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A study of pupil participation in learning : factors which promote or undermine inclusion

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Ruth S. Bailey

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A study of pupil participation in learning: Factors which promote or undermine inclusion

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)

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Abstract

This small-scale piece of practitioner research centres on the participation and learning experience of one group of year 7/8 pupils. My aim was to increase pupil participation in learning. I considered the pupil experience of inclusion and factors which promoted or undermined participation in learning. The investigation is in two phases. The first stage is a case study in which I investigate the school's organisational culture and how the features of school impinge on pupils' participation and inclusion. The second phase is classroom-based research, which is divided into four action cycles, each progressively focusing on an improvement in pupil participation in learning, which emerged from the previous cycle.

Findings showed that the biggest barriers to pupils' learning were the school's organisational culture (which led to pupils' low self-esteem), over-reliance on teacher support and lack of autonomy. Pupils' participation improved, together with their self-esteem by being given a choice and a voice, by being supported in identifying their learning styles and by teachers having high expectations of them in completing tasks which made sense and had purpose.

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[1] Estyn is 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales', the equivalent of Ofsted.

Chapter One – Rationale and Background

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the context, background and rationale of my investigation, introduce the main themes and research questions. The contextual background is divided into two sections concerning the school and the pupils. In the rationale I discuss my personal reasons for the investigation as well as more general reasons and those of the school. Finally I identify the main themes and questions for investigation and discussion.

The focus of this investigation is pupil participation in their learning. The level of pupil participation in all aspects of schooling is an important area, which can lead to inequality of access to the curriculum. In their study of pupil participation, Jelly *et al* (2000) found that involving pupils in dialogue about how they learn best improved their autonomy and empowerment in learning.

The investigation is focused on one group of pupils who were initially in year 7 and moved to year 8 in the subsequent academic year. All pupils had a history of learning difficulties, as described below. The school and its organisational culture played a significant role on pupil participation in learning and inclusion. Built in the early 20th century as a single sex grammar school, it became comprehensive in the 1970s. My research interest was in how inclusion worked in practice in this school, what effect it had on the pupils themselves and whether I could improve the learning and participation of pupils in my year 7-8 group in my English classroom.

Contextual Background

School

The AB school is an 11-18 comprehensive school of 1000 pupils in an old mining town surrounded by a rural area. The area is ecomically disadvantaged as described by Estyn 2003 (Appendix d). The school dates back to 1905, and was a grammar school until 1978. The school attracts pupils from 15 main feeder primary schools. There is one other secondary school in the town, which is denominational and attracts a selective entry.

AB school is fairly successful, has achieved well in performance tables and hence has a good reputation amongst the local community. Some of the pupils attend because they failed to get into the church school, but for a large number the school is their first choice. As a result, pupils at the school represent the whole range of ability although there are an above average proportion of pupils of lower ability (Appendix d). The school is divided into two, the Lower School which includes years 7 and 8 and the Upper School which includes years 9 to 13. The two buildings are situated at opposite ends of the town, about a mile apart. The school operates a setting system where pupils are set into 6 groups or 'sets' according to ability on entry to the school. These groups are informed by the KS2 SAT results, cognitive ability scores and information from primary school. Pupils are then taught in these sets for all subjects. Having been placed in these sets, there are few opportunities for pupils to move into another group, usually only once per year following annual examinations.

Pupils

The bottom set comprises 24 pupils. The school has responded to their needs by splitting them into two for all core subjects. They are therefore in smaller groups of 12 for English, Maths and Science than there are for other subjects. They follow the same curriculum as all pupils in the school. The class on which the investigation is focused is one of these split groups of 12 pupils, 7 boys and 5 girls, who were in year 7 at the start and progressed into year 8 during my investigation.

The pupils are characterised by moderate difficulties in learning (MLD) with some examples of specific learning difficulties (SpLD), where pupils general ability level is significantly higher than their ability to read, spell and organise ideas into writing. Three pupils in this group have statements for SpLD, where they are able to perform orally at a level similar to or better than other pupils of their age (on the 50th centile or above)[2], although their written work is at a level similar to others in the group. The school labels them as 'weak', 'poor' or 'slow' learners. However, a discussion on labelling belongs elsewhere. In curriculum terms they all perform

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[2] Centile levels show the number of pupils out of one hundred who would obtain a similar score, therefore, on the 9th centile, 9 pupils would score the same, 8 would score less and 91 would score higher.

significantly below the correct level for their age. Their reading ages vary from 7 years to 9 years and all attend additional reading lessons for 20 minutes each day.

Jones and Quah (1996) identified teacher expectations as one of the most significant factors which influence pupil participation and behaviour. Sadly, very early on in their secondary education these pupils have already been labelled as a failing group and, as a result, teachers have low expectations of them. This has obvious implications for their learning, self-esteem and motivation. By the time they are in year 7 they have been learning literacy skills unsuccessfully for at least 6 years: year after year they have been unsuccessful and this has reinforced a cycle of failure and contributed to their low self-esteem. Many also have weak numeracy skills and have experienced similar failure in this area. As my investigation is focused on my English classroom, further discussion concerning numeracy is irrelevant. Literacy skills are important across the curriculum and can affect performance in examinations and tests. All pupils are better at spoken work than at written work, although some have weak listening skills and have difficulty following instructions. Seven of them have emotional and behavioural (EBD) problems. One child lives in a children's home. Six have a history of poor attendance, two as a result of medical problems. It is difficult to gauge whether these pupils would be in this group if their past attendance had been better, and they had been given more opportunities to acquire basic skills. One has ADHD (attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder), which severely affects his concentration. Two are being counselled for anger management. Concentration is a real problem for the group, not because of disruptions due to poor behaviour, but because many of the pupils have genuine difficulties in this area. One child has severe problems with communication and has only recently begun talking in a whisper in school.

Rationale

Personal

My rationale is derived both from personal interest and experience and from the general and line-specific criteria of the doctorate. My specific focus is participation. My investigation addresses issues concerning why pupils in

my year 7-8 English class participate at different levels, with a view to identifying those factors which will improve my practice. The investigation was clearly focused on the classroom; however, in spite of this focus I am at all times conscious of the effect of the organisational context and my limitations in changing it. Many aspects of education are non- negotiable within the wider school context. I am limited in what I can do to change things, for example, alone I cannot regroup pupils, change widely held perceptions of the value and worth of particular skills and abilities compared to others or alter long standing views on how schools and pupils are best organised. In addressing my research questions, my role as both teacher and researcher is both limited and challenged.

It is difficult to motivate and fully engage all members of a large, disaffected group when the curricular content lacks relevance or purpose and is simply not appropriate. It is also difficult to create an inclusive classroom or inclusive activities in which all pupils can fully participate when the process of identification, selection and grouping gives us classifications of high and low status knowledge, and by implication high and low status pupils and teachers. Perhaps it could be argued that the nature of the national curriculum impedes the process of inclusion. Many of us, as teachers find ourselves trying to make the child fit the curriculum rather than changing the curriculum to suit pupil needs

My conceptual framework and the values to which I aspire are those of a classroom teacher. My work is empirical, I am totally committed to educational improvement and to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in my classroom. I am committed not only to these improvements but also to gain a deeper understanding of what I can do to make these improvements.

Personal Educational Values

McNiff (1988) stresses the importance of being honest and open about one's educational values and how they are denied in practice. My values, described below, are denied in many ways, not least because the context, culture and ethos of the school, while outwardly advocating equality of access and opportunity seem resistant to modern thinking and retain much of the culture and ethos of a 1950s grammar school.

I believe that school should reflect equality of access and opportunity and that inclusivity should mean making schools more responsive to all pupils. In order to achieve this, my classroom environment should reflect my values in the tasks and activities I set the pupils and that, as communication is at the centre of the learning process, pupils should be heard as equal participants in their learning. Pupils should be at the centre of their learning as active not passive participants who are empowered to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour. In high quality teaching and learning, all participants play an equal part, demonstrate mutual respect and trust and decision making and lesson planning is informed by the pupil voice.

School

In 1998, when I started this project the AB school was going through a period of change. A new Headteacher had been appointed, whose task it was to bring the school into line with many local and national policies. Prior to her appointment the school had been under the management of an acting Headteacher for two years, who maintained the status quo but did not make many changes to policy or practice. One of the areas in which the school was being forced to move forward was in relation to SEN. In the term before I was appointed an LEA inspection had judged that the role of SEN in the school, and particularly the role of the SENCO should be changed to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (1994).

The pupils' experience of learning is deeply affected by the school culture and the value a school places on its pupils. Organisational culture is important to effective inclusion within a school as it affects the inclusive experience and participation of pupils (Booth *et al*, 1998, Corbett, 2001). The context and ethos of the AB school did not value pupils equally. A rigid setting system meant that pupils with poor literacy skills and low reading ages were stuck in 'bottom sets', often with pupils who lacked concentration or were disruptive. Pupil disillusionment and disaffection were partly due to low self-esteem and pupils' perception of their own difficulties. This could be seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students who were experiencing difficulties did not stay 'on task' in the classroom, got further behind in their studies and then started to misbehave or truant. In their investigation into promoting inclusion through pupil participation in seven special schools,

Jelly *et al* (2000) found that raising pupils' self-esteem improved both their learning and their chances of success.

Many of the pupils at the AB school exercised a kind of 'differentiation by participation' by, at one end of the spectrum exhibiting active and total participation and commitment and, at the other, truanting. The group of pupils on whom the research is focused participated poorly in lessons and were not well motivated. As they had many difficulties in reading and writing (as described earlier in this chapter), one way of improving their participation could be to promote their independence in oral work. Through discussion and scaffolding, pupils could become actively involved in each other's learning such that they progressed further than they could have done alone (Mercer, 1995).

Learning difficulties have been described as a mismatch between pupils, tasks and the curriculum (Booth *et al*, 1992a, 1998, Hart, 1996b). There is no doubt that long term apathy and boredom with the curriculum can contribute to a pupil's disaffection. Pupils' expectations of school and of lessons were such that they almost expected to be 'contained' rather than engaged. Sometimes in my lessons I felt that pupils were co-operating in completing class work in a passive way: the onus was on me as the teacher to play the active role in finding and giving the work, and the pupils perceived their role as passive, to complete it. Individual teachers differentiated to some extent but the strategies they used and the activities they asked pupils to complete were not wide ranging and there was little evidence that they planned for individual pupils' needs. If pupil participation were to improve it was vital that the curriculum and materials were inclusive and that teaching methods and materials were appropriate, challenging and had purpose. In short, the individual and their needs had to be placed at the centre of the learning and curriculum material had to be adapted to suit them.

General

At the time of my investigation SEN departments in schools were undergoing a period of change. The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (1994) had come into being in 1994 and the SENCO Guide (DfEE, 1997) in 1997. At the same time

there was an expectation that schools should be working towards inclusive practice. Hornby (1999) suggests that there is a lack of empirical research evidence to show that the outcomes of inclusive practices improve the lives of pupils with learning difficulties.

Inclusion itself is complex. It is an unseen process, involving the participation of all members of a school. Many pupils feel 'different' at some point or other in their school lives for some reason or another. Each will have difficulty in accessing some parts of the curriculum however small. It is the individual that is important in education and that in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning we should look at the individual and recognise what they bring to their learning. Pupils' learning is improved when it is 'grounded' or rooted within the individual (O'Brien and Guiney, 2001). Lunt and Norwich (1999) claim that the difference between inclusion and integration is that integration expects pupils to change to fit the school, whereas inclusion encourages schools to fit the needs of pupils.

In previous investigations I had considered and reflected on the effects on inclusion of local, national and institutional policy, the curriculum, resources and materials. Although these factors are vital to an inclusive system, it is what goes on in the classroom, the relevance and appropriateness of the tasks and activities and the extent to which pupils participate that makes inclusion work in practice. Without the supporting policies, materials and curriculum inclusion would not be possible, but alone they are only the start.

Research Questions

Four main themes have emerged from the rationale; organisational culture, pupils' experience of learning, pupils' participation in their own learning and their invovement in classroom talk and discussion. The last two themes can be considered together, as discussion work is a necessary part of their participation in learning. These themes have informed the research questions for my investigation as follows;

1. How do the features of school impinge on pupil participation and inclusion?

2. What is the experience of learning of the pupils in my year 7-8 English class?

3. a. To what extent do this group of year 7-8 pupils participate in their own learning?

    b. How can they be supported to participate more fully in speaking tasks?

Chapter Two - Literature review

Introduction

In my Literature Review I consider themes which have emerged from my rationale. These are organisational culture, pupils' experience of learning, pupil participation in learning and how pupils can be supported through classroom talk.

It is important when basing research within an institution to understand its underlying values and ideologies. These are reflected in the organisational culture and ethos (Handy, 1988, Hargreaves, 1997). Such cultures often contain implicit, unspoken assumptions, which permeate institutions and have an obvious impact on the individuals within. The aim of my investigation is to improve the participation in learning of pupils in my classroom. The success or otherwise of such inclusion is dependant to some extent on the culture and ethos of the school and the organisational response to diversity.

The pupil experience is an important theme to explore, as it is intrinsic to their participation. The provenance of categorisation and labelling in schools not only reflects the organisational context but also affects pupils' self-esteem and motivation. Similarly, the expectations that teachers have of pupils are also intrinsically linked to the organisational culture of the school and are reflected in the rules that we impose on our classrooms and the imposed, implicit, subtle, hidden agenda to which pupils are expected to understand and adhere.

The next theme is pupil participation in their own learning. Pupils do not fully participate in lessons for a number of reasons. Some pupils have learning or behavioural difficulties and some are perceived as such because they do not conform to teacher expectations. I explore some theories

surrounding these issues such as why pupils find learning difficult, disaffection and the place of pupil advocacy in empowering pupils to take control of their learning and behaviour (Jones and Quah, 1996). What happens when pupils do not adhere to this agenda, refuse to participate or become disaffected?

In this section I also consider the theme of classroom talk and how pupils' learning can be supported through dialogue. Pupils are not always aware of the opportunities available to them to participate or how to 'use' talk effectively in the classroom. At the same time, pupils with low literacy levels are more able to contribute orally to a lesson than in writing.

Implications for special education of recent educational legislation

The National Curriculum (NCC) (1989) was implemented in an attempt to raise standards. Peter (1995) describes how the Education Reform Act of 1988 paved the way for today's National Curriculum. It introduced the idea of a 'curriculum for all,' the raising of standards through testing and assessment, high expectations and the importance of building a framework for continuity and progression.

Initially it seemed that there was reason to celebrate the establishment of a 'curriculum for all', which outwardly appeared to respond to questions concerning equality of access and opportunity (Dyson 1998). However, in reality the National Curriculum emerged as non-empirical, narrowly conceived and inaccessible. Children were not able to participate in a meaningful learning experience but were to be 'set in confinement within a hierarchy of knowledge' (Dyson 1998). An example of this is the statutory inclusion of Modern Foreign Languages. The changes that have taken place following the advent of the National Curriculum have meant that pupils who were traditionally denied access to this important part of the curriculum were first encouraged, then directed to study a language. Teachers struggled to change their pedagogy in order to increase access to pupils with learning difficulties. Unfortunately, the majority of the teaching methods and published materials are still aimed at the more able pupil. Prior knowledge and understanding, such as telling the time, is assumed in order to make sense of complicated concepts such as money, exchange rates or grammatical rules. Language structures are difficult to understand, long

tedious lists must be learned and there is much reliance on English explanations. In addition, there is an expectation for pupils to 'show they know' in the conventional, written form. This has long been the tradition in exams and can cause insurmountable problems for pupils with poor literacy skills.

Barton's (1988) view is that this academic hierarchy has created competitiveness and an implicit low status knowledge and thus promoted a narrower definition of ability. Schools can now opt out and become centres of excellence, a concept which does not sit comfortably with the ideals of integration and inclusion.

The publication of examination and test results, resulting in league tables, raises a number of difficult questions. McPherson (1997) claims that unadjusted results are informative only in that they inform how a certain syllabus is being studied and to what standard. Smyth (1999) adds that such information can be a useful tool for schools in their own planning and developments. However, within this system attention is increasingly focused on learners' potential and resources required for improved achievement. The extent to which the concept of under-achievement is useful in SEN is debatable, as it relies heavily on the subjective views of teachers, whether learning potential is attributed to pupils by teachers or whether learning abilities are less evident (Norwich, 1996).

British schools have been legally required to publish results for over ten years. Many people are affected by these results such as parents, pupils, teachers and governors and indirectly, local education authorities, colleges and universities. In Ireland, school league tables have been banned in an education act. Smyth (1999) in his research found that examination results said little about how an institution works or how to enhance results. He claims that the variation in examination performance was mainly due to differences in gender, social class and abilities of pupils. McPherson (1997) makes a similar point in that tests results differ from school to school because schools differ from each other in intake due to their type (gender and denomination) and location (ethnicity and social background). Raw outcome scores measure test results. However raw results are misleading indicators if they are not adjusted for such intake differences. Raw scores are therefore of limited use without comparable data on the national context

and value added analyses would therefore be more worthwhile. Value added outcomes scores should measure the school's contribution to pupil progress (McPherson, 1997). However, if value added measures are to be used, analyses must be sophisticated enough to take all factors into account.

The NFER report (Saunders 1998) claims that although such value-added methods are an improvement they are only as good as the data on which they are based. Cassidy (1999) says that no analysis has yet been found which accounts for all factors associated with poor performance. Even a complicated system which considers catchment area, size and percentage of free school meals made little difference to ranking in urban schools with high levels of poverty and little parental support (Cassidy 1999).

In our present educational climate accountability is the key. We have been forced to compromise our values to fit in with a government imposed competitive system. It is not only the broader concept of 'the school' that is now under the microscope, it is necessary also to measure and evaluate our personal performance as teachers and managers in relation to school improvement. This argument is borne out by recent government proposals in relation to performance related pay. Benchmarking, target setting and value-added are the key issues in school management (Cassidy, 1998, Cassidy, 1999, Smyth, 1999). No surprise therefore, in this climate that inclusion seems to be very much an elusive ideal to which we can only aspire.

Dyson (1998) argues that integration within such a school system has forced the system to reproduce itself in mainstream and is a 'colonisation' rather than 'transformation'. Labels are still prevalent in mainstream. Statementing is extended on an individualist approach and such compensatory integration has only perpetuated inequality causing large groups of pupils to feel devalued (Dyson, 1998). These feelings of devaluation and inequality link with issues of race, class, gender and sexuality and contribute to pupil disaffection. A discussion of issues relating to devaluation can be found later in the Literature Review.

In 1994 'The Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs' was published. This document provided schools with guidance and advice concerning their responsibilities in organising provision for pupils with special needs, their identification and assessment.

It was followed by further documents such as 'the SENCO Guide,' published in 1997, the Green Paper of 1997 which outlined further improvements in provision for pupils with special needs, The Inclusion Index (2000), the SEN Toolkit (2001) and the revised Code of Practice (2001). The SEN and Disability Act 2001 stated that all schools must pay regard to three documents; the Inclusion Framework (from January 2002), the Revised SEN Code of Practice (from January 2002) and the Disability Code of Practice (from September 2002). The Inclusion Framework requires schools to follow the principles of an inclusive service, not to discriminate against pupils without statements in admissions and to make appropriate provision for statemented pupils providing that it is not at the expense of other pupils at the school. The Revised SEN Code of Practice requires that schools identify, assess and make provision for pupils with SEN and comply with specific duties relating to the school's SEN policy and monitoring its impact. The Disability Code of Practice requires that schools do not discriminate against disabled pupils and actively promote better access. In addition, the DFES document entitled 'Inclusive Schooling' (2001) provides statutory guidance on developing inclusive practice, suggesting that inclusion is a process by which schools, LEAs and others develop their cultures, policies and practice.

These documents have helped schools throughout the country to review their special needs policy and current practice. The last decade has brought about different debates in education which are more firmly focused on disability. An example of this is the emergence of inclusion as a dominant issue.

Theme One - Organisational Culture

Culture and Ethos

It would not be appropriate when basing research in an institution to overlook the importance of the organisational culture of the institution since it is this which underlies the attitudes, values and philosophies of the institution itself. As discussed in the previous section, organisational culture is particularly important to effective inclusion within a school (Booth *et al*, 1998, Corbett, 2001). An inclusive school is one which is inclusive in every aspect of its ethos and this is reflected in the way staff

treat the children and each other (Corbett, 2001). In essence, it is the values of the stakeholders which both reflect and determine school culture. These values in turn affect the extent to which staff are willing to accept change and make progress towards inclusion. Inclusive education challenges rather than supports the established status quo and culture and the extent to which students feel valued (Corbett, 2001). Staff who resist change therefore consciously or subconsciously work against the principles of inclusion, and in such cases it will prove more difficult to become inclusive. Inclusion itself is a response to the valuing of difference, which is consciously modelled by inclusive schools (Corbett, 2001).

Organisational cultures have been defined in many ways by different educationalists. Torrington and Weightman (1993) describe the culture and ethos of a school as a reflection of its 'wholeness' and as paramount in understanding the underlying philosophy, values and ideology held by its members. The members of an institution play an obvious integral part in its culture and ethos. The culture of a particular school is largely determined by the individual values and experiences of its members which are reflected in their language and behaviour. The ways in which members act and interact and the 'footprint' they leave behind them are also important to the culture and ethos of the organisation (Beare *et al*, 1989).

Definitions

Organisational culture can be defined as the level of basic assumptions and beliefs served by members. It often operates unconsciously and is based on 'taken for granted' frames of reference, which can be explicit or unconscious. These frames of reference are sometimes brought about by a manager or group of managers (Torrington and Weightman, 1993), but to some extent organisational culture exists regardless of management systems (Poster and Poster, 1993). They are perpetuated by history and traditions which form 'cultural norms', which develop over a period of time (Torrington and Weightman, 1993). According to Smith *et al* (1998) there are a number of educational value systems or ideologies, such as pupil centred (progressivism), subject-based (classical humanism) or education as seen for wider purposes (instrumentalism). Schools often combine elements of such value sets to create a distinctive environment.

Handy (1988) offers a useful definition of organisational culture which links with theories of 'wholeness'. He defines it as an integrating mechanism. He reminds us that organisations are living things with their own history, traditions and environment and therefore an ability to shape their own destiny. Meyerson and Martin (1997) take the viewpoint that culture is a metaphor of organisation since organisations themselves are patterns of meaning, values and behaviour.

