each school would be a central part of the work, with an attempt to bring rigour to the analysis whether undertaken through quantitative or qualitative methodology. There would be an expanding universe of factors and participants, but with a focus on examining the dynamics of the social and micro-political changes linked to the focus on pupil learning and class teaching.

Thus, the approach I pursued derived from the dynamics identified in the improvement field in Table 2.2, and sought to see whether there were some stable cause and effects that could be identified at all the schools as a result of the projects. This led to my considering the research field in school change.

#### **2.2.4 Schools and change**

An ever-developing range of educational reform and innovation (see 2.2) is currently endemic in our society. Bichard, as permanent secretary at the DfEE, wrote in August 1998:

We still have too many people inside education clinging to a system which for most of this century has been expected to select an academic elite and provide only basic education for the majority. We have just reached the base camp of reform. There is still a mountain to climb. (p. 4)

This was a political marker for the agenda of social inclusion, the beginnings of an explicit acknowledgement that all pupils are entitled to an education which ensures most achieve well, that seeks ways of ensuring pupils learn as opposed to seeking reasons as to why they can not. The need to develop a context in which staff can meet priorities for improvement with both improved technical skills but also working within a context that manages change effectively was identified earlier by Fullan (1993). He argued powerfully that the design of better reform strategies would not lead to change, that introducing series of reforms to a system that is basically not organised to engage in change would do nothing but give reform a bad name. His tenet is that if teachers are in the business of making improvements then they will be making improvements in an ever-changing world, and will therefore be contending with and managing change on an ongoing basis. They will therefore need to become skilled change agents. 'If they do ... they will make a difference in the lives of students from all backgrounds and by doing so help produce greater capacity in society to cope with change' (p. 5).



### **2.2.4.1 Change processes**

Productive educational change, according to Pascale (1990), roams between overcontrol and chaos. Fullan (1993) argued that the process is exceedingly complex, and full of paradoxes which are dynamically interdependent. The early difficulties in effecting change were in part a result of seeing change as an event rather than as a process. This gave insufficient attention to the tiers of implementation within a school, particularly at classroom level. Huberman (1992) summarised the issue ‘if changes in organisational and instructional practices are not followed down to the level of effects on pupils, we will have to admit more openly that we are essentially investing in staff development rather than in the improvement of pupils’ abilities’ (p. 11).

Successful change therefore needs to address the different levels of school organisation, to fulfil the intent to improve pupil achievement, to facilitate teachers in adapting to changes in a positive manner, to manage complex and interdependent pressures competing for attention, and to take place over time. Hopkins *et al.* (1994) identified that the following features will be involved:

- changes in the structure and organisation of the school;
- changes in teaching materials;
- teachers acquiring new knowledge;
- teachers adopting new behaviours;
- changes in beliefs or values on the part of some teachers.

(p. 25)

These features emphasise the central role of teachers although each teacher is likely to have a different perspective and different realities about their priorities. The distinctions between adoptive and adaptive models of change are useful here (Hopkins, 1984). Adoptive change is seen as an hierarchically imposed, top down procedure, linear in fashion and motivated by an authority figure. Here more value appears given to the teacher as a technician, rather than as a professional making choices and judgements within the classroom. This approach to educational change



has not proved overly successful (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994). Wise (1977) argues that even if schools had goals which are clearly set out, strategies for implementation stated, and evaluation procedures defined, change would still be limited because, as a social institution, schools are not always operating in a rational vacuum. Expecting that they should fails to acknowledge the importance of the existing culture, the ebb and flow of a daily life with changes of external pressures and at times disagreement over priorities. This relates to Joyce's (1991) view and implies that opening the door to improvement may mean more radical social shifts. The model, which enables this to be embraced rather than ignored, is an adaptive model of change (Hopkins *et al.* 1994). It is developed from Skilbeck's (1984) original outline of a model with five stages: situational analysis, goal formulation, programme building, interpretation and implementation and lastly monitoring, feedback, assessment and reconstruction. In this model plans for implementation are not static, but incorporate processes of innovation. Attention to interpretation, and to the outcomes of monitoring, feedback and assessment leading to reconstruction indicate responsiveness to the context of the school, incorporated within an adaptive process that does not relinquish its original intent. This process links to and expands the three overlapping phases of initiation, implementation and institutionalization identified by Miles (1986, Figure 2.1).

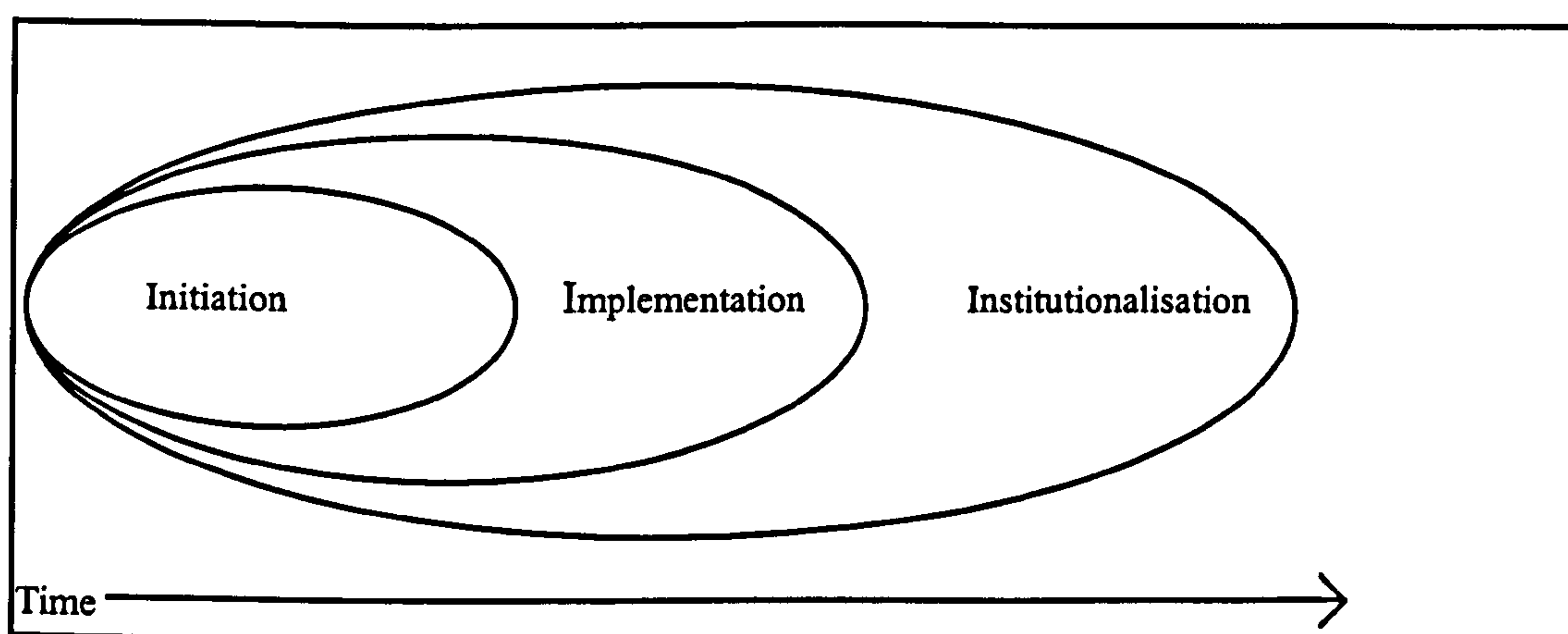


Figure 2.1 The three overlapping phases of the change process (Miles *et al.* (1986), p. 36 in Hopkins *et al.*, 1994).

Miles identifies associated facilitating activities for each phase, each of which is linked to the context and culture of the school. Hopkins *et al.* (1994) suggest that it is lack of attention to these aspects which can additionally thwart change efforts.

Hopkins argues that the historical emphasis on the implementation phase has been disadvantageous; that overall greater attention is given to the first two stages as opposed to the final stage of institutionalisation, when the impact of change can most legitimately be claimed as the initiative becomes integrated into the normal ways of working of the school.

<p><b><u>Initiation.</u></b>          Linked to a local agenda and local need          Well structured approach          An active advocate who understands and supports the innovation          Active initiation to start the innovation          Good quality innovation</p> <p><b><u>Implementation.</u></b>          Clear responsibility for co-ordination          Shared control over implementation – good cross hierarchical work and relations          A mix of pressure and support          Adequate and sustained staff development and in-service support          Rewards for teachers early in the process (help, resources, supply cover for example)</p> <p><b><u>Institutionalisation</u></b>          An emphasis on embedding the change within the school's structures, organisation and resources          Elimination of competing or contradictory practices          Strong links to other change efforts          Widespread use in the school          A bank of local facilitators</p>
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*Table 2.3. Key factors for successful change at each of Miles' (1987) phases of change. Derived from Hopkins et al. (1994) pp. 37-38.*

As a result of the implications of this argument for the project, I examined the text to identify the factors which Hopkins suggested needed to accompany each of Miles' phases of change (Table 2.3). This could give me access into the elements of intervention which supported these phases.

#### **2.2.4.2 The importance of involvement**

Embedding changes, or rather the capability to manage change was identified as one of the goals of the project. Strategic planning for change needed to promote the most positive outcomes for implementation. Involving staff and others in the planning process was found by MacGilchrist *et al.* (1995), in relation to school development planning, to be important.



In their research development plans were differentiated according to the extent of shared ownership, purpose, leadership and management of the process. Plans and their processes were found to lead to different outcomes, from least effective to greatest impact:

- the *rhetorical* plan lacked ownership and purpose, was not a working document and the involvement of teachers was minimal. There was no link with resourcing or training. It led to teacher frustration and disillusionment as well as a distanced headteacher;
- the *singular* plan was led by the head alone. Used to improve management and efficiency, with little staff involvement and no linked resourcing and training it had little impact on pupils or indeed staff;
- the *co-operative* plan emphasised efficiency, effectiveness and teacher's own development; finance and training were linked; little monitoring and evaluation were identified; some impact on classrooms, organisation and management but little impact on pupils;
- the *corporate* plan involved staff and others. An open working document which emphasised teaching and learning, effectiveness and efficiency; finance and training were linked to the plans which were monitored and evaluated. This type of plan improved pupils' learning and there was evidence of increased learning as a community between staff.

This research indicated that the most effective planning for change addresses the focus for change, yet accommodates planning for a range of innovation at different levels, taking into account the complex nature of the organisation and its culture, and involving the community of the school.

#### **2.2.4.3 Perspectives on change**

In analysing change, perspectives are most commonly represented through the use of interrelated organisational groupings. House (1979) identified three major perspectives, the technological, the cultural and the political. The biographical perspective was identified additionally by Blenkin *et al.* (1997) as operating within structural and the socio-historical perspectives. In defining my own analysis of



change within the schools, I needed to decide the representation I would be using. This involved an understanding of the values behind each view.

The technological perspective conceptualises change as a planned, logical and systematic approach (Blenkin *et al.*, 1997). It is connected with centralised approaches to curriculum and educational change. This perspective promotes change through a linear model of defining new action to address a problem, informed through the application of theories and techniques from the empirical sciences (Schon, 1983). I related this to the development of technical skills of both pupils and teachers.

The cultural perspective emphasises the social setting of change and the interpretation of change by teachers. In this perspective the norms, values and beliefs held by those working within the school and the process by which these adapt and alter in order to assimilate innovation is made explicit. Change is promoted through developing a collaborative approach (Liebermann and Miller, 1990) and to the examination of practices and their consequences (Little, 1990). I related this to the social dimensions of change between staff.

The micro-political perspective conceptualises the process of change within a school as concerned with the power relationships within and between groups within the school, both informal and formal channels of power (Little, 1990; Blase 1991). Whilst it does not provide an approach to change it provides an awareness of the different power and influence bases within the organisation, and the difficulties of uniting factions in order to pursue a common goal. I related this to the power and influence of those with positions of responsibility within the school, in particular headteachers and senior managers.

The micro-political level often, according to Blase (1991), interacts with the macro-political level. Whilst I did not examine the macro-political level within the analysis of the data and for the purposes of my research, there were rich seams of its influence. National changes, such as the external inspection work of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), and local political changes, such as the relationship between the LEA and schools, impacted on the work of the schools and

therefore the research outcomes. Whilst these are acknowledged, the focus of my research was the processes within the schools.

The biographical perspective emphasises the way in which change impinges on the experiences of the individuals within the school, their life history and their careers. The perspective is directly related to the career cycle of teachers and how their personal lives both influence and are influenced by this (Huberman 1988). This perspective has been viewed through a structural perspective which considers schools within their wider contexts of economic, social and political structures. Class size, resources and parental expectation (Ball, 1991) are directly influenced by national policy. The socio-historical perspective is linked to the process of curriculum change (Goodson, 1981), and has been used to examine the origins of subjects within the curriculum and the social hierarchies linked to being associated with the teaching of a particular subject (Goodson, 1987).

Each of these perspectives standing alone offers a valuable viewpoint from which to consider the change process, although each on its own has limitations. The technological perspective is pervaded by a rational view of the world. Although it places the change within a wider political context, it is limited by a failure to acknowledge the impact of features of school culture and the importance of school organisation. The cultural perspective is concerned with the social setting of the change, and is a facet of the adaptive model of change (2.2.4.1). It has clear relevance to this research although it omits aspects of the wider context of the school. The political perspective provides some useful insights about the difficulties associated with change and the culture of the school. The biographical perspective focuses on the experiences of individual teachers, and offers more insight into the detail of improvement, although it is a perspective which I shall not pursue for this study.

Thus I decided to use a combination of the technical, social and political perspectives of change as a framework for exploring the process of improvement.

### **2.2.5 Schools as learning organisations**

Within this framework I would want to explore the development of the social and cultural aspects. The project aimed to develop each school's own capacity for



change, the ability to sustain improvements for themselves, without continued external support. Garratt (1987) made the point that, for any organisation to survive, the rate of learning within the organisation needs to equal the pace of change in the external environment. This implies a school becoming what Handy (1991) defined a learning organisation, that is, an organisation which learns and encourages learning in its people. Rosenholtz (1989) referred to schools which were learning enriched. Barth (1990) took this further, in a statement, which reflected the basis of the analysis I wanted to follow:

A school as a community of learners is the 'coat-rack' on which are hung many supporting components and to which all other pieces are fastened. There is much talk these days about the importance of student achievement, of teachers' staff development, and of principals' professional growth as if all these people inhabit different planets. A good school for me is a place where everyone is teaching and learning - simultaneously, under the same roof ... Principals, teachers, students and parents working together can create within their schools an ecology of reflection, growth and refinement of practice - a community of learners.

(p. 162)

Rosenholtz (1989) contrasted the learning of teachers with the effectiveness of the school. She identified 'stuck' schools, where there was low commitment, isolation and where learning was impoverished, with 'moving' schools where there was a high level of collaboration and commitment, and where learning was enriched. Hopkins *et al.* (1994) devised a typology of school culture (Figure 2.2) through aligning the process of improvement with the level of effectiveness.

In this diagram the process of improvement ranges from static to dynamic. The level of effectiveness ranges from ineffective to effective. Where a static school has ineffective performance, then it is described as 'stuck'. If the dimension of effectiveness is higher with the school still static, then a school that is 'promenading' is described. The combined dimensions of dynamic processes but ineffective performance are defined as a 'wandering' school, whilst the optimum combination is that of effectiveness with dynamism. The authors write:

The moving school is an ideal type of active school which has achieved a healthy blend of change and stability, and balanced development and



maintenance. Internally the school is relatively calm as it adapts successfully to an often rapidly changing environment. It adapts its structures in line with its culture and traditions, and staff are often heard to say that ‘we try to keep abreast of developments and everything under review’ (p. 91).

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Ineffective</b>	<b>Effective</b>
<b>Process</b>		
<b>Dynamic</b>	‘wandering’	‘moving’
<b>Static</b>	‘stuck’	‘promenading’

Figure 2.2 Four expressions of school culture. (Hopkins et al. 1994 p. 91)

Stoll and Fink (1996) developed these ideas further, using the dimensions of effectiveness - ineffectiveness, and improving - declining. The effective and improving school in their model was described as ‘moving’ as opposed to the ‘sinking’ school which was both ineffective and declining. In the ‘moving school’ people worked together to respond to their changing context and to keep developing. In the ‘sinking’ school ineffectiveness was additionally accompanied by staff who were not prepared or able to change.

Stoll and Fink (1996) wrote: ‘while the outcomes of the educational process must be pupil progress, development and achievement, a crucial contributor to pupil learning is teacher learning’ (p. 152). An important aspect of school culture which sustains quality teaching and is a key characteristic of the moving school is that of collaboration (Rosenholtz, 1989; Little, 1990; Fullan 1991). Wallace and Louden (1994) suggest that the pre-conditions for success in any program are to be found, not in the qualities of the program, but in the qualities of collaboration, a view affirming those of Nias *et al.* (1989) that collaborative cultures are based upon beliefs about desirable relationships between individuals as much as beliefs about practice. It is the

impact of a collaborative culture over time which can have the effect of catalysing teachers to extend the boundaries of their practices.

#### **2.2.5.1 Teachers as learners**

A learning organisation suggests a community of teachers, yet each teacher will approach learning with different motivations, skills and understandings. There are fundamental differences between adults as learners, such as the factors of career development (Huberman 1988), and the influence of both age and gender (Sikes, 1992).

Studies of teachers' responses to initiatives for improvement found that, where these were not addressing the core of teaching and learning (Hart and Murphy, 1990; Baker *et al.*, 1991), they discouraged all teachers, but in particular those with greatest commitment. Teachers were adversely affected by piecemeal or superficial improvement initiatives. Where new tasks were connected to core teaching tasks or contributed to quality instruction and learning activities, then these initiatives were found to be more fulfilling and increased teachers' commitment to the initiatives.

Moore (1988) offered useful guidelines for facilitating teacher development where she proposed that opportunities should:

- be collaborative, involving participants in diagnosing needs and designing opportunities to address them;
- help learners achieve self direction through deciding their preferred learning methods;
- capitalise on their experiences, particularly as starting points;
- cultivate critical and reflective thinking, helping participants to confront their assumptions;
- foster learning for action, such as strategic planning;
- encourage problem posing and solving, closely related to real problems;
- encourage a climate of respect between facilitators and participants.



### **2.2.6. Intervention**

This research basis gave a clear indication about style and content of a programme of intervention as well as indications for the basis of the research on changes as a result of the intervention. The research basis on the role of the LEA, interventionists or external consultants, in supporting schools is not widely ranging in recent years.

#### **2.2.6.1. The role of the LEA**

A project funded by the Rowntree Foundation focused on the functioning of local government, and identified education as having encountered the most radical changes (Cordingley and Kogan, 1993). It tackled the question 'do schools require any entity beyond themselves in order to perform their functions' (p. 9). The authors concluded that:

some external source of advice which can promote improvement and innovation is seen as necessary. Furthermore, without some entity beyond the school, small and isolated schools and schools that needed help but were unlikely to seek it, ought to have a continuing source of guided support.

(p. 95)

Central government had argued that there should be a strengthening of existing mechanisms of quality assurance. That quality assurance, argued an Audit Commission report in 1989, can come only as a result of professional monitoring (inspection) and measures to secure improvement also require a 'detached professional input' (1989, p. 1). In a study on the role of the LEA in the light of OFSTED's remit for inspection, Riley (1994) found four approaches to promoting quality from the outside, on a continuum from interventionist, interactive, responsive and non-interventionist. These reflected historical traditions and perspectives as well as the new context and power-relationships between LEA and schools. The research identified that LEAs were keen to develop partnerships with schools rather than adhere to a paternalistic role. Similarly, headteachers who had remained within their LEAs, as opposed to moving to the grant maintained basis which had been available to them giving independence from the LEA, expected some benefits from that decision: they identified support, particularly on management issues, and a level of proactivity from their LEA. This approach was endorsed as one which promoted empowered schools, in the Audit Commission's (1998) identification of four



conceptual models of the styles of LEA relationships with schools. The traditionalist LEA was controlling and disempowering; the minimalist LEA was laissez faire but empowered its schools; the enabling LEA was reactive and empowering; and the partnership LEA was proactive and empowering. The models overlap and blur, but the view that partnership is a two way process, where the effective LEA proactively promotes opportunities for development is reinforced. This involves both intervention and consultancy.

#### **2.2.6.2 The role of the external interventionist**

Havelock (1979) outlined the range of consultant roles which were effective: solution giver; resource linker; catalyst and process helper. Fullan (1991) stressed the importance of external consultants not only providing good information but additionally ensuring that there is support for that information and its implementation, the 'process helper' referred to by Havelock (1979). Rudduck (1991) argued that an external consultant can support focused professional dialogue in a school and support the challenge of assumptions, whilst building teachers' confidence, presumably acting as the catalyst within Havelock's (1979) elements. Mixed response to the work of consultants exists in the literature. There have been reports from practitioners expressing dissatisfaction with both the attitude of consultants and the content of their work (Marsh, 1988). Comber and Hancock (1987) reported on the ineffective top down approach used by consultants working with plans conceived outside the school which disempowered teachers rather than facilitated improvement. More productive work has been reported in Houston, (1990) where it is noted that an outsider can help to clarify expectations, coach teachers and monitor the match between resources and the planning and implementation of the curriculum. Specific activities, which teachers acknowledged as having a beneficial impact on the quality of their leadership within an improvement project, were identified by Ainscow and Southworth (1996). The five categories they identified were:

- pushing thinking forward;
- framing the issues;
- encouraging partnerships;

- providing incentives;
- modelling ways of working.

These provided a useful alignment with elements of the project. Each of these categories could be related to the range of activities planned within the projects and with which external professionals would engage. Perhaps the most nebulous was the provision of incentives, if these are interpreted as practical rewards. Incentives in the spirit of encouragement or the provision of resources such as time and practical equipment might act as an incentive, but there were no material incentives for those participating.

The power of collecting data or evidence and using it for further development and dialogue was emphasised by Learmouth and Lowers (1998) in their work with both primary and secondary schools. The concept of dialogue ‘involves holding a reflective mirror to a belief system, allowing a collegial exploration’ (Macbeath, 1998). This relates to the challenging of assumptions in Moore’s work (1988) and would be a key development in the collection and sharing of data in my project.

### **2.2.6.3 Characteristics of effective consultants**

Some studies have revealed successful characteristics associated with the role of external consultancy. It is linked to the concept of critical friend. This person is external but has those internal at heart; a role which is comfortable but challenging, challenging but not necessarily threatening (Hopkins, 1989). Lovat and Smith (1990) listed the characteristics of empathy; homophily; credibility and dedication. Olson (1980) stressed the importance of consultants appreciating that proposals would be interpreted differently by different teachers while the view that consultants need to understand and be sensitive to the specific culture of the school is emphasised in three studies (Nias, 1989; Ainscow and Southworth, 1996; Learmouth and Lowers, 1998). Murdoch and Johnson (1997) gave six guiding principles for the ‘delicate and complex’ role of outsiders working with schools:

- acknowledgement of the uniqueness of school culture and context;
- the locus of control is the school;



- the outsider's stance should be personal and interactive;
- the quality and quantity of involvement is linked to getting to know and being known by the participants;
- the consultant should work for the development of participants' personal knowledge and skills;
- an awareness of potential dangers and obstacles such as dependency, lack of clarity.

Other characteristics involve certain skills. Present in the literature is an acknowledgement that many of the activities undertaken by a consultant will involve difficult moments, such as brokering new awareness which may be unwelcome. This implies that the consultant will have a range of inter-personal skills which will include a high degree of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996) as well as technical intelligence, and which are linked to the skills of counselling (Macbeath, 1998).

#### **2.2.6.4 Links to the project**

In the school improvement project that I designed, the contribution of the assigned inspector would be significant, although to attribute school improvement or the lack of it to that particular element would be impossible. However, the design of the research would allow further exploration of the key activities, and those characteristics and skills which were found by a range of participants to promote their development.

I therefore needed to define the phases of the project, over the long term of initiation, implementation and institutionalisation and consider each of the elements within those phases (reference to 4.1). I needed to use the 'door' of data and involve staff in both considering this and in shaping the detail of the action to follow. The importance of ensuring that the context of each school was considered and explicit had been identified. This related to the context in terms of the current performance of pupils and the scope for improvement, and the context in terms of the current social dimensions of the staff relationships and where these supported or blocked progress. The promotion of collaboration would need to be engendered within the activities of the project. The promotion of micro-political structures linked to management and



engagement of those responsible for driving the school forward would also need to be considered. The support for technical developments, by identifying external facilitators or networking expertise, was important and I would need to ensure mechanisms and provision for this. I would need to encourage the establishment of strategies which would inform schools of the progress they, or their pupils, were making.

The roles of those working with the schools would need to be defined for each stage of the project process, within the role of process helpers. In order to do this the climate of respect, for building on what is already working well within schools and for ensuring that the level of personal expertise was both relevant and high, and linked to the needs of the school, would need to be considered.

Additionally, I needed to align my research methodology with each of the elements of the project to assess whether the changes in technical, social and micro-political dimensions of the schools had been supported by the intervention which occurred. Intervention as an act 'so as to modify or prevent a result' (Brown, 1993, p. 1401) suggests an act which leads to action which otherwise would not have occurred. My focus was both the impact on the schools of their involvement with the project, but additionally 'process helper's' key qualities and activities, and whether these were enhancing the school's ability to pursue higher achievements, in terms of their goals for pupils and their ability to realise these.

In the next chapter I shall develop the rationale for the framework for my research and which underpins the research methodology I framed to reflect the purposes of my research.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Rationale and frameworks**

#### **Introduction**

In structuring my enquiries located in a research project I needed to establish the framework within which it would be set. In the previous chapter I considered the research basis for educational change and school effectiveness and improvements, and the implications for developing the project which would be the basis for my enquiries about school improvement and intervention. This chapter details how I developed my research questions into a research process. Whilst the development of the project needed to answer the research questions:

- how can the research findings about school effectiveness and school improvement be used to improve schools?
- how can schools be supported in managing a culture where review and development are promoted?
- how best can the use of assigned inspectors and external help be used to enable schools to sustain new understandings and expectations in the drive to improve a specific aspect of educational provision and to raise standards of pupil achievement?

These questions were underpinned by my objectives to access the perceptions of those working in the schools to assess how best intervention supported improvement, and were therefore to:

- develop a strategy for support for the improvement of learning in schools
- identify the sequence of change related to intervention
- establish methods for data gathering and assessing the culture of schools
- establish methods for data gathering and assessing the management of the micro-political dimensions of schools
- identify the activities and associated expertise and skills of intervention linked to the sequence for improvement



### **3.1 Defining the paradigm**

The challenge, as Robson (1995) states, of 'seeking to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally messy situation' (p. 3), relates to the assumptions I am making about conducting this research. In particular my research is based on a view that I will gain valuable insights from the perspectives of a range of individuals within the project. I am therefore assuming that individuals have perspectives on their experiences which are meaningful and considered, that I will be able to gain access to these, and that through my research I will be able to develop further insights into them.

These assumptions indicated the framework within which the research would be based. Chalmers (1982) proposed that the conceptual scheme adopted by researchers to make sense of the world governs the observations they make, the way these observations are classified and the way in which the selection of what is relevant is made. Kuhn (1970) introduced the notion of a scientific paradigm which governs a scientist's view of the world. The assumptions made by a researcher can be taken for granted and may not necessarily be explicit in the writing (Hammersley, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1994), defined a paradigm as 'a set of basic beliefs that deal with ultimates or first principles ... it represents a world view' (p. 107), arguing that once the researcher defines the paradigm that informs the research, the assumptions upon which it is based and the reasons for choosing it become clear.

There is a further rationale behind requiring researchers to articulate the perspective from which they approach their material (Wilkinson, 1988), which is to provide the linkages within the research process. Paradigmatic assumptions provide the framework which leads to the inter-relatedness of the research process (Earls, 1986). Gilbert (1993) identified three major ingredients in social research: the construction of theory, the collection of data and the design of methods for collecting the data. If the research is to yield interesting results, each of these has to be aligned. The consensus amongst researchers (Bryman, 1984) is that the link between philosophical assumptions and



technical design gives the research coherence and consistency. Research techniques then reflect the researcher's theoretical construction and perceptions (Popkewitz, 1984).

Different paradigms consider the social world in different ways. For inductivists, at a naïve level, the basis of scientific knowledge is provided by observations made by an unprejudiced and unbiased observer (Chalmers, 1982). Chalmers uses the example of drawings which can be interpreted by different observers as representing different realities, such as the drawings of Escher. Two observers viewing the same object, from the same place under the same physical circumstances do not necessarily have identical visual experiences. The observers may see the same thing, but not necessarily have identical perceptual experiences. If, Chalmers argues, this is the case in the visual world, then it can equally be the case in the perception of the social world. Whilst social research involves theories, data indicators and theory testing, that is a culture of social science (Gilbert, 1993), these are guided by disciplines (Becker, 1992) which take everyday questioning, noticing and re-examining into a more systematic and rigorous mode. Additionally:

... the researcher has a goal larger than the solution of an immediate, individual problem. She or he wants to articulate essential insights into the phenomenon, ones that can be understood, recognized and used by others. The researcher's purpose is to provide a tangible and penetrating overview of the phenomenon that evokes the reader's life experience of it.

(p. 31)

Individual researchers will embark on the process with their own range of values and perceptual predispositions developed from past experiences and current interactions. Paradigms will not provide rules which the researcher must be bound by, but provide examples of:

... good practice ... and scientists themselves determine how the model is to be pursued ... scientists do not merely have to agree what should serve as the basis

of their work, they also have to agree how it should serve their purpose ... they are obliged to employ a paradigm much as a judge employs an accepted judicial decision.

(Barnes, 1991, p. 88)

The reasons for clarifying the paradigmatic issues are threefold. Each paradigm has a particular emphasis in the way the social world is examined. A fuller understanding of the area under study is enabled through greater exploration, and the study is likely to have an integrity which allows coherence between the research processes. The identification of the particular paradigm within which my research sits, and the issues that are related to its use follows.

### **3.2 A family of approaches**

Kuhn (1970) challenged traditional research where underlying assumptions led to insufficient representation of the social world. Three of these implicit assumptions were identified by Scott and Usher (1996). They are firstly that the world is objective and orderly, secondly that there is a distinction between fact and values, that is the researcher can make objective discoveries which are value free, and thirdly that there is order and reason in the social world. Within the interpretative approach which forms the overarching paradigm for my research these assumptions are challenged: the emphasis is on the importance of individual viewpoints, with personal experience as the focus and the starting point for the analysis (Weber, 1949). It allows for the unpredictability and the complexity of the context for my research.

The interpretative paradigm is a broad one and covers a range of research traditions, including semiotics, ethnomethodology, constructivism and hermeneutics, of which most utilise a qualitative research methodology. When discussing qualitative research a number of paradigmatic labels are used to capture the essence of the approach. Two of these, constructivism and interpretism, are discussed by Schwandt (1994):



Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live in it. This goal is variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, from the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actors' definition of a situation, for verstehen.

(p. 181)

The characterising traits of the interpretative approach are description, interpretation, self reflection and critical analysis (Van Manen, 1990). At the heart is the:

belief that individuals are not merely passive vehicles in a social, political and historical affairs but have certain inner capabilities which can allow for individual judgements, perceptions and decision making - autonomy. Possession of such capabilities, it is assumed, can contribute to, influence, or even change events.

(Garrick, 1999, p. 149)

The assumptions that underpin this are fivefold and challenge those of Scott and Usher (1996). Firstly that there is an interdependence between cause and effect, rather than a direct causal relationship between phenomena; events, processes and factors impinge on each other. Rules of interaction are not hard and fast, not inviolable (Giroux, 1983), but agreed and consequently validated through actions. Secondly, that the research aims to understand individual cases, to give description and expressions of lived experience, rather than generalisations claiming predictability (Van Manen, 1990). Thirdly that the fragmentation of experience is best avoided in order to recognise the importance of the context in which experience occurs (Swindler, 2000) and that the organisational context (Ball, 1991) will yield rich sources for data. Lastly, that the researcher will have a value system which will influence the conduct of the research. Complete objectivity about reality is unattainable, because the researcher will make sense of their experience through their own social constructions of reality.



Whilst each approach within the interpretative paradigm has particular emphases and variations, common to them all is a view that researchers are no more detached than those they are studying and that those studied will in turn create their social world through an inter-subjective process. Reality here is socially constructed by individuals in response to the contexts of time and place. Reality becomes 'the things people did and said and thought rather than some kind of abstract system that was somehow greater than the sum of its parts' (Ball, 1991, p. 168). A dominant theme within such research is the search for understandings of linguistic meaning within oral material transposed into text. Diverse perspectives can provide a fuller understanding of the social, psychological phenomena. The onus, says Madill *et al.* (2000), is to make the relationship between the researcher and the material clear, and to ground analysis in the participants' own accounts. This answers the criticism that the explication of meaning requires a certain level of inference and 'studies can be criticized for the space they afford the subjectivity of the researcher' (Madill *et al.*, 2000, p. 1). Nevertheless, contextualist analysis accepts the inevitability of bringing one's personal and cultural perspectives to bear on the research project. In fact, Madill argues, the empathy provided by a shared humanity and a common cultural understanding can be both an important bridge between researcher and participant, and a valuable analytical resource.

### **3.3 The researcher's role**

The researcher is central to the research process, with a unique role in establishing the focus for and parameters of the researched. In order to do this contacts are established and agreements reached to enable the research to take place. Researchers organise the collection of the material and then 'understand, record, gain insight and interpret the data collected' (Arsenault and Anderson, 1998, p. 134). Within social research researchers participate in the realities of the researched (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), whilst they are 'always the medium through which research occurs; there is not method or technique for doing research other than through the medium of the researcher' (Stanley and Wise, 1983, p. 157). The influence of the researcher's own likely biases must be declared. Nelson (1996) wrote 'strong objectivity, or objectivity that does not degenerate into 'objectivism' is based not on an illusion of detachment, but rather on a recognition

of one's own various attachments and on the partiality this location lends to one's views.' (p. 48). It is the level of self-reflection, the ability to challenge personal preconceptions and to acknowledge personal prejudices which enables the researcher to put these to one side when collecting evidence, through a heightened awareness of when they might encroach. 'The researcher must use that knowledge she has ... not wasting time trying to eliminate 'investigator effects'; instead she should concentrate on understanding those effects' (Delamont, 1992, p. 8). It is this concept of reflexivity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) which, applied through all the stages of the process of the research, makes acceptable the use of the researcher's expertise to interpret the environment on which the enquiry is based.

As a researcher of an educational setting trying to interpret the effects of interventions I had planned, but not delivered, I was no newcomer to the type of settings in which I was researching. I was also aware that I needed to develop the reflexivity to guard against bias in my interpretations. The usefulness of my own expertise and experience became apparent through my reading of criticisms of early ethnographic studies which suggest that findings might be invalid due to an insufficient understanding of the language in use, and the researcher's own cultural determinism obscuring her interpretations of a strange culture (Freeman, 1983). Some epistemologists suggest a thorough local acquaintance is necessary for good fieldwork (Campbell, 1975). However, Cibulka (1994) points out the flaws of policy analyses which are usually undertaken by those who have an interest in generating policy relevant knowledge. By providing an analysis which was grounded 'in the self understanding of the actors' (Fay, 1975), using a semi-structured interview approach, and through using a wide sample of participants I sought to strengthen the evidential base for the analysis.

Additionally, it was important that I made explicit to participants the way in which my role, as a local authority inspector with overall responsibility for initiating and sustaining the project on school improvement, aligned to my role as a researcher (3.3.3; 4.1.1). I emphasised that my stance would be non-judgemental, and that I ensured confidentiality and anonymity. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) give examples where social and



personal networks are used to gain access and stress their significance, with the implication that this is an acceptable strategy. My research was accessed through formal routes. Permission was sought both from the education authority, and from the schools and the participants who agreed to be a focus for the research. Whilst this permission was formal, there was also the informal permission (Arsenault and Anderson, 1998) of access to groups of children from teachers, or access to the headteacher through the secretary.

The process of access could have presented a problem for me in the search to gain reliable responses. My own status may have been an advantage in gaining access to the areas of senior management in the schools (Burgess, 1989), but it may have been a restraint for the open contributions of some staff. The issue of power, particularly within interviewing, is a recognition that the relationship between the researcher and the researched is both political and social (Limerick *et al.*, 1996). The exercise of power, suggests Street (1998), is a central interest of critical research and 'as such the structure and ongoing negotiation of the research relationships are continually in the spotlight' (p. 150). Whilst my experience and knowledge gave me credibility within the field, it additionally enabled me to explore avenues of accepted wisdom and whether these matched the experience of the researched. The principles of openness, confidentiality and anonymity were made clear to participants, combined with a respect for their consent in providing me with data, and a level of compromise and negotiation within the interview process. Negotiated timing and setting for interviews were always sought. Additionally, the purpose and procedures of the research were made clear to all participants at the various stages of data collection. The acceptance of the time, the text and the understandings that interviewees gave was treated as a gift (Limerick *et al.*, 1996), acknowledging the reality that their contributions were in fact an act of valued generosity. Participants might additionally gain from the process of reflection with an outsider, clarifying and articulating their understandings.

The concept of integrity in the research (Grace, 1998) enables the 'disinterestedness as involving knowledge constructed independently of interest groups or of the prior

agendas of political and funding agencies' (Skeggs, 1994, p. 75). This can be achieved through aspiring to a principle of soundness in methodological procedures and analytical processes, with a balanced consideration of the claims, alongside seeking a comprehensiveness of research contexts.

The identification of the paradigm for my research as that of an interpretative approach, and my examination of my role as a researcher within that paradigm gives a broad outline of my overarching assumptions and answers some of the criticisms of such an approach. Phenomenological aspects were applied as the tools of the process, with consideration of aspects of the interpretation.

### **3.4 Phenomenology**

The phenomenological approach relates to a focus on the experiences of individuals rather than the description of external or physically described realities. It is a research method for 'mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people conceptualise, perceive and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them' (Marton, 1988, p. 144). Whilst 'phenomenologists study situations in the everyday world from the viewpoint of the experiencing person' (Becker, 1992, p. 7), it is not a discipline with a rigid approach. I framed my research within a perspective where a plurality of perceptions is seen as enabling deeper perspectives than those located in singular discourses (Garrick, 1999). The understandings of experiences as described by the participants in the research context enabled the identification of the dominant characteristics in the data. This then enables the life world of the individuals to be described (Schutz, 1970). From these are developed the overall framework within which the range of categories of understanding and experience exist.

In phenomenology the participants' construction of their realities is accessed through listening to their accounts. It is the content of their thinking, that is 'the illumination of intersubjective human experiences by describing the essence of the subjective experience' (Tesch, 1990, p. 51), which is the focus. The causes of social action are linked to the ways in which individuals interpret the events around them, and therefore



the research needs to access the shared meanings and interpretations of these individuals. The insider perspective of the impact of intervention is co-created through the interactions, the communications and the relationships which together provide a common framework for interpretation (Schutz and Luckman, 1974).

My research would use elements of this approach, but I wanted to develop the categorisation of these understandings of realities. If I was to embrace a phenomenological perspective I would need to be reflexive (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) and become aware of those preconceived ideas or constructs of my own which might get in the way of uncovering conceptions and common threads between participants. This second order perspective is one associated with phenomenography, which does not 'describe things as they are, nor discuss whether they can or can not be described as they are, rather seeks to characterise how things appear to people' (Marton, 1988, p. 146). In order to develop themes of understandings I could not be completely non-directive when interviewing. There were certain questions which I would need to refine in order to focus my enquiry. Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that such an approach is a reasonable and pragmatic one for the researcher who is working within given timespans and within phenomena which have already been studied, and suggest that 'tighter designs are a wise course for researchers working with well-delineated constructs ... and provide clarity and focus for beginning researchers worried about diffuseness and overload' (p. 17). I wanted to place my research between the dimensions of a prestructured design and an emergent one. I would have background knowledge and theoretical insights which could help focus my tasks.

These common experiences, where individuals experience similar situations, imply interactions between people which could influence the outcomes of those situations and the actions which people chose to take, or the individual interpretations of the situation. 'Interactionists focus on the world of subjective meanings and the symbols by which they are produced and represented. This means not making any prior assumptions about what is going on in an institution, and taking seriously, indeed giving priority to, inmates' own accounts' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 33). Whilst phenomenological

perspectives ensure a focus on the individual, this perspective adds the dynamic dimensions of those activities taking place between people. As the process unfolded these would include those shared activities between pupils and teachers, between teachers and teachers, between senior managers and the managed, within the schools. This is a conception of the organisation of a school which is the product of multiple social interactions, such as described by Ball (1991) where 'realities lay in the things people did and said and thought rather than in some kind of abstract system that was somehow greater than the sum of its parts' (p. 168).

### **3.5 The context for experience**

The context for a phenomenon can act both as a resource and a constraint upon the powerful personal experience narratives educators tell (Swindler, 2000). Case study, whether described as a bounded system or an instance in action, recognises the context in which the personal experiences are embedded and 'aspires to describe and analyse the processes by which and the conditions in which innovations are implemented' (Simmons, 1989, p. 115). The focus on particular schools suggested case study methodology: 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Robson, 1995, p. 52). There is little agreement about what exactly constitutes a case study: it is

... a holistic research method that uses multiple sources of evidence to analyse or evaluate a specific phenomenon or instance. Most case study research is interpretive ... it often occurs in a natural setting and it may employ qualitative and quantitative methods and measures.

(Anderson, 1998, p. 152)

The range of data collection methods underpinning this definition of case study has been criticised (Ball, 1983; Yin, 1984), and in order to acknowledge this I needed to establish the rationale for the parameters of that range. Within the writing on case study methodologies it was clear that I would need to define what I was taking to be the 'case'.



Ragin and Becker (1992) suggested that 'we need to strive for greater clarity by what we mean by case and differentiate its various meanings' (p. 4).

My use of a case study seeks to address these criticisms. I used case study within the phenomenological perspective, as a result of exploring the focus on the original research questions (Stake, 1996). I based my inquiry on the complexities and dynamics of experience and practices, with the search focusing on explaining and understanding these.

The case was a concentration on the particular (Ball, 1983), with a focus on ways in which intervention supported participants to secure improvement. The initial case would be the study of the eight schools in the first project. The second project would yield case studies on two schools. Findings would be drawn from the experience of the participants in all ten schools. The research would be considering multiple instances of the enactment of the project. The use of a multiple case study approach, based on condensed field work (Stenhouse, 1984), is one which would make it possible to 'shed light on the interweaving, turnings and unanticipated events encountered along the way' (Huberman and Middlebrooks, 2000, p. 283). The boundaries of the case would be ragged as they were not static entities. Too early and static a definition of the 'case' could be counterproductive, and the 'case' may alter throughout the research process (Ragin and Becker, 1992).

Within the case study approach I would be collecting a range of data. I would be using the interview methods (3.3.3), but, additionally, quantitative measures of qualitative data such as ascribing values to the responses to questionnaires before and after the project and presenting this in graphical form (3.3.2). This offers a concurrent validity to the research: if findings from both the qualitative and quantitative data endorsed each other this could make my evidence base stronger. If the collection of data was restricted to interview potentially valuable sources of evidence could be missed. May (1995) suggests that:

... social researchers do not have to content themselves with one paradigm. Social sciences are dynamic disciplines within which, depending on the disposition and power of the researcher, other paradigms can be considered. This enables an understanding and explanation of empirical inquiries and adds the challenging of assumptions about social life as an important part of research practice.

(p. 26)

It was important that I should be able to gain access to the overall impact of the project in terms of the effect on pupil performance; a rise, fall or no change in the standards of work pupils attained. Many school improvement researchers have based their findings on mostly qualitative data and accept the need to relate the changes to more quantitative descriptors (Reynolds and Stoll, 1996). Quantitative methods, such as the use of national tests or standardised tests were appropriate, but illuminated through investigations about the perceptions of improvements in pupils' learning or through access to pupils' work using qualitative methods so that the nuances of the participants' views would not be omitted. This integration of approaches helps the interpretation and clarification of data in the manner promoted by Sieber (1973).

Information needed to be gathered in as systematic and focused a way as possible to enable the critical process of analysis to be carried out. There was always the possibility of collecting an array of information which ultimately gave no guarantee of a satisfactory analysis; 'choosing where to look and when to look is also a matter of systematic principled, reflexive decision making' (Delamont, 1992, p. 115). Theoretically structured descriptions would provide a more secure basis for 'the application of constraining ideas to infinite evidence' (Ragin and Becker, 1992, p. 221). The research then could utilise the case study approach, with the advantages of being based in the realities of the school's own experiences, recognising but focusing the complexities of perceptual differences. Additionally, I could utilise the advantage pointed out by Adelman *et al.* (1980), of a case study being a 'step to action' (p. 26). They acknowledged that case studies begin in a world of action, and also contribute to it.



Insights generated can be put to use, by the individuals in the setting, by the institution, and indeed in policy making.

The longitudinal aspect adds the useful dimension of time to the multi-perspective research design of case study. Robson (1995) defines this aspect as where 'the same set of people and the same situation is studied over a period of time' (p. 50). According to Hill and Rowe (1998) most quantitative studies in school effectiveness have collected data at two time points, which they considered unreliable as a measure of lasting impact. To overcome this, I was keen to collect data at four key time points, at the start of the project, during the project, at the end of the project, and a year after the project involvement had finished. I was working within given time constraints and therefore pragmatic as well as principled choices had to be made. I hoped to be able to identify which effects were lasting and which transient, and to pursue the conditions for change as changes are differently perceived and enacted by those involved. This is a neglected topic according to Sammons *et al.* (1998). In order to answer my research questions and provide some analytical progression I would need to incorporate into my research design opportunities for progressive focusing, with some elements of grounded theorizing (Miles and Huberman, 1994) from the analysis of the early evidence.

The early evidence would comprise of a range of responses collected through taping the spoken word. These would be transcribed, considered and coded within emerging categories using the computer program NUD\*IST to assist with the organisation of the data (3.3.3). This coding of responses to permit comparison has been defined as 'the general term for conceptualising data; thus coding includes raising questions and giving provisional answers about categories and about their relations' (Strauss, 1988, p. 20). This method allows for the focus on the ways in which change is perceived, and the identification of similarities between individual responses. If these are similar they can be categorised and indexed against themes and topics. A process of comparison can ascertain where the connections lie, and enable hypotheses to be formed, based in the data, rather than in superimposed theory.

Yet alongside this I would need to pursue the collection of focused data, theoretically informed as discussed previously. Woods (1985) questions the need for perpetual grounding and identifies the opportunity for developmental work which could advance theoretical knowledge, as opposed to replicating existing theory or illustrating it. Within the programme I would be able to utilise this approach through basing aspects of the data collection design on existing theory, but enabling the freer flow of individual perceptions through the use of semi-structured interviewing techniques. The development of the second phase project could also allow for revised research tools which themselves were informed by the outcomes of the first year, for instance the key aspects identified by the first cohort of participants could influence the aspects to pursue with the second group of participants. The process was iterative, in that the data collected re-oriented the subsequent focus for data collection or revisions in the questions.

### **3.6 Fractured data**

The dynamics of the individual contexts for the multiple case field research meant that there were no interchangeable contexts (Huberman and Middlebrooks, 2000), a world somewhat distant from one where universal truths and grand theories can be developed from a process of logically and objectively developed and applied research. Each case would present different dynamics which would yield different data. Seeking connections through only looking for agreement would be limiting. Popkewitz (1991) had suggested that the traditional strategic positions of focusing on harmony and consensus might be better replaced by considering conflict and controversy. Kemmis (1995) suggested that there are weaknesses inherent in the traditional frames of reference for considering educational change, just as Hargreaves (1994) wrote about a wider focus for considering educational change, from a narrow focus on operative issues to the inclusion of the consideration of contexts and the definition of the purposes inherent within them. Fullan (1993) identified a necessity to use more intuitive and contextualised frames to understand how concepts work out in practice. Studying the planned changes alone would not necessarily yield sufficiently illuminating results. The interview methodology I used gave scope for the unexpected to surface (3.3.3).



Within this research different values are acknowledged, within contexts which are ultimately bound by cultural and individual interpretations of human experience, related to the influence of human interaction which is dominated by the use of human language. The two significant views of this are the deconstructionist approach and the revisionist approach. In the deconstructivist approach fragmentation occurs as evidence is deconstructed. This is 'a useful way to understand the sorts of hybridity that characterize the post-colonial condition. The problem of identity, of the de-centred subject, is a central one for social theory and practice' (Stronach and MacClure, 1997, p. 31). They refer to Derrida's argument that the search for principles which will ground theory and end uncertainty is always endlessly deferred. Whatever is proposed as the fundamental issue becomes dependent on something else. Thus deconstruction shows us the impossibility of ever getting it right and heightens awareness of paradoxes in meaning and interpretation, and not least the need to respect individual differences.

The revisionist approach in contrast seeks to unify the range of influences in order to understand and to predict. These influences relate to those identified in Chapter 1, the technological, cultural, political and biographical perspectives of House (1979) and Blenkin *et al.* (1997). Within the revisionist approach influences are identified and models which work for the moment are developed, but with the awareness that they are transitory, likely to be supported or challenged as new evidence and understandings become apparent. This is the stance from which I hoped to develop the analysis of the text or transcripts. Here I would be involved as both recorder and reteller (Coffey, 1996). The difficulties of gathering perceptions, representing others, of my role in selecting text and constructing a reality from the experiences of others, would be considered as a distinct aspect in considering the overall issues in my procedures.

### **3.7 Exploring perceptions**

It was clear that the written or spoken word would be the basis for much of the evidence gathering techniques I would be using, as they best suited the main purposes of my study (Bryman, 1988). Not only would I need to ascertain the validity of such evidence within my research, I would need to explore how best to get beneath the rhetoric and gain

honest accounts from participants, and remain critically aware during the interview (Measor, 1988). In order to address this the use of different kinds of qualitative evidence in the study would allow for a range of comparisons to be made, between different people about the same event, and from the same person but at different times. A guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity would be given to all participants, and the names of participating schools would not be revealed. A clear remit for my own working practices would be shared with all to allow as much openness as possible.

Additionally, there were practical limitations to the range of data I could gather. For my purposes I had defined what I wanted to answer, and through the pragmatic approach referred to earlier would be interviewing a sample of key participants from each school in depth. This sat well within the qualitative research paradigm: 'Qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in depth - unlike quantitative researchers who aim for larger numbers of context stripped cases and seek statistical significance' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 27), although it could not claim to reside within ethnographic parameters, with its emphasis on a limited context but very detailed material, the 'depth, intensity and richness' identified by Fielding (1993, p. 155).

The importance of accessing the perspectives of individuals through qualitative methodologies was clear. If understandings about intervention were to be generated by the research then the attitudes and understandings of the key players (headteachers, teachers and pupils), within schools would be a significant part of the evidence base. Accessing these views would be possible through the qualitative approaches of interview, but additionally the personal construct theory associated with Kelly (1970) was relevant. Kelly viewed people as constructing their own realities. The sense they make of their experiences would give important insights into the impact of the intervention. In an attempt to gain more easily manipulated evidence I decided to adapt a strategy developed from the work of Kelly (3.3.4).



Whilst the detail of the projects in each school would be different, I wanted to identify common threads between the schools which encompassed both the pedagogical realities and the social phenomena as experienced by participants. The methodology needed to allow emerging aspects to be refined and redefined, and contrasted between institutions or between the different participants within the same institution. The school as an institution is the sum of those within it, and those within the school would have an individual response and framework for making sense of change. For the purposes of my research I needed access to participants' views of the events in the process, to the range of competing or cohesive views within each school, to the ways in which those views changed, developed or re-aligned over the course of time.

This process of personal learning and the development of systems of meaning derives from Kelly's (1970) personal construct theory. Kelly proposed that people develop a personal view of the world through their experiences. The limited range of views for each person will be defined by the range of their experiences and their individual response to them; and each view, or construct, will be re-evaluated as subsequent experiences impinge on it. These views are idiosyncratic to the individual, as is the ability to revise views through self generated feedback. In this way 'perceptions are actively created rather than passively received.' (Robson, 1995, p. 58). Kelly likens the development of perceptions to the scientific process. Effective scientists will engage in the often uncomfortable revision of their existing hypothesis in the light of new evidence. Less effective scientists will adhere stubbornly to existing viewpoints even in the light of new information which justifiably challenges their stance. Fullan (1991) noted the importance of what teachers do and think for achieving educational change. Individual teacher's perspectives will be created as a result of their personal response to the range of interaction and experiences in different and unpredictable ways.

Additionally, whilst individuals may build values and meanings from experience, that experience will be from varied contexts. The contexts will not be restricted to the school. Influences on perceptions will be different for different people: the range of schools they have worked in, the range of professional reading they have undertaken, the range of

views they are exposed to from outside the educational context. Young (1977) suggests that each of us builds an assumptive world, into which we fit the many experiences which lead to our understandings. These fused elements inform our working values and norms, and hence our daily work. Through the study of this he suggests that it is possible to understand the situational factors and the situational determinants that different people at different levels of the organisation have and experience.

### **3.8 Presenting the research**

I developed a range of methods for data collection and, as this was being undertaken, moved into the task of writing and representing my findings. Atkinson challenged the traditional construction of texts in that they can not 'simply and transparently report an independent reality' (1990, p. 7). The difficulties were identified as a researcher as less involved in representing a reality, and more involved in interpretation and construction (Delamont, 1992; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). The textual representation that I selected would be a construction of a social world in a readable textual form (Richardson, 1990) with the construction defined by myself as author. Whilst I wanted to present the text as the story from the field, I did not want the account to become even more complex by increasing the references to my own experiences of conducting the research, although I kept field notes of my activities and responses to them in order to pursue the level of reflexivity identified earlier. Whilst I was exploring intervention, my role as researcher was intended to be non-interventionist. In order to achieve this my representation was based on constructing an account based on the data and texts I had elicited. It involved selection and rejection of data, and therefore decisions about what was important and what was not. I sought to rely on the data to bring out what was, and what was not, meaningful (Dey, 1993).

The data I found most helpful in reaching understandings about intervention were the narratives provided by participants through the interviews. I endeavoured to capture the meanings produced and conveyed by them in order to arrive at deeper understandings of the processes underway (Stromquist, 2000). I represented my selection through presenting the original contributions of participants, showing how this accumulated to



enable a synthesis to contribute to my theorising. In order to answer potential criticisms about the influence of myself as a researcher I have not written myself out of the text (Jenkins, 1991), and I have acknowledged my role in the production of the data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

### 3.9 Representing realities

The analysis of the data gained from the interviews was the main focus for presentation and interpretation. These were developed from both the stories of the each school's development and from the categorisation of instances into themes, building up the theory to lead to explanations. By referring back to complete texts I sought to preserve the integrity of the accounts. Nevertheless, the selection and editing of text pointed to the importance of acknowledging that stories had been recounted to me from which I had then selected episodes. Reissman (1993) issued the challenge to researchers of working with texts to preserve participants' control over their own voice. The levels of interpretation of these realities is not a transparent process, and Reissman proposes that issues of representation start with the primary experience of the researched, and permeates five levels of the research process (Table 3.1).

READING	The selective and interpretative actions of the reader lead to further adaptations of meaning.
ANALYSING	The interpretation and selection which leads to a further representation.
TRANSCRIBING	The conversation as recorded, missing the non-verbal, implied or silent emphases, and therefore partial.
TELLING	The interpretation of the experience as a result of interaction in discussion with others.
ATTENDING	The interpretation and construction of that experience by the individual.
PRIMARY EXPERIENCE	The firsthand experience of the individual.

*Table 3.1 Reissman's levels of representation in research.*

At each stage the selection of what is important will be decided at an individual level and therefore the final level of reading text has been through a selective sieving process,

which is likely to reflect but be distant from the original primary experience, which itself is selectively sieved. At the level of attending people made sense of the primary experience, with some aspects being more meaningful to them than others. At the level of telling, the person makes decisions about the way in which the experiences are to be recounted, whether or not to include different aspects, sometimes in response to the particular person with whom they are discussing the event. The transcription itself omits a layer of communication because the written word does not record the nuances of speech and the power of non verbal communications, including silence. Analysis of the transcription will lead to further interpretation and selectivity in the decisions about what and what not to include in the written record and synthesis of the data. Finally, the reader will make his/her own selective take on the writing, importantly, bringing his or her own interpretations to bear on the opaque system (Sparkes, 1995) of communication which is language. As a result of this layering effect, my research can lay claim only to representing a construction of reality (Atkinson, 1990; Hammersley, 1992) rather than an explication of it.

### **3.10 Reliability and validity**

Quantitative research is validated through careful scrutiny of variables, careful reasoning linked to statistical significance and carefully addressed issues of reliability and generalisability. The qualitative aspects of the research design I was considering could not meet that criteria. I could not control variables because any tight control of variables in a social setting is not possible. I certainly could not claim generalisability from a study of ten schools.

Addressing validity is made possible through a change of emphasis. Whilst using quantitative methods within the study, my overall approach could remain qualitative and I could use the criteria as defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) for verifying the standards for the quality of conclusions, that is, aspects which relate to confirmability, dependability, credibility and potential transferability.



Checks for confirmability could be made through acknowledging my own bias. Reliability checks would indicate whether the process could be repeated by another researcher and produce similar results. The research could not be replicated as it was to take place within a particular time, and a context with particular individuals. Therefore it was important to ensure a dependable methodology through a sequence of data collection which could be made explicit, and which could be trailed and audited to show how conclusions had been reached.

The credibility of the study relates to the authenticity of the findings, the internal validity of the research. I would use quantitative methodologies to give concurrent validity to the qualitative data. Credibility checks could be established through checking and rechecking data, returning to the original sources when I had been working with developed data reduction techniques. I achieved this through, for example, the organisation of sections of the transcripts into categories, then rereading original transcripts. Within interviews the technique of checking meanings, summarising and asking for verification of understandings with participants would be an approach which could develop the credibility of findings. Where early findings were used to move my thinking forward these would need to be shared and checked with participants. In this way I could begin to ensure that I was identifying accurately the phenomena that participants were experiencing.

The potential transferability of the findings is related to the external validity of quantitative research. The careful synthesis of patterns between the case studies, the meta-ethnography of Noblitt and Hare (1988), was possible but within an acknowledgement of very cautious claims to generalisability, given the limited parameters of the research.

Criticisms that could be levelled at my research could be that it is too highly subjective and relativist (Layder, 1994), due to the focus on individuals and the interpretation of the researcher. I was operating within an interpretative paradigm, concentrating on the realities of those in schools, within their contexts, from their perspectives. I held the

view that multiple realities, and therefore multiple interpretations were possible. The interpretation may therefore differ between the researcher and the researched, particularly due to the opportunity for the researcher to gain insights into interactions and patterns, processes and behaviours (Sparkes, 1995) as a result of the overview gained. My own biases, that change in schools was possible, that intervention can be helpful and that the application of research findings on school improvement is appropriate, were used to inform my own reflexivity during the research process and were explicit.

In this chapter I have sought to identify the way in which my research aims were considered in order to develop the research methods considered in the next chapter. In particular I will examine the development of methods which align with the overall philosophical and paradigmatic channels I have identified.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter 2 the methodological framework for my research was considered. This shaped the data collection methods which I developed and which are detailed in this chapter. Chapter 5 will detail the involvement of schools with the project before moving on to analysing the outcomes of the research in the first phase.

#### **4.1 Research design**

Whilst the project was designed to support schools in their improvement, decisions about the design of research methodology stemmed from the questions I was seeking to answer in relation to the intervention. I started with these key questions in mind:

- How can the research findings about school effectiveness and school improvement be used to improve schools?
- How can schools be supported in managing a culture of collaboration, review and development?
- How best can the use of assigned inspectors and external help be used to enable schools to sustain new understandings and expectations in the drive to improve a particular aspect of educational provision and to raise standards of pupil attainment?

These questions drove the focus of my research and therefore underpinned the decisions I made about the methodological framework from which I derived the data collection strategies. I wanted to utilise aspects of the research work in the fields of school improvement, effectiveness and change. The complexities of change have been well documented (Fullan, 1991, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994; Ainscow *et al.*, 1994; Hargreaves, 1997). I wanted to develop understandings by giving more detailed attention to the key aspects of intervention which prompted or supported the broader front of improvement.

I wanted to develop understandings about supporting change in the technical skills of pupils, teachers and leaders (Senge, 1990; Block, 1993; Crump 1993) supporting change in the social culture of the organisation (Barth, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994; Nias *et al.*, 1989) and supporting change in the micro-political systems and structures of control and influence (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1988; Fullan, 1993).

As a researcher I had chosen a phenomenological perspective with case study as the overarching design. Within this I needed to develop techniques which would allow access to more precise detail about changes to school culture, changes to micro-political values and changes to technical skills (Littledyke, 1997). These needed to be appropriate to my research, based within the educational field as distinct from other social settings such as medicine or psychology, using the range of the definition encompassed in my second research question. I needed to be in a position to know whether changes had occurred in pupil attainment, and in the working patterns and behaviours of those working in the schools, over the period of their involvement with the project and beyond. Overall, within the research itself I became more focused on the dimension of the nature of external support, my third question. This in turn impacted on the emphases of the material I eventually selected as the most relevant for meeting my aims as a researcher.

Research, according to Stenhouse (1975), is nothing more than the systematic examination of practice made public, while theory is defined as the local organisation of understandings that arise from this examination. Within the complex structure of my research I needed to ensure that my systems were defensible and that my organisation of understandings systematic. Defining my research as a case study approach opens it to the criticism of ambiguous definition. Nevertheless, the use of a case study approach where the boundaries of the context are blurred has been an acceptable approach (Yin, 1988; Deem and Brehony, 1994). Stake (1994) identifies three categories of case study. The collective, which extends to several cases, the instrumental where the case is less important than the pursuit of understandings of an issue or theory, and thirdly the intrinsic where better understanding of a particular case is sought. Within these



categories, this case study sits within both the collective and intrinsic parameters. It extends to a series of extended studies, ten schools altogether. It seeks to gain insight and refine understandings of theory as it exists in relation to supporting improvement.

Within this series of case studies, the techniques I used relied predominantly on qualitative collection methods, although a combination of qualitative and quantitative collection and analysis was used in order to combine the rich detail of case study data with an analysis of a large number of variables. The sources for evidence were varied. They involved me in gaining access to schools, and to a range of individuals, events and documents connected with them. They involved participants attending meetings with me outside the schools. They included:

- interviews with headteachers;
- interviews with Chairs of governors;
- interviews with deputy headteachers;
- interviews with subject co-ordinators;
- interviews with teachers;
- interviews with pupils;
- analysis of completed questionnaires about the school culture from school staff;
- analysis of the constructs for improvement from senior staff at each school;
- analysis of school's pupil performance data.

The development and application of each of these is presented in sections 4.2 - 4.5. The use of a range of methods is seen to be a major strength of the case study design (Denzin 1978; Williams *et al.*, 1982; Yin, 1988). Through cross checking accounts from within the individual case study settings, through identifying themes across the range of case studies, and through synthesising findings from a range of sources I was able to avoid the method boundedness (Chia and Walker, 1992) which results in an over-reliance on one data source or method. Additionally, the checking and validation of emerging

themes with participants meant that I was able to access a range of methods for triangulating findings, to avoid researcher bias and to achieve greater validity.

The ethical considerations of the methodology had to be established at the outset. These can be identified as informed consent to gain access, personal reflexivity and objectivity, confidentiality, and the use of busy people's time (3.3). The choices of procedures used, and the shape of the research, were also influenced by a need to be responsive to the context of each school. A feature of the research was that the collection of data was carried out by myself, although elements of the project were conducted by others. As an instrument of the data collection my role was important to consider. Access to the schools did not, ultimately, prove difficult. My personal networks did not rely on the sponsorship of others, (Cassell, 1988; Homan, 1991), as they were already established through my professional role. I had to be aware that my ascribed role (Burgess, 1994) could have a result, in a negative way, on whether participants would agree to be interviewed for research purposes. I believe that through the strategies of taking time to explain my research purposes, defining the parameters of confidentiality and use of the data, and through my own existing credibility, I gained access to personal and considered contributions. The legitimacy of the research as a topic of gravity and significance to the participants, combined with these credentials allowed me to access informative and insightful data (Homan, 1991). My own background meant that I was very familiar with the contexts in which participants were working, and therefore able to respond appropriately and sensitively, whilst additionally employing methodological strategies which enabled me to obtain the data I needed.

An objective perspective was maintained, as far as possible, through remaining non-participatory in the project itself. This aspiration towards objectivity may be unattainable. Nevertheless, Stenhouse is again reassuring: 'we are concerned with the development of a sensitive and self-critical perspective' (1975, p. 157). Whilst the project was co-ordinated by myself, others were undertaking the work. I designed the research and collected the research data, and this enabled the separation between the activities of the project and their evaluation.



Access to the information I required was gained through negotiation with both the LEA and the headteachers of the schools. Informed consent (May, 1993) was gained through sharing the purpose of the research and the values which underpinned the project. The parameters of confidentiality were defined with the schools and the contributors to my enquiries. These were established on initial contact and revisited with participants during data collection. The issue of confidentiality was, and remains a central one. Those participating in the research were assured that their contributions would be confidential, to enable the gathering of different perspectives from those who had different roles within the same schools. The schools themselves were assured that their identity would not be revealed and that when the research was written up the findings would be reported anonymously.

The issue of using valuable time was met by flexibility about where and when data collection would be carried out. I needed to ensure efficient use of time. I kept interviews to the period of time I had informed schools they would take. Only in one case, in phase 2 of the project, was I unable to interview a participant, or rearrange this. It was important that I acknowledged that schools are busy places, that my research was secondary to their work, that I wanted to make any time I spent with them as useful and as convenient to them as possible. I decided to develop instruments that could be used within the same time span as other data collection events, for example questionnaires to be completed within the introductory staff meeting, and questionnaires to be completed within the interviews. I also offered a range of dates and times so that they could be as convenient for the schools as possible, and the agreed dates and times were very carefully kept to. I would check the day beforehand to ensure that there was no confusion or difficulties with my planned visit. I was also very careful to write and confirm agreed dates, and to write and thank the schools for their time following a visit.

## **4.2 Selecting the sample of schools**

There were two levels of selection for the research purpose. The first one was for those schools to be involved in the project for school improvement. The second was from those schools participating in the project, the selection of schools which would be the focus of my research. I decided to use all eight of the schools participating in the project in the first year. In the second phase I wanted to carry out a more detailed and focused analysis in order to access a range of perceptions within the levels of the schools' organisation, so two large schools from different contexts were selected.

One of the main criteria for the selection of the schools in the first phase, both for the project and for the research, was that they should provide as varied a sample as possible. In this first year the eight primary schools were selected using the following range of criteria:

- contexts in inner city, urban and rural locations in the county;
- differing needs for improvement which they themselves were keen to address;
- unlikely that they would have embarked on similar procedures without the opportunity of joining the project;
- a range of sizes, from three to one class entry;
- headteachers who had been in post for different lengths of time, including those new to post.

The relevant assigned inspector for groups of schools had been asked to identify which schools would be interested in additional support for school improvement and willing to work as participators in the project, evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses as it progressed. Once responses to this request had been received the schools were considered against the criteria and the eight which offered the widest variety were selected.

Whilst these schools were selected against clear criteria to be a representative spread of typical primary schools, in some aspects they could not be considered typical. In terms



of the literature on school improvement, very little exists about working with schools which are not serving disadvantaged or deprived areas (Reynolds *et al.* 1996). Only one of the eight in this project could be placed in this category, and therefore my research can claim to advance some understandings about improvement in non-disadvantaged schools. Assigned inspectors had identified the schools as ones likely to be interested in school improvement. An initial motivation existed at least from the headteachers; they were all willing to work with the project and to contribute to the research. Involvement in a project could focus interest within the school on achieving the aims of the project and therefore cause a Hawthorne effect (Willms, 1992). In this, an extraneous factor has an impact on the outcomes. The consultant's enthusiasm could generate positive change irrespective of any other changes to the structure. The sample itself was small, and therefore allowed in depth analysis.

Generalised findings from the first year were used and the procedures for the second year of the project were developed from an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the first. The first eight participating schools were selected from a group which had been identified by their LEA assigned inspector as likely to benefit from additional support. Once invited, and visited for the process and purpose of the project to be explained, all were keen to be involved. In the second year the criteria against which schools were selected was changed. LEA assigned inspectors identified schools where there was evidence of stubborn underperformance. This is a significant difference between the two phases of the research.

The second group of schools was extended to encompass twenty schools, selected against the criteria for the first project, but additionally considering the criteria of schools where, in the opinion of the assigned inspectors, improvement was proving more stubborn or where attitudes to being part of a project would not be as enthusiastic as in the first cohort, although the needs might in fact be greater. From these schools I selected two which represented different contexts: one urban and one rural both with similar underachievement. Both were large schools to allow me to gain perspectives from a range of people working within them. In one the headteacher was keen but staff

were rather more reluctant. In the other the headteacher's involvement was more reluctant, although accepted, and staff were in the main keen to be involved. The final selection of schools is outlined in Table 4.1.

#### Phase 1 project schools

School	Roll below 100	Roll 100- 200	Roll 200+	Age group 5-11	Age group 7-11	Urban	Suburban	Rural
1			*	*			*	
2			*	*		*		
3			*	*				*
4		*		*			*	
5	*			*				*
6		*		*				*
7			*		*		*	
8		*		*				*

#### Phase 2 project schools

1			*	*		*		
2			*	*				*

*Table 4.1. Details of the sample schools for both phases of the project.*

Within these schools the age range and experience of staff differed. During the course of the project the staff stayed the same in all of the schools except for Schools 3 and 8, where promotion had led to a change of a member of staff in each. In Phase 2 the staff changes came after the project. In general, the schools reflected the stability in staffing which is a feature of the county. Where staffing changed, the measures I used (4.3.2) were looking at the culture of the staff as jointly perceived, and therefore I was able to compare measures in those schools where staffing changed. Similar class sizes existed in the schools of approximately 35 pupils per class, although in the smaller schools mixed age classes were a feature of their organisation.



### **4.3 Data collection - the overall framework**

The decision to use a case study approach (3.5) met with difficulties when considering this range of schools and the range of data. If I had focused on one school as the 'case' then any claims to generalisability would be bounded by the time, location and particularities of that school (Chia and Walker, 1992). Yet Stake (1994) suggests that there is a need to understand the complexities of a single case in order to locate understandings within the context of others. I wanted to develop theoretical insights into supporting school improvement, so for that reason I expanded my focus to two phases, eight schools in the first and two in the second. In this way, exploring the similarities and themes across all schools would enable me to build a comparative analysis (Atkinson and Delamont, 1986) and cumulative theorising.

In order to get a view of the key characteristics and the key events of the improvement process I sampled the views of headteachers in the first phase. The relevant players in a school, teachers and pupils, were sampled in the first phase of data collection through questionnaires, second hand observations from the headteachers, and from pupil performance data. I wanted access to more detail than these in order to follow up instances and give supporting detail. Therefore, by limiting my focus to two schools, I could afford to do this within the time available in the second phase.

All schools involved in the projects were introduced to them in the Summer term before commencement. The first phase ran for the academic year 1995-6 and the second phase the following academic year 1996-7. The data collection took four main forms:

1. A questionnaire (4.3.2) for staff relating to the culture for school improvement given at the start and end of the project.
2. Semi-structured interviews (4.3.3) with the headteachers at the start of the project, at the end of the project, a year later.
3. A repertory grid (4.3.4) for the headteacher on constructs for improvement, current judgements and, for each construct, the ideal state for the school.

4. A collection of documentation from the school relating to pupil performance at the start of the project and at the end of it.

In the second phase of the project I wanted to have a wider range of sources of evidence than had been possible working with eight schools. This focus on the details of the processes within each of the schools relates to Stake's (1994) proposal that the usefulness of the study increases the more specific and bounded the system studied is. The focus on two schools allowed for this. This time the data collection took similar forms, but with more participants:

1. A questionnaire (4.3.2) for staff relating to the culture for school improvement given on two occasions, at the start and end of the project.
2. Semi-structured interviews (4.3.3) with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, two other teachers, the Chair of governors, and groups of children from Key Stage 1 (5-7 years), Years 3 and 4 (7-9 years), and Years 5 and 6 (9-11 years) at the beginning and end of the project.
3. A repertory grid (4.3.4) for the headteacher, deputy head and the subject co-ordinator on constructs for improvement, current judgements and, for each construct, the ideal state for the school.
4. A collection of documentation relating to the school's audit of pupil performance in the aspect it sought to improve at the beginning of the project, and at the end.

The range of instruments used drew on the literature from school effectiveness and improvement and educational change. For instance, the questionnaire relating to the culture for school improvement was developed from that used in the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) project (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994). Its use enabled the findings to be shared with the schools to help them decide which aspect of their culture for improvement would be best incorporated into their action plans.



### **4.3.1 Performance evidence**

For most schools in both phases of the project the results of the national Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) were used to ascertain improvement from the start of the project until a year later. The initiation of the project came before SATs results had to be made public, and early on in the development of the tests. National assessment tests (SEAC, 1991) were introduced to make more public the performance of schools, and comparative tables based on the results were intended to act as a guide for parents choosing between schools (DfEE, 1997). Tests are taken by pupils aged 6-7 years old at the end of Key Stage 1 after two years within the key stage, and at 10-11 years old after four years within Key Stage 2. Pupils at Key Stage 1 are awarded levels graded from W (working towards level 1), to level 1, level 2 which is the expected level for this age group, and level 3 for the highest attainers. At Key Stage 2 pupils are awarded levels from the range level 1 to level 5 and for the highest achievers a possible level 6. The expected level for this age group is level 4. The tests were originally criterion referenced assessments against the statements of attainment specified in the different levels for subjects. These were developed into broader level descriptors for describing the performance of a typical pupil at the level. The key construct is that of minimally acceptable competence (Berk, 1980; Fitz-Gibbon, 1996) as assessed by performance in the test, with some tasks assessed by teachers. Sizmur (1997) suggests that the value of the statutory tasks is that they provide an independent standard which, whilst dependent on some teacher interpretation, stands outside of teacher assessment. They are administered at a similar point in the year and have a standardised format, which led Strand (1997) to the view that there is likely to be less variation in the statutory task results than from teacher assessment. Teacher assessed work has the potential for differences in teachers' interpretations of the National Curriculum statements of attainment, and additionally the potential for differing timings of assessment.

Whilst other studies have used SATs for the measure of pupil attainment (Sammons *et al.*, 1997) the concentration has been on the issues of 'value added' associated with significant intake factors, that is the difference individual schools make to the progress of pupils from similar backgrounds (Saunders, 1999). I wanted a view of progress over a

year, but involving different cohorts of pupils. Whilst Massey (1997) advised a degree of caution in equating tests between key stages, he suggested that equating tests in different years for a given key stage appears less problematic. The maintenance of standards from year to year as opposed to comparing them between key stages is, he suggests, the aspect which is of more concern to schools. In the schools where the project was undertaken it was SATs tests with which staff and pupils were familiar and we agreed that these would be used as the external measure of improvement, rather than introducing a different source and schedule for assessment. One main advantage of this was that the pupils would be taking these tests as a matter of course, that externally moderated judgements would be made, and that these tests had relevance for the schools because of the pressures (Reay and Williams, 1999) to sustain or improve results.

#### **4.3.2 Developing the staff questionnaire**

The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine a view of the culture, or social aspects of the schools. The questionnaire used with staff remained the same for both phases of the project. It was derived from that provided by Ainscow *et al.* (1994) who mapped the change in schools using this technique. The questions centred around the key areas of the attention to enquiry and reflection in the school; the process of planning and the level of collaboration employed; the involvement of pupils, parents, governors and outside agents in school policies and decisions; the emphasis placed on and commitment to professional learning and staff development; the effectiveness of co-ordinating roles and strategies; and the leadership of the school, not just that of the head but as a function spread throughout the school (Appendix 4.1). This questionnaire is designed with statements against which staff can indicate whether or not they match their own perception of the school. It covered all the key aspects identified in Ainscow's research, including teaching and classroom practice, but within the Ainscow questionnaire there was an omission about pupil performance. I wanted to focus on the attitudes held by those at the school and perceptions about expectations of pupils are an important aspect of this, as identified in school effectiveness research (Sammons *et al.*, 1995). I therefore added two questions about the staff expectations of pupil attainment,



but written in different terms: 'we all expect high standards from our pupils' and 'many of our children cannot be expected to do well'.

The main use of these questionnaires in the first project was to reflect back to the schools the culture which their staff had identified as the prevalent one, and identify aspects that, together, they believed would benefit the school if they were changed. The use of these questionnaires was developed in the second phase of the project. They were used to give a quantitative view of the changes in culture. The questions used were checked for clarity and unambiguity through using a reference group of the first project's inspectors and the headteachers. Whilst drawing on the questions used by Hopkins *et al.* (1994) they were not the same. The aspects of staff development, enquiry and review, leadership, involvement, and planning were considered but this reference group changed the detailed questions. For instance in the original conditions scale (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994, p. 210) there are no questions about the involvement of parents and governors. The reference group felt that involvement extended beyond the involvement of staff and pupils in decision-making. Phrases that could be interpreted in different ways were given more precision, bearing in mind the frames of reference which were prevalent in schools. For instance, the statement 'There is a policy of using staff experience to guide development decisions' was deemed to be ambiguous: the policy might exist, but the practice might not. Therefore it was changed to 'I influence the decisions that are made for school development'. The use of a Likert scale (Robson, 1995) enabled attitudes to the aspects to be measured. Questions were organized into groups so that overall perspectives of the perception of the school culture could be ascertained.

Ainscow *et al.* (1994) had detailed how in the IQEA (Improving the Quality of Education for All) improvement work schools were 'encouraged to diagnose their internal conditions in relation to their chosen change' (p. 11). Each school member of staff was given this questionnaire to complete at the introductory staff meeting at the beginning of the project. They were asked to say whether each statement represented their school on a five point scale: rarely, sometimes, neutral, often or nearly always. I

introduced this questionnaire in the same way with each school, and stressed that the importance of answering it was not to give a 'right answer' but to state how far the statements matched their own individual perception of the school; their personal view.

Once completed, I totalled up the scores against each answer for the school, and using Microsoft EXCEL (Matthews, 1995), I graphed each school's results against the overall average results for all the schools participating in the first year of the project. I did this by ascribing a value of 5 to the most positive answer and 1 to the least. I then calculated the total values of the responses given, as a percentage of the total values possible. The total possible was the number of responses times 5. For example:

	strongly agree (5)	agree (4)	neutral (3)	disagree (2)	strongly disagree (1)	Total value of responses / total possible (5x12)	Percentage
Question responses	4 (20)	5 (20)	2 (6)	0 (0)	1 (1)	47 /60	78%

*Table 4.2 A hypothetical example showing the calculation of the value ascribed to responses to the questionnaire*

These school results, question by question, were then given against the average for all schools, shown graphically (Appendix 5.6). This allowed schools to have a visual stimulus of their context for improvement, with clear indications of where their perceptions dipped or were different from the average. The school's assigned inspector used these, to prompt a discussion at a staff meeting, in order to identify any aspects of the school culture where it was agreed that there needed to be significant emphasis on change used them.

In the second phase of the project the questionnaires were repeated a year after the beginning of the project to establish the changes in school culture as perceived by the staff. In order to ascertain whether the differences were significant I undertook a t-test (Howell, 1999), comparing the differences between the mean values of responses before and after the project. From this analysis I was able to ascertain the spread of variables to assess whether the changes were similar for all questions or varied between them, and



whether those differences were more marked at the start of the project or at the end. The t-test also enabled me to see the level of the probable significance (Coolican, 1996) of the improvements for both schools, and whether that differed between them. Additionally, I grouped the questions into five areas of enquiry and reflection, co-ordination, involvement of all, leadership and staff training (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994) to see whether there were aspects of the school culture which had changed more than others (6.4.2).

#### **4.3.3 Designing the semi-structured interviews**

The decision to use a semi structured interview format was based on a rejection of a highly structured format which might lead to important phenomena being overlooked, and a similar rejection of a loose framework which might yield too much superfluous information. My own role was important here. Whilst I showed, and had, a deep interest in what was being said, understood the ebb and flow of the responses and sympathised with the underlying moments of frustration and elation (Burgess, 1984) in the accounts, I maintained a balance between friendliness and objectivity (Wragg, 1978). The study was both exploratory and confirmatory: some of the parameters of the setting I would not know, some of the research questions would have anticipated answers. A number of issues were taken into account when the semi-structured interviews were designed. This was in response to the recognised limitations, strengths and weaknesses of the interviewing technique (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Questions were devised which would allow triangulation across the range of those being interviewed so that their different perspectives could be compared and contrasted. Reliability was strengthened through the sequencing of questions, the wording of questions, and the prompts that I used when interviewing. However, there was sufficient flexibility to allow for the checking of meaning and any clarification of ideas to take place as each interview progressed (Hubermann, 1993). Becker (1958) identified the usefulness of indicators from the interviewee within the interview dialogue which flag up issues to explore further. This systematic but responsive flow to data gathering is the process of progressively focusing (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972) the direction of the questioning. Too rigid a focus with a precise framework based on premature indicators could,

according to Lutz (1986), lead to a distortion of the evidence. Nevertheless, some early focusing supported me in gathering the views of participants to confirm or disconfirm the early analysis I was making. Delamont (1992) also identified the value of doing analytic work as the fieldwork is in progress, to support the relatively easy testing of insights by the direct or indirect questioning of informants. Additionally this process reduced the risk of reaching the end of the planned interviews and finding then that there was more I needed to ask, but the opportunity for asking it had been missed (Hyman, 1975; Whittrock, 1986). In this way the interactive nature of the interviews (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984) enabled both the interviewees and myself to respond to those priorities that were emerging and in part help the interview take shape.

The agenda for the interviews was:

1. General responses to the project.
2. Staff culture.
3. Defining attainment targets, action plans and the involvement of others.
4. Particular challenges- factors facilitating or hindering improvement.
5. Developments in the classroom with teachers.
6. Impact on management and leadership approaches.
7. Role of external intervention.

The interviews followed a similar structure with all interviewees, who were selected to have an overall perspective on the work and its impact, as well as possessing the knowledge, status and communicative skills (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984) to contribute highly relevant material, whatever their status was within the school. The procedure for interview was defined beforehand. Firstly, the dates were arranged over the phone to a time which suited the school. I asked that a room be available where they could be conducted in private and without interruption. Some problems with the tape recording were encountered (Corrie and Zaklukiewitz, 1985), because the interviews were recorded in schools. In one headteacher interview several interruptions from pupils meant that the interview was halted whilst more immediate issues were dealt with. In several of the interviews conducted with teachers there were straying sounds of pupils



playing during their breaks, which in some cases made the recording difficult to transcribe.

Powney and Watts (1987) criticise research reports which under-report the preparation, conduct and reporting of interviews. Taking this criticism into account the following general structure for my research follows.

The structure developed through:

1. Contacting.
2. Putting at ease and establishing a rapport.
3. Defining the parameters and the processes of the interview.
4. Asking questions and listening to the answers.
5. Writing to thank participants for their help with my research.

On meeting the participants normal pleasantries were observed to help the interviewee feel at ease with the process. The rights of the interviewee were made clear and the length of the interview confirmed. The room was arranged so that the interviewee could sit comfortably. Then the procedures of the interview and the parameters of the use of the information were made clear. I explained:

- that I would be taping the interview for later analysis; full transcripts would later be made of all interviews. If at any time they requested the tape to be switched off then I would be happy to do so and take notes;
- the purpose of my research; the aims of this part of the process in securing data from key participants;
- that the interviewee was a selected participant but had the right to reject participation or to refrain from answering questions they were uncomfortable with;
- that my stance was non-judgmental. My interest was in the project and its outcomes, whether they were positive or not;

- that I guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. All names would be changed in the report so that participants could not be identified.

The checklist I carried with me reminded me to:

*Prompt on particular issues from the agenda checklist, responding to the interviewee. Maintain flexibility in order to elicit as unique a response as possible. Allow a natural flow so that aspects important to the interviewee are priorities, but ensure coverage of issues through prompting, and maintain a focus through the questions. Clarify and summarise during the course of the interview to enable verification.*

The questions were designed to elicit the main aspects I was covering for change related to the research focus. This ranged from the perception of the current state of the school; understandings that were developed as a result of involvement of the project; the ways in which staff work together (to elicit any development in staff and school culture); the involvement of others; the development of strategies to support teachers; the personal impact of involvement in the project; and finally, observations about the use of external support. Carspecken (1996) suggested that interviewees often talk during interviews in ways they seldom talk in everyday life. This is because they are not generally listened to so intently or indeed not supported in exploring ideas by the probing of the listener. In order for this to happen some of the prompts were not planned and therefore not identified in my prompt sheet. I responded at times to the interviewee's agenda, to facilitate a deeper exploration of the issues. Of those prompts I had identified, some were particularly useful. For example, for the interviews with headteachers a sample was:

1. You have been involved in a school improvement project and I would like you to tell me what you see as the current position of your school and how you have arrived at that?

*(prompts: attitude to improvement, key areas of impact; awareness of significant moments of change.)*



2. How have the targets and action that were agreed upon involved others in the school?  
*(prompts: staff - negotiation /imposition /consensus / awareness raising. Involvement of pupils /parents /governors?)*
3. Some of the activities, which have been undertaken, have led to decisions that changes need to be made. Has any of that information been difficult for you or your staff to accept? Are any of the approaches challenging the way people work now and their current or altered values?  
*(prompts: information informing need for change - difficulties/ tensions? Challenging or aligning with existing values? Managing these? Diverting or sustaining the drive for improvement?)*

For the interviews with teachers the parallel questions were:

1. Can you tell me what you see as the current position of the school, and of how you have arrived at this perception of it?  
*(prompts: improving, staying the same, declining? How has this view been arrived at?)*
2. How have the targets and action that has been decided upon involved you?  
*(prompts: questionnaire outcomes, interrogation of pupil attainment data, joint/individual decision making? Action planning- agreement of targets - negotiation/ consensus/ imposition?)*
3. Some of the activities which have been undertaken indicated that changes needed to be made. Has that information been difficult to accept? Are any of the approaches ones which don't really fit with the way you think about education and your work?  
*(prompts: information needed for change - difficulties? Tensions? Challenging or aligning with existing values? How was sustaining the drive managed?)*

The variety of questions and the use of the construct repertory grid (3.3.4) within the interview schedule for the adults allowed me to meet a range of needs within one meeting. The majority of questions were designed to be open ended so that the contributors could give descriptions, observations, judgements, explanations and

opinions. Full transcription took place of all interviews. Using the NUD\*IST (Richards, 1996) programme I then coded the transcribed data for common categories, and used the results of the coding to lead the analysis, rather than using the questions to dominate the outcomes. NUD\*IST allowed me to index and search the text, and to develop interim theories by linking segments of text (Tesch, 1990). The analysis was based on coding the text under different categories. I re-checked the coding of the data at different stages in the analysis to address the issue of whether the initial coding remained accurate, and indeed revisited the original transcripts at different stages. The collection of different forms of data also allowed for triangulation of evidence to give greater reliability to the analysis.

Whilst I found I could use similar questions for the adults I interviewed, I did need to adapt my questioning techniques when discussing their involvement with pupils. The range of language that I used had to be simpler and more direct for the youngest (4-7 year olds) than for the oldest (9-11 year olds), although the focus of the questions continued to be gathering their perceptions about how well they were making progress, what was different in the ways they were being asked to work, and what was helping them most in improving their work. Establishing the context for the interview was more important than with the adults, with whom I could almost immediately move into asking the key questions, having re-established the confidentiality parameters and purposes of the research. With the younger pupils I had to spend longer establishing an initial rapport and in sequencing the focus of the answers through the way in which I asked subsidiary questions.

Thus, my role within the interviews took on different dimensions. I was an active listener, seeking to draw out the views and attitudes of those I was interviewing. My own views were inappropriate and indeed might have obscured those of the interviewees. To ensure that the interview flowed and that full elicitation was made possible I used a range of roles during the course of interviews (Littledyke, 1993).

These were:



a) Facilitator - supporting the elaboration of views to enable the explanation to be made in more detail, e.g.:

*'Tell me about that?'*

and

*'How did you manage that?'*

and

*'Did that help?'*

b) Reflector - reflecting the words or ideas of the interviewee to enable easier understanding of what was being said, e.g.:

*'When you say harder what do you mean?'*

and

*'Can you give me an example of that?'*

c) Clarifier - asking for refined definition of statements, e.g.:

*'Would you say any of those in particular were most helpful in getting you ready for the changes you want to happen?'*

and

*'You talked about raising expectations, raising the attitudes of staff and children towards those expectations. How clear was everybody that the nub of this was about raising pupils' own achievement?'*

d) Initiator - Introducing a new aspect for consideration so that the interview could move on, e.g.:

*'Tell me about...'*

and

*'Let's think about...'*

and

*'What happened as a result of...'*

e) Summariser - reviewing what has been said in order to ascertain the meaning, e.g.:

*'In terms of you and your staff leading the school forward you are saying that you were worried about some of those things from the questionnaire which came as a surprise to you, because you'd been appointed to do a particular job and you had thought that staff understood and accepted that?'*  
and

*'When you say all this has given you confidence, was it confidence in being able to raise the issues that are a bit uncomfortable do you think?'*

f) Informer -explaining or clarifying some points which were not clear to the interviewee, e.g.:

*Explaining the process of the project and in particular defining targets in the early part of the project*

g) Supporter - being empathetic with the interviewee to allow a relaxed approach to difficult issues, establishing a rapport which allowed for more confident sharing of difficult aspects, e.g.:

*'I can understand that'*

and

*'It's been a difficult time for the school with new buildings and OFSTED simultaneously'*

and

*'Your probationer has had a tough year, is that from having a difficult class?'*

h) Challenger - presenting a different point of view, e.g.:

*'Some people see that as a waste of time'*

and

*'There is the view that this is about...'*

All these roles were utilised during the course of the interviews, with a frequency which reflected the need to support or develop the interview process in order to gain a free-flowing and clear response from those being interviewed. Only in one case out of the



total of twenty-five interviews did this fail, with an interviewee whose responses were terse, brief and singularly uninformative (6.6). The range of strategies adopted enabled both clarification of issues, and introduction of new aspects for discussion.

#### **4.3.4 Designing the repertory grid on constructs for improvements**

The use of a qualitative framework for collecting data led to a predictably extensive range of material. I was able to manipulate this through the use of NUD\*IST qualitative data handling programme (4.3.3). In order to access the dimensions of improvement perceived by the leaders of the schools, which was important to assess within the micro-political development of the schools, I developed a technique derived from Kelly's (1955) repertory grid technique, for identifying the ways in which key players were perceiving the importance of key constructs associated with school improvement (Appendix 4.2). Just as the scientist formulates hypotheses, makes and tests generalisations and refines ideas through experimentation and reflection, so people replicate this approach in an essentially active and inquiring manner in order to make sense of their experience.

Kelly (1955) suggests a technique to facilitate the task of identifying personal constructs in his repertory test and its more graphic representation, the repertory grid. Kelly himself identifies eight forms of the test alone, and as Bannister and Mair (1968) indicate, the grid is merely a flexible frame of focus which can be cast into many different forms, involving any number of different types of constructs and elements, and many types of scores can be derived. In order to develop a methodology for comparing constructs between the managers of the schools I developed a set of constructs derived from a meeting held with the headteachers involved in the first phase of the project. This decision was in part pragmatic; it would not have been possible to elicit constructs from each participant given the time constraints within which I was working. The tension between Kelly's (1955) view of elicited constructs, and the use of provided constructs has been usefully addressed in Bannister and Mair (1968). They suggest that by using both elicited and supplied constructs a check can be made on the meaningfulness of the constructs. Constructs elicited from participants are defined in the participants'

language. By using the language of a group of headteachers I was able to use a shared linguistic understanding, relying on the paradigmatic functioning of cognition (Bruner, 1985). Here experience is reduced to concepts which are built into categories of experience and relationships. Shared understandings allow people to identify common experiences by emphasising the elements which appear frequently (Dey, 1993).

Defining the constructs was developed through a layered process. Firstly, I identified the key factors in the existing research on what supports school improvement, and discussed these themes and factors with participating headteachers at a meeting early in the first phase. Secondly, meeting with the headteachers and deputies from the eight schools towards the end of the first phase, and through discussion and debate together, those constructs, which they considered most significant, were identified. These were then put into the repertory grid shown in Appendix 4.2, and taken to each of the schools to use in the second interviews of the first phase, and in both the interviews in the second phase.

A review of British and North American literature linked complementary processes between schools which were effective (Sammons *et al.*, 1995) and those which had been seen to improve (Stoll and Mortimore, 1995). These factors were identifiable as those which concern the micro-political aspects of change, those that the leaders and managers of an improving school would control and influence. These were used for the focus of early discussions with the headteachers and are:

### *1. Participatory leadership*

Whilst the headteacher was the key motivator and guide, teachers were involved through undertaking leadership roles and participation in decision making and influencing planning.

### *2. Shared vision and goals*

The vision of working towards improvement was built through the schools. Planning became the process tool, but the product was not lost sight of. The sense of working for the whole school's good was promoted.



### ***3. Teamwork***

The opportunities for collaboration and developing collegiality amongst staff were increased through teacher involvement and empowerment.

### ***4. A learning environment***

Managers striving to ensure that the school was an orderly, safe and secure environment, with a positive ethos and where risk taking was encouraged.

### ***5. Emphasis on teaching and learning***

Leaders promoting the opportunities for teachers themselves to learn and practice new techniques, with teaching and learning as a central focus. A well structured development of varied teaching and learning repertoires, aligned to learning goals.

### ***6. High expectations***

High expectations about both adults and pupils. Explicit reference and strategies to ensure these were promoted. Aspirations and success criteria shared.

### ***7. Positive reinforcement***

Celebration of success, for both teachers and pupils. Appreciation and recognition of teachers. Capturing teacher enthusiasm.

### ***8. Monitoring and evaluation***

Managers establishing success criteria for their priorities, and using these as a focus for monitoring and evaluation. They use monitoring to review progress, make the necessary adaptations, keep the improvement on track.

### ***9. Pupil rights and responsibilities***

Involvement of pupils in the management of learning. Eliciting pupils' views.

## **10. *Learning for all***

Coaching and mentoring taking place for teachers, as well as peer observation and feedback. Managers encourage the development of 'critical friendships' amongst staff.

## **11. *Partnerships and support***

Managers seek to involve partners and community. They use external support appropriately and effectively. They develop networks and clusters. In the research literature on effective schools there is evidence that success is associated with a sense of identity and involvement amongst staff, parents and the wider community, all with a strong commitment to the school's success (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994).

Whilst these factors were shared at the introductory meetings with the group of headteachers in the first eight schools, they were revisited a year later at a progress meeting which included deputy headteachers. At this meeting the key constructs that they held as a result of their year's involvement and experiences were elicited through debating which factors were more important than others. A list was drawn up which both reflected the research basis but also reflected the views of this group. Their own language was used rather than retaining the language used in the research overview. Some of the constructs overlapped, but were considered by the group to be important. I have grouped the constructs and noted the relation to the research overview and the key points which were made by the headteachers during that meeting.

### **1. *Clear aims (links to 2)***

Rosenhaltz wrote 'the hallmark of any successful organisation is a shared sense among its members about what they are trying to accomplish' (1989, p. 13). Establishing clear aims at the outset of the improvement process was identified as a crucial factor. These shared goals are also linked to agreement and certainty amongst the staff of the aims, the cohesiveness and commitment which they bring to the challenge of improvement, and understandings of their achievements.



## ***2. Delegation (links to 1,3, 6 and 10)***

The importance of enabling others to share in the responsibility and take a lead in the improvement was seen as vital, but the need to ensure that competence was supported through coaching and training was also identified.

## ***3. Agreement and certainty amongst staff of aims (links to 2 and 6)***

Clarity and understanding about the outcomes that the school wanted to achieve were seen as crucial. Although this appears to overlap with the first and third constructs the difference was identified as the ironing out of differing agendas between staff.

## ***4. Detailed audit (links to 5 and 8)***

These precise goals needed to be derived from a thorough analysis of both pupils' current attainment and of the contributory factors such as organisation, delegation, training and views about teaching and learning.

## ***5. Detailed planning (links to 2, 5, 6 and 10)***

This was seen as a key part of the process which also supported the development of agreement and certainty about the aims, goals and targets. It incorporated both strategic planning which gave an overview of the school's work within the project, and curriculum planning linked to changes of emphasis within the teaching.

## ***6. Clear targets (links to 2 and 6)***

Whilst overall aims are identified, more precise goals at both school and teacher level were identified as a necessary early part of the process. This gave staff a tangible expectation of what each of them were expected to achieve.

## ***7. Cohesiveness amongst staff (links to 2, 3 and 7)***

A shared view and shared understandings about the common ways staff will work in order to achieve the goals that have been decided.

**8. *Collaboration between staff (links to 3 and 10)***

The ways in which staff work together and draw on individual strengths to influence and support each others' working practices.

**9. *High levels of commitment (links to 6 and 7)***

These were not present in all of the schools at the beginning of the project, according to the headteachers. Collaboration was seen to foster cohesiveness and cohesiveness fostered collaboration. Commitment was needed to the tasks identified and to the overall realisation of the goals. Headteachers viewed this aspect as important not only at the outset, but also important to foster in order to sustain progress during it.

**10. *Training (links to 1, 5 and 10)***

This related to training for all involved in the project, not only teachers using different teaching repertoires, but also the development of managerial and leadership skills and understanding of those with particular responsibilities.

**11 and 12. *Consistent views about teaching and learning (links to 2,3, 4, 5 and 6)***

The relationship between different teaching strategies and different learning outcomes had not been explicit, according to some headteachers, in debate amongst teachers. Developing understandings about what worked, and why, supporting pupils' progress.

**13. *Monitoring the implementation (links to 2, 7 and 8)***

The need to ensure that which was planned and agreed to happen actually did was ruefully identified by some, and seen to be relevant to all. Not only did this act as a check on implementation, it also allowed for adaptations to be made if there were unforeseen difficulties.

**14. *Outside support (links to 11)***

The use of an external critical friend, access to expertise which was not available from within the resources of the school itself, and additional help with aspects of the work was seen to be both prompting of improvement as well as sustaining and facilitating it.



### ***15. Involvement of pupils (links to 9)***

Some of the schools used more extensive involvement of pupils than others. Pupils were informed about the areas for improvement and their active and explicit participation was made clear. Others schools were similarly focused on improvements in pupil performance but did not make these clear to the pupils; rather, pupils were recipients of altered approaches. Those that did involve pupils more explicitly found it an effective lever, particularly with respect to developing shared aspirations for improvement.

### ***16. Involvement of parents (links to 11)***

The involvement of parents was seen by some to be important. This included telling parents about the work that was going on in the school and how they could play a part in supporting it. For example, one school working on raising standards in reading involved parents in supporting their children at home.

### ***17. Involvement of governors (links to 11)***

Governors are not frequently mentioned in the research literature. Whilst governors were all informed at the start of the project, the level of importance attached to their involvement did differ between schools, which, in the main, saw the improvement as their delegated responsibility. I wanted to include this aspect to see whether it was important to the micro-politics of the schools as perceived by those in leadership positions.

These factors were then applied to a repertory grid technique (Appendix 3.2) which I developed for use with the headteachers, deputies and subject co-ordinators in the second two schools in the next phase of the project. The repertory grid technique which I used for the purposes of this research, asked the respondent three main questions about each of the constructs:

- how important is this to the improvement of your school?      x
- what is the ideal (aspirational) state for your school?      y

- what is the actual (current) state of your school?

z

Respondents were asked to give a value, on a score of 1-10, for their answer to each question. These scores were to enable them to identify the priorities for action which they considered to be important (x), with the gap between the actual and ideal state (y-z) identifying the challenge for improvement that existed. By factoring the gap with the value given for the constructs importance, x (y-z), I was able to ascertain the level of disparity identified by the participants which provided a priority for action (Table 4.3).

Construct	Importance Rated on a scale of 1-10	Ideal school assessment Rated on a scale of 1-10	Actual school assessment Rated on a scale of 1-10	Disparity Importance (Ideal assessment -Actual assessment)
Clear aims	9	10	5	$9(10 - 5) = 45$
Agreement and certainty amongst staff of aims	8	9	4	$8(9-4) = 40$

*Table 4.3 A hypothetical example calculation of the values ascribed to constructs of school improvement.*

This then gave a value for the disparity of each aspect, the higher the value implying that attention to this aspect was perceived as both important and necessary. Where the value was lower, then the individual perceived that this factor was either already achieved or not important. I was able to identify whether the disparity of each construct was common for each of the key players within the school, and therefore gain an insight into the extent that there was a shared nature of the challenge for the school. I was also able to:

- compare views between two points in time for the school;
- extract those aspects which were considered to be most important for each school from all viewpoints;
- extract those aspects where there were the widest discrepancies between viewpoints;
- identify those aspects identified as a challenge for all schools.



#### **4.4 Testing and confirming findings**

Those assigned inspectors and consultants working with the schools were deliberately omitted from the groups from whom evidence was collected. This was because I wanted to focus on the impact of the intervention on those within the schools. However, a part of the process of corroborating my developing theories was holding meetings with assigned inspectors who would act as a reference group for my emerging analysis. This occurred between the two phases of the projects, and at the final stages of my research, as the analysis developed into tentative theory (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It enabled valuable exploration and confirmation of the frameworks that developed, and provided triangulation and verification.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This range of data collection then gave me the basis for the enquiry into the intervention and its impact. In the following chapters I shall describe how I introduced the project and the research procedures. I shall consider the first eight schools and the changes that were identified over the course of its implementation, using the range of methodologies identified above but with an emphasis on the data provided through interview as the richest voice of the research (Richardson, 1990). In constructing this account I move to order the themes and episodes which carry the most meaning for my research purpose (Dey, 1993). My own textual representation of these is bound up with my selection of what is important, the authority of the author mediated through the conventions of written language (Geertz, 1988; Richardson, 1990). To return to the concept of the gift of Limerick *et al.* (1996) explored in 3.3, the participants' voices are not muted but given a high profile in the presentation of the findings.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The first eight schools**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter identified the data collection methods I developed or used to collect the evidence on the use of intervention in supporting primary school improvement. In this chapter I will address the implementation of the project development in the first year with eight schools. I will outline the procedures that were followed in order to introduce the project and the events that were part of the project. I will then use the methods for analysis developed and described in Chapter 3. This will establish whether there are changes in staff perceptions about the school culture, and which aspects of the school's practices and of the external support are defined by the headteachers as priorities for improvement. To support the analysis I will use the results of the questionnaires which focused on the school's culture as defined by staff perceptions of aspects of the working practices. In order to ascertain the headteachers' viewpoints I will use the analysis from the headteachers' constructs to identify the disparity between their ideal and actual conditions for school improvement. Additionally, alongside these strategies for gaining understanding of the changes and the impact of the external support, will be the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews conducted with the headteachers before and after the project. I will then identify those aspects which appear to be key in promoting improvement and the aspects which were attributed importance but were also identified as not sufficiently supported in this first stage of the project.

In the following chapter I shall explore the effects of the second phase of the project. I shall consider its implementation and analysis in two schools.

#### **5.1 Details of the first eight schools' involvement with the project and the events that occurred during the year**

The eight schools were selected to participate in the project as detailed in 4.2. Schools were invited at a time when they were not involved in other initiatives and had a stable



staffing profile. They were assessed by their assigned inspectors to be in a position to be committed to the project, to give the necessary support to those involved in it, and potentially to make positive use of the involvement. Following a meeting where details of the project were shared with all LEA assigned inspectors (AIs), a memorandum was circulated requesting proposals and identification of potential schools and outlining the criteria for selection, the resources available and key dates of the project agenda (Appendix 5.1). AIs submitted their nominations, the schools were selected and I wrote to the schools to invite them to participate. All eight schools replied positively to this opportunity.

Over the period of the late Summer and early Autumn Term 1995 I contacted the eight headteachers in order to arrange a convenient time to meet with them and to lead a meeting with the staff at each school. The purpose of the meetings was to introduce the purpose and principles of the project, outline the benefits to the LEA and to the school of the project, make explicit the obligations of all of those involved, and establish the commitment and the interest of the staff. I also explained that, if the school agreed, I wanted to use the outcomes of the project for my own research purposes. In five cases the school's AI was also able to be present at these meetings. These meetings were similar in approach for all schools. The meetings with headteachers made clear the purpose and principles behind the project and gave the headteacher the opportunity to state whether these would not be acceptable in their school. It set out the obligations of the LEA and of the school once the project was underway. The meeting also gave some early health warnings for the headteachers about the need to involve all the staff, that there would be some uncertainties about the exact focus of their work until the audits had been carried out, and that these uncertainties could lead to some anxieties amongst staff (Appendix 5.2 - notes used for the meetings held at the schools). One of the recurring aspects where schools had to be reassured most frequently was a result of the title of the project 'Improving Schools' which gave rise to anxieties about the school being perceived as other than a school that provided well for its pupils.

During this period I also met with the AIs involved with each of the schools to brief them and give outlines of the project process. The project was designed to last a year and moved through the following stages:

Order	Phase	Timing
1	Identification of schools	Summer 1995
2	Initial meeting and baseline questionnaire with staff	Autumn 1995
3	Assigned inspector develops a teaching and learning policy with staff	Autumn 1995
4	Audit and identification of the focus for improvement with senior managers and then staff	Autumn 1995
5	In- Service training for the headteacher and deputy on developing the culture of the school	Autumn 1995
6	Feedback from the baseline questionnaire on the school's culture	Autumn 1995
7	In- Service training for the headteacher and the deputy on action planning for improvement	Autumn 1995
8	A period of time to develop the planning, by the end of term	Autumn 1995
9	Implementation of the planned action, from Spring to the end of the Summer Term	Spring/ Summer 1996
10	Evaluation through data from the outcome measures defined by the school	Summer 1996

*Table 5.1 The stages of the project 1995 to 1996.*

During the year, the headteachers and deputies were asked to attend one meeting with me to ascertain the areas that they had selected for the improvement focus. This meeting also allowed some discussion about how the project was developing in their schools, where the developments were going well and where there were any particular difficulties. Later in this chapter the detail of headteachers' responses is considered in relation to the areas that were found in the research to be of most significance to improvement.

The project was designed to address those aspects outlined in Chapter 2. In 2.6.4, the basis of this project is located within the research on school effectiveness and school improvement, in 2.7 the implications of studies of change in schools are used to influence the structure of the project, and in 2.8 the importance of developing the school's ability to manage its own improvement was considered, particularly through



promoting the development of the school as a learning organisation. The main focus of the project was to raise pupil achievement in an area defined by the school, and to develop those aspects which contribute to school improvement, in particular the development of a school culture which facilitated the focus on pupils' learning.

Each significant part of the project was preceded by training which involved both the headteacher and the deputy from the school. In the case of school 6 the whole staff were able to participate in the training days. These days were led by experts with national standing in the field, in order that the schools would be getting the best possible support for their work. The days of in-service training led by the AIs were supported by training packs developed by myself with other AIs (Appendix 5.3). These packs were designed to give consistency to the way in which the policy would be developed, ensuring that the rationale for teaching and learning was explored by all schools and linked to their stated aims, that the management of teaching and learning would be considered by the headteachers, and that the debate which should flow from the activities outlined would be informed by the recent research into effective teaching and learning. AIs were given additional time to work with their schools in order to support the early audit and identification of the area for development, to support the writing of an action plan, and to help with negotiated aspects of the implementation of that action.

As part of my research data collection I asked each AI to complete a simple proforma half way through the year and to attend a meeting (Appendix 5.4) where these were discussed. This meeting was important not only for keeping the project on track but also for sharing early effects of the work and ensuring the next term's focus on auditing practice and synthesising the issues with the school. The proforma asked for their view of the school's:

- current dominant aims;
- agreement and certainty between staff of aims;
- staff working patterns;
- levels of commitment;

- approaches to teaching and learning;
- physical indicators of the school's ethos;
- any other points.

At the end of the project AIs also met with me to evaluate the work done and propose changes to improve the project for the subsequent year.

### **5.1.1 The initial meetings**

I spent the first half hour with the headteacher alone explaining what I was going to be saying in the meeting with staff and ensuring that the headteacher would have no surprises during the meeting. I showed the headteacher the questionnaire and explained the procedures I would be using to protect anonymity. All the headteachers were positive and welcoming; none voiced any concerns about the questionnaire and several expressed an interest in the information this would make available. Some articulated the view that such judgements were made intuitively, not systematically. I was able to hold the staff meeting with the confidence of the headteacher in every case.

Whilst I had a prepared script and an established time for these meetings, each was different. The schools had already identified themselves as keen to participate and so staff were receptive although they showed this in different ways. In schools 1, 2, 6 and 8 staff were fairly quiet and accepting, whilst in schools 3, 4, 5, and 7 they were interested and keen to ask for more details. The sharing of the principles underpinning the project was welcomed in most, interestingly, as much as the more pragmatic details of the project itself. The opportunity to discuss 'what we are here for' was felt, by some staff, to be unusual. Perhaps at this particular time teachers had become very familiar with initiatives, such as the introduction of the range of requirements from the Education Reform Act (DfE, 1988) and in particular the National Curriculum, but were less familiar with the opportunity for discussing purposes and principles. There were concerns, from some of the headteachers, that at this stage specific details about what each school would be doing were not presented and that only the general outline given in Appendix 5.5 was available. The project design was an 'organic' approach as opposed to



the mechanistic, a distinction made by Hopkins *et al.* (1994). I was providing general strategic guidelines developed from broad principles, seeking to find what would work in practice as opposed to what would fit in terms of predetermined decisions. Information about predictable events and expectations was not available because that depended on the outcomes of the schools' audits and the priorities they decided to work on. I could give a generic framework, but they would be completing the details. It was clear that in general staff were keen to know precisely what was expected of them and the part each would play. There was some anxiety expressed by some headteachers, about increased workloads for staff, and in several schools discussions took place about ensuring that the work focused on the important issue of raising achievement and the project having the potential of enabling the focus of teachers' work to be more refined than it might otherwise have been. These discussions were important. Whilst the national agenda was concerned with raising standards, any changes in teaching practice to achieve this would be enacted by teachers (Spillane, 1999). A further emphasis of the discussions was the LEA principle that support for schools starts with the premise of the school's own autonomy, and that the project sought to promote the school's development of skills, acting as a pump primer and therefore only lasting a year, but with the intention of leaving the schools in a position to take the initiatives forward.

### **5.1.2 The baseline questionnaire**

The questionnaire which I developed to establish the cultural climate of the schools (4.3.2) was first administered at this meeting. It was handed out towards the end of the meeting. I introduced it as part of the repertoire of tools which would help with the school's audit of its strengths and weaknesses. Schools would receive feedback on their profile compared with the averaged profiles of all the other school's in the project, which I would complete over the Summer holidays. My instructions were to read the questions and respond as honestly as possible to the position statements. I asked that they did not spend too long reflecting on their response but gave their first reaction. If there were any queries about the questions I would answer them. Once the questionnaires were completed, staff were asked to place them on the table face down for collection. I made clear that responses would be totalled and individual responses would not be traceable.

This element was also completed without any significant difficulties, apart from one school. Here there was a new headteacher, and staff were concerned whether they were referring to past or predicted practice. Staff took the questionnaires seriously and they completed them independently and quietly. There were very few questions about the questions themselves as the introduction had stated that they were about the school as they each saw it. When feedback was given to them of the overall analysis (Appendix 5.6), it was accepted as reflecting the school accurately from a collective perspective. Any major ambiguities in the questions themselves had clearly been sufficiently addressed in the initial design of the questionnaire (4.3.2). For every school the values ascribed to each of the statements was totalled in the manner detailed in section 4.3.2, compared against the average responses from all schools, and fed back to them through their AI (Appendix 5.6).

### **5.1.3 Developing a teaching and learning policy**

This element was designed to encourage the debate about pedagogy, the relationship between teaching and learning, in each school. The day was led by the school's AI. Importantly discussions about quality and effectiveness were promoted, so that the importance of raising standards and the development of learning skills were valued and shared. An introduction to what is known about effective teaching moved to asking staff to use that information, and relate this to current school aims and teaching and learning practices. It involved considerable debate and discussion between staff about different aspects of their practice, such as planning, assessment, class routines. In several of the schools it resulted in dissatisfaction with the current schools aims, in particular the lack of any explicit reference to raising standards. According to the AIs most schools had statements about pupils reaching 'their full potential' but staff in several of the schools identified a need to refine that statement further. The completed teaching and learning policy document (an example is given as Appendix 5.7) was then developed by the school to inform subsequent practice in classrooms. The school linked its aims to clear criteria for the teaching and learning experience, with the observable outcomes expected made explicit and the way in which these outcomes can be used for monitoring the



implementation of the policy defined. In this way the aims of debating practice, setting expectations and linking this to the management of teaching and learning were achieved.

The In-service days spent developing the teaching and learning policy were evaluated positively by staff. One overriding element of feedback was that for the first time in a long time they were able to discuss what they saw as the fundamental part of their work. The opportunity to consider the project, to promote the discussion of pedagogy, and to engage teachers in defining and clarifying their approaches in the classroom was an important feature (McLaughlin, 1990, Little and McLaughlin, 1993). Due to the introduction of national curriculum initiatives, many staff meetings and In-service training had been devoted to updating policies and planning, and implementation through teaching was a welcome emphasis according to the headteachers.

#### **5.1.4 Auditing and identification of the focus for improvement**

The schools were at an early stage of using data available from evidence such as SATs (the national Standard Attainment Tests) results. This was used to define the particular aspect of the curriculum where standards needed to be raised with most urgency. The schools had a tradition of school development planning, so that priorities were often already decided in advance as a result of their defining their strengths and areas for development. The effectiveness of the systems used to define priorities ranged from seeking the opinions of all, to the headteacher working independently and presenting his/her view to the staff and governors. The schools were encouraged to analyse data, but had little support in the form of useful data from the LEA to help them. One of the side outcomes of the project was the development, following a meeting between this group of headteachers and the manager of the research and statistics arm of the LEA, of much improved comparative performance data for schools.

Once the broad aspect for development had been established schools were encouraged to undertake a more detailed analysis of the position. The tools used, including some developed by the school itself, are shown in column three of Table 5.2. These were identified by the headteachers as the measures most appropriate for their use at the

beginning and at the end of the project. The introduction of formal tests other than the existing and statutory SATs was only considered at two schools, one where spelling was the focus and one where reading was the focus. Three schools wanted to use the SATs as the measure of improvement. One school developed its own 'attention span' tally chart to be undertaken at assembly time and during some lessons, another carried out a review of pupils' writing. This range of measures reflects the different emphases of the different schools as agreed at the start of the project. They enabled headteachers to know about the difference in performance in the selected area of focus at the beginning and end of the project.

School	Focus for improvement	Tool for audit
School 1	English- reading and writing	SATs
School 2	Writing	Looking at pupils' work.
School 3	Mathematics - AT1	Teacher review of practice
School 4	English - spelling	Audit of practice conducted by deputy head
School 5	Behaviour-particularly concentration in lessons	School developed tally of time on task
School 6	Writing	SATs and pupils' work
School 7	Mathematics	SATs
School 8	Reading	NFER reading test

*Table 5.2. The first eight schools' foci for improvement and the tools selected for audit.*

### 5.1.5 In-Service training

The two sessions of in-service training were designed to support the head and deputy-head's development through the opportunity for them to both attend and spend time together. The consultants were briefed about the project and their part in it. The use of external consultants to the LEA was deliberate. These people would have a wider perspective having worked with schools across the country. One, Neville West, was also known for publications such as his book 'Primary headship, management and the pursuit of excellence' (1992) which relates to the development of a school culture with a predominant interest in teaching and learning. The other, Pauline Monaghan, worked at Bath University Centre for School Improvement and was well regarded as a presenter in the region. AIs were invited to these training days but only a few were able to attend. Copies of the notes and handouts were circulated to them so that they were aware of the content and the strategies that had been promoted.



The headteachers and deputies evaluated the days immediately after their conclusion (Appendix 5.8). A summary of these showed that all had found the day very useful, with seven headteachers of the eight saying that the shared materials given out were helpful. At that point in time it was clear that these training days were seen as valuable sessions, not least because of the opportunity for debate between the head and deputy and the time made available for joint planning. Other benefits were related to new understandings and new skills that were developed during the sessions.

#### **5.1.6 Feedback from the questionnaires**

The schools were provided with results from their questionnaires at staff meetings led by the AIs. An important basis of the project was to increase awareness about the school's own cultural conditions for improvement, but to achieve this through supporting the self reflection of staff. The questionnaire asked for staff's perceptions of whether statements linked to their cultural and social patterns of behaviour represented their school or not. Staff reflecting on what is done in their school, how it is done, and who is involved in the processes accessed this. In this way the results of averaged values for the school against those for all schools in the project were an assessment of the staff's own judgements, and therefore could be fed back as valid because they were the perceptions of all associated with the school. They were not a result of the observations of an outsider. Appendix 5.6 shows how this feedback was presented in graphical form to allow visual access to the answers to each question, and then to the five main aspects of staff development, leadership, co-ordination, involvement of others, planning and enquiry and reflection. AIs were briefed, and reminded that the questions were based upon what is currently known about school culture and its relationship to enabling improvement to take place. Positive answers would indicate that the conditions are similar to those in schools where effective improvement can occur. It was suggested that AIs used the results as a discussion focus with the head or staff before negotiating aspects for improvement through In-service training or school based strategies.

The analysis was presented as a prompt for discussion, rather than a refined measure and words of caution were issued about the slightly different interpretations that may have been put on questions by participants. Once the school's own profile had been considered against the profile for all schools in the project, any aspects that were considered to be important to address and develop were considered by the headteachers, staff and AI. Ways of incorporating the development of these into the action plan were discussed.

### **5.1.7 Planning and implementing the action**

The schools were left to devise, with their AIs, the planning and implementation of the action. There was no other support for them at this stage of the project than that provided by the AI, and the intention was that they should pursue these aspects with the newfound skills from their training. Towards the end of the year I held a meeting with all the headteachers involved and introduced the constructs for improvement I had been developing for the second phase of my research (4.3.4, Appendix 4.2). They were asked to rank them in order of importance. Values were ascribed to the constructs depending on how many of the headteachers at that meeting identified them as a top priority, so the higher the number, the higher the ranking. I then asked them to complete the questionnaire which graded these constructs, not only in terms of importance, but also in terms of the ideal state for their school and the actual state at the end of the project. A second meeting was held with all the headteachers, deputy heads and AIs to not only celebrate the improvements that had occurred, but also to pull out the key aspects that had been difficult or beneficial and that I needed to take into consideration for the second cohort of schools involved in the project in the subsequent year. The final part of the project, for them, was the reports and evaluations which they carried out at the end, and which were edited and sent to all primary schools in the county.

These sources of data were combined with the interviews I carried out for my research purposes. These were conducted in the Summer of 1996, and again in the Summer of 1997 to see if the effect of any changes had been lasting.



## **5.2 The outcomes of the project through analysis of the data and the interviews with headteachers**

As part of the schools' evaluation processes they were asked to submit a written report to me of their involvement with the project and the improvements that had occurred. This was part of my research evidence base although the interviews conducted with headteachers became the main focus of my analysis as they were a rich source of information.

Quantitative data from the schools was limited. Some were able to supply rich evidence of the improvement of pupils' work from their own scrutiny of it. All were able to refer to the Standard Attainment Tests undertaken by all schools. Most had been reluctant to introduce additional forms of testing to that being used on a national basis. Issues about the comparability of test results between years had already been a focus of much debate in all schools now being judged on the results of this performance more publicly than ever before. Interestingly, Schools 7 and 8 provided the most data, yet their original questionnaires had not put them as the schools most committed to their pupils achieving high standards.

### **5.2.1 Improvements in pupil performance**

The process of the project had been to audit attainment, action plan for improvement and then support the identified action to raise attainment. Schools were able to supply evidence of pupils' academic improvement over the year. Whilst the difficulties of comparing the different attainments of different cohorts were explored in Chapter 4, the headteachers did give evidence of improvement as presented in the following summaries.

#### **School 1**

The focus in this school was reading and writing, and following the project SATs results showed improvements. At Key Stage 1, in reading, 85% of pupils attained a level 2 or above as opposed to 76% the previous year. In writing, 75% of pupils attained a level 2 or above as opposed to 67% the year before.

### Key Stage 1

	1995		1996	
	Reading	Writing	Reading	Writing
W	6%	9%	5%	5%
L1	18%	24%	10%	20%
L2	57%	63%	70%	70%
L3	19%	4%	5%	5%

At Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils gaining a level 4 or above had risen by 17%.

### Key Stage 2

	1995	1996
	English	English
L2	3%	3%
L3	45%	28%
L4	41%	47%
L5	11%	22%

### School 2

The focus for improvement in this school was writing. The SATs results in writing had risen at Key stage 1, and at Key Stage 2 more pupils had achieved the expected level for their age than in the previous year.

At Key Stage 1 49% of pupils had attained level 2 as opposed to 38% in 1995. 5% had managed the higher level as opposed to none the previous year.

	1995	1996
W	20%	15%
L1	42%	36%
L2	38%	44%
L3	0%	5%

At Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils gaining a level 4 or above had risen by 10%, although none had reached the higher level.



## Key Stage 2

	English	English
L1	4%	4%
L2	8%	7%
L3	45%	36%
L4	39%	53%
L5	4%	0%

## School 3

The focus for improvement was in mathematics at Key Stage 2. The results of the Key Stage 2 SATs had shown a rise in attainment.

At Key Stage 2 61% of pupils had attained level 4 or above against 27% the previous year.

	1995	1996
L2	18%	9%
L3	55%	30%
L4	25%	55%
L5	2%	6%

## School 4

The school had selected as its focus for improvement spelling. The headteacher reported improvements, but no data was provided.

## School 5

Behaviour, particularly reducing off task behaviour in lessons, and increasing attentiveness in whole school events such as assembly, was the focus for improvement. The headteacher reported that behaviour monitoring showed improvement in 'on task' behaviour, but did not provide any data.

### School 6

The focus in this school was writing. The headteacher reported that writing had improved, as evidenced through work which had been moderated by staff. This was backed up by the analysis of the SATs results which showed that fewer pupils attaining the higher levels in 1996 than in 1995 in Key Stage 1. More significant improvement occurred at Key Stage 2, with an increase of 60 % of pupils attaining Level 4 and above with 11% more attaining the higher level.

### School 7

The school had taken mathematics as the focus for improvement, but reported improvements in both mathematics and English SATs results. National test results showed that those pupils attaining Level 4 and above in English had risen by 17% and in mathematics by 52%.

	1995		1996	
	English	Mathematics	English	Mathematics
L1	2%	6%	2%	0%
L2	4%	16%	7%	7%
L3	38%	58%	18%	21%
L4	47%	18%	44%	62%
L5	9%	2%	29%	10%

### School 8

Reading was the focus for improvement in this school. The headteacher reported improvements in both KS1 and 2 SATs results. Reading test data showed in the class which had been the main focus, rates of progress averaged at 1.5 year's improvement during a one year period (Holborn reading test).