Torrington and Weightman (1993) have described organisational culture as the 'characteristic spirit and beliefs of an organisation which is demonstrated in norms and values'. Often a culture which is real and powerful is demonstrated through norms and values which are deep and 'taken for granted' assumptions which are not always expressed. Layers of practice continually modify and consolidate these norms and provide a framework of ritual and convention in which members of the organisation feel secure. This can lead to a strong sense of fellowship and loyalty, but, at the same time can create barriers and obstruct change. Cowne (2003) warns of the difficulty in managing change when it implies a change of values. Fullen (1999) points out that any change process is unpredictable and requires collaboration in a learning community.

Models

Handy's (1988) model outlines four different cultures which are commonly found in school. There are also an unlimited number of mixtures of cultures. Handy's four cultures are the role, the task, the club and the person. Each culture has its strength and weaknesses, none is wholly good or bad and each is more or less appropriate to different institutions. 'The club culture' reflects centralised power and can be visualised as a spider's web with the key at the centre. Little is written down formally within this culture. It is quick in responding to crises or opportunities and is exciting to be part of, if its values and beliefs are shared. However, such an organisation is only as strong as the dominant central character. Within a 'role culture', the organisation is perceived as a set of linked roles. Individuals are seen as role occupants. A role culture demands that communication is formalised and does not encourage independence or initiative. 'Task culture' requires that a group of talents should be applied to individual tasks or problems as necessary. This culture is expensive as it is a questioning culture which

encourages professionals to spend time talking. Within a 'person culture' the individual is placed first, with the organisation seen as a resource for individual talents.

The culture of a school depends on the relative importance of size, workload, environment and history. Handy (1988) claims that secondary school cultures are predominantly 'role cultures', due to their size, procedures, timetable and the academic-pastoral divide. In addition there are norm references of standardised exams and specialism by individuals. Such a large organisation, divided into such specialised functions to produce a standardised product is a recipe for a role culture.

Hargreaves (1997) offers as an interesting model for school cultures (Fig. 2.1). This model consists of a square, the top line of which represents social control, and the left hand line of which represents social cohesion. The continuum along the top line is marked high to low and the left line with high at the top to low at the bottom.

Within this model the 'ideal' school, described in school effectiveness literature is at the centre (Hargreaves, 1997). Each corner of the square reflects a particular type of culture. It is also possible to be placed at any point within the square. In the top left hand corner is the 'hot house culture' (Hargreaves, 1997), where both social control and cohesion are high; all are under pressure to participate fully in the range of school life. Expectations are high and everyone seems to be under surveillance.

The bottom right hand corner represents the 'survival school culture', in which social control and cohesion are weak. Teachers within such a culture strive to maintain basic control and the ethos is one of insecurity, hopelessness and low morale. The culture represented in the bottom left hand corner reflects a high level of social control and a low level of social cohesion. This is the 'formal school culture' in which pressure is put upon pupils to achieve learning goals and perform well at exams but with poor cohesion between staff and pupils. School life is orderly, scheduled and disciplined and the tone is custodial. The top right hand corner reflects a culture which is relaxed and carefree which places emphasis on informal, friendly teacher pupil relationships. This is a 'progressive culture' which focuses on individual development within a caring environment.

The assumption among cultural theory and models is that the stamp of culture leaves an identical mark across whole organisations. However, it is important to remember that schools contain teams of staff, each of which has its own culture. Indeed, individuals within these teams also have their own value systems and ideologies. There is consequently a 'legitimate plurality of views and styles' in many institutions (Torrington and Weightman, 1993). In spite of this, schools need cultures and ideas about which there is a degree of consensus in order to have a sense of unity, without which the organisation would not be effective (Torrington and Weightman, 1993).

Social Control

High   **Low**

High

Hot House Culture	Progressive Culture

Social

Cohesion

Ideal school

Low

Formal School Culture	Survival School Culture

Fig 2. 1- Hargreaves (1997) model of school cultures

The assumption among cultural theory and models is that the stamp of culture leaves an identical mark across whole organisations. However, it is important to remember that schools contain teams of staff, each of which has its own culture. Indeed, individuals within these teams also have their own value systems and ideologies. There is consequently a 'legitimate plurality of views and styles' in many institutions (Torrington and Weightman, 1993). In spite of this, schools need cultures and ideas about which there is a degree of consensus in order to have a sense of unity,

without which the organisation would not be effective (Torrington and Weightman, 1993).
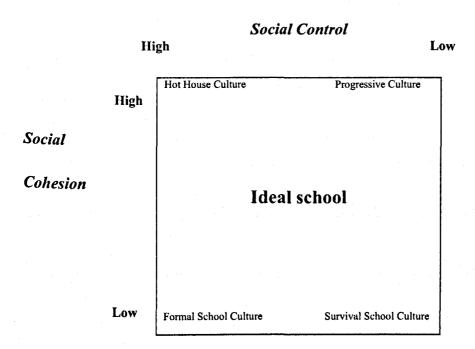
Handy's (1988) model reflects staff cultures but to some extent disregards the pupils as an integral part of this culture. Torrington and Weightman (1993) believe that there are two cultures in most schools, one set of cultural norms for pupils and a completely different set for adults. However, since schools are integrated communities in which both pupils and teachers play an integral part, the culture must be intertwined. Hargreave's (1997) model accounts for teacher-pupil relationships within the school and focuses on the extent to which teachers gain 'control' of pupils through social cohesion. It is this model which is most useful in attempting to understand organisational culture within the AB school.

In order to investigate the inclusivity of my classroom it is important to consider how the school is organised, the ways in which this reflects the diversity of the pupils and the effect that grouping and labelling have on the pupils themselves. These issues form an important contextual background.

Theme Two - The Pupil Experience

What makes learning difficult?

There are many factors which influence and affect pupil participation. The intended outcome of my research project is to improve pupil participation. Therefore, one of the most important perspectives to consider is that of the pupils themselves.

The question 'What makes learning difficult?' is central to my investigation. Research completed by Croll and Moses (1985) suggested that the causes of learning and behavioural problems relate to three factors; those innate to the child, such as intelligence or ability, the child's attitude or concentration, and the home circumstances. This definition clearly overlooks several important issues such as the curriculum, the relevance of the tasks and activities, teachers' attitudes and expectations and their skill reflected in the methods and approaches used in the lesson. In addition it overlooks how all these factors interact and the response of the pupils themselves. Jones (1992) indicates that the causes of learning and behavioural difficulties can be found in the child, the curriculum and the learning environment. Jones and Charlton (1996) take the view that pupils' learning and behavioural

difficulties are affected by a range of interacting factors. They define these as the child, the curriculum, the environment and the broader social context. These latter definitions include references to the curriculum and interacting factors but the skills of the teacher and the purpose of tasks remain overlooked.

Charlton and George (1993) offer a longer list of factors which make learning difficult as follows; a mismatch between task and pupil, obstructed or badly organised lessons, pupils not being informed adequately of what they need to do, teachers' poor time management, lack of opportunity to review, lack of choice, unsuitable or inappropriate work for the pupils' chronological age, lack of purpose, lack of differentiation, inappropriate grouping strategies, approaches not encouraging independent learning, poor social skills leading to inappropriate behaviour in certain situations, inconsistency from teacher to teacher, lack of focus in lessons or poor record keeping. Much of this synthesises with the findings of Booth *et al* (1998) relating to participation discussed later in the Literature Review. Pupils' learning and behaviour are affected by a range of interacting factors, all of which must be considered in order to provide the best for any particular child. It is dangerous only to address those factors which are highly visible since some highly influential factors can be hidden from view. In many cases these factors are more likely to be noticed by pupils themselves than by teachers (Jones 1992). Pupils are in the best position to identify the causes and locations of learning and behavioural difficulties and can give useful, meaningful insights into problems and suggest solutions. However, pupils are rarely consulted, and, when asked, their contributions are often overlooked or treated as tokens.

Jones and Quah (1996) interviewed pupils to ask them what they believed prevented them from learning. They mentioned being called names, told off for doing wrong without being told why, blamed for things, labelled as trouble when they did not understand the requirements of the task or being taught by uncaring impersonal teachers. Researchers (UNESCO 1993) have also claimed that children who do not get on with their work often do not understand the purpose of what they have been asked to do. It has been suggested that learning is about finding personal meanings for experience and that learning is less likely if we are unclear about the purpose of an

activity. Successful teachers are therefore those who stress meaning in their work and find ways of helping pupils to understand the purposes of particular tasks, the reasons why they have been set, how they have been carried out or by when. Pupils who do not totally understand the purpose of a task will have no control over it. They need to refer constantly to the teacher for help and will not build up skills within which they can manage their own learning. In order to improve the participation of pupils in my class, I must firstly ask them their opinion on why classroom tasks create barriers to learning.

Pupil perspectives

Charlton and George (1993) claim that we should consider pupils as partners in their learning. Wood (1991) suggests we need to consider how children think about thinking. Wade and Moore's study (1993) gives us many insights into pupils' perceptions. They claim that many teachers do not fully appreciate the range of difficulties encountered by pupils. In their study pupils were reluctant to participate for fear of failure. These thoughts and feelings are often reported as undetected by their teachers.

Teacher talk is a powerful tool. As discussed later, Mercer (1991) calls it 'the guided construction of knowledge.' However this act of sharing is often teacher dominated and not evenly matched. Keys and Fernandes (1994) carried out research on a sample of two thousand pupils from years seven and nine. Forty per cent reported that they had not had an individual conversation with their teacher about their schoolwork that year and they were deprived therefore of the opportunity to listen and be listened to about their own work. The right of children to be heard is emphasised in the revised Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) and in the Children's Act (DHSS, 1989).

Responses to learning and behavioural difficulties require that teachers and other professionals address the whole range of causes within the child, the curriculum, and the learning environment (Jones and Charlton, 1994). Active listening encourages us to engage with our pupils and in turn encourage them to participate more fully and in the tasks we are asking them to do. It is most effective when the agenda is set by the child. Through listening to pupils we show respect, improve our professional practice and

help children to find a voice. Gersch (1996) suggests that there are three main reasons for actively involving children in their learning. They are pragmatic, moral and legally supportive. The most important for teachers is the pragmatic reason. Pupils know about their own ways of learning and are best placed to voice concerns about aspects of their schoolwork which they find difficult or irrelevant. They are also given the opportunity to express and clear up emotional problems which can prevent them from learning. This poses an organisational problem, however, when class teachers are faced daily with large numbers of pupils in groups of about thirty. There is thus a tension between meeting the needs of the individual and providing the right environment for the whole class. In addition, to do so would involve a radical change in the way in which teachers respond to pupils. This would include, for some, the feeling of an unwelcome loss of control and power. In some organisational contexts this would not only be seen as unwelcome but would be seen as threatening and as a challenge to an established status quo. This is in sharp contrast to the guidance contained in the revised Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), which discusses gaining pupils' views in the assessment and individual planning processes. However, it concludes with a warning that assumptions should not be made about pupils' levels of understanding and that some groups would need help to express their views. Stoker (1996) encouraged pupils to give their views at the age of 14, during transition planning, through the use of an approach based on Kelly's (1955) 'personal construct theory', where photographs and pictures, placed on a grid, were used alongside questions to encourage the pupils to discuss and illustrate how they viewed their future.

The consideration of pupil perspectives is the first step in empowering pupils to take control of their learning and behaviour (Charlton and George, 1993) and is a vital element in moving towards increased and improved pupil participation in inclusive classrooms.

Pupils' contributions to learning

As teachers it is important to reflect on how knowledge is constructed and the part we play in it. Mercer (1995) claims that knowledge is shared as a collective endeavour 'shaped by people's communicating actions'. In many ways the success of the process of teaching and learning depends on the contributions made by both teacher and learner and how language is used as

a social mode of thinking. Vygotsky (1966) in the early twentieth century saw language as a psychological tool which we use to make sense of our experiences. We also use it as a cultural tool to share experiences.

Research into the social or cultural identity of students relating to the participation in classroom talk, shows that children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds find public interrogation difficult. This links with themes concerning claims that children from working-class backgrounds are educationally disadvantaged (Dyson 1998). It can be argued that these children do not therefore have equal opportunities for participation. This may be because they do not know how to participate in ways which are 'conforming' as discussed by Dewey (1916) and Edwards and Mercer (1992), but in ways which demonstrate social competence (Freeman, 1988) which is not valued in the classroom.

According to Mercer (1995), classroom talk has low status and research does not support the idea that talk and classroom collaboration are inevitably useful. Pupils are not always aware of the opportunities available to them or how to 'use' talk effectively in the classroom. Mercer's study shows students are quite often unaware of what they are supposed to be achieving and teachers provide little useful information about such things. One simple way to improve participation would therefore be to ensure that teachers make their expectations and purpose absolutely clear. This synthesises with Booth *et al*'s (1998) findings, where they found a high level of pupil participation associated with teachers who gave clear instructions and directions.

The success of the process of teaching and learning depends on the contributions made by both teachers and learners (Mercer, 1995). The opportunities available to pupils for active involvement in a traditional teacher-pupil interaction follow a typical classroom exchange, where the teacher asks questions and pupils' reply; however the learner can alter and shape a traditional classroom dialect to meet their own agenda as they have their own perspective and interpretation of events.

Why then is there a lack of opportunities? Classroom talk is shaped by many factors. Mercer (1995) believes that changes in some aspects of classroom organisation have unexpected effects on the ways in which learners

contribute to conversations with their teachers. He describes a British primary school teacher who shifts the role of 'expert' and 'non-expert' in order to encourage pupils to develop more confidence and to take more initiative. In this way, the pupils took increasing responsibility for helping the teacher and progressing the conversation. The key change of role reversal worked in context.

Mercer (1995) claims that the amount of talk contributed by pupils in a traditional classroom situation is quite narrow. This is rather concerning as, according to Mercer, education should be a means of helping learners to learn to use language as a social way of thinking. This will not be successful if their opportunities for using language are limited to response slots in traditional classroom settings.

Labelling

Categories have been common within special education for many years. Prior to the Warnock report (DES, 1978), categories were framed as pseudo-medical terms and focused on defects. One of the biggest impacts of this report was in the language used to describe pupils who experience difficulty in learning. One of the terms introduced in this report and commonly used today is 'Special Educational Needs' (SEN). Although these terms are a step forward in that they regard the 'need' and not the 'child' as 'special' they still place emphasis on the individual having a certain kind of need or difficulty. Placing students in diagnostic categories is a precursor to allocating them different provision. Sometimes labels can be useful for allocating provision. More recent legislation, such as the revised Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) works on the premise that resources must be protected for those pupils who have been identified. Such an allocation of resources has reinforced a medical or deficit based approach, including labelling rather than the development of inclusion (Johnston and Warwick, 1999). Labels prevail and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and pupil profiles often begin with the identification of student difficulties in terms of individuals such as 'Nick is dyslexic', 'Viv has emotional problems', 'George has a learning difficulty'. We are constantly referring to the learning characteristics of these pupils using categories which can assert to divide students into 'normal' and 'not like normal'. According to Hart (1996b) a social model of difficulties would value pupils equally, through

using descriptions such as 'Jo experiences barriers to learning' or 'a pupil whose learning gives cause for concern'. In this way learning difficulties are perceived as something which comes about due to a mismatch between students and tasks and the resources available for support (Hart, 1996b). On the other hand, if we focused on some labels to the exclusion of others, we may be in danger of ignoring or forgetting some of the differences (Cowne, 2003). Sometimes parents welcome a label for their children's difficulties. This is particularly true in the case of dyslexia. In her research, Riddick (1996) collected the viewpoints of parents diagnosed with dyslexia. The parents showed signs of relief at being given a diagnosis and their children were happy to have a label for their inability to read. Other labels, however, may not be as welcome to parents.

Labelling or categorisation is one way of demonstrating the inclusiveness of language and by implication, the extent to which we value diversity. Perhaps one test of the inclusiveness of our language would be to reflect whether the people described would be happy with the labels used to describe them. Such labels and categories are an example of 'othering', however, the best examples of 'othering' come from the pupils themselves, who see themselves as different from the other pupils in the school. As can be seen in Chapter 5, the labelling which occurs almost unconsciously in the AB school has a huge effect not only on pupils' experience of learning and their self-esteem but also on staff perception and expectations.

Disaffection and self-esteem

Disaffection is the opposite of participation. It is not necessarily the opposite of inclusion since it is the pupil who plays the active role in both participation and disaffection, whereas it is the institution which plays the active role in inclusion. There are many ways in which, and many reasons why young people become disaffected. These can relate to family or social circumstances, friends, adolescence or school as well as other outside factors. A young person's disaffection with school cannot be considered in isolation, as it is part of the youngster's perspective on life. It is related to their self-esteem, self-respect, their expectations and values and other people's expectations of them. It is also important to consider how the school system affects the youngster's self-esteem and self-respect. Cooper (1993) states that disaffected students respond when they feel secure, valued

and respected. In their study of pupil participation, Jelly *et al* (2000) found that involving pupils in dialogue about how they learn best improved their autonomy and empowerment in learning. This raised their motivation and self esteem as well as their participation in their learning and their chances of success at school.

Pupils are devalued in schools in many ways. This devaluation is often unconscious, unintentional and comes about as part of school culture, traditions and historical precedents. One of the ways in which this happens in many schools is ranking due to ability (Booth *et al*, 1987). Much research has been done in this area, concluding that pupil disaffection is often the result of pupil's feelings of devaluation and worthlessness. Booth (1987) and Wright (1987) concluded that Afro-Caribbean pupils are often devalued due to teacher expectations that they are troublemakers and of low ability. Pupils in Jones and Quah's (1996) study mentioned being labelled as troublemakers as one of the factors which prevented them from learning. This creates negative attitudes which cause a climate of conflict and hence relationships between pupils and teachers become tense. Teachers in Wright's (1987) study did not attempt to harness the enthusiasm and energy of the Afro Caribbean pupils and as a result, the pupils did not make the effort in school. The same pupils, however, continued to further education, where they gained qualifications. Davies (1987) discusses pupil devaluation and disaffection due to sexism in the hidden and official curriculum. She claims that many curricular materials contain sexist assumptions and asks to what extent a non- sexist curriculum would alter amounts or styles of pupil disaffection? Cunnison's (1987) study concerns the values assigned to women in a mixed sex secondary school whose culture is dominated by men. Coulby (1987) discusses the effects of the curriculum on working class children.

Cooper (1993) sees pupil disaffection or problem behaviour as a response to the 'unfitness' of schools. The curriculum should reflect the diversity of experience and values which children bring to schools and in this way schools could open up the curriculum for negotiation. This links with ideas concerning the extent to which organisations value diversity. Disaffection could also be altered through curriculum change, giving young people the opportunity to study a curriculum which is relevant, appropriate and has a

strong sense of purpose, as it is this which contributes to the learning and behavioural difficulties (UNESCO, 1993).

Behaviour can also be affected by the peer group. Peer groups have their own set of values which often conflict or are different from individual family or wider society values. Schools should also make a greater effort to value cultural diversity, raise self-esteem and reward pupil achievement. If we are to be effective as teachers in responding to this diversity we need to address one simple question: How do children learn? The hidden curriculum of schools is therefore socially controlling through a series of rituals and procedures which are designed to develop conformity and obedience (Freeman, 1988). It imposes unspoken, unwritten rules whereby children can only participate in lessons in a socially acceptable way. The ideal pupil is interested, polite, respectable and conforms to rules.

From the students' point of view 'conforming' includes showing an intrinsic interest, co-operation, motivation, willingness to learn, effort and engagement (Charlton and George, 1993). The teacher provides the tasks and challenges which facilitate participation, but it is the students themselves who play the active role. To participate fully pupils must do more than the 'competent' pupil, who does little more than conform to teacher expectations. Edwards and Mercer (1992) produced a list of requirements of pupils in order to be labelled as a 'competent' pupil. Pupils are required to listen to the teacher, to bid for the right to speak without being too enthusiastic only when the teacher stops talking, answer questions which are asked expressly to find out if you know and not what you know, put up with having your answers treated as evidence of common misunderstanding, look for clues as to what the right answer might be from the way the teacher leads into a question, ask questions about the administration of the lesson but never about its content and accept that whatever you know about the topic is unlikely to be asked for or to be accepted as relevant unless it fits with the teachers perceptions. Although Edwards and Mercer's list is rather tongue in cheek, there would appear to be some underlying truth.

True participation involves 'engagement' and 'flow', a concept defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and discussed later in the Literature Review. At a simple level, participation or engagement is the antithesis of disaffection in

the sense that pupils who participate 'opt in' and those who are disaffected 'opt out'. There is also another perspective on this argument, which takes the notion of 'compliance' one step further. Some researchers (Dewey 1916, Freeman, 1988) argue that it is the hidden curriculum itself which is socially controlling and teacher expectations, whether conscious or subconscious, are such that pupils are actually taught to please the teacher and not the subject matter of the class.

Dewey (1916) claims that teaching via traditional methods creates problems. It is, after all, children who should be at the centre of learning, not the curriculum. This thinking is closely linked to more modern notions of social competence such as that of Freeman (1988). Social competence includes a number of invaluable life skills such as social problem solving, assertion skills, negotiation and the ability to argue one case using evidence. However, such social competence is not valued in the classroom. Constraints concerning class size, economic problems, inadequate rooms and furniture make it extremely difficult to teach a class of socially competent pupils. This is compounded by the traditionally accepted formal curriculum.

Perhaps one way to increase access and participation would be to harness this social competence and to encourage pupils to use these skills positively in a learning environment and to encourage argument, negotiation and assertion within a defined framework. This idea synthesises with the findings of Charlton and George (1993), who describe how pupils in their study showed improved behaviour when they were empowered to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour.

Issues to be investigated arising from this section include the ways in which pupils are encouraged to give their opinions, how pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour and whether labels are used in the school and the affect that this has on the pupils.

Theme Three - Pupil Participation

Promoting access

There is much inconsistency in translating inclusion theory into practice. As discussed by Florian (1998), this gap between policy and implementation is not always acknowledged, a fact which is astonishing given the worldwide

philosophical agreement on rights to inclusion. Inclusion, which is currently seen as such an important issue in many fields, not only in education, can create confusion and difficulty and one can encounter resistance when one tries to make it work in practice. Some of the reasons given for the policy-implementation gap in education are identified by Thomas and Loxley (2001) as the struggle over limited resources, competing policies and their practical applications and the centralisation of special education itself.