Whilst the outcomes of SATs do not represent the total drive for quality in the schools, they gave a measure of whether pupils' skills had improved. For national tests, level 2 is



the expected level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1, and level 4 is the expected level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Whilst standards remain low in several of the schools, there is a trend towards improvement evident. National or local trend data were not available for comparisons. Whilst school 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 had carried out some analysis of their results, schools 4 and 5 relied on the subjective assessment of teachers, with these backed up with exemplars of the pupils' work which did show improvement over the time. In schools 4 and 5 the data on evidence for improvement was limited. The reliance on SATs tests was endorsed by the project, in order to limit any additional testing from teachers at a time when national tests were being implemented. In the final reports from the headteachers many acknowledged a need to improve their use of data. Assessment can drive curriculum reform or be a key impediment to its implementation (Barnes *et al.*, 2000). Both summative and formative uses of assessment underpinned the project: using assessment to ascertain whether progress had been made and improvement achieved, and using the information it provides to influence future classroom practice.

The provision of performance data from the schools was, for schools 4, 5 and 8, limited. The headteachers were better able to detail other aspects of the school's work which had improved in the process of raising achievement. (Figure 5.1) Whilst these included mechanisms for the collection of data, they also related to the development of more detailed micro-political strategies and systems such as policy writing, implementation and monitoring by subject co-ordinators. I was able to extrapolate from their interviews, and from their written reports, the following areas they had identified as having improved.

School	Additional key areas of improvement identified by the school.
School 1	<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing reading records; a skills record sheet; introducing a new scheme of work and ways of teaching</li> </ul> <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addressing inconsistencies of approach in the teaching; drafting a new scheme of work</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improving aspects of management and issues of responsibility; better informing staff and governors on their roles; improving communication; building the staff team</li> </ul>
School 2	<p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing better analysis of SATs results; more formal discussion between teachers and children of standards expected</li> <li>General :project team leadership of subjects as opposed to individual co-ordinators.</li> </ul>
School 3	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarification of expectations for both academic and social goals</li> <li>improved use of SATs data and more assessment tracking</li> </ul>
School 4	<p>English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>policy writing; developing English audit techniques; researching teaching of spelling</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>head and deputy addressing management of change; improved action planning</li> </ul>
School 5	<p>Behaviour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved assessment of observed patterns; improved overall assessment in reading and core subjects; clear expectations of teachers and pupils.</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>involvement of pupils, parents, governors and the wider community; involvement of all staff in effective management of behaviour</li> </ul>
School 6	<p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more involvement of pupils in reviewing their work; improved attitudes</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved action planning; improved assessment procedures</li> </ul>
School 7	<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>much improved rigorous data analysis leading to identification of specific difficulties for pupils and teachers; improved record keeping and assessment procedures.</li> </ul> <p>Mathematics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seeing other ways of teaching; establishing setting organization; more whole group teaching</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved involvement of governors; collaboration between staff; involvement, motivation and commitment of staff; improved communication.</li> </ul>
School 8	<p>English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishing teaching entitlements for all year groups; sharing and spreading good practice; consistency of expectation; raised expectations</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved ability to measure progress through tests; shared vision about achievement; more communication between teachers</li> </ul>

*Figure 5.1 Additional key areas of improvement as identified by the schools.*



### 5.2.2 Headteachers' assessment of the key factors for improvement

All headteachers were able to identify improvements, based on their observations of changes in practice and in the detail of the day-to-day life of the school. Some of those improvements were about improved systems to support improvements. Whilst there was a lack of reference to precise improvements in academic performance by six of the headteachers, there was a much more developed sense of the need to access the information to allow this analysis to be made. Many of the heads pointed out that the project had had insufficient time to embed the improvements, and they were planning how they would be developing the work over the subsequent year. The findings from data collected at interviews on the difference between the headteachers' assessment of the ideal conditions for their school's improvement, and their assessment of the actual conditions at the end of the project showed interesting trends (Appendix 5.9). Figure 5.2 is taken from the data in Appendix 5.9.

Aspects for development. Headteachers' constructs identifying the difference between ideal and actual assessment at the first phase schools.

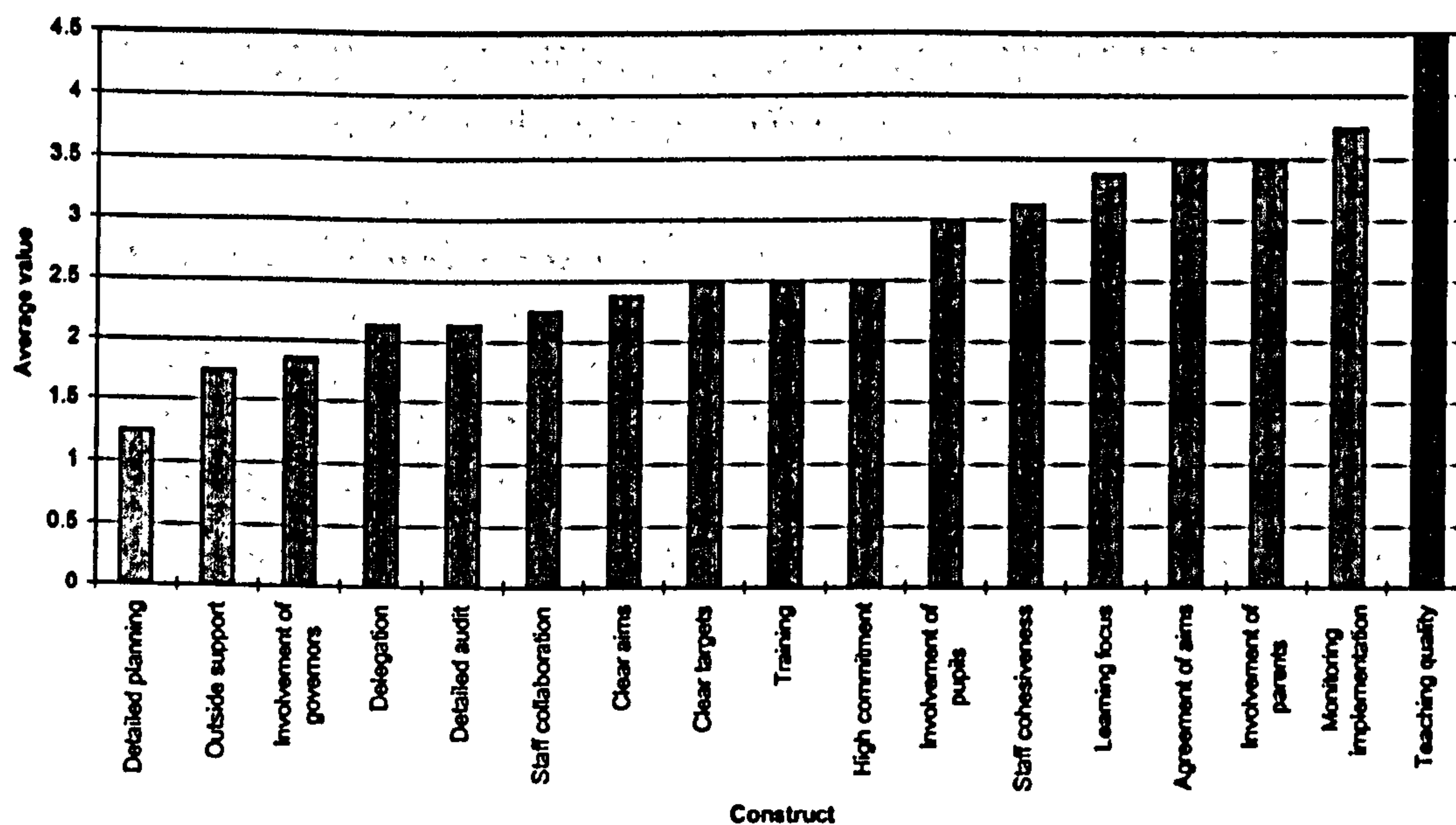


Figure 5.2 Key points for continued improvement identified by the eight headteachers in the first phase project.

The data from all headteachers was used to arrive at the combined view of the headteachers. This shows aspects that they perceive as requiring further improvement in the schools at the end of the project. In particular there was evidence that headteachers saw the quality of teaching as a remaining concern if improvement were to be secured. The monitoring of implementation was seen as the next key aspect to secure within the schools. These points are both consistent with Harris's (2000) view that within school improvement strategies the rigour of implementation is not always attained, that is, ensuring that high quality training supports high quality modes of delivery in the classroom. This analysis influenced the way in which the next phase of the project was designed, with additional emphasis on support for teachers, and systems for monitoring progress.

### **5.3 The key elements of the improvement process as identified by the headteachers and the key aspects of intervention which supported these**

Through the interviews I was able to probe further and gained further insights into the way in which improvement had been promoted. Whilst my conclusions are based on the perceptions of those interviewed they are backed up by the measures used by the schools to assess the changes in their pupils' achievement.

#### **5.3.1 Dominant improvement activities**

The perceptions of those interviewed show the complex range of influences on a school. During the course of the project other initiatives were occurring simultaneously, such as OFSTED inspections (four of the eight schools) significant staff changes (one school) and major building works (one school). These had the capacity to both divert or enhance the headteacher and staff from focusing on improvement. I identified dominant aspects, which had served to support the development of these schools, by analysing transcripts of the two interviews, one held immediately after the project and the other a year later. In this first project these were held with the headteachers only, so others' perspectives are accounted for through the headteacher. These common threads arising from the interviews with headteachers appeared to be key in moving the schools forward.



The integration with the model of school improvement outlined in Chapter 1 is shown in Figure 5.3. This model identifies the key stages of audit, comparison, action planning, implementation and review (DfEE, 1996, 1997). For each of these stages there were linked elements within the project. These were detailed using analysis of transcripts of discussions with headteachers and from minutes of meetings with AIs. Each stage was related to the involvement of those working with the schools, or to activities undertaken in schools which were prompted by the project. In order to gain more knowledge of the range of linked activities undertaken, and to gain a view from all the headteachers of the constraints or opportunities these offered I focused my questions in the interviews, after the first phase, around these areas.

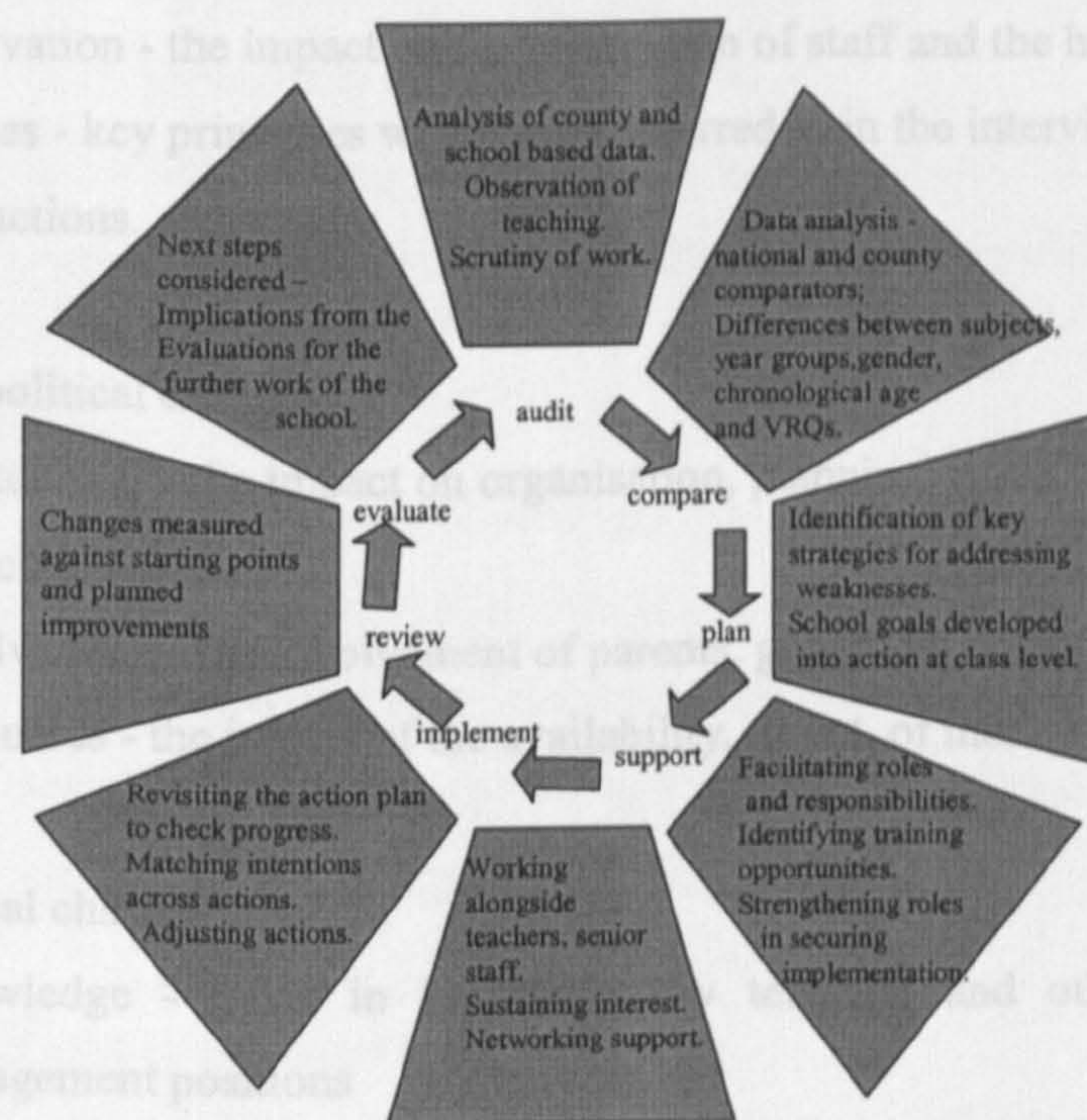


Figure 5.3 Linking intervention strategies or strategies promoted with schools to the improvement cycle.



### **5.3.2 Dominant improvement themes**

Whilst the analysis of interview transcripts started from the range of activities outlined above, my categorisation of these activities became more refined as the projects developed and my research analysis continued. I considered the technical, social and micro-political aspects of change, which led to categorisations within the following areas:

- **Social changes**
  1. Awareness - the changes and activities related to improvement, current performance of the school and the school's preparedness for change.
  2. Affective - the impact on the working modes of the school, the relationships within the school, tensions which arose and the turbulence this led to.
  3. Motivation - the impact on the motivation of staff and the headteacher.
  4. Values - key principles which were referred to in the interviews as guiding decisions and actions.
  
- **Micro-political changes**
  1. Institutional - the impact on organisation, planning, roles and responsibilities within the school.
  2. Involvement - the involvement of parents, governors and pupils.
  3. Resources - the impact of the availability, or not, of money and time.
  
- **Technical changes**
  1. Knowledge - gains in knowledge by teaching and other staff, and those in management positions
  2. Gains in knowledge, skills and understandings of pupils
  
- **Intervention**
  1. Direct reference to the work of AIs, the use of other experts and training opportunities.



In relation to the phases of improvement in the model provided in Figure 5.3 the analysis related in the following way:

**Audit:**

- the raising of awareness of a need to improve;
- the raising of awareness of the current performance of the school;
- the raising of awareness about the school's capacity for improvement;
- affective changes - tensions and turbulence;
- motivation - a realisation of a need for change was frequently followed by a desire to do so.

**Comparison and action planning:**

- intervention - the synthesis of issues;
- institutional changes - planning, organisation and responsibilities,
- resources - the identification of the need for them and the planned use of them.

**Implementation:**

- institutional changes - undertaking new roles;
- affective changes - relationships and collegiality, insecurities and tensions;
- motivational changes - sustaining interest;
- knowledge - gains at teacher and management levels;
- intervention - key aspects of support or challenge.

### **5.3.3. Audit and awareness raising**

This was a powerful, if sometimes uncomfortable stage. Where a performance gap already existed, that is underachievement by groups or classes of pupils in a specific area of the curriculum, it had not always been explicit. In some cases heads reported there was a knowledge that this existed, but the issue had not been raised with or by staff and was not clear. Awareness was made clear through the AI's analysis of data with the headteacher, and then through activities such as the analysis of linked evidence, for example school

based performance data, pupil's work, or the observation of teaching. Strategies used by AIs to carry out this part of their involvement included:

- the analysis of comparative performance data, based on national curriculum assessments, as provided by the L.E.A. The identification of trends between subjects, within subjects, verbal reasoning quotients and attainment correlation and differences in performance between gender groups;
- the analysis of performance data as provided by the school. This ranged from reading ages correlated with chronological ages to the analysis of samples of pupils' work through the school to assess progress and attainment, or indeed to consider teachers' marking;
- the observation of teaching, using OFSTED criteria, within the subject focus for improvement.

The impact of the range of activities linked with raising the school's awareness was referred to in some detail by all the headteachers interviewed. The importance of this aspect to them was evidenced by the fact that using the analysis provided by the NUD\*IST program the text retrievals I had placed in this category were shown to be a total of 8.5% of the total transcribed text. The range of comments about the importance of this stage is significant:

The project helped us to identify certain cloudy areas and firm them up.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

Really this was the starting point for so many things.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The significance for the headteachers was linked to the fact that issues that arose from the audits were either surprises, or aspects that were known but not clear. Four headteachers reported that the fact that these issues became more explicit and therefore tangible, allowed staff's awareness of the need to address them to be shared and given greater importance and which therefore affected motivation. This new awareness was



uncomfortable in that it led to insecurities about continuing current practices without being clear about what to put in the place of them. Interestingly though, the headteachers in this stage of the project found these tensions useful:

The questionnaire reinforced our view of some things, but there were some surprises in the detail. In some cases it raised issues that people haven't thought of, or I think more importantly, that people hadn't shared.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

We've got much greater people awareness of what the school is.

(Phase 1, School 7, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

The questionnaire was very good for our self confidence and morale because it was answered in such a positive way. There were issues that needed addressing, particularly the sharing of information and communication around the school' which has been taken on board and it has been taken into our development plan, but people did feel better just knowing that we were thinking positively and working together positively and people then shared experiences together. There's been a lot more intellectual honesty I think as a result of that survey and people were able to say things more openly and straightforwardly.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 1, Headteacher)

One head reported that he had increased his awareness of issues which were linked to the affective dimensions of the school, the social interactions and relationships between the staff. Nevertheless this allowed him to consider how to address them:

I'd identified, I think, what were the issues in this particular school and I didn't need the improving schools bit. But through the course of last year I came to the realisation of just how rocky the place was and how much discord and unhappiness, uncertainty there was here. You can't always go looking.

(Phase 1, School 8, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The use of data in the audits was not as explicit in the first interviews as in the second a year later. One of the implications which arose for the LEA from the project was the need to provide better comparative data for primary schools than was currently available. In the

interviews a year later there was more evidence of the awareness of how data could be used both for evaluation, and its importance for directing action:

I found that (tests overview) very useful and I think that has been developed giving us certain benchmarks so we've got this great debate going on matching scores of our kids and where we need to be nationally without going below a reasonable target.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

and

We used some money to buy the NFER reading tests and applied a scale to show where the children were and where we need to put money and time in for children and lift the tail end. We've got a very, very long tail end on this graph. We must have done something about that for them all to get a Level 4 (Key stage 2 SATs results at expected level for age group).

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The audits carried out were related to staff perceptions about the way the school currently worked, how their combined perceptions compared with those of all the rest of the staff in the schools in the project, and audits of pupil performance. Further insights were gained once the link between the responses to the staff questionnaire and the dimension of pupils' performance was considered.

It (staff questionnaire) showed me that staff expectations of the pupils here was low, considerably lower than any of the other schools who were on the project and because we have a very difficult catchment area I can understand why their expectations were lower but I do feel now that they are aware that we've got to raise our expectations higher and to do that we have to raise the children's self esteem because they think they can't. They think they can't, and then they won't, and that's the line we could end up going down.

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 2, Headteacher)

and

I think that the "How are we going to know?" questions were important and the impact that results can have on us in being able to say "Yes, we're going forward" and "This is positive", so this year I've got a much greater bank of information on kids that are going through so I'm able to go to my governors and say "We haven't done this job by any stretch of the imagination, I still think we're an underachieving school, but we're going forward."

(Phase 1, School 8, Interview 2, Headteacher)



Where the outcomes of the questionnaire showed that staff perceived that performance was not monitored, and the AI carried out a subsequent scrutiny of work with the staff, the headteacher became aware that certain agreed policies were not being consistently implemented throughout the school:

I'd been here a year now and I don't think I'd moved them very much - we've got to move each other. We've already done a bit of monitoring but when we had done it people didn't understand the need for it nor did they care for the need of it. So we've moved on in leaps and bounds now because of that session. I fed back to them and said you may not have liked it but it didn't matter we weren't being inspected. It was raising the issues that we need to address and one of the major issues that we need to address is the marking policy. Whereas when I came in and I said all the way through the year - how about the marking policy - oh yes we've got one. Do you take note of it? Oh yes, yes. And it was so obvious that they weren't, so basically they've been confronted and they've had a bit of a shock. That to me is my starting point - it gives me the excuse to go in and say now look we can't have these inconsistencies. So that was so valuable and so constructive.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

#### **5.3.4 Synthesising the issues**

In the interviews with headteachers they clearly valued support for the identification of the main issue for the school. The ability to sift through a range of evidence, to identify where further evidence was needed and the subsequent extrapolation of key targets for improvement was acknowledged as a skill they were keen to make use of from someone outside the school. Headteachers also valued the opportunity to work alongside someone and develop their own skills and strategies, in particular where the AI debated the ways in which the evidence linked, possible interpretations and in doing so challenged assumptions and focused the thinking. Comments from the headteachers were present in each of the interviews to support this view. For instance:

Our AI took us that little bit further and he actually helped us - he just put it so succinctly really, how we should develop the role of the co-ordinator in the monitoring role. He saved us months of work there.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

The meeting as a follow up with our AI was very effective. It brought people together to focus on the issue and I think that proved beneficial as a catalyst to further the school's move on, I think the way that was handled was very good.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

We've looked at what our structure should be and how we should move forward. Our AI is very good at playing 'devil's advocate' with me and asking how are we going to do this, how are we going to do that and made very clear statements that I mean to take on board to make sure that we are moving forward.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

Our AI has been very helpful in helping to devise targets for the early years. He's been in quite a lot of the time, in fact far more time than he's supposed to and the days I'm allowed.

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 1, Headteacher)

This focusing of thinking relates to the knowledge which AIs had developed over time through their work with the schools. The ability to generate commitment to action, to clarify thinking, to identify pertinent questions and promote discussion is part of the repertoire referred to by headteachers. Barber wrote:

The precise nature of intervention in a school which is not succeeding should be the extent and character of its failure. Any intervention needs to be carefully planned and based on knowledge of the school effectiveness and school improvement research. Its purpose needs to be clear; improvement cannot be imposed. The role of intervention should be to generate within the school the capacity for sustained self renewal.

(1996, p.149)

These schools were not 'failing' schools as defined by OFSTED, but the supported identification of foci for improvement had enabled headteachers to validate their own judgements, to clarify their own understandings of relative strengths and weaknesses and subsequently support the development of possible strategies to nurture and address



further improvements. Alongside this is the generation of skills within the school, and not least, the confidence to use them in order to influence the work of others:

My AI really encouraged me, gave me the opportunity to feed back to staff which I wouldn't probably have dreamt of doing in that way if I'd been left to my own devices. Basically it was showing me and opening the door and going through. I found that tremendously supportive and I am proud that I was able to do it and thanks it kick started me to action. My AI's taken us forward a long way.

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

The inspector input, I think, was also a very positive one to talk over issues. We did have a day when our inspector did observations with myself and then my senior management team and I think that had a significant impact about giving us all confidence as a management team and about how to tackle those sorts of issues.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 2, Headteacher)

### **5.3.5 Planning for action**

The project members, both headteacher and deputy head, received training for this element, with the choice of involving their AI in developing their action plans. The most improved school had not only defined a school level action plan but additionally made clear the action for individual teachers through identifying where, in their planning for their class of children, their work linked with the school focus for improvement. MacGilchrist *et al.* (1995) found that the difference between school plans and what actually went on in classrooms created a gap between rhetoric and reality. Staff in one school welcomed this:

The staff came away clear about how you put aims into practice which I think was probably the most valuable thing because they could see there was a point to all the talking.

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 1, Headteacher)

In the response from headteachers about this part of the activity was one negative response concerning a lack of involvement on the part of the AI which had led the headteacher to feel that time had to be spent familiarising this person with what was happening which hampered the process. For instance:

If I could start with a negative, I would have liked the assigned inspector to have been at all the meetings so that we would all move forward together without having to fill her in on all we wanted to do. That resulted I think in our AI being more detached from where the school was.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The In-service training was seen by one of the schools as the most helpful element of the project:

The support we had in terms of the action plan was possibly the most immediate benefit as far as I personally was concerned in being able to focus on the success criteria. I think that is something that had direct effect.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The setting of agreed check points at this stage was also found later to have been a useful strategy for ensuring that action actually took place. For instance, staff meetings were planned in schools 1, 5 and 7, when pupils' work was shared and assessed to see the impact of the implementation of plans.

### **5.3.6 Networking support**

The project gave schools access to other experts, either identified by the LEA or by the schools themselves. This access to specific expertise in a particular area of the curriculum was clearly valued by three of the schools:

We got in A.N. the expert, because we were beginning to realise that everybody in the team was coming from a different perspective and having a different view point, that we wanted to lay some sort of a base upon which to build our reading and writing and all those other aspects of English. We haven't looked back since.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

We also swapped inspector time for a consultant to come and work on English. She came in and spent about two thirds of the day working on English work. That was very useful.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and



Staff said they wanted some more Inset so I actually bought it in. She was very good, in fact she was excellent. This accountability is forcing us to look at it (reading) and everybody seems to be much more aware, they're more organised and more businesslike I suppose.

(Phase 1, School 7, Interview 2, Headteacher).

### **5.3.7 Sustaining interest**

The project was established with key points which served as checks in establishing what had taken place and what needed to happen next. AIs sustained contact during this period on the basis of checking progress that was being made and re-aligning some of their support where necessary. Fullan (1991) stated that 'individual schools can become highly motivated for short periods of time without the district, but they cannot stay innovative without the district action to establish the conditions for continuous and long term improvement' (p. 209). The level of this differed between schools and AIs.

The importance of this element and indeed the way in which it was viewed showed differing perspectives. From some it was seen as the LEA monitoring and unproductive, from others an opportunity to receive encouragement, and as a prompt to action:

The problem is that you say these are our priorities but there are cries from other people about other priorities so you have to decide what are your priorities at that point in time.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

He's been very helpful, he's called in many times on his way elsewhere to see what we're up to and what he can help with and it's been appreciated. He phones quite often, and so yes, you appreciate it really.

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

The input, initial meeting and follow up was very effective. It brought people together and proved beneficial in the timing of the whole exercise and as a catalyst again to further the school's move on.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and

It was interesting really, because it's one of those jobs you start and if you're not careful drift. He came along and did an evening staff meeting which was interrupted by a gas leak. We had to close

the school the following day and he was free on his diary and he actually came back on the following day and we did it. Now that was brilliant because we had things tying together. It helped solidify everybody's thoughts.

(Phase 1, School 8, Interview 1, Headteacher)

A more negative view about the absence of this also shows how its presence would have been valued:

I think it was a bit unclear about how the inspector's role was going to be included. There were other factors, dates that had to be changed, which made a difference. There was a bit of a lull and we lost, not impetus in what was going on, but the way we were thinking about what was going on. With a project of this complexity it is essential to this part of the project that you are hoping will develop.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 1, Headteacher)

### **5.3.8 Evaluation**

The identification of a clear structure for evaluation was identified at the beginning of the project and was intended to be embedded within each school's action plan through the identification of clear success criteria. Interestingly, whilst each school undertook and submitted a written evaluation at the end of the project, most acknowledged how they wanted to take the work forward, through similar work in other areas of the curriculum, through developing aspects of the project itself further, or through using key skills they had developed more systematically. Evaluation therefore was not seen as an activity that drew a line under the work of the project, see Weindling (1994, p. 256).

Comments came from all schools, and charted over the space of a year they show the key points which headteachers found to be valuable. Figure 5.4 shows the key themes that were evident in the headteachers' responses to the question referring to overall evaluation of the project. This was a focus in both interviews, first at the end of the project and secondly a year later to see if their opinions had altered. Headteachers were also asked to provide written evaluations at the end of the project. These three sources of data, responses to the questionnaire, interview and written reports, showed recurring emphases on those aspects headteachers found most important as an outcome of the



project for improvement. All referred to the state of being ready for further improvement. The clarity with which goals could now be defined, and motivation and confidence to take the action forward were important outcomes of the evaluation. As already identified in Section 5.2.2 there was an increased awareness about the need to utilise data. The comments from schools 1 and 4 show an overall empowering of the school, an ability to take control of the planning for improvement. School 3 also relates improvement to a growth in confidence, but with a reiteration of the core values relating to pupils' achievement.

### Key themes in the headteacher's evaluations.

The themes of the headteacher's response to identifying key gains or losses	1 <sup>st</sup> interview	Written evaluations	2 <sup>nd</sup> interview
<b>School 1.</b> ⇒ motivation ⇒ facilitation ⇒ goals ⇒ preparedness for further action	Evaluation was one of the best bits of the project - not only the motivation, not only the opportunity but the ability to evaluate where we've actually come	The project helped significantly with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying the crucial issues that need to be addressed</li> <li>• giving senior managers time to work together</li> <li>• helping us to develop common purposes and tackle issues</li> </ul>	It gave us a kick start and a direction and models and I think it gave us the opportunity to realise so much that we could do.
<b>School 2</b> ⇒ goals ⇒ measurement of performance ⇒ preparedness for further action		The measurement of pupils' standards has been reviewed and has had long term advantages for all schools. This year's SATs results will be closely analysed to determine if writing still shows a weakness.	The reading and literacy work really follows very nicely from the first project so I see very clearly the aim for the school in the next 12 months
<b>School 3</b> ⇒ goals ⇒ measurement of performance ⇒ facilitation ⇒ motivation ⇒ preparedness for further action	In terms of concrete data which substantiates our improvement we can move forward. We understand a lot more about how the school can run. The chance to evaluate has really helped build self confidence.	I feel that for schools to improve their management in all its different roles there must be a clarity of purpose and development. I believe the project has addressed this. Thankyou	It is time, the time factor is critical in schools and I think that is where you do get depressed with current media interest and political simplicity. It does take time and it has to be done properly. I think that the fruit, the real fruit, all that labour is still in the future in terms of achievement and pupil achievement.

<p><b>School 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ goals</li> <li>⇒ planning</li> <li>⇒ monitoring action</li> <li>⇒ preparedness for further action</li> </ul>		<p>The most valuable part of the project was the action planning. The work on success criteria was extremely helpful and came at an appropriate time. Our OFSTED action plan was moved forward considerably and our subsequent school development plan will be drawn up on the same model.</p>	<p>One thing that we learnt from the planning was that we're planning too much. We're prioritising much more clearly. I'm quite pleased with how that's developing. One of the key parts of that, which also was a key part of our action plan was the monitoring and evaluation. I've been hammering away at that.</p>
<p><b>School 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ goals</li> <li>⇒ planning</li> <li>⇒ teaching and learning</li> <li>⇒ preparedness for further action</li> </ul>	<p>I'm much clearer about where we need to go. Next year we're focusing totally on teaching and learning and the planning of what we said we'd do.</p>		<p>It just lifts the professional dialogue in the staffroom and all over the school really. You just do not get the debate in school because you are so immersed in the day to day issues that happen schools need really the opportunity to stand back and debate things.</p>
<p><b>School 6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ goals</li> <li>⇒ motivation</li> <li>⇒ measurement of performance</li> <li>⇒ preparedness for further action</li> </ul>	<p>The success criteria are a comparison of the before and after and to see if things have improve. We are still struggling, obviously it is early days. I think we have done the groundwork ...</p>	<p>Certainly we are further along the road than we were in September: pupils are more positive about their work, self-esteem is higher, pupils are more able to comment on and discuss either their work or a fellow pupils in an encouraging way</p>	<p>It definitely brought us together more as professionals. We've got more confidence to say well really they should be doing this. Staff are not afraid to have a professional input.</p>
<p><b>School 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ motivation</li> <li>⇒ goals</li> <li>⇒ preparedness for further action</li> </ul>	<p>That's really what the project had done. It's been a motivator. We haven't got there, but we want to.</p>	<p>The collaboration between the staff, the willingness to try out ideas and generally support the principle of improvement has been particularly gratifying. The measurable results of reading ages and SATs are supporting our positive view and all in all I feel that we are on a real drive to put some good ideas in place and probably the best indicator of our success as an improving school is that we recognise that we have along way to go to get it right.</p>	<p>I think the whole business has made us more accountable for everything.....We actually look at what we said would be our success criteria from the point of the actual learning of the children, go into the classroom, and is there an interesting corner, are the children reading meaningfully, seeing whether anything we have said actually happened.</p>



<b>School 8</b> ⇒ goals ⇒ preparedness for future action	We've exposed, we have as a staff exposed our perceived weaknesses and when you do that you either run for cover or do something about it. Bits aren't completed and I think there is definitely an understanding of everybody's part to play	Our SATs results at KS1 are significantly improved this year which has much to do with the focus we made on our work and practice through the review. More awareness of what is possible is evident. The same process is now to be adopted for science.	The lasting influence has been probably to allow us as a group to identify the part that everybody has to play in the school's success. Most of the ideals that we have worked to have centered around improving the culture of this school and improving what it does, what its here to achieve and what we are out to get from these children.
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*Figure 5.4 Key themes in the headteachers' evaluations.*

#### **5.4 Lessons learned: key areas to take forward into the next project**

The intervention programme had supported the schools' improvement but there were adjustments to be made. Whilst the overall framework of the project had been helpful, according to the headteachers who had participated, there were clearly some aspects of the intervention which needed further attention. The main areas identified follow.

##### **5.4.1. A focus on teaching**

Whilst the outcomes with these schools appeared positive there were some aspects which clearly needed to be carefully considered before the next cohort of schools. The identification of the quality of teaching was the most common area where schools felt there was still a performance gap. A growing body of evidence suggests that a major impact on the effectiveness of a school is the differential performance between classrooms (Sammons *et al.*, 1997; Harris, 1998). The project had involved considerable time in talking about teaching, in identifying areas where learning was weaker, but there was no support for teaching available in more direct forms. If the process of improvement and change was to embed into the everyday actions then attending to structural changes and the general focus in teaching were not sufficient. A deeper understanding of the affective and social influence on teachers' personal ways of working was needed.

#### **5.4.2 Clearer performance measures**

The schools were in a context where the performance measures of SATs were developing nationally, and becoming increasingly public and important. Whilst these would remain an overall measure there could be opportunities for schools to develop more detailed measures of the particular aspects of learning they were hoping to influence. Pupils themselves would be included in the research focus for interviews: they can serve as powerful incentives for either keeping things as they are or for promoting changes in teaching (McLaughlin, 1993).

#### **5.4.3 Monitoring the impact**

Sustaining the school's focus was one aspect which had been raised as important, or indeed criticised because it had not happened (school 4), or difficult because other events diverted the attention of the schools (schools 2 and 3 in particular with OFSTED and new accommodation). This was seen as an important gap between the ideal and actual perceived conditions for school improvement at the end of the project.

#### **5.4.4 Skills of the interventionist**

Whilst I had considered the activities of those intervening, the skills deployed and the expertise needed had not. The manner in which those working with teachers supported them best in making changes needed exploring. As part of my research findings I wanted to be in a position to ascertain the key skills, both at the level of subject expertise and at inter-personal levels, in relation to supporting the improvements for this particular sample of schools. This needed to be key in my interviews with the schools. The model for successful intervention was beginning to unfold and would be further developed.

#### **5.5 Summary**

This chapter has shown the impact on schools for the better due to their involvement in the project. This has been evidenced through the differences in test results, and importantly through the accounts given by the headteachers. It has allowed me to begin to establish my hypothesis about the key elements of the role of the interventionist in



supporting school improvement, whilst refining some of the activities which need to be promoted in the interventions.

In the next chapter I will outline the procedures I used for selecting two schools to conduct my research and the way in which I further developed some of the research methods I used. I will explore the changes which took place and the congruence between the perceptions of the staff and pupils about the impact of the intervention which took place. I will explore the skills and expertise which were needed to support these schools as changes took place as they worked towards improvement.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Phase 2 schools - implementation and effect**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter I considered the development of the programme of intervention in the first eight schools. I was able to measure the following changes: the differences in pupil attainment, the differences defined by the staff in the way in which aspects of school culture had changed, and the differences identified by the headteachers. In the second phase of the project a more detailed investigation into the process of intervention was made possible by focusing in greater depth on two of the schools involved. I was able to strengthen some aspects of the intervention in response to implications from the first phase.

In this chapter I shall describe the procedures I followed implementing the second phase of the project, and the changes which were made to the project as a result of experience in the first. I shall justify and describe the changes that were made to the range of data collected. To enable a more detailed analysis two schools were selected for the focus of the research. The rationale for their selection and a description of the context of each school is given. The range of data is then analysed in order to follow through my research concerning the nature and related impact of external intervention in schools. In particular, I am concerned with the manner in which intervention can support raising the standards of attainment achieved by pupils. In addition I am concerned with perceived changes to the culture of the school, measured by a staff questionnaire, and the construct questionnaire completed by the headteachers, deputies and subject co-ordinators. The impact on aspects of the pupils' attitudes and the staff culture will be developed from themes generated from the interviews, looking at the perspectives of change drawn from research discussed in Chapter 2 (2.2.4.3). These perspectives focus on three areas in particular. Firstly the area of technological change (Blenkin *et al.*, 1997), to establish whether any planned and systematic features relating to the technical aspects of teaching and learning were identified. Secondly, social and cultural changes linked to the adaptations and alterations made by staff in order to assimilate new approaches (Little, 1990) and to aspects of teacher collaboration (Lieberman and Miller, 1990).



The political aspects will be considered with reference to the micro-political, the changes to structures in order to establish strategies to influence staff and secure implementation effectively. The stages of improvement are then presented as those which became dominant themes, with the technical, social and micro-political indicators at each developmental phase.

### **6.1 The changes made to the second project (phase 2) as a result of the first year's experience**

The sequence of the project was essentially similar to the first year. The funding for the project changed as a result of a successful application to the DfEE to be part of a national project. This meant that additional resourcing was available for the participating schools. As a result of the DfEE requirements, an LEA steering group was established to which termly reports of progress were made, and a report was submitted to the DfEE at the end of the project. These additional layers of accountability did not impose any restrictions on my research, but meant that the research was conducted within a framework which enabled further consideration of the procedures of the project itself with colleagues representing different spheres of expertise and interest.

Additional funding led to the ability to widen the project from the eight schools involved in the first year to a cohort of twenty schools. Two special and eighteen primary schools were identified for potential participation by the LEA, using different criteria from the previous year's group. The criteria to select schools representing a range of contexts across the county, from large to small and from urban to rural was applied. The schools in the first year had been selected on the basis that pupils should be performing better, but also as schools where the project would be welcomed and supported. The cohort in the second year was selected against different criteria: for my research I selected two large schools, one urban and one rural, with persistent underachievement. Of the schools in the project, there were different attitudes to involvement: the personal knowledge of the schools' assigned inspectors indicated that some of the headteachers may have found it difficult to accept an LEA view that performance could be improved. Some of these headteachers might be defensive and some might justify current performance in terms of the perceived abilities of pupils. Others would bring to the project expertise,

such as the development and interrogation of data, and enthusiasm for improving the quality of their educational provision. It was accepted by the LEA that the initial contacts with these schools would need to be sensitively handled if commitment from them was to be secured. Nevertheless, the promise of additional funding and the opportunities that participation would give the schools, were recognised as factors which might strengthen the attraction to become involved.

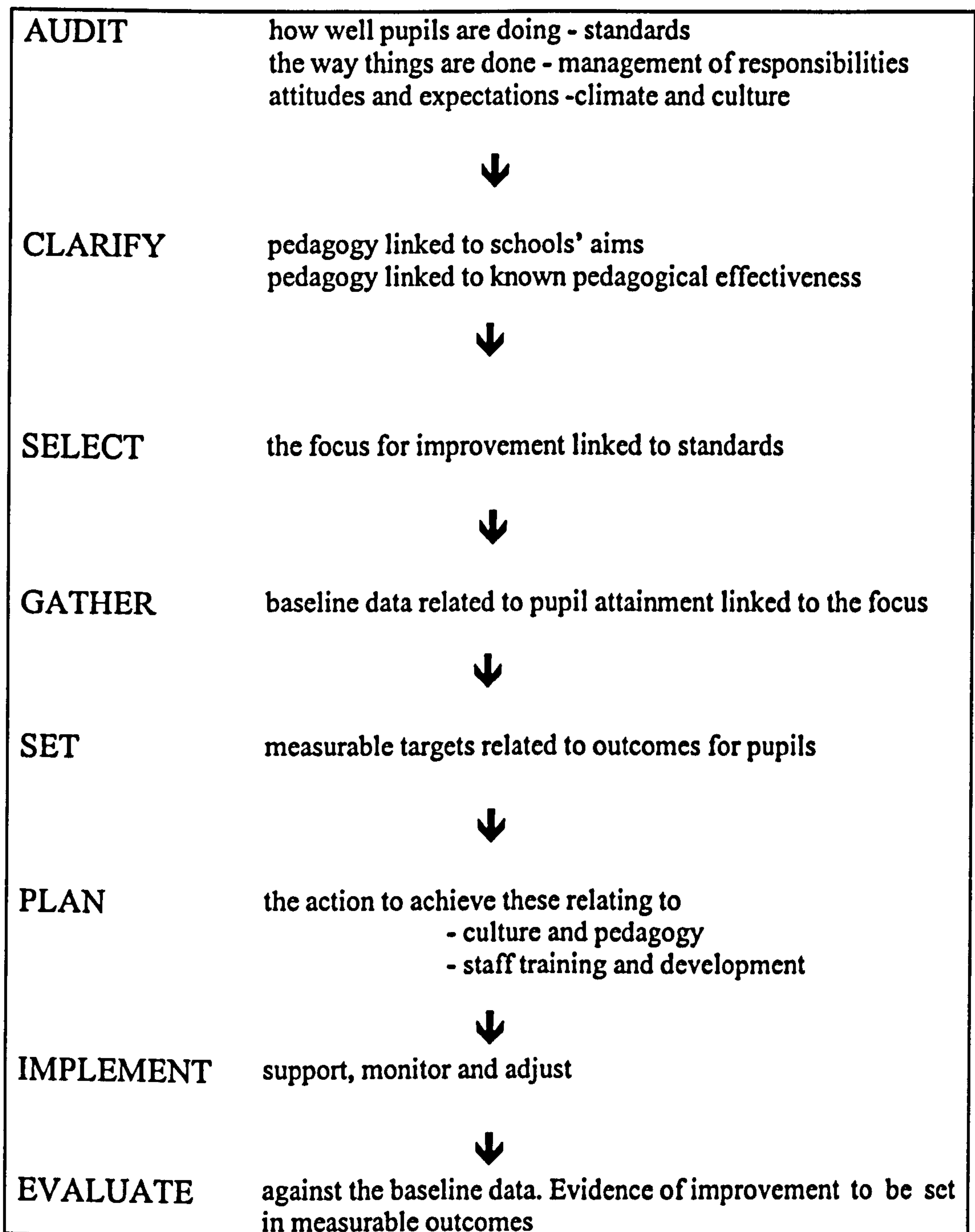
The broad process of the project was similar to the first as outlined in Chapter 5, 5.1. It followed the sequence depicted in Figure 6.1. This sequence moved from the auditing phase of the culture and climate of the school, the linking of pedagogical imperatives to the stated aims of the school and to what is known about effective teaching. The selection of the main focus for improvement was carried out through the audit of standards but in more detail through the scrutiny of pupils' work or through the scrutiny of classroom activities.

The initial audit which schools undertook led to the setting of targets, wherever possible defined in measurable terms and linked to the expected gains in pupils' progress. Once this groundwork had been achieved then the planning for the aspects sought to change was undertaken, with reference to the audit of culture and teaching and the linked requirements for staff training opportunities and development needs. The implementation phase had some support and some monitoring built in external to the schools, and guidance was given by AIs to identify school-based support and monitoring activities in their plans. The evaluation phase was earmarked at the start of the project to show what was expected in terms of data and review by the schools to evaluate their work, and the contribution to it of the project itself.

The main differences in this process, which had been identified as a result of the evaluation of the first project (see 5.4) related to:

- a sharper focus on improving and supporting the teaching;
- the need to develop clearer performance measures;
- monitoring the impact of the work within schools at a range of levels, to include the headteacher but, additionally, involve governors, staff and pupils.





*Figure 6.1 The broad process of the project.*

More attention was given to these aspects within the detail of particular elements of the project. As a result of the requirements of the DfEE, and to promote the role of the governing body in knowing about the focus and development of the project within their own schools a meeting was held with all the Chairs of Governors. This promoted the monitoring of the project within the schools, whilst promoting the

monitoring function of the governing body. The evening briefing meeting was held for all Chairs of Governing bodies from the twenty schools, with an invitation for their headteachers to accompany them. Fifteen out of the twenty schools attended. The project background, rationale, aims and procedures were outlined at that meeting, as were the expectations for governor involvement (Appendix 6.1).

The second major change to the process was the identification of support for teachers. In the first project, identification of teaching strategies had relied on teachers debating effective pedagogy whilst developing the teaching and learning policy, and on support from expertise available within the school itself. For this next stage of the project, external expertise was identified for the specific focus for improvement. For example, schools which were focusing on reading or writing were given access to support from leading professionals in that subject. The identification of professionals to fulfil these roles was an aspect of LEA networking which relied on contacts within and external to the LEA. The remit for those experts eventually selected was made clear, and it was their responsibility to define with the headteacher the exact focus of development work in classes, and subsequently to work alongside class teachers, and discuss skills and develop understandings in staff meetings.

The identification of sharper performance measures was as a result of the difficulties encountered by some of the first project schools in giving evaluations which referred to objective accounts of improved performance by pupils. The role of the assigned inspector in this second cohort was to ensure that measurable outcomes were defined at the beginning of the project. Schools were asked to define what would count as evidence early in the project, as opposed to at the end. Whilst the focus on the national SATs would remain, tracking of progress was encouraged through strategies such as the scrutiny of pupils' work, or teacher assessment of particular learning.

## **6.2 Changes to the collection of data**

The range of data collected differed in the second phase. I wanted to refine my research through getting a more detailed view of the changes from within schools, rather than a wider range of schools. I focused on two schools to attempt to gain access to the complex inter-relationship of change at different levels of the school's organisation. Curriculum innovation and implementation which focuses only on



technical development is a limited perspective. House (1979) suggested that the micropolitics of a school might explain a lack of success, just as the working patterns and social networks of a school were seen to have an influence on the quality of teaching (Rosenholtz, 1989; McCaughlin, 1993). In order to access evidence about change in these aspects I extended the range of interviewees from headteachers to deputy headteachers, subject co-ordinators, a member of the teaching staff and the Chair of Governors. Through this wider range of interviews I was able to access the technological, cultural and micro-political aspects of impact of change in these particular schools, and to access the interaction between the levels of responsibility within the schools. Studies which look at pupil, class and school levels are few. Creemers and Reezigt (1997) identified only seven examples in a trawl of publications since 1989, and only two of these were focused on primary education. Raudenbush (1989) emphasised the need for this in his advice for researchers to 'pay attention to the multilevel organisational structure in which education occurs' (p. 721). Therefore I conducted interviews with individuals to include teachers with different responsibilities - class and subject level, and to include pupils from different year bands. This allowed access to the levels of educational organisation, firstly the individual level of pupil, secondly to the group of pupils and the teacher at class level, thirdly to the group of classes and the headteacher at the school level, fourthly to the senior managers of the school and headteacher level, and finally to the overall LEA level through the meetings with the assigned inspectors and headteachers.

### **6.3 The selection of schools**

The two schools selected for the purposes of the research represented schools where progress in raising standards had been identified as slow. The headteachers of these schools, when asked, were committed to improvement but little which currently existed within the schools appeared to be having an impact on raising standards. Within the schools there were also mixed attitudes to the benefits of LEA support, attitudes which were further explored through the questionnaires administered to staff.

I selected schools working in deprived areas, but in differing contexts of deprivation, in order to find what might promote further effectiveness. One was in an area of significant urban deprivation, another in an area of significant rural deprivation. One

outcome of the first year's project, a side effect of the work, had been the grouping of primary schools by Gloucestershire's research and information unit, into comparator groups in order to establish and provide comparative performance information between schools with similar socio-economic intakes (Gloucestershire LEA, 1996). Z scores, that is scores to describe the relative position of an observation within a distribution, were attributed to schools. Six variables were established using the percentage of children aged 0-15 in overcrowded households according to national census data, the percentage of lone parent households with children aged 0-15, the percentage of dependent children with no earner in the household, the percentage of households without a car, the percentage of households with dependent children who moved within a year before the census, and the percentage of households with the head of households in social classes 4 and 5, that is, partly skilled and unskilled occupations. The Z-score was calculated for each variable, then totalled for all variables to give a Z-score index. Schools were then sorted on this value from the 'most deprived' to the 'least deprived'. Out of the county total of 226 primary schools, the urban school selected came below 200th position, and the rural school between 100th and 200<sup>th</sup>. Of all the Gloucestershire schools, city schools occupy the first 40 of greatest deprivation in the county, using this analysis. The urban school represented a context where deprivation was most marked within the county, the rural school selected represented a context where deprivation is more difficult to ascertain from census data, but exists in recognised forms such as unemployment, rural isolation and a lack of links to social support which is more readily accessible in the centre of a city.

Whilst the project had similarities in its framework at both schools and there were similar expectations of the schools and of those supporting them, a flexibility was encouraged in order to respond to their unique needs. Elmore and Burnley (1998) identify this as a useful principle. Schools were treated slightly differently according to their circumstances with different foci for improvement, different support to reflect the chosen focus and different aspects of the culture promoted in response to the questionnaire analysis. Nevertheless, the underpinning principles of raising attainment, developing the quality of teaching, and supporting the management in influencing and sustaining improvements remained common threads.



## **6.4 Outcomes of the project**

Ascribing the changes that were evident at the schools directly to their involvement with the project is not possible. There were other changes and influences which occurred during the period. For instance, both schools had OFSTED inspections, not scheduled when the schools agreed to participate and which impacted differently on them. Nevertheless, by taking together the data and the interviews which asked participants for their perception of how their schools had been influenced by their involvement in the project, I was able to ascertain the participants' perceptions of the influence of the external involvement.

### **6.4.1 The impact on standards**

The schools had each selected their focus within the subject of English. School 1, the urban school, focused on reading. School 2, the rural school, on writing. The primary analysis undertaken at the schools was that of standardised reading tests in School 1 and the SATs results at the end of Key Stage 2 in School 2.

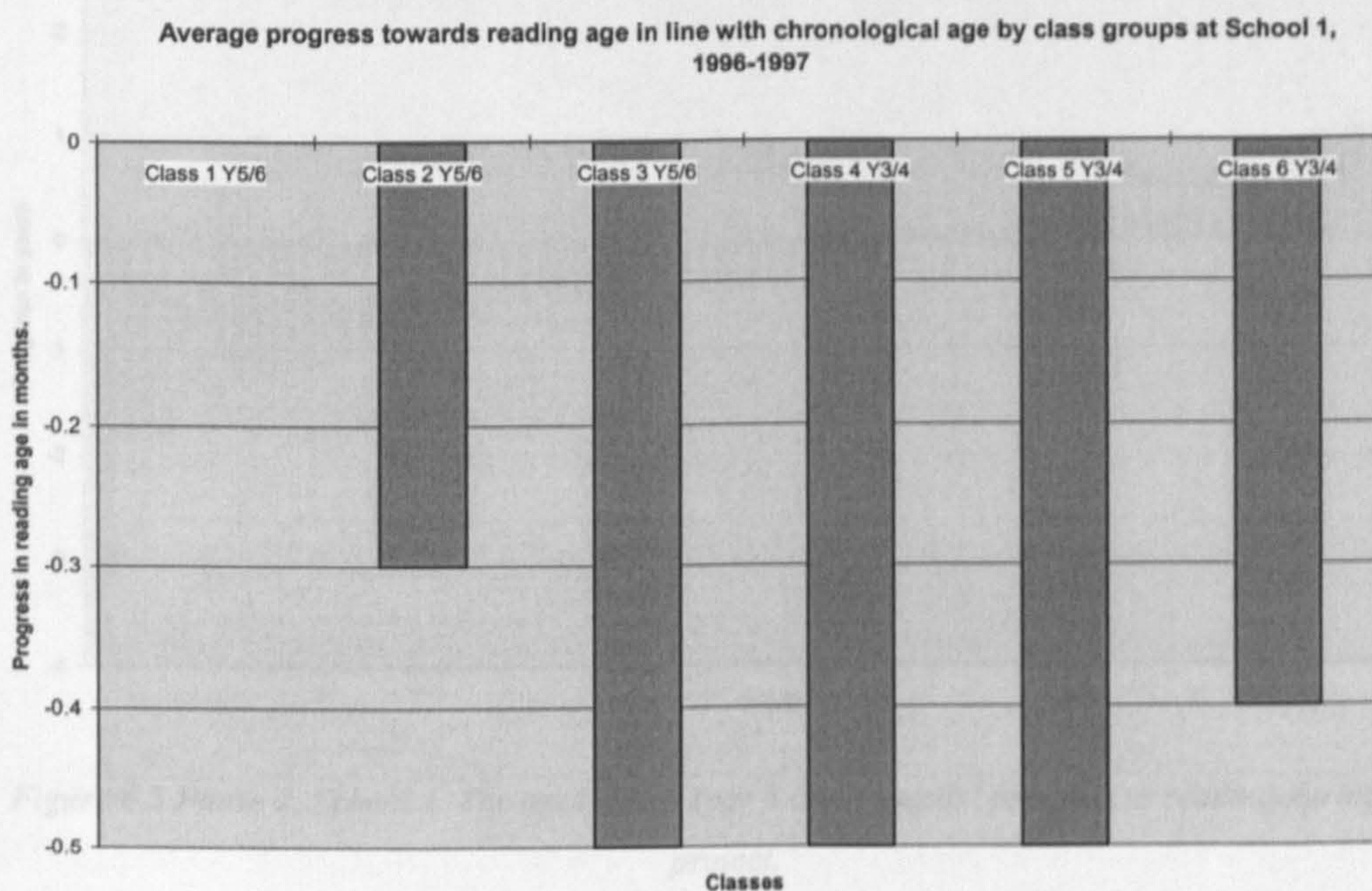
#### **School 1**

Standardised reading tests give norm referenced results in reading ages (Lindfall and Nitko, 1975). This score represents attainment and gives a measure of a child's performance at a given point in time. Reading age, if in line with the norm for the age group, will be similar to the child's chronological age. Comparing the reading age against the chronological age gives a measure of how the child is attaining. Reading test results are given as values expressed in years and months, so that comparisons can be made with the average attainment for the age group. By comparing the difference between the child's reading age and chronological age at two points in time a measure of progress in reading is given. For instance, a child whose reading age was 6 months below the chronological age in June, re-tested in December shows a gap of 3 months, has made an additional 3 months of progress on top of the 6 months of progress that would be expected.

At the beginning of the project I calculated the difference between the chronological ages and reading ages for all children in years 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the school. At the end of the project the retesting undertaken at the school enabled me to have comparable data. This analysis gave me a longitudinal view of progress. I was able to look at the



progress made by all 153 children comparing the difference between chronological age and reading age at the start and end of the project. A positive value shows that progress had improved; zero value shows that progress has been maintained as the expected performance for the age, and a negative value shows a decline in performance. The outcomes of this methodology give an analysis of average outcomes of progress for each class, and are shown in Figure 6.2.



*Figure 6.2 Phase 2, School 1. Class progress in reading during the project.*

It was clear that no class had made greater average progress than that made prior to the project as no class had outcomes expressed as a positive value. Class 1 had maintained similar average progress to that prior to the project, whereas the other classes showed a relative decline in progress. Classes 3, 4 and 5 had a similar profile to each other, with an average decline in progress of five months. Class 2 had an average decline of three months and Class 6 of four months.

I then considered the data by looking at the progress of individual pupils. Classes in the school were composed of two mixed age groups, three classes of years 3 and 4, and three classes of years 5 and 6. This organisation reflected the school's intent to improve class planning by enabling teachers to plan their work for parallel classes together. Therefore, to reflect this, I examined the data for years 5 and 6, the older pupils, and for years 3 and 4, the younger pupils. Here the profile gives more detail



than that given by the first analysis. Each bar of the graphs represents the progress made by individual pupils in terms of the movement of their reading age towards or away from their chronological age (Figures 6.3 and 6.4)

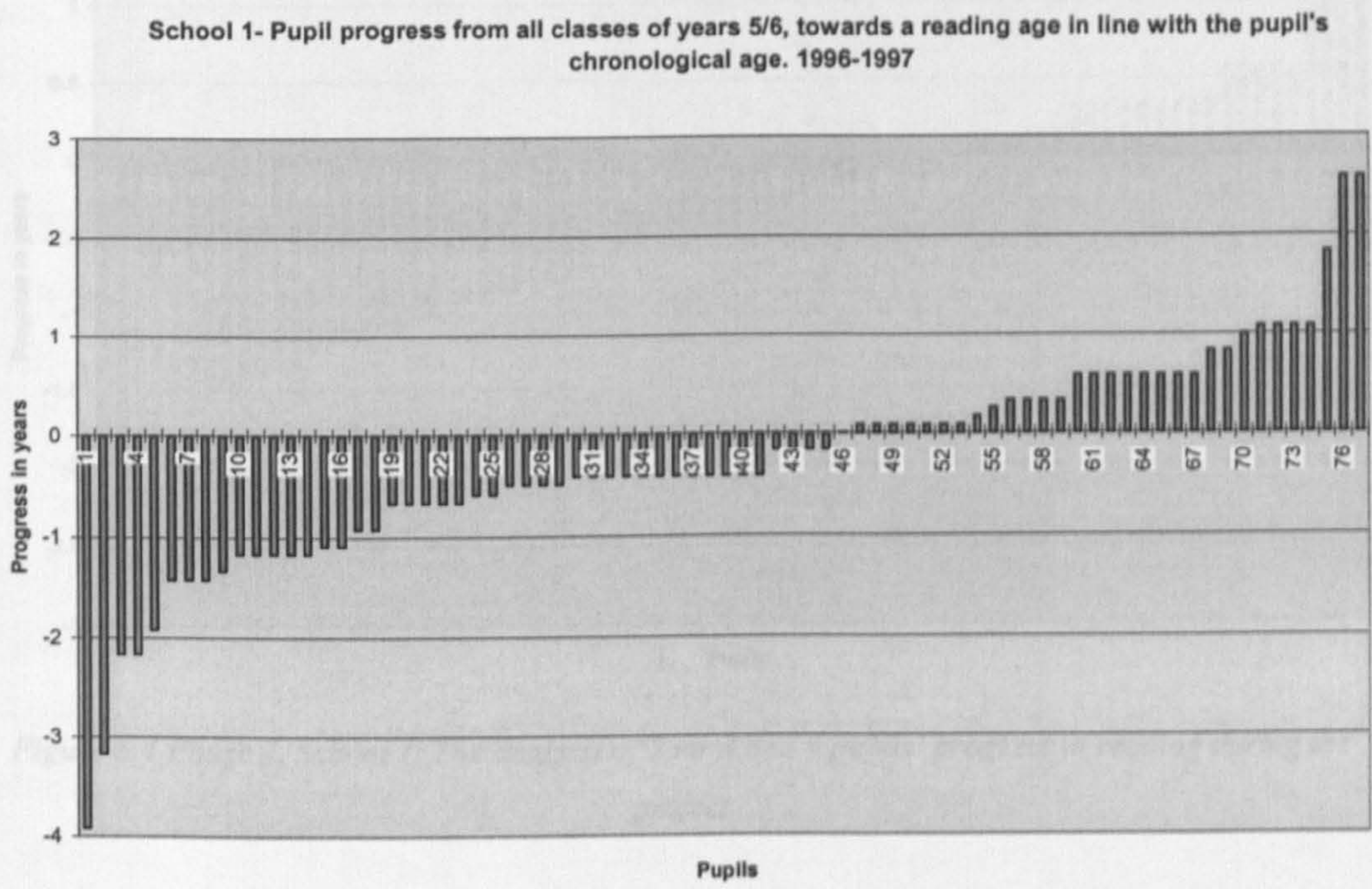


Figure 6.3 Phase 2, School 1. The analysis of Year 5 and 6 pupils' progress in reading during the project.

Pupils whose reading skills were being improved at a similar rate as at the beginning of the project appear on the zero axis of the graph. Those making faster rates of progress appear with positive values, those whose reading age had slipped further below their chronological age have negative values. A similar difference is apparent between the year groups as in the class analysis, with more Year 5 and 6 pupils making progress at faster rates. Two pupils have made the equivalent of 2.5 year's progress. 32 pupils have improved their reading scores in relation to their chronological age, but 45 have not, with 16 increasing the gap by over one year. In years 3 and 4 the difference is more stark. 24 pupils have an improved relation between their reading age and their chronological age, which leaves a tail of 49 pupils whose progress has deteriorated. Of these pupils, 18 have lost at least a further year of progress.



School 1- Pupil progress, from all classes years 3/4, towards a reading age in line with the pupil's chronological age. 1996-1997

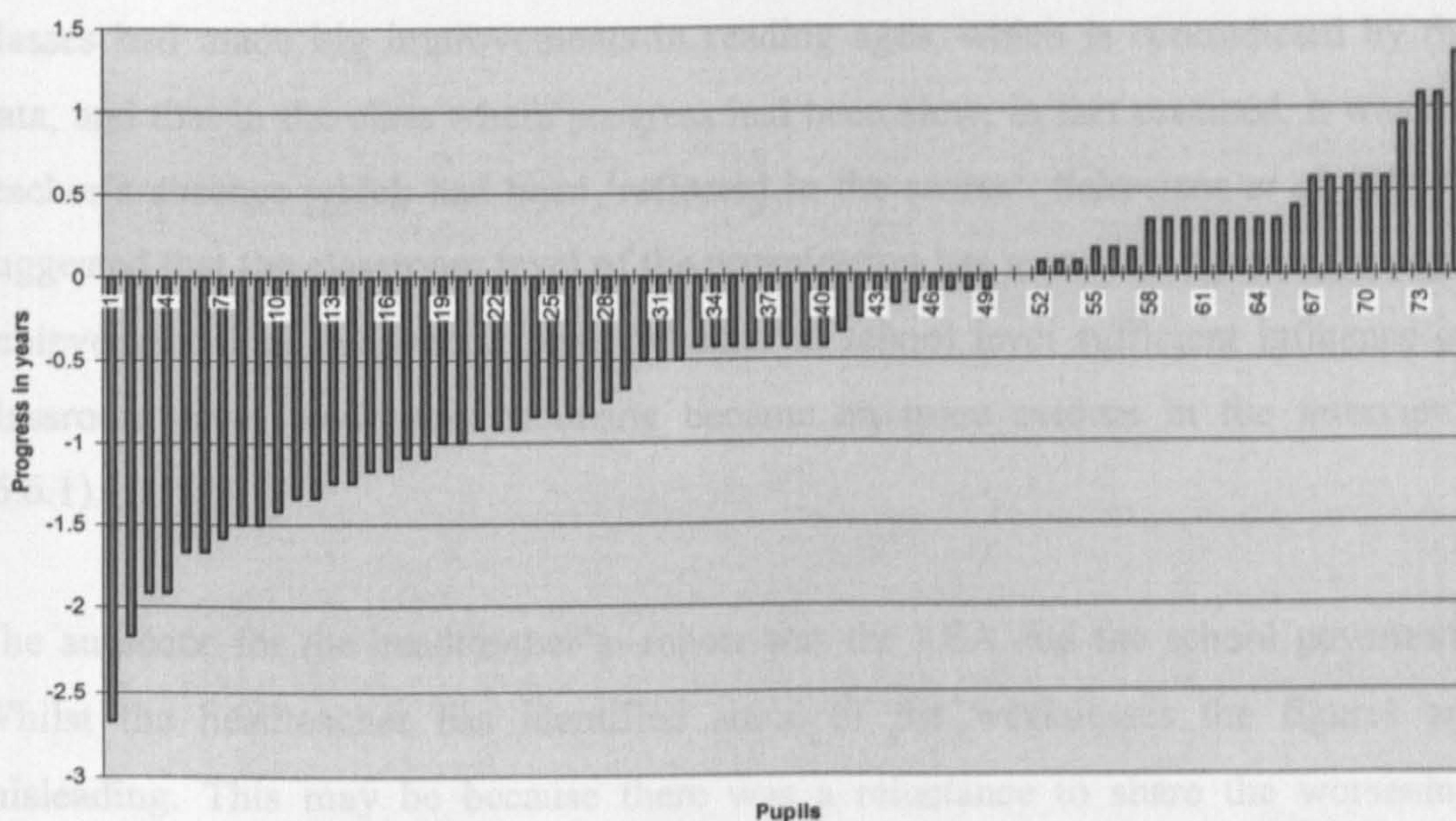


Figure 6.4 Phase 2, School 1. The analysis of Year 3 and 4 pupils' progress in reading during the project.

It is clear from this analysis that overall negative progress with improving reading has been made at School 1. Effects appear to be different between classes, with some classes in both the mixed Year 3 and 4 classes, and the mixed year 5/6 classes making less progress than others.

The report provided by the headteacher gave a different analysis. The data was interpreted in a different way. Progress was measured by comparing the actual reading ages at the start of the project with those at the end. The headteacher's evaluation report stated:

In years 3 and 4 19% of the children had made progress between 7 months to 1 year, 32% had made progress of between 1 and 2 years, and 13% of the children were over 2 years above their chronological age. However, 21% were 6 months or below their chronological age ... In years 5 and 6 16% of the children were reading at or above their chronological age. However 40% of the children were reading up to 2 years below their chronological age and 44% were reading over 2 years below their chronological age.



The headteacher goes on to identify the differences between classes stating that two classes had made big improvements in reading ages, which is contradicted by the data, and that in the class where progress had been slow, in fact reversed, it was the teacher's absence which had been 'reflected in the scores'. Scheerens *et al.* (1989), suggested that the classroom level of the organisation has more significance for pupil achievement than the school level. Whether at school level sufficient influence on classroom level work was occurring became an issue evident in the interviews (6.6.1).

The audience for the headteacher's report was the LEA and the school governors. Whilst the headteacher has identified some of the weaknesses the figures are misleading. This may be because there was a reluctance to share the worsening picture of even slower rates of progress amongst pupils, or because the data had been interpreted in a way which made this conclusion less obvious. The response suggests a different view of progress, or a difficulty with confirming the weaknesses in reading. Southworth and Conner (1999) make the point that 'one of the pitfalls of evaluation is that the analysis of data does not lead to action' (p. 60). The implications of the data had either not been carefully considered or not accepted as a basis for action. Targeting class teachers' needs to meet individual pupil's needs has not occurred, or led to a consistent approach in every class that enables teachers to build effectively on children's past learning.

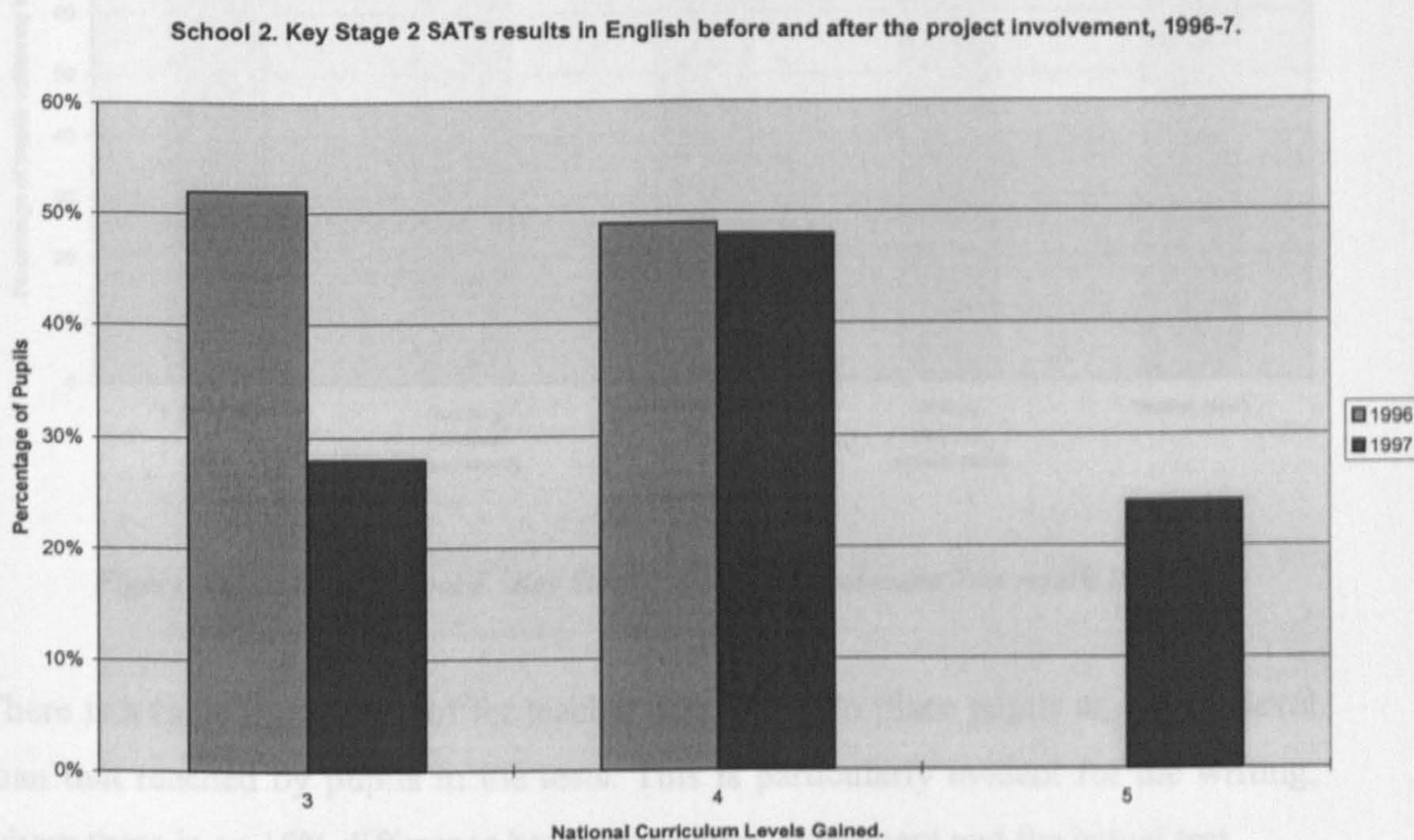
### School 2

The SATs results for the Year 6 pupils were used as the measure of attainment in School 2. The comparison between year groups, as opposed to comparative measures of the same cohort, was made in response to concerns about introducing further tests at the same time as the staff were only in the second year of the implementation of SATs. In 3.3.1 I discussed how year on year comparisons can be used. The school believed that the profile of ability of these two year groups had remained similar.

The previous year there had been no pupil who had achieved above the expected level (Level 4) for the age group. 49% of pupils had attained a level 4. More pupils



had attained standards below the national expectation than had achieved in line with it. This profile altered dramatically in the tests undertaken at the end of the project (Figure 6.5). At the end of the project, 24% of the pupils achieved a Level 5, that is above the expected level for the age group. Fewer pupils achieved the lower level 3 than in the previous year.



*Figure 6.5 Phase 2, School 2. The Key Stage 2 Standard Attainment Test results before and after the project.*

At Key Stage 1 the school had not retained its data from Key Stage 1 tests for 1996. The importance of year on year data was only beginning to permeate into the culture of schools at that time. Nevertheless, similarly high results had been achieved to Key Stage 2 for 1997 (Figure 6.6). The results are presented as the overall subject level given as a percentage of the pupils gaining the expected level for the age group or above it, which is a level 2. Key Stage 1 tests are separated into reading and writing and are calculated through tasks which are teacher assessed and through testing.



School 2. Key Stage 1 SATs results in English.

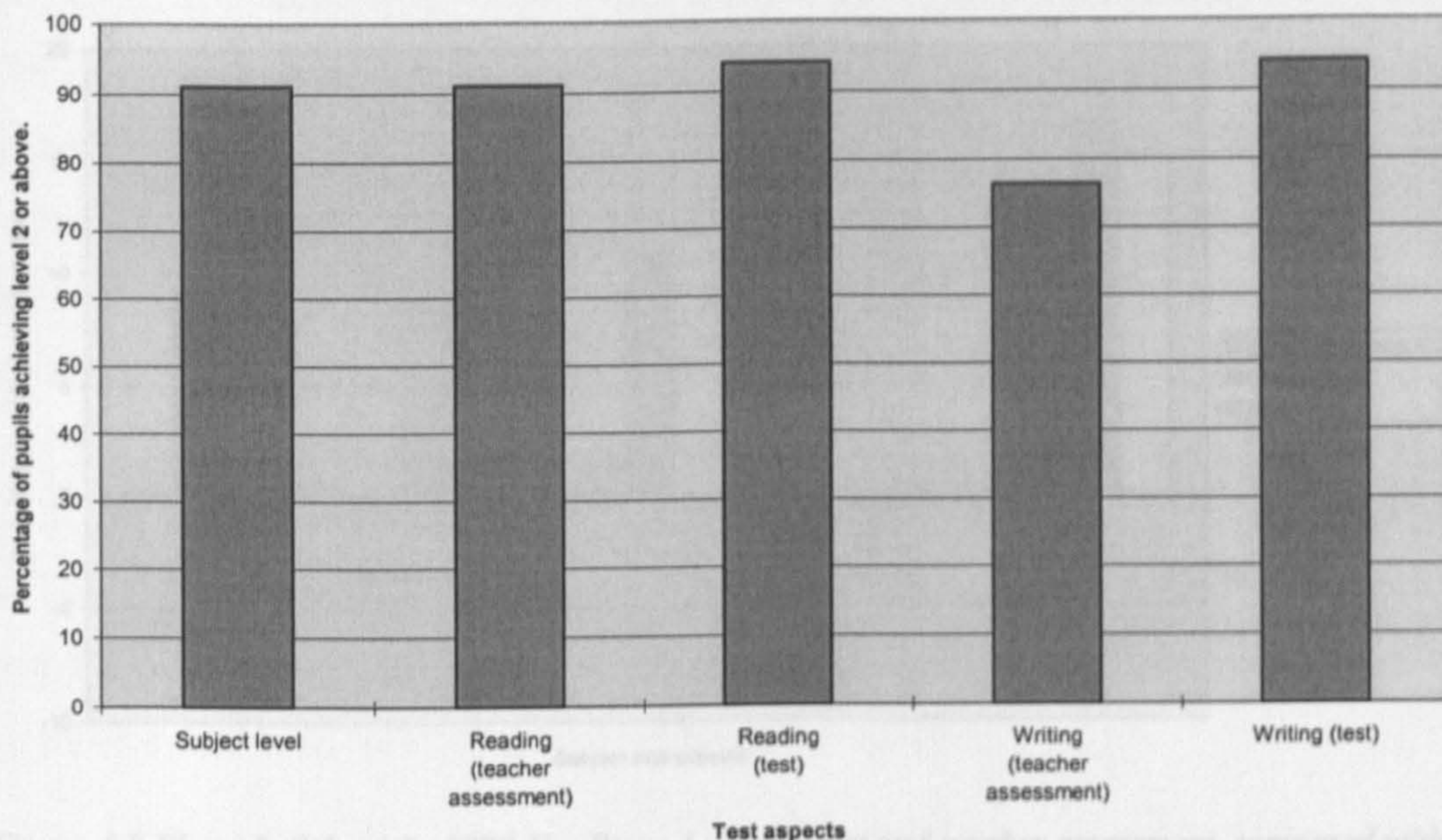


Figure 6.6. Phase 2, School 2. Key Stage 1 Standard Attainment Test results in 1997

There is a trend in this school for teacher assessment to place pupils at a lower level than that reached by pupils in the tests. This is particularly evident for the writing, where there is an 18% difference between teacher assessment and the actual test.

In 6.3 I identified how the county had developed the ability to place schools in comparator groups as a result of the implications from the first phase of the project. This data gave useful information to support the analysis. In Figure 6.7 the outcomes of teacher assessment and of tests are compared against the average for the comparator group in which the school had been placed. A plus or minus figure identifies the percentage of the school's total which is below or above the relevant comparator group figure.



1997 Key Stage 1 results, test and teacher assessment, compared with county comparator schools, all county schools and national results

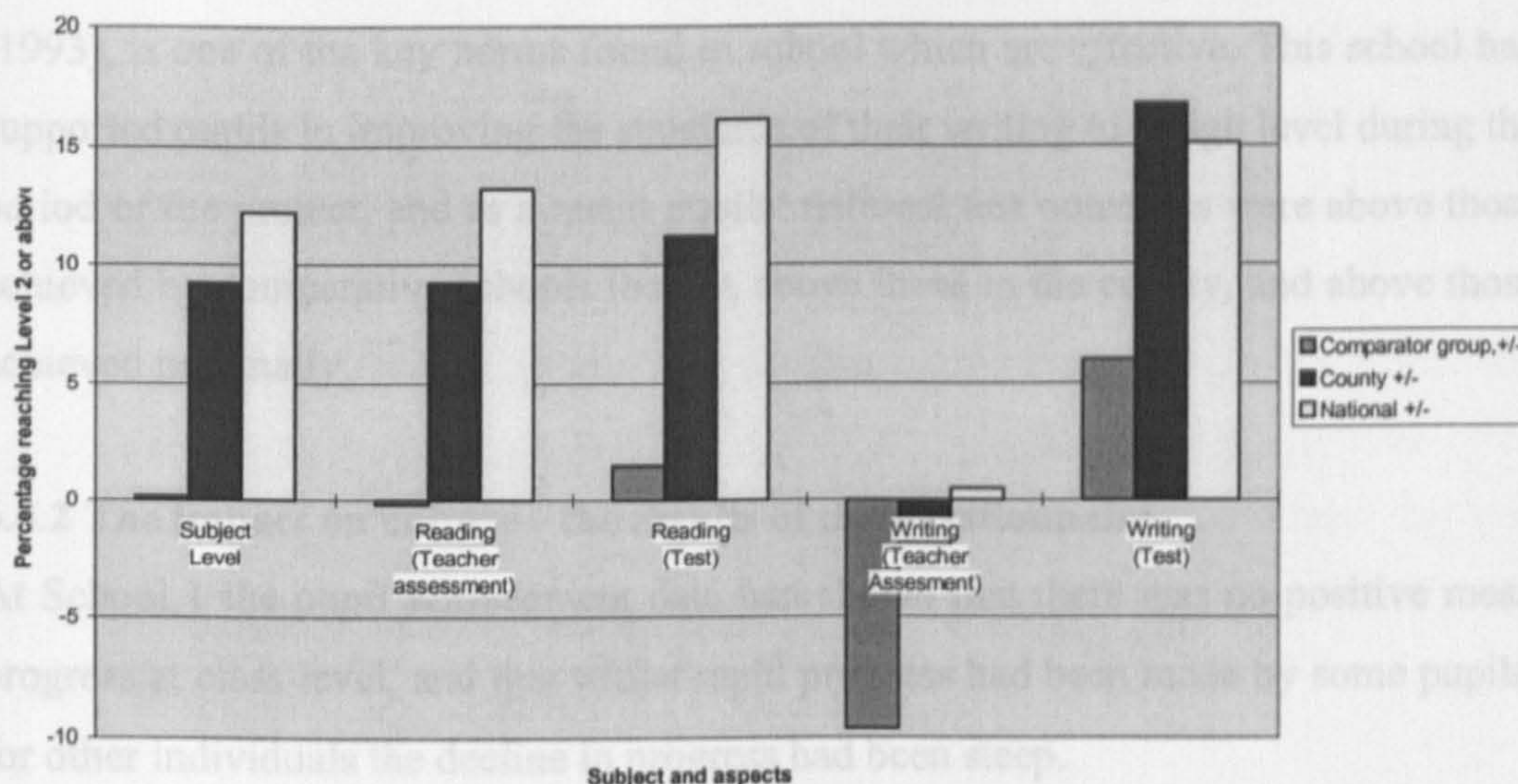


Figure 6.7 Phase 2, School 2. 1997 Key Stage 1 results, test and teacher assessment, compared with county comparator schools, all county schools, and national results.

For both reading and writing, the teacher assessment was below that of the comparator group level, writing more so. When the school's results were compared against all Gloucestershire schools both teacher assessment and test outcomes in reading were above county schools. In writing teacher assessment had put pupils 9% below the county figure and 3% below the national figure, but the test showed them at 16% above the county outcomes and 15% above the national.

These results were underpinned by the school's inspection report that stated:

At the end of both key stages standards of attainment are generally at least in line with national expectations and they are above national expectations for many pupils ... Pupils' written work is well organised in both key stages. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory (OFSTED, June 1997).

This indicates a school that is securing higher attainment of pupils than previously throughout the school. The results of the analysis also point to a staff where expectations of pupils are high. There is evidence that teachers have interpreted the criteria for national standards on the rigorous side, particularly for writing. This



evidence may suggest that teachers had high expectations of their pupils, which according to studies from both Aspin *et. al.* (1994) and Teddlie and Stringfield (1993), is one of the key norms found in school which are effective. This school had supported pupils in improving the standards of their writing to a high level during the period of the project, and as a result pupils' national test outcomes were above those achieved by comparative schools locally, above those in the county, and above those achieved nationally.

#### **6.4.2 The impact on culture - the results of the questionnaire**

At School 1 the pupil achievement data had shown that there was no positive mean progress at class level, and that whilst rapid progress had been made by some pupils, for other individuals the decline in progress had been steep.

The data on staff's perceptions of the school culture was analysed by taking the average scores on the staff questionnaire (4.3.2). The differences in the perception of staff to the conditions for improvement at the school were considered. Twenty eight statements had been given to the staff and they had been asked to state on a five point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, whether they perceived the conditions in their school as matching the statement. The perceptions were gained at the start of the project and again at the end.

The data from these questionnaires (Appendix 6.2) was analysed (Coolican, 1996) to identify whether there were any statistically significant relationships between the changes before and after the project identified in the responses from staff. If the staff had seen little or no change in the schools it was likely that there would be little or no change in the values they ascribed to the statements.

Each set of combined scores was used to calculate the relationship between the scores and the responses to the complete set of questions. The questions were then grouped as subsets to calculate the correlation coefficient between scores and the responses to groups of questions. A strong relationship between the responses to the questionnaires would yield a coefficient of +1.00. An absolute lack of relationship would result in a value of 0.00.

Trends were investigated further by comparing the responses to questions by means of a *t* test with a computed degree of significance. The hypothesised mean difference between the response to the question at the two different points of time was zero, in that if nothing had changed in the school, then a similar response would be given at the beginning of the project as at the end of it. There were twenty eight observations, or questions, to which responses were gained. Using the statistically significant values from these analyses, I was able to investigate the trends in the responses. Levels of significance were rated as \* =  $p < 0.05$  (significant); \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  (very significant); and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  (highly significant). Table 6.1 shows how this was used, and gave a highly significant difference in the mean scores for responses at the beginning and end of the project.

Full questionnaire at school 1	
Pearson Correlation	0.74
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
<i>t</i> test	p = 0.0007 ***

*Table 6.1 Phase 2, School 1. Staff questionnaire changes: the results of the t-test analysis.*

For a separate analysis relating to the same school I grouped the questions into the six subsets of overarching concern: the aspects explored in Chapter 1 of enquiry and reflection, planning, involvement, co-ordination, leadership and staff development. These were the six observations against which responses were analysed, with variable one at the start of the project and variable two at the end. When grouped in this way as opposed to individual question response, the results (Table 6.2) showed a significant difference in mean scores at the beginning and end of the project, though the level of significance was not as great as the results for the full questionnaire. The value for the correlation coefficient was also smaller, which indicated that there was some inconsistency in the responses to the questions at the beginning and end of the project. The overall negative progress of the pupils in reading had not been made explicit, and contrasts to the teachers' perceptions of improved conditions. The potential for cultural improvement was beginning to show, but because the audit of the learning was too imprecise, the focus for improvement was not clear.



Cultural aspects at school 1	
Pearson Correlation	0.26
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
T test	p = 0.004 **

*Table 6.2 Phase 2, School 1. Staff questionnaire results compared as grouped subsets - the results of the t-test analysis.*

At School 2 the results in the national end of Key Stage standard assessment tests had shown a marked lift in pupil attainment, particularly with the higher levels. The analysis of the questionnaires, administered before and after the project to staff, also showed that those aspects of the way the staff worked together and which are thought to impact on the ability of a school to manage change positively had improved (Table 6.3). Using the same analysis as for school one, I looked at the correlation between the variables between the first responses and the second responses to the questionnaire statements. The results of the t-test show an increase in scores from the beginning of the project to the end, indicating highly significant perceptions of improvement. In this school the correlation of responses indicated greater consistency in the answers to the questions.

Full questionnaire at School 2	
Pearson Correlation	0.9
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
T test	p = 0.0006 ***

*Table 6.3 Phase 2, School 2. The staff questionnaire changes: the results of the t-test analysis.*

When the aspects of the questionnaire were grouped for a similar analysis (Table 6.4) as that undertaken for School 1 both schools show perceptions of improvement. In both schools the trend for improved conditions for improvement were apparent, but staff at School 2 perceived more change than staff at School 1.



Cultural aspects at School 2	
Pearson Correlation	0.78
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
T test	p = 0.005 **

Table 6.4 Phase 2, School 2. Staff questionnaire results compared as grouped subsets - the results of the t-test analysis.

The statistical analysis indicates that changes in perceptions about the conditions for improvement have occurred at both schools. When the subsets of the questionnaire are grouped and responses from the staff, taken before and after the project, are presented as graphs some of the differences become more easily accessible (Figure 6.8).

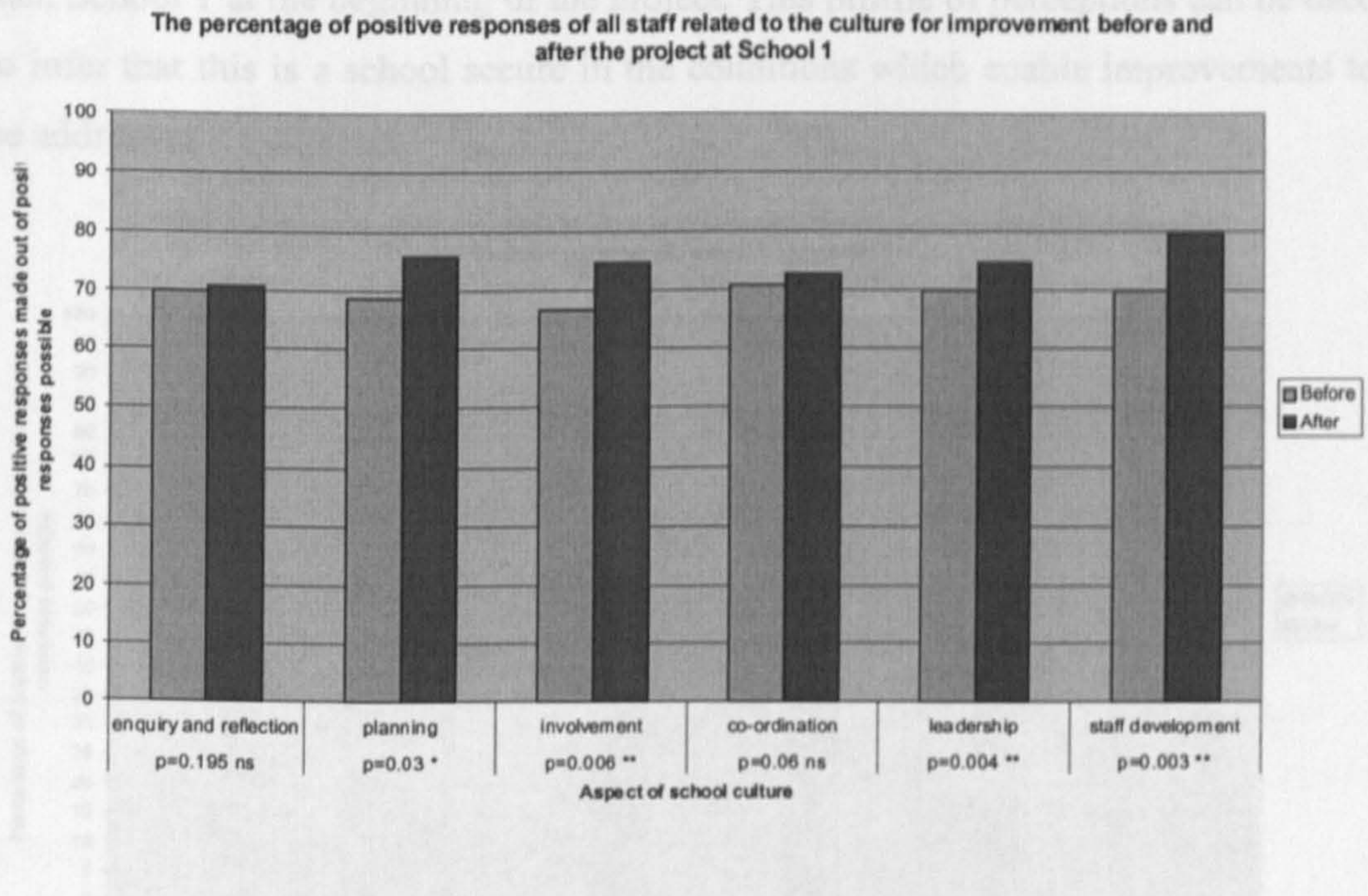


Figure 6.8 Phase 2, School 1. The grouped subsets of responses to the staff questionnaire, compared before and after the project (ns = not significant, \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  for t-test comparing mean scores).

Additionally a t-test of these results was carried out to assess the significance of the perceptions. In School 1 the strongest perceptions of improvement relate to aspects of involvement, leadership and staff development. Where change is less evident is in the aspect of the enquiry and reflection, which could be related to the lack of focus in the audit for improvement, and the way in which subject co-ordination was implemented



in the school in order to influence the implementation of planned improvements. In School 1 the level of planning for technical improvements in pupils' work and the implementation of teaching was identified by staff as having risen, a feature of the stage of development in the school's improvement when action to address the scope for improvement is being confirmed.

In School 1 there was an increase in the perception of the expectations made of At School 2, where improvement in pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 had been marked by more high attainment than previously, there is a consistent trend towards a more positive response. The aspects which staff perceived to have changed most significantly were in the area of enquiry and reflection and staff development, and marked in the involvement of others (Figure 6.9). The least change was perceived in planning and leadership. All aspects started at an already higher level than School 1 at the beginning of the project. This profile of perceptions can be used to infer that this is a school secure in the conditions which enable improvements to be addressed.

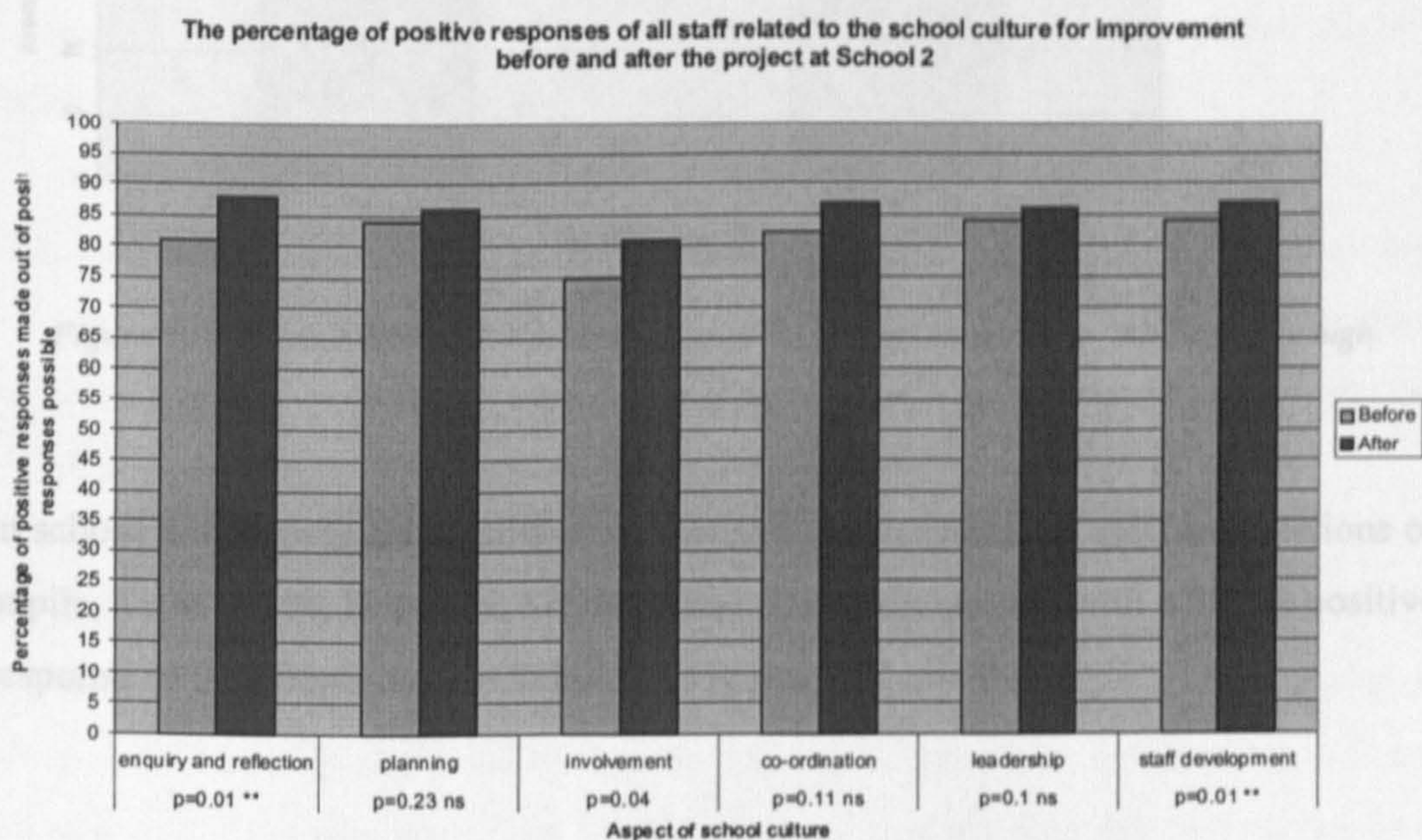


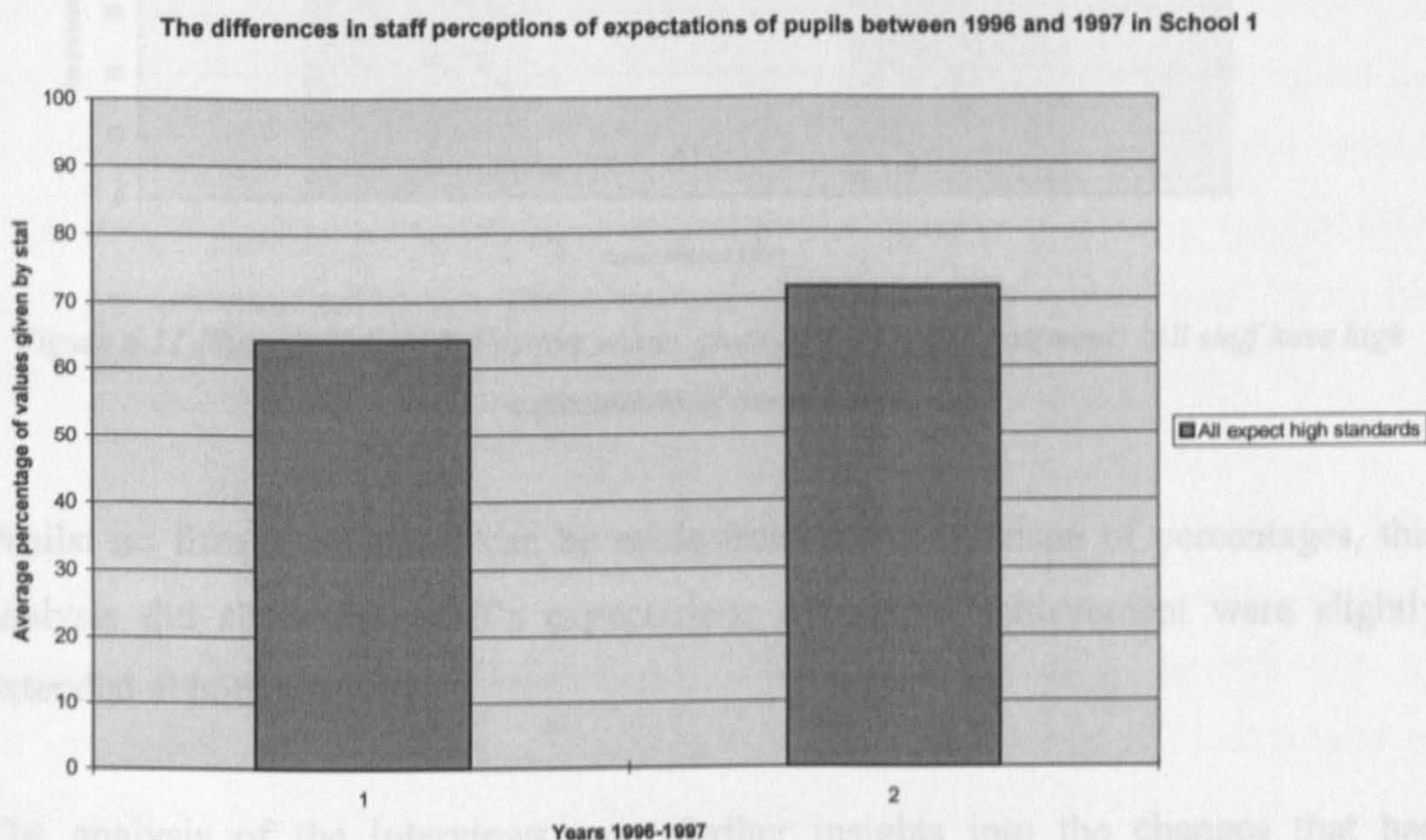
Figure 6.9 Phase 2, School 2. The grouped subsets of responses to the staff questionnaire, compared before and after the project (ns = not significant, \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  for t-test comparing mean scores)

A further exploration of the data enabled me to get a view of how the school staff perceived their pupils' abilities. The project had alerted schools to the scope for improvement, and the focus on raising pupil attainment might challenge existing



conceptions of the possibilities for improved attainment of pupils. Whether a belief that little more could be expected of the children than they were already attaining existed before the project and whether that changed by the end could give insight into what might be impeding progress.

In School 1 there was an increase in the perception of the expectations made of pupils by staff (Figure 6.10).



*Figure 6.10 Phase 2, School 1. Positive values given by staff the question 'All staff have high expectations of our children'*

In school 2 there was also a slight increase in the perceptions of staff expectations of pupils, a rise of 8%. However, School 2 had started the project with a higher positive response to the questions than School 1 (Figures 6.10 and 6.11).



Differences in staff perceptions of expectations of pupils between 1996 and 1997 at School 2

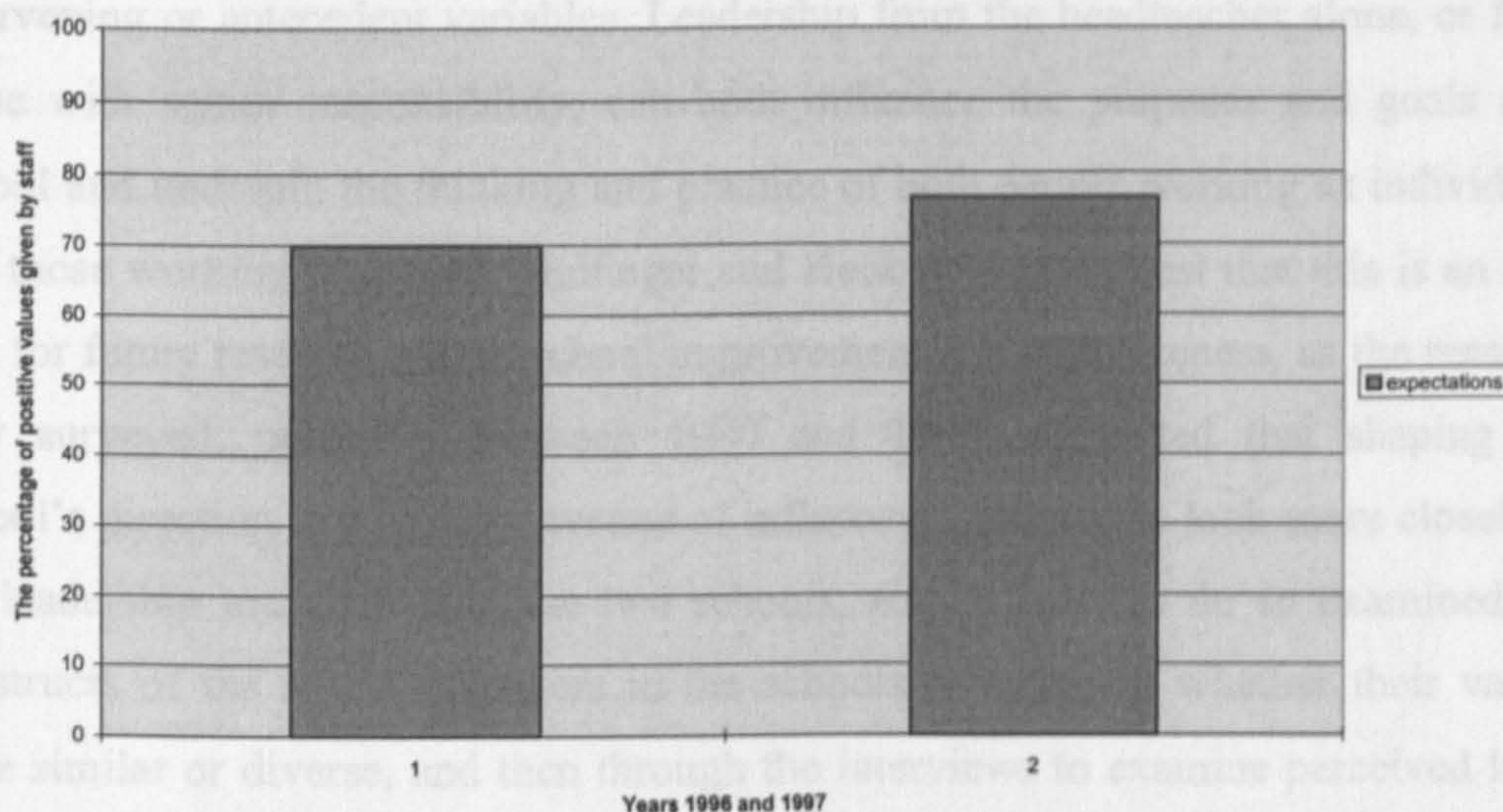


Figure 6.11 Phase 2, School 2. Positive values given by staff to the statement: 'All staff have high expectations of our children'

Whilst no firm conclusions can be made from the comparison of percentages, this analysis did show that staff's expectations of pupils' achievement were slightly extended at both schools.

The analysis of the interviews gave further insights into the changes that had occurred and how intervention had or had not supported them. The early perceptions of how the school was responding to the project were collected and analysed and followed up with interviews again at the end of the project.

### 6.5 Senior managers' personal constructs of improvement

The micro-political concept includes aspects of leadership. The dominant factor of leadership is usually attributed to the individual qualities of the headteacher. Indeed, Teddlie and Reynolds state 'we do not know of a study that has not shown that leadership is important within effective schools, with that leadership nearly always provided by the headteacher' (2000, p. 141). Effectiveness research examines schools which are already effective. The perspective I use asks whether the leadership, or micro-political influences, need to extend beyond the headteacher to address and secure improvement. In Hallinger and Heck's (1998) four fold model of leadership, one model, that of 'direct effects' suggests that the leader's practices can have a



direct effect on school outcomes. Other parts of this model show more complex intervening or antecedent variables. Leadership from the headteacher alone, or from those with senior responsibility, can both influence the purposes and goals of a school and underpin the thinking and practice of both people working as individuals and those working in groups. Hallinger and Heck (1998) suggest that this is an area ripe for future research within school improvement and effectiveness, as the research they surveyed, published between 1980 and 1995, suggested that shaping the school's direction is a primary avenue of influence. I wanted to look more closely at the leadership team effect in the two schools, and in order to do so examined the constructs of the senior managers in the schools to ascertain whether their values were similar or diverse, and then through the interviews to examine perceived links to the development of social and cultural cohesion and improvement within the schools.

I developed a technique (4.3.4) for identifying the perceptions of senior managers relating to school improvement. This was based on eliciting the personal constructs (Kelly, 1955) of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinator. As senior managers their role in influencing events through the school's structures of responsibility had an impact on the micro-political dimensions of the school.

Analysis at both schools (Figures 6.12 and 6.13) shows firstly the differences and similarities between the perceptions of the individual members of the senior management teams, and secondly, areas where they agreed that more development was needed. The link between importance and value gave me an insight into the dominant preoccupations of the individuals concerned in relation to the school.

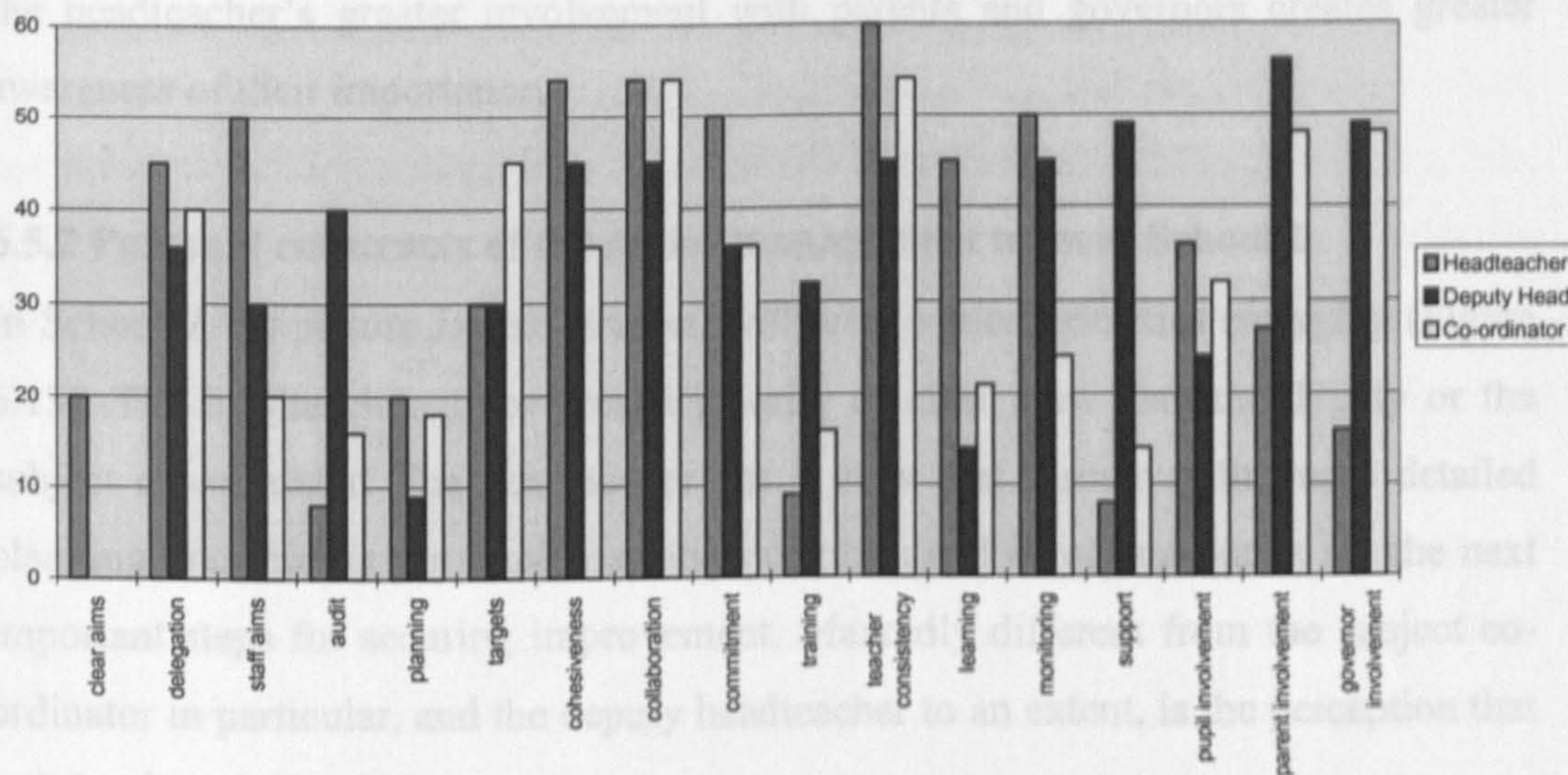
#### **6.5.1 Personal constructs of the senior management team at School 1**

The technique I developed highlights the differing priorities for the three managers in the school. These may be different due to their different roles, or it may relate to different agendas between them. Overall the areas (Figure 6.12) where there was an agreement of a priority for greater consistency were in the teaching and staff collaboration. This is the stage of addressing improvements, through an emphasis on these aspects, for the school. Greater discrepancies with the headteacher's view related to the need for clear aims, and improved learning gains, with the headteacher



believing there was still work to be done. The headteacher did not see parental and governors' involvement as requiring more attention whereas the subject co-ordinator and the deputy headteacher did. Greatest discrepancy with the deputy related to the need for further training, further support from outside the school and further work on audits.

**School 1. Personal constructs of the senior management team. Conditions for improvement assessed against the perception of actual conditions, factored by their importance for improving the school.**



*Figure 6.12 Phase 2, School 1. Personal constructs of the senior management team related to school improvement.*

The subject co-ordinator had a markedly different perception of the need for greater clarity with targets for the school. There was an agreement that more governor and parental involvement was necessary to secure improvement, but pupil involvement was considered more important than by either the head or the deputy.

This analysis shows an agreement that technical changes relating to securing less variable teaching remain important for this school's continued improvement. Nevertheless a need for support for this through training and external support was identified strongly only by the deputy headteacher. Improvement through monitoring was seen as an important factor by both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.

The social changes needed in establishing greater collaboration are agreed by all, with greater commitment an important construct for the headteacher, and greater



cohesiveness also important. However, the clarity of aims for the school appear to be secure according to the perceptions of the deputy headteacher and the subject co-ordinator.

The micro-political changes needed relate to opportunities for collaboration and delegation. All would see further opportunities for delegation as helpful. There is a disparity between the views on parental and governor involvement. It could be that the headteacher's greater involvement with parents and governors creates greater awareness of their importance.

### 6.5.2 Personal constructs of the senior management team at School 2

In School 2 the picture is also diverse, with very varied priorities emerging (Figure 6.13). The headteacher gives greater priority to clear aims than the deputy or the subject co-ordinator. The headteacher has a view that further audit, more detailed planning, monitoring the implementation of plans and involving pupils are the next important steps for securing improvement. Markedly different from the subject co-ordinator in particular, and the deputy headteacher to an extent, is the perception that training is as it should be.

School 2. Personal constructs of the management team 1997. The ideal school conditions for improvement related to the perception of actual conditions, factored by the perception of their importance in improving the school.

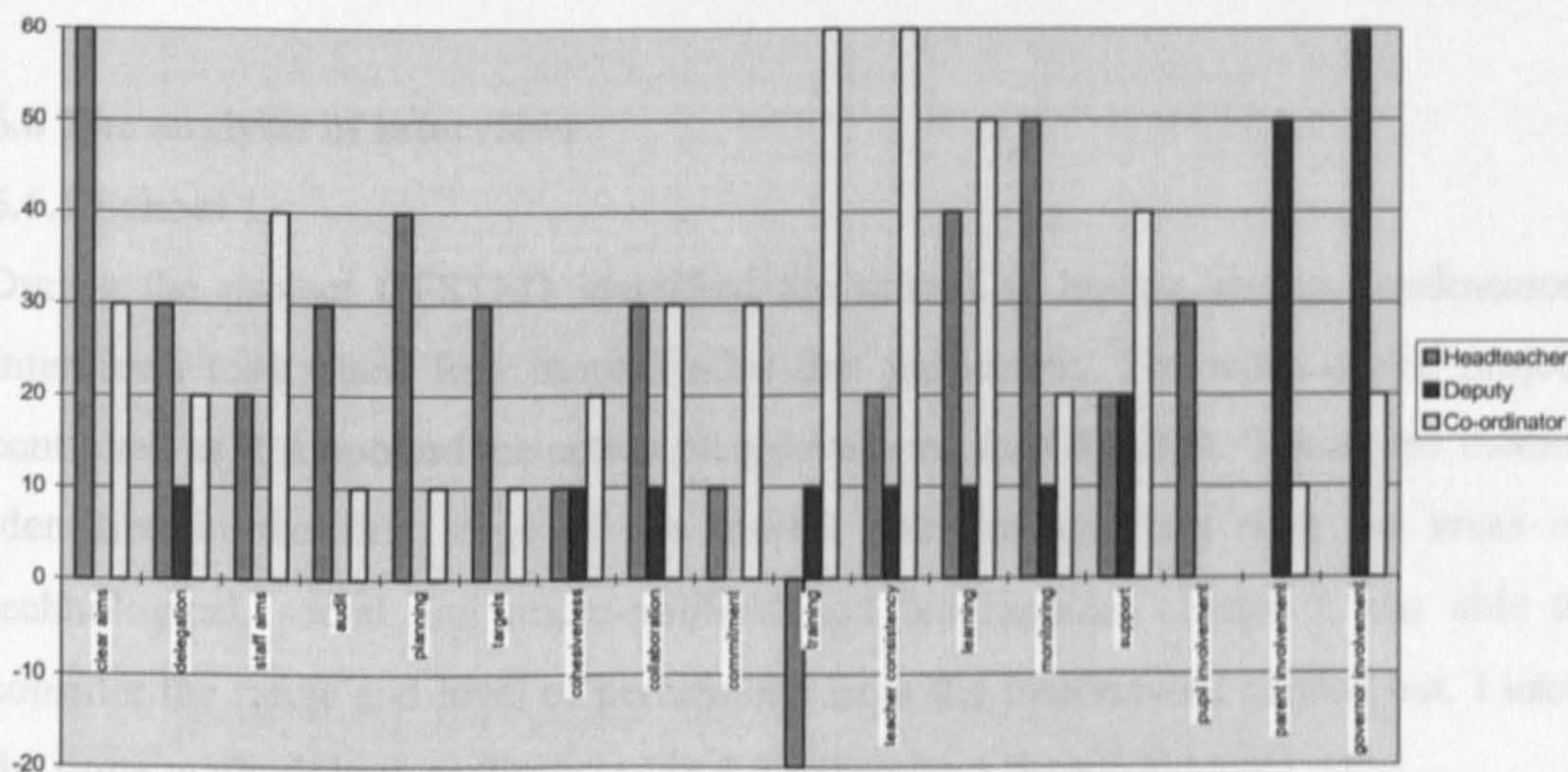


Figure 6.13 Phase 2, School 2. Personal constructs of the senior management team related to school improvement.



Where there is no apparent response it is because the value calculated came out as a zero, rather than a plus or minus value. The figure suggests that the deputy headteacher perceives most of the work of the school to be as it should to secure improvement, apart from the involvement of parents and governors. Consideration of social aspects of change imply aspects of cohesiveness and agreement about aims and the ability to collaborate. These appear to be identified as secure in School 2, although there remains a degree of further attention needed.

The micro-political aspects of change are linked to the headteacher's view which appear to signify that the school's aims can be achieved through delegation. The disparity of views about the involvement of parents and governors was evident in both schools. This may relate to the role of the headteacher as one which is more closely involved with both groups than the other senior managers in the schools.

This analysis gave me some insight into the perceived importance of aspects related to school improvement and how they differed between people within the schools. It would appear that these schools are in different transitional phases of improvement, with one having secured improvement (School 2) and the other still in the process of addressing improvement, alert to the needs but not yet fully confirming the depth of the problem (School 1). The analysis of the interviews allowed greater insights into the levels of technical, social and micro-political change that were related to this.

## **6.6 The analysis of interviews**

### **6.6.1 School 1**

During the project OFSTED identified the school as having serious weaknesses. Interviews took place four months after that judgement. The work of the project continued as it supported the action plan developed for OFSTED. Taking the themes identified in the first stage of the project and linking them with the areas of technological, social and micro-political and biographical change I was able to consider the range and level of perceptions from the interviews I carried out. I used the same methodology as discussed in 3.3. Interviews were conducted with:

The Chair of Governors

The headteacher

The deputy head

The literacy subject co-ordinator

A class teacher

Six year 5 and 6 pupils

Six year 3 and 4 pupils

Six year 1 and 2 pupils

#### **6.6.1.1 Technical Changes**

If the changes are related to the technological perspective conceptualised by Blenkin *et al.* (1997), they will focus on the development of the teaching repertoire of teachers and the learning skills of pupils. Therefore I identified aspects which defined improvements in pupils' and staff knowledge and changes to the ways in which the school or lessons were organised, the awareness of staff and pupils, and any resources which were seen as necessary for supporting the changes.

The Chair of Governors had an overview which showed knowledge of the expected curricular skills which children should acquire and how some of the external indicators compared with these, but had little specific knowledge of whether or not children's learning was improving. Two clearly held views were of the early positive impact of a new deputy, and the restrictions of developing staff's technical expertise due to the impact of a training model which relied on a member of staff to disseminate to others:

The evidence on the walls is much better but for the things like the teaching of reading, we lost our best member of staff.

The new deputy head has come ... The first half term was doing the class and now it is deputy heading and that really feels quite good.

Our In-service training budget is well above the average of our comparator group so we actually use that a lot and in theory that helps but in practice it doesn't help as much as it jolly well should. It might help the individual but then the individual doesn't see, well cascading is always a very suspect thing anyway.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Chair of Governors)

The headteacher again had little specific evidence of improvement, although able to identify moments from observation of classes where changes in technological



expertise of both teachers and pupils was evident which was clearly exciting. Additionally, frustration with the slow nature of improvement was beginning to be expressed. The underlying need to discuss the difficulties in securing improvement through the school was evident throughout. The blocks to improvement were identified as the nature of the children, and indeed the nature of the staff at the end of the interview:

I was in there observing a lesson on beginnings and it was just wonderful, children coming out with beginnings using adjectives, they knew all the words for a start and this is years 3 and 4 and it was wonderful so it is possible, so there are little pockets like that.

It has pulled on board the special needs children. They are actually involved in the main bit and they seem to have taken on board the bits we've done so far very well.

At the end of the interview:

We get a huge amount of English problems in this school. We're never going to get rid of a fair proportion of them because of the nature of the intake and the area and the social side of outside life that happens right across the country. I've got children here who do actually talk like two year olds and act like two year olds and if you deal with them at that level you can get them to perform to a certain extent.

You can't have your ordinary satisfactory teachers you've also got to have your really good ones.

A hint of exasperation came with the comment:

I think that expectations are the biggest, biggest issue and how can I eradicate that I do not know.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The new deputy, who had only been at the school for one month, was more positive. The values of independence and attainment were clear:

Children are able to work more independently, they need a lot of structure but I see it coming. I can see it throughout, in my own class obviously but around school too.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Deputy Headteacher)

The subject co-ordinator gave very terse answers to my questions about improvement. This may have been a defensiveness due to the lack of improvement. There was little evidence of technical detail or personal expertise about the precise nature of the teaching needed to secure improvements in reading through the school:

Nothing has changed, they're all doing reading. I've got all these groups reading and I hear different groups each day, they're looking very well.

I've altered the questions because they are older. Different ones for the top group to find them the higher level.

I think so (the reading is getting better), because a lot of it has improved now. You've always got this feeling that things are tatty or untidy but generally it's looking a lot better.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Subject co-ordinator)

The class teacher was more encouraging. Awareness was apparent of the large tail of children who still had much to do to secure improved reading abilities. Evidence was based on what staff were recounting in staff meetings and, more informally, in the staff room. This was evidence that as a staff there were debates about the nature of the improvements:

I can only speak for the children I have come across, and hearing what other teachers say. A lot of them have improved, their attitude has improved ... The writing has improved. The reading gradually, yes. The ones who are good are very good, and the ones who are poor still need a lot of work.

The changes to the teaching which were taking place and the impact that was having, both on the improved expertise of children and the improved expertise of staff were reported. This was additionally impacting on the self confidence of staff and their expectations of children:

The problem we had was finding the time to hear children read not just gloss over them, but to really hear the children read because you had constant children coming to read. Now with group reading you can have a table as an activity and have the readers read to you. All the children are of a similar ability on that table, reading the same book, and you can hear them read and then you have a comprehension based on the reading that they have just done and



the children do that so you feel you are actually listening to the children read rather than just hearing them read and helping them improve.

It's amazing, once you know something you're more confident and you walk into a classroom and because you're more confident the children are better behaved because you go in there with more confidence. I walk in there with more knowledge so suddenly you think you are in control, you've got more knowledge than the children, because the children ask you a question you don't want to give the children the wrong answer ... (what was helpful was) their (consultants) approaches to ways and approaches I personally didn't know about before and also the expectations of children. If you have the confidence to go and tell these children about it they have the ability to learn it and you find that out now.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Class teacher)

The children showed different levels of awareness as they moved through the school. The eldest were able to describe improvements in terms of fluency and speed, the ability to use punctuation to support their understanding of text, and tackling books of increased complexity and vocabulary:

When I was reading I couldn't understand the words, like some words were too difficult but now I can understand them and I've got better at it.

You learn a lot of new words and you look it up in the dictionary and you know what it means and you know a new word when you read a chapter.

I can read more fluently. I use the punctuation marks but before I never used to use them too much.

I used to be really slow at reading and now I've got a bit faster.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 5 and 6)

The seven and eight year olds described their technical improvements most simply in terms of the size of the book they were now reading (thicker with more pages) and the size of the fonts in those books (smaller). They also mentioned the fact that books were becoming more challenging in terms of the breadth of the vocabulary and the range of the information, including the use of a dictionary:

I don't remember what it's called but it's a thick book and I can read thick books now.