The revised Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) advocates the inclusion of all pupils to all activities and areas of the curriculum. Such statements, however, provide no guarantee of pupil participation. Sometimes subject leaders initially focus on the curriculum and its materials in an attempt to increase pupil participation. Lunt and Norwich (1999) suggest that although inclusion is a very important value in education, equally important is quality teaching that addresses pupils' needs. However, it is also important to consider organisational influences, such as how services are provided, the methods and materials and policy flexibility (Booth *et al* 1998). Participation may sometimes be facilitated by a change of environment or lesson location. Such factors can exert or influence behavioural interaction of members and affect a pupil's ability or opportunity to learn (Booth *et al* 1998).

There is no simple way to promote access to the curriculum and to increase participation. In an attempt to provide such a solution, schools often introduce new practices, such as those discussed above or the organisational responses discussed earlier. Unfortunately, many of these practices are exclusionary and create a lack of access and opportunity (Booth *et al* 1998). It is unlikely that such attempts at inclusive practice are ever beneficial to pupils. In some cases, it may even exacerbate the problems and traumas of sensitive pupils and make them feel increasingly alienated. It may be better to find a balance between pupils' rights to inclusion and an education which fully meets their needs. Lunt and Norwich (1999) on the other hand, comment on the way in which inclusion is defined and interpreted in three main areas; being in the same place, doing the same as other students and being socially accepted and feeling a sense of belonging.

Another factor which threatens inclusion is the continuing inclination to label and categorise pupils. Feiler and Gibson (1999) claim that such labelling has re-emerged partly as a result of current legislation and funding arrangements. Although the formal categories defined in the 1944 Education Act, such as 'ESN' (Educationally sub normal) and 'maladjusted' have happily now disappeared, we have still not achieved Warnock's (1978) ideal of all pupils who experience barriers to learning as being described similarly. There is now an increasing tendency to highlight particular kinds of special needs such as 'ADD' (Attention Deficit Disorder), 'ADHD' (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder), 'Dyslexia' and 'Dyspraxia'. The cause of this is partly due to pressure groups and certain individuals such as the BDA (British Dyslexia Association), who argue that certain kinds of special needs require special or additional support. There is a lot of pressure on schools and teachers to provide more for these pupils. This has serious resource implications for schools which are already underfunded.

One of the underlying problems in gaining an understanding of this complex issue is the number of assumptions made in theorising. To move forward requires a deeper understanding of the process of inclusion and to challenge these underlying assumptions. Many such assumptions are made concerning pupil participation, including its measurement, the nature of learning itself, the way in which pupils learn, organisational methodology and classroom materials, tasks and activities. In addition, many of these assumptions are contradictory and do not coexist comfortably. As claimed by Clark *et al* (1995), theorising in special education is not only necessary but also inevitable. Schon (1983) states that any purposeful action implies a theory and that there must be a basic and fundamental set of assumptions which moves the concept from a mere description of phenomena towards explanation and analysis. Such assumptions appear to have shaped the expectations of teachers, pupils and other stakeholders over time and have contributed to the development of exclusionary practice, such as the organisational cultures discussed in the previous section. At the same time, many of these practices create disaffection, impede inclusion and actually prevent participation and engagement.

Defining participation

Firstly it is important to consider what is meant by participation, as there are many contradictory definitions. This section addresses several factors relating to these issues, including how local and national policy is translated into practice, factors which influence pupil participation, how teacher expectations affect the way in which pupils learn and problems concerning the measurement of participation.

As discussed by Wilson (1998), much of the argument for inclusion resides within the realms of ideology, mere presence in the classroom or in school does not constitute any serious inclusion. The subject of participation brings up several conceptual difficulties. Hornby (1999) concludes that there is a lack of empirical research evidence to show that the outcomes of inclusive practices improve the lives of pupils with learning difficulties. Perhaps the answer is to consider the learning styles of pupils and to construct a curriculum which matches these with the activities set for pupils. Gardner (1993) describes a similar approach in his book entitled 'Multiple Intelligences'. Such an approach could be the foundation for a whole school programme of inclusion.

One of the most significant factors which influence pupil participation and behaviour is teacher expectations (Jones and Quah, 1996). It is important that teachers must recognise different readiness or preparation for involvement at a range of levels. This is strongly influenced by school cultures and organisation. Sometimes, in order to comply and please the teacher pupils quickly learn to conform to teacher expectations and participate in particular ways. In this situation pupils' learning may be affected. This kind of participation cannot be described as full participation or engagement but reflects a kind of 'conforming' as discussed by Dewey (1916).

Increased participation is integral to the process of inclusion. It would not be possible to cite the promotion of access and opportunity as one of the fundamental aims of inclusion without focusing on this issue. Previous authors (Feiler and Gibson 1999, Hornby 1999, Wilson 1998) have identified that, although much has been theorised and written about these topics, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support many of the

underlying theories and assumptions. My work focuses firmly on the subject of participation and specifically how I can increase pupil participation in my classroom.

Pupil needs

In order to meet pupil needs within the classroom as well as to devise appropriate and relevant tasks, it is necessary to analyse these needs. Earlier in the Literature Review I discussed the concepts of labelling and categorisation and the language used for this purpose. Although it would be contradictory to label pupils in any way the importance of a clear definition of pupil needs is imperative

Firstly, it is interesting to consider the difference between the basic terminology. The revised Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) tends towards a deficit model, in that it discusses and describes pupils' learning difficulties, and encourages us to support pupils through a rigorous, staged process in which the difficulties or deficit in learning skills is measured. Local provision is made for these pupils in an attempt to make up this deficit. Norwich (1996) states that the deficit therefore becomes the defining feature of the provision. These strategies compete almost directly with local and national policy on inclusion, which encourages us to take an all-embracing view of inclusion by ensuring that the curriculum is for all. In curriculum planning one should have regard for what is at fault with the school itself, not with the pupil (Ainscow 1998). We should therefore consider the whole learning context for pupils.

O'Brien (1998a) makes a clear distinction between needs and difficulties. He demonstrates this pictorially, with the pupil's difficulties, made up from a number of interactive factors between pupil and environment, as a chasm which is bridged by two interlocking ladders, the first labelled 'needs' and the second 'provision'. Thus, the pupils' needs and their provision are clearly defined as a way of progressing and overcoming those difficulties. If pupils are to make such progress teachers must be responsive to learning needs rather than reactive to learning difficulties (O'Brien 1998a).

In order for the curriculum to meet individuals' needs it is important that distinctions are made between different kinds of needs. It should emphasise individuality as well as recognising and valuing commonality. O'Brien

(1998a) differentiates these needs in three categories. Common needs, which are those needs common to all; distinct needs, which are needs associated with a particular group and individual needs, which are those factors which are unique and which relate to a specific person at a specific time. In this way needs are progressively focused inwards from common to specific. IEPs and classroom provision could then be clearly and explicitly based on individual or distinct needs.

O'Brien (1998b) claims that the term 'special' does not distinguish between distinct and individual needs and that assessment of 'special needs' does not provide insight into individuality and that, as a result, statements based on such assessments can easily reinforce conceptual clarity. This is not useful for its intended purpose of directing strategies for teaching, curriculum design, focus and implementation. A clearer way of expressing needs could influence planning and make a better match of teacher intentions and aims with learning outcome.

Issues arising from this section concern the experience of learning of the pupils in my year 7-8 English class, where it is successful, whether they understand how they learn best and in which ways is their learning connected to their experience.

Theme Four – Classroom tasks and activities – Strategies for teachers

There are many ways in which classroom tasks and activities can be modified in order to improve access. Differentiation is important, by task, pace or by outcome (Hart, 1996b). Successful differentiation allows teacher aim and style to meet learning need (O'Brien and Guiney, 2001). This requires mutual communication between learner and teacher in which information becomes knowledge and self-confidence improves as a result of this new learning. The purpose of learning must be explicit, collaboration encouraged and opportunities given for pupils to make choices and express preferences. O'Brien and Guiney (2001) describe this match between material and learner as 'grounded', by which they mean that the learning connects, is meaningful, is accessible and is rooted within the individual. Corbett (2001) describes a 'learning inclusive classroom' as one in which there is a commitment to drawing from a diverse range of teaching and learning styles. Corbett's theory clearly links effective differentiation to

valuing difference. Her model consists of three stages, traditional, inclusive and valuing of differences. The model is progressive and leads towards other wider possibilities and potential.

Curriculum goals can be modified or differentiated by using the same content but making it less complex, by reducing performance standards, adjusting evaluation criteria for grading systems or altering behavioural management techniques. The 'differentiated worksheet' model, based on 'task' and 'outcome' often restricts teachers' creativity and limits opportunity (O'Brien 1998a). In schools today there are times when, rather than including pupils in the current curriculum by focusing on making tasks more accessible, the difficulty and the challenge of the task is reduced thus making it patronising. In their research on pupil participation in the Richard Lovell School, Booth *et al* (1998) commented that some teachers used such a low level of challenge to negotiate compliant behaviour, such as that discussed previously. In a Science lesson, pupils were seen to copy from books or the blackboard constantly. It is when the challenge is reduced that pupils experience apathy and boredom and hence disaffection. This synthesises with Hargreave's (1997) model of school cultures, where he indicates that a low level of social control can lead to situations which are 'survivalist or welfarist', where pupils are given a low level of challenge. At the time pupils may appear happy and content but may look back with resentment at not being driven hard enough. In order to enable pupils to achieve they must not only take part but become true participants, make progress, become actively involved in lessons and have positive expectations.

My thinking in this area has been influenced by the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and specifically his work on the concept of 'flow'. Csikszentmihalyi's model consists of four quadrants, subdivided horizontally by a line reading 'low skill' to 'high skill' and subdivided vertically by a line reading (from the top) 'high challenge' to 'low challenge' (Fig. 2.2). He suggests that in tasks where pupils are low skilled they experience apathy when the challenge is low and anxiety when the challenge is high. When the task is one in which the pupil is more highly skilled the pupil experiences boredom when faced with a low challenge. However, when faced with a high challenge the pupil experiences a concept

that is described as 'flow'. This could be described as true participation. The message highlighted by Csikszentmihalyi's work is that in order to participate, people must be faced not only with an appropriate challenge, but also one which is suited to their skill level.
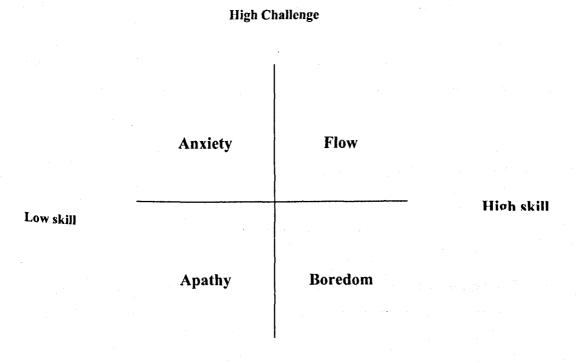
High Challenge

Anxiety   Flow

Low skill   High skill

Apathy   Boredom

Low Challenge

Fig 2.2 - Csikszentmihalyi's model of 'flow'

An inappropriate curriculum is a major source of disaffection for some pupils (Booth, 1992a). It is unrealistic to expect pupils to behave well when school is filled with resources and materials that do not interest them. Booth (1992a) suggests that children have learning difficulties due to a mismatch between pupil, task and curriculum. This synthesises with Hart's (1996a) view of a social model of difficulties described earlier.

Accelerated learning theorists such as Smith (1996) encourage us to consider learning from another perspective. Instead of considering the curriculum and its contents as central to our planning, we are encouraged to look at the skills and learning styles of our pupils and to adapt the curriculum to suit their needs and learning styles. In this way we are looking at the curriculum from inside out rather than the more simplistic, traditional, curriculum-led pedagogy which urges us to follow strict schemes of work and teaches pupils to complete tasks at specific levels and at certain ages.

It would seem more appropriate to place the individual, their needs (as defined by O'Brien, 1998a) and styles of learning at the centre of the learning itself and to adapt the curriculum material to suit them. These ideas synthesise with Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligence theory. In his seminal work Gardner (1993) identified seven different human capacities or intelligences, which range from linguistic intelligence to personal intelligence. A school and its curriculum recognise few of these intelligences. Therefore Gardner (1993) theorises that there are some pupils who will not succeed in traditional academic study because their potential or intelligences lie elsewhere. Gardner (1993) therefore makes the assumption that we do not all learn in the same way and pupils will all need different experiences in order to learn what is expected of them. Some may even need multiple experiences using different intelligence in order to learn and understand. According to Gardner, it is vital that we recognise and nurture all of the human intelligences and combinations of intelligences. With each intelligence is implied a certain preferred way of learning, and it is therefore possible to use this information to develop and differentiate classroom tasks for diversity.

These theories also synthesise with those of modelling communication strategies developed in neuro-linguistic programming (Smith 1996). This work has shown that, in the same way as we receive information about the world through our five senses, each of us has an individual preference as to which sense we would prefer to use to make sense of the world around us. The three preferred sensory styles are visual, auditory and kinaesthetic and each of us learns through a balance of stimulation of these three systems.

In a perfect situation, pupils would therefore be given the opportunity to use all three, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic systems for each topic they are required to study. It would be appropriate to use these ideas in the development of tasks and activities in my classroom.

In addition, sometimes children encounter difficulties if they are not taught adequate study skills such as how to use a text, index, table contents, dictionary or how to take notes. Reading contextual clues through skimming, scanning or backtracking is a skill which many pupils have to learn (Westwood, 1993). In such cases, they are clearly disadvantaged in completing tasks. Lack of transference is also a problem for some pupils, for

example, if one focuses on acquisition of skills to an end objective children can perform those particular skills only under a particular set of circumstances. This can be seen in modern language classes, for example in my investigation for E835 the pupils were able to understand and respond to a series of set questions. However, when the same words and phrases appeared unexpectedly in another exercise the pupils did not recognise them.

In order to improve pupil participation in my investigation it will be important to consider what makes learning difficult and to use these findings to inform the development of tasks for use in my classroom.

Teacher factors

In order to increase levels of participation of pupils teachers need to feel empowered to handle differences between pupils and must be comfortable working in a flexible environment (Hart, 1996b). In this way teacher isolation is reduced and problem solving is facilitated by shared insights. Sometimes participation can be increased by changing delivery or teaching style, or by trying to match teaching and learning style (Booth, 1992a). In some cases this can be seen to dramatically improve pupil performance. For example, Howe (1995) describes how he looks for ways to make physics more accessible through a different pedagogical approach. Unfortunately, some school cultures do not easily lend themselves to change and the rigid school curriculum is often translated as a rigid teaching style or delivery which is, by nature, exclusionary.

It is often pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties who do not participate (Hart, 1996b). These learning and behavioural difficulties are complex and have their roots in a number of different causes. O'Brien (1998a) states that behaviour and learning are not separate and cannot be seen as such if we are to promote positive behaviour. Ainscow (1993) suggests that pupils encounter difficulties or problems because of an inability of teachers to provide meaningful and relevant experiences for them. The research into Richard Lovell School showed a high level of pupil participation associated with teachers who were purposeful, enthusiastic, gave clear directions and instructions and made efforts to link lesson activities to pupil experience (Booth *et al*, 1998). Teachers make many

assumptions concerning learners, including their understanding and awareness of how to learn together, the things that are appropriate in a classroom and their acceptance of the ground rules.

Wade and Moore (1993) claim that sometimes teachers do not realise or appreciate the extent of the difficulties which their pupils encounter. In many instances, learners have to 'make sense' as best they can, often with little or no obvious help from teachers or others. Children in these circumstances can be reluctant to start due to fear that they might fail. Wade and Moore, in their study found that these feelings and thoughts were at times undetected by teachers.

Metacognition

One way of overcoming this lack of meaning and lack of transferable skills while, at the same time, giving learning a sense of purpose is through metacognitive instruction. Metacognition has been defined as 'understanding and controlling one's thinking' (Westward 1998). Metacognition implies that pupils know which skills are required to complete a task or activity or to solve a problem and also when and how to complete a task. Such strategies can be made explicit to pupils, as often pupils are unaware of them (Pressley and McCormick 1995).

In this way, pupils are empowered and know when they are completing tasks successfully. They will then also be equipped to make informed judgements about their performance.

In this way tasks would be explained in full to pupils and in such a way that they would understand how to assess themselves. It is vital that pupils know what is involved in the whole task and that they can therefore see its purpose. In this way pupils can become autonomous learners.

Working Together

Teachers can go a long way towards assisting learners to benefit the most from learning experiences in many simple ways, for example, making the purpose of lessons explicit and encouraging understanding of such expectations. Mercer (1995) defines scaffolding as how one person can become actively involved in another's learning activity in such a way that the learner has an active role and is able to progress further and more easily than they could otherwise have done alone. Scaffolding describes quality in

the process of teaching and learning which both progressive and traditional ideologies ignore, one in which both teachers and learners play an active role. Often, however, school teachers operate differently due to outside factors such as teacher-pupil ratio, fragmented relationships and tradition. One way of scaffolding could perhaps involve peer tutoring, where groups of pupils are trained to work together in partnership towards specific learning goals.

The notion of 'scaffolding' was originally conceived by Vygotsky (1966) as a particular kind and quality of cognitive support which an adult can provide through dialogue so that a child can more easily make sense of a difficult task. Vygotsky's hypothesis was that any activity which learners do in isolation is unlikely to stretch intellectual capabilities and that the construction of knowledge is a joint endeavour. Vygotsky's experimental research, conducted in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s, provided some evidence that these limits expand if another person provides cognitive support. Vygotsky's theory makes assumptions that cognitive processes are the product of social and cultural interventions, where the teacher plays a central role in the pupil's learning, which is mediated within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). This can be seen as a bridge from one level of learning to another.

Issues arising from this section include how pupils are encouraged to participate in their learning, which kinds of tasks they find most difficult or easy, how some tasks create barriers to learning, how to make them more accessible to pupils and how pupils can be supported to work better in groups.

Conclusion

Inclusion is the process of making schools respond to the diverse needs of pupils with a variety of learning styles and approaches. An inclusive school is inclusive in its culture and ethos, which is reflected in the way the members treat each other (Corbett, 2001). Inclusion is most effective when difference is seen as a cause for celebration, not as a problem to be overcome. A school's organisational culture can undermine inclusive attitudes in many ways. In itself, this culture is a reflection of the basic ideals, assumptions and beliefs of its members. In this way it is a measure of

how responsive a school is to the diversity of its students (Dyson 1998). Cultures in themselves are extremely difficult to change.

Pupils encounter difficulties in learning when there is a mismatch between the curriculum, tasks set and the learning styles of pupils (Booth 1992a). One way of addressing this would be to identify pupils' learning styles and try to create tasks to match them. If they are to do this, it is important that teachers feel empowered to handle differences and are working within a comfortable, flexible environment. Sometimes this is difficult due to a rigid curriculum or an inflexible teaching style or delivery.

It is the pupils, who are at the centre of their learning and in order to match their skills it is important to consider their place in their learning and how they learn best. One way of responding to difference is to empower pupils to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour (Charlton and George, 1993). This has implications for pupil advocacy, self-esteem and the pupil voice and is an important step in the creation of an inclusive classroom. Pupils' experience of learning can inform our planning and encourage us to give pupils challenging tasks which draw on their experience and are relevant and meaningful. O'Brien and Guiney (2001) describe this match as 'grounded', by which they mean that the learning connects, is meaningful, is accessible and is rooted within the individual.

Questions and themes emerge from the Literature Review as follows:-

1.   How do the features of school impinge on pupil participation and inclusion?

- How is the school organised?

- How are pupils grouped?

- How does labelling affect the pupils?

2.   What is the experience of learning of the pupils in my year 7-8 English class?

- In which ways are pupils encouraged to give their opinions?

- What affects their learning?

- Do pupils understand how they learn best?

- In which ways is their learning connected to their experience?

- How are pupils encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour?

3.   a.   To what extent do this group of year 7-8 pupils participate in their own learning?

- How are pupils encouraged to participate in their learning?

- How do tasks create barriers to learning?

- How to make tasks more accessible?

- How is their learning successful?

b. How can they be supported to participate more fully in speaking tasks?

- How do they contribute in speaking tasks?

- How can pupils be supported to work better in groups?

Chapter Three - Methodological theory

Introduction

The purpose of my research is to probe deeply, describe and analyse the context of my institution, the pupils and myself with a view to improving practice. In the following section methodological theory is considered through the exploration of two main approaches to educational research, positivist and interpretive. These two paradigms are explored in relation to the purpose of research itself, which leads to the choice of 'paradigm' for my investigation. I explain the way in which I have decided to investigate my research questions, outline the procedures adopted, consider the appropriateness of differing approaches, methods and procedures to research and justify my choice.

Action research itself is complex and has many different interpretations. In this section, I define action research and discuss, its nature, assessment, criticism and evaluation. I consider whether my investigation can be viewed as action research, since, due to the organisational context and culture, I was

unable to collaborate and extend my work across the whole school effectively. Instead I was forced to limit my collaboration to my peer validation group. In spite of this, the investigation is constructed in a similar way to conventional action research.

Research Paradigms

Positivist and interpretive approaches

There are many forms of educational research since it serves many purposes. There are also differences in the collection and analysis of data, methods used and issues concerning the importance of reliability, validity and audience. One way of conceptualising this diversity is through the distinction of quantitative and qualitative approaches (E835 Study Guide, page 10). These two approaches, also known as positivist and interpretive, can be viewed as two ends of a continuum, which, at one end, relies on numerical data and at the other, verbal data.

One of the fundamental differences between these two paradigms is in the reason for conducting research itself. Stenhouse (1975) described research as 'a systematic inquiry made public.' According to Mercer (1995), the most important feature of successful research is to be clear about what you want to find out and for what purpose. Each of the two paradigms above, positivist and interpretive, has a clear and distinct purpose. The purpose of the former is external validity which offers reliable and generalisable data, useful for strategies, plans or policies. The purpose of the latter is internal validity, important when the purpose of research involves finding out about oneself, others or one's own institution, such as in practitioner research.

The positivist paradigm assumes a detached scientific approach used by researchers who seek universal laws to explain and govern a reality. Such approaches try to prove a theory or hypothesis, make generalisations and look for causal relationships which can be proved through the manipulation of variables. Experimental methods and the measurement of human characteristics using numerical data are regarded as ideal for this approach which is primarily concerned with input and output. One of the main criticisms made about positivists is that they make many assumptions concerning human behaviour. Such assumptions include the fact that human behaviour is predictable, aspects of behaviour can be observed and

measured, common causal thinking can be applied to human behaviours, when actions are observed and identified they can be predicted and that there is no qualitative difference between the natural and social worlds (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995).