**I'm on a book with about 61 pages and something like that 63. It has some pictures in it and I think it's stage 14 and at home I'm reading books with 100 pages.**

**We've got thicker books now and we're reading a chapter at a time because the chapters are like 9-10 pages each time.**

**I can read faster. I use small words (font size?) I don't use big ones any more.**

**It's (reading) getting harder and understandable. When we were in our old class there wasn't such words to describe it but now we're getting older it got much more words to describe it.**

**The books we're reading now have got information.**

**We're getting older and we understand the words. I use my dictionary.**

**(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 3 and 4 )**

**The youngest pupils of five and six years described their improvements in reading by first making reference to the coloured stickers on the spines of their reading books which related to the level of difficulty of the book. The ability to read back their own writing was identified, as was the increase in words recognised and the fact that some of these words are longer than those they knew previously:**

**I'm on black stickers.**

**I'm on yellow stickers and I've read up to the sun check. I'm getting very good at reading because I wrote two whole pages of writing and I read it in my class.**

**I'm on green stickers and I'm getting better at reading than the other children because I write the story on a piece of paper and I do some pictures.**

**We know a lot more words and sometimes it can be hard because some of the words are spelt longer.**

**(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 1 and 2 )**

**The other aspect of change identified by the children were the differences in the way in which they were being taught. The interviews were held at the end of the academic year so these differences were not from one year to the next of different class teachers, but within the year of experience in one class.**



The eldest children noted a difference in the way in which reading was organised. Group reading as opposed to the hearing of individual children read was the dominant change, with more time spent on reading, reading at home, and the children grouped into different levels for reading.

We go in groups and read sections at a time, and then she gives a sheet that was from the story and it says things like 'What did Jim do on Monday' and you have to do this in your English book.

She (teacher) does group reading and when we finish the book now we talk about what we have just read, at least sometimes we do.

We practice reading at home and then we have to read it in class. We do silent reading after dinner.

She (teacher) gives us more time to read and she tells us what the words are and what they mean.

She gives us different levels for different children, so it's really quite good because you can have a harder book. If we go on to the last stage then we're allowed to just go up to the library and pick any book to read.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 5 and 6)

Year 3 and 4 children made some reference to the organisation of the teaching, with reading a story followed by writing answers to questions as with the older children, but they were more concerned with the perceived increase in the level of individual support from teachers to help them with their reading.

In our English we read it and then we write down the questions in our English books and at the moment I'm on book 4.

He (teacher) helps with the letters.

He helps me say all my letters out.

He helps me sound my letters out. When I get a word wrong the teacher tells me what it is.

If it's a real long word like caterpillar she (teacher) would put her finger between the words so that we could sound it and at the end we get it right.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 3 and 4)

The youngest children perceived the changes to be connected to the new resources, both new books and new computers, with the accompanying rewards of a 'nice' story and 'getting it right' on the computer.

It is quite different because we've been learning about new books.

They're (new books) nice because they're easy to read and at the end it's very nice 'cos they live happily ever after.

When I play on the computer I like history and when we press the 'I' it talks. You've got to read the instructions and then you can get it right.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 1 and 2)

#### **6.6.1.2 Social Changes**

The focus on social change was referred to in 2.2.4.4. This perspective considers the ways in which change is interpreted in the social setting of the school, that is the working practices of a staff, the values they express through their attitudes to their work and to each other, and the consequences of this.

A recurring theme in the interviews conducted was the level of 'negativity' and of the fragile and unhelpful attitudes of some staff. This was ascribed initially to the OFSTED judgement, but in the pursuit of improvement it was clear that progress was inhibited by the social dynamics of the school. The impact of the micro-political dimension of changes as a result of altered structural organisation of the school, which provided opportunities for changed cultural and social attitudes is reflected in the work of Hargreaves (1994). Fullan (1993) suggested that successful changes in culture and structure are linked and tend to be concurrent. Aspects of this positive influence came through the interviews with those in positions of responsibility, in particular the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They were not evident in the interview with the subject co-ordinator.



**The Chair of Governors reported some improvement.**

**The cliqueness and entrenched behaviour has weakened but there is an awful lot of negativity around.**

**(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Chair of Governors)**

**The headteacher had organised the staff into groups for staff meetings so that social cohesiveness could be encouraged whilst issues such as planning were addressed. Some staff's lack of interest in pursuing improvement was attributed to a lack of confidence.**

**They are doing it more in little year groups, more than they ever did in the past but perhaps more of them after a meeting, some of them in a year group meeting or something.**

**There are people that are interested and want to know and keep examining and questioning but two or three possibly four members of staff are still very lacking in confidence.**

**(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)**

**The deputy also recognised the negativity but did not feel it was as prevalent as the Head and Chair did. This more positive view also did not suggest it was a matter of confidence, but about a fear of overwork. The dynamics between groups of people who are keen and able and groups who are reluctant due to a lack of confidence or a fear of hard work would be divisive.**

**On the whole they're (staff) working together, there's the occasional negativity but it's not a major event. It's usually just one or two people who are a bit sceptical about something new or something different that they haven't tried before. I think it's come because of the fear of extra work, people feeling already quite overloaded. That's difficult to handle.**

**(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Deputy head)**

**The subject co-ordinator was very reluctant to give any detail:**

**They're (staff) working better together. They're talking to each other more.**

**(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Subject co-ordinator)**

The class teacher was more positive about the way the group was able to move forward. The processes of sharing planning or pupil outcomes was identified as potentially demoralising teachers whose impact was not as effective as others.

I work with three people in my year group. We work together well. I don't know about, in the staffroom ... we all say things and we get together. But I only work closely with two other teachers and we get on very well so I'm not sure about them when they get together.

It can have an effect, if for instance I'm teaching the same as another member of staff and look at their work and I say you're doing a lot better than I am it can have a negative effect.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Class teacher)

The Year 5 and 6 children were more aware of their behaviour in terms of the social impact on their learning. Alarming, they reported their deteriorating behaviour as related to a school expectation of culture for their year group.

We had someone in to help us. It was okay but everybody was a bit naughty so everybody except one had to write an apology letter. Martin and another boy walked out after him and a girl kept talking all through the session.

We are quite a bit naughty but sometimes we're really good but it's just a big difference.

We sometimes mess about a lot and sometimes we don't. We don't when we do like something good. It's got worse this year I think because we're in the upper stage now. I think it's because we're in the top classes.

The negative effect of this on some learners was apparent.

When I'm in the class and when I've got to read out loud, if I get a word wrong I go red and everybody starts laughing and I just sits down and I don't read until they're quiet or I just skip the word.

When I get nervous I just take deep breaths and says I can do this.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 5 and 6)

The seven and eight year olds (Years 3 and 4) made little reference to any social changes apart from a passing reference to an identification of all classes being united



in their more positive approach to books, because of the new range they were being introduced to.

When you've got a thick book and you get into the middle and it gets real interesting and you've got to stop and you want to carry on, that's why we've got into more books now.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 3 and 4)

The youngest gave evidence that they were more dependent on their teachers for the lead on their cohesive attitudes to learning.

We're practising and we're learning to read. The teacher tells you what to do.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 1 and 2)

### **6.6.1.3 Micro-political changes**

This perspective of change is concerned with the power relationships and the exercise of control and influence within the school (2.2.4).

The Chair of Governors identified that within the composition of the school, responsibility had to be taken for changing some of the staffing. This was related to the macro-political influence of the OFSTED inspection and the need to secure rapid improvements in the quality of teaching. The dynamics relate to the social tensions the school experienced.

We would have to make some teachers redundant because of falling rolls ... Two teachers resigned ... and that was very bad in a dynamic way. Teaching in the classroom is not easy in this school so you can't have an easy afternoon and then go into the planning, you've actually had a very heavy afternoon and then have to do some planning.

The end goal is raising standards for children. I don't think all the staff are clear about that. I think some of them think it's all words and I still think when they don't do well in their SATs it will be 'What do you expect?'

The thing that caused problems this term were the parents ... The head thinks it's because they can't handle the change of staff.

He (external expertise) has been in and out all the time and that's outstanding and when he comes he has a good mix, I picture him as a support. She (consultant) has done a couple of

sessions that governors were exclusively excluded from otherwise I would have been there. The head was thrilled with it and ... the other staff are doing it.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Chair of Governors)

The headteacher had organised the additional meetings to reflect the micro-political changes in influence which needed to occur. These again reflected the social tensions the school experienced. Also noted was the influence of parents in both generating tensions and supporting the school. External support was present but not yet securing the improvement the head sought.

We've focused a lot more in staff meetings in bringing work up and looking at it as a whole school. Some people find that very, very uncomfortable. We have to go on improving but we haven't got enough and that's still to come I think.

It (a meeting for parents to discuss the issues) was to do with angry parents really and I think when we had the bad press which was very unfortunate about the meeting with parents (low turnout). Parents started getting up a petition and they were saying how they felt the school had improved. They weren't saying about SATs results or reading but how they saw it with their own eyes.

She (consultant) comes in and she's done some lovely work. The approach is wonderful, the children were motivated and enthused. The staff didn't get as much out of it as they should.

It's (assigned inspector) a listening ear, to say I've got this problem I was thinking of doing this. It's more an expert opinion that I am going for.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The deputy headteacher was closer to the tensions that were arising as staff started to challenge not only each other but also the leadership of the school. This position in balancing the perceptions and keeping the school as stable as possible was only articulated by the deputy. It was also clear that the political expediency of the Chair of Governors was frustrating, as it was perceived to be slowing down the progress that could be made. The external support was identified as supporting the management of the school, but the class level evaluation was not being well received or supporting the development of confidence and motivation:



I find it quite a balancing thing really between, I mean if someone is critical of the head I'm being sort of defensive and yet sort of trying to explain why- almost like making excuses for it then perhaps because I'm nearer to people seeing both sides. Difficult times have been over issues that didn't really matter I think, but I think that perhaps feeling under a bit of pressure the you feel that little things are the things that are highlighted.

I think that the process of helping teachers who are not as good as they should be or could be is too slow I think perhaps that we are too gentle with people. Well, I think that you should deal with it gently but if it's not good enough I'm afraid you need to go somewhere else. The trouble is that I've noticed it becomes very personal. People in education are all very friendly in a school and it's build up relationships because you are working closely together. So then it's a personal thing which it shouldn't be really.

I've been aware that people (assigned inspector, consultant) have been in more than would normally have been in the school. It's on a managerial level really and everyday practical. I think it's having an impact on the management of the school.

I don't think staff look at it as support if they're being observed and getting feedback. There's a sort of fine line between you're just being judged and actually this is to help you.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Deputy Headteacher)

The subject co-ordinator was finding the structure inhibiting and the workload difficult. The person undertaking this role was in a position of influence, and these attitudes, if spread through the school would contribute to the negativity identified by the head and Chair of Governors. The new structure of meetings and the presence of external support in classes was acknowledged, but nothing more than this:

The whole thing's changed quite a lot it's very highly structured.

I hate being told what to do. It's very highly structured isn't it and there's no room for any initiative or any of your own thinking or anything like that. That's government.

We all attend non-stop meetings and we're all doing this and we're all doing that. I don't think we can do any more.

I think there's been help at classroom level.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Subject co-ordinator)

The class teacher also identified the tensions which had arisen from the inspection judgement. These were expressed as individual rather than shared tensions. Once personal thoughts were recounted, an expression was made of the new values, a shared view of the mistakes, the way forward and for whom this is necessary. The external support received and the perspectives this led to was valued:

When we had the OFSTED feedback it was utterly and totally devastating and demoralising. We just felt ah well this is it and giving up. I went home and sat down and I thought this is it, teaching is not for me, I'm giving up, I've had enough, I can't cope with it. We had worked and worked and worked but then the feedback we had made you think what's the point ... We made a lot of mistakes, we planned things wrongly and we had to change things. There's only one winner, in the end it should be the children.

We had an In-service day to tell us about genre. Most of the teachers have had had somebody come into their classroom to give them a lesson and then monitor. The teacher first shows you how and then watches and it works. It's very good. She has a different theme she looks at and she was looking at pace and progress; and it's always good to have a feedback ... it's always helpful if somebody can say right that's going right, you should have done this - in a positive way. I found that quite helpful.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Class teacher)

The micro-political influence and pressures on the children were also identifiable. They were expressed in terms of who they were improving their work for. They were well aware of the external pressures to do well, for results in SATs, in order to get to college, in order to obtain a good job:

We want our work to get better because when you go to secondary school, get good grades and get a good job.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 5 and 6)

If we learnt words that we didn't know before we would get more marks than we are now like in our SATs. Because we won't be able to get into a big school if we don't have enough marks.

Well, we will be able to get into a school but we won't be able to get into college because you've got to pass your exams. If you don't know how to spell and you haven't used these words, you don't know what it says.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 3 and 4)



The very youngest saw this as their place in the scheme of the school simply because they were gaining in years.

We're getting older. We're getting better because we're growing up.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Years 1 and 2)

## **6.6.2 School 2**

School 2 had, on all the indicators, secured greater improvements than School 1. It too had an OFSTED inspection during the year but this did not permeate the interviews as it had done at School 1. The interviews were markedly different in their content. The same range of people were interviewed as in School 1, although the Chair of Governors was not available for the day of the interviews, and it was clear that he was too busy to make a further arrangement.

### **6.6.2.1 Technical changes**

There was marked detail in the accounts given of the technical improvements, from headteacher to children. Detail was given about the progress made by children and aspects of the writing curriculum. A deeper knowledge of curricular theory and implementation permeated the interviews. Knowledge and expertise started being evident in the headteacher's account. The technical improvements in pupils' learning and the technical improvements in the delivered curriculum by teachers were recounted.

The most obvious improvement that occurred has been the level of success at Key Stage 2 SATs. It went from 49% to 72%, up by 23%. We had to look at that carefully because it might have been that we had a particularly good year last year. But the target we set was a realistic target and that was 60%, so that has been a marked success at 12% above the target which was excellent.

The children have shown a little bit more enthusiasm, a little bit more knowledge of what was expected of them, a little bit more knowledge of what was a good story. You know, beginnings, middles and ends, characters, setting, all the rest of it and more awareness of needing to use better language, more descriptive language, to think about what they were writing.

The second thing we have done particularly well is that we had an improvement in the way teachers have planned to achieve the target. They have actually focused on learning and composition and the story planning and I think that has been most important because they have had a half term and said all right this term they are going to look at character and this half term we'll concentrate on characterisation, we'll concentrate on that.

I saw more sharply focused teaching which I think is better teaching. I think it used to be 'blah, blah, blah' and I think that sums it up in a nutshell but I think that now there is a clearer focus on what are the children going to learn.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The deputy headteacher also acknowledged with greater detail the improvements in pupils' technical abilities and the staff's increased technical confidence and abilities:

I think a definite overall improvement in story writing itself. The children have certainly got more idea of how to go about writing a story, more idea about how to plan and lay out a story.

I think they're (staff) more confident because it's specified, you set your outcomes, you set your targets and you're actually writing the detail in your plans, not just saying you're doing story writing today, because we know how to teach this particular bit.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Deputy Headteacher)

The subject co-ordinator linked children's new confidence in their ability to do well to the increased confidence of staff in their technical abilities. The increased emphasis on careful planning had derived from an earlier audit of pupils' strengths and weaknesses identified through the scrutiny of written work, which were used to develop detailed action plans for each teacher.

The children are more confident because the staff are more confident and probably explain it to the children with more confidence so it comes back that way too.

Staff are doing more detail, they are planning ahead more and thinking from stage to stage.

Because they had planned well they were getting a lot more out of it and they were surprised by what the children could do.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Subject Co-ordinator)



The class teacher made explicit the impact of this level of early evaluation, which had informed the school's planning for improvement, together with an acceptance that improvement was necessary:

On the evidence of the stories that I have had I realised that teaching the children the techniques of writing and the vocabulary is what they need. I always thought in the past that if you provided stories and stimulated them and then said wrote a story it happened and I have for the first time ever seen that if you start to analyse it and take some aspect and work on that it comes back at you and that's the first time it's ever happened and I thought that all those stories they've written in the past I didn't know you went about it like that I didn't know you actually taught them and broke it down into different parts.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Teacher)

The children too showed a high level of awareness about how their work had improved. The eldest gave technical details, which ranged from punctuation to form and style:

Where to put full stops. I used to not put full stops everywhere I needed to but I do now.

The teacher told us how to do an end and we worked on titles and it helped in a lot of ways. I wrote a story before, my first story was good but my second one got better and the last one I wrote is brilliant.

When I was in my last class most of us forgot to describe the characters but the first week we were there we did a story and straight away I remembered I had to describe the characters.

You can describe a character by his name, like someone bad with a bad name and someone good with a good name.

He taught us all sorts of different introductions. He taught us not to put the same word over and over again like 'and'.

Instead of putting said put words like screams or shouted.

We like doing it more because we did all the work on it and we tried really hard then, now it's got easier so it makes it easier to think so it makes me feel better because of how it's got easier to write.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Year 5 and 6 children)

The seven and eight year olds were aware of their improvements in handwriting and spelling, but also of the content and power of their work:

It helped me with my spelling.

Lined paper made my writing neater.

I find it easier for me now because I done lots of big story writing and lots of hard things in it and it's helped me a lot. I'm better at spelling and lots of other things that I do in my story.

We can think up some characters and how we done our story and we can remember some of the spellings and that gives us a good idea for our stories.

Three things, one they helped me to put curls on my letters, two, they helped me to put full stops in and three, to keep it nice and tidy.

I feel that when I'm writing I can do anything to anyone. I can make them into different letters and so I can make them into words and pictures so maybe my grandmother could be a wolf and I can control the grown ups and turn them into little people.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Year 3 and 4 children)

The youngest launched straight into examples of descriptive, narrative and recall writing genres. Whilst punctuation was mentioned, of greater importance to them was the new ways in which they could use their writing skills.

Writing about my dog. Writing about the three little pigs.

Writing about some things we saw on our walk. We can do full stops easily now.

I like it because sometimes it makes my arm ache but I don't mind because I like writing and sometimes because I do my best and sometimes I don't.

I like writing because you can write about all sorts of things.

I like writing for myself because I done nice things and I like to think about them and if I forget I just look at my book.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Year 1 and 2 children)



### **6.6.2.2 Social changes**

The headteacher was aware that the process of improvement had brought awareness to some of differences in the school which had to be resolved. The move through the identification of the scope for improvement, and the subsequent confirmation of this through more detailed analysis and planning for action had not been without some turbulence. The new awareness, the approach to evaluation through sharing information had led to tensions. Nevertheless, the accounts of others show that this had been managed productively. The determination to continue to move new values forward with rigour was made clear:

I think the biggest change is that fact that people are now more aware of what the standards are like throughout the school not just in their class. We're sharing information that has been kept in the filing cabinet for donkeys' years. They're a dedicated staff really, once they know what is going on- it comes as a shock to them as it did to me.

Their collegiality has developed. It's difficult because they're very nice when I'm there, they're very nice to each other. You keep getting these little messages getting through. I think on a professional level I see that improving, that's the most important but there is still this Key Stage 1 Key Stage 2 thing and there's lots of issues under the surface, like how much non teaching time are Key Stage 2 getting. It's still there bubbling under the surface which we'll have to sort out.

We had a senior management team meeting and we were just talking generally about things and the Head of Infants said 'You've ruffled a few feathers' she said 'but they needed ruffling'.

I think I'm going to try to be a bit harder if possible. You know I said I was impatient at the beginning- I am impatient but I've been very tolerant and I've listened to people and I think the time has come for us to say right, time to get our fingers out, this school is going to go places and this is what we're going to do.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The deputy headteacher had not recognised any difficult periods. The confidence of the staff to work as a group to examine their practice and develop their competence was accepted as a positive aspect of the school:

I don't think there were any negatives. I don't think anybody complained. I think everybody got something out of it.

I think we collaborate about the same because we've always as a school worked well together. I think it depends on the mixtures of age groups to be honest. I think that as departments in our Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 we still put a lot of input together, we talk about what we're doing so everybody knows what everybody else is doing and perhaps it might make a difference to other schools where they haven't. As a school we've always performed well together and collaborated well together.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Deputy Headteacher)

The subject co-ordinator identified the way teachers had personalised the practice and gave an acceptance that they would ask her for help but currently did not need to do so. The new direction of the school was identified as stemming from the head and positively valued:

It's a bit hard to say whether the way we work together has changed, because we've had some changes anyway. I feel it's a bit early to ask ... I haven't had as many requests as usual from people to say can you help me with ... And going by the looks people have really got it together. The head is like a breath of fresh air around the place, very positive and I think carries people along with him.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Subject Co-ordinator)

The class teacher had a similar view about the way staff worked together although did identify feelings of isolation.

The way staff work together has stayed the same. As far as I'm concerned. I feel fairly isolated as a member of staff anyway so I mean you may be getting a warped idea but I don't think it is.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Teacher)

The children did not notice any key differences in social aspects apart from the eldest who were confident about their abilities to continue to improve. The youngest felt they were missing some aspects through reduced playtimes.

We've worked hard over the year and we're still improving.

We feel confident.

(Interview 2, School 2, Year 5 and 6 children)



We have to do work and we hardly get to play.

We started off with three plays and then we had two plays but in this class you always have two plays because we've got used to not going out.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Year 3 and 4 children)

It takes you so long writing.

Sometimes it takes you all day.

Even in the playtime, even through the last playtime.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Year 1 and 2 children)

### **6.6.2.3 Micro-political changes**

The headteacher recognised the impact of changing the structure and focus of the school meetings. The self-evaluative approach, starting with standards and linking to curricula and pedagogical issues, was now established in the school. The importance of the focus and drive of the leadership was explicit. Governor involvement was minimal, but this was not necessarily a sign lack of interest, more one of confidence in the school. External advice was used as a catalyst in securing the influence to improve, and to reinforce messages. There was confidence to seek support for future priorities and a commitment to allocating resources to support them:

I don't know what happened in staff meetings before I came, but the staff meetings are now more focused and we look at issues like teaching and learning and the curriculum. It's not just sort of policy things - here's a policy do we pass this, give it to the governors. We're looking at actually what we're doing and we're looking at standards in the school and we're looking at ways we can improve that. I've also changed the meeting pattern whereas we are having fewer whole staff meetings we're having those once a fortnight now but we're having more department meetings, We're having those more regularly.

I know now what is going on and I want to have more knowledge of what is actually happening in classrooms.

They (staff) hadn't had the leadership, they hadn't had a focus to go for and that's what I'm trying to do.

All I can say about the governors and this project is that they are aware of what we're doing.

Once they saw him (consultant) in the classroom and saw the possibilities and they realised that the children were capable of doing much better then I think that improved the teacher's attitude and they wanted to put more effort into it then. Now we want to improve the

spelling. You see what the £500 has done so let's put aside another £500 and see what we can do, see what experts we can get in and see what we can use.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The deputy headteacher identified that new priorities would now start with an accepted level of self-evaluation linked to the new values for the school in securing improvements:

I think that it has made us reconsider our overall target planning for the whole school really, I think where we're aiming to go for the school, where we're aiming. It's made us think about breaking everything down. We're seeing things from the top down and from the bottom up. People are suggesting things and we're putting them in.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Deputy Headteacher)

This commitment to continued improvement was also identified by the subject co-ordinator. The use of outside agencies was seen as a positive prompt, particularly from courses and with practical support for teachers. An excitement about finding new approaches and adapting them to school needs was evident:

Well I think we'll try to continue to improve now as a whole school. It has got to be whole school- we've got to say where the problems are, where we think the gaps are and what we think the children are really going to be capable of, and we've got to go on from there. Hopefully if there isn't the expertise then we can get someone to go on courses and get the expertise in. Because I think this is something which has surprised us. We all thought we were quite well up to date but really we were just covering courses, not always using them.

He (consultant) came in and started these ideas with them which was super but there were too many ideas at once and they really couldn't get to the mechanics of it because he was teaching. The staff meeting was wonderful because we were just scribbling down ideas all over the place and afterwards we used the ideas he gave us. Then they decided what they would like him to concentrate on in his next visit. He had done some preliminary work and they found that particularly valuable. That was real quality time.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Subject Co-ordinator)

The class teacher had had difficulty in feeling personally involved. The need for evaluation and explicit strategies for improving at a class level were highlighted:



**It's happened so quickly that I thought I was on my own. I think that's the bit to make sure of that people can freely discuss where we're short. The first time I felt contact with what we were supposed to be doing I felt inspired to do things.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Teacher)**

**The children saw the point of improving their work in terms of raised opportunities for later in life. For the eldest the increase of skills had brought increased enjoyment. The relationship between enjoyment and increased skills linked to later opportunities in life was implicit from the younger pupils but expressed by the eldest.**

**If you're improving you'll get better stories, like when you get into the secondary school, when you have like GCSEs it will help you get work and help you get a better job.**

**I like writing stories now because I've got a better set of ideas to do it.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Years 5 and 6 children)**

**When I was little I always wanted to write poems and story books and when you're in this class you learn a lot more about stories and how to write them and he wants you to have a go and it's really education. And we have to have that.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Years 3 and 4 children)**

**My mum always wanted to be a writer but she made Ribena and Orange Squash where she worked.**

**My mum works in a college. She says if I work hard I can work anywhere.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Years 1 and 2 children)**

## **6.7 Conclusions - aspects of change identified through stages of school improvement**

**In this chapter I have shown that the intervention planned within the improvement project in phase 2, whilst impinged upon by OFSTED, led to improvements which I have been able to measure through the methods I developed. Whilst some improvements had occurred in both schools, it was clear that these were more advanced and more securely embedded in School 2.**

Progress had been impeded at School 1 by factors which the research had made apparent. Firstly, the interpretation of data by the headteacher had led to a more positive appraisal of the situation than realism should have allowed. A willingness to identify external factors to explain the situation was apparent, rather than a focus on the internal factors which might help address it (6.4.1). Whilst staff perceived clear changes in the school, least changed in their perceptions were the levels of enquiry and reflection being carried out in the school (6.4.2). The discrepancies between the deputy's, co-ordinator's and headteacher's constructs for improvement were wide ranging (6.5.1). Teacher consistency was an issue for the head, but further support and training were not. Audit, training and support were a disparity for the deputy, who wanted further opportunities for teachers in this area. Further collaboration, consistency and targets were seen as crucial for improvement by the co-ordinator. In interview, the expertise of the subject co-ordinator did not come over strongly (6.6.1.1), and the overall responses showed that difficulties were embedded. Attitudes of staff, the local community, parents were criticised. Whilst a few teachers were showing attributes that would support improvement, others were more negative in their impact. Taken together, this suggests difficulties which are deeply resistant to change.

In order to develop the analysis I considered the key stages apparent as the schools moved towards improvement. I defined these stages of improvement in relation to the aspects of technical, social and micro-political change. This relationship has not been explored in the research literature. Whilst Figure 6.1 gave a broad outline of the stages of the project, it became clear through my analysis that the move to securing improvement could be grouped into a simpler model. I then took these stages and identified from my research the detailed technical, social and micro-political indicators which were aligned with them, shown in Figure 6.14.



### Stage 1 - alerting

technical	Current pupil achievement and the scope for improvement identified against the systematic application of national expectations, curricular, attainment and learning attributes.
social	Increased awareness of the social setting, the culture and attitudes - staff and pupils. Early awareness leads to some dissonance and pockets of turbulence.
micro-political	Awareness of structures of the groups within the school and their power and influence.

### Stage 2 - confirming ↓

technical	Knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of planned progress at pupil level and the implications at teacher level for the planned curriculum. Knowledge of curricular expertise necessary to address these weaknesses and the opportunities for learning to be secured..
social	Drive for and commitment to improvement variable but dominant. Staff groups are beginning to form, often cohesively, but exhibit a range of positive or negative perspectives.
micro-political	Senior managers accept and lead positive response. Structures to secure influence developed. Involvement of parents and governors to extend commitment and influence.

### Stage 3 -addressing ↓

technical	Planning and support for implementation. Additional expertise located, accessed and used in classrooms to enable skills to be modelled, practised and extended.
social	Initial enthusiasms are sustained and developed. Motivation secured through acknowledgement of early successes. Working productively with tensions as a staff.
micro-political	Collegiality and collaboration structures developed and secured. Resources of time and money made available to facilitate these. Outside agencies used to reinforce influences, and adapt improvements.

### Stage 4 - securing ↓

technical	Deeper understanding and critical interest in curricular theory and practice. Practice closely related to addressing strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning to promote progress.
social	New values either are integrated with or supersede 'old' values. 'Messages' have been personalised into day to day practice Competence, individually and as staff groups, is built on with confidence. New approaches are welcomed and thoughtfully integrated.
micro-political	School values are about securing improvement with rigour and excitement. A self-evaluative approach permeates the school and is welcomed. Pupils' learning is enhanced along with their attitudes to their work Parents and governors have confidence in the school.

*Figure 6.14 Stages of school development through the school improvement project as evident in the research findings.*

Overall there appear to be four stages as the schools moved to the ability to secure and embed improvement. The first stage is that of *alerting* to the need for improvement, through increased awareness of the gap between current realities and potential aspirations. The second stage is one of *confirming* with greater precision where and what was needed, confirming that this is the way forward for the school and gaining the commitment of all to planned action. The third stage is the process of *addressing* the issues and implementing plans, moving through early individual difficulties and developing strength as a school to addressing them productively. The final stage is one of embedded values about improvement and a confidence in the ability to secure it. This relates not only to *securing* the identified improvements but also *securing* a context in which further improvement could take place.

In the next chapter I shall further the analysis of intervention. I shall examine how movement between the stages of school improvement were supported, the particular activities that were involved and the style in which they were presented. I will consider the dominant themes of intervention which supported schools in their improvements. This will use evidence and data from both phases of the research. The focus will be the role of the interventionist in supporting effective changes which have a positive impact on pupil attainment in schools and the culture which supports these changes. The sequence indicated by the research which appears to be important to support schools' implementation of change and assimilation of new or different approaches to technical, social and micro-political aspects of their development will be outlined.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Discussion of findings**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter I described the procedures I followed in implementing the second phase of the project (Phase 2) and the changes that had been made to it as a result of the implications from the first stage. Following analysis of the outcomes from questionnaires, personal constructs and interviews I identified phases of school improvement. This model defines four developmental stages which are, firstly *alerting* to the need for improvement, secondly *confirming* this in greater detail, thirdly *addressing* the areas for improvement, and fourthly *securing* the improvements. I identified the key elements of technical, social and micro-political changes which, from my analysis, accompanied these stages at the schools I had considered.

In this chapter I shall consider the evidence from all ten schools in both stages of the project related to the intervention which did or did not support their improvements, analysing it in relation to the developmental phases identified in the previous chapter. I shall consider the aspects of technical, social and micro-political changes, which were supported by the intervention, as perceived by those within the schools.

As a result of examining the role of intervention in relation to the stages of improvement identified in the previous chapter I shall develop the sequence and themes of external intervention which, according to the schools, supports them in implementing necessary changes or assimilating new or different approaches. I shall present a model which considers the element of intervention associated with each aspect of the cycle of improvement as promoted by the DfEE. I shall show how the intervention within the phases I have identified related to the aspects of technical, social and micro-political changes which were supported.

I shall then consider some of the themes which ran through the research findings. Firstly, I shall look at the role of external support in promoting schools' abilities to secure their own improvement. The mix of 'pressure and support' will be explored. I

shall look at how 'pressure', in the terms of interventions, led to cognitive dissonance for staff, and suggest how this can be used productively and introduced as a technique to support schools move their work forward. I shall examine some aspects of the support which appeared to ensure that this pressure or dissonance could be used effectively, so that it did not become overwhelming or ultimately dysfunctional for headteachers and staff.

Secondly, I shall look at the aspect which headteachers had identified as important for sustaining and securing improvement, that is the role of external support in developing the school's own skills of enquiry and reflection. This growth of analysis and critical reflection was a significant element of moving through the stages of alerting, confirming, addressing and securing improvement identified in the schools. I shall explore whether in fact this was developed at the schools, by examining the difference between those aspects of the questionnaire responses related to enquiry and reflection. I shall look at the factors which lead to an ability to act on findings constructively and without damaging morale and causing disaffection amongst staff.

Finally, I shall identify the messages from this research for those who work with schools to secure their improvement. These messages will be identified through the responses from the headteachers and school-based staff involved, and build on the sequence of alerting, confirming, addressing and securing school improvement.

### **7.1 Defining intervention and the roles of those external to the school**

The term intervention and the role of the interventionist in the context I am using it refers to the part played by those outside the school and the particular forms of their involvement with the schools during the project. Weindling, (1994), asserts that:

fundamental changes (in schools) require support from the LEA and few of the variables listed are likely to be realised without this support. Consultants can provide valuable information and training and facilitate the school improvement process. Research on the management of change shows powerful effects when a blend of inside and outside assistance is used. School improvement requires both pressure and support.

(pp. 148-149)



The link between school level effectiveness and local educational advisory structure and support is not clear, although Reynolds and Teddlie suggest that 'there are hints that these other levels are important in generating educational outcomes' (2000, p. 152).

The range of external support differed for the two phases of the project. For the first group of eight schools the range was limited to the Local Authority inspector assigned to their school and the consultants who led the In-service training (5.1 describes these in more detail). The assigned inspector's role involved leading a training day for the school staff to develop the teaching and learning policy, to support analysis of pupils' attainment and its link to teaching, to support the action planning undertaken to address aspects for improvement, and to support implementation through sustaining contact during the period of the project. Two different consultants led two separate training days timed to support the work happening in the schools. The first day was related to the focus on teaching and learning and addressing the importance of school culture, the second day focused on developing skills of action planning to support improvement.

The difference for the second group of schools, and detailed for the two schools focused on for the research, was that the range of external support was extended. The complete range of activities, the different external individual roles which were associated with those activities, and the members of the school who participated in those activities are identified in Table 7.1.

Event	External Involvement	School members
Introduction to project	Project leader	All staff, governing body representative
In service training - improvement process, focusing on teaching and learning, the school culture, action planning	External Consultants	Headteacher and deputy head or senior manager
Training day: teaching and learning	Assigned inspector	All teaching staff
Analysis of performance data	Assigned inspector	Headteacher.
Analysis of pupils' work; analysis of related teaching	Assigned inspector	Teaching staff, pupils
Action planning	Assigned inspector	Headteacher deputy/subject co-ordinator teaching staff
Implementation	Advisory teachers Colleagues with specific expertise	All staff and pupils at schools in the second phase of the project.
Evaluation	Assigned Inspectors advisory teachers	Headteacher, staff, pupils

*Table 7.1. The involvement of external interventionists within the period of the projects for schools in Phase 2.*

Whilst there had been an encouraged focus on and a raised profile of the importance of teaching and learning in the first phase, practical support within classrooms had not been provided. These interventionists were allocated time to spend in the schools, working alongside class teachers, demonstrating teaching techniques with the pupils, and leading staff meetings to discuss the implications for the work in classrooms.

## **7.2 Support at different stages of improvement**

The previous chapter identified simplified phases or different stages of development during the improvement cycle than those used by other researchers, although there is a link between these and the cycle frequently presented in DfEE publications (1996, 1997). This cycle, where are we now, where do we want to be, what are we going to do, implementation and reviewing action and progress relates to activities undertaken which are considered helpful to improvement. These reflect the review of research considered in Chapter 1 and influenced the development of the sequence of the project. However, the identification of the four stages of alerting, confirming, addressing and securing improvement in 6.7, related to the evidence from the participants in the project and those stages which became apparent as they moved towards what they considered the optimum position for their own improvement to be



secure. The movement between stages is not distinct and there were overlaps. Nevertheless, these distinctions may be helpful for those working with schools and indeed for schools themselves. The need for careful assessment of a school's particular weaknesses and therefore identifying the particular support relevant to that school was emphasised by Barber who wrote:

The precise nature of any intervention in a school which is not succeeding should depend on the extent and character of its failure. Any intervention needs to be carefully planned and based on knowledge of the school effectiveness and school improvement research. Its purpose needs to be clear; improvement cannot be imposed. The role of intervention should be to generate within the school the capacity for sustained self renewal.

(1996, p. 149)

Reference to the importance of identifying the developmental stage of a school when presenting strategies for intervention is made by Watling *et al.* (1998). They stress the importance of identifying the growth stage of the school and using strategies which meet the needs of the school at whichever stage it is, although they do not elaborate on these. My research allows for this to be considered in further detail within the stages I have identified. The goal of a context in which the school is able to secure its own improvement, where there is capacity for managing self-improvement, is referred to by Barber (1996) as sustained self renewal.

My reasons for relating this support to the technical, social and micro-political aspects of a school's development have been discussed in 2.2.4.3. The importance of this has become clearer during the process of the research. Technical changes for teachers relate to skills of reflection, an ability to make the connections between assessments of pupil attainment to the need to sustain or change teaching practices:

If schools are to achieve the improvements the staff want and the children have a right to experience, it is fundamentally important that teachers develop an understanding of data and its analysis and more importantly are able to identify the most appropriate teaching implications that arise.

(Southworth and Conner, 1999, p. 88)

van den Berg (1999) noted that the degrees of difficulty with most innovation tasks are often underestimated and that, as a result, problems develop with respect to the didactic repertoire of teachers, requiring them to make some shifts in their personal paradigms of what constitutes effective teaching. Stoll (1999) has suggested that the social and cultural aspects of a school influence readiness for change to the extent that the school can either be a black hole or a fertile garden for improvement. The micro-political aspects of structure and influence can be viewed as the multiplicity of interests, goals and motives among teachers, the school as an arena for action and dynamics (van den Berg, 1999). The perspective I have taken is to consider the impact of the structural and predominant roles of senior managers in influencing the internal politics in order to control and secure improvements. Many studies have found the leadership of the headteacher a crucial force (Mortimore, 1998). I was able to use the perspective of headteachers, deputy headteachers and senior managers to assess the role of external support in securing their influence and impact on improvements.

### **7.2.1 Intervention and the first stage of improvement: Alerting**

This first phase of improvement is a significant and potentially hazardous one for the school and the interventionist. The label 'alerting' has been chosen carefully. The dictionary definition of the term suggests such words as 'wide awake', 'sudden surprise' and 'condition of preparedness'. It was the phase when headteachers and staff became aware that there was a gap between where the school is now and where it should or could be. That gap, within the framework of both phases of the project, was linked to the scope for improvement within the standards attained by pupils, and the development of understandings that this could be attributed to current teaching content and style. It was the moment when it was realised that other aspects of the school's organisation, ethos and leadership might not currently be promoting and supporting all the provision for pupils that was possible. It is important to distinguish between this phase and the phase of confirming the need for improvement. Mishandled, early triggers that can lead to commitment and enthusiasms can lead to defensiveness, rejection and ultimately missed opportunities. The phase of alerting a school to potential underperformance needs to be based on evidence that the school finds credible, is accompanied by the identification of particular strengths, and does



not leave the school in a position where further support is not available to follow up these initial findings.

One of the key themes which came through the interviews was that the information shared by the external interventionists was either specific to each school, or the school was involved in considering whether or not it related to their school. This appears to be a crucial part of the early acceptance of scope for improvement. National level or local drives for specific action and improvements can only work if they are interpreted at school, and indeed class level. Thus, in this stage, the strategies used by those working with the schools were supporting the analysis of overall trends and comparisons from the data on the individual school's performance. Staff were involved with answering questions against a set of statements about ideal conditions for school improvement, so that they were identifying values for improvement and beginning to compare their own experiences with these. At the same time, senior managers (headteacher and deputy headteacher) of the school were attending training sessions and being introduced to different ways of thinking about the role of leadership, and different emphases in the accountabilities of those with identified responsibilities. Whilst this did not equally challenge all schools, for some there were moments of personal reflection which alerted them to different possibilities within their own schools. Insights gained as a result of engaging in reflection were personal responses but developed into issues made explicit when shared at staff meetings with the assigned adviser. Senge wrote:

Leader as teacher does not mean leader as authoritarian expert whose job it is to teach people the correct view of reality. Rather it is about helping everyone in the organisation, oneself included, to gain more insightful views of current reality.

(1990, p. 10)

#### **7.2.1.1 Supporting technical changes**

Strategies used to support this element included analysis of comparative performance data, based on national curriculum assessments, as provided by the LEA. Developing the data for schools was referred to in 6.3. It included the identification of trends between subjects, within subjects, the correlation between scores achieved by pupils

on verbal reasoning quotients and attainment compared with other schools in the authority, and differences in performance between genders. Alongside this the assigned inspectors were available to support analysis of performance data provided by the school. This ranged from reading ages correlated with chronological ages to analysis of samples of pupils' work through the school to assess progress and attainment, and finally the observation of teaching using OFSTED criteria within the subject focus identified from the analysis of the overall data.

The view from the participants was that external support was helpful in looking at these objectively, developing skills and achieving greater clarity about the analysis and therefore the implications for the work of the school as quickly as possible. For example:

I was interested in the comparative groups and things like that. We were put in group 10 (out of 14 groups for comparing results in similar schools) and that's fairly down the pecking order. That's probably not fair but in some ways I'm glad about it. We worked on the understanding that what we had in the last results was poor, there was no good bleating about it we had to try and do something about it

(Phase 1, School 8, Interview 1, Headteacher)

I think it was the breaking down of the broad target and the help which our assigned inspector gave us that was useful. We'll use that in other areas as well but that was the most valuable part of what he did. He comes in with a fresh eye. He knows the school well. But he comes in (he is connected to it but he is not connected to it) and he is able to ask questions which make you stop and think and they could be simple questions but they are questions which I haven't thought of myself and I think yes, we should think about that.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

I think we wasted a lot of time previously dancing around things rather than saying well let's look at the results, let's get the results. Then examining by saying this is what we found, are we right in choosing this (to work on). In this way it's done in less time.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The technical support for headteachers in promoting their own skills was also welcomed. It was seen as saving time and providing expertise which now gained, would be used in the future:



I don't want to waste time, we've got to move forward. He really encouraged me, I probably wouldn't have dreamt of doing it that way if I'd been left to my own devices. Basically he was showing me and opening the door and going through and I found that tremendously supportive.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

and:

The support was crucial in terms of bringing together the data skills. I needed somebody to actually go through it first so that I would be able to go on.

(Phase 1, School 7, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The training from consultants also supported alerting schools and raising awareness of aspects to be addressed. Key pointers here were that training clarified the way forward for schools and developed the headteacher's own skills, understandings and ideas to use back in school. The credibility of an expert in the field presenting these ideas made them the more acceptable:

It just lifted the professional dialogue in the staff room and all over the school really. Because you start looking at issues that you wouldn't look at when you're in school. You just do not get the debate in school because you are so immersed in the day-to-day issues.

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 2, Headteacher)

It made a considerable difference because it clarified formats for target setting and particularly clarifying success criteria which I do find difficult to manage and I find that much easier and from the messages we're getting the course made a considerable difference to how I was targeting. A real plus. That's changed the way I thought. It's just made me understand it better because I was struggling. I'm much happier now.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 2, Headteacher)

### **7.2.1.2 Supporting social changes**

Evaluating or assessing the impact of the assigned inspector at this stage of alerting the school to issues and raising its own awareness was carried out during the initial phases of the project, when staff were completing questionnaires about their perception of the conditions for improvement in the schools. The skills of assigned inspectors in challenging existing assumptions were not only interpersonal ones but also about assimilating high levels of contextual understandings of the school. Technical expertise additionally supported the credibility of their judgement or analysis in the eyes of the staff. Long term relationships with the schools had clearly

made this easier in some cases. Where assigned inspectors were involved with the analysis of data, this led to exposing findings which did not always confirm the perceptions of the status quo, in a large forum. Sharing that information with staff was, therefore, in several cases, the first time that potential issues were made explicit to all. Headteachers valued assigned inspectors mediating potentially difficult information about pupils' performance, particularly handling the early awareness of a link with teacher expertise or effectiveness.

One headteacher found that the challenge had been at headteacher level as well as for staff, but that because of the relationship established with the assigned inspector as a long term friend and supporter of the school this was accepted and indeed respected:

I think we were challenged, me personally and the school. I think that's fine, I think that's healthy and I think staff would say that. I think the challenge of someone coming in regarded as a friend and supporter of the school even though that person might be saying something different to what's going on at present is I think rather respected.

(Phase 1, School 2 Interview 2, Headteacher)

Another headteacher valued the way in which potential complacency within the school, which could have led to little further improvement, was prevented by the careful analysis which had been undertaken:

You've got the enthusiasm and everything that you bring as a headteacher, then it's taking stock a little bit after that and it's like here we are but where can we still go and if you are not careful you can get into a sort of we've done this and we've done that and you can really be quite complacent or pleased with where you think you are. I think then you really need to look in the way that we did.

(Phase 1, School 7, Interview 2, Headteacher)

At a different school the headteacher acknowledged that the contribution from the assigned inspector, because it was based on evidence gathered together with the school, was considered credible by staff and therefore accepted. She had therefore been supported in tackling the attitudes of a staff who previously had not been either prepared or able to acknowledge there was an issue which needed addressing:



Our AI came in and did some work with us in school which actually set the scene for where we are at this point in time. It was really excellent, it was an excellent day. It was a very bruising day for the staff in some ways, really facing what needed doing from the evidence... It was raising the issues that we needed to address and one of the major issues was marking. I'd said that earlier but they said we'd got a marking policy. I asked do you not take note of it and they said yes, but after the monitoring it was so obvious that they weren't, so basically they've been confronted and they've had a bit of a shock.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

### **7.2.1.3 Supporting micro-political changes**

The role of both assigned inspectors and consultants included managing the tensions that arose as a result of presenting evidence that implied changes were needed. This impacted at the social level identified previously and at the micro-political level, in supporting headteachers themselves and additionally those with responsibility in the school to be alert to and aware of their roles in promoting and securing changes. In particular the development of senior roles to secure the changes needed was an aspect which several of the schools began to consider. These developments implied both structural changes and a change in emphasis of the role. Headteachers became aware of the need to shift to a focus on teaching and learning, and to fulfilling a role where knowing about and supporting the development of colleagues' practice became apparent. Additionally, ideas for greater delegation of the responsibility to know of and promote more effective teaching were considered by headteachers and their senior managers.

One of the headteachers identified the support in alerting the management team to new expectations and suggesting ways forward as a motivating force for her:

Our AI took it that little bit further and he actually helped us - he just put it so succinctly really - how we could develop the role of the co-ordinator in the monitoring. He saved us months of work there. I think people were a bit shell shocked really by his visit and if you like I have used him to move people forward. He is a very gentle person and he has been one of the greatest motivators for me.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

Another found the training provided by the consultant the catalyst for moving this dimension forward:

**It's been one of clarification and development. I saw the early part of the project, particularly the input at the training day, as a catalyst in setting us (management team) off on previously cloudy issues.**

**(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)**

**For another there were significant personal changes in the perception of the role of the head as a result of this input from the training. From some headteachers there was an acknowledgement of the requirements of the role, but now a more deeply appreciated understanding of the imperative to carry them out:**

**My perceptions of the headship role changed. In theory I should have been seeing more of what went on in classrooms, now whether I've been doing that is very debatable. I wanted to get into classrooms to actually look at the teaching and what I've done basically is that I've started to monitor the curriculum. Which hasn't been done before. Co-ordinators in all subjects had no idea what was going on in the rest of the school. I am increasing the amount of power which co-ordinators have so that will be a subtle change.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)**

**and this was endorsed by the subject co-ordinator in the same school:**

**We were very polarised before, I knew what was going on in the Infant department and I think we all worked reasonably well together but as I said before I wasn't aware of what was going on in the Junior Department and I think they weren't aware of what we were doing. I probably put a bit more in now as English co-ordinator and maybe gelled it together a little bit.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Subject co-ordinator)**

### **7.2.2 Intervention and the second stage of improvement: Confirming**

**This second phase of intervention built on the earlier phase of alerting and developing headteachers' and staff's awareness of the potential scope for improvement. The word confirming suggests linked terms such as 'strengthen', 'ratify', 'verify', 'assure' and activities such as a 'making firm or sure' and generating 'convincing proof'. For improvement to develop at the schools from those early awakenings, then those working with the schools would be involved in promoting, developing or supporting activities, involving staff in these activities so that the further clarifications were clear and shared.**



The strategies employed by those working with the schools related to further analysis and synthesis of the issues, and framing action to address them. Whilst the analysis of data had been the starting point for raising awareness and alerting schools to areas of relative underperformance, this phase related to identifying where further information was needed to get underneath the data, to deciding which information was important and which could be disregarded, and debating with headteachers and staff ways in which evidence linked and should be interpreted. Implications for a changed emphasis in teaching led to implications for individual teachers to make changes in their classroom practice. Sharing information from the staff questionnaire raised issues related to how an individual school compared with others in the project in staff perceptions of the social and micro-political climate for improvement. Accepting the need for changes led, in some cases, to the management team accepting that previous preoccupations might need to be extended. Supporting those in positions of accountability for school performance to develop their role emerged as a significant role of intervention at this stage. Responses from headteachers, and from those with subject or phase responsibilities, showed that this intervention was valued.

#### **7.2.2.1 Supporting technical changes**

Technical support refers to helping schools pursue their analysis of potential scope for improvement through scrutinising work or observing teaching. This increased the specific knowledge of strengths and weaknesses within aspects of the curriculum in individual schools and at classroom level, and alerted schools to the benefits of involving others to support the development of teachers' expertise and technical skills. Accepting that teaching skills were crucial endorsed the findings in Chapter 4, where the dominant view, of all the headteachers at the end of phase 1 of the project identified from the analysis of the constructs of 'what helped your improvement' (5.2.3) related to the need to constantly ensure that teaching was of a high quality. One headteacher was clear that staff development does not necessarily result in improved teaching. The teacher's commitment and ability to use advice was also important:

**It doesn't matter how much staff development or whatever we put in at the end of the day it is the person, what they do with it. Because an awful lot of money has been spent on trying to pull the skills of staff up but it's not money that's going to make the difference.**

**(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)**

**The impact of the activities undertaken with some of the schools was exemplified in the greater detail that the school gained about the work of their pupils:**

**I really did not have that great an idea about what was going on all through the school, so at least getting all the work in and going through it then I could see if there obviously is a progression.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Subject co-ordinator)**

**It also gave greater detail about the work of teachers and pupils. The skills involved in carrying out further teaching observations gave one headteacher confidence:**

**We had input in terms of a teaching observation scrutiny from our assigned inspector which I think was crucial. It was very useful both to individuals and to me because I was able to have an explanation from someone else's point of view as to what was happening in the classrooms. I was doing it but it was useful to have his eye too.**

**(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 2, Headteacher)**

**This view was endorsed by a subject co-ordinator, for whom the additional verification or validation to the school's own judgements, and support for the development of new technical expertise, was important:**

**I mean the valuable bits are when you have someone coming in and looking at the children's work, doing an audit and it's someone else's point of view isn't it because you're not sure you're on the right track, you're not completely sure if you're marking right or if this is what they should be doing. So that is always valuable.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Subject co-ordinator)**

**This was evident in other responses but in particular from subject co-ordinator level. The subject co-ordinator at one school made an additional point about the nature of the assigned inspector's relationship with the school. This indicates that it is productive to have someone who knows the school well but is objective about the judgements, a view which was also expressed by heads (see 7.2.1):**



**I think being able to stand back from the day to day running and involvement helped and she (assigned inspector) doesn't have any particular biased view of different areas or whatever so I would say that helped definitely and I feel her input and her ideas especially in the teaching and learning was very important. She's got the happy medium. We know her but not too well so we feel we can work with her, that she's not so closely linked.**

**(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 1, Subject co-ordinator)**

**An important negative view came through from one school where the assigned inspector had led a staff meeting to refine the audit and action planning. Here there was a repeated theme from the teacher interviewed and the subject co-ordinator, and less pointed but also apparent from the headteacher. There had clearly been an acceptance by the school, a confirmation that work needed to be done, so the relaxed approach from the external interventionist to refining this was clearly frustrating. This identifies a need for the competent interventionist to give clear presentation, take the work very seriously and not be overly relaxed about findings which have challenged individuals and their practice. The teacher was offended by a 'jokey' style which undermined the importance of the event for her. This style was recognised by the headteacher as compromising the importance of the messages to be shared.**

**The head said:**

**It's the touch of waffling really and I think that's OK if you've got time to spend. If you're talking to people in a staff meeting and they've only got an hour and a half people want to get to the point.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)**

**And the class teacher said:**

**It's trying to be jokey in the wrong sort of way. I don't think it's necessary to make some of those silly remarks, we're not laughing at the job we've got to do. We want it to be direct and not wasting our time. You just want it delivered to tell you what is what.**

**(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Teacher)**

The deputy head teacher endorsed this but nevertheless was clear that as a management team they had been left in a position to use what had been presented and refine it for themselves:

I remember being quite mind boggled after we'd done them (clarifying action points with the assigned inspector). Whether it was because, with respect, things weren't always explained clearly or whether there was so much there to try and absorb at one go but I know on several occasions I came away thinking ehhhh where do we go from here but when you sat down and mulled it through afterwards and things began to fall into place you could see what you were doing then yes, the actual content of what had been done was very useful.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Deputy headteacher)

#### **7.2.2.2 Supporting social changes**

In-service sessions led by the assigned inspectors within the school had also some effect on bringing people together in some of the schools. Whilst this was not evident in all responses it was brought to the fore by schools which had a particular issue of lack of cohesion between staff. Sharing the outcomes of the staff questionnaire also led to some schools facing difficulties they had not been able to make explicit before. The fact that the evidence for this came from staff themselves, had been sanitised and made anonymous through the statistical strategy of averaging responses, made the information easier to share but no less powerful.

In one school difficulties related to seeing the school through the initial stages of the project had led to some tensions between staff. Here strengths and weaknesses had been explored for the first time in a more explicit fashion:

Certainly it's helped us to focus on all these issues and I think this had the effect of bringing people together. It is often useful to have an outside person coming in to school and again the assigned inspector coming into school, I would put a lot of store in that. Not only to trigger it off, but then to lead us over the first, rather difficult, initial stages.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The assigned inspector's skills in keeping a common sense of drive and purpose in a situation where views could be polarised was also linked to manipulating situations to ensure that staff had the opportunity to work together:



I think our assigned inspector has worked very hard trying to build a new cohesion and it's plain to people why it's crucial that we work together on various aspects. Hopefully we've nailed that, but you can't, you can't ever say you've nailed anything. The AI has just done that, getting people to work together and I don't think it's because they haven't wanted to work together it's just that the machinery wasn't there.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

Another headteacher synthesised questionnaire material with the assigned inspector but presented it himself to the staff. Here the issues that were clarified linked to the social dynamics of the school. These were identified by him as rocky, undermining the situation with pupil performance and teacher effectiveness which needed to be addressed:

I told the staff at that point exactly the same situation and didn't pull any punches. We knew then we had to do something about it. We knew it would take a bit of time to work through but I think a year into the job then you start to realise the magnitude and depth of change that's required. Through the course of last year it was hard coming to the realisation of just how rocky the place was and how much discord and unhappiness, uncertainty there was.

(Phase 1, School 8, Interview 1, Headteacher)

### **7.2.2.3 Supporting micro-political changes**

The influence of micro-political change during the confirmation of the scope for improvement was a significant one. There were responses from all the schools which showed the importance of confirming the new drive for improvement and establishing the structures to support the drive. The impact of the consultants' in-service training, which had been linked to cultural change with a focus on teaching and learning, not exclusively on the implications for management, had clearly been a catalyst for re-structuring or re-thinking management roles. Interviewees used words such as 'provocative' and 'kickstart' to describe this catalyst, implying its power. Three schools had returned to redefine their work following the training day:

What we started through that Inset and what came from it started us thinking. We actually took the framework as management team and we split the staff to brainstorm on issues. It's grown from that. I suppose it gave us a kick start and a direction and models and I think it gave us the opportunity to realise so much that we could do.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and:

If all the input from Inset was as valuable as that it would be great. We have really gone ahead with that side of the school. What we have done is we structured the management, the SMT but also the focus on the curriculum.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

and:

Even though there was a problem with the deputy I think the day with the consultant training had a significant impact in a lot of ways. It was provocative to me about justifying what I do. It was also provocative to my deputy in a way and then talking about what we should be doing in terms of management and my management structure went haywire and I think that has had a very strong influence on the existing structure and the way that is now pulling together as a team.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 1, Headteacher)

In one case the existing structure was not changed but the headteacher noted that it was more cohesive. Where a new style of leadership, a focus on teaching and learning, was linked with practical ideas from the assigned inspector, the way forward for the senior management team was confirmed:

I think again coming back to the course it helped the SMT focus very clearly on that style of leadership linked to the teaching and learning not just things like resources, and therefore with the SMT there was no problem because we had outside intervention like the assigned inspector and the consultant at the training and they could see the practicalities of the way forward.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 1, Headteacher)

These practical ideas also relieved some of the pressure from a head who was aware that a staff now wanted to see some changes in his/her style of leadership rather too quickly for his/her comfort. The new senior team structures were established carefully in this school, and the headteacher was clear about the importance of getting this stage right. Here the assigned inspector was seen as giving a steer through planning to achieve these changes:

It's two things really it puts more pressure on me because I know the staff want leadership and almost like everyone else, you get the new blood in and they want changes immediately but inside me I need to know more about the school, I need to learn more so on the one hand



I am feeling under pressure that they want to see something and I don't want to jump into rash decisions which haven't been carefully thought out. Our assigned inspector helped us in how we should think about planning it. That was useful steering us through that way.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

Interestingly the Chair of Governors in one school had also noted this in the second phase of the project. The assigned inspector was someone with whom the headteacher was able to discuss potential ways forward and whose opinion was sought, during a period when changing dynamics in the senior management team were apparent:

I think the headteacher uses her (assigned inspector) quite a lot as a sounding board about action to take place.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 1, Chair of Governors)

In some schools the greater involvement of governors themselves was being encouraged to extend the micro-political influence:

I can see that the SMT is now much closer than it ever was. We have involved governor input for that, mostly the chairman but other times other governors when appropriate.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

### **7.2.3 Intervention and the third stage of improvement: Addressing**

Whilst actions had been apparent in the first two phases, the third phase is one where the schools moved the planned action forward. 'To apply or devote oneself', 'direct', and 'aim' are all words associated with addressing. The complexity of the undertakings, even with a tight focus for participants and sharpened action plans, cannot be underestimated. Developments took place within a context where headteachers could not ignore other pressures and demands. The range included staff changes, pupil changes, inspections, and building work. Such events lead to dynamics which are unforeseeable, and therefore during the addressing phase the ability to stay with the focus was subject to a range of potential diversions. The role of external intervention at this stage was evident, not only in sustaining the staff motivation and headteachers' confidence that the changes were attainable, but also in ensuring that the focus was maintained through keeping an interest in the work at

hand, and supporting the headteacher and staff in finding ways through potential obstacles. While not necessarily time consuming for the assigned inspector it nevertheless appeared to be valued.

Apparent also in this stage was the strand of additional involvement within classes. The schools had acknowledged the need for improvement within classes and with developing new teaching techniques and strategies. Evidence from the interviews indicated that headteachers welcomed support with accessing the particular expertise which would meet their needs, particularly at this practical level within classrooms and working with their children. The ability to identify, locate and facilitate the calibre of expert who could demonstrate teaching skills in a variety of contexts, gain credibility with a staff, extrapolate key themes for the school to take forward independently and present these at a staff meeting was a feature of LEA networking which was valued.

The inter-relations between the micro-political, social and technical developments of the schools were also significant. There became apparent an inter-dependency, that, if the social basis was not secure this threatened the development of technical skills. Where the micro-political influences were compromising the values placed on making difficult and demanding changes at a personal level, or the opportunities to sharpen skills, then the school's progress appeared to be inhibited. These blocks to progress were also an important aspect for headteachers to discuss with someone external to the school who could support with strategies to address the issues.

#### **7.2.3.1 Supporting technical changes**

Access to additional expertise was not built into 'support' in phase 1, an absence which some schools noted and which some overcame by purchasing further expertise. Learning from phase 1 I built in such extra support into phase 2. In the second phase a range of those working in the schools gave evidence that this support was valued. Technical support helped both the drive for coherent approaches in classrooms and the personal development of teachers' skills.



In the first phase School 1 had asked for help in locating an expert in teaching, in particular to develop similar perspectives amongst staff and to gain added consistency in the approach to English teaching:

We asked who was best and we got in the expert in teaching English because we began to realise that everyone in the team was coming from a different perspective and having a different viewpoint and we wanted to lay some sort of base, and we haven't looked back since.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

Also, in another school in phase 1 the assigned inspector had been asked to spend additional time in classrooms following up the implementation of the teaching and learning policy decisions with teachers, reinforcing the importance of sustaining this implementation phase:

He (assigned inspector) was enormously helpful because he was involved in the classroom and the teaching and learning policy and that was wonderful because it gave added weight to things which needed to develop. He led the day on it with me and was able to sharpen up people's awareness very effectively.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 2, Headteacher)

In one school there was an initial weakness in the ability to make good use of support. In phase 2 the head saw the value of an external consultant working with teachers, but was thwarted by the inability of some staff to pursue the ideas independently and to build on them. This outcome implies that the demonstration of a skill is not sufficient. It is clear that relying on one demonstration of teaching to transform a teacher's practice asked too much in this school: micro-political structures need to be robust enough to ensure follow up and further support. This is the school where the English co-ordinator showed little evidence of a personal drive for the work. The headteacher reported:

She (external expert) comes in and she's done some lovely work. The children were motivated and enthused and all the rest of it ... It was the way she valued their responses, her delivery, the fact that she sat them down and made it very clear where they were going, what they were going to learn etc ... They (staff) couldn't take away that process and translate it

so consequently the following week the teacher was doing a lesson and copied the whole thing and I just thought that was really tragic.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

Nevertheless the subject co-ordinator valued the personal influence of this expert and had changed some of her own class organisation in response to the ideas presented, and showed a willingness to share some of her ideas with others:

It wasn't quality input but personal input that worked for me. The way I worked and the organisation of my classroom to do group reading skills has worked for me so I'm going on personal experience and people say to me, is that how you do it, I'll try that.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 1, Subject co-ordinator)

and a class teacher related how, as a result of this input, expectations of children had changed and had given the class teacher greater confidence to teach aspects of the curriculum that she had not considered possible previously:

Well, their approach was really helpful approaches to ways and approaches I personally didn't know about before and also the expectations of children. I never thought about telling a six and seven year old child about genre. It's just something you thought about at secondary school but when they tell you that if you had the confidence to go and tell these children then they have the ability to learn it, and you find that out now because it's expectations.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Teacher)

The other phase 2 school had secured stronger micro-political structures. Here the impact of the external expert's input was seen as inspirational, both for teachers and for the children. The contribution had given ideas, reminded teachers of what was possible, and gained their commitment to taking it forward in their own classes.

The headteacher said:

I feel the most crucial thing was the fact that he stood in front of the class and delivered and the teachers were there and they saw him and they were inspired by him basically. They saw him at work and the feedback I had from teachers was very, very positive. He's given us a lot of ideas. The staff meeting at the end of it was good - like a nice windup of the whole thing.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)



and the deputy reported the credibility this expert had, in showing the possibilities with these children.

He (outside teaching expert) knows what going on in schools and he can see where children are, he knows the problems and so he can say, you can try this, you can try that, that sort of thing. He inspired children and he'll remind you of things you've forgotten.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 1, Deputy Head)

### **7.2.3.2 Supporting social changes**

The external experts' input encouraged staff enthusiasm for the undoubtedly challenging changes that they are managing in their classrooms. In one school early awareness of a need to improve was compromised by a group of teachers who believed that the children in their school were not capable of more. The powerful nature of witnessing someone else managing and eliciting responses from children in a way that was not thought possible was identified in both the schools in phase 2. This was seen as improving attitudes, and although it is possible to see how this activity might have led to resentment and a loss of teachers' esteem and confidence, there was no evidence to suggest that this was the case. The ability to work with tensions, to support staff through a period when existing practice is being challenged and therefore identified as in need of development, relates to the ability to lead and manage feedback in as positive a way as possible. Constructive feedback was seen as help, as opposed to the monitoring which teachers saw in a more negative light.

In both the schools in the second phase the external expert's influence on teachers' attitudes was noted, by both the headteacher and the Chair of governors:

I think once they saw him, saw how he could do it, in the classroom and saw the possibilities, and they realised the children were capable of doing much better then I think that improved the teachers' attitudes and they wanted to put the effort into it then.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

and:

They use the excuse, apparently with this teacher the negative ones we've got too many still, apparently said now it would be nice to see them do it. But nobody could do it with our kids and when she came and did it with all our kids they all sat up.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Chair of governors)

The potential for feedback to diminish the positive staff attitudes was identified in one of the schools. Where success was acknowledged within the feedback, then positive attitudes were more likely to be sustained, according to a teacher whose response suggested she was representing a fairly unanimous view from the staff of her school.

No - speaking personally I like feedback. I think we all like to be told we're doing a good job. I like feedback and I like to know if something's going right. I don't think they look at it as support if they are being observed and then getting feedback. Sometimes there's a fine line between you're just being judged and actually this is to help you. I think we're going to have to be careful that when we talk about it as a staff that people don't feel personally judged because that can be destructive.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Teacher)

In this school the headteacher acknowledged the inter-personal skills and the expertise of both the external expert and the assigned inspector in working with individuals and in giving feedback that provided not only a catalyst for taking ideas forward but for sustaining the action:

He (curriculum expert) works for the county. It's the confidence to really know what they are talking about and I think it's a lot to do with actually working with our children, as well as inset stuff. But I think it's because there is somebody actually spending time with either one person or two people, she (assigned inspector) is sitting down talking in a non-threatening way and I suppose and coming up with some hopefully fanning the flame. It's a bit like a joss stick for some staff and it's only barely there and other stuff it's sort of burning brightly and it's trying to get them all on the same level.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

### **7.2.3.3 Supporting micro-political changes**

The importance of effective structures for influencing and supporting the drive for improvement was evident in all the interviews conducted with headteachers. This was linked to a senior management team which was cohesive and where all were concerned with securing the necessary improvements. The intervention served to secure this drive, as well as give confidence to those with responsibility to hold others to account. The importance of making resources available, both time and



money, which enabled teachers to take ideas forward, was also identified by headteachers.

In one school the headteacher was about to induct a new deputy and recognised the importance of securing a cohesive team, but felt confident to do so:

I think that had a very significant impact, giving us all confidence as a management team and about how to tackle those sorts of issues, but I've got to start all over again of course. I think those things have been very influential and given confidence I think, particularly to me as a senior manager in the school.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 1, Headteacher)

In another school the confidence of the headteacher as a leader of other senior managers had grown, and she referred to her assigned inspector as providing a model for taking initiatives forward and holding others to account, and she had moved that forward not only in her own practice, but additionally with her senior management team:

Basically he (assigned inspector) was showing me, opening the door and going through and I found that tremendously supportive and I am proud that I was able to do it but thanks to him for kick starting me into action I think that has certainly taken us a long way forward. I've got the confidence now and am prepared to do it. I've explained how my role is the starting point, how the management team need to be supporting those initiatives that are raised as a result. By us working together now on those issues and until the management team was in a position to be able to do that we couldn't do any of it, so if you like all those strands are beginning to come together.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

A similar development was noted at another school, with reference to the deputy. This also identified the increased collegiality of the senior management team. The intervention here saved the school time in developing this aspect of their work:

I would say it has definitely brought us (the senior management team) together more as professionals and it gave the acting deputy another way of looking at her work and she's looked at it more from the point of view as senior management. I'm sure if we hadn't been part of it, it would have taken much longer.

(Phase 1, School 6, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The management of tensions linked to both the social and the micro-political dimensions of the school. In one case the headteacher was clear that the assigned inspector's role in promoting tension within staff meetings in order to ensure reactions and then to use these to clarify thinking and clarify ways forward had positive outcomes:

He's (assigned inspector) very good at playing devil's advocate you know, and he is extremely good at saying 'what do you think' not just to me but to my staff. Certainly he could be quite - come on come on - positively stirring, getting reaction, making people jump one way or the other and usually in similar ways. And that was good for us. It was really interesting because if you're not careful you drift. We had things tying together. It helped solidify people's thoughts. That was useful.

(Phase 1, School 8, Interview 2, Headteacher)

Headteachers also acknowledged that they needed to ensure resources were available for staff. In particular the need to ensure that staff had the necessary non-contact time was identified, not just the purchasing of additional resources. Interestingly the status given to this by one was high, but the means to do it was seen as difficult to access. The role of those external to the school can either be one of providing resources such as time or equipment, to facilitate action, or of ensuring that the need for earmarked resources is highlighted:

I'm fiddling my budget to try and give them non-contact time because as you know they will always say we don't have time to do it.

(Phase 1, School 7, Interview 2, Headteacher)

In another school the headteacher had seen how the additional external funding had supported the school, and was now keen to ensure the availability of funding as a prerequisite for addressing improvements:

When you think, what a difference that £500 has made. Coming back to one of the earlier questions, that it's made me look again at things like development planning issues because you go scratching around to see if you've got enough money for books and pencils and staff but when you see what that £500 has done and you can say to yourself, well, okay, so let's



allocate it, we want to improve spelling and so let's put aside £500 and see what we can do, see what we can use it for and let's improve the spelling.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

#### **7.2.4 Intervention and the fourth stage of improvement: Securing**

A potential weakness of any intervention is that the effect may be transitory, having an impact whilst others are involved in the school, but with the school left in a position where it is unable to sustain or transfer what it has learnt to new situations without continued support. The initial aim of the improvement project was to develop the schools' own abilities to secure improvement. The term secure relates to words such as 'stable', 'fasten' and 'confident'. Watling *et al.* (1998) note the suspicion of teachers of LEA interventions which, whilst appreciated, were 'in danger of not being sustained' (1998, p. 54). If the schools' involvements with the projects had led to longer term improvement at the schools, then the responses of respondents would indicate a commitment to identifying and pursuing issues through audit and analysis, and a confidence to do so. Fullan gives the warning that 'individual schools can become highly motivated for short periods of time without the district (region of educational provision in Canada), but they cannot stay innovative without the district action to establish the conditions for continuous and long term improvement' (1991, p. 209). Where schools reported that they were able and keen to pursue further developments, what was it about the intervention which had supported this? Was there any implication that the schools would now be self sustaining? Would that imply that some continuing external intervention would be welcomed?

##### **7.2.4.1 Supporting technical changes**

The increased understandings about using data, examining the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' progress and abandoning the assumption that the status quo is not to be challenged seemed to have a lasting impact on the headteachers. For those where improvements had been secured there was a commitment to using further evaluation and some of the strategies used in the project to support the development work. Technical ability and confidence to interrogate information was evident:

I think I will actually look at pupil achievement as this comes through and further evidence of pupil achievement. In a way it's very easy to look at the able and say they're achieving

but I think we've had a significant jumps forward in our middle to lower ability children who are pushing forward and we'll keep pushing there.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 2, Headteacher)

In another school the commitment to careful analysis of data was linked to securing further input from a curriculum expert to support technical expertise:

We've already established that we want to look at maths in the same way and we have already established that she (curriculum expert) will come in and work with staff like we did in English.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

There was also evident a lasting interest in pedagogy, and a critical interest in whether implemented practice related to the intended practice which had been clarified in the work in the teaching and learning policy.

It's only now that I think the teaching and learning policy is really kicking into play. We keep revisiting it. Every now and again we remind ourselves about how we tackle things. If you take pupil achievement in its crudest form our English SATs are up significantly, we're very pleased with that. So now if we're tackling an issue like maths we go back. We revisit and say what were we saying last October when we actually brainstormed and started putting that together. It's had, I think a very strong impact and it's there.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 2, Headteacher)

#### **7.2.4.2 Supporting social changes**

Secured improvement showed hallmarks of staff's confidence and professional attitudes, suggesting that new values were assimilated into the social mores of the school. One school noted that intense support to sustain this would not be needed, although some support would keep the impetus:

I think once you get the snowball moving I feel confident that with the time and the staff and the professionalism and the expertise we're able to drive it along again without her (assigned inspector) support but just her help to move it along. So yes, to be there, it certainly has been a great help to me.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)



At the same school the new cohesion which the head had identified was reinforced by the teacher interviewed, together with the increased ability of the staff to accept and use the identification of areas for development in a positive way, building on existing competence with confidence and enthusiasm:

Obviously with the staff you get varied personalities and sometimes people do take things personally as a criticism which isn't meant as a criticism at all. But I do honestly think that this year that we are working together a lot more we realise there are things to be done and I think as well we probably all don't mind being told because it can only be good.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Teacher)

The new ability of staff to work more closely together was identified by the headteacher, but not as a result of anything that could be specified with clarity:

I didn't really know what anyone else was doing but that other people were working at it because on the human level there wasn't that sort of working together but it's like it's just happened.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

In another school individual growth was attributed to the processes of thrashing out issues with external support. This ability to consider new approaches and to adapt them through careful consideration of the issues was seen as the growth of individuals, but within a newly asserted value system.

We've had so many meetings and people have hammered out so many issues together with people from outside. There's been a lot of hotly debated issues which I think is good and healthy. I think people are growing. We're more together now.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 2, Headteacher)

#### **7.2.4.3 Supporting micro-political changes**

The ability of headteachers to evaluate their school's performance and to encourage rigorous debate also implied for some the ability to take personal challenge in a constructive manner, and to introduce tensions which they were then confident to manage:

I think in terms of actual management style I've changed, I think, I mean the word turbulence which I think I referred to last time I was interviewed. Being introduced to that word turbulence had quite a profound effect on how I felt I should do things and there are times now when I've been deliberately provocative at times to float ideas but sometimes I expect to get shot down, but sometimes being deliberately in conflict, not all the time because conflicts are hard to cope with. But just by provoking responses people have come up with alternatives which has made us stronger for it. So in terms of how I've managed things, rather than people being compliant and fitting in with what the boss says I actually think the collegiate approach has got stronger for that.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 2, Headteacher)

This new approach to rigorous self-evaluation combined with an explicit drive for securing improvement was evident in the most securely improved school in the second phase. A determination, a secure drive from the headteacher to sustain this was expressed with enthusiasm:

The head of infants said 'You've ruffled a few feathers in the last year,' and I said, they needed ruffling. I wouldn't have thought like that before... I think I'm going to try to be just a little harder if possible. You know I said I was impatient at the beginning - I am impatient but I've been very tolerant and I've listened to people and I think now I can say it's time to get our fingers out, this school is going to go places and this is what we're going to do.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

Improving pupils' learning and specifically relating that to the school's own aims and values was seen by one school as the heightened focus of the staff. These more explicit values and aims were guiding the leadership and influencing the day to day work of the school:

We're more aware of the important issues because we spent a long time discussing our overall aims and sharpening them and including more appropriate challenge and academic aims. People are more tuned in to looking at that, we've got more things in place formally.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 2, Headteacher)

The continuing value of external support was also acknowledged by one head as the continuing need to avoid insularity, and the ability to share issues, as the key leader, with someone external to the school:



The one thing I don't want to do is become very insular and I feel this is important and I think you need to know there is somebody at the end of the phone that you can pick up and say 'what do you think, where can we see' or whatever.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

### **7.3 Linking intervention strategies to school improvement**

From the above analysis it was possible to link the key strategies used by those working with the schools to the cycle of school improvement. This cycle was that provided in the DfEE's (1997) own literature which promotes the process of answering the questions: 'Where are we now?', 'Where do we want to be?', 'What are we going to do?' and finally 'How well have we done?', the reviewing and evaluation of progress. In order to answer the question 'Where are we now?' the review of performance, pedagogy and management is suggested along with a comparison with the performance of other similar schools, banded by the percentage of free school meals. This review leads to the setting of specific targets for improving pupil performance, the 'Where do we want to be?' 'What are we going to do?' is met through the action planning for attaining these targets. Implementation occurs, supported through the actions identified at the planning stage. Finally, review and evaluation of progress is achieved through the monitoring activities undertaken to ensure that the planned activities occur, but additionally through evaluating the action taken and judging its strengths and weaknesses through the impact on children's performance.

This cycle, whilst useful, does not explore the dimensions of technical, social and micro-political development which became evident as schools moved through the phases of alerting, confirming, addressing and securing improvement outlined as a result of the project. In order to provide this analysis, I examined the transcripts to identify the attributes ascribed to those working with the schools and to examine what participants saw as the crucial skills of those working with them to secure improvement (Table 7.2). In one case those attributes were expressed negatively and therefore implied what would have been helpful. Whilst the distinction between the technical, social and micro-political elements of the intervention are given, there are clear overlaps and duplications between the activities, attributes and skills identified and their contribution to an integrated impact on the school's development.

Attributes and skills of external interventionists, within aspects and stages of change for improvement

Stage	Activities undertaken	Attributes mentioned by interviewees	Skills mentioned by interviewees
<b>ALERTING</b>			
<b>Technical</b>	Interpretation and analysis of benchmark and comparative data	Clarity of thinking User friendly debate Saved time	Ability to interpret a range of statistical and performance data quickly
	Analysis of school's own performance data	Clarity in expressing issues	Ability to synthesise issues Use of information technology to support analysis
	In-service training	Credibility	Organisational skills
<b>Social</b>	Staff meetings to share and define issues	Confidence Charisma and personality Non- threatening Persuasiveness	Mediation of difficult information  Motivator
<b>Micro-political</b>	Senior management team meetings. In- service training for Headteacher and deputy head	Knowing the school and its context A friend and supporter Catalyst for new thinking	Promote serious discussion about current realities
<b>CONFIRMING</b>			
<b>Technical</b>	Making explicit the link between overall goals and specific goals for children and teachers	Sharply focused  Directed attention to what matters	Ability to ask questions which make you stop and think Ability to use school's own data as evidence for identification of strengths and weaknesses
	Observation of teaching, analysing strengths and weaknesses in relation to a curriculum subject or aspect	Expert in the field Prevents cosiness Reliable judgement	Curriculum expertise Ability to observe teaching and judge quality and report on it succinctly
	Scrutiny of work	A fresh eye	Secure and objective judgement
	Identifying further needs or opportunities for training  Working alongside staff in classrooms or on planning	Objective and fair Worked productively within a short time span Connected to the school but not connected	Imparts knowledge and understandings Ability to present judgements based on evidence from scrutiny and observation. Feedback which acknowledges positive and negative dimensions
<b>Social</b>	Staff meetings to discuss and define the action plan focus and content	Committed to the improvement Promotes confidence and enthusiasm	Communicating effectively with a range of staff in different situations Providing a relevant focus for debate Securing commitment of staff
<b>Micro-political</b>	Ensuring roles and responsibilities defined and facilitated Strengthening senior managers	Articulates the goals clearly Promotes the commitment of senior	Modelling strategies alongside senior managers Ensures resources are allocated to priorities, both time and money



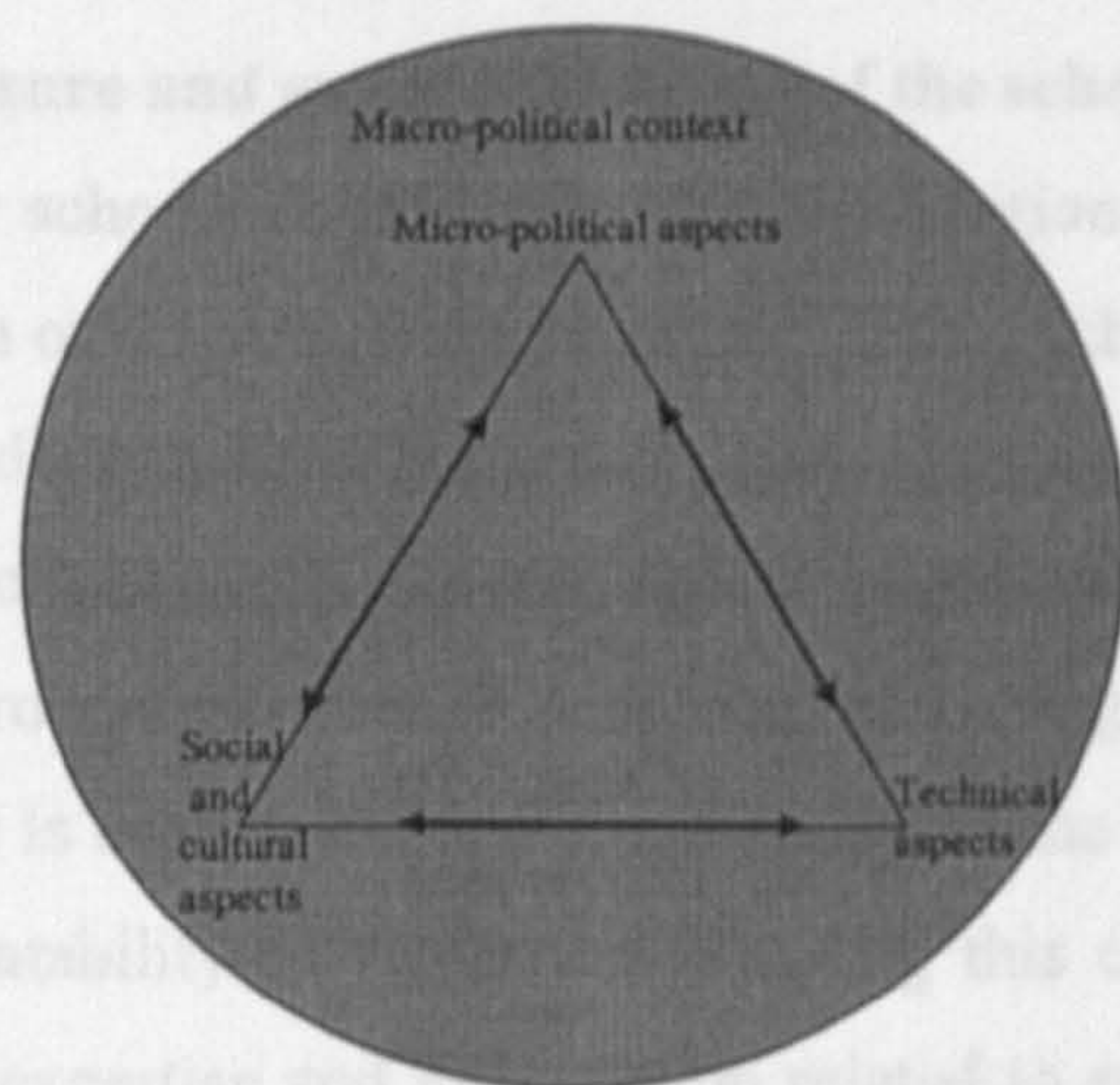
<b>ADDRESSING</b>			
<b>Technical</b>	Networking support	Can find the right person for us	Knowledge of and access to a wide range of reliable experts
	Identifying training opportunities	Values input for staff	Knowledge of range of training available
	Teaching the school's selected curriculum focus to a range of classes and year groups	Inspired our children Imaginative Lifted our aspirations	Ability to gain response from different and varied ranges of pupils
	Leading staff meetings	Source of ideas, inspiration and information Acted as a catalyst for changes	A knowledge of the subject and related effective pedagogy
<b>Social</b>	Leading and attending staff meetings	Relates quickly and effectively with a range of staff. Engages all staff Solidify and crystallise thinking Commitment to teaching well Taking a real interest in the achievement of staff and pupils	Ability to challenge without undermining. Develops school's own ability to be productively self-critical.  Influences the identification of the values of the school Reflects values of the school Respects abilities of staff and pupils
<b>Micro-political</b>	Brief but focused contact through 'phone calls or short visits to check on thrust of action	Alert to barriers and diversions, and strategies to overcome them. Prompts, nudges, insists	Ability to prioritise and promote this process with others Ensures that key focus is sustained
	Revisiting the action plan with the headteacher/ senior management team	Develops the confidence of the head/senior managers in their own abilities	Supporting the head or senior managers through periods of difficulty, lifting school's skills
<b>Securing</b>			
<b>Technical</b>	Supporting the school's evaluation	Validates our systems Knows the basis with which the head is working	Identifying strategies for collecting and collating evidence
<b>Social</b>	Involved in staff activities	Someone with a foot inside and outside the school Basically friendly	Exhibits confidence in the school's own ability to sustain improvement Sustains professional relationships with staff
<b>Micro-political</b>	Identifying with senior managers the aspects which would be useful to transfer to future work	Plays devil's advocate Leaves me thinking	Sustaining a penetrating dialogue with the school managers  Knows when to withdraw support

*Table 7.2. Attributes and skills of external interventionists, within aspects and stages of change for improvement.*



This analysis was the result of synthesising the identified attributes and skills of the several individuals who were working with the schools, a total of twelve people, which comprised seven assigned inspectors, three external consultants, and two expert teachers. The schools identified the attributes and skills of those who worked with them. There was some overlap between the skills and attributes of assigned inspectors, consultants and expert teachers, although their contributions were different. The model of change for improvement, combining phases with aspects, was further discussed with assigned inspectors who had worked with the schools which supported the analysis from their perspective. It was the mix of the range of people working with the schools, the infra-structure of that support which appeared to be cohesive in its aims but specific in the way in which events aligned to help the schools take their development forward.

My findings suggest that the nature of intervention needs to relate to the technical, social and micro-political development of schools if continued capacity for improvement is to be secured. Figure 7.1 shows through a diagram how these three inter-related aspects sit within the overall macro-political context for the school.



*Figure 7.1 The micro-political, social and cultural and technical aspects of development within the macro-political context.*



The inter-relationships between these aspects of change are powerful, so that it is difficult to establish secure change in the technical aspects if the support is not given for changes in the micro-political structures and the social attitudes. The changes impact not only pupils' motivation but also staff confidence. Intervention also needs to take account of the particular phase of the school as an improving school and promote activities accordingly. Different activities become more appropriate at the different phases. Alongside this is the requirement for a range of attributes and skills which will be used by those providing interventions. The extent to which schools need external support to provide pressure to improve, to help address their weaknesses and become successful, or to sustain their success and remain so, is currently being queried at a national political level. The view that schools should be supported in proportion to their needs, and that successful schools should receive minimum support has been proposed in the DfEE's Code of Practice for LEAs (1999). As a result of her scrutiny of school improvement studies and her own experience of school improvement in different countries, Stoll (1999) identifies as an important aspect within the parameters of external support, a need not only for monetary support, but for human, material and psychological support from the educational infra-structure for those schools which need it.

#### **7.4 Defining pressure and support in terms of the school improvement projects**

Self autonomy for schools could imply that intervention is redundant. The model to support the growth of schools, within a system where schools' accountability and the responsibility for development is decentralised, is promoted by Fullan (1999) as an 'inside-outside' collaboration. In his model organisations develop their internal strategies for improvement through accessing and using external expertise, and the inside-outside role is used to develop the capacity of the organisation and to build in an external accountability or validation. Relating this concept to my research, the 'outside' external expertise and intervention related to securing an 'inside' capacity for self improvement. Whilst those 'inside' the schools planned their own action, they did so after considerations arising from the use of 'outside' expertise. This was provided by a range of providers, including those with long term association with the schools, those who provided In-service training, and teaching experts from classrooms or colleges of higher education.

A feature of these external involvements was an increase of pressure, expressed differently by different participants, different from the pressure they related concerning other events that occurred during this period, for instance OFSTED inspections (Phase 1, Schools 2, 3, and 4, Phase 2 both schools), building works (Phase 1, School 3) or staffing issues (Phase 1, Schools 4 and 8). Degrees of discomfort for individuals were evident at different times during the projects. These arose as a new awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses became evident, particularly where challenges about current practice and principles had not previously been queried. They included: initial exploration with the assigned inspector of data to identify strengths and weaknesses; staff scrutiny of pupils' work to identify underlying strengths and weaknesses within the area for development; subsequent staff meetings which encouraged debate about values and principles underpinning teaching in the school; wide ranging and sometimes conflicting views on the practice of teaching and the promotion of learning presented in In-service training sessions; the presence of an expert teacher presenting strategies and goals which had hitherto not been a feature of the teaching. All and each of these events led to one system of beliefs being challenged by another.

### **7.5 Managing dissonance: technical, social and micro-political responses**

To explore these aspects of the schools' involvement I examined the responses in the interviews which referred to conflict, turbulence and personal difficulties. I then attributed these to the aspects of technical, social and micro-political changes and sought to find how the intervention had supported the effective management of dissonance within the schools.

#### **7.5.1 The role of the interventionist in supporting challenge in the technical aspects of the schools' development**

The challenges to existing ways of teaching and therefore to the technical aspects of the schools' development emanated from a range of events in the project at both phases. I explored the issue of tensions with all the headteachers in interviews at the end of the first phase of the project. In their responses to the personal construct questions about what would most help their school secure improvement the most significant factor was the quality of teaching (5.4.1). It was clear from their responses



during the interviews that one of the strategies for securing quality teaching was gaining the recognition from all staff that changes were needed, and this was uncomfortable for the individual teachers, as well as uncomfortable for some headteachers to manage.

One headteacher was clear about the importance of the assigned inspector's role in alerting staff to weaknesses. This was achieved through involving staff in examining the evidence, rather than by a more remote activity. The opportunity for developing the headteacher's own skills was also a positive benefit, according to this headteacher:

When the management team was released to work with our assigned inspector and all staff had put three trays of work from their classes and they were all spread out and our assigned inspector took us through it, and it was shocking. The staff came in and our AI was really good, he told me to observe the way they approached looking at the books. And some couldn't care a bean and just sat down and wouldn't do anything, others really systematically went through and then when the staff fed back it was really good, what they had picked out was very relevant. And then I fed back on what our AI and the senior management team had picked out. At times you've got to be very explicit and I was very balanced but I was very explicit and of course naturally people got upset because they were taking on board the negative and didn't take on board the positive. But it was a deliberate ploy, we've got to move each other. So we've moved on in leaps and bounds now because of that session. They've been confronted and they've had a bit of a shock. We can't have these inconsistencies so that was so valuable and so productive.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The acceptance and awareness of a need for change does not, on its own, secure the improvement. Continued dissonance was evident in responses about the development of a teaching and learning policy, where debate about the values of the school and their implementation in the teaching, and the research findings about effective and less effective teaching strategies were discussed. A diversity of responses was encouraged and ideas shared:

The debate on teaching and learning did raise issues that people haven't thought of, or I think more importantly that people had thought of but hadn't shared. I think there were one or two surprises, when people shared things and other people said yes, I think that would be a good

way to do this. There's more sharing and some movement but issues aren't as yet resolved and we've still got a long way to go to get consistency.

(Phase 1, School 4, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The sharing of ideas related by this headteacher also relates to the role of dissonance in clarifying attitudes and beliefs. Here issues were not necessarily resolved, but they were being considered. The increase in dialogue about teaching was apparent in the majority of headteachers' reports. Valuing what teachers had to report about their current class practice and acknowledging the complexity of their task which gave teachers confidence and supported their acceptance of the potential for developing the teaching. The comparison of individuals' practice with others was a developed feature of many of the schools, for example:

I think people are once again starting to look at their practice in the light of everybody else.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The ability to accept a different viewpoint and evaluate it to decide the applicability to a personal context was seen as a positive feature in the development of staff at one school. The significant aspect was that this alternative view needed to come from someone who was regarded as a friend and supporter of the school.

I think that people here will accept a viewpoint which might be different to their own and be able to evaluate them and to see if it would be able to use it here. I think the challenge of somebody coming in regarded as a friend and supporter even though that person might be saying something different to what's going on is really helpful.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

Munro (1999) suggested that for effective teaching, teachers needed to restructure their knowledge into explicit theories of learning that are based on their personal experiences. Not only theories and ideas, but practical demonstrations of a different way of working from usual practice was a powerful prompt to teachers. This could have been undermining, and perhaps the most significant aspect of the development of new understandings here was that the context for the work was exactly that in which the teachers were working, and therefore the changes became more readily attainable. This was particularly the case in one school, where the impact of



observing another teacher teaching successfully content which had been considered too difficult for the pupils, led to a shift in staff attitude:

I think once they saw him (expert teacher) in the classroom and saw the possibilities and they realised that the children were capable of doing much better then I think that improved the teachers' attitudes and they wanted to put the effort into it then.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)

One teacher mentioned being in contact with what she was supposed to be doing for the first time when she observed a practitioner at work in her class. Vygotsky's (1962) proximal zone of development has relevance here, in that the gap between the actual state and the desired state may be so wide as to inhibit the effort and ability to make the desired changes. In this case, the expertise of the practitioner was a factor for this teacher's acceptance of the new ideas and her willingness to turn them into realities with her own class:

I recognised him as knowing what he was doing (expert teacher), as being an artist and being able to impart that enthusiasm and knowledge. It inspired me to do things. It was the first time I felt in contact with what we were supposed to be doing. Up until then it hadn't been making a lot of sense and with him it was a reality.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Teacher)

### **7.5.2 The role of the interventionist in supporting challenge in the social aspects of the schools' development**

The main event, which appeared to challenge the social and cultural aspects of the schools' development, was the presentation of the results of the questionnaire which all staff had completed (5.1.2). These questionnaires asked staff to grade their perception of a range of factors which are thought to contribute to the school's conditions for improvement. The average scores for each school were calculated and then plotted against the average for all the schools in the first phase of the project. The results then showed some schools where they had scored themselves below the average, some in line, and some above. The impact of the assigned inspector presenting information to the staff which emanated from the staff themselves, as opposed to an outsider's view, was clearly powerful. For some, the fact that some

aspects were weaker than others was more acceptable because other factors were more positively shown.

One headteacher attributed this event as giving staff greater confidence to tackle the issues and encouraging a greater openness between staff because they were secure in the basis from which they were operating. MacGilchrist *et al.* (1997) refer to this basis as the emotional intelligence of a school 'the school's capacity to allow the feelings of both pupils and staff to be owned, expressed and respected' (p. 108):

The questionnaire was very good for our self confidence and morale. There were issues that needed addressing which have been taken on board, but people did feel better knowing that we were thinking positively and people then shared experiences together. There's been a lot more intellectual honesty I think as a result of that survey and people were prepared to say things openly and honestly ... people are supporting each other seeing the strengths and weaknesses that they reflect on so I think we have a much more collegiate style at the moment.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 1, Headteacher)

Another head reported a similar outcome. She reported that the initial feedback from the results of the questionnaire was tense, with the first response being to suggest that teachers had not completed it as accurately as they might have done. Nevertheless she perceived a contribution to a greater openness between staff:

It was difficult. The assigned inspector came and she fed back from the questionnaire, she didn't mean to but inadvertently made the staff feel a little bit uncomfortable and they were quite upset about it. I think they filled in the questionnaire, it was gut feeling. It was actually helpful, because I think you have to have an honesty base and I think it encouraged an honesty base instead of people not saying what they meant for fear of offending. I think they are more ready and in subsequent staff meetings staff have been more prepared to speak out which is good.

(Phase 1, School 6, Interview 1, Headteacher)

Another headteacher reported the results of the questionnaire as 'exposure' which had led to a greater cohesiveness in staff. The realisation that they each had a part to play in addressing the issues, stemmed from acknowledging they had all played a part in identifying them:



**We've exposed, we have as a staff exposed our perceived weaknesses and when you do that people have a choice to either run for cover or do something about it. There is much more of a feeling of 'I have got my part to play in this field and if I'm not playing my part then further up the road the bits fall off.'**

**(Phase 1, School 8, Interview 1, Headteacher)**

**The role of the assigned inspector in mediating these difficult messages additionally supported staff in accepting and acting on them:**

**There were certain areas (of the questionnaire results) that I was fidgeting about because it was getting towards me. But she (assigned inspector) handled it well and the staff respected her for that and it was a comfortable meeting in the end although it wasn't all plain sailing and I think she did a good job ... we thought about issues which unless she (AI) had come in with that questionnaire we wouldn't probably have addressed as quickly.**

**(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)**

**The accounts from the phase 1 schools were those from the perspective of the headteachers. In Chapter 5 I identified that headteachers believed that the development of evaluation was an important aspect of securing improvement. By comparing the results of the first and second questionnaire I was able to gain some insights into staff perceptions about the changes that had occurred. I analysed the percentage of positive values ascribed to the following set of statements which related to enquiry and reflection, as described in 4.3:**

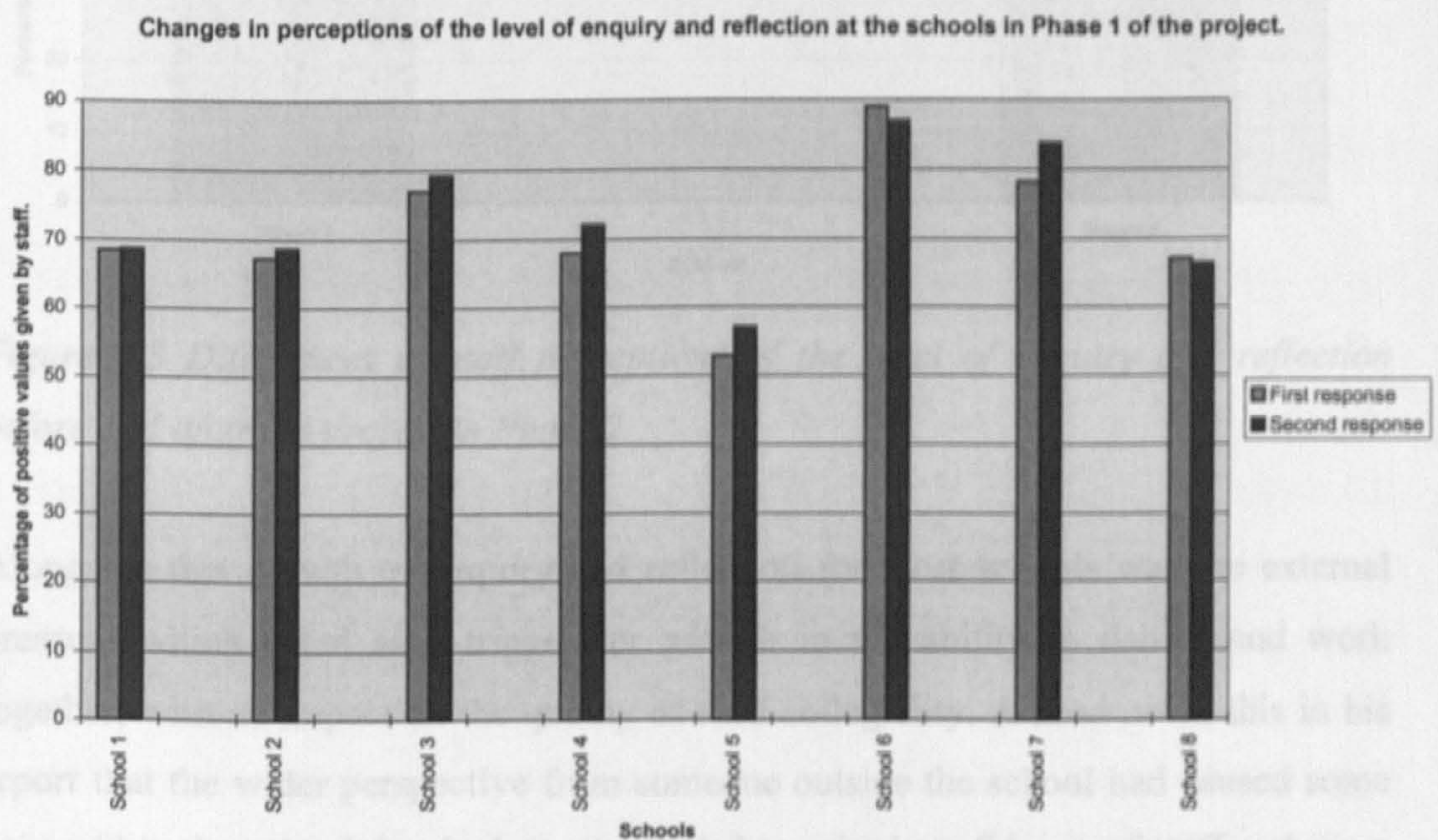
- Information I gain about children's achievements in my class is used to provide a whole school picture of our work;**
- We discuss and review our day to day teaching;**
- As a staff we discuss the trends in children's progress through the school;**
- When something new is introduced, we take time to consider how well it is going.**

**Staff had been asked to give a response ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree on a five point scale. If all staff had responded 'strongly agree', then a value of 100% was attributed to that response. I compared the first response with the second to identify changes.**



increased this by the end of the project. School 1 had started from a lower base than

The responses from the schools were compared before and after the project (Figure 7.2). Whilst these are expressed in percentages and the differences are not extreme, there do appear to be trends towards more involvement in enquiry and reflection. It was apparent that in six of the eight schools staff perceived the level of enquiry and reflection to have risen in their schools. Interestingly schools, 2, 7 and 8 had seen their pupils' attainment rise, but for school 8 there was a perception that the level of enquiry had slightly fallen as opposed to the other two schools where it had increased. In Phase 1 there had been no promotion of external support within classrooms.



*Figure 7.2 Differences in staff perceptions of the level of enquiry and reflection before and after the project in Phase 1*

The staff in generally more confident and prepared to put their backs out a little bit more than

I carried out a similar analysis from the data provided by the schools in Phase 2 of the project (Figure 7.3). It was apparent that the greatest change had occurred at School 2 which had started from an already strong basis. There was not the diminished level of enquiry or involvement apparent in the first phase of the project. Staff in the less secure school of the two, School 1 where differences between classes had become very apparent when the reading attainment profiles were examined, showed little acknowledgement of any increase in the level of enquiry and reflection. School 2 had commenced with a higher level of perceived reflection, but had



increased this by the end of the project. School 1 had started from a lower base than that identified in School 2.

The differences in staff perceptions of the level of enquiry and reflection before and after the project in Phase 2 schools.

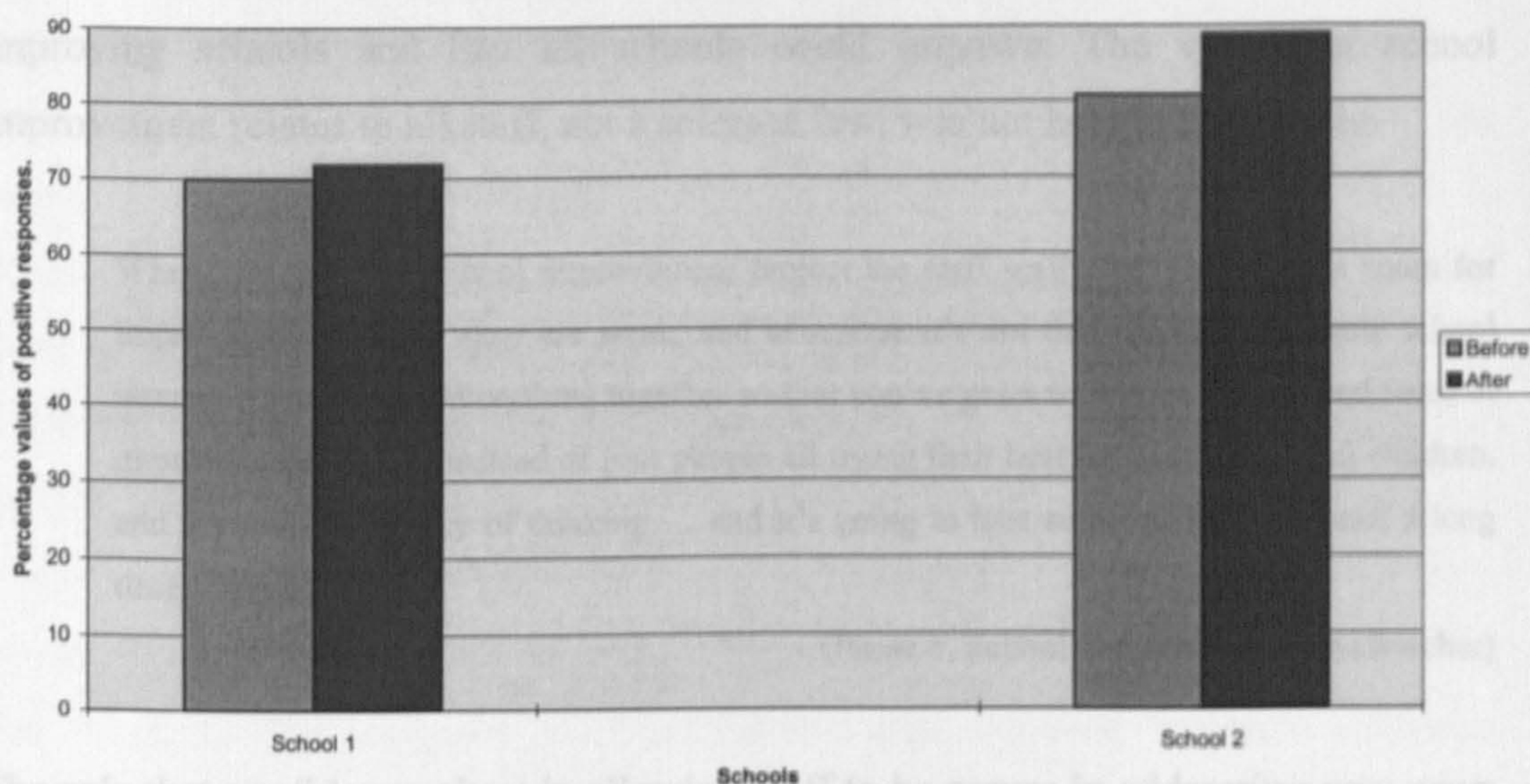


Figure 7.3 Differences in staff perceptions of the level of enquiry and reflection before and after the project in Phase 2.

Alongside this growth of enquiry and reflection for most schools was the external pressure which acted as a trigger for growth in the ability to debate and work together, with an impact on the quality of staff collegiality. A head noted this in his report that the wider perspective from someone outside the school had caused some pain within the school, but had eventually led to raised confidence of staff and more evidence of staff working and debating together:

The staff is certainly more confident and prepared to put their necks out a little bit more than where they were a year ago and that in turn will raise the standards. In terms of concrete data that will substantiate that I think a lot of the pain we've gone through this year has moved us forward and you can see it in all sorts of ways around the school in the way people are working together. It's been very good that the assigned inspector has played devil's advocate with me, and the expert advice on putting together our teaching and learning policy, the day was full of good intellectual debate ... And whereas we've been a little parochial in our little environment, he's been able to come and give that wider perspective.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 1, Headteacher)



The discomfort caused by being part of a project called a school 'improvement' project was also an issue for some staff which resulted in some changes of attitude. The word improvement suggested that not all was good enough, although initial introductions to the project (Appendix 5.2) had stressed that the best schools were improving schools and that all schools could improve. The view that school improvement relates to all staff, not a selected few, was not held in all schools:

When you are on a school improvement project the staff really feel that there is room for improvement because they are weak, and of course it's not that at all it's a whole school issue and it's pulling everything together so that you've got a whole school forward force in improving the school instead of four people all trying their best for their individual children, and it's a different way of thinking ... and it's going to take some members of staff a long time to realise that.

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The role that confidence plays in allowing staff to be secure in addressing new ways of working together was also clear. Claxton *et al.* (1996) suggested that the engagement and motivation of teachers, and the facilitation of their learning, requires a change in their attitudes. The self-esteem of teachers is likely to be based on the belief that current knowledge and teaching are competent. With the more recent demands for teaching, such as an externally defined curriculum and calls to increase children's rates of progress, self-esteem will falter if it is based on old values. It will need to change to a self-esteem based on an ability to build on competence. This may need to be explored with staff explicitly when working with them. In one reported case from the second phase of the project, in the school where enquiry and reflection had not developed, some staff lacked confidence to make changes or to take risks. This had an impact on the ability of all staff to support each other, particularly where the lack of confidence was expressed in negative or sceptical terms:

Staff meetings on the whole, they're working together, there's the occasional negativity about but it's not a major event. It's just usually perhaps one or two people who are a bit sceptical about something new or something different that they haven't tried before ... It's a confidence thing. If you lack confidence you stick to something that feels safe. You don't want to fail at something so you don't take the risk so you don't get any better.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Deputy headteacher)



### **7.5.3 The role of the interventionist in supporting challenge in the micro-political aspects of the schools' development**

There have been analyses of leadership which point to differences between styles which are identified as transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Fink (1999) used these definitions to define two types of leader, the transactional leader as using conventional, rather political means to get the job done, and the transformational leader as one who unites their colleagues through a shared vision to achieve goals. The micro-political dimension I am exploring incorporates both of these styles, but from a stance that each strategy plays a part in influencing the attitudes and actions of others in order to achieve goals. One of the training In-service days, for both phases, explored the influence of senior managers on the shared vision and values of the school and on the quality of teaching and learning. Ignoring the micro-political processes can undermine the efficacy of a change. Van den Berg (1999) suggests that the interactions between teachers influence innovations just as innovations influence the interactions between teachers. Handling the micro-political processes is therefore an important part of managing the innovation and change.

Sharing questionnaire material allowed some of the functional aspects or transactions of the leadership to be explored. Both events provided moments of dissonance for headteachers and their senior managers. The challenge to complacency through the In-service session was welcomed in retrospect, with one headteacher remarking that it was the most productive training he had been involved in. One headteacher acknowledged that turbulence and discomfort were a likely outcome of some of the activities they were engaging in. The experience of being put in a similar position to that of the staff in being challenged about managerial practice, as opposed to teaching practice, led to an increase in confidence to lead the school through the issues that arose during the year:

That day (Inset day) was probably one of the best day's Inset I've ever had as a head because it was very provocative, it shook your complacency, we all creep into that things are going along, bubbling along very nicely and everything about that day was questioning - is this really working? is that really going on? And a lot of comfortable assumptions I made were challenged on that day. I was lucky my deputy at the time was with me and we shared a lot

of things on that day. The word turbulence shone through and it has helped me a lot. It's given me lots of confidence as I have had a very rocky year with staffing issues.

(Phase 1, School 3, Interview 1, Headteacher)

Indeed, one headteacher felt that she would now utilise dissonance selectively to produce the conditions for improvement in her school, as opposed to always trying to sustain a calm equilibrium in the school. Here the proposed development of collegiality in an ethos of critical reflection is possibly an indicator of a creative and supportive development of the management role:

I think I was challenged by it. I think that probably that happened from coming to these Inset days, but very much the fact that you shake the thing about not being too cosy ... so whereas if things are going along smoothly I don't rock the boat. It's made me think that sometimes perhaps you should if you want to get things done.

(Phase 1, School 7, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The importance of viewing the responsibility for the micro-political dimensions of the school's development from a wider base than the headteacher was reassuring for a recently appointed head. The initial feelings of being so far away from the desired state following the discussions at the In-service training with other headteachers was for one participant overwhelming. This was helped by the realisation that there was a responsibility for all those in the senior management team to take forward:

I think for me because it's my first post and because I'm new to the post it's been a painful year and painful in that it makes you realise all the things you haven't got and you need, and it makes you feel quite de-skilled. But the Inset day helped so much because he was focusing on quality from a team perspective.

(Phase 1, School 5, Interview 1, Headteacher)

This view was shared by another headteacher whose personal philosophy had been challenged. As a headteacher in a context where social issues had taken precedence over pupil attainment he was re-thinking the values that had to be incorporated into his frames of reference. The view that the responsibility for seeing this through could, and should, be shared with other senior members of staff was beneficial. It required a change in the relationships and ways of working that had been acceptable previously, not least in sharing and debating ideas:



I think it's been difficult. Having done it one way for a number of years one then finds a new method which is fundamental to the running of the school and my own philosophy then it's quite a difficult change ... I knew that was the way forward and whether I liked it or not that's the way it had to be and so we've all got to do things ... I think the basic thing is supporting each other, we all have bad days and then you can go to somebody and share. I'm giving people greater responsibility to carry out functions, pre-determined in negotiation. Both deputies are good at curriculum, they focus on different areas and they were able to throw back at me I thought very good ideas and we were able to work together very closely and that changed our relationship. To me I think that was the benefit.

(Phase 1, School 2, Interview 1, Headteacher)

For one headteacher the effectiveness of the deputy was challenged, because of a complacency which the headteacher did not share. The in-service session led to the opportunity to debate this more openly in senior management meetings:

The junior deputy head thought everything was perfect and didn't really want me along anyway and that has really caused me a lot of problems. That person hasn't the ability to rise above and have an overview. That then becomes the major thrust in management team meetings and we had a very good debate as a result.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 1, Headteacher)

The evidence from these interviews points to the managed introduction of dissonance as a feature of the management of change in a school. Headteachers, Dean (1993) found in a survey of four different authorities, valued an outsider working collaboratively with them, which ameliorated some of the tensions of headteachers feeling increasingly isolated. In the same study the importance of the adviser's ability to form good working relationships with staff was stressed. Whilst there were examples of dissonance at individual level in the accounts from headteachers and from the staff in phase 2, there was a clear indication that when introduced alongside the development of supportive collegiality its impact could be turned into an effective motivator for change. Clearly for the schools in this study moments of dissonance, often promoted by someone outside the school, was productive. Some of these moments were intentional (acting devil's advocate, being provocative) others were not, for example inadvertently upsetting staff. The careful and intentional management of providing moments of dissonance, within a framework of support,

can aid the change process. Stoll (1999) suggests that outsiders offering critical friendship are invaluable to capacity development. This research shows how this was the case in the schools involved.

### **7.6 Implications for supporting schools: the place of self evaluation**

What are the implications for schools sustaining improvement? The importance of continued self-evaluation was identified from the evidence presented by the headteachers at the end of the first phase of the project. Stoll (1999) suggests that the most effective approach to improvement and learning is underpinned by critical and reflective self-analysis. Nevertheless, self-evaluation is not always underpinned by this quality of analysis and can be prone to the self-delusion and imprecision identified by Earley (1998). Dean (1993) found that the headteachers surveyed preferred views from the outside to come from those who had built their views up over a period of time, and that both positive and negative reporting was highly valued. Self evaluation does present opportunities for dissonance, and it appears to be those schools which have developed a confidence in their abilities as a collegiate staff to manage difficult information which are better placed to utilise rigorous self enquiry productively, according to the evidence from the interviews which took place in phase 2. Externally validated self-evaluation, conducted with someone who has an interest in the school, but remains objective, can extend these opportunities.

The levels of external support for school self evaluation needs to be considered in relation to the context and developmental state of the individual school. The confidence needed to face difficult information was identified in one school in this study as a difficulty for individual teachers, who then had an impact on the rest of staff with their negativity. Those schools, which lack self-confidence, are unlikely to want to participate in an activity which could expose their weaknesses. Macbeath (1999) suggests that elements of self-evaluation need to be present in every school because it is the seed of growth. Earl and Lee (1998) identified that schools which are assisted in developing the capacity for reflective evaluation learn to take primary responsibility for their own improvement. They found that the more opportunities the school had to collaborate, make interesting changes, the more the staff sought evaluation data. In weaker schools this capacity is likely to start small and need external support, but complacent and self-satisfied schools may also need external



help to deal with the gap between their perceptions of how things are and a different presentation of the evidence. To relate to the individual context, school self-evaluation would therefore need to reflect the values of the school and consider the inter-related aspects of technical expertise, social and cultural norms, and the micro-political structures and influences which hinder or support the spread of implementing that which the school values. To ignore any one of these aspects is likely to compromise the other as their inter-relatedness became apparent from the research evidence given in 6.6.

### **7.7 Pressure and support**

Outside intervention can be used in a range of ways by schools. An over dependency on external help can mask inadequacies within a school, when autonomy implies that the responsibility for improvement rests with the school itself. On the other hand, a determination to address everything from the school's own resources can lead to, at extremes, either isolation or complacency. 'External assistance is a blend of support and challenge and the latter is especially important to combat professional parochialism, insularity and conservatism' (Southworth and Lincoln, 1999, p. 206). A selective accessing of support both in providing some of the 'pressures' that act as a catalyst towards change, and in providing 'support' to extend the opportunities to address the changes, reflects the inside-outside model of school development promoted by Fullan (1999).

Whilst the headteachers within the project saw the value of outside help which had offered both pressure and support, it could have been that the pressure was not welcomed by staff and that as a result the school would avoid utilising external help. Whilst the questionnaire could not give any insight to this, it did allow comparisons of the values given to the statement: 'We use outside help to contribute to our work in classrooms'. If outside help does not, through a chain of causality, contribute to influencing changes at class level then its use is limited. 'External challenge and support from the LEA is critical in the improvement process but requires internal development and change at the school level to be most effective' (Watling *et al.* 1998, p. 61). The responses about the use of outside help, from the first phase schools, are shown in Figure 7.4.



Changes in staff perceptions of the use of outside help in Phase 1 schools.

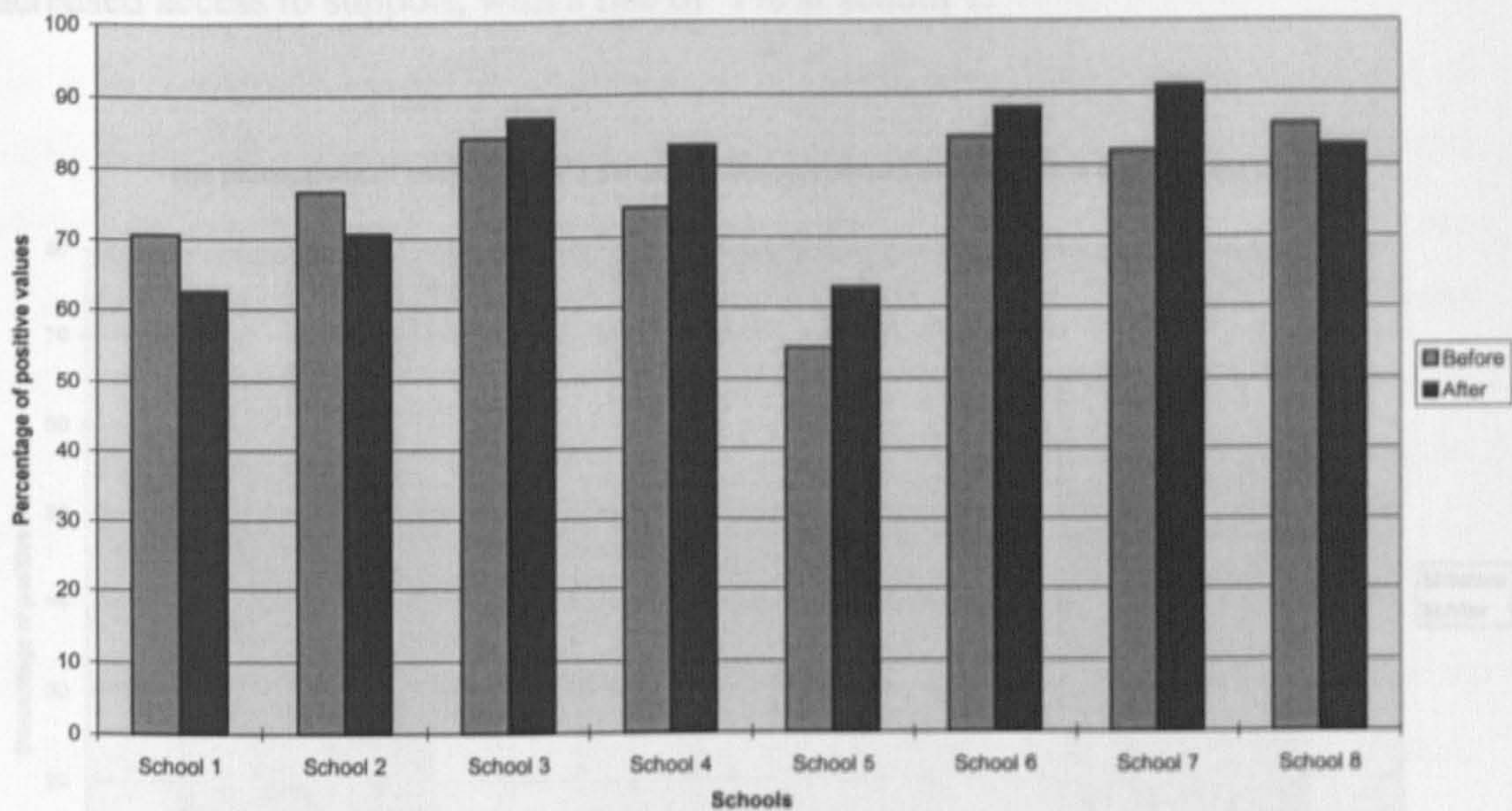


Figure 7.4. Staff perceptions of the use of outside help before and after the project in Phase 1 schools.

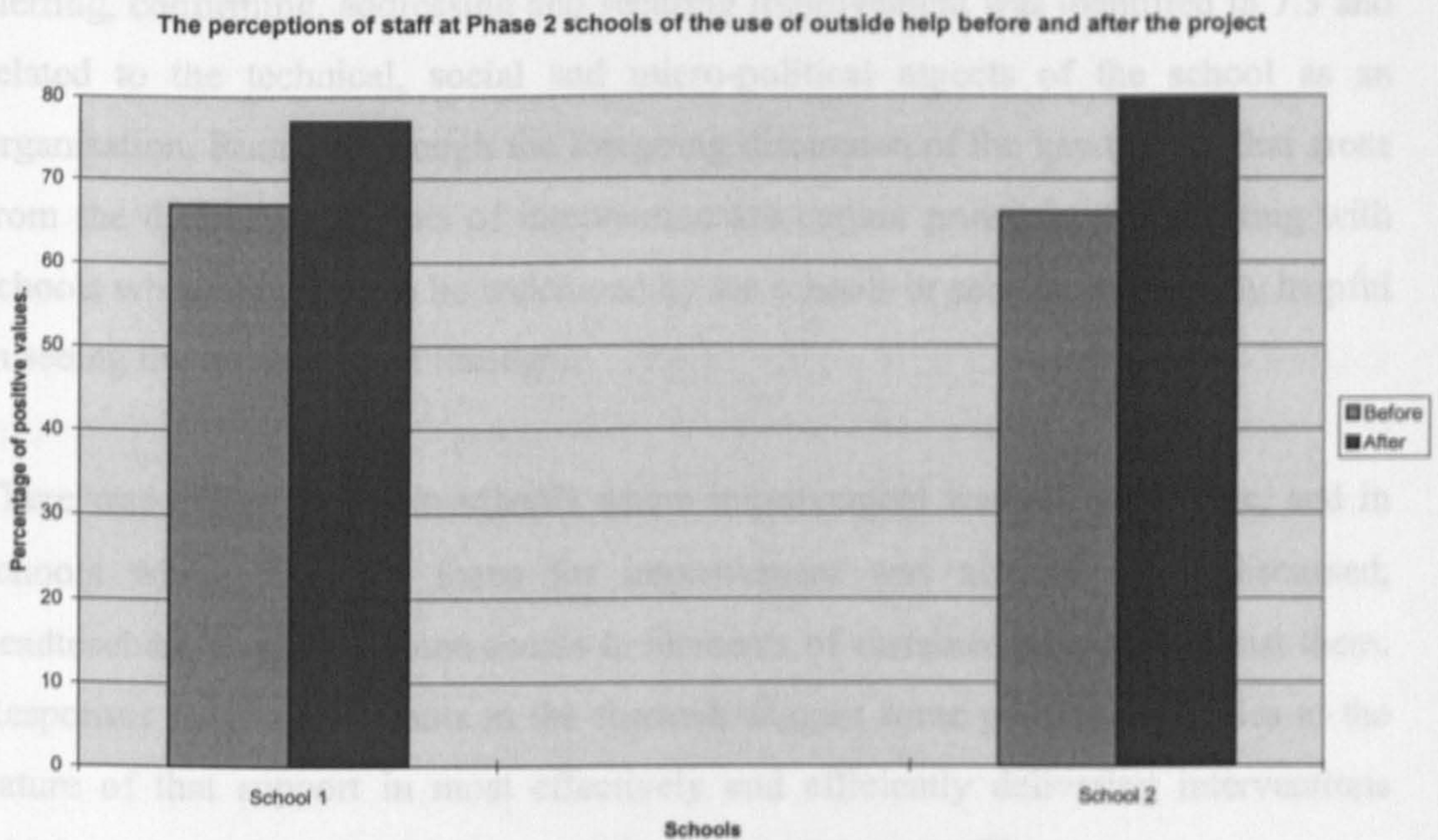
This figure does not give any detail about the type of outside help, or whether outside help was acting as pressure - a catalyst for change- or support. What is clear is that two of the more successful schools (School 1 and 8) perceived that support had diminished, whilst others were increasing their access to help. This increased access to assistance may be an acknowledgement of the usefulness of the support given during the project. It does seem to endorse the views from the interviews that there is an increased awareness both about a wider range of support, and about how it could be used most effectively.