Interpretive researchers deny the assumptions made by positivists and question the value of such experimental methodology in certain contexts. There is an obvious and undeniable value in experimental methodology in certain contexts or kinds of research, for example medical research. However, within settings which involve the observation and analysis of human characteristics or behaviour such as mine, it is important to consider the appropriateness of the methodology to the context of the research.

Interpretive researchers research situations to produce a greater understanding, a breadth and depth of perspective, a 'thick description' to interpret events and actions. There is no single approach to qualitative research since it encompasses a number of different traditions which recognise many complex layers of meaning, interpretations, values and attitudes (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). Approaches favoured by interpretivists place research back into the classroom, focus on the context of teaching and learning and place individuals firmly at the centre of research.

Educational research itself has been seen as a search for truth, an exploration, a way of proving something or a way of finding out about oneself and others. It can be argued that where research is unsuccessful in bringing about improvements in schooling, it is sometimes due to attitudes towards research itself, such as when it is perceived as something which is 'done' to education rather than as part of the same process. Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest that some educational research can be viewed as ineffective because the research is taken out of the classroom, away from the practice and is completed by researchers who are detached from the situation. The separation or synthesis of research and teaching is clearly linked to that of theory and practice, which is discussed later.

My investigation calls for some aspects of both approaches. It is primarily interpretive as it attempts to come to a deeper understanding of the pupils, who are at the centre of the research. However, as a piece of practitioner

research, it is important firstly to form a true descriptive account of the context in which the practitioner research takes place. To achieve this it is important to present a balanced view giving both objective and subjective accounts. This is particularly important when forming descriptive accounts, such as in the first phase of my investigation.

Epistemology

To some extent, the role played by the researcher is dependent on their epistemological beliefs (Cohen and Manion 1994). A belief that knowledge is tangible, objective and can be passed on implies an allegiance towards a positivist methodology. Positivists such as Rutter *et al* (1979) believe that knowledge is objective and can exist independently of the 'knower'. On the other hand, an understanding and belief that knowledge is unique, personal and subjective, requiring insight and experience assume an interpretivist stance. In this instance, as in my investigation, the researcher requires direct involvement with the subjects of the study.

A further difference in approach is in the relationship between human beings and their environment. Positivist researchers believe that the world and natural phenomena are hard, real and external to the individual, therefore they also believe that human beings will respond mechanically to their environment in ways which are predeterminable and can easily be categorised and analysed. Most interpretive researchers adopt a more subjectivist stance, believing that the world is humanly created and therefore it is human beings themselves who initiate actions. Since it is human beings who initiate actions they cannot therefore be extracted and manipulated in isolation from the context within which the meanings were constructed. According to Allan *et al* (1998) a Foucauldian perspective perceives pupils as active rather than passive participants who construct their own identities and experiences. In this case they do not merely respond to the environment, they help to create it.

It is this perspective which colours the approach in my investigation as the pupils are encouraged to be active participants and not passive learners. An interpretive epistemology is required as knowledge and understanding of the pupils is vital in order to undertake practitioner research.

Theory, practice and practitioner research

Theory is a concept which has been defined and discussed in a variety of ways by educationalists. A dictionary definition of theory describes it as a 'set of abstract principles or rules which explain a given reality'. This definition, however, assumes the idea of generality and that theory can therefore be generalised to any situation.

An interesting methodological debate surrounds the nature of and relationship between theory and practice in education. Does theory precede or follow practice or are the two so inextricably linked that it would be pointless to deal with them as separate issues? According to Winter (1998) academic conceptions of theory are descriptive and define meanings of action. Positivists generally make the assumption that theory inevitably precedes practice and that any practice must be guided by a theory or set of rules. Interpretivists, however, would question this assumption and take the opposite viewpoint. Their argument is that theory follows practice. This is in line with the philosophical viewpoints concerning epistemology, ontology and the construction of social reality. For example, if human beings control their environment and initiate their own action rather than merely responding in predetermined ways, a general set of rules would never be applicable to explain human behaviour. There is a similar epistemological argument, for example, if knowledge is personal and is learned through experience, then it follows that such knowledge or theory cannot exist without the experience. In this case knowledge or theory must necessarily follow practice.

Theory is also defined differently in action research. The two juxtaposed words 'action' and 'research' imply a particular kind of purposeful action. The very action of action research involves the identification of a way of improving the situation and intervention in order to take steps towards a desired outcome. If one is to do this, one must also have some tentative idea of a desired outcome. McMahon (1991) describes this as 'contextual knowledge'. Such action therefore implies theory. In order to 'do' Action Research you have to have such an idea, or you would not commit to action. Dyson (1998) claims that such actions are 'theoretical' in a basic sense because they move beyond basic description towards explanation of how a

phenomenon came to be, how it interacts and how it may be changed. Such theories, perhaps, are better described as theories-in-action.

Implications for my study

In my investigation, the emergent theory is so specific to the context that it could not be generalised. There are aspects of it which can be used within the institution and there are others which could be considered in other, similar contexts. However, any emergent theory demands further investigation and questions in different contexts. Interpretive researchers also reject notions of 'generalisability' as they do not fit in with their rationale for research.

Assumptions made by the research paradigms such as those discussed in section one have profound methodological implications for researchers. The methods employed by researcher often rely heavily on the stance, values and beliefs of the researcher.

My assumptions and the nature of my research question are subjective and fall within the qualitative paradigm. I believe that since the world is humanly created the subjects of my investigation have a distinct and unique insight or knowledge and experience. As a practitioner researcher I am inevitably part of the research which focuses on the levels of participation in a teaching and learning situation in my classroom. The methods I will employ to uncover levels of meaning and interpretation are therefore personal accounts, diaries, interviews and participant observation. These methods will provide research data, which will demonstrate levels of understanding and experience.

Action Research

Teachers as researchers

In 1975 Stenhouse formed the teacher-as-researcher movement. This movement emphasised a qualitative approach to research which was conducted by individual teachers who strove to develop their own teaching in their classrooms or by institutions who tried to improve their performance. The movement appealed to education professionals as it justified a sense of professional autonomy and respect. Stenhouse (1975) urged that teachers should play an active role in research and made educational research relevant to practitioners' problems. He claimed that it

is not enough for the work of teachers to be studied, but they need to study it themselves. Stenhouse offers an argument that all teaching should be based on research and that research and development are the preserve of teachers themselves. In this way the curriculum is seen as a way of studying the problems and effects of teaching.

One of the main arguments put forward against 'outside' researchers is that their findings have little credibility for teachers, who read them but do not take them on board to change their behaviour. Teachers are often critical of Ofsted or advisory teams who come into schools to assess or inspect and often report very surprising results. The main criticism made of this kind of approach is that it is just a snapshot.

The 'teacher as researcher' movement based on the work of Stenhouse was developed further by Elliott and Adelman, who directed the 'Ford Teaching Project' between 1973 and 1976. In this project a small group of teachers were supported in order to research on their working practice and to develop a pedagogy of inquiry learning. Elliott's belief was that curriculum and teaching are highly theoretical enterprises and research is a self reflective process through which practitioners are able to examine their theoretical world of practice.

Elliott (1991) claimed that theories are validated through practice. He advised people to work closely at the start of a practical situation and to generate multiple explanations which they could explore further. He advocated that researchers should use action steps to implement their plan and suggested a number of monitoring techniques.

In the 1980s, there was a surge of interest in action research. Kemmis (1988) claims that this was for a number of reasons related to the profession as a whole. The National Curriculum (imposed in the UK in 1987) made teachers feel deskilled and less autonomous. Action research was one way in which teachers could regain control of their classrooms. Since the 1980s, action research has gradually grown in popularity. As a result of its emphasis on values it has taken on in many cases a social justice or political approach (Vlachou, 1997, Atweh *et al*, 1998).

The Nature of Action Research

Perhaps the most widely quoted definition comes from the work of Carr and Kemmis (1988),

> 'Action research is a form of self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out' (Page162).

If qualitative research places the investigation of education practice back into the classroom, educational action research places the research firmly back with the action of the researcher. It stresses the need for teachers to reflect upon their own practice and identify priorities for the future, translate them into actions and monitor real situations. It seeks to improve situations through active intervention and a change in practice. Moreover, in action research, research is driven by a 'reflection-on-practice' to bring about social change from the 'bottom-up' or the 'inside-out' (Ainscow, 1998). This idea mirrors the debate concerning 'theory and practice' in the previous chapter. A prerequisite of action research is therefore the will to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as the context and conditions under which teachers and students learn in schools. However, such a drive for improvement and 'reflection-on-action', similar to that described by Nias and Groundwater-Smith (1988) does not make the changes without the strategic action. Furthermore, McMahon (1991) emphasises that it is such strategic action which differentiates action research from reflective practice. Action research places an emphasis on action, collaboration and ownership of knowledge and produces a particular kind of 'insider knowledge', which attempts to show the ways in which understanding is transformed in specific contexts. Action research therefore implies a synthesis of 'action' and 'research'.

Ainscow (1998) claims that action research leads to improvement because it is teachers who are responsible for deciding what to change and its monitoring, evaluation and review. In this sense, teachers have ownership over the process of change, which takes place within educational contexts.

This stresses the importance for the synthesis of action and research in the same way as for the synthesis of theory and practice.

Practical educational explanations of real situations are particularly powerful since they form part of a process of trying to improve the quality of practice (Elliott, 1991). Such explanations form part of a kind of personal educational knowledge which has been described by McNiff (1993) as 'living knowledge', by Whitehead (1993) as 'living theory' and by Elliott as 'the epistemology of personal practice' (McNiff,1993). Also important, however, is the process through which the knowledge or living theory came about. According to Whitehead (1993), such knowledge is constituted by an individual's own descriptions and explanation of educational practice as they strive to become more effective (McNiff, 1993).

Praxis

One of the most useful definitions relating to the practice of action research is that of Elliott (1991), whose argument is that theories are not tested then applied to practice but they are tested through the practice itself. He urges teachers to look carefully at the facts of the situation and to consider possible explanations which would lead to a plan of intervention and improvement. This kind of practice is different from that of normal teaching but is a praxis - an informed, committed action.

Lomax (1994) takes a different viewpoint. She sees action research as a method of educational research based on values rather than social science. Through doing action research we make disciplined enquiries into our practice and discover areas of contradiction. In Lomax's definition it is the values which are central to action research and her claim is therefore to live out her values in practice.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) believes that practice is much more than behaviour, it is strategic action undertaken with commitment. This idea is also reflected in much of Winter's (1989) work, in which he strives to find synthesis between theory and practice. He even hyphenated the two words action-research in order to emphasise their unity.

Research Model

One of the features of action research is that it follows a reflective cycle, progressively focusing on improvements. Whitehead's (1993) action

reflection spiral as discussed by McNiff (1988) contains five stages which are framed as questions as follows;

1   I experience problems when some of my educational values are denied in practice

2   I imagine a solution to these problems

3   I act in the direction of the imagined solution

4   I evaluate the outcome of the solution

5   I modify my practice, plans and ideas in the light of the evaluation.

This is undoubtedly the best model for my research because it focuses on the 'I', the practitioner at the centre of the research and thus focuses on the reality and not the academic problem. It also attempts to improve the relationship between educational theory and professional development. In this way it is also perfect for curriculum review and evaluation. However, there are drawbacks to being so personally focused, for example one of the aims of action research is to change systems and to initiate improvements on a wider scale.

Planning the project

The planning stage of the project is rigorous, involving a series of questions concerning issues such as personal and professional values and why are they being denied in practice (McNiff, 1993). During this stage of my investigation I considered who should be involved and who should be the critical friend. I was careful not to exclude anyone. Elliott (1991) outlines two criteria for the general idea. Firstly, that it is impinges on one's field of action and secondly that it is something that one would like to change or improve on. He stresses the importance of understanding the nature of the problem as it is easy to oversimplify a problem which may have deeper roots. To begin with I wrote a plan deciding what I should do and when, which included details about the stages in the spiral and methods of data collection.

At this stage of my investigation, I identified and openly stated my value position, as stated in the Rationale (McNiff, 1993). Where one can identify a contradiction in one's values and one's expectations there is a point at

which one can be seen as a 'living contradiction' (McNiff, 1993). This is an ideal position from which to start an action research investigation.

Statement of problem

For the first stage of each cycle I explained the problem which I found problematic and with which I was dissatisfied. This stage is similar to the 'reconnaissance' stage of Kemmis (1988), in which the thematic concern is outlined and the current situation described. Carr and Kemmis (1986) stress the importance of context and the historical implications, both to understand how the local situation is a product of its own history and also to generate a historical understanding of the ways in which our ideas in education have been formed and reformed over time. Elliott (1991) splits the reconnaissance stage into two parts, describing and explaining the facts of the situation. He stresses the importance of describing the situation which requires change in as much detail as possible. In this way the nature of the problem can be clarified and the information provided can be used as a basis for clarifying relevant data and generating categories. In some instances it can even change one's understanding of the original idea. In the second part the facts need to be explained, such as how the situation arose and what had a bearing on the state of affairs. In this way the question is moved towards critical analysis.

Implementing a solution

Having analysed the problem I imagined possible solutions to my situation. As suggested by McNiff et al (1996), I imagined many possible scenarios and tried to work out a solution in each case. I discussed these with my critical friend and we brainstormed ideas and produced other strategies.

I formulated a possible solution as a kind of action plan. Kemmis (1988) points out the importance of being realistic and deciding the limitations of the study at this point. He suggests that any action is planned both in terms of objectives (physical and material) and subjective (people's expectations, thoughts, interpretations and their pattern of relationships). Kemmis's (1988) reasons for such careful strategic planning are because when the first step is evaluated there must be an accurate account of the relationship between circumstance, action and consequence in order for reliable decisions to be made.

Elliott (1991) gives us a clear picture of what should be contained within the plan. He outlined four main areas which should be addressed. These are a revised statement of the idea, a statement on the factors which one is going to change, a statement of resources and a statement of the ethical framework.

I drew up an action plan for each cycle of my research project, as discussed by Elliott (1991), Lomax (1994), Kemmis (1982), and Mckernan (1991). As a senior manager in my school I am always writing and modifying action plans as part of school improvement practice. For each of these plans I am responsible for the action required to complete the targets and sometimes also for the monitoring or evaluation of the action. This system works well in school improvement terms as it gives me the ownership of the tasks and empowers me to improve the situation.

It occurred to me that it would be useful to use something similar to structure each cycle of the action research investigation. I drew up an action plan at the beginning of each cycle, having considered the possible solutions to the problem. I decided on the research questions, the methods to be employed and the success criteria to evaluate the success of the intervention.

Implementing the action

In this stage of each action research phase I implemented the action which I had outlined. As Elliott (1991) points out, this stage is more difficult than considered previously and can take time because it usually involves changes in behaviour and attitude. If a teacher changes the way they teach, inevitably this will imply change in the participants' behaviour. In addition, Elliott (1991) reminds us that sometimes action can produce ideas which require modification and changes.

During this stage I concentrated on whether I was collecting enough data for reflection this must be kept in mind since the focus of this stage is on the accumulation of data and the putting together of a narrative.

Assessing and Evaluating Educational Research

Educational research has traditionally been judged on two criteria, its validity and its relevance (Hammersley *et al*, 1994). The former refers to the extent which the account accurately represents the phenomena to which it refers. This idea is closely linked to notions of truth, discussed earlier in this

chapter. The ontological implications of this explanation of validity are obvious. If there is no single reality we can never be certain of anything. We all perceive reality differently, and hence there are multiple views or perspectives of the world, some of which are contradictory. All views of the same phenomena could thus be seen to be equally 'true' on their own terms. Hammersley *et al* (1994) respond to these arguments by suggesting that there are three ways of assessing the validity of research claims. They are plausibility, credibility and evidence. If the research responds to these three ideas, it can therefore be deemed as 'valid'.

The second criteria for assessing research is relevance. Research, according to Hammersley *et al* (1994), must be relevant to issues of legitimate public concern. It must be addressed to an appropriate audience and have relevance and importance for them.

Action research is often assessed in terms of the cognitive validity of the knowledge produced. Should such validity also therefore be judged in terms of its practical contribution? Kemmis (1988) suggests that the validity of action research should not be questioned since there is analysis at every level. The questions asked by action researchers are not formalistic and overtly theoretical, but they are informed and convivial. The 'rigour' of action research does not therefore come from the techniques used to establish reliability or validity but derives from the logical, empirical and political coherence of the interpretations.

Habermas (1981) suggests that three functions in the mediation of theory and practice must be distinguished in action research. These functions supply criteria for evaluation. Habermas' first criteria is that action researchers should be involved in the formulation and articulation of their own practice theories. Secondly, the action researcher should be involved in the testing of practice in their own situation and finally, the action researcher should be engaged in a selection of strategies. Therefore, the action researcher is involved in their own practice the research is necessarily subjective and not objective. Such practical research is always value laden because actions are always concerned with a desired outcome. In action research the researcher's values are made explicit. The 'rigour' of it is that the work is collaborative, it is continually discussed and monitored by a

group of people, including the action researcher, the participants and the critical friend.

Criticisms of action research

Many criticisms have been made of action research since its beginning. The main criticisms concern its lack of rigour, the fact that it is not long term, it lacks objectivity, it is time consuming, superficial, makes assumptions and creates undesired effects.

More conventional research methodologies would question whether any practitioner research can be considered as research since it is the study of one's own practice. However, it is the study of practice and it is this very fact which makes it unique and gives us insight. If the practice is monitored in a rigorous and systematic way and one has detailed records of data, the research is clearly an educational study in a practical situation.

Other questions are asked concerning the superficial nature of action research, leading people to the conclusion that its effects are not long term. Any change in attitude or behaviour has to be worked at continually by all involved. One of the aims of action research is to produce conclusions which challenge our ways of seeing and doing things. There is a wealth of literature on change management issues which support this claim.

However, since action research actually involves the people who are 'doing' in the research itself, they are the ones who will be involved in implementing the change, collaborating and participating. Since they have formed part of the change programme, they will be more committed to its success. Focus or action groups often continue to meet and discuss how things are working for a considerable time afterwards. They have a stake in the change. Part of the action research programme also implies that people work collaboratively towards goals, but these goals are ever changing, particularly in the field of education where nothing seems to remain constant for long. Action research takes this progressive focusing of goals into account in its methodology and allows for such flexibility. In this way it is responsive and has intention to produce change. This links with the criticism that it is time consuming. The object of action research is practice (Kemmis 1988). This is gradually being changed, significantly and over time. Action research can be time consuming, but as its products are

practices and participants are involved in all aspects of the research, it can be seen as part of an active change programme.

Another common criticism is that action research lacks generalisability. As discussed earlier, generalisability is an idea linked with scientific research, whose primary concern is predicting knowledge, applying theory and replicating knowledge (McNiff, 1988). The aim of action research is the self explanation of behaviours and the creation of living knowledge which can be shared with others in similar situations. An attempt to investigate a specific situation makes it difficult to suit the general situation. Lack of objectivity is another criticism. It is indeed very difficult to be objective about a situation in which you are the change agent and play a part. I would argue that this involvement does not produce 'undesired effects' since all effects are useful data for analysis. I am at the centre of my research, which is investigating my practice. Any assumptions made do not affect the credibility of my work for the same reasons. The research is in my classroom and is centred around me as a teacher. What I do will affect what others do and will also have a knock on effect into other areas. McNiff (1988) argues that objectivity itself does not matter. Personal knowledge is precious and offers us multiple perspectives and insight. Action research gives some esteem to teachers own intuitive knowledge.

Why are so many criticisms levelled at action research? Hammersley et al (1994) suggest that fundholders often want to impose an engineering model and therefore draw a line between research and action. This they term consultancy. The task of the consultant is therefore one of facilitator. They are brought in to resolve a practical problem, whose outcome is often specified by contract.

In explaining the reasons behind the criticisms, Kemmis (1988) returns to the reasons why teachers became researchers. This was in response to social conditions, political pressures and professional aspirations. The growth of the teacher as researcher movement was therefore pragmatic, uncoordinated and opportunistic. The pace was so fast it left little opportunity for careful theoretic consideration, leaving action research open to a number of criticisms.

Justification

Action research is relevant for my research because it is 'simultaneously theoretical, practical, rigorous and personal' (Hanrahan 1998, page 302). It regards meaningful learning as a personal process influenced by social and psychological factors. There is an implicit personal involvement in learning. It involves the pupils personally and this fits in with my personal and professional values. In addition, it suits my value system because it is an inclusive way of researching in that it does not exclude anyone, particularly the pupils (McNiff *et al*, 1996). It is important to value multiple perspectives because people think and behave in different ways. They have different value sets, borne from their life experiences and cultural backgrounds and other influences.

My aim was to change the situation of the pupils, to increase their participation and encourage them to gain autonomy as a group. I used my subjective experience to investigate the situation. I made the changes and I was the agent of influence. In addition, I monitored and reflected on the results. I was at the centre of the investigation. This concept is stressed by action researchers such as Whitehead (1993) and McNiff (1988). My research is more than an explanation of phenomena, it is intentional. I changed my style, pupils' expectations changed and together we moved towards a more inclusive situation.

In my setting qualitative research offers an interpretive view. However, the methodological approach of action research contained within the 'critical theoretical paradigm' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) offers research 'with' rather than 'on' others (McNiff 1988). It also enables people to improve practice (Kemmis, 1988) and is researched in a moral context defined as 'praxis' (Lomax, 1994).

Action research requires intervention and action to produce change. It also requires the commitment of participants. Responsiveness was very important for my research. My intention was to produce changes involving the commitment of participants.

I tried to achieve rigour in my work by following a model, triangulating data whenever possible, discussing and accessing literature throughout interpretation, developing the interpretation as part of data collection and

testing assumptions critically, trying to challenge them both in terms of my evidence and the literature reviewed.

My research involves a commitment to both improvement and change and an awareness of effective aspects which inform practice.

Conclusion

Action research or practitioner research?

At the outset my intention was that my investigation would be a small scale piece of action research. The investigation was empirical, focused in my classroom and was a synthesis of action and research in an attempt to improve understanding in a specific context. My aim was to improve the situation through carefully planned active strategic intervention following critical reflection which clearly identified priorities for the future. The knowledge produced was insider knowledge, specific to a given context.