This supposition is backed up when the results for the phase 2 schools are examined in a similar way (Figure 7.5). The schools in phase 1 had not received any tailored support within classrooms unless they themselves had organised it, as School 1 did. The identification and networking of support for work in classrooms had been the major change in the project for the schools in phase 2. They were likely to have more experience of the ways in which external support could be used to help them. Indeed, here the evidence suggested that there had been a greater rise in the support accessed and its relation to class practice, a rise of 12% at School 2, the most successful school



in the outcomes of improvement. The less improved school had also recognised the increased access to support, with a rise of 7% at school 1.

The intervention which supports the development of the school through the stages of altering, evaluating, advancing and sustaining improvement was identified as 7.3 and related to the technical, social and micro-political aspects of the school as an organisation. This intervention was designed to support the school to develop its own capacity for improvement. These are:



*Figure 7.5. Staff perceptions of the use of outside help before and after the project in Phase 2 schools.*

- Make explicit with the school the values and guiding principles it stands for;

The graph shows that perceptions of the level of outside involvement was higher for School 1 than School 2 at the commencement of the project, and had increased for both schools by the end. There was less perceived outside involvement at School 2 at the start of the project but a strong rise was evident by the end, according to these graphs. Evidence of a dependency on the outside support was not apparent from the responses to the interviews, rather an accessing of support for ensuring that relevant expertise was brought to bear on developments:

Next half term we're going to look at something else, characterisation, and we'll concentrate on that. I think the clear focus for the school helped tremendously along with the input. I think the biggest change is that people are now more aware of what the standard is like throughout the school, not just in their class. They see the results and think what can we do together to improve this.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Headteacher)



## **7.8 Key principles arising from the involvement with schools**

The intervention which supports the development of the school through the stages of alerting, confirming, addressing and securing improvement was identified in 7.3 and related to the technical, social and micro-political aspects of the school as an organisation. Running through the foregoing discussion of the key themes that arose from the different elements of intervention are certain principles for working with schools which appeared to be welcomed by the schools or seen as particularly helpful in seeing the improvement through.

There was evidence that in schools where improvement was not yet secure, and in schools where the next focus for improvement was already being discussed, headteachers would welcome access to elements of sustained support to assist them. Responses from participants in the research suggest some guiding principles to the nature of that support in most effectively and efficiently delivering interventions which promote the school's own capacity for improvement. These are:

- Take time to get to know the school;
- Make explicit with the school the values and guiding principles it stands for;
- Remain objective and secure about sustaining personal expertise and judgements;
- Undertake evaluative activities which involve the staff in sifting, analysing and reaching conclusions about strengths and weaknesses which are accepted;
- Be prepared to be both supportive and provocative in helping others to make judgements;
- Develop the evaluative skills and expertise of staff through these activities;
- Pay attention to and raise the profile of debate on the technical skills and expertise of staff, the social and cultural context within which they can support each other, and the micro-political aspects of influence and control which can endorse, challenge, hinder or facilitate the changes;
- Network relevant ideas for staff development opportunities both outside and inside the school, but as close to the context of the classroom reality for teachers as possible;



- Support the development of staff confidence and morale through acknowledging what is going well;
- Ensure early intentions are sustained and pursued through contact which helps to identify blockages to progress and suggests strategies to remove them.

Whilst these principles can guide those working in schools requiring significant levels of support, they can also guide aspects of the contact which sustains a relationship with the school within a framework of some external accountability, as for an education authority. The level of intervention required by each school needs informing through systems which identify the level of schools' effectiveness. The school's ability to use self-evaluation will also inform how the school needs supporting in order to develop those internal and external collaborations which secure improvement. The promotion of improvement and of changes in pupil attainment and teachers' curricular implementation is underpinned by promoting changes in the attitudes and organisation which require explicit debate and dialogue in order for those involved to identify and refine the practices which best support them. Different schools have different strategies and different solutions. The knowledge, understandings, skills and enthusiasms of those working in the capacity of consultant, expert teacher or local authority inspector are not to be underestimated. The external promotion of challenge to facilitate change, and the external provision of support to secure necessary changes are often provided through the same personnel. Not all schools can develop strategies which enable them to make sense of the changing demands being made on them, and which build the motivation and commitment of staff to enable them to do so, independently. The synthesis of the differing roles of external interventionists can make a powerful contribution to building the capacity of schools for improvement and ultimately to developing productive opportunities for young people.

## **7.9 Summary**

In this chapter I have identified interventions in relation to changes in technical, social and micro-political aspects of the schools. These were linked to the developmental phases of alerting the school to a need for improvement, confirmation within the school of the precise nature of improvements needed and gain acceptance

of this, of intervention to support the school with addressing improvements, and finally of securing the changes. The interventions which had promoted or supported those changes were refined through the perspectives of those interviewed. I identified the aspects of change within each developmental phase. I then considered the skills and attributes associated with the interventionists' actions at each phase and for each aspect.

I examined themes of intervention which were apparent from the research. In particular management of cognitive dissonance, or turbulence, which permeated the responses as an initially difficult aspect, but used productively was perceived as a key motivator for securing improvement. The theme of promoting school autonomy whilst acting in an interventionist role, to promote the opposite outcome of dependency was explored. Involving staff in analysis and critical reflection was a significant element of intervention which supported the move through the identified stages of improvement.

Finally, I identified guiding principles from this research for those who work with schools to secure their improvement. These messages build on the sequence of intervention and school improvement already identified.

In the final chapter I shall consider the contributions I have made to research on school improvement and intervention through data collection methods, and the analytical and methodological contributions which these supported. Whilst the effects of intervention are hard to isolate there are some insights which I have been able to develop. I shall consider how my methodology could have been improved and therefore how the process of the research could be developed.



## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Introduction**

The focus of the research was to establish the nature of intervention to support improvement. In this chapter I summarise my findings, with particular reference to the research questions introduced in Chapter 1 and revisited in Chapter 3. The research sought to answer questions about a programme of intervention with schools, and, in particular, to identify which elements or combination of elements, prompted through external support, best support improvement and which do not, and to answer questions about the role of those who carry out the intervention.

In this chapter I summarise my findings and show how they relate to my initial research questions and objectives. I consider ethical issues and tensions which arose and the limitations of the research, before considering implications for the LEA, and implications for future research.

#### **8.1 Summary of main findings.**

The contribution I make to research on intervention with schools to secure improvement are within the three areas of:

- strategy and methodology;
- data gathering methods;
- analysis.

Each of these aspects was developed in order to assess the contribution of interventions with schools involved in the improvement project initiatives which I led for the two years of their implementation. I developed projects (Chapters 5 and 6) which supported some, but not all, schools in improvement. These projects were also a contribution to the field of school improvement. The research of others was built on to develop the projects and to enable analysis, which contributed to the development of emergent theory for my research about intervention. The lack of improvement in

one of the phase 2 schools contributed to my understandings about the effective use of intervention.

Perspectives about intervention range from views that schools themselves must be supported in taking control of their own improvement for significant change to take place (Lacey and Lawton, 1981), and arguments that external intervention is the only route (O'Hear, 1999). I developed an approach which mixed both internal and external pressure and support, now the more commonly held view of the route to successful school improvement (MacGilchrist, 2000). My interest in my thesis began as an acknowledgement that within existing research those charged with intervention, as opposed to inspection in schools, are given no more than broad indications for their role (Southworth and Conner, 1999; Stoll, 1999). My central research questions enabled a contribution to be made about the nature of interventions which may best support improvement.

A major emphasis of the methodology was the choice of sourcing data from within the schools, where the main features of the change reside. Importantly, the research rests on the perspectives of those most involved with the schools. The voices of the participants were my main research data source. Using the perspectives of those who experienced the intervention in order to develop indicators of the outcomes, combined with external standard measures such as SATs, gave me a measure of the effect of the interventions.

The data gathering contribution was developed to support the measurement of aspects of change in schools. Culture is 'hard to define, difficult to identify and difficult to change' (Fink, 1999, p. 284). A commonly used description is the 'way we do things around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1983). It is the perception of the day to day social and working patterns held by those within the school, which I accessed through the questionnaire based on one developed by Hopkins *et al.* (1994). I used this in a novel way through both feeding back the analysis to the individual schools, and through using it as a comparative measure at two points in time to establish whether there had been any perceived cultural changes (3.3.3; 4.1.2; 5.4.2).



The second major contribution to data gathering was that which allowed me to explore the micro-political dimensions of change (Ball, 1987), and the patterns of power and control within the school (van den Berg *et al.* 1999). I did this through accessing the perceptions of senior managers, that is those charged with leading and influencing school, (3.3.4; 4.2.2; 5.5) and the perceptions of those being managed. I considered the inter-related nature of the social and micro-political aspects of change alongside the technical changes of skill development, in relation to interventions. This provided additional insights into the parameters and processes of intervention to assist change in schools. Additionally, the constructs, skills and attitudes within the school, which may enable them to manage their own improvement, have been identified (6.3).

These additional insights have enabled me to make my original contribution to research on intervention with schools. I have done this by defining the multi-dimensional aspects of school organisation, and by exploring the impact of intervention at a range of levels within the schools, from headteacher, deputy, subject leader, teacher and groups of children of different age ranges (Chapter 5).

I continue by proposing that there are identifiable but overlapping phases of school improvement which relate to intervention, namely alerting schools to the need for improvement, confirming the aspects that need to be developed with staff, and the later two phases of addressing and subsequently securing improvement. I argue that cognitive dissonance is a predictable outcome during the transitional phases of school improvement, which can be used effectively to secure the motivation for improvement. I propose that the role of the interventionist as a facilitator relates to providing both the context for providing the pressure which leads to degrees of turbulence, and the support for managing this and seeing improvement through (Chapter 6). I propose that this can be used to enable senior managers to address strengths and weaknesses in their schools with heightened awarenesses of the potential of more searching self-evaluation strategies. These strategies are promoted in such a way that the search for excellence is not undermined through a counsel of perfection. It is enhanced through greater confidence in managing the tensions anticipated in making changes, less trepidation about the identification of

weaknesses, and supporting staff as the move towards a learning community is striven for.

I then consider the implications for those charged with providing intervention in schools. A definition of intervention is considered which endorses the need to establish key ethical considerations of intervention. Whilst intervention is seen to provide pressure and support, the competencies associated with intervention need to be acknowledged and pursued in promoting the effectiveness of time spent working to develop of schools. Finally, the potential for developing this as part of the processes of engagement with schools within an education authority is discussed before considering the issues for future research agendas.

## **8.2 Supporting learning in schools**

My research questions were asking how research findings about school effectiveness and school improvement could be used to improve schools, and how schools can be supported in managing a culture where review and development are promoted.

The underlying objective in my research questions was to develop a strategy for support for the improvement of learning in schools. The development of the improvement project from phase 1 to phase 2 enabled me to use the research fields to develop a process which moved from supported audit, to identification of issues, to supporting school's in addressing these issues and to embedding changes and processes to promote sustained improvement. I show this in Chapters 5 and 6. My research focus was on the intervention which supported this process, from a range of providers including assigned inspectors, consultants and expert teachers. As a result of my research I was able to identify the transitions in the process and the importance of involving and developing school staff as learners, and the school as a community of learners.

### **8.2.1 A phased but jagged process**

Within the transitions identified in the research were the critical incidents (Tripp, 1993, 1994) which had a significant influence, the event or situation which 'marked a significant turning point or change in the life of a person or an institution ... or in some social phenomenon' (Tripp, 1993, p. 24). Just as turning points occur rarely for



teachers but are highly significant in terms of the personal adaptations and the personal developments which arise from them (Sikes *et al.*, 1985), so it is for schools. As in the research on critical incidents in teachers' lives (Woods, 1993), it is only possible for critical incidents to be identified as such after they have happened: it is only in retrospect that the significance of an event and its consequences is available for examination. Such events are not necessarily sensational, that is there are not necessarily major insights, but are rather the identification of possibilities, more linked with the surprise (Schein, 1985) when realities are identified differently from the expectations of the observer.

I was able to develop my analysis on the process of improvement. The stages of school improvement I identified relate to those identified by others, particularly that of Hopkins *et al.* (1994) who proposed three main overlapping processes (2.2.4) of initiation, implementation and institutionalism. The difficulties of presenting a linear progression results from the way in which phases overlap and blur, so the recent notion of interactive networks which develop the institution sits more comfortably with the realities of improvement as I found them (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Southworth, 2000). For the interventionist, considering the development of those networks relating to the social and micro-political dynamics becomes crucial. Here the separation of initiation into two phases, those of alerting and confirming, may be a helpful distinction. Each phase carries a different emphasis (Chapter 7, Table 7.2). The *alerting* phase, in a school where self-improvement is not secure, involves presenting evidence which raises issues the school has not hitherto acknowledged. It can therefore expose the interventionist to a variety of responses, as discussed in Chapter 7, which may present a range of tensions which have to be managed if the school is enabled to move forward constructively into the *confirming* phase of initiation.

This phase involves astute judgement about where to focus attention in order to delve beneath the overview of the weakness identified at the alerting phase, in order that sufficient accurate assessment and evidence can be gathered to inform plans to address the weakness. Crucially, those who will be implementing the changes need to be involved in identifying the weaknesses:

I think it has got to be whole school - we've got to be there saying where the problems are, where we think the gaps are and what we think we ought to be capable of, and go on from there with us.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Subject co-ordinator.)

The overlap between developing technical skills and the attitudes, motivation and social behaviours of staff is indicated in this co-ordinator's perception. Intervention involves astute assessments of the emphasis needed to develop the social cohesion and skills which will build a community of teachers learning about and sharing practice together, accepting and building on differences. It involves supporting staff as they reconstruct their concepts about effective teaching and learning, and supporting senior managers in gaining others' commitment and developing structures in which teacher development can be supported through rigorous and helpful systems.

The implementation phase is one which was identified through my research as the phase of *addressing* the actions to lead to the necessary improvements. The difference identified here for interventionists is that during this phase the preparation for the final phase of secured improvement is occurring. Here, then, the technical, social and micro-political aspects of change overlap in a symbiotic relationship. Intervention will encourage the development of staff's professional skills and staff relationships, ensuring that success is acknowledged so that confidence is built.

It's quite exciting to do something slightly differently, even though it isn't really different, just a slightly different way of approaching something, so it builds up the staff morale which is important. It isn't just a nice little experiment, it's going to be worked into the way we work and an ongoing thing.

(Phase 2, School 2, Interview 2, Deputy Headteacher)

Ways of working are modelled following the shared identification of the need, not only in classrooms with children, but in staffrooms. Here relationships built with staff allow challenges to be made without undermining individuals, and in this way develop the confidence to be constructively self critical.

The majority of people didn't care about anybody else and I think the biggest problem of all is trying to get people to understand that they must work together for the sake of the



children. If you've got a partnership as a staff you will move on a lot better. It's about getting the balance right between encouraging people and saying they're doing a good job without being complacent and trying to move people on.

(Phase 1, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

These are processes which are 'characterised by and sustain professional openness, security and trust which nurture the willingness of individuals to face professional differences and the capacity to deal with these differences productively' (Southworth, 2000, p. 281). These attributes are those associated with the self-evaluating school which is empowered to pursue improvement with minimal intervention.

The final phase for the interventionist, within the phase of institutionalisation, is that of *securing* improvement. It is about recognising a school where leadership can both accommodate and accelerate productive interactive networking available internally and externally. The judgement for the interventionist is about withdrawing support, yet sustaining a relationship which will allow low level future contact when necessary.

I think it's good to have somebody outside, that's what's so good about the assigned inspector, they have a dual role, they advise you and inspect you a bit. The one thing I don't want us to do is to become very insular.

(Phase 2, School 1, Interview 2, Headteacher)

This relationship depends on sustaining personal expertise in order to ensure that advice is reliable, and to ensure that interventions will be selected which provide the most efficient and effective use of time. Here, sustaining improvement through a process of validation of school systems and judgements was the strategy which headteachers identified as most helpful in enabling the school to be certain it had secured the capacity for self improvement (5.3.8).

This theory of phased improvement, linked to interventions which address the range of key change foci, is derived from those significant moments and impacts identified by participants, as they developed their own learning and their ability to develop as a community of learners within the school.

### **8.2.2 Engagement in events as learners**

Whilst the process of improvement can be identified as a phased process, within the transitions between phases were periods of turbulence (7.5). This was created by the presentation of expectations which were different from those currently accepted and acceptable within the schools. These expectations were drawn up as a result of the examination of evidence, evidence about pupil performance compared with similar schools, or evidence of performance compared between subjects within the school.

The data which provided this was obtained during the two phases of the project. It was a direct development from the research, undertaken within the LEA as a result of the meeting of the headteachers in the first phase of the project with myself and the officer with responsibility for research and statistics within the county (6.3). This data led to more accessible comparisons and analysis about performance within academic subjects. Supporting the analysis of this was a key aspect of the intervention, and supporting schools with getting underneath the analysis led to challenges to existing ways of working for teachers. Presentation of the analysis of the staff questionnaire on ways in which the organisation worked compared to the rest of the schools in the project (5.1.6), additionally led to challenges to existing ways of thinking and behaving. This, for some of the participants in the project, led to ambiguities, confusions, and vulnerability during the transitional period and before the eventual reconstruction into new ways of thinking and working. I draw upon the concept of learner to take this further. As Stenhouse (1975) said, we are all either experts or learners, and since we can never know all there is to know about any one thing we must all therefore be learners. Stenhouse concentrated on encouraging teachers to explore the effects of new strategies for teaching controversial issues in their classrooms, with a goal of developing self-reflective practitioners. Learning is presented by Claxton (1988) as a risk. If meaningful understanding and learning for teachers is to take place, then an environment is needed where not only appropriate experience is provided, but additionally opportunities for reflection are made. An environment is developed where the social, emotional and psychological elements in the construction of teachers' new knowledge are incorporated into the approach.

My research was based on school improvement projects which asked all those in a school to explore their practice. The planned intervention included an early



opportunity for current practice in teaching and learning to be explored in relation to the values that the school had defined and debated. Discussion about pedagogy appropriate for the school's own values and context was facilitated, as a basis for developing each school's teaching and learning policy (5.1.3), and the new demands on raising pupil attainment were explored in terms of what they meant for the teaching. Current practice was also the basis on which to make sense of or act on the new expertise and information teachers met through interaction with other teachers, consultants and experts. This model of teacher change, where initial and underlying values are explored is not, according to Munro (1999), an explicit aspect of all models of teacher change. He criticises the conditions for successful teacher change identified by Joyce and Showers (1983, 1988) as not including the requirement for participants to consider the purposes of their engagement in the change process. The consideration of school values, and their expression in school aims, was an early part of the development of the teaching and learning policy work with staff. There was evidence that those in positions of responsibility in the schools, who were members of the senior management teams, were led to consider how their leadership influenced the school in matching values that were either newly explicit or revisited. Their role in influencing and facilitating staff in making any necessary changes was frequently reviewed. As a result of this, several of the project schools made significant changes to not just the structure of their senior management teams, but additionally to the way in which senior managers were required to carry out responsibilities.

For participants, in particular the teaching staff, response to new understandings could have given rise to three potential conditions. The first, consonance, in that the beliefs and understandings about teaching aligned with existing ones, the second, dissonance, in that the beliefs or understandings about teaching conflicted with existing ones, or thirdly be unimportant, in that they were deemed irrelevant to the individual. These views of knowledge are held by the constructivist view of learning (Steffe and Gale, 1995), where individuals are active constructors of understanding. Learners, as individuals, develop frameworks through experiences which challenge, confirm or are irrelevant to their current constructs. The 'zone of enactment' (Spillane, 1999) is the meeting point of teachers' capacity, willingness and prior practice with new incentives and learning opportunities. It is the introduction and



impact of the dissonance and challenge that leads from this which appears critical. The moment of reconstruction, and the new ability to manage this was identified by several participants as a development benefiting their ability to sustain improvement (Phase 1, Schools 3 and 8, and Phase 2, School 2; section 7.5). Headteachers had referred to moments of discomfort for staff which were ultimately replaced with a motivation towards addressing the perceived performance gaps. Negotiating the transitional periods was as hard for some of the individuals as it was for some of the organisations. The hallmark of the most improved school was the level of technical input with teachers and the stabilising and facilitating impact of the school's micro-political and social structure. These both supported individuals in their development, but had an internal drive which persisted in the realisation of values and made clear that improvement was not optional.

School self-evaluation was identified by the majority of the headteachers as an overarching strategy which would be most likely to sustain and develop their school's improvement (5.3.8). Inspection as a strategy for school improvement does not necessarily develop the school's capacity for improvement. It seeks to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a school and identify key issues for development (OFSTED, 1995), but nevertheless has at times had a negative impact on staff morale and professionalism (Jeffrey and Woods, 1996). School self evaluation has been recently promoted as a quasi inspectorial exercise, replicating many of the OFSTED processes and parameters (OFSTED, 1998). Saunders (1999) asks if the focus, which the OFSTED model promotes on academic achievement, 'ducks the more salient - and more difficult - questions which need answering if schools are really to improve' (p. 425). Whilst schools have accepted an externally driven agenda to raise standards, there are other important aspects of their work which they value. If the school's values are explicitly identified, and evaluation focuses on how well these are put into practice alongside the review of standards and performance which the school is seeking to improve, these values can be reflected in the priorities for action. If additionally the powerful micro-political and social influences which can inhibit or facilitate improvement are explored, then a more context driven evaluation will be secured with less superficial changes likely to be promoted. My research provides methods to support such investigations. It endorses the view that school, teacher and class level evaluation supports sustained improvement. Additionally, I have shown



that if others within the community of the school are asked to contribute to evaluation, important voices which are traditionally not given a high profile, such as children (Rudduck *et al.*, 1996), have messages which can illuminate the process.

### **8.2.3 Promoting a community of learners**

The concept of the learning organisation (Senge, 1990) has been extended through research on primary schools with a high capacity for innovation to include a concept of strategy formation for personal growth (Geijsel *et al.*, 1999). Here staff are included in strategy formation and as a result identify their training needs, which they are given opportunities to address, in order to meet these goals. It is through their involvement in defining strategy that their concerns are raised as needs for meeting goals. An expectation within the promotion of self-evaluation is that the commitment of staff is necessary, but is not only gained through strategy development but through involvement with identifying priorities. This identification, through evaluation, involves exploring both what is valued by the school and the externally driven agendas.

One aspect which allows a staff to undertake honest evaluation and helps individuals to address comparative weaknesses is the security of a collegiate framework. In her work on staff relationships Nias (1987) acknowledged the powerful opportunities brought about through teachers working together and being exposed to differing view points to their own, but made the point that conflict in the primary school staffroom is often viewed as a pathological symptom. A collegiality that extends from the ability to get on well with each other to the ability to use disagreement productively is indeed a hallmark of a sophisticated organisation. There is a consensus that collegiality is an effective condition which serves as a facilitating basis for a school managing change (Hargreaves, 1989; Fullan, 1991). Learning through interaction is a productive strategy, as forms of co-operation can be both motivating and effective. It is, however, the emphasis on the quality rather than the amount of interaction (Terwel, 1999) and the focus on debate about pedagogy, how teaching works to promote children's learning, which makes the co-operation motivating and effective (6.6). Collegiality can exist within a range of behaviours. If it represents an assumed homogenous staff, with an unquestioning defence of the status quo in order to maintain an equilibrium it is not likely to support improvement. In the more effective

collaborative culture that Nias defined, failure and uncertainty are not protected and defended, but shared and discussed with a view to gaining help and support. Risks are taken and blame shared. According to Hargreaves (1994), truly collaborative staffroom cultures require broad agreement on educational values but they also tolerate disagreement. A culture which accepts differences, and develops emotional intelligence (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1997) to use these to shed light on practices, from a range of sources, is likely to be more successful in developing the thrusting, inquisitive and acquisitive hallmarks of the learning institution. Here, Fullan's (1999) notion of knowledge creating cultures is relevant, where implicit knowledge is converted to explicit knowledge as a result of the quality of internal and external interactions. The effective knowledge network is 'plugged into the world of ideas outside their professional context, as well as offering them the chance to explore their work with the help of others situated outside their schools' according to Southworth (2000, p. 286). Those charged with working with schools to provide interventions therefore need high levels of expertise and interpersonal skills (Bennet *et al.*, 1994) associated with such provision, and access to wider networks of experts (7.3) to ensure that where personal expertise is not available in a particular aspect, it can be found elsewhere.

### **8.3 Intervention for improvement**

My third research question asked how best can the use of assigned inspectors and external help be used to enable schools to sustain new understandings and expectations in the drive to improve a specific aspect of educational provision and to raise standards of pupil achievement.

Identifying the intervention which develops the capacity for school improvement, was one of the aims of the project and identifying the sequence of change related to intervention. How has this research shown this? Firstly I argue that intervention is a process with distinct stages, at each of which interventions need to be defined. Secondly I acknowledge that intervention itself carries with it a unique set of skills which are separate and different from those of a school inspector or a headteacher. Whilst these may be early qualifications for such a role, the implementation of intervention in a way which will endeavour to build the school's own skills is more than the sum of these experiences. It is the work of an ally, a critical friend, an offerer



of challenges, an astute perceiver of the context of the school. The interventionist needs the skills to identify the next steps for a school and support staff in sustaining the momentum of improvement. Thirdly, I offer a model for intervention which develops the stages of improvement against the aspects of improvement identified in my research.

A useful definition of intervention is provided for those working in the helping professions, a 'planned intrusion into the life or environment of a target unit that is intended to bring about beneficial changes for the individuals involved' (Thomas, 1984, p. 29). There is an assertiveness related to the use of the word 'intrusion', an acknowledgement that intervention is not always welcomed or invited, rather uncomfortably related to a concept of encroachment. The word 'intended' is also important. There are no guarantees in this definition that the intervention will bring about the change required. Nevertheless, the action is planned to be beneficial, and defining what 'beneficial' might look like then has to be a key part of the planning process and central to the monitoring of effectiveness. Within the alerting and confirming phases of my model for intervention, the objectives for change will inform all the goals to which action is linked, and therefore information needs to be gathered to ensure a careful assessment of the underlying contributory factors to address in order to achieve the key objective. Within the addressing phase, intervention methods and techniques will need to integrate approaches which support technical, social and micro-political (2.2.4.3) improvements.

During this period, monitoring is essential in order that the progress of intervention can be ascertained to provide the information which is the guide and basis for any necessary adjustments to the interventions. Finally, evaluation needs to be planned towards the end of the process, to inform the level of follow up needed once improvement is secured, and used to improve and inform subsequent interventions elsewhere.

If intervention is a form of encroachment then it is crucial to define the related ethical considerations. Borrowing and developing from the field of the helping professions, and building on the views of the headteachers in my research, I propose the following aspects are important to answer:

- Whether the objectives of the intervention are accurate. Is there clarity between all involved about the overall goals of improvement?
- Whether these have been developed with the school and are in the school's best interests. Is there transparency in the expected commitments of both the school and the interventionist?
- Whether the selection and range of interventions is appropriate and the best available. Are they chosen for potential effectiveness, as well as providing the most efficient use of time and resources? Do the interventions address all the necessary areas?
- Whether the interventionists are adequately trained and suitable for the purpose. Can they provide the relevant support competently?
- Whether progress measures are developed, shared with the school, and the school is involved in giving feedback on the quality and effectiveness of the intervention. Is there a shared responsibility to getting it right?
- Whether overall responsibility for the interventions ensures they are both monitored and evaluated. Intervention is of little use unless it has the desired effect;
- Whether arrangements are in place for effective practice to be defined and shared for future reference.

The consultants, advisers and inspectors charged with supporting schools in their improvement cannot be expected to generate effective interventions unless they have access to relevant methods. Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) pointed out that consultants need more than just experience of schools, they need an explicit theory of organisations if they are to be able to facilitate successful change and compare the workings of schools in a way which is meaningful. A theory, which leads to working conceptions and methods, allows practitioners to plan, design, develop and evaluate methods which can sit within an overall framework. In Table 8.1 I build on the analysis given in Chapter 7 and show how intervention strategies can be planned to support the stages and aspects of school development. The framework can support planning for each of the stages of intervention (alerting, confirming addressing, and securing) and giving consideration to the aspects of change (technical, social and



micro-political) that are inter-related and inter-dependent. This is developed from the data provided by the interviews and which is considered in chapters 6 and 7, in particular 7.5 and 7.6. In Chapter 7 the support at different stages of improvement was identified, and the role of the interventionist in supporting aspects of technical, social and micro-political changes was discussed. Table 7.2 links the attributes and skills of the external interventionist to the stages and aspects of school improvement as it developed in the projects.

### Considerations for effective intervention planning.

#### ALERTING - OVERVIEW

Improvement objectives:	<i>defined from the overview of strengths and weaknesses</i>		
Overall goal:	<i>defined from the broad area for improvement</i>		
Contributory aspects	Technical <i>Likely focus for initial analysis</i>	Social	Micro-political <i>Identification of key players with related responsibilities to the area in focus</i>

#### CONFIRMING

Initial assessment techniques	<i>Refine understanding of aspects to address. Use of data</i> -pupil performance -teaching quality -managerial skills	<i>Gain commitment and understandings of the weakness through Involving staff in the assessments</i> - at class level - at school level - at senior management team level	<i>Analysis of contribution of senior managers necessary to support firstly the initial assessment and then to ensure that actions are supported</i>
Intervention targets	<i>quantifiable aspects of:</i> - pupils' learning, - teacher's teaching, - managers supporting	<i>developments in</i> -staff collegiality -networking of support -shared evaluations	<i>managers developing:</i> -co-ordination of support -identification and removal of potential blocks to progress
Participants support within school outside interventionist other	<i>define key players:</i> -groups of pupils -specific classes/ teachers - external help	<i>define groups:</i> -for staff meetings -training groups	<i>define strategies</i> -to take roles forward -to develop strategies
Contexts for support	<i>classroom/ own school/ other</i>	<i>identify meetings or training opportunities</i>	<i>Identify initial external input and then moments or events when identified roles can be observed, developed and supported where necessary</i>

**ADDRESSING**

<b>Intervention strategies</b>	<i>define the appropriate support which will be needed to develop skills/ expertise/ knowledge</i> -for pupils -for teachers -for leaders	<i>define the specific behaviours which need to be encouraged and the activities which will engender these e.g.</i> -paired observation -joint planning -moderation of pupils' work after a lesson -joint visits -shared reporting	<i>define the specific aspects of leadership which will need to be supported in order to ensure that implementation is supported and tracked e.g.</i> -observation of teaching -evaluation of plans -evaluation of progress
<b>Implementation strategies</b>	<i>define who is responsible for what, by when, with whom and how success will be identified</i>	<i>define where, who and how the above opportunities will align with the development of technical skills</i>	<i>define how the above strategies will be provided to scaffold the implementation of the technical and social change strategies</i>
<b>Maintenance strategies</b>	<i>define the checkpoints to review progress</i>	<i>define the checkpoints to review progress</i>	<i>define the checkpoints to review progress</i>
<b>Monitoring methods</b>	<i>define the strategies for knowing about progress e.g.</i> -timings -forms of contact -reporting focus and mechanisms	<i>define the strategies for knowing about progress e.g.</i> -timings -forms of contact -reporting focus and mechanisms	<i>define the strategies for knowing about progress e.g.</i> -timings -forms of contact -reporting focus and mechanisms

**SECURING**

<b>Evaluation methods</b>	<i>define the methodology for ensuring that the initial concerns have been addressed, which involves staff</i>	<i>define the methodology for ensuring that the initial concerns have been addressed, which involves staff</i>	<i>define the methodology for evaluation which involves senior managers in presenting their own evaluations</i>
<b>Follow up procedure</b>	<i>time elapsed check on whether improvement is sustained and lasting. Identification of any light touch involvement which may be required</i>	<i>time elapsed check on whether improvement is sustained and lasting. Identification of any light touch involvement which may be required</i>	<i>time elapsed check on whether improvement is sustained and lasting. Identification of any light touch involvement which may be required</i>

*Table 8.1 Considerations for effective intervention planning.*

Intervention with schools is designed with the overall principle of developing the school's own capacities. Within the model offered in 7.3, it is possible to define capacity building strategies within each phase of the sequence of development I have identified. I offer this analysis to answer the challenge of offering capacity building strategies in schools which are in different developmental phases in terms of their capacity for improvement (Stoll, 1999; Harris, 2000). This gives a new discourse to the dynamics of change which enables their description in a way which has not been



available before. The power to be able to describe change events (Clarke and Christie, 1997) reduces the tensions of working within the unpredictabilities of change and gives opportunities for exploring the ways of working within schools.

#### **8.4 Research objectives related to developing methodologies.**

Underpinning the research questions were objectives to develop data gathering techniques which would enable me to assess the culture and the micro-political dimensions of the schools involved, to access the perceptions of those within the schools about the intervention they had experienced and the impact it had.

##### **8.4.1 Methodological process and analytical processes**

I began this research by identifying the need to refine understandings about the role of interventionists in working with schools to raise the performance of pupils and to support extended improvement lasting beyond the involvement of the interventionist. I argued that there was a lack of research into this aspect of school improvement, as endorsed more recently by Lofton *et al.* (1998). There is an increasing amount of research on aspects of school improvement but little taking a focus on the intervention. I argued that there was an urgent need to consider the efficacy of external intervention (2.1.2) given the political agenda and the challenges to LEAs. I considered the necessity for this research being underpinned with a school-based model for an improvement process, which I developed through an externally initiated and supported project. I moved into the necessity to locate my findings in the perspectives of the individuals within the schools. My research aim led to methods which gave understandings about intervention, drawn from the perspectives of the individuals within schools as they experienced the changes that occurred during the two projects. I was able to extend the range of individuals in the second project to encompass the different levels of the organisation of the school. I drew upon a phenomenological perspective to consider the changes that were perceived in terms of improvement (Chapter 3). I used mainly qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to create a research process which was concerned with eliciting the main themes of collective concern at different moments in time, relating this to the aspects of change identified in 2.2.4.3.

This study suggests that interventionists have an important role in initiating, promoting and supporting an improvement process, where it does not exist as a systematic feature in a school, and that the capacity for change can also be enhanced through developing the staff's organisational and individual efficacy within the technical, social and micro-political aspects of the organisation (7.2.4.1; 7.2.4.2; 7.2.4.3). It also suggests that interventions can be carefully planned to take account of the stage of development and the nature of integrated support for the aspects which are under-developed. Additionally, in the development of all in becoming a community of learners, the skills of a learner can be fostered through the style of intervention.

#### **8.4.2 Data collection and analytical processes**

Whilst this research had as an important outcome the raising of pupil attainment, and the technical aspects of improving practice, it sought to collect data on the neglected aspect of cultural dimensions in school improvement (Fuller and Clarke, 1994). I developed quantitative measures to analyse the changes in culture, through staff's perceptions of change (5.1.6; 6.4.2), in the way in which key aspects of the school functioned. I developed a quantitative measure to ascertain the constructs of those with managerial responsibilities within the schools, to identify the similarities and differences between the influential concerns of senior managers, and to identify their perceptions of disparity between the ideal and the actual state of the conditions for improvement within their institutions (5.2.2; 6.5). I utilised the perspectives of those within the schools as the basis for evidence. This enabled me to scrutinise the local culture of the school and the micro-political structures which influence and to some extent control these. I used methodologies which gave feedback to schools, and here the analysis of staff's own perceptions is seen as a contribution to heightening self awareness, of staff as leaders and of staff as an organisation, and helping them in making the most of their approaches to school and class improvement.

Collecting data in this way enabled the development of an analysis, that is the focus on the technical, social and micro-political dimensions of change, which allowed the crucial inter-relatedness of these dimensions to be tracked, as opposed to a one dimensional and therefore incomplete study (Bennett and Harris, 1999). It allowed for the identification of the different phases of improvement as they were supported



and evolved within the schools, the building blocks of securing the final phase of secure self improvement. Essentially it allowed for a focus on the nature of intervention which occurred within the schools, whether from local authority assigned inspectors or their equivalent, consultants, or colleagues with particular teaching expertise. Research existed which focused on school improvement, but even where intervention was part of the process for school improvement, the research focus and methodology did not allow for this to emerge as part of the contribution to the overall picture of school improvement. The problem remains, that in order to evaluate the contribution of an intervention, it is necessary in some way to isolate that contribution. However, it is difficult to untangle the contributions made by different players (Derrington, 2000). Whilst it is not possible to identify the cause and effect of intervention with certainty, it is possible to use the key players' perspectives to identify how they perceive the effects. These key players are informing and influencing the improvement, or the changes. Thus, through the phenomenological perspectives of the range of participants in this research I was able to gain an overview of perceptions about intervention. Through ensuring this focus and through combining the phases and aspects of school improvement, my research made a powerful case for the identification of the intervention which supported development. The process acknowledged the stages of development of different schools, and retained a focus on the perceptions of a range of individuals, including those of the children. As a result I have been able to preserve the depth and nature of the experiences of individuals and identify how these relate to the key themes of the research findings.

The research process provided opportunities for individuals within the schools to identify, use and discuss what was important to them. Evidence from the openness of the interview responses suggests that the relationship that I developed with individuals was one of credibility and honesty, a mutual respect which allowed issues to be discussed and reflected on with openness and trust. The development of confidence, of the ability to be open amongst others, featured within this process.

By developing a research process which predominantly sought to enable the perspectives of individuals to emerge, I have made a much needed and timely contribution to insights about the nature of intervention and how this can be most

effectively tailored to answer the differing needs of schools. The transitional processes of constructing the staged implementations of improvement feature as a crucial aspect of the dynamics of intervention.

My research focuses on ten schools, but my findings are applicable to the considerations for supporting schools in general, where the imperative to secure advances in pupil attainment implies supporting the underlying advances necessary in technical, social and micro-political structures within the school.

### **8.5 Tensions and ethical issues**

My own position within the LEA had made the research possible, through funding both for the projects and for the research. My own status as an LEA inspector, an OFSTED inspector and the leader of the project could have inhibited the participants' contributions. This was a tension between my professional role and that of researcher, which was only manageable because the parameters had been well considered and made explicit in the initial stages. The examination of my role as researcher within a setting with which I am familiar was explored in 3.3. During the research the ethical principals and dimensions which I had outlined in this section were adhered to, and their importance became very apparent.

The issue of confidentiality was a key area. I was able to keep separate issues that arose within the schools, from the LEA. There were findings which, shared more widely, would have compromised my research and the individuals on whom it focused. Ethically, I had to take considerable care in writing up the research to give the schools the anonymity I sought.

The assurance of confidentiality supported me here, and my familiarity with the context I was researching meant that I shared a technical language and understanding with the participants. Nevertheless, I had to be careful to ask for negative responses to interventions as well as positive, to be non-judgemental in my own responses to participants. I was aware that I had an interest in promoting a project which was seen to work; the tensions here again were helped by the initial exploration of them I had undertaken. The outcomes in one of the two phase 2 schools had not led to a positive outcome. I was able to use the evidence from this school to support my analysis.



The process of access to schools through my status, and likely bias, could have presented a problem. Whilst this was an advantage, I had to acknowledge my own position and the impact it could have on the relationship between myself and the researched. I was able to explore avenues which might have not been open to someone else; on the other hand there were likely to have been areas that were not shared with me which might have been shared others. It can never be possible for a researcher to gain a full and unrestricted access to others' perceptions. I resolved this tension through making the best use of a range of perceptions from the same setting. Similarly, my own reflexivity in examining my analysis for likely bias was an important part of the process.

#### **8.6 Limitations of the research and implications for future study**

I have endeavoured to justify the theoretical and methodological reasons for the selection of my research strategies and explained the research themes to which my study relates. The use of a multiple site case study approach has yielded fruitful outcomes and my mix of inductive and deductive analysis has characterised the theoretical approach I have taken. The extent and quality of the data generated has been made possible through the approaches I have taken.

I have tackled issues which are related to policy reform, but which are issues likely to be faced by all those engaged on research linked to policy initiatives. These relate to the levels of analysis I have undertaken, the frames of reference I have used, and the usefulness of my research findings. Hammersley (1992) argues that research should not try to serve the needs of both practitioners and the research community. This research was undertaken with the express aim of exploring intervention with schools, and theoretical development has proved possible. Limitations of my research include the omission of exploring the macro-political dimensions of change (2.2.4.3) related to school improvement. Ozga (1990) argues that only when these are taken into account can the contradictory aspects of state reform be identified. This potential criticism is answered in that I did not set out to explore macro level policy, but rather valued the multiple case study approach which could explore the attempts to realise macro political imperatives within the opportunities and confines presented by statutory contexts.

I used a multiple case study approach, which was refined to the study of two schools in the second project, and there were further explorations in data collection which may have yielded useful evidence. I regret not developing a socio-gram of staff relationships at the start and end of the project. This would have enabled me to trace patterns of influence between staff members and could have yielded further data related to social and micro-political changes, which if linked with the development of teacher effectiveness, may have yielded further useful insights.

The focus on the perceptions of those who experienced the intervention proved to be appropriate for my purposes. Whilst I used the perspectives of the interventionists to consider the developing analysis, the research could have been developed by further exploration of their insights, to better understand the mechanisms at work in the relationships between interventionists and schools, from their perspectives.

The revised role of LEAs described in the White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997) was described as a constructive relationship as opposed to a relationship based on control. More recently, outcomes of the inspections of LEAs (OFSTED, 2000) showed how the quality of an LEA's inspection and advisory service was judged to be the most important factor in defining the effectiveness of an LEA. The debate has for some recent time centered at policy level on whether LEAs are needed. Proposals such as those for establishing Learning Skills Councils and for Education Action Zones (Kingston, 2000) were all indications of potential models for replacing LEAs. Think tanks are reportedly about to make proposals for new ways of doing things (Whitbourn, 2000). Whatever form that takes, whether or not LEAs are key players, expertise will still be needed to support schools in difficulties return to health, and to promote the co-managed partnership identified by Stoll and Fink (1996). In this way a district system of some sort is not only appropriate for schools in difficulties, but for supporting other initiatives too:

If states provide funding to schools for school improvement efforts without having a district support system in place to provide the really intensive and skillful support that will enable those schools to make and sustain school



generated initiatives, then another institutional arrangement needs to be developed to provide that support.

(Joyce *et al.*, 1999, p. 215)

Since I began this research, schools have now been categorised into different levels of need through the judgements of their OFSTED reports. I suggest it would be useful to examine the range of intervention which is now taking place with the different levels of concern and consider the lasting effectiveness of that intervention in relation to the sustained improvement of the school once the intervention has ceased. Further effectiveness 'will be built through learning, rather than through the belief that we already know' (Joyce *et al.*, 1999, p. 223).

The nature of regular contact by LEAs with schools which only require light touch monitoring has now been reduced to core contact. Defining the most effective core contact, and the manner in which the self maintaining school can access the networks of support and expertise when they are not in difficulty is timely. My research begins to explore the most advantageous contact which supports the continued improvement or sustained performance of schools, and this is a rich area for further consideration.

Finally the role of the interventionist is complex and multi-faceted. Research into the most effective ways of making the transition from headteacher, deputy or other educational practitioner into an adviser/inspector could yield some fruitful information. The voices of those providing effective intervention in schools in different contexts and stages of development now need to be listened to.

### **8.7 Impact of the research**

This research set out to gain new understandings about intervention and interventionists. During the course of the research, developments within it had an impact on developments within the authority. This included:

- the provision of comparative performance data to all primary schools (6.3);

- the development of strategies available to assigned inspectors to work with primary schools, in particular promoting teaching and learning policy development (5.1.3);
- the use of methodologies to assess and develop the culture and relationships of staff (4.3) where there were difficulties which needed to be made more explicit;
- sharper methodologies for data interrogation with schools in order to define the most appropriate focus for raising standards (5.1.4).

A particularly important impact of the research was that of the development of standards by the LEA for assigned inspectors. Drawing from the understandings gained, a set of attributes, knowledge and expertise was developed and further explored (Appendix 8.1). These relate to the values and principles of the authority's service, and now support induction and staff development. Induction of new members of staff involves a self audit of knowledge and skills against these standards, and a subsequent training and development schedule is then developed to ensure that opportunities are made to address the areas where expertise is needed.

Regular opportunities to share and develop interventionist strategies are built into the internal meeting programme. This promotes the understanding that intervention is a distinct and separate skill from that of the leading expert or the charismatic trainer, and promotes the debate about what we know about intervention. It has also been requested, through the formal network of information between LEAs, by many other authorities to inform current developments in this area.

### **8.8 Implications for an LEA**

The business consultancy model in Gray, (1988) is further refined into three types of consultancy, directive, behavioural and catalytic. The directive model utilises the consultant to conduct an appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of a company, to recommend changes in personnel, structure and systems for improvement. The behavioural model focuses on the relationships and conflicts of personnel and seeks to develop these. The catalytic model is a focus with the personnel on the problems within the organisation and planning to address them. These are useful models to



consider the different perspectives which may be appropriate. The capacity building dimensions of the directive and catalytic model sit well with those concerned with developing a school's autonomy. Capacity building concerns will be central to the process consultant identified in Gray (1988), who is someone who is external to the school and deliberately marginal, who focuses on problems rather than activities, and facilitates and educates the school about organisational problem solving. Others (Ainscow and Southworth, 1996; Stoll, 1999) have suggested the necessity of an infrastructure which provides external support to schools, and which supports schools in developing their own capacities. This will be most effectively concerned with five aspects. Firstly, respecting professionalism, and an associated aspect of modelling ways of working as professionals. Secondly, supporting the continuing professional development of staff, including supporting the development of partnerships external to the schools. Thirdly, helping schools interpret and use data, and supporting them with framing the issues that arise from this. Fourthly, being a critical friend and having the ability, or the audacity, to push the thinking forward with staff. Finally, making high quality education for all a priority and providing incentives which encourage and sustain staff so that initiatives are sustained.

Whilst these provide a useful framework for the provision of external intervention, it is possible to consider them in relation to the expertise and skills identified in my research and to develop more detailed requirements from interventionists. The issue, as Ainscow and Southworth (1996) point out, is an ongoing search for what works locally. An LEA is charged with providing support in inverse proportion to success (DfEE, 1999) for a wide range of schools serving a wide range of communities. Conner and James (1996) found evidence of LEA willingness to accommodate state policy but within a broad framework of local values and practices. The challenge of accessing the range of support, which, whilst it will not be required by all schools, may be necessary within some, implies the development of expertise, knowledge, skills and understandings of interventionists. These can be described as evaluator, educator and advocate. The first, evaluator, concerns the gathering and interpretation of a range of data in order to define and refine the problem and to assess progress with addressing the difficulty. The second role, as educator, concerns the provision of expertise about new ways of working for the many different aspects of the school, potentially focusing on aspects of management and aspects of delivery. The third

role, as advocate, ranges from promoting the rights of pupils, to promoting the resources and locating the expertise necessary for the school. The expertise needed to meet the demands of a role which encompasses these aspects is considerable, not least to include knowledge about curricular innovations, statistical analysis, institutional and individual development and interpersonal awareness. Crucially it is also about knowing that no one person can be appropriate to answer all these demands which implies knowing about the wider range of expertise available outside the LEA.

Understandings about the particular context of the school and the dynamics within it will support the selection of appropriate strategies to move the school forward, which can be derived from Figure 6.14. School improvement, according to Farrelly (1996), is an issue for all schools, however good they are, and LEAs 'have a vital role in supporting this work' (p. 42). For the authority there are wider implications once the importance and uniqueness of the role of the interventionist has been acknowledged. Firstly, it would seem important to share with schools the underlying principles and the expectations of those working in an interventionist role to secure improvement. This was made explicit in the first stages of the projects, and within the research a positive relationship was evident between heads and interventionists, which built on the implicit trust that schools appeared to have in their assigned inspector. For this to become a consistent factor, the role needs to be made transparent to all.

The promotion of self-evaluation emerged from the research as a crucial part of securing longer term improvement (7.6). This aspect was acknowledged by headteachers (5.3.8) as the major strategy which would enable them to pursue and maintain improvement, allowing them to gain the commitment of others within their school to the actions needed to secure improvement. Incorporating self-evaluation into the culture of the authority's work with schools then takes on a critical importance.

Interventionists face challenges and situations that demand a high level of both personal resilience and personal response, and many will be developing new insights and understandings as the work proceeds. It would be all too easy to miss opportunities for capturing these. Providing opportunities for networking between



interventionists, which allow the development of a professional dialogue and the sharing of strategies that work and new understandings as they develop needs to be more widely promoted across and within LEAs. This enables the LEA to develop and realise a similar learning organisation (Senge, 1990) to those its interventionists are promoting with schools, a learning organisation which uses the outcomes of what works and what does not for further debate, innovation and to support all in addressing new challenges.

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1-22.



### Appendix 4.1 The Staff Questionnaire

<i>Put an X in the box which best represents your response to the statement given</i>	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
1. Information I gain about children's achievement in my class is used to provide a whole school picture of our work					
2. We discuss and review our day to day teaching					
3. As a staff we discuss the trends in children's progress through the school					
4. When something new is introduced, we take time to consider how well it is going					
5. We all expect high standards					
6. We all share similar goals for the school and children					
7. Our plans help us realise our long term aims					
8. I influence the decisions that are made for school development					
9. Plans can be changed if our priorities alter					
10. Many of our children cannot be expected to achieve well					
11. There are clear procedures for involving governors in decision making and review					
12. Parents are involved in their children's learning					
13. Children share in making decisions about their work and reviewing school changes					
14. We use outside help to contribute to our work in the classroom					
15. Co-ordinators have roles and responsibilities which we are clear about					
16. Important information reaches everyone who needs to know it					
17. Different groups work as teams to get things done					
18. Co-ordinators receive training to develop their skills					
19. We have a clear, shared sense of purpose					
20. I am encouraged to use my skills for the benefit of everyone					
21. I feel I can express myself freely in meetings, even if I disagree with what's being said					
22. Senior staff delegate challenging tasks					
23. Leadership in our school is firm but fair					
24. I use the expertise of colleagues to gain ideas for my teaching					
25. Other colleagues ask me for help					
26. I am given a range of opportunities to meet my training needs					
27. Staff development is seen as an important aspect of school life					
28. When changes are made we identify our training needs					

**Appendix 4.2**  
**The repertory grid of constructs.**  
**What helped you achieve your improvement?**

Ascribe a value from 1 (low) to 10 (high) for each construct in each of the first three boxes.

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Importance (x)</b>	<b>Ideal School Assessment (y)</b>	<b>Actual School Assessment (z)</b>	<b>Disparity x(y-z)</b>
Clear aims				
Delegation				
Agreement and certainty amongst staff of aims				
Detailed audit				
Detailed planning				
Clear targets				
Cohesiveness amongst staff				
Collaboration between staff				
High levels of commitment				
Training				
Consistent range of approaches to teaching				
Shared views about learning				
Monitoring the implementation				
Outside support				
Involvement of pupils				
Involvement of parents				
Involvement of governors				



**Appendix 5.1**  
**Memorandum to assigned inspectors**

**Note to : All Assigned inspectors**

**From : Jane Spouse**

**Date : June 4 1995**

**Improving Schools Project 1995/96**

We are seeking to identify 8 schools which would benefit from focused support to develop a whole school enquiry approach to effective teaching. Assigned inspectors are best placed to nominate schools which would welcome involvement and are at a stage in their development where such support would be beneficial. The final selection of schools will be made on June 27th.

The criteria for selection will be:

- full commitment from the head and deputy to promoting a whole school consideration of teaching effectiveness.
- a commitment to undertaking planning, review and evaluation linked to the identified areas for action.
- data held centrally supports the view that development is necessary.  
(Annual review, SATs results, inspection reports.)

Involvement will mean that the following will be organised and centrally funded. The assigned inspector can either have additional time or use existing time allocated to the school - this is negotiable.

**Headteacher and deputy**

3 days at PDC for training, review and evaluation

1 day in school for planning

+ 4 days supply cover for organisation and implementation

**Assigned Inspector Involvement will be:**

1 day leading whole school Inset

1 day with Headteacher to observe and agree agenda for action

½ day to monitor progress in school

**Programme**

**September 18<sup>th</sup>**

- Inset for Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher

**October 2<sup>nd</sup> (or thereabouts)**

- Whole staff Inset on teaching and learning with LA
- AI in school to agree agenda

**January 11<sup>th</sup>**

- Inset for Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher

**Between January and March**

- AI in school ½ day, check progress.

## **Appendix 5.2**

### **Agenda for the meeting at schools**

#### **Meeting with Headteacher**

Thanks for agreeing to be part of the project - eight schools varying in size, context.

**Purpose of project (as for staff meeting)**

**Project principles (as for staff meeting)**

**School's part :**

- obligations (as for staff meeting);
- time scale (as for staff meeting);
- ensure all are involved;
- cadre group, those likely to be influentially supportive, wise to identify;
- the best we can do - living with uncertainty is very challenging;
- turbulence - natural and normal – healthy;
- social V. professional interaction.

**Concerns**

**Contact Assigned Inspector**

#### **Meetings with Staff**

DfEE funding. National Incentive, one of a few LEAs. Project will attract attention

#### **Improving Schools - title of project**

promoting a corporate, participative learning culture

best schools are improving schools

you don't have to be bad to get better

#### **Project aims**

1. Identification of strategies and procedure which helps schools use pupil achievement as a focus for teaching and learning strategies
2. Identification of strategies which promote staff collaboration
3. To use the most up to date research available and relate this to the project
4. The project will last only a year so schools will be left in a position to carry the work forward with their AIs
5. To encourage audit and target setting techniques

#### **Project principles**

- that schools are places where everyone is valued as a learner, and that there is always more to learn
- that successful school learning takes place where people collaborate, support each other and take part in reviews
- that schools are places where children's needs are the most important
- that the project will be the best we can do, and that our own mistakes will help us know how to improve it

#### **Project outlines**

July - staff meeting to introduce and establish conditions relating to school improvement opportunities

Inset for headteacher and deputy October and November



## **Appendix 5.3**

### **Teaching and Learning Policy Support materials for assigned inspectors.**

#### **CONTENTS**

##### **Section A**

- 1. Introductory statements outlining the material and guidance contained in the document**
- 2. A rationale for teaching and learning**
- 3. The nature, purpose and use of the guidance**

##### **Section B**

- 4. A pack of guidance materials for training:**
  - an overall training programme
  - flow diagram
  - an introductory paper for schools
  - a set of diagrams which shows how teaching and learning relates to school curriculum and management
  - a look at the aims of the policy
  - materials and suggestions for discussing teaching and learning
  - a check list for examining a school's current aims
  - a mechanism for developing school aims into teaching and learning prompts
  - strategies for monitoring and evaluating the policy
  - a proposed contents list for a completed policy
- 1. A set of supporting papers**
  - Recent research findings on effective teaching and learning
  - Key points from OFSTED overview

## Appendix 5.4

### **BRIEFING MEETING FOR Assigned Inspectors**

#### **1. Resume of this term's work**

- structure and culture

Discussion relating to establishing the school's own teaching and learning policy, and to the analysis of its present starting points

Personal reflections of the AI for each school:

- current dominant aims of school? (consensus?)
- working patterns? (agreement and certainty between staff of aims?)
- quality of interaction between staff (commitment, cohesiveness, collaboration)
- approaches to teaching and learning (culture and structure of development?)
- physical indicators of climate/ethos? (social - professional)

#### **2. Preparation for next term's work**

- establishing starting points - within the school's own agenda for action
  - Inset day with HTs and DHs will address
- working in partnership –'critical friend'
- relationship of HT and DH
- considering questionnaire 'conditions for improvement'
- establishing independent views of each school's conditions by HT and DH
- looking at shared perceptions and differing perceptions to arrive at an agreement on which structures/strategies should be encompassed within the action plan.
- Considering the aspect of each school's development. Exploring strategies to judge starting points.

1. Audit of teaching and learning by/with staff.

2. Audit of teaching and learning related to the school's focus by AI

3. Audit of pupil attainment related to the school's focus

4. Use of standardised tests or SATs results

5. Effective action planning from the audit outcomes



## **Appendix 5.5**

### **Improving Schools Project 1995-6**

#### **Outline of the planned project process.**

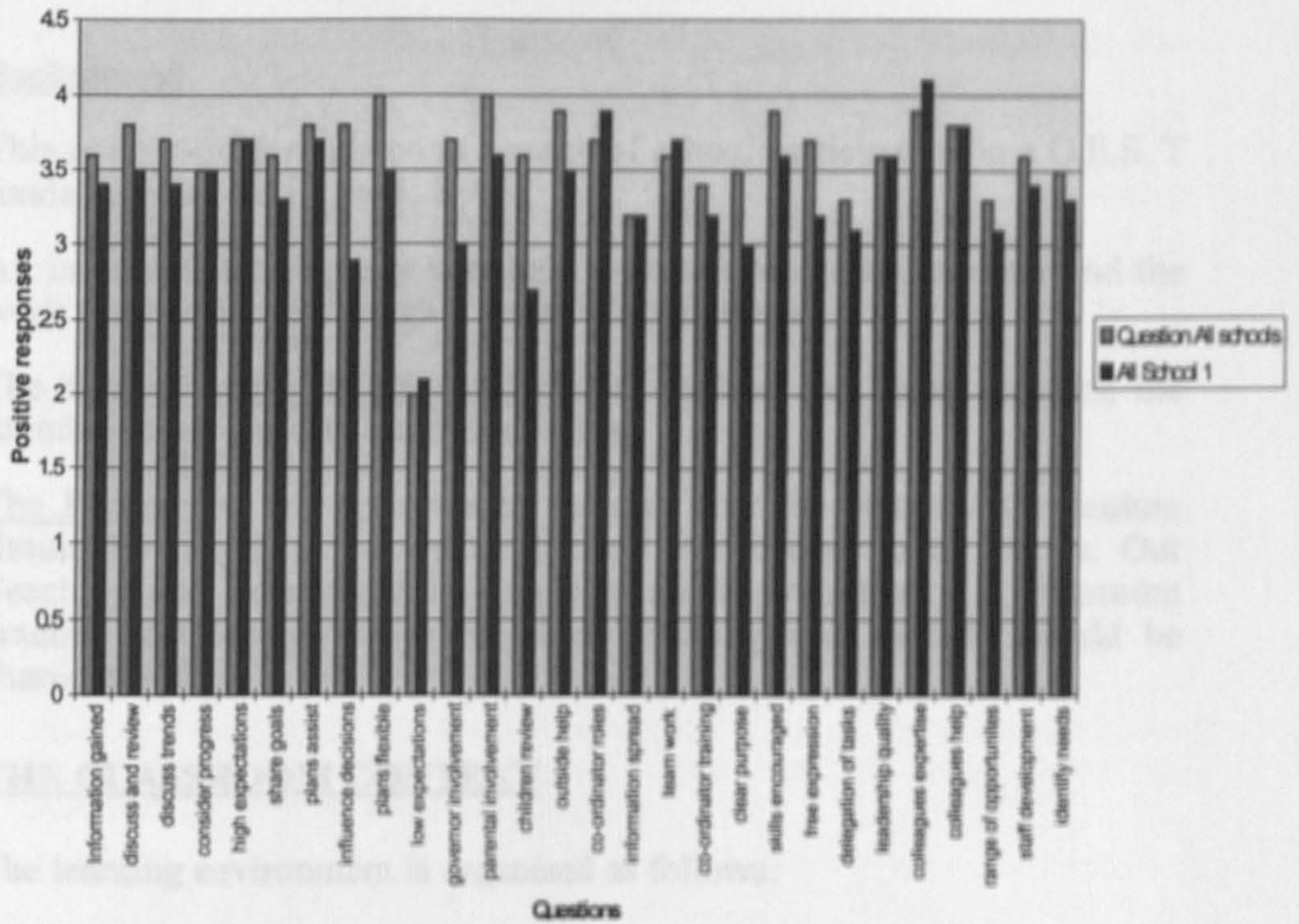
- 1. Schools invited to participate.**
- 2. Meeting at the school to introduce the project and undertake the first part of evidence gathering- school culture.**
- 3. Training for headteachers and deputies. Identifying models for improvement, developing a culture to facilitate improvement focusing on teaching and learning, developing management structures to support improvement**
- 4. Assigned inspector led school based In- service training - developing a teaching and learning policy**
- 5. Training for headteachers and deputies. Strategies for action planning as a result of in- school monitoring and evaluation.**
- 6. Assigned inspector in school supporting the identification of the agenda for action.**
- 7. Supply cover for the headteacher and deputy to work together drawing up the action plan.**
- 8. Assigned inspector allocated an extra half a day equivalent to monitor/ support progress.**
- 9. Review and evaluation of progress.**



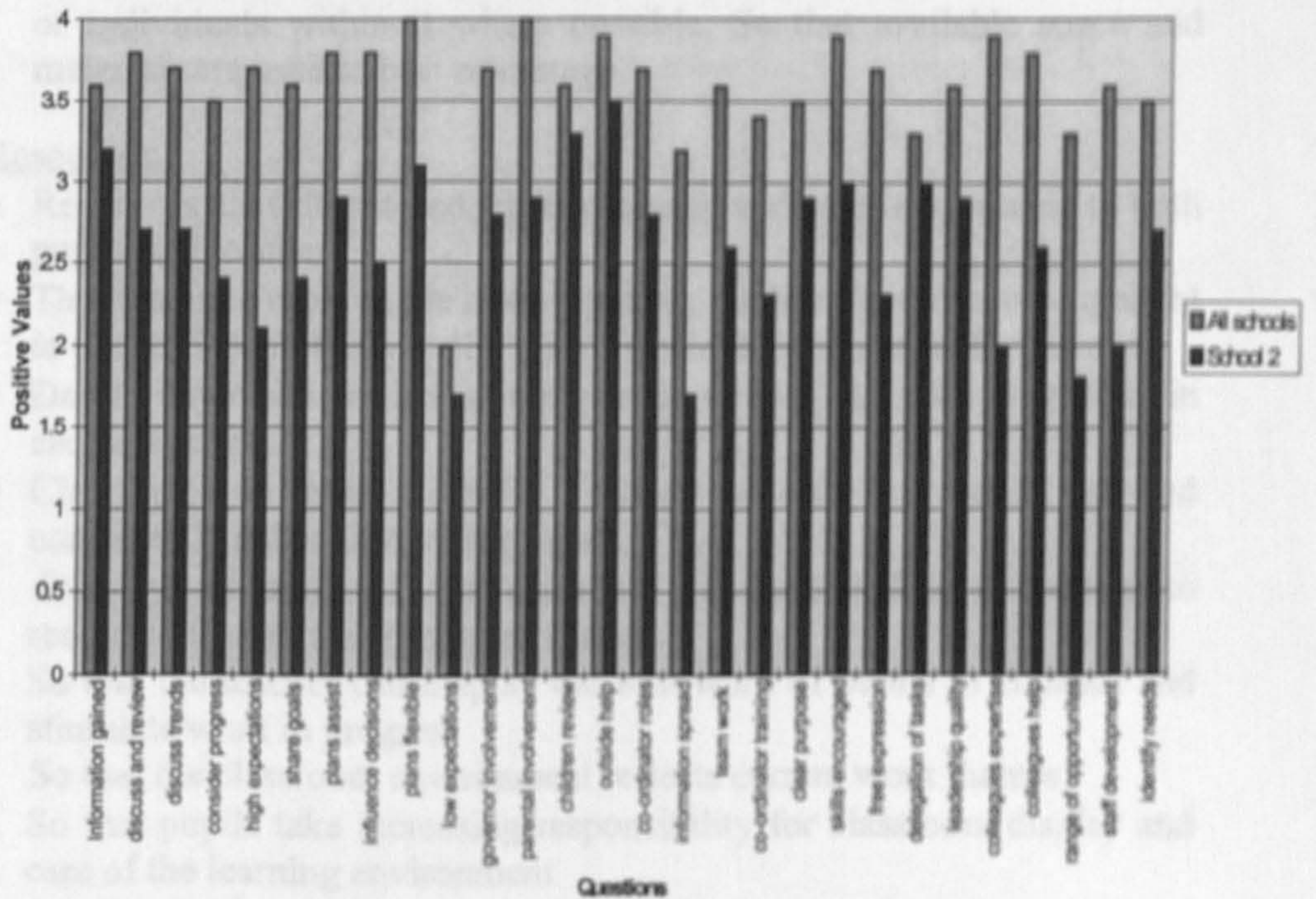
## Appendix 5.6

### Examples of the staff questionnaire analyses as presented to the schools

**Staff questionnaire results, School 1 and average for all schools**



**Staff Questionnaire results, School 2 compared with all schools.**





## Appendix 5.7

### Example of a completed teaching and learning policy

#### Teaching and Learning Policy.

##### Background

This policy was formulated as a result of school participation in a G.E.S. T funded project led by the L.E.A.