However, as I discovered after the first phase (the investigation into context), due to the culture and ethos of the school, the effect of the investigation would be extremely limited. Action research places an emphasis on participation and collaboration to bring about social change. Altricher *et al* (1993) consider the power sharing aspect of action research. They urge that such collaboration between the teachers who form the critical community will raise more individualised question and consequently teachers will become part of the decision making process. Lomax (1994) also reminds us that we should be aware of the quality of the contributions of others and warns that participation without commitment and engagement may lack the impetus for change.

Although my investigation clearly meets the criteria of participation, it falls short in terms of collaboration due to the culture of the school. Any improvement and change would therefore be limited to the small group of teachers with whom I collaborated and would not be embraced as living knowledge or living theory by the wider school, at least certainly not within the life of my investigation. As a result, I decided that the study would be more suited to practitioner research, with many features of action research.

Chapter 4 - Research Design

Introduction

This chapter contains a detailed account of the research design. It includes the research plans and gives detail of the data gathering tools for both phases. In the introduction I present the research plan and explain the overall structure of the investigation. A plan of the project can be found in Fig. 4.1. There follows a detailed description of the phases.

Research Phase One is an investigation into the organisational context and how its features impinge on pupil participation. This identified the problem to be addressed in Phase Two and set the scene out of which the classroom based research was conceptualised. Below I describe the data gathering tools used in this phase; research diary, observation and interview. I then describe the constraints imposed by the context.

In the following section I describe Research Phase Two, the classroom based research in which I undertook the small-scale practitioner research investigation, addressing the research questions concerning the experience of learning and participation of a group of year 7-8 pupils in English lessons. Firstly I describe the additional data gathering tools used in addition to those described for Research Phase One; critical Friend, validating group and letters. I then discuss the measurement of participation and, in the final section, evaluating the solution.

My investigation focused on three main research questions as follows:-

1.   How do the features of school impinge on pupil participation and inclusion?

2.   What is the experience of learning of the pupils in my year 7-8 English class?

3. a. To what extent do this group of year 7-8 pupils participate in their own learning?

   b. How can they be supported to participate more fully in speaking tasks?

Phase	Design	Research Questions	Themes
Phase One	Case study giving 'thick description' of the school's organisational context, its culture and ethos. Methods used are mostly qualitative.	How do the features of school impinge on pupil participation and inclusion?	Organisational context School ethos Culture Language Labelling
Phase Two	Classroom based research framed as a small scale piece of action research or practitioner research. This is divided into four action cycles, each progressively focusing on an improvement emerging from the previous cycle. Methods used are mostly qualitative.	What is the experience of learning of the pupils in my year 7-8 English class? To what extent do this group of year 7-8 pupils participate in their own learning? How can they be supported to participate more fully in speaking tasks?	Self-esteem Motivation Participation Autonomy Group work Tasks and activities Learning styles Speaking tasks

Fig. 4.1 Plan of the project

Research Phase One - The organisational response to diversity

The organisational context is, in a sense, a measure of how responsive the school is to the diversity of its students (Dyson 1998). The framework within which the pupils are working underpins much of the pupils' attitudes and experience of school and influences their learning, their expectations of school and their level of participation in learning.

There are many reasons why inclusive attitudes prevail in mainstream schools. One of the most influential factors is the willingness of staff to value diversity and this is reflected in the organisational culture of the

school (Ainscow, 1995). To reflect this I interviewed some key members of Lower School Staff and I observed teachers at meetings and in the staffroom, paying particular attention to the way in which they spoke about pupils and whether their language was inclusive. I also interviewed pupils and observed them at formal and informal times.

Data gathering tools

I used the following data gathering tools during this phase:-

Research Diary

I used the research diary to record thoughts, feelings and actions. In this way it was a kind of self evaluation because I was trying to understand my actions. Examples from my diary can be found in the appendices (Appendix D, Appendix a). The diary lent a kind of objectivity where I could distance myself from the action in order to interrogate it. The diary also contained my field notes written as open-ended notes, anecdotes and observation in which I documented significant aspects of action. These descriptions were 'thick descriptions'. It was also the log of the progress of my research and contained accounts of personal reflection and learning that emerged from this reflection. It served as an analytic tool in which I examined data and dealt with problems of analysis. Thus it provided the link between the action plan, evaluation and replanning. I have consistently written in my research diary throughout. At the end of each research phase it provided documentation on which to reflect. My diary was kept in a loose leaf folder. I kept it in this way in order to add entries such as analytic or critical accounts of descriptions at a later date.

There are disadvantages to using diaries as a method of data collection. The diary is extremely impressionistic and subjective. In addition, it is important to think carefully about what to include and exclude because later it may become apparent that data required has not been included. In order to do this effectively it is important to think things through carefully at the beginning.

Observation

I was a participant observer. This caused some difficulty as I had a twofold role. Through participating I got a sense of the situation itself and a deeper understanding and comprehension of social behaviour. Other benefits of being a participant observer are that accounts are authentic and ideas can

easily be verified through empirical observation. I used triangulation through pupil accounts, recordings and observations. Observation techniques used included both qualitative and quantitative measurement. I counted the number of times each pupil could be said to participate in the lesson or be engaged. This technique was also used for counting contributions made to class discussion. Interaction charting was used to show the interaction between pupils in the group and the number of times individuals interacted with each other in group discussion. Interaction process analysis showed the number and type of interaction between pupils in the group work. I identified categories of behaviour before and added more during observation if necessary.

One of the drawbacks of such techniques is the dual role of the researcher. It is difficult to make notes at the same time as teaching the lesson. To try and overcome this I used a tape recorder to tape the lessons. This made analysing, counting and measuring the quality of pupil interaction much easier. In turn, the use of the tape recorder itself may have caused reactivity amongst the pupils. I gauged this during the first lesson because I felt that if it spoilt the participation it would have been counterproductive. I explained to pupils why I was recording and who would hear it afterwards. They were a little reticent at the beginning of the first few sessions. After a number of sessions the tape recorder in the room had become the norm and pupils did not react differently. Perhaps next time I will first try to record some lessons that are not so important, in order for the class to become accustomed to the presence of the tape recorder. Another problem with tape recording is its transcription, which can be time-consuming. I did not transcribe the entire tape. I used it to do the analyses and also to make open-ended field notes on the nature and quality of participants' contribution.

Informed by the analysis of the data collected from the initial investigation, I made several decisions concerning exactly what should be observed. I wanted to observe pupils' behaviour, attitude and participation in each lesson in order to see if this data provided evidence of triangulation with the data from the other phases. I decided that it would be interesting to try and observe in three ways, two of which involved collecting structured data, firstly time on task and body language and secondly response to questioning and contribution to discussion, and the third making open ended field notes.

I also used open interviews and group discussions with pupils to gain their perspective. Since the group is so small, it was possible to include them all for the group interview. They thus formed a 'natural sample'. For the individual interviews, I selected a small group of pupils, who I believed represented the group. I used two main criteria for my choice; I thought it important to select some pupils who had attended regularly and for this I used my attendance register. I wanted to ensure that the pupils interviewed had had a true experience of all lessons and participated in all kind of activities including assessment.

In many ways the interviews were very informal, since I worked in a collaborative way with the group, we discussed how things were going often at the start and end of lessons. Much of this impromptu interviewing was initiated by the pupils themselves, who took it very seriously and often knocked on my door at break time or lunchtime with another idea. I recorded these discussions in my research diary. Other interviews were initiated by me. These I recorded on tape, writing up the result as open ended field notes rather than writing whole transcripts. After each interview session, I listened to the cassette, and took notes from it. I did not make a complete transcript from the cassette as it would have taken too long. Instead, I noted down salient comments. I read them to the pupils the following day to check respondent validity of my notes.

For each of these interviews I had a series of open ended questions which I used as a starting point (Appendices E, F). Having done many research projects for the MA with the OU, I feel I have developed my interviewing and listening skills. I used active listening skills to play back what was said by interviewees, I accepted silences and framed questions in order to further discussion. I used the notes for specific, in depth information. Drawbacks of the interview technique are that it can be time-consuming. In addition, pupils may react to the tape recorder in the same way as described above.

Problems with using the interview technique are many. Firstly, if questions are framed to focus on particular aspects of their schooling it is possible that participants may be inclined to present a misleading account. This can be a particular problem in group interviews as the interviewees may unwittingly

paint an unrealistic picture as all are giving examples to link with or to support a particular point made by one of the group. One way of overcoming this is to triangulate data with other information such as observational studies or data collected from individual interviews.

In order to investigate the school's organisational culture and response to diversity I used a number of research methods:-

- I interviewed the Head of Lower School and the Head of Year Seven using an informal interview schedule. (The interview schedule and extracts from the teachers comments can be found in Appendices B and C).

- I interviewed pupils in the year 7 group individually using an informal interview schedule. (Appendices E and G)

- I interviewed pupils as group using an informal interview schedule. (Appendix F)

- I observed pupils around the school at informal times over one week and wrote my reflections in a research diary. (Appendix D)

- I observed staff in the staffroom and at meetings over one week, paying particular attention to the way in which they spoke about the pupils. I wrote reflections on this in my research diary.

- I collected relevant information from the school prospectus, the staff handbook and policy documents and wrote my observations and reflections in my research diary.

Constraints

Having investigated the organisational context of the school and analysed the problem it became clear that there were significant and inherent weaknesses in the research design being framed as an action research project as the organisational system was inflexible and the school was not ready for change, particularly not in the short term, and not during the life of my investigation. The context did not fit the context of action research design as the ethos and attitude of some of the staff was stuck in habitual ways of teaching and I did not want to create an atmosphere of controversy and conflict with my colleagues. As a result I was unable to work the full action research model in terms of sharing my findings with the wider staff

group and using the findings to provide whole staff development. Instead I had to restrict my findings to a group of like minded colleagues (the learning support group) as the peer validation group. In spite of these setbacks, the investigation provided some useful outcomes for my students and some ideas for discussion and replication within other departments, led by members of the learning support group

Research Phase Two - Classroom based research

Introduction

The second phase of the investgation was the classroom based research which took place with my English group, who moved from year 7 to year 8 during my project. As discussed earlier, I followed the action reflection cycle suggested by Whitehead (1993) which contains five stages framed as questions.

There are four cycles in Phase Two of my investigation; each cycle took place over a half term (7 weeks) and each 'action' took place over a series of 2-6 lessons. Each cycle and phase is clearly labelled according to this model.

Data gathering tools

I collected data during the cycles in the ways listed below. I monitored the action in order to provide data which, when analysed and evaluated could be used as evidence to support my claims. I used the data collecting tools below in additional those described in Phase One; research diary, observation and interview.

Letters

McNiff et al (1996) describe the research strategy employed by Brennen (1994) who was investigating how to improve her practice of teaching German to a poorly motivated class. One of the fundamental problems of the teacher researcher is how to encourage pupils to speak openly and freely about one of their subjects to their subject teacher.

To alleviate these problems, Brennen (1994) asked her pupils to write a letter explaining their likes and dislikes in the subject. For my project for E835, I decided that this method would also suit my research and I began by replicating it. Unfortunately, when I received the letters they were rather

disappointing. The pupils had written what they liked and disliked about the subject but had not analysed their reasons in any depth. These pupils had needed far more guidance in order to evaluate in this way.

For this investigation I tried to give pupils a little more guidance. This was extremely difficult to do without influencing the pupils and encouraging them to focus on certain issues. I tried to overcome this by writing the main topics on the board and suggesting to pupils they work through their exercise books and discuss in pairs what they had done in each topic. Having spent the lesson reflecting in this way I asked the class to write me a letter for homework. The letters were more informative than those from the previous year. Pupils had tried to give me some reasons for their comments. I used the points raised by the pupils in the letters to inform group and individual interview schedules.

Measuring Participation

There may be potential difficulties with measuring participation. As discussed in the literature review, pupils can appear to participate at a number of levels. It is vital, therefore to present an operational definition of participation which is measurable by my data. In order to measure it I considered two aspects; what pupils say in the discussion session and how they behave in the observation session. I measured the number of contributions each pupil makes to the discussion. Pupils' behaviour measured through time spent on and off task and body language. I also commented on salient points in the open ended field notes. I placed body language into three categories, positive, negative and neutral. Positive body language includes smiling, sitting forward, looking attentive, reading or writing, discussing work with a partner motivation and co-operation. Negative body language includes frowning, talking about other things, looking away or playing with equipment. I also measured time spent on and off task when pupils are writing, and noted down every five minutes whether they are on or off task. Examples of this can be found in Appendices J and P.

Evaluation Tools

Critical Friend

McNiff et al (1996) suggest that the researcher and critical friend choose each other and as a result, the ground rules of the relationship must be negotiated. This was entirely the case in my situation, as the person who was to take on this important role was a mature student who also needed to find someone with whom to share her concerns about this particular group of pupils. She sought me out as SENCO, as she hoped that I would be able to shed light on the nature of the group, suggest and explore some approaches with her. She therefore had a direct interest and involvement in the research, as she wanted to utilise the ideas within her classroom. As a mature student she was also critical and challenging when discussing ideas.

At the same time I was looking for someone who shared my values and was interested in my research to act as a critical friend for my investigation. I felt that it was important that the person shared my values as they were counter to those of the majority of the staff and to those of the culture of the school. As the person was also new to the school she did not form part of its ethos. I wanted this person to act as a confidante and mentor and to talk through the research at regular intervals. In this way we would provide critical advice and support to each other.

I involved my critical friend in the monitoring process. She was fully involved in all aspects of the action including collecting, interpreting, evaluating the data and planning further action. My critical friend also played an important role in providing evidence and support at the validation meetings.

My aim was that my colleagues, both the critical friend and the validating group should take over the ownership of the action and continue to shape it as necessary. As I expected that other people should take on the ideas it was important that all the ethical considerations which governed the investigation and its collaboration were overt and that my research was transparent. There are some drawbacks to the use of a critical friend, especially if the relationship is perceived by others as one of collusion. This could impede the validation of research claims. The role of critical friend is also difficult to fulfil as it requires a level of trust and the balance between

support and criticism , particularly when meeting with the validating group. The relationship of critical friend and researcher must be well understood and defined by all parties.

Validating group

Before I started my investigation, I created a group which I called the 'Curriculum Support Group'. This group served the purpose of a validation group throughout the investigation. It consisted of sympathetic colleagues who had expressed an interest in inclusion and who wanted to explore more inclusive approaches as a means of increasing participation. I tried to involve staff from different curriculum areas, as I felt that for dissemination purposes and for future work and progress to be made in this area, it was important to have as broad a representative group as possible.

The colleagues invited were able to ensure the validity, reliability and relevance of the investigation. They discussed all aspects of the investigation fairly and critically, asked relevant questions, shared and helped to develop new ideas, considered the data and discussed the justification of the evidence. The Curriculum Support group also helped to maintain enthusiasm for the changes and their implementation. I hoped that ultimately they would be able to take the ideas back to the subject areas, where teachers would work them into lesson planning, thus creating a more inclusive curriculum. The validation meetings were held at regular intervals (4-6 weekly) throughout each cycle and the group played a key role in shaping and validating the investigation.

Problems with the validating group are similar to those encountered whenever peer validation groups are used. The group contained people who espoused to the same values as me, most of whom were not in influencial positions within the school. It included no representative from the senior management team, nor people in other positions of responsibility who may be in a better position to implement and advocate for improved practice and to include them in the School Development Plan.

Evaluating the solution

Having collected the data and reflected on it critically I evaluated the situation. The process of reflection is vital because it give us a better understanding of how researchers' actions have changed practice. Schon

(1983) regarded reflective practice as the key ingredient of professional development. Winter's (1989) view of reflection was that it is a crucial process by which we make sense of evidence.

Having reflected thoroughly I discussed the implications with my critical friend. I reviewed my educational values and tried to look for ways in which I could shift the focus or broaden my study in order to achieve my aims. Finally I rewrote my research plan in the light of this. When I evaluated the impact and its significance I identified indicators that I believed showed the process of change and highlighted critical incidents in practice which showed the action of improvements.

Having completed the fourth stage I moved towards modifying my practice. I reflected on discussions with my critical friend and decided whether the new form of practice was appropriate to my values. I decided how to share these new insights with participants. I thought whether there were any new aspects of new practices that needed attention. Finally I went back to stage one of the action research cycle and reidentified my concerns and the cycle moved into cycle two. Altogether I organised my investigation in four cycles.

Cycle One – The Pupil Experience

The problem addressed in Cycle One was identified in the first phase of my investigation. The school culture had an enormous impact on the pupils. As the first part of the classroom research, it was important to establish, investigate and to form a rich description of pupils' perceptions and participation in learning. I also needed to record an initial measurement of pupil participation. This would offer valuable insight into factors affecting their learning as well as providing a baseline measurement against which future participation could be measured. I began by discussing their experience in a group situation and then asked the pupils to write letters about their experience of learning (Appendix I). Following this I taught a series of two English lessons.

Aim	To investigate the pupil experience of learning and to identify barriers to learning
	To improve pupil motivation and participation by finding

	out about pupils' preferences in learning
Proposed Outcome	Class likes and dislikes
	Compile a list of pupils' perceived barriers to learning
	Pupil motivation is improved, demonstrated by positive comments from at least 8 of the group during the interview.
Monitoring	It will be monitored by my critical friend through observation and critical discussion and discussed with the peer validation group (Learning Support group) at 2 weekly intervals

I was then observed teaching two English lessons with the pupils. Open ended field notes were made of these observations and quantitative data were recorded to measure the pupils' contributions to discussion, their participation during written work and their body language. I followed this letter writing with a group discussion in the next lesson. This discussion was informal as I did not stick rigidly to the specific questions preferring to be flexible about when the questions were covered. I was aware of the potential problem with pupils not having the confidence to speak their minds at interview due to others present in the group session. I recorded the conversation onto a cassette, although in the beginning the pupils felt ill at ease and were rather slow to respond to questions. However, they soon began to speak when I linked the discussion to what they had written in their letters. As they had already written the letters and they knew I had read them, this took the onus off the pupils and allowed them the distance to discuss the letters quite freely. Having started to converse they were more inclined to discuss other questions. It was also interesting to see whether the data triangulated with what pupils had said in their letters, the observation and in interviews.

I then interviewed the pupils and asked them for their views of various activities, tasks and situations in the classroom context (Appendix M). I tried to find out what worked well, what they enjoyed and why. I also asked

pupils to complete a questionnaire concerning what they liked and disliked in English. The questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix N, enabled a more structured responses to the questions about tasks and activities than the unstructured letters had done. I had prepared them for this in the group interview and encouraged them to think of their ideas as informing lesson planning.

To measure pupil participation I used mixed methods, including both qualitative and quantitative data as follows:-

- Pupils wrote letters about their experience of learning in English. A quantitative analysis was used to measure their likes and dislikes from these letters (Appendix I)

- Data collection over two lessons to measure contributions to discussion, their participation during speaking work, written work, group work reading work and body language. A quantitative analysis was used to measure the time pupils spend on and off task during these observations. (Appendix J)

- Informal group discussions with the pupils (Appendix L)

- Informal group interviews with the pupils (Appendix M)

- Pupil questionnaire concerning likes and dislikes in English (Appendix N)

- Observation of two lessons in which I was teaching English (Appendices H, K)

Reflection

The steps taken in the last cycle increased pupils' motivation and participation in lessons. Pupils said they felt empowered because they had a voice and where possible, a choice. They had been given some power to discuss their true feelings which may change their situation. This would make them feel better at school, more valued and they would be more motivated to work at classroom tasks.

However I still felt that I could go further in increasing access. The pupils did not know how or where to start when they were asked to begin a task. At this point in the lesson many of them asked for reassurance and support.

This demonstrated their low self-esteem as they said they were unable to start the task without help. Although pupil motivation and concentration had improved I felt that some pupils were still not able to access tasks. This was the focus of the next cycle. Booth (1998) and Hart (1996b) suggest that when pupils experience barriers to learning it is often because there is a mismatch between the pupils' skills and the tasks set. It is only through a thorough examination of the factors that prevent pupil participation that I can try and eliminate them and encourage pupils to become more autonomous and refer to teacher help less often.

Cycle Two – Classroom tasks and activities as barriers to learning

If I were to identify pupils' preferred learning styles, I could try to plan activities which could be accessible to a greater number of pupils and also improve the participation of all members of the group. Pupils would be able to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that made sense to them and which they understood. This would give tasks an increased sense of purpose for pupils. Firstly I was observed teaching two lessons. The observer, my critical friend, made specific notes on what the pupils found difficult. I then completed a lesson analysis to find out which skills were needed and in which context over a two week period. In a two week period pupils have five hours of English lessons. I analysed the lessons in three ways to find out which skills the pupils were required to use. As categories for this analysis I used the attainment target headings from the National Curriculum criteria, speaking and listening, reading and writing. I also analysed the context in which the tasks took place. Headings I used for this part of the analysis included individual, small group or pairwork and whole class discussion. Finally I looked at which sensory channels were used; visual, auditory or kinaesthetic during the task and for how long each channel was used over the five lessons.

At this stage I wrote an action plan in order to measure the success of my intervention.

Aim	To improve pupils' participation and independence in my lessons by matching the learning styles of the pupils with the tasks set.

Proposed Outcome	Pupils are aware of their own learning styles
	Pupils are more motivated to complete tasks
Monitoring	It will be monitored by my critical friend and reported to the Learning Support group at 2 weekly intervals

The research data and analysis can be found in Appendix S. Having completed this part of the investigation I interviewed pupils concerning their individual learning styles. I used information from an accelerated learning techniques questionnaire (Gardner, 1993, Smith, 1996) to inform my questions for these interviews, which were slightly different for each pupil. I decided that if I gave them the questionnaire without the discussion that the results would not be reliable. I felt that the questions were not clear enough to give to them unaided and that they may discuss their replies with a group of friends, which would affect the reliability of this part of the study. In addition, I wanted to ask them more than the questionnaire allowed, for example I wanted to expand on the result of the questionnaire to make sure that the results were accurate.

I also gave the pupils a questionnaire to complete concerning their preferred sensory channels, visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. I felt that the results of this questionnaire would be more reliable as it was written in an easy, pupil friendly way which relied on ticking boxes and there was therefore nothing unclear which pupils needed to discuss. The results of this questionnaire, can be found in Appendix T.

Having completed the questionnaires and interviews I analysed the data by trying to match the data from the lesson analysis with the pupils' preferred styles of learning. I then prepared a lesson which concentrated on tasks which used the learning styles and sensory channels favoured by the pupils. I taught the lesson, and, as before, a critical friend made open-ended field notes concerning how pupils coped with the tasks. Finally, I interviewed the pupils as a group to find out their opinions on the lesson, how enthusiastic and motivated they were and whether they enjoyed it. I made notes following this in my reflective log.