An in-service training day was held with the Assigned Inspector and the work was continued through a series of staff meetings. .

The school's Aims & Philosophy were revised and these provided the foundation on which to build this policy.

The Purpose of this policy is to indicate how the National Curriculum should be taught to ensure entitlement and access to all pupils. Our Teaching and Learning Policy aims to secure consistency in classroom practice and identify ways in which teaching and learning should be characterised.

#### THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

The learning environment is organised as follows:

##### Physical.

- \* Parts of the classroom are designated and equipped for specific subject studies.
- \* The layout of the classroom furniture is varied to meet the requirements of the subject matter studied or the particular learning needs of the class or individuals within it where possible. So that available space and materials are used to best advantage.

##### Resources.

- \* Resources are tidily stored, clearly labeled and offer easy access to both pupils and teachers
- \* The Resource room in the main building; the library; the stock cupboard in the staffroom; the wooden shed provide the main areas for storage
- \* Day to day resources and those specific to each class are kept tidily in each classroom
- \* Clear rules on those areas for Teacher use only will be set out and consistently adhered to by the pupils
- \* Displays are mounted to enhance and stimulate work in progress or to record and celebrate completed studies.
- \* So that the teacher can display the best work of pupils to enhance and stimulate work in progress
- \* So that the classroom environment reflects current work themes
- \* So that pupils take increasing responsibility for classroom display and care of the learning environment
- \* Pupils are aware that they live in a multi-cultural society

- \* Pupils experience and enjoy an aesthetically pleasing context for their learning

### Purposes

#### (i) Pupils

- \* Pupils have access to a widening range of learning materials and resources.
- \* Pupils can take an increasing responsibility for the organisation and care of learning resources.
- \* Pupils can have progressive responsibility for managing their time within units presented by their teacher
- \* To enable pupils to engage in work on entering the classroom
- \* To cut down pupil movement during activities and enable them to complete good work in prescribed time limits
- \* To enable pupils to follow clearly understood routines and procedures related to the ways of working.

#### (ii) Teachers

- \* To enable teachers to monitor pupils' learning systematically
- \* To enable teachers to focus attention on groups or individuals
- \* To enable the teacher to manage other activities in the classroom
- \* Teachers are skilled in managing other adults in the classroom; the latter's roles and tasks are clearly defined and they complement and enhance the work of the class teacher.

## THE TEACHING POLICY

Our school aims to provide, at all times, a consistent and coherent learning experience for all pupils.

### SKILLS

Our teachers are expected to demonstrate the following skills in the classroom:

- \* Use demonstrations to illustrate and reinforce particular teaching points
- \* Give pupils very clear instructions as to what is expected of them
- \* Manage time, resources, space, pupil groupings and adult assistance, to promote the learning of specific knowledge or skills and to keep pupils on task.
- \* Use both direct and indirect techniques to foster pupils' learning; to give instruction but also to enable pupils to work on tasks which take the learning forward through investigation and exploration
- \* Strike a good balance between instruction, explanation, discussion, different kinds of questioning, listening to answers, task setting, organising and assessing
- \* Have a good subject knowledge and clear teaching aims/targets
- \* Choose teaching styles to suit the purpose of the subject and the learning needs of pupils.



## **ATTITUDES**

Teachers at our school are expected to demonstrate the following:

- \* a variety of tasks, some requiring pupils to solve specific problems and to arrive at correct solutions; others where a variety of valid outcomes is possible.
- \* Require pupils to work at a good pace, with an understanding of the quality and quantity of work required of them to meet certain deadlines.
- \* Monitor systematically all the work being undertaken in their classes; to know when to intervene and when to allow pupils to work on their own.
- \* To make effective use of learning resources including I.T.
- \* To demonstrate effective and constructive management of pupil behaviour

## **PROGRESS**

Teaching in our school enables the pupils to make steady progress by the following means:

- \* Assessment is seen as central and integral to teaching and learning
- \* Assessment information is used to identify those pupils needing specialised or additional help
- \* Have appropriate expectations based on skilled assessment of pupils' previous performance
- \* Provide evaluative feedback to the pupils on work and in progress
- \* Plan own tasks to take account of the need to obtain and use accurate assessment information; target groups of pupils and individuals for assessment purposes.
- \* Achieve sufficient emphasis on A.T.1 (investigation, research, application of knowledge, problem solving etc.)

## **ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND FEEDBACK**

- \* Feed information about pupils' attainments directly into the planning process so as to provide appropriately challenging work
- \* Strategies to encourage pupils to evaluate the tasks they are given; the way in which they complete them and to assess their own work
- \* Show a clarity of objectives- pupils know purpose and context.

## **THE LEARNING POLICY**

### **LEARNING SKILLS**

Pupils are encouraged to develop the following skills to aid learning:

- \* Gain first- hand experience, engage in investigative work and communicate their findings in a variety of ways.
- \* Engage in problem solving
- \* Engage in systematic observation
- \* Learn through discussion and debate
- \* Engage in self-evaluation of their work and identify future needs
- \* Create, express, enact, recount and communicate to others using a variety of media

- \* Produce work for a variety of audiences
- \* Use modern technology as an appropriate aid to learning
- \* Select learning materials and tools appropriate to the work at hand
- \* Manage their time and meet the challenge of completing assignments
- \* To create a happy, caring school environment

### **ATTITUDES TO LEARNING**

Make choices, and play an increasing role in planning and organising their learning Pupils will enjoy success by developing the following attitudes to learning:

- \* Work under pressure of time
- \* Reflect on current work: predict and plan a subsequent stage
- \* Work individually and as members of a collaborative group
- \* Establish positive attitudes towards learning
- \* Acquire a sense of well being and concern for others
- \* Value the work of other pupils
- \* Compete with others in the achievement of learning goals
- \* Learn from adults in the wider community

### **PROGRESS IN KNOWLEDGE**

In order to make progress we expect our pupils to do the following:

- \* Acquire the key concepts and modes of enquiry associated with the different areas of the curriculum
- \* Apply concepts to a new situation
- \* Engage in competitive group activities
- \* Meet the challenge of participating in co-operative projects
- \* Sequentially acquire basic study skills
- \* Build on their own success
- \* Consider and appraise their own work and progress
- \* Use modern technology as an aid to learning

### **MONITORING AND EVALUATING THIS POLICY**

The Head Teacher will evaluate the quality of teaching and learning across the school. When possible if funds allow, subject co-ordinators will be asked to focus on particular areas and this will reflect the School Development Planning. When evaluating our practice in school, we have agreed to consider:

- \* classroom observation
- \* sampling pupils' work including that on display
- \* internal moderation of pupils' work and discussion with pupils
- \* teachers' plans and records
- \* the overall standards achieved

**REVIEW** - The annual review of this policy will take account of:

- \* evidence from the evaluations of the H. T and Co-ordinators
- \* inspection or audit evidence



## Appendix 5.8

Analysis of evaluations from the Inservice days for Headteachers and their deputies.

### Day 1

Number attending..... 16  
Evaluations returned.....15  
Percentage of returned evaluations. 93%

### Overall response to the day.

Excellent	7
Stimulating	5
Well presented	1
Thought provoking	1
Reassuring	1

### How far did the course meet its objectives?

Almost completely	2
Objectives met	7
Well met	6

### Any sessions you found particularly helpful?

All- motivated us	7
- brought unique opportunities	1
The teaching and learning module	4
The developing competencies module	3

### Any suggestions how the programme might be improved?

None	9
A structure to share progress with similar schools -	1
More time to reflect and discuss	3

### Commentary.

These evaluations are very positive. The day clearly met its aims, the speaker led the content well and motivated and interested the participants. One spoke of being reassured and stimulated at the same time by the course content. Whilst 53% of the respondents felt there were no sessions which stood out as particularly better than the rest, 26% had identified the session related to developing the quality of teaching and learning as the most valuable, and 20% had identified the session where developing the competencies of staff had been considered as the one they found most valuable. Whilst

73% had no suggestions to improve the programme, four of the participants would have welcomed more opportunities to share and debate the content of the day.

**Day 2**

Very useful.....10 (76%) Useful..... 3 (23%)  
Of limited use....0 Of no use.....0

**Of most benefit was:**

Focus on areas which need changing.....5  
Opportunity to reflect on and plan for own school.....2  
Work with others.....4  
Work with own colleague.....5  
New skills developed -action planning.....5  
Developing management techniques and strategies.....3

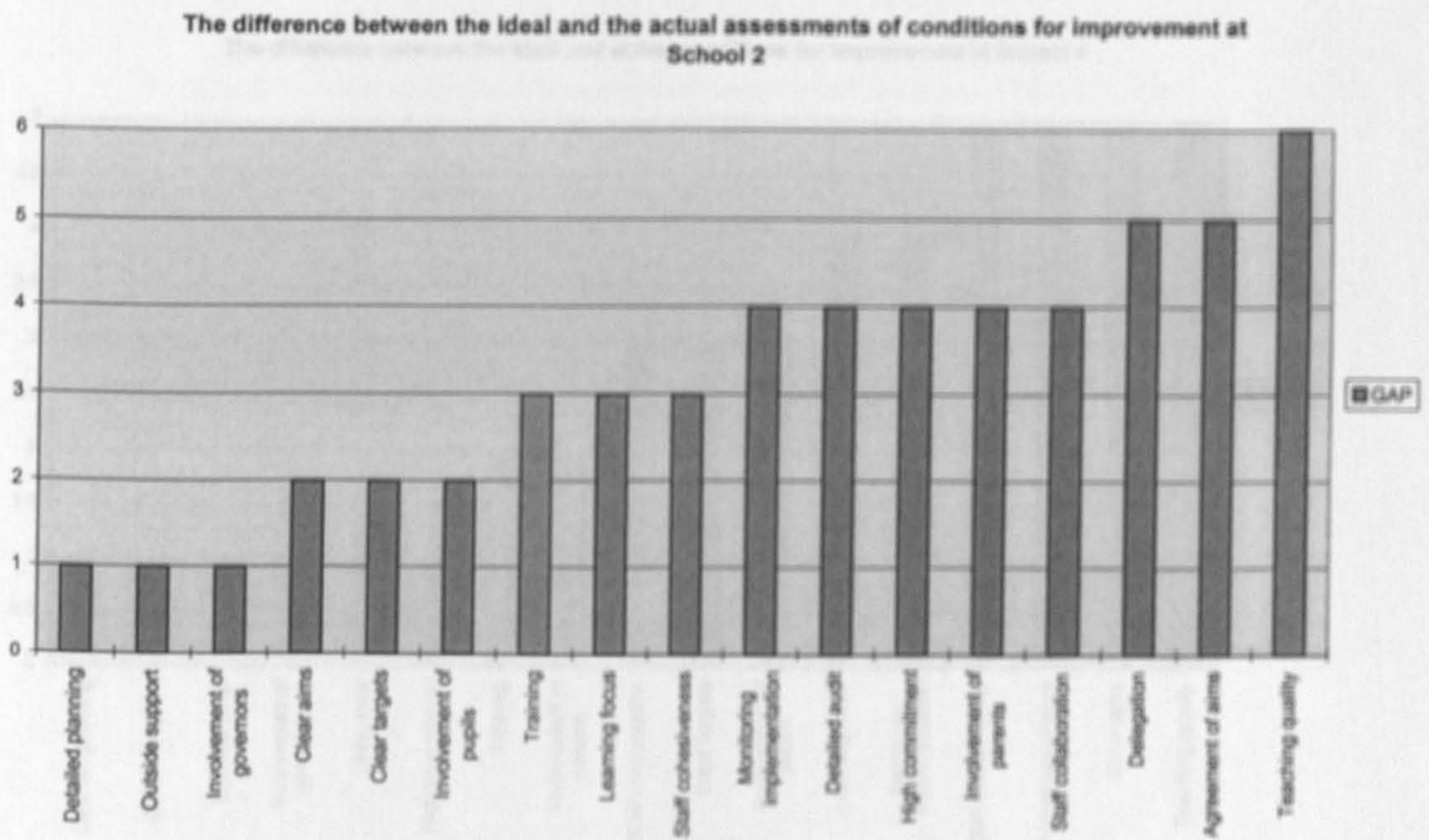
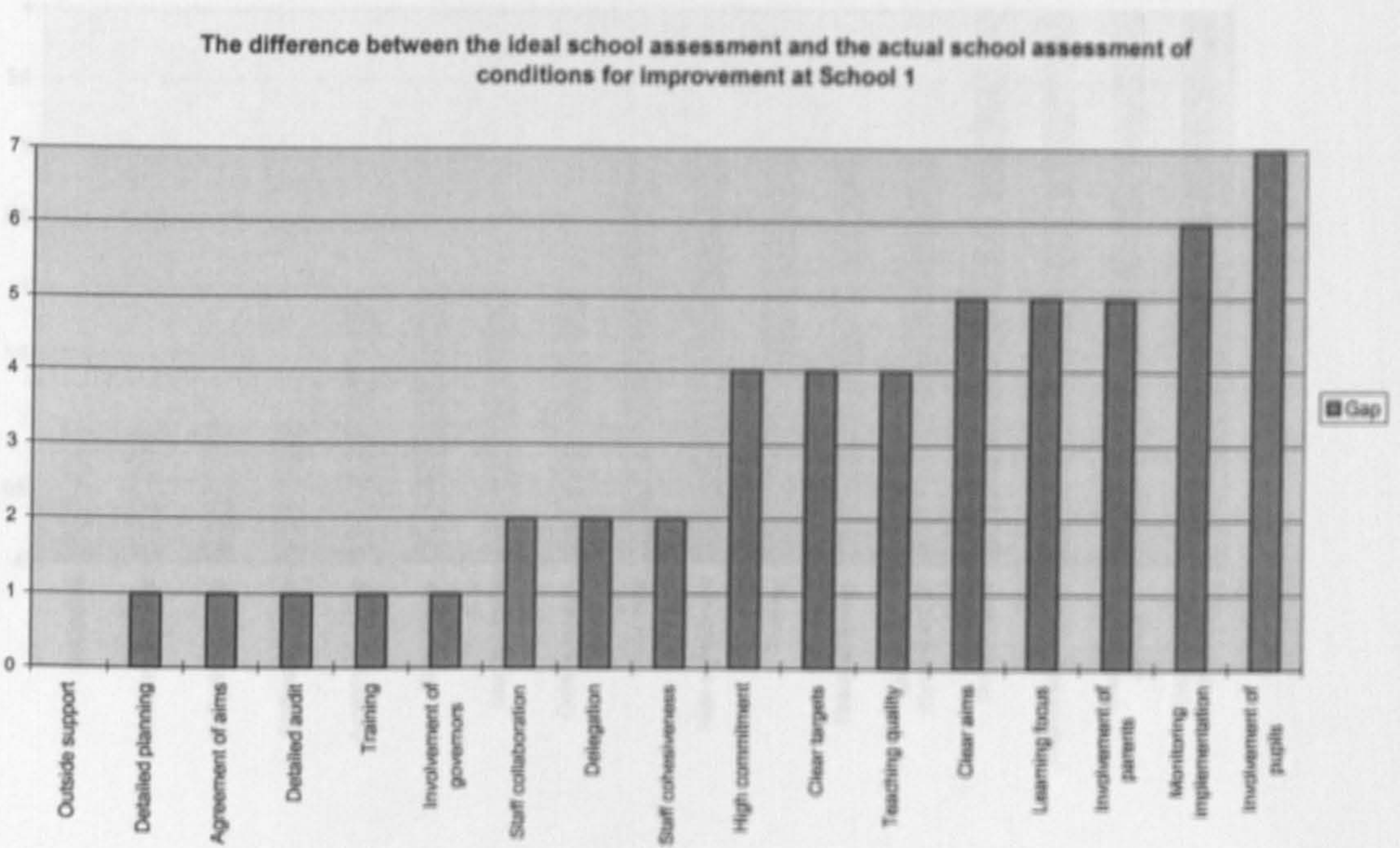
**Commentary.**

The opportunity to develop new skills and thinking, which were closely related to the applications implied in the participants' own schools, was key to the strong evaluations of the day. This combines with opportunities to debate the issues with a colleague, with participants identifying the limited amount of time available to do this in school. The opportunities to share common issues with a wider range of colleagues is also a strongly appreciated aspect.



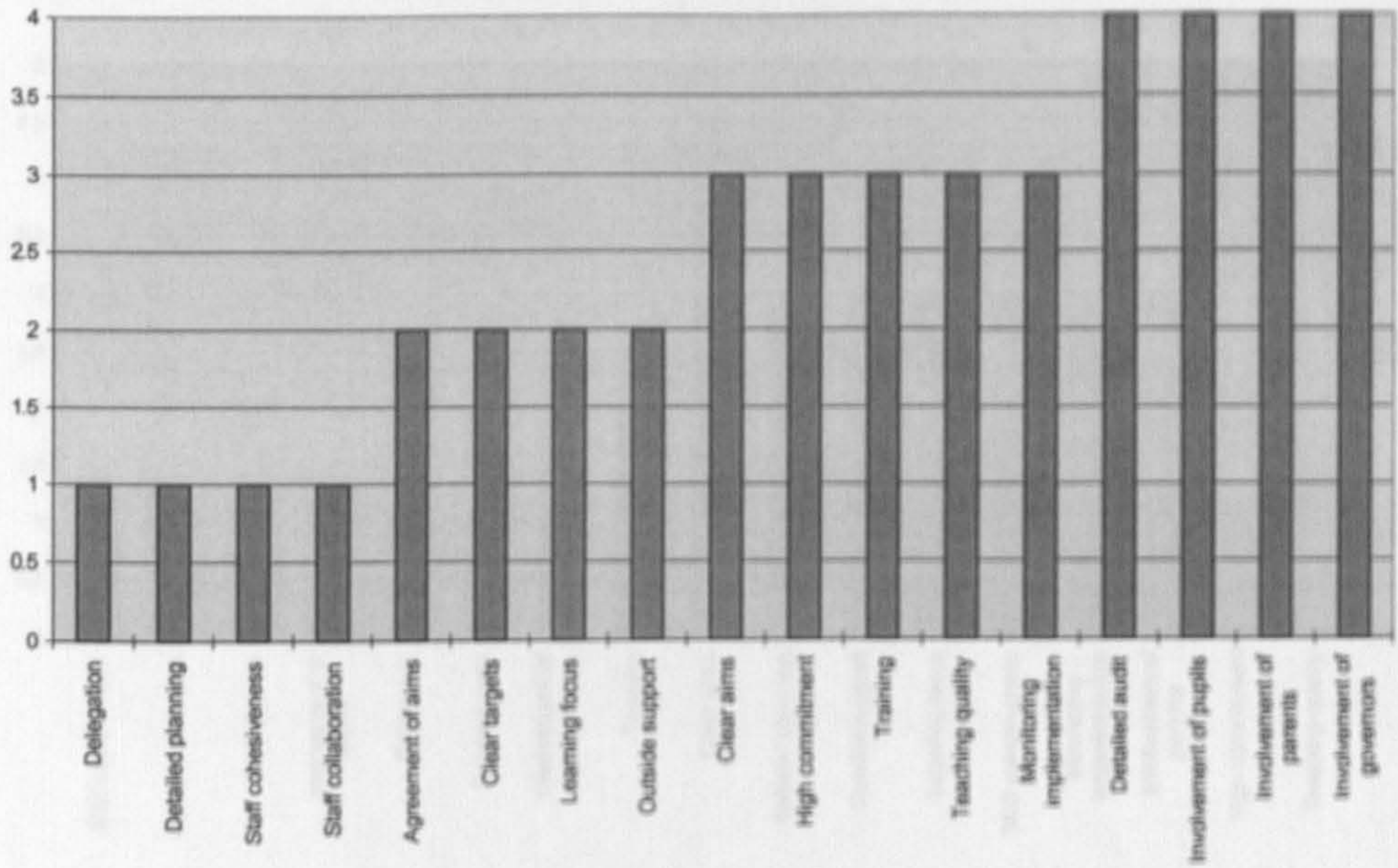
## Appendix 5.9

Examples of the graph giving the analysis of the headteacher's constructs for each school

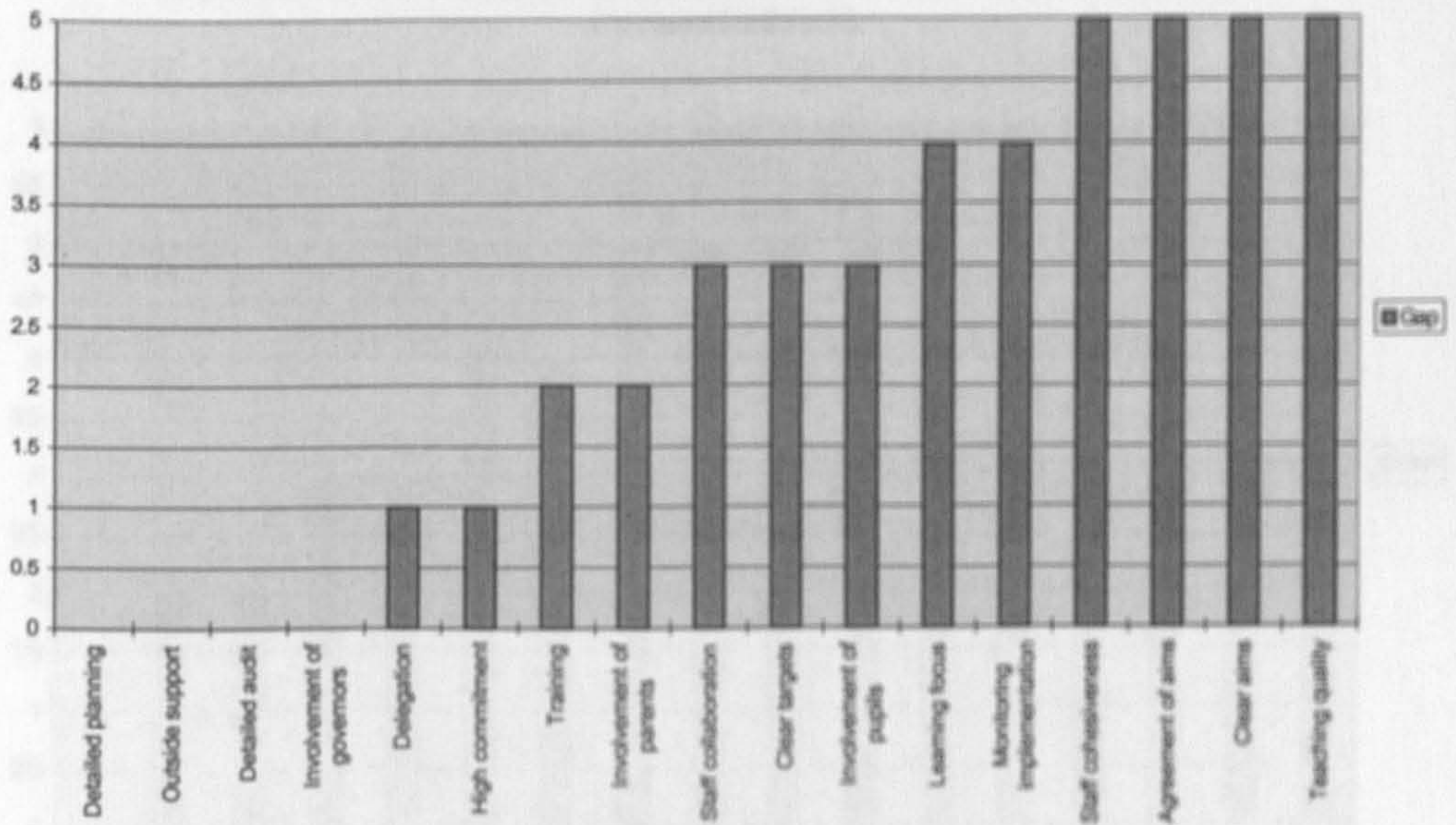




The Gap Between Ideal and School Self Assessment of Key Areas to Support Improvement at School 3

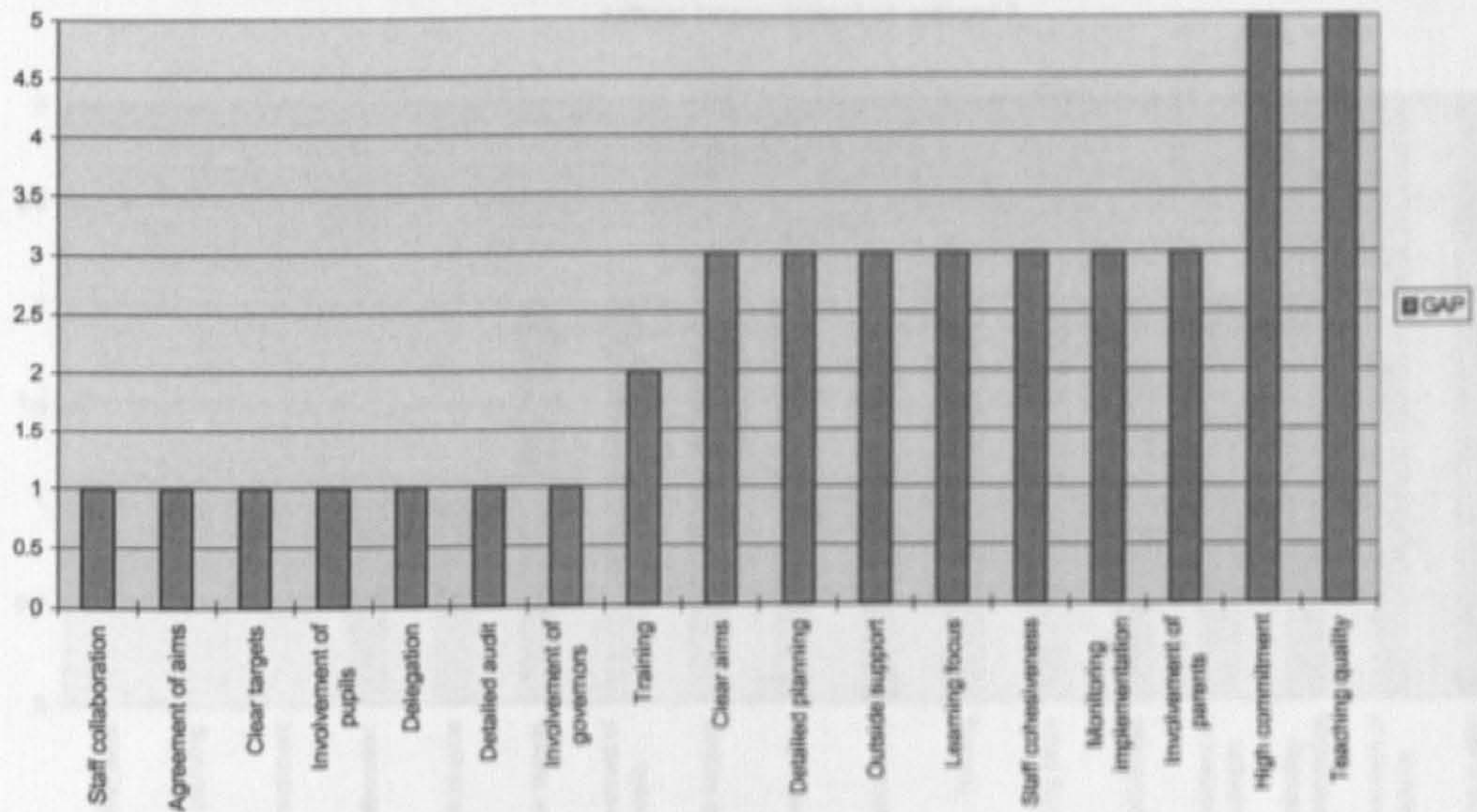


The difference between the ideal and actual conditions for improvement at School 4

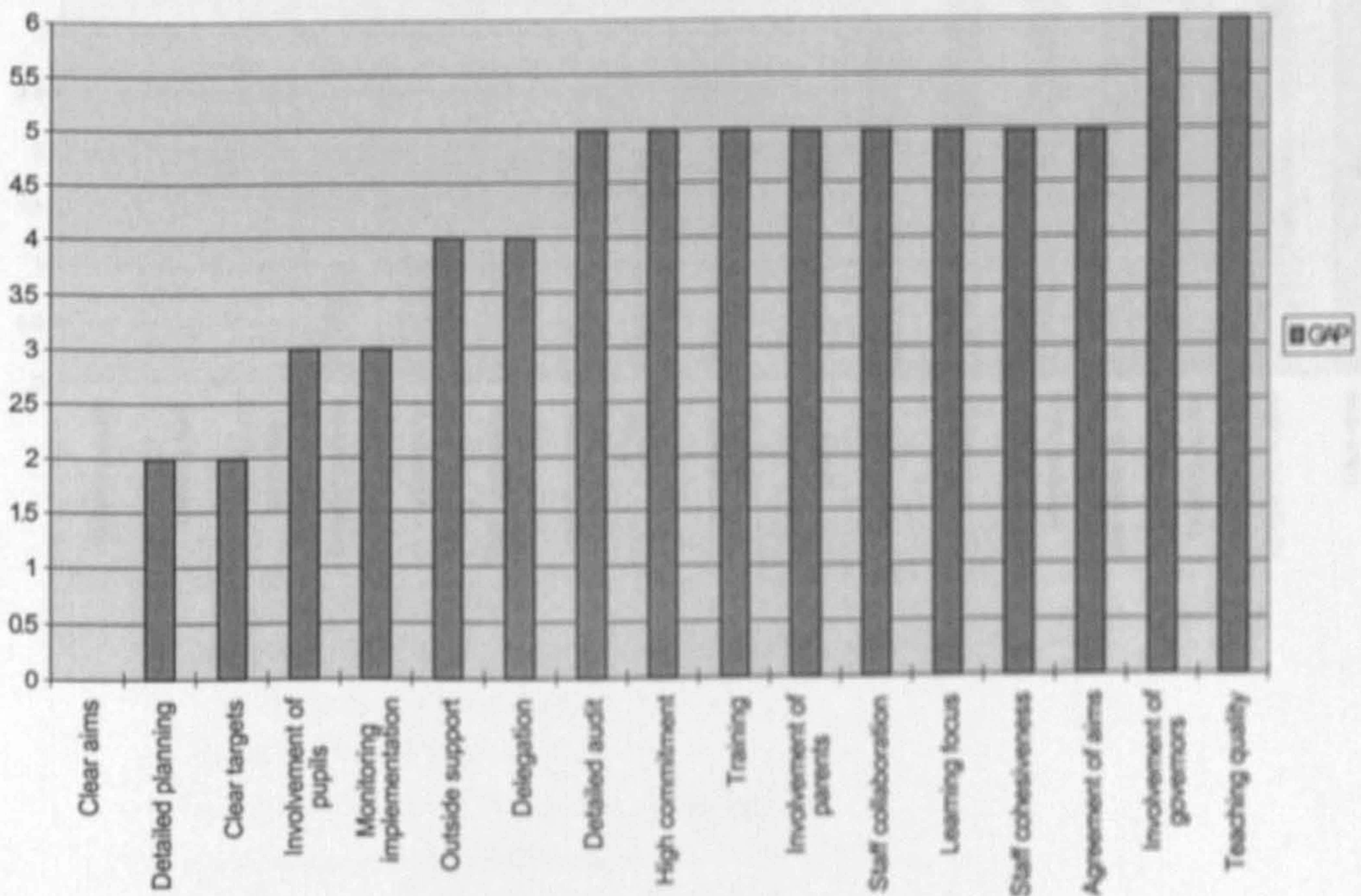




The difference between the ideal and actual assessments of the conditions for improvement at School 5.



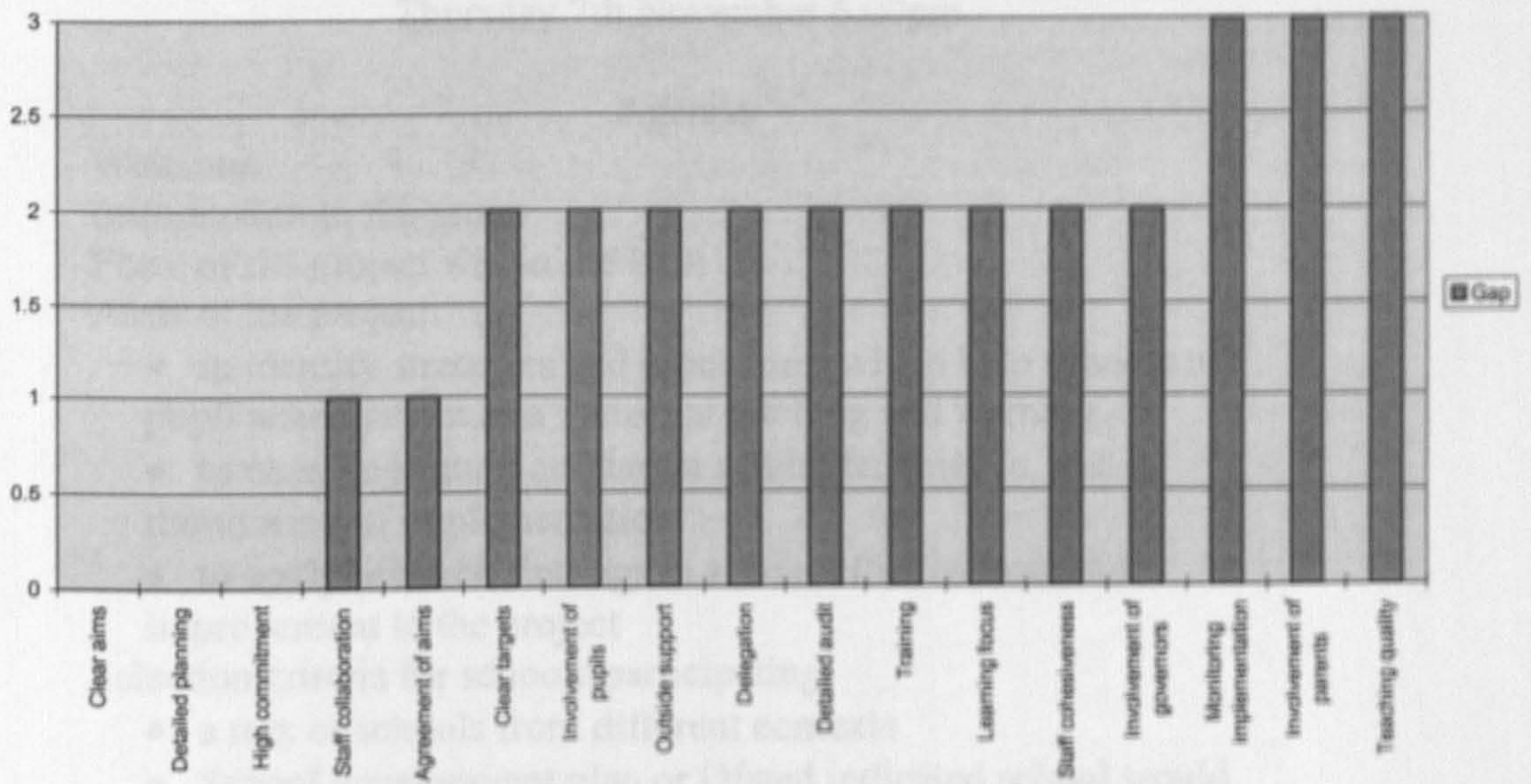
The difference between the ideal school assessment and the actual school assessment of the conditions for improvement at School 6.



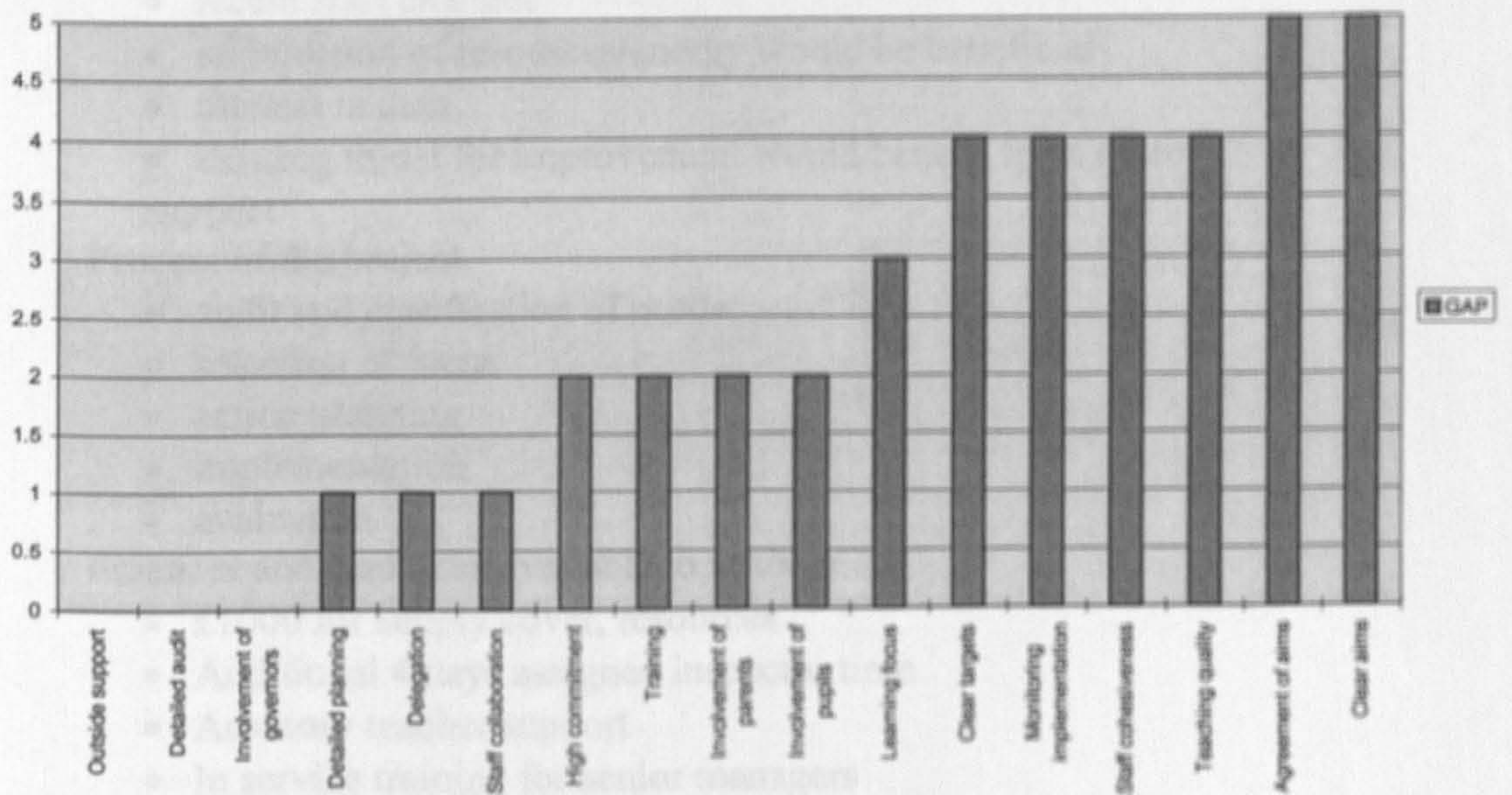


Appendix 6.1  
 Governor briefing agenda  
 School Improvement Project 1996-97

The difference between the ideal school assessment and the actual assessment of conditions for school improvement at school 7



The difference between actual and ideal conditions for school improvement at School 8.



- involvement of governors
- support for the school's involvement
- introductory meetings
- school head meet
- progress reports from headteacher
- participation in evaluation

Questions



**Appendix 6.1**  
**Governor briefing agenda.**  
**School Improvement Project 1996-97**

**Meeting for governors and headteachers**  
**Thursday 7th November 6.00pm.**

**Agenda**

**Welcome**

**Introduction to the group**

**Place of the project within the LEA**

**Aims of the project:**

- to identify strategies and procedures which help schools use pupil achievement as a focus for teaching and learning
- to encourage audit and target setting techniques, and monitoring of implementation
- to apply research findings in school effectiveness and improvement to the project

**Selection criteria for schools participating:**

- a mix of schools from different contexts
- School development plan or Ofsted indicated school would benefit
- reached a plateau
- recent staff changes
- an injection of resources/energy would be beneficial
- interest in data
- existing thrust for improvement would benefit from more support

**Process of the project**

- audit and clarification of needs
- selection of focus
- action planning
- implementation
- evaluation

**Finances and resources available to schools**

- £1000 for supply cover, resources
- Additional 4 days assigned inspector time
- Advisory teacher support
- In service training for senior managers

**Involvement of governors**

- support for the school's involvement
- introductory meetings
- school based Inset
- progress reports from headteacher
- participation in evaluation

**Questions**

## Appendix 6.2 Staff Questionnaire Data

School 1 Questionnaire data 1996										School 1 Questionnaire data 1997									
Q	5	4	3	2	1	num	score	av. score	%	5	4	3	2	1	num	score	av. score	%	
1	2	7	8	2	0	19	66	3.5	69	4	5	6	2	2	19	64	3.4	67	
2	0	13	1	5	0	19	65	3.4	68	2	10	3	2	2	19	65	3.4	68	
3	0	14	5	0	0	19	71	3.7	75	6	8	2	2	1	19	74	3.9	78	
4	0	10	7	1	1	19	64	3.4	67	3	9	5	2	0	19	70	3.7	74	
5	1	9	3	5	1	19	61	3.2	64	4	4	9	2	0	19	67	3.5	71	
6	1	10	4	4	0	19	65	3.4	68	4	6	8	1	0	19	70	3.7	74	
7	3	13	3	0	0	19	76	4	80	5	10	4	0	0	19	77	4	81	
8	1	3	6	8	1	19	52	2.7	55	0	9	6	4	0	19	64	3.4	67	
9	1	12	5	1	0	19	70	3.7	74	4	12	3	0	0	19	77	4	81	
10	1	2	6	7	3	19	48	2.5	51	0	1	0	6	12	19	28	1.5	29	
11	1	9	8	1	0	19	67	3.5	71	2	10	7	0	0	19	71	3.7	75	
12	2	6	6	5	0	19	62	3.3	65	3	10	4	2	0	19	71	3.7	75	
13	0	7	7	5	0	19	59	3.1	62	2	7	7	3	0	19	65	3.4	68	
14	2	6	6	5	0	19	67	3.5	71	3	14	2	0	0	19	77	4	81	
15	0	7	7	5	0	19	59	3.1	62	2	10	2	5	0	19	61	3.2	64	
16	1	10	4	4	0	19	65	3.4	68	2	10	5	2	0	19	69	3.6	73	
17	2	14	2	1	0	19	74	3.9	78	2	14	3	0	0	19	75	3.9	79	
18	1	13	5	0	0	19	72	3.8	76	3	11	3	2	0	19	72	3.8	76	
19	0	11	6	2	0	19	66	3.5	69	2	9	5	3	0	19	73	3.8	77	
20	0	10	8	1	0	19	66	3.5	69	3	11	4	1	0	19	73	3.8	77	
21	1	8	8	0	2	19	63	3.3	68	2	10	5	2	0	19	69	3.6	73	
22	0	10	6	2	1	19	63	3.3	68	1	6	11	1	0	19	64	3.4	67	
23	2	14	1	2	0	19	73	3.8	77	8	6	4	1	0	19	78	4.1	82	
24	1	12	6	0	0	19	71	3.7	75	2	11	4	2	0	19	70	3.7	74	
25	0	15	2	2	0	19	70	3.7	74	3	14	2	0	0	19	77	4	81	
26	1	7	6	4	1	19	60	3.2	63	6	11	1	1	0	19	79	4.2	83	
27	2	14	2	1	0	19	74	3.9	78	6	11	2	0	0	19	80	4.2	84	
28	1	7	9	2	0	19	64	3.4	67	4	13	1	0	0	18	75	4.2	79	

School 1 1996	Av. score	%	School 1 1997	Av. score	%
Enquiry and reflection (1-4)	3.5	70		3.6	72
Planning (6-9)	3.4	69		3.8	76
Involvement (11-14)	3.6	67		3.7	75
Co-ordination(15-18)	3.5	71		3.6	73
Leadership (19-23)	3.5	70		3.7	75
Staff development (24-28)	3.6	71		4	80



<b>Scores for questions 1-28 at the start of the project against at the end, in School 1</b>		
<b>t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means</b>		
	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	65.46428571	69.82142857
Variance	41.22089947	94.22619048
Observations	28	28
Pearson Correlation	0.743636279	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	27	
t Stat	-3.525974472	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00076393	
t Critical one-tail	1.703288035	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001527859	
t Critical two-tail	2.051829142	

<b>School 1: The responses to questions grouped in aspects. Compared before and after the project.</b>		
<b>t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means</b>		
	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	3.486842105	3.762573
Variance	0.005833795	0.025901
Observations	6	6
Pearson Correlation	0.268465722	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	5	
t Stat	-4.26011801	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.004006982	
t Critical one-tail	2.015049176	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.008013964	
t Critical two-tail	2.570577635	

School 2 Questionnaire data, 1996										School 2 Questionnaire data, 1997									
Q	5	4	3	2	1	num	score	% of pos.	average	5	4	3	2	1	num	score	%	average	
1	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
2	1	4	0	1	0	6	23	77	3.8	1	4	0	1	0	6	27	90	4.5	
3	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	3	3	0	0	0	6	27	90	4.5	
4	0	6	0	0	0	6	24	80	4	3	2	1	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
5	3	1	0	2	0	6	23	77	3.8	4	2	0	0	0	6	28	93	4.7	
6	3	2	1	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	5	0	1	0	0	6	28	93	4.7	
7	3	3	0	0	0	6	27	90	4.5	4	2	0	0	0	6	28	93	4.7	
8	1	3	2	0	0	6	23	77	3.8	1	2	3	0	0	6	22	73	3.7	
9	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	
10	0	0	0	3	3	6	9	30	1.5	0	0	0	2	4	6	6	20	1	
11	0	3	2	1	0	6	20	67	3.3	0	3	2	1	0	6	20	67	3.3	
12	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	
13	0	3	3	0	0	6	21	70	3.5	2	1	3	0	0	6	23	77	3.8	
14	0	6	0	0	0	6	24	80	4	5	1	0	0	0	6	29	97	4.8	
15	3	3	0	0	0	6	27	90	4.5	3	3	0	0	0	6	27	90	4.5	
16	1	4	0	0	0	5	21	70	4.2	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
17	0	6	0	0	0	6	24	80	4	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
18	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
19	2	3	1	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	4	1	1	0	0	6	27	90	4.5	
20	2	3	1	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	2	3	1	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	
21	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	
22	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
23	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
24	3	3	0	0	0	6	27	90	4.5	5	1	0	0	0	6	29	97	4.8	
25	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	
26	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
27	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	2	4	0	0	0	6	26	87	4.3	
28	0	6	0	0	0	6	24	80	4	1	5	0	0	0	6	25	83	4.2	

School 2 1996			School 2 1997
Aspect	Av. score	Av. %	Av. score Av %
Enquiry and reflection (1-4)	4.04	80.8	4.41 88
Planning (6-9)	4.2	84	4.29 85.8
Involvement (11-14)	3.75	55	4.04 80.8
Co-ordination(15-18)	4.2	81.6	4.37 87.5
Leadership (19-23)	4.2	84	4.3 86
Staff development (24-28)	4.2	84	4.38 87



Full data for questionnaire, responses compared at the start of the project and at the end.		
t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	23.92857143	25.17857
Variance	11.55026455	17.85582
Observations	28	28
Pearson Correlation	0.906148041	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	27	
t Stat	-3.597944619	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000634349	
t Critical one-tail	1.703288035	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001268697	
t Critical two-tail	2.051829142	

School 2. Responses to questions grouped in aspects. Compared before and after the project.		
t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	4.109722222	4.298611
Variance	0.036428241	0.018095
Observations	6	6
Pearson Correlation	0.789360012	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	5	
t Stat	-3.911665257	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.005638041	
t Critical one-tail	2.015049176	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.011276081	
t Critical two-tail	2.570577635	

**Appendix 6.3**  
**Phase 2**  
**Initial Interview schedule.**

**Chair of governors**

1. What has been your involvement with the project so far?
2. What do you see as the progress made by the school so far?
3. What are your perceptions of where the school is and where it wants to be?
4. What is the extent of the role of the governors in supporting and knowing about the school's involvement with the project?
5. How do you perceive the role of those working with the school through the project?

**Headteacher, deputy headteacher, co-ordinator and teacher.**

1. Can you tell me what you see as the current position of the school and how you arrived at that? (*attitude to improvement*)
2. What useful new knowledge and understandings have you developed about:  
a) your school    b) your own role  
as a result of the project so far?
3. Are there any elements which have been more effective with helping with that?  
(*Knowledge gained/understanding of process*)
4. How do staff work together at the moment? What institutional changes are planned for? What adaptations will need to be made?(*Staff- negotiation/imposition/ consensus/ awareness raising. Pupils/ parents/ governors*)
5. Some of the activities which have been undertaken have led to decisions that changes need to be made. Has that information been difficult for you or your staff to accept? Are any of the approaches challenging the way people work now or their current values  
(*Information informing need for change - difficult/tensions? Challenging or aligning with existing values? Managing this?*)
7. Is the structure for supporting teachers in classrooms clear? Are there any difficulties with this that you can see?
8. What influence is the project having on your own confidence and feelings about your work?
9. Your school's assigned inspector has worked with you on the project. What aspects of the role have helped or hindered? What elements of the outside support have been personally helpful? What ways of working helped staff most?  
(*Pushing thinking forward/framing issues/ encouraging partnerships/ providing incentives/ modelling ways of working.*)

**Pupils**

What work are you doing now in reading/writing?

1. Do you like doing this work? What are your favourite parts?
2. What help are you getting to make your work even better than it is?



3. Does it matter that you do good work? Do you know how to make your work good?
4. What sort of things do you do in your lessons. Is anyone else helping you in class?
5. Probe knowledge about reading/writing- relevance of skills and application of them in other subjects.

**Appendix 6.4**  
**Follow-up interview schedule.**

**School Improvement Project.**

**Headteacher interviews**

1. What are the key improvements you can identify which have occurred at the school, mainly as a result of the project and ensuing work, in relation to - standards, attitudes, pupils and staff. What has had a lasting impact?
2. What changes has this meant personally to the way you work- (*prompt of improvement process -audit/ action/ support/ review*) Which elements are important to continue using? Which are not?
3. I want to focus on the interventions and their effectiveness as you saw them.
  - Long term impact of the In- service training opportunities?
  - Contribution of assigned inspector?(*clarifying plans, auditing work, identifying issues, supporting procedures*)
4. Can you consider the key attributes of those providing the interventions:
  - of assigned inspector, ways of working which helped staff, HT, pupils.
  - of expert teacher - related to planning work, work in the classroom, staff meetings.
5. What is your view now of successes and difficulties in the area of focus? What do you think should be done differently/will be done differently in future?
6. Can you identify any ways in which staff working together have altered or attitudes have changed?
7. Are there any differences in your or others' leadership?  
(*emphasis and style*)

**Deputy headteacher, co-ordinator and teacher.**

1. Can you identify any improvement that has occurred at the school, mainly as a result of the project and ensuing work? (*standards, attitudes, pupils, staff.*) What has had a lasting impact?
2. What changes has this meant personally to the way you work- (*prompt of improvement process -audit/ action/ support/ review*) Which elements would you recommend to use, which would you want to see continuing to be used in this school are important to continue using? Which would you not bother with?
3. I want to focus on the interventions and their effectiveness as you saw them.
  - Long term impact of the In- service training opportunities?
  - Contribution of assigned inspector?(*clarifying plans, auditing work, identifying issues, supporting procedures*)
4. Can you consider the key skills and attributes of those providing the interventions:
  - of assigned inspector, ways of working which helped staff, HT, pupils.



-of expert teacher - related to planning work, work in planning in the classroom, staff meetings.

5. What is your view now of successes and difficulties in the area of focus? What do you think should be done differently/will be done differently in future?

6. Can you identify any ways in which staff working together have altered or attitudes have changed?

7. Are there any differences in the way the school is led?  
(*emphasis and style*)

### **Pupils.**

1. How has the work you did on reading/writing last year helped with the work in writing this year?

2. When you had someone in your class to help with your writing, what do you most remember learning from them?

3. Has your work improved enough now?

4. Does it matter that your writing/ reading is good?

5. Do you like writing/ reading? What particular writing/ reading do you like? What happens in your classroom now that didn't happen last year?

6. Do your parents know about the work you have done?

## **Appendix 8.1**

### **Standards for assigned inspectors**

#### **Standards for assigned inspectors**

**The assigned inspector works with a group of schools in order to:**

- agree targets with schools for improvement
- develop an accurate knowledge of each school in its context and its educational provision and performance
- challenge and support each school in the identification of effective routes for sustaining and improving provision and performance
- undertake personnel work in the appointment of key staff and headteacher appraisal
- monitor the progress of schools in meeting their targets
- evaluate the impact of action taken to promote effectiveness

#### **Key outcomes**

**The work of a link adviser is most effective when:**

- the quality of strategic leadership, curriculum planning and assessment, teaching and pupil attainment in the school is enhanced through the guidance, challenge and support provided by and through the assigned inspector
- the LEA knowledge base about school effectiveness and achievement is secure, accurate and up to date
- the Education Committee and governing bodies are well informed annually about the educational performance and provision of schools
- for each school there is an appropriate and targeted programme of annual support, which stimulates improvement, sustains high standards or arrests decline
- evaluations of the effectiveness of the support have led to a growing knowledge base of strategies which support school self-improvement.

#### **Professional knowledge**

**In order to achieve these outcomes link advisers should have knowledge and understanding of:**

- the characteristics of effective schools and school improvement, the factors which indicate school ineffectiveness and decline
- the use and analysis of data about school performance
- relevant and recent research, particularly relating to school effectiveness and school improvement as well as its contribution to professional and school development
- the statutory framework for education
- the statutory frameworks for key areas of personnel work - appointments, appraisal and disciplinary procedures
- strategic and operational planning, budget setting and monitoring



### **Skills and attributes**

In order to achieve and maintain these outcomes link advisers will need a range of key skills and attributes. In particular to:

- work within a changing context and respond to changes in a flexible and constructive manner
- have a high level of interpersonal skills which are transferable between different contexts, and deal sensitively, honestly and constructively with people
- be self managing and prioritise and use time effectively
- manage teams effectively and efficiently, and be an effective team member
- identify, gather, analyse and interpret evidence and data which is presented in different - forms - statistically, written or observable
- make accurate judgements based on secure evidence, make decisions and set priorities
- communicate effectively with a range of audiences in a range of contexts through presentations, interviews and writing
- utilise information and communication technology
- differentiate and discriminate between the different needs of schools and identify support accordingly
- contribute to quality assurance systems

### **Key areas**

The key areas of the work of assigned inspectors are:

1. Understanding the school in context
  - understand the national and international issues relating to education
  - know about the key characteristics and intake of assigned schools
  - develop knowledge of and relationships with headteachers, staff and governing bodies
  - know about the quality of the management and leadership of teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment through a range of procedures which may include the analysis of documentation - school development planning, policies and reports
  - know about the performance of schools through the analysis of pupil achievement as presented in statistical data and the observation of teaching
2. Provide accurate judgements of the school's effectiveness and ability to maintain or secure improvement
  - support the school's own development of effective quality assurance and monitoring systems which ensure policy is implemented into practice
  - reflect with the school on its strengths and weaknesses
  - moderate the school's own judgements with secure and informed analysis, challenging where necessary
  - contribute to the authority's register of schools causing concern
3. Lead an annual review of progress in the achievement of targets leading to the setting of new priorities and targets
  - follow and contribute to the procedures for the annual review of schools
  - promote the partnership in improvement between the LEA, headteacher, staff and governing body
  - maximise the opportunity for governors and others to be involved in the review

- promote the involvement of staff through their evaluations of last year's priorities
  - ensuring that criteria for targets set are precise, clear and unequivocal
4. Define a focused programme of support
- assist with action planning post Ofsted, approving it in schools causing concern, and co-writing it in schools requiring special measures
  - plan, within the time available, the support which will provide the most effective lever for meeting new targets and which will develop the managerial capacity and expertise of the school
  - apply for additional support for schools placed on the authority's list of those causing concern
  - consult and involve other colleagues from within the LEA
  - facilitate and foster the networking of expertise within and outside the authority
5. Facilitate and monitor the effectiveness of the programme
- ensure targeted follow up contact which focuses on previously agreed priorities
  - facilitate and monitor the effectiveness of the programme, and in particular the development of the school's own quality assurance
  - review strategies and adjust these where they are proving ineffective
  - share effective strategies with colleagues
6. Evaluate and report on the quality and progress of each school annually
- use the data available, results of OFSTED inspections, annual reviews and school visits as the basis for making judgements about school performance and provision
  - report on each school annually to contribute to the county review, with particular emphasis on strengths and weaknesses in achievement, management, teaching and learning
  - contribute to an annual meeting when themes and issues are shared, developments identified and targets set
7. Personnel, appointment and appraisal procedures
- participate in appointments, advising governors on procedures for appointing headteachers, and the selection of appropriate candidates
  - undertake roles in disciplinary and competency procedures
  - act as support appraiser for headteachers, promoting rigorous and challenging appraisals which facilitate their professional development
8. Efficient use of resources
- manage allocated funds, for additional support to schools or for specific projects, strategically and efficiently
  - ensure the allocation of support maximises each school's entitlement, but does not extend it except for schools on the register of concern
  - where additional time is necessary, define and apply for funding
9. Accountability
- provide evaluations of activities and achievements on others as appropriate
  - give account of school performance to key stakeholders: governors, LEA, as appropriate