I used mixed methods of data collection including both qualitative and quantitative data in this cycle as follows.

- I completed a task analysis of 5 English lessons over a two week period. (Appendix S)

- I interviewed pupils concerning their individual learning styles. (Appendix T)

- Pupils completed a questionnaire on learning styles and preferred sensory channels, visual, auditory or kinaesthetic.

- I analysed the data by trying to match the data from the lesson analysis with the pupils' preferred styles of learning.

- I was observed teaching a series of lessons and open-ended field notes were made. (Appendix O)

- Data was taken during two lessons, recording pupils on and off task, body language and contributions to class discussion. (Appendix P)

- I interviewed the pupils as a group using an informal interview schedule

Reflection

Results from this cycle showed that pupils' preferred style of learning was interpersonal and visual/spatial. This suggests that one way pupils would learn best is through discussion. However, throughout my investigation pupils did not appear to enjoy or value spoken work and were sometimes reluctant to offer replies. This highlighted the focus of the next cycle; to improve pupil participation in oral tasks.

Cycle Three – Improving participation in speaking tasks

My findings from the last cycle showed that although speaking and discussion is the preferred style of learning of the majority of the group, pupils tended to undervalue speaking work and did not participate willingly. In order to improve their participation, I needed to find out if the range of opportunity given for pupils to participate in speaking was limited, and if so, how it could be improved.

It was clear that they did not value speaking tasks as much as other tasks and they had previously reported that they felt that they had not been

working when a lesson involved a lot of discussion and spoken work. It was important to try to promote the value of such tasks in the pupils' eyes. As the writing frame had been so successful in getting them to participate independently in the last cycle, I decided to experiment with a 'speaking frame'. This would give the pupils a structure around which to make their comments to the group. At the end of the lessons, if pupils commented that they had not worked, it would be easier to persuade them that they had by drawing their attention to the speaking frame. Another way of promoting the importance of speaking work would be to encourage pupils to judge their contributions and those of others according to the national curriculum criteria. This would also achieve a further objective, which would be to promote their independence as learners.

At this stage I wrote an action plan in order to measure the success of my intervention.

Aim	To improve pupils' participation and independence in speaking tasks
	To encourage pupils to value spoken work
Proposed Outcome	Improved time spent 'on task' during speaking tasks compared to baseline measurement.
	Pupils ask for less reassurance from the teacher
	Pupils understand the criteria against which their spoken work is judged
Monitoring	It will be monitored by my critical friend and reported to the Learning Support group at 2 weekly intervals

Firstly I interviewed the class about the importance of speaking work. I stressed its importance. I wrote a worksheet which contained the criteria by which speaking is judged. I ensured that this sheet was written in language they could easily understand. This sheet can be found in Appendix X. I encouraged pupils to judge their own contributions to speaking work according to these criteria. At the end of every lesson I asked pupils to consider the criteria, to grade themselves and to record it into their exercise books.

In order to ensure that pupils valued oral work and saw it as an integral part of the lesson I wrote the plan for the whole topic on a sheet of sugar paper and displayed it throughout the topic. Pupils could then see exactly how and where the speaking and listening came into each lesson and its importance to the topic as a whole.

I also completed an observation session with the help of my critical friend. In this session we observed and noted the range of opportunities given for pupils to contribute and the number of contributions made by each pupil. I planned a lesson intending to give them opportunity for a wider range of contributions. I taught this lesson and noted down the range, number of contributions, time on and off task and body language during speaking work. This data can be found in Appendix V.

I used mixed methods of data collection including both qualitative and quantitative data in this cycle as follows.

- I interviewed the group using an informal interview schedule (Appendix W).

- I held a group discussion to plan the topic

- I was observed teaching a series of two lessons and quantitative data was recorded concerning the range of opportunities given for pupils to contribute and the number of contributions made by each pupil. (Appendices V,U)

- In analysis, data was triangulated to see whether the pupils perceptions matched up with their contributions

Reflection

Although pupils were generally placing more value on speaking work and enjoying their success, they were still over reliant on the teacher, responding mainly to her questions and not communicating with each other. I felt that in order to improve their participation they needed to take further responsibility in the classroom. This may be achived through peer support and structured group work. The focus of the next cycle is how pupils work together and encouraging them to support each other rather than being over reliant on teacher support.

Cycle Four – Working together

Group work is beneficial to learners as it gives them the control of their learning and thus fosters pupil independence. However, my pupils needed further support if they were to be empowered to support each other. In order to achieve this I tried to encourage pupils to use each other as support and to ask each other for support, rather than always asking for teacher help. I decided that in order to do this I would need to provide pupils with tasks which were structured in such a way that this would be easy. Pupils will remember more of what they are taught if they have to explain it to others. I decided that ways to do this would include pairing pupils carefully according to learning styles to encourage peer scaffolding, giving pupils roles as experts or coaches and using jigsawing techniques, where pupils were given clear roles and rotated around the groups to complete an activity.

At this stage I wrote an action plan in order to measure the success of my intervention.

Aim	To improve pupils' participation and independence in speaking tasks To encourage pupils to work together To increase pupil autonomy
Proposed Outcome	Pupils take an increased responsibility for tasks and ask for less teacher support All pupils make contributions to spoken tasks The number of contributions increases overall
Monitoring	It will be monitored by my critical friend and reported to the Learning Support group at 2 weekly intervals

For this cycle of my investigation I considered how to encourage pupils to work together more effectively. I discussed with pupils their opinions on

working together in groups or pairs and noted my reflections in my research diaries (Appendix a).

Using information given from my reflections and pupil comments, I decided that there were two problems, firstly that some pupils did not know what role to take during small group work and secondly that pupils did not work well in pairs because they were unsure what to say. I decided that I would try to support their group work in two ways, firstly by giving it more structure and secondly by encouraging peer support.

In order to improve their participation in pairwork I imagined a solution might be peer scaffolding, where pupils are carefully paired together in order to extend their learning

I tried this in a different kind of speaking situation. Firstly I looked at the pupils individually and their achievement in speaking tasks. I then paired them deliberately and did further observations on contributions made, time on task and body language to find out what extent their participation had improved. Finally I interviewed pupils again to find out if their feelings about spoken work group work and pairwork had changed, if they valued it more, if they felt they could contribute more and they knew what was expected of them.

I also needed to provide more structure for the pupils to work with. I decided that this would work best in small groups and I decided to give all pupils roles, similar to the jigsawing technique discussed earlier. Pupils would become expert in one aspect of the work and would therefore be empowered and work better and participate more. This work would be similar to 'information gap' work often completed in Modern Languages. I considered structuring their small group work in a method similar to jigsawing. I taught this lesson and observed the contribution made by all members of the group. I measured time on and off task, body language and my critical friend made open-ended field notes.

I used mixed methods of data collection including both qualitative and quantitative data in this cycle as follows.

I discussed with pupils their opinions on working together in groups or pairs and noted my reflections in my research diaries (Appendix a).

- I paired pupils and recorded quantitative data on contributions made, time on task and body language (Appendix Z).

- I interviewed pupils

- I was observed teaching a series of lessons. (Appendices Y,b)

Ethical issues

The discussion of ethical issues is not as prominent with practitioner research as it is for other kinds of research since the researcher is conducting insider-research and therefore the ownership of the research remains firmly within the context of the research. However, even with practitioner research teachers teaching similar groups may be sensitive to any change in the established way of teaching a certain topic, even if it does not directly affect their teaching. For example, pupils in one class who are approaching a topic in a new and different way may discuss their learning with friends in another group, who may then question why their class is not approaching the topic in the same way. There are specific ethical problems, in the conducting of insider research which can be perceived as a threatening or critical activity by other members of the institution. As Nias and Groundwater-Smith (1988) explain, there is a particular need for sensitivity in context based research, as there is a danger that it may highlight issues which could be perceived as threatening, either for individual teachers and their established habits, or for the organisation as a whole since questions can be raised about organisational contexts. At the same time, change is often difficult to implement in schools, particularly those with well-established organisational cultures such as the one in which I undertook my investigation. Context based information, such as that which emerged from my study could question the established status quo and provide a catalyst for action, both from the teacher researcher and others, particularly if there is commitment to action by senior managers to a case for changes in organisational practice.

Chapter Five – Findings from Research Phase One – Organisational Context

Introduction

This chapter contains the findings from 'Research Phase One', the investigation into the organisational context. Its focus is on the first of my three research questions, 'How do the features of school impinge on pupil participation and inclusion?'

Research Phase One

My initial research formed an important contextual background to my study. It consisted of the collection of data to form a rich picture of the school and the pupils concerned. The school was divided into two, each having a Head of School who was responsible for that part of the school and year heads, responsible for each year group. This made the choice of scope for the second phase of my investigation easier as I had to choose either Upper or Lower school. I chose the Lower School as I wanted to investigate the same group of pupils over a period of time. Year 7 were ideal because they were new to the school and as all were from different primary schools all had different expectations of school. In this way I felt they would be more honest and less influenced by the values and expectations of the AB school itself. As SENCO, I was particularly interested in improving the experiences of pupils who find learning difficult. The bottom set of pupils in year 7, who I taught for English, French and Maths were ideal as a focus for my investigation as they were a group with diverse needs. Details of the pupils in the group can be found in Appendix c. They were in year 7 at the start of my investigation and progressed into year 8 as I was completing my research. Although there were some pupils with behavioural and attention difficulties in this group, overall their behaviour did not impede the learning of the whole group. This would have been a problem for the investigation, as it would have been difficult to form a true picture of the group's difficulties in participation and learning if the behaviour of individuals was such that the others were unable to concentrate on tasks set.

The school chooses to use a test of cognitive ability (NFER CAT) and to set according to overall scores on a combination of these scores together with the latest SAT or school exam results. According to this test, the pupils in

this group all had standardised scores between 70 and 75. It is important to note that this type of testing is not always appropriate for setting as individual pupils can have strengths in specific areas which are not recognised. This may result in their being placed in an inappropriate group for certain subjects, perhaps working at a lower level than that of which they are capable. The inevitable disaffection and frustration that this causes can lead to a lack of motivation, sometimes leading to disruption and behaviour problems. In this group there are four pupils with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) who have been placed in this group as they had low scores on this test. However, many have large discrepancies between their scores as their non-verbal skills and their oral ability is much higher than their written skills. They, like some of the others in the group attained low scores in this test due to their weakness in reading, as the test requires pupils to read questions and answer them. However, they show much more potential in class and in discussion groups where they are not required to read and write for themselves. Most of the pupils had some delay with literacy and for some these difficulties were specific. Nevertheless, given their overall ability profile the pupils should have been able to access the normal national curriculum, when it is appropriately differentiated to their level.

Organisational Context

The organisational paradigm of the AB school is traditional and academic, more appropriate to a selective grammar school. It is similar to a 'formal school culture', as described by Hargreaves (1997), which has a high level of social control and a low level of social cohesion. The school is, in fact, an ex-grammar school and many of the staff are ex-pupils who have taught there since graduating, a point rased by Estyn (Appendix d). Strict operational procedures ensure that a strong hierarchy exists amongst both staff and pupils. This is consistent with Handy's (1988) role culture, in which communication is formalised and does not encourage independence or initiative. Systems in the school are organised in specific ways and any questioning of these traditions is almost frowned upon. Everything is formalised in such a way as to prevent any misunderstanding or change. Evidence for this includes the language used by the Head of School in individual interview (Appendix B). When explaining school procedures and

systems he referred to 'we' continually, for example 'that's the way we do things here', rather than personalising the information and using 'I'. I tried to encourage him to give his own opinions, but he made very few personal comments. This use of language is an attempt to reflect a common 'formalisation' and 'unquestioning acceptance' of the systems. There is, after all, a strength in 'we' since it implies more than one person. There is also an attempt to convey an implicit understanding that such commonly held ideas and systems are beyond challenge. This links with ideas concerning the unspoken values, ideas and assumptions of school cultures discussed in Chapter Two.

As discussed overleaf, pupils in the AB school are placed in groups according to CAT scores and examination results. Groups are labelled in alphabetical order A to E. Such an academic hierarchy perpetuates the myth of 'an elite body of knowledge'(Winter, 1989) to which few can contribute. Pupils are subsequently 'valued' in accordance with their contribution to this body of knowledge. There is evidence of this in the teachers' comments and in the language used to describe pupils (Appendix C). Pupils who have learning difficulties are by implication devalued in similar ways to those described in Chapter Two. These pupils struggle in a system which continually undermines their self-esteem and self-worth and which offers little relief, for example, in terms of the presentation of prizes for anything other than academia (Appendix C).

These are examples of the ways in which the school conceives of diversity as a 'problem' to be overcome rather than a cause for celebration. As discussed in Chapter Two, inclusive schools define differences as ordinary and value differences in a context of diversity. Stainback and Stainback (1990) describe inclusion as 'an enabling attitude'. Values and assumptions such as those discussed above reflect a disabling rather than an enabling attitude. Interventions involve the diagnosis and treatment of defects as in the medical model (Barton, 1988), rather than identification and removal of barriers to learning. This is stated by the Head of School in interview (Appendix B). Such diagnosis leads to a specific allocation of resources based on a deficit approach, and consequently perpetuates labelling strategies, rather than the development of inclusion (Johnstone and Warwick, 1999). Pupils in the AB school are labelled and categorised in

many ways, both formally and informally (Appendices B, C). Within such a system, it is the individuals who must change to fit the system, rather than the curriculum modified to meet diversity, as described by Hart (1996b) and Booth *et al* (1992a).

AB school is split site, the Lower School housing years 7& 8 and the Upper School, one mile away, housing years 9 to 13. The result of this is that pupils in the Lower School continue to play games in the playground much as they did in primary school, uninhibited and without the influence of the older pupils. Pupils who are playing games in the playground in year 8, change their behaviour when they arrive in the Upper School and can be seen huddled around in groups chatting much like the older pupils.

In exceptional circumstances, usually relating to illness or learning difficulties, pupils are retained for a year. Rachel, who is 13 and chronologically a year 8 pupil described the feelings that she has about repeating year seven in interview. She feels embarrassed, awkward and out of place. Evidence for this includes her behaviour at lunchtimes, an account of which can be found in Appendix D. 'I hate it in the playground because they are all kids there - playing games and stuff, it's childish' (Appendix E). In the interview she began by saying that she did not like her situation, by the end, when she had had time into reflect on and express her feelings she said 'I hate is here because I hate being in this 'hut''. The environment and its affects on pupils self-esteem will be discussed in the next section. She feels awkward about having to repeat year 7, as she is a mature girl, who is bigger than her peers. 'I am older than the others and I should be going up next year - but I have got to stay - I don't like it here' (Appendix E).

Reflection on Phase One

There are limitations to what I can do and how I can change things. As SENCO, I am a member of the middle management team. There is a small leadership team, comprising of the headteacher, one deputy, the examinations officer and the two heads of schools. The SENCO role is that of a senior head of department. All members of the leadership team and most members of the middle management team are established within the school and have been working there for at least 5 years, in many cases much longer. Estyn, 2003, commented that 40% of the staff had been at the school

for over 15 years and that over half of these over 20 years (Appendix d). Almost all the staff are well established and few leave for promotions or move to other schools. When I started my investigation, I was new to the school. In some ways this made my investigation difficult as I was not a well respected member of staff. However, it also gave me scope and the opportunity to make suggestions to implement new ideas. I was aided by the fact that at the time the role of SENCO was changing rapidly and that the LEA advisor had visited the school and reported that the SEN provision in the school and the SENCO role itself should be revisited in line with local and national policies. This had to be started before the OHMCI (OFSTED) inspection at the beginning of the following term. My appointment had been instigated by these events and there was awareness among the staff that changes had to be made. In this way I was appointed as a change agent.

As described above, the specific organisational culture of the school is such that change is extremely difficult to implement, as attitudes and beliefs may take many years to change. Therefore I was unable to get to the heart of the problem and change the school culture within the timescale of my project. Therefore, I decided to focus on the changes I could make with my year 7-8 English group. I decided to make a measured response, firstly by investigating the nature of the problem, the pupils and their attitude and feelings towards school.

Having reflected on the findings of Phase One, a number of factors emerged as strong influences on pupils' experience of learning in English lessons. The school's culture had an enormous impact on the pupils, in particular their sense of being valued equally as members of the school. As a result, the pupils felt undervalued and had low self-esteem in response to the organisational context. They had low expectations of themselves as they felt that others had low expectations of them. In class they were poorly motivated, over reliant on the teacher and constantly asked for support and reassurance.

Charlton and George (1993) suggest that we should consider pupils as partners in their learning. In order to respond to the difficulties pupils faced due to the organisational context of the school I tried to empower them by giving them a voice. If they felt that they had some power to discuss their true feelings and to change their situation, however small, they may begin to

feel better at school, more valued and more motivated to work at classroom tasks.

Chapter Six – Findings from Research Phase Two - Classroom based research, Cycles 1-4

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the findings from Research Phase Two. It is divided into six parts, firstly the Introduction, one on each of the four cycles of the investigation and finally a Conclusion containing a reflection on all four cycles of Phase Two.

The first cycle concerns the pupil experience and their views on their learning. In the second I consider how to develop tasks for diversity, in the third, improving participation in oral tasks and in the fourth and final cycle, working together.

Research Phase Two - Cycle One - The pupil experience of learning

Introduction

This cycle focuses on the pupils' experience of learning. The main themes which emerge include participation, pupils' views of their learning, pupil responsibility and empowerment, non- inclusive tasks and successful tasks.

Participation

In the group interviews the consensus was that pupils enjoyed reading. All felt that their reading had improved since being at the school and, as a result they had more choice about what to read. In the individual interviews, two mentioned that they enjoyed individual reading ' I like good stories that are funny or scary' (Appendix G). One pupil said 'I enjoy reading now because I know more words and have to ask less' (Appendix G) . The pupils said they enjoyed discussion in a large group with the teacher but not in a pair or a small group. Four said they enjoyed the more structured activities concerning comprehension, listening to a taped story and answering questions (Appendix F).

Pupils feel that they are sometimes given work that is too easy for them.

'Teachers all give us easy work as they think we're stupid' They do not like this because they feel its 'babyish' (Appendix G). Their perception is that

they have been placed in the bottom set because they are stupid. One pupil said 'I have always been in the thick group'. In the group interview they all agreed that they were in the 'thick' class (Appendix F). One pupil said that 'the teachers tell us we are not in the thick class, we are here because it takes us longer to learn things than the others'. Another said that 'the teacher only said that to make us feel better'. Only one paused for thought and gave a different view saying, 'if I was in the higher group I couldn't do the work' (Appendix G) .

All pupils said they found writing difficult but for various reasons (Appendix G). Two said they didn't like making up stories. Four said they didn't like writing because they their punctuation or spelling was not good. One girl said she didn't like writing stories because she couldn't decide what words to write down. She explained that she knows what to say but cannot write it down. She spoke to me quite coherently about how she felt you should make a story exciting. She showed her understanding by explaining to me that she thought that vocabulary, suspense and a good ending all make the story more exciting for the reader. All pupils in the group interview said they didn't like story writing because they didn't like spelling (Appendix F). However, in the observed lessons data shows that pupils were far more responsive in a lesson when they were discussing a creative writing task than when they were talking about a story (Appendix H).

Tasks and activities mentioned in the pupils letters were reading, listening to stories and answering them, speaking, pairwork, creative writing, poetry, comprehension, spelling, work sheets and games (Appendix I). The class completed five different tasks during the research period. Two listening and speaking, two writing and one spelling and comprehension task. The details of the data are found in Appendix J.

There was a diverse response to activities. In the first lesson, pupils spent twenty minutes in a group discussion with the teacher discussing a character from a story that they had read in a previous lesson. They were asked to role play a character. The response by each pupil is shown in Appendix J. Most of the contributions to this discussion were from three of the pupils. The others made some contributions, in some cases this was only one utterance. Having discussed this work the class set about a writing task in which they

write a letter from the character. Pupils were more responsive to the activities in this lesson than they were in the next lesson when they were discussing a story. Their response to these tasks were measured in several ways. The amount of time each pupil was 'on' and 'off' task was measured, both in terms of the exact sessions they were on and off task and the total amount of time each pupil was on and off task per lesson (Appendix J). In lesson one, all but one of the pupils were on track for fifteen minutes of the lesson and four concentrated for twenty minutes or more. In the second all but two were on task for more than ten minutes and only three for fifteen minutes or more.

In lesson two, during the pairwork activity on the comprehension, pupils started well but as they had said they quickly lost focus and concentration and started to involve themselves in other discussions. I tried to maintain focus by continually reminding them of the purpose of the task (Appendix H).

Pupils had said in the group interview that they disliked creative writing because it is boring, too hard or they don't know what to write (Appendix F). Generally, pupils concentrated better in speaking and listening than in other activities.

Their body language was more positive in the first lesson than in the second. Overall their participation was better in the first lesson. They were also more motivated and enthusiastic. This synthesises with their comments at interview (Appendix L), in which they said that they found the role playing a character more interesting because they could pretend they were the character and imagine what they would do. Another said that 'it was like real life'. They clearly saw this activity as linking to their experience and therefore they can become engaged more easily.

Pupils' views on their learning

The class like working in the classroom more than working at home, although a significant number said that they enjoyed taking reading books home and sharing them with brothers, sisters and parents (Appendices F,G). Most enjoyed individual work. Six mentioned that they found pair work hard because 'it is difficult to do the work without talking about other things'. Four mentioned they want good marks to do well and get a good

job. They enjoy reading spelling and punctuation and think that these skill are important. Seven mentioned that they needed to improve one of these skills (Appendix F). In their letters pupils mentioned several factors which influenced their learning. Parental expectations are an important factor. 'My Mum is pleased with my progress' and 'my Mum wants me to do well and I try to do my best' (Appendix G). Pupils were proud and felt an obvious sense of achievement 'I have improved my spelling and I can read long books now' (Appendix G). All their positive responses were in relation to written tasks or reading tasks and many referred to their marks, or teacher comments. None mentioned speaking or listening work, which is undervalued in many ways by these pupils. This theme is revisited later in the investigation. Relationships with teachers and school in general, including other lessons and subjects were seen as important in that they affected pupils moods and consequently how hard they worked during lessons. 'I work hard if I like the teacher' (Appendix G). Other pupils were mentioned, either in that it was difficult to concentrate when others were not behaving properly or that they could not work when they were upset or picked on by others in the class.

The ability to concentrate and persist in a difficult activity is also mentioned, 'If it is too hard I can't do my work and it is boring'(Appendix G). This was also linked to relationships with teachers by two of the pupils who said they wouldn't ask if they didn't like the teacher or if she was in a bad mood.

Most pupils showed an ability to take some responsibility for their learning because they were all clearly able to answer the question ' how could you do better?' in the interview and had set themselves targets for improvement. Two girls mentioned that they needed to improve by concentrating more (Appendix G). One girl explained how she wanted to get high marks 'for a good job when I leave school' (Appendix I).

In interviews the pupils highlighted several factors about which they were unhappy. Most centred around the fact that they were in the bottom group and see themselves as being stupid, thick and dull. They gave themselves the labels and said it before anyone else did. It was obvious that they were offended by these names as they were quick to mention teachers who suggested that they were stupid or different.

During an inspection two years later, Estyn commented that 'pupils of average to lower ability are insufficiently challenged' and that 'expectations of these pupils were not high enough, nor tasks challenging enough' (Appendix d).

Pupil responsibility and empowerment

In interview, pupils that they are rarely asked to give an opinion about their schooling. Indeed, they were deeply suspicious when I started asking for their thoughts about their schooling. One girl warned the others, 'Be careful! She's probably spying for the teachers!' (Appendix F). None had ever been asked to give an opinion on a lesson which they had had. They even got into a big discussion about how 'cheeky' it was to give a teacher an opinion. This was clearly not within their experience of learning, nor did it form any part of their expectations (Appendix F).

Neither did they see the importance of giving an opinion on their own performance. Eight out of twelve said that they sometimes were asked to complete an evaluation sheet or self assessment sheets in some subjects (Appendix F). According to school policy, all subjects should teach a core module, followed by some kind of evaluation or self assessment but this is not how pupils remember their work. Four pupils also mentioned that they were asked to give an account of their performance in a lesson where they had not done well (Appendix F). This kind of self appraisal is used by the school as part of a punishment as a precursor to being kept behind to finish work or being given more to take home to finish.

Pupils had never been asked to give an opinion on other pupils' work. They appeared to think that this idea was also stupid (Appendix F). This again is also clearly outside their expectations. They are conditioned to only voice their opinions at certain times and certain ways. Any thing else they feel is cheeky or rude.

In observation, pupils often used the excuse, 'Its boring' for not completing work (Appendix H). When asked later in interview if this was really their opinion, one boy replied that it usually meant that they could not be bothered to do the work, another said she did not want to be in school and another that she did not feel like reading or writing (Appendix G).

Pupils responded well to being genuinely asked what they liked and disliked, having firstly answered the questions about pupils voice and hence got over their initial suspicions. One girl even commented, 'This is great! Why can't we talk like that all the time?' (Appendix F). In the observed lesson following the interview pupil motivation and participation increased enormously for those parts of the lesson for which they had given their suggestions. Time on task was greater, their body language was more positive and they asked for teacher help and support less often (Appendix J). They were extremely keen at the end of the lesson to discuss how they felt it had gone and where it could be improved. In this lesson giving them a voice was seen to act positively towards making them more responsible for their learning and behaviour.

Non- inclusive tasks

Pupils explained that work was too difficult when there were long boring texts with no diagrams charts or pictures (Appendix M). They described and showed some examples of material which was easier. These included pages which were well set out, with diagrams and boxes giving key words and information. Two of them complained that the words on worksheets were often too difficult and that they needed to have the key words in front of them all the time. They did not understand as sheets badly produced with small type face and long sentences. Although they complained about 'babyish' work they did not mind sheets or material containing cartoons or pictures (Appendix M).

In observation sessions the observer commented on pupils' difficulties with several of the tasks or part of the task (Appendix O). However, one of the biggest difficulties pupils faced when challenged by tasks was the behaviour of other pupils in the group. All have fairly short concentration spans and limited attention and memory (Appendix O).

To achieve success in the tasks pupils wanted to see it from start to finish. Otherwise it makes little sense to them and they are not motivated to do things which appear to have no sense or purpose (Appendix M). Their memories are not good, so several interruptions during a lesson can result in their losing focus and track of what they should be doing (Appendix O). Some of the tasks were so long that the pupils lost concentration.

Pupils commented on several difficulties which relate specifically to the materials and tasks provided (Appendix M). Difficulties in written answers included pupils not knowing where or how to start in a task. This is triangulated in observation sessions, where some pupils spent a long time wasting time copying questions and underlining headings in colours (Appendix O).

Pupils also experienced problems with speaking tasks. In the observation lesson, one word answers were common and pupils were keener to answer questions they felt were safe to answer since they would get them write. These were most often factual. Pupils were reluctant to give their opinions and say why they felt certain things would have happened (Appendix O). Teacher questioning is significant to the overall response of the class. In the observed lesson, most questions asked in the class discussion were open. In small groups only a few pupils spoke in each group and this was not evenly distributed. Reading tasks or tasks which involved a substantial amount of reading also caused problems in the observed lesson for a number of reasons. Pupils struggled with text which included technical jargon and had a high reading age (Appendices O, P).

Worksheets caused many problems for pupils. Pupils said that keywords helped but were not always available. Pupils complained about work sheets which were badly produced and copied. Words were cut off the ends of sentences rendering it difficult to read. Non- inclusive worksheets included worksheets which were cluttered and busy. Worksheets which were easier to follow included those with clear print, diagrams and headings and were well spaced out (Appendix M).

The Estyn insection of 2003 reported that the work was not sufficiently differentiated to support the range of abilities and that insufficient consideration is given to the strategies which would enable average and lower ability pupils to reach their potential (Appendix d).

Successful tasks

When asked about their favourite lessons, pupils cited examples as diverse as making paper mache masks in art to preparing for spelling tests (Appendix M).

Four mentioned PSE lessons. They said that they enjoy talking about themselves and things which relate to their own lives (Appendix M). In the individual interviews pupils showed me examples of what they found easier. They liked the materials in PSE lessons, which are photocopied worksheets containing a mixture of facts and questions and which include cartoons, drawings and key information boxes. Five mentioned preparation for spelling tests (Appendix M). Booklets used here are designed for pupils in primary schools two to three years younger than those involved. They include cartoons intended for very young children. Activities are short and structured geared to practise the words. Perhaps they enjoyed these because they are easily achievable and they know what to do to succeed.

In the group interview, seven mentioned Art as a favourite lesson (Appendix M). Three mentioned a series of lessons where they made paper mache masks, this could be because this activity is a kinaesthetic 'hands-on' activity. Pupils felt they were part of the whole process. They planned, designed, made and evaluated their project as part of a larger project in technology. When asked what pupils disliked they only mentioned three lessons Science, History and RE. In Science they have to do a lot of writing which they don't always understand. RE was described as 'boring' and 'meaningless' and history because they always copy facts down (Appendix M). When asked, the teachers of these subjects claim that their overall achievement in all three was higher than in many other subjects except for Art and Technology. Their difficulty with this subjects was not therefore indicative of their achievement in the subject (Appendix Q). Things in common with all three subjects is that they do not relate to pupil lives and pupils cannot therefore make sense of them. In addition, each of subjects involved a lot of writing.

Pupils were more motivated to work during the observation lesson when I employed strategies such as using writing frames and adapted writing frames where pupils can place ideas in words or whole sentences in boxes. Some pupils used what was written in the frame as their written response to tasks, others went on to use it in writing more freestyle responses (Appendix Q). During this lesson pupils spent an increased amount of time spent on task, which was greater than for the first observation. Pupils made far more contributions to the class discussion, which took place in three sessions.

However, pupils also spent more time off task during these discussions. This triangulates with data collected at interview, where pupils said they enjoyed it more but were frustrated that they were unable to complete work or to keep up with the lesson. This left some pupils confused and unable to stay on task. In addition, pupils said that they were more motivated and keener to complete tasks (Appendix O).

They settled more quickly. This was apparent from the observation sessions, when less time was take to start the lesson and each task. Also, when they were asked to begin tasks they used fewer 'stalling' techniques and fewer pupils asked for help or said that they didn't know what to do. Their body language was more positive, there were fewer incidents of negative body language in the observed lesson (Appendix O). In addition, pupils were far more enthusiastic about the lesson following the intervention (Appendix O). More pupils were keen to comment and overall, there were more comments made during the lesson.

Reflection on Cycle One

The intervention in Cycle One was successful in that pupils' participation improved overall and 10 pupils made positive comments about the lessons. We felt that pupil motivation had improved through being involved and being given a voice. However, pupils still perceived that there were significant difficulties with some tasks in spite of the fact that these tasks had been differentiated appropriately. This perceived difficulty did not relate to their achievement. In addition, many were still reluctant to start without individual teacher reassurance and support. I felt that their perceived difficulties and requests for support had more to do with their self-esteem than with their ability. They felt undervalued and worthless within the school.

In observation I also noted that pupils lacked any idea of where or how to start activities. Some pupils commented that they did not know how to 'do' tasks or where to start. This indicated that they did not have the skills to complete the tasks in the way they were presented and they lacked the confidence to start independently. I felt that if their difficulties were related to a mismatch between task and skill, as suggested by Booth (1987), one way of improving their participation would be to try to identify their

preferred learning styles and to match the tasks set with these learning styles.

All pupils mentioned teachers as a significant factor in making work accessible. Many comments were extremely negative. Some pupils described some teachers as 'boring' and 'talking too much'. Others claim that they cannot do tasks when they are not explained properly by teachers or that, in their opinion, teachers expected too much from pupils because they expected them to do same work as pupils in the top sets and that this work was too difficult. Pupils said that some teachers continually nagged them to work and finish things when they felt they should be left to work at their own pace. They felt that their work was not of their best when they felt rushed (Appendix M).

Pupils complained bitterly about teachers who constantly ask them to do things which they feel they cannot do. One pupil said that after being told to do these things, they get 'shouted at' because they have not completed them, when really they do not understand what to do or where to start (Appendix M). In interviews, the pupils said that teachers gave them material that was too difficult and believed themselves to be 'too thick to do some tasks'.

Research Phase Two - Cycle Two - Developing tasks for diversity

Introduction

This cycle concerns developing tasks for diversity. It begins with an analysis of the skills required to complete a series of classroom tasks which took place over two weeks. The next theme concerns pupils' learning styles and the theme of the final section is matching pupils' skills and learning styles with classroom tasks.

Skills required in completing classroom tasks

Firstly I isolated the learning styles and skills of the pupils in my class and then tried to match the tasks and activities I gave to the pupils with these learning styles. In order to find out to what extent the pupils' skills matched the tasks in my lessons I looked at my lesson plans for two weeks (five hours) for the same year eight class in English. Over the five hours there appeared to be a good balance of skills. Pupils spent one hundred minutes listening to the teacher, seventy minutes writing, eighty-five minutes in discussion and twenty minutes listening to or giving presentations. I then

broke each lesson down into tasks and worked out how much time each pupil actually spent on each task over the two week period. Over the five hours pupils spent eighty minutes working individually. They spent fifty minutes in a pair or small group discussion and sixty-five minutes in whole class discussion. They spent the remaining time listening to the teacher speak (Appendix S).

As the final part of this task analysis, I separated the tasks out depending on the three 'channels', which are used, visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. The results were quite concerning as no balance was apparent between these three. In spite of my ongoing efforts to allow for a range of skills and abilities in my lessons, over these 5 hours 1 hour 10 minutes was spent on activities which used the visual channels, 3 hours 25 minutes were spent on activities which used the auditory channels and no time whatsoever was spent on kinaesthetic activities (Appendix S).

Pupils' learning styles

When interviewed individually (using Gardner's (1993) learning styles questionnaire as a guide) eight out of twelve pupils identified visual-spatial as their preferred style of learning and five out of twelve identified interpersonal intelligence (Appendix T).

In whole group discussion, the majority of pupils felt that they learned best when they were doing things (Appendix T). These comments synthesise with ideas discussed in the last section where pupils described one of their favourite lesson as Art, which obviously involves a clear kinaesthetic hands-on approach (Appendix M). It is important, however, to remember when considering these findings that these pupils have been placed in the bottom set as a result of examination results and that therefore their written skills are not as developed as others.

Matching pupils' skills, learning styles and tasks

Over the last two week observation period, of the five hours of English lessons, seventy minutes were spent on visual work and two hundred and five minutes on auditory (Appendix S). The pupils preferred learning styles are predominantly interpersonal and visual-spatial (Appendix T) which would indicate that they would learn best from looking at images, collaborative discussion, paired and small group activities, collaborative

learning and looking at issues from a number of perspectives and empathising (Smith, 1996). This synthesises with previous findings when pupils participated more when discussing aspects of a character (Appendix J). During the five hours they had spent only fifty minutes in small group discussion (Appendix S) and in observation it was clear that they did not enjoy this kind of work (Appendix U). For these lessons, neither the pupils' skills nor their learning styles matched the classroom tasks and activities asked of the pupils. This was reflected in their participation and their body language, which deteriorated over the lesson (Appendix V). Data from the observer's notes triangulated this, saying that pupils seemed restless and did not enjoy it at all (Appendix U).

Findings from the observation lesson showed that although the tasks and skills were carefully balanced for this lesson, pupil participation did not improve as dramatically as I had hoped (Appendix V). Since there were so many changes of task, instructions were complicated and pupils had to listen to instructions for some considerable time while these instructions were explained. The lesson required pupils to sit and listen for fifteen minutes. Observation shows that some pupils were finding concentration difficult, one pupil was reading, two were writing notes and three were drawing pictures (Appendix U). This is triangulated in pupil discussion, where many said that they had been listening but it was clear that they had not absorbed the content of the lesson since they could not answer even the most simple questions about the topic.

During the lesson there was a lot of time in which pupils were expected to listen, absorb the information and translate it into steps to do in order to complete the task. Pupils sat uncomfortably at the end of the explanation and did nothing. Many asked the teacher what to do. At one point in the lesson, pupils were unable to retain enough information to progress to the next tasks, use appropriate conversational skills to interact, listen and find material to support their points, recognise the literary devices and to transfer the techniques to their own writing (Appendix U).

Nevertheless, pupils participated well in the observed lesson. Their participation was better in the pairwork task than in a small group. This might have been because it was first. They made more contributions to classroom discussion, although they did not contribute as much as I had

hoped (Appendix V). In discussion at the end of the lesson, pupils were more motivated and said that they enjoyed it more (Appendix U). However, although the skills and tasks were better matched this did not make the big improvement that I had expected, particularly in speaking tasks.

Reflection on Cycle Two

On evaluation, it was obvious that pupil motivation had improved once more. Pupils were participating more overall compared to the last cycle and in this sense this success criterion had been met. The second success criterion, that pupils were aware of their preferred learning styles was also met. I asked pupils informally a week later and all had remembered their preferred style and had a clearer idea about why different tasks were easier or more difficult for them. Writing frames were a success for the group and all pupils agreed that written work was easier with a frame. Surprisingly, only one of the 12 pupils had ever seen a writing frame before. The frame allowed pupils to start and to structure their work without waiting for teacher intervention for reassurance. In this way they became a little more autonomous and there were fewer requests for teacher intervention, particularly at the beginning of the task.

Part of the success criteria was not met, however. Although there was an improvement in participation overall, there was no improvement in participation during speaking tasks. Given that most of the pupils (8 out of 12) preferred style of learning is through discussion and communication, their participation, autonomy and achievement should improve if they accessed tasks via speaking activities.

Research Phase Two - Cycle Three - Improving participation in oral tasks

Introduction

This cycle concerns pupils' participation in oral tasks. As their preferred style of learning was through communication, any improvement in their spoken participation should improve their motivation and self-esteem.

Speaking tasks

Interviews with pupils had suggested that they did not place much value on speaking tasks (Appendix M). The first stage in improving their oral

participation was to encourage pupils to place more value on oral work. In order to encourage pupils to value their speaking work firstly I showed them the criteria against which their work would be judged. Using information from the NLS and the NC levels I designed a 'speaking frame sheet' for pupils and spent part of several lessons explaining what it meant (Appendix X). I gave pupils examples of each level (Appendix X) and asked pupils to judge their own performance according to this criteria in speaking work and where appropriate, I also asked them to judge each others' contributions. Pupils were slow to take part in this exercise and needed a lot of support in the first lesson. In the second they were quicker and more enthusiastic because they felt more secure about what they were doing (Appendix Y). This sheet also served as a reminder to pupils that they needed to contribute in a number of ways. Pupils responded well to this method of judging each other's work and started to contribute more in lessons. Pupils made more contributions than previously, spent more time on task and were more enthusiastic to work (Appendix Z).

Findings from the interview session showed that pupils had little concept of any coherence between the skills in English. They thought of them as completely separate skills, totally unrelated to each other. Speaking and Listening were perceived as the least important of the skills. When asked why they rated these skills so low, nine pupils out of twelve said that it was because there was no concrete evidence to show for such work (Appendix W).

In the second lesson, pupils were more enthusiastic in the lessons and became more actively involved in what they were doing and produced better quality work when it was preceded by a discussion, in which the tasks and activities were put into context and the speaking part of the lesson was explained with reference to the whole task and was seen not as an isolated task but as an integral part of a larger task (Appendix Y). Observations took place of three small groups of pupils who were writing poetry during this part of the investigation. The pupils produced poetry work which was of a better quality and used more descriptive language than in the initial observation. My results also showed that pupil participation improved in these lessons, they showed more positive body language and finally

produced better quality and longer written work after the intervention (Appendix Z).

Following the intervention, the poetry they produced contained more adjectives and other poetic devices such as similes and was more complicated in structure than those produced previously. They proved their understanding of these devices in the plenary session (Appendix Y). However, the initial discussion was shorter and of the twelve pupils, three did not contribute at all, four made most of the comments and one only made a few supporting remarks.

Following the intervention and the extended discussion the pupils asked for teacher help three times, they did not stop working and all contributed to some extent. In their group conversations two pupils were leading, but the others were less reluctant to contribute and all made valuable comments (Appendix Z).

Pupils' contributions

As discussed in Chapter Three, pupils only have a limited range of opportunities to contribute to class discussion and that this range is quite narrow (Mercer, 1995). The NLS (National Literacy Strategy) outlines the range of opportunities to which pupils should be given to contribute in class as asking and answering questions, giving opinions, explaining, recounting and presenting ideas.

During the observation lessons I measured the pupils' contribution to discussion by using a simple tally chart. I used the range of categories listed above. This chart showed that by far the most contributions were answering teacher questions, no questions were asked by the pupils, two recounting ideas, seven explanations were offered and ten opinions were given. These opinions, however, were only offered if asked for by the teacher (Appendix V). These results synthesise with Mercer's (1995) theory that pupils only have a limited range of opportunity to contribute to discussion.

The pupils were given speaking frame sheets, which would enable them to contribute freely and in a variety of ways in line with the NLS. I included the five categories on the speaking frame sheet (Appendix X). In the observed lesson following the intervention some improvement was apparent but there were still two pupils who only contributed minimally in class

discussion. Pupils also contributed more widely across the range having been given the speaking frame sheets to use as a guide. Pupils participated more and made more contributions, both to class and small group discussion than they had done in the initial observation. They also appeared more enthusiastic and made more comments in each category (Appendix U). The biggest change was that pupils made more contributions in the 'explanation' and 'opinion' categories than they had before.

Reflection on Cycle Three

In interview, pupils had said that they did not consider speaking tasks as 'real work', which they defined by how much was written in their exercise books. These findings synthesise with those of the first cycle, where pupils widely felt that some tasks, particularly speaking were not 'work' and anything that counts as work had to be written down as if this was the only acceptable evidence of their effort. It did not matter to the pupils whether they completed the work themselves or copied it from the board or a worksheet. They felt that such written work was valued more highly than the most perceptive comment or discussion. Following the intervention, pupils were also placing more value on speaking work. This was evident through the increased number of contributions overall and through their comments at the end of the lesson (Appendix U). However, pupils were still asking for reassurance from the teacher. Although pupils were participating better in speaking tasks, their response was mainly in reply to teacher questions and they did not communicate well with each other. In this way they lacked autonomy as they were overreliant on teacher support. Their participation could be improved further if they were to take responsibility for their learning. This I felt could be achieved through promoting group work, where pupils could ask each other for support rather than constantly asking the teacher.

Research Phase Two - Cycle Four - Working together

Introduction

In the fourth cycle of my investigation, I considered ways of encouraging pupils to work together in more imaginative and flexible ways in order to match skills and improve the effectiveness of their learning (Appendix a). I tried to use some elements of scaffolding and peer support in order to extend

their learning. In the other cycles of my investigation, pupils had said that they did not like working in pairs or groups. I imagined this might be because this kind of work is often less structured than other kinds of work. I thought that I could encourage them to work together by matching pupils in pairs or small groups and training them to 'coach' or support each other as peer support.

Working together

I measured their participation, time on and off task and contributions during this task. I looked at their achievement at the end of the task during which most pupils showed some participation and motivation. This was apparent from the number of contributions they made, the time spent on task and their body language. In the observation lesson four out of the six pairs were motivated to work and participated well. The other two pairs needed constant support (Appendix Y). In the discussion following the lesson pupils said that they disliked being 'paired' and that they preferred to work with their friends. One girl pointed out that although they may talk more, if they were allowed to work with their friends, in her opinion, they would also work more (Appendix Z). I was a little disappointed that their participation had not improved more dramatically (Appendix Y). The second part of the task involved getting pupils to write a description themselves. I kept pupils in the same groups with the same coaches throughout. The coaches felt empowered as they knew, and had rehearsed, exactly what their roles should be. Most took their responsibility very seriously (Appendix b). Some pupils felt unhappy that others had been singled out, although I had tried to ensure that each person had a role, they felt that the situation had become a 'them and us' situation and that they were once again disempowered. This was obvious from their comments. Far from uniting the class and improving the quality of their discussion work, 'peer scaffolding' had temporarily reconstructed some of these barriers. These pupils are extremely sensitive to difference and division. I was extremely disappointed that this was not more successful as I had seen it as a way forward.

The findings show that they still do not work as effectively in small groups or pairs. They still describe this kind of work as the kind they least prefer and in many cases because of this they are not trying their best. Some pupils

were still very quiet and reluctant to speak and were carried by other, more outspoken members of the group (Appendix Y).

Encouraging pupils to work better in groups

Having been disappointed in my last attempt at encouraging them to work together, I looked for ways of improving participation by giving the group work a sense of purpose. In order to make this kind of work more meaningful for them I tried to give the talk more structure through jigsawing (Johnson and Johnson, 2000, Sebba, 1995) so that pupils knew exactly what was expected of them. Pupils were given roles, although I was sure to give them choices of roles so that none felt that they had been singled out for a lesser role as in the last session. Pupils participated more in this lesson, appeared happier and made more contributions.

Reflection on Cycle Four

Following this intervention, the success criteria were met in the following ways. The pupils spent more time on task during speaking work and they also asked for teacher intervention less often. Their attitude towards speaking work also improved, they made more positive comments about this part of the lessons. In interview, it was clear that they valued their contributions more than in previous cycles and that they saw that there was a relationship between speaking and other tasks and that they did not see these tasks in isolation. They were also able to justify their judgements using criteria from the National Curriculum. However, pupils participated less during small group and pair work than during whole class work, and at these times continued to ask for teacher support or sat quietly without starting, claiming that they did not know what to do.

It is possible that pupils did not know how to participate effectively in small groups and pairs. One way of improving pupils' independence and autonomy in these situations would be to try and provide them with a structure through which they can support each other.

The success criteria were met in that most pupils showed improved participation and motivation during this task.

In discussion pupils said that they felt that they had worked better and that they were successful in the lesson. These findings were triangulated by observation data which showed that each group made more contributions

during this activity than they had previously and each individual made at least ten contributions to the discussion (Appendix Z). In addition, their body language was more positive and more time was spent on task.

Pupils showed improved participation during the jigsawing exercise than during the peer support activity. Pupils were active participants not passive participants. Overall pupils contributed more to the jigsawing sessions than in earlier observations. Pupils made more contributions in a small group situation. Observation notes described them as showing improved motivation, enthusiasm, enjoyment and more positive body language. They asked for teacher help less often, only twice during the jigsawing activity and were even seen to ask each other for help (Appendix Y). These findings are triangulated by pupil comments at interview, in which they said that they felt happier because their group work had more structure.

Reflection on Research Phase Two – Classroom-based research

The culture and ethos of the AB school is hostile and resistant to change. Within the organisation, pupils are categorised and grouped in ways which affect their self-perception and participation. One of the most important themes to emerge from this part of my investigation is the extent to which I, as an individual, can improve their participation and create an inclusive environment within a non-inclusive school culture. The pupils' experience of learning reflects the way in which the school responds to diversity. To many, their experience and their views are valued in accordance with their position in the school. This raises questions concerning the extent to which pupils can be empowered to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour.

Sometimes classroom tasks and activities create barriers to learning. This can be due to a mismatch between the tasks and the pupils' skills. My investigation shows that even a difficult poetry topic can be made more accessible to pupils through matching pupils' skills and learning styles with activities through a flexible, imaginative methodology and through creating tasks which are pupil centred by using pupils' experience as a starting point for each activity. In this way connecting their experience and learning provided a positive improvement in their participation and the quality of their learning.

Throughout my investigation pupils constantly placed more value on certain tasks and skills than on others. In order to try to support them to achieve a higher level of oracy, I encouraged them to value speaking work more by asking pupils to make judgements about themselves and their achievements using the appropriate criteria. In this way, pupils' range of contributions improved. Pupils' dislike of working together in many ways impedes their progress and inclusion, as they are unable to use each other's ideas and experience to measure their own. However, their enthusiasm to work in groups improved dramatically when they were all given roles in the jigsawing activity.

Conclusion

Pupils' self-esteem is low and throughout the investigation they demonstrated an overreliance on the teacher, constant requests for reassurance and a reluctance to accept responsibility for their learning. By the end of the investigation they were participating more than they had at the start and they clearly enjoyed being given some choice in their learning. They were still reluctant to do so without a great deal of persuasion. In many ways their improved self-esteem was shown in their readiness to participate in tasks which was improved when they were able to rehearse and play specific roles within the group, as shown in the last cycle.

Chapter Seven – Reflection on Methodology

Introduction

This section contains a reflection on methodology in which I explain the choice of method, improvements that would have strengthened the investigation, the place of theory and practice and problems and dilemmas faced during the investigation. Finally, the dissemination of findings is considered, both within the school through the validation group and through the provision of in-service training for staff.

Methodology

I believe that the methodology chosen for this investigation was appropriate for the purpose and context of the research, because it is designed as a small scale piece of practitioner research with many features of action research. The synthesis between the 'action' and the research was vital in achieving

educational improvements. During my investigation I tried to embody my educational values and to put them to the test of practice (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). I took steps to ensure that the methodology was rigorous and valid, such as developing a small, critical, self reflective community with my critical friend and the validation group.

In future investigations I would ensure that the culture of the setting was less resistant to change before I designed the investigation. I designed the investigation as practitioner research as it fell short of pure action research. This was mainly because the school culture meant that the level of collaboration was limited and that any suggested changes would not be readily embraced by the staff.

I would also investigate different ways of measuring participation and engagement as I feel that although levels of pupil participation were measured, my methods were not refined enough to distinguish subtle differences in their involvement in tasks, such as simple task completion, being 'on task', active participation, engagement or 'flow'. I would consider different methods of interviewing, particularly with small groups as sometimes the pupils gave very similar, short answers. Future research could focus on ways in which pupils can work together more effectively. Although this was one of the themes of the last cycle of my investigation, the focus of this phase was the materials, tasks and activities rather than the pupils themselves.

Theory and practice

Many interpretative researchers claim that theory follows practice. Potts (1998) states that 'theory has not life without experience'. Winter (1998) defines theory as 'speculative play with possible general explanations of what we experience and observe'. Mercer (1995) uses the term to describe the wider background context to his work. He sees the role of theory as threefold. He claims it 'sets the agenda for the research, generates kinds of questions and provides a 'universe of discourse' within which discussion of the findings can take place.' This view implies that theory must precede practice, as it is such theory which guides the action. Within this 'universe of discourse', even theoretical frameworks, which are rejected by

researchers, are important in the sense that they inform the 'theory' or motivate the researcher to negate them.

Any investigation must be based around a general concern as the researcher must have identified a problem and, in the case of practitioner or action research, must have imagined what could be perceived as a solution or a number of solutions (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982). In spite of its exploratory nature, the researcher critically thinks through a number of possible solutions, which will improve the situation and answer the research question.

This is similar to Whitehead's (1993) notion of 'living theory'. The reflexive practitioner, has a broad idea or intuition of what might improve the situation. This argument takes the discussion firmly back to the subjective-objective debate discussed in Chapter Three. It is extremely difficult in some situations to be objective about issues concerning one's professional life. Becker (1971) talks about 'making the familiar strange' or trying to maintain distance between oneself and the subject of the investigation. This was my dilemma, as decisions and actions are informed by the belief that one is the product of one's learning and past experience. This mirrors the ontological belief that there is no 'hard', 'external' reality, which is independent of the knower.

Problems and dilemmas

There are many ethical issues associated with practitioner research. It is important to be aware of the ethics of teaching (McNiff, 1988). Throughout my investigation I was committed and had a thinking awareness. I continually asked questions about my situation as I tried to improve it. I felt strongly that I could not accept a situation in which my personal and professional values of equality of access and opportunity and the valuing of diversity were denied.

The dilemma was that because the problem was brought to the foreground in collaboration with a number of other participants (the learning support group), there were implications elsewhere in the school as the solution and improvements towards which I was working were very different from the established status quo. Some pupils therefore may have had expectations that things would change throughout the school in a similar way. It was

important to recognise and expect that some other members of staff would feel it inappropriate that pupils began to question established procedure and status quo. This problem may be particular to my school, where there is a particular and hierarchical traditional school culture as discussed earlier.

In addition, I encouraged pupils to critique my professional practice as part of my work. This did not only affect me as the teacher operating in my classroom. It could be said that such discussion of shortcomings lowered the image of the profession and volunteered criticism elsewhere in the school. There was always the potential of conflict between critical openness to pupils and a respect for the professional expertise of my colleagues.

Dilemmas are above all a clash of professional values between two groups of people. Sometimes this clash is between the dominant culture and the 'other', new kinds of ways of thinking which are seen to threaten the established 'status quo'. In a school such as the AB school where there is a dominant and traditional culture, there were many such clashes, some of which people were not consciously aware. In situations such as this it was important to be aware of, and honest about, the underlying interpersonal conflicts which may exist. Indeed, as an individual, I faced a dilemma between respect for the hierarchical structure of professional authority and the value of critical openness.

For the same reason, there was a possible risk of tension in sharing data with my colleagues as my work identifies a problematic area of practice, the solution to which was counter to the established culture. In order to try and overcome this I tried to adopt a professional development perspective.

I was in a favourable position when I undertook the study, in that I had recently joined the school and was not therefore part of the culture. Had this been the case it would have been more difficult to maintain objectivity or distance in order to assess the situation. In addition, I would have had to further consider my value position in relation to my part in the school culture. As I was still perceived as the 'new' member of staff, I was not regarded as part of the established culture or of the value system of the school. It is important to consider my values in relation to, and not as part of the school's culture frame.

Dissemination

My research also enabled me to reflect further on my own epistemology of practice. Such reflection has led to an improvement in my own understanding and the development of my active role, which in turn, has led to a change in practice to bring about improvement in my own institution. The validation group have been instrumental not only in shaping my ideas and offering critical support and advice during the course of the action research investigation, but they have also played an integral role in disseminating the ideas and promoting them into everyday practice. Their empowerment has thus been the key to the continued success and development of the project across the wider curriculum.

Through my involvement with professional development and as a provider of INSET, both in my LEA and for external bodies, I will disseminate my findings to a wider audience and, in this way I hope to make improvements to local and national policy and practice.

Conclusion

One of the outcomes of my research has been to instil a more positive attitude towards learning, to add to pupils' intrinsic enjoyment of learning and hence to improve their achievement. The outcomes of this investigation were positive for this group of pupils. In addition, I have improved my professional practice and I became aware of the extent to which the SENCo can contribute to teaching and learning within a school. Although the school culture prevented me from realising this at the AB school, this is an important message to take to future schools.

Chapter Eight – Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter contains three sections; the analysis, discussion and conclusion. I have subdivided the analysis into four sections, each of the first three focuses on one of my three research questions and the final subsection is a reflection of practice.

The organisational context and culture has a profound effect on the pupils' behaviour, motivation and attitudes towards school. The use of labelling and language by members of the school and the way in which pupils are grouped

reflect widely held values and this is a measure of the way in which the school responds to diversity. The section on the learning experience of the pupils includes discussion on the pupil voice, what affects their learning, their understanding of how they learn, whether they are empowered to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour and how their learning is connected to their experience. Pupil participation is affected by many factors, including the ways in which are encouraged to 'show they know', how tasks create barriers to learning and how they can be made more accessible. Participation in speaking tasks and groupwork is an important area as these pupils have difficulties with basic literacy. In the next section, I reflect on my professional practice as I strive towards an epistemology of practice.

Finally, the conclusion contains a summary of the investigation and consideration of the implications for the school, the wider context and myself. In the conclusion I identify further questions for investigation and consider how my findings link to current thinking. In the addendum I explain how the key messages from this investigation have helped me in my new school.

How do the features of school impinge on pupil participation and inclusion?

The organisational context of the school

The features of school impinge on pupil participation and inclusion in many ways. The AB school's organisational response to diversity is a key issue in my investigation as it is a way of of gaining an insight into the extent to which it values its pupils and demonstrates how it encourages or discourages inclusion. Schools which respond to diversity are more effective for all pupils (Ainscow, 1995).

The value set to which the school espouses is classical humanist or subject based (Smith *et al* 1998). This is demonstrated through the school's ideology, strongly reflected in its organisational structure (Hargreaves 1997, Handy 1988). It has a significant influence on stakeholder attitudes, values and ideologies, which in turn affect pupils' self-esteem, motivation and participation.

Torrington and Weightman (1993) describe such a culture, demonstrated through norms and values, which are continually modified through practice. This they describe as the organisational framework in which members of the organisation feel secure for some. However, in some cases, the reverse is also true and such assumptions, norms and values lead to feelings of devaluation and insecurity. The section on the organisational response to diversity in Chapter 5 provides evidence of how this is true in the AB school and leads me to believe that the existence and perpetuance of such assumptions and values contribute daily to pupils' negativity and disaffection towards some parts, if not all of their schooling. This is seen in the way in which pupils 'other' groups of pupils in the higher streams and classes and in the language used by the staff.

Pupil groupings

The AB school responds to diversity by placing pupils in groups according to age and ability as described by the Head of School in Appendix B. Such ability ranking is just one of the ways in which the organisational culture of the school has created a climate which does not value diversity and in which pupils feel devalued and are prevented from learning (Booth *et al*, 1987). Pupils in the group interview showed how they felt useless and stupid (Appendix F) or feel that there was 'something wrong with them' (Appendix E). The situation of difference and incompatibility is then perpetuated throughout every aspect of school life. Once set, groups remain together for all formal and informal parts of the curriculum subjects. The system allows for pupils to move between sets after each series of school exams. However, in reality, there is a minimum amount of movement. The Head of Lower School explains his views in interview,

'In reality, only a few pupils are moved each time. It would be possible to move borderline pupils up and down many times, we try not to do this too often because it is not good for the children.' (Appendix B).

The distinction between pastoral and curricular structures is significant in trying to understand the way in which the school encourages or discourages the participation of pupils (Booth, 1998). As a result of the organisational system of setting and the emphasis on the academic, in the AB school, pastoral matters traditionally take a low profile and until recently there was

no pastoral structure. In part, this is because of the split-site nature of the school. In interview the Head of Year explains that the tutors never meet as a group and that often they do not have the opportunity to take the register every session, as sometimes staff are placed by the timetable on the wrong site. The Estyn (2003) insection report identified this as an area for development as they felt that tutorial time was not used effectively and that the mentoring scheme was not embedded (Appendix d).

Pupils in group interview gave clear messages about how they felt being in their class. They said they felt useless, thick, and stupid, some even said that some teachers made excuses for them to make them feel better (Appendix F). One pupil in interview explained how she felt alienated and different because of the position of the classroom in which she was taught (a prefabricated building positioned on the other side of the playground)
'I hate it here because I hate being in this 'hut'. It's horrible and cold and wet. It's away from everyone else in the big building. Like there's something wrong with us, out of the way', (Appendix E) Rachel, in Appendix D wanders around the playground at lunchtime but does not mix, in spite of the fact that she is very sociable within my classroom.
One way of establishing how a school responds to diversity is by finding out how its resources are allocated (Johnstone and Warwick, 1999). The LEA allocates resources to statemented pupils and the school follows this model. Traditionally in the AB school, pupils are identified by the SENCo, and diagnosed by the educational psychologist. Those identified and labelled as needing 'extra help' are assumed to need something other than the 'ordinary' curriculum and are placed in the lowest set, sometimes with additional help.

Resources are targeted at such pupils and are deployed in setting up alternatives to the ordinary curriculum rather than enriching and enhancing standard provision. On the one hand, this can be seen as directing necessary resources in the areas where it will make a difference and improve the experience of school for those youngsters. Unfortunately, due to the school culture, it further devalues diversity and perpetuates the 'them and us' culture. In interview, the Head of School explained how resources are allocated to these pupils. His language whilst explaining this point is curt and precise as if his opinion is not to be questioned. At the end of his answer

he says three short sentences which serve to prevent any challenge or further discussion, 'That's the way we do things here. It works for us. We are happy with it' (Appendix B).

Systems of identification, diagnosis and allocation of additional provision go back to the medical model (Barton, 1988) and allocation of provision following the Warnock report (1978), which emphasised that some needs are greater than others and to those extra provision was allocated. Such identification and diagnosis also links with issues concerning categorisation and can make the social and educational experience of pupils very different from their peers. This can be clearly seen in the interview with one of the pupils, where she discusses her unhappiness at being labelled, segregated and seen to be taught in another part of the school (Appendix E).

Pupils who require 'extra support' are taught core subjects in small groups. Having been placed into sets as described above, the bottom set is divided into two groups, those who are 'special needs' and those who are thought not to require help. This is described in interview with the Head of School (Appendix B). Issues relating to the accessibility of the environment include the appropriateness and suitability of the classrooms. Pupils with learning difficulties are not taught in specialist rooms as other groups, but are taught most subjects in the 'Special Needs Classroom', situated in a hut at the far side of the playground. Although this may be seen as an attempt at sensitivity, one of the factors which may prevent learning is inaccessibility of the environment. The analogy of the 'outsider' is reinforced by the position of this classroom which is outside the main building, in an old prefabricated classroom. In this way, the organisational culture of the school is excluding and so is the physical location of the area. This accentuates pupils' feelings of alienation and lowers feelings of self-esteem. The pupils describe being seen going to lessons in the 'hut' as embarrassing. In interview one pupils said 'I hate being in this room. I know I need help, it's just being in this room that I hate. It's walking across the yard when all them can see us' (Appendix F). The symbolic walk across the playground further fuels the established 'them' and 'us' culture and reinforces their self image as 'outsiders'. Estyn inspectors (2003) commented on this prefabricated building as one of the shortcomings in accomodation which adversely impacts on the life and work of the school (Appendix d).

Organisational context can lead to an almost subconscious devaluation and of particular groups of the school population, as discussed in the Literature Review. Simple organisational features of the school environment, such as the lessons in the 'hut', or unconscious messages permeated through the school culture can have a deep impact on pupils. Organisational culture can lead to a sense or feeling of 'unfitness', fuelled by cultural norms which develop over a period of time, such as those described by Cooper (1993). The implication of a norm unfortunately is that things that do not match or fit easily into the framework are outside and not normal.

Language and labelling

One way of conceptualising how a school responds to diversity is through the language used to categorise pupils (Hart, 1996b). The language used by the Head of School in interview to describe group changes following an annual series of examinations is 'promotion and demotion' (Appendix B). These terms are a clear example of the academic, hierarchical organisational culture and values of the school and imply a higher and lower status within the school. Pupils are promoted to a place in which they can contribute more to an 'elite body of knowledge' (Winter, 1998) and vice versa. Ability ranking makes pupils feel devalued (Booth *et al*, 1987) as demonstrated in the group interview (Appendix F) and the simplistic nature of the terms 'promotion and demotion' further undervalues differences.

There is a strong tradition of categorisation and labelling within the AB school. Pupils are labelled both formally and informally, by both staff and pupils. Staff informally refer to pupils as 'weak' and having 'no shape' which is a colloquial way of saying that pupils are unable to complete work at their teachers perceived, acceptable level. (Appendix C). In Appendix E a pupil says that the 'others' call her and her friends names. The problem with such categorisation is that there is a strong feeling of 'normal' and 'less than normal', which perpetuates a 'them and us' culture.

The school categorises pupils as 'statemented', 'Special Needs', 'bottom set' and 'dyslexic or reading difficulties'. Informal and sometimes derogatory categories are also sometimes used within the staff to describe pupils who experience barriers to learning. Categorisation and labelling

reflect staff and pupil expectations which are strongly linked to the schools underlying philosophies and ideologies as discussed in Chapter Two. In the staff room teachers discuss pupils with learning difficulties with pity, even the Head of Year in interview says they 'weak' (Appendix C). No qualifying noun is used to describe what pupils are weak at. The implication is that if a pupil is in the bottom set, they are poor or weak at everything. On the other hand, those who are in the top set and are more successful at schoolwork are referred to as 'good', 'Joanne's a good girl really' (Appendix C).

Informal labelling or name-calling is rife amongst pupils and the names chosen usually reflect placement in the academic hierarchy. Rachel, in interview, says she gets called 'nasty names' by other pupils. This has contributed to her disaffection and her dislike of school, 'I hate it here' (Appendix E). Pupils with learning difficulties are often called names such as 'thick', 'remedial' and 'mong' so many times that they devalue themselves and call themselves names. This is demonstrated in interview when pupils refer to themselves as 'stupid' and 'thick' (Appendix F). In spite of this outward show of not caring, the pupils are deeply affected by the reaction of other pupils. The feeling among them is that once placed in the bottom set you are labelled as failing and will never move up a set. However, some pupils have clearly thought it through and they realise they may have problems in other groups, 'Anyway, if I was in the higher group I could not do the work' (Appendix F).

What is the experience of learning of the pupils in my year 7-8 English class?

Pupils' opinions

Staff do not appear to respond positively to suggestions from pupils or parents nor do they encourage pupil advocacy. Pupils in interview (Appendix F) say that they are not encouraged to give their views; in fact they are actively discouraged from doing so. This makes pupils feel disempowered. The same pupils gave some good reasons why this would be a good idea, for example because they would be able to learn from each other. The inability of the staff to accept challenge also links with issues discussed in the literature concerning role culture (Handy, 1988).

One of the most important factors in empowering pupils is to give them a 'voice' (Charlton and George, 1993). In line with Charlton and George's findings, my investigation also found that pupils felt that teachers did not listen to them and that they did not have any right to express an opinion on their learning. Several perceived making comments about their learning to a teacher as being cheeky or rude and they felt that if they did so, they would get into trouble with their teachers. When I explored the reasons for this during the group interview (Appendix F), it was clear that this kind of interaction was not within the pupils' experience and did not form part of their expectations.

This links with ideas discussed previously considering the organisational structure of the school (Hargreaves, 1997, Handy, 1988). The school culture, the expectations of the stakeholders in the school, staff, pupils and others is such that any suggestion or opinion put forward by a pupil is treated with suspicion and distrust. Control is clung onto desperately by key staff and managers of the school, for whom there is a real fear of change in case this control is lost.

Giving pupils a voice and demonstrating to them that their views were valued certainly improved their participation and motivation and helped them to regain control. Initially, pupils were disinclined to believe me when I asked for their comments and views. They displayed deep distrust and suspicion. I feel that this is again indicative of their self-perception, lack of self-esteem and their discomfort within the organisation.

Expectations

Teacher expectations and opinions have an inflated importance to these pupils, who referred to teacher expectations as part of every answer in both individual and group interview. In many ways, this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as pupils achieve in line with teacher expectations. Pupils in Jones and Quah's study (1996) also related issues preventing them from learning to teacher expectations, for example being told off for doing wrong without being told why, being taught by uncaring, impersonal teachers, being called names, blamed for things and labelled as trouble.

Pupils' perceptions of their teachers' expectations can lead to feelings of alienation, devaluation and disaffection (Coulby, 1987, Booth et al 1987,

Wright 1987, Jones and Quah 1996). In my study, feelings of being labelled as of low ability led to feelings of devaluation and in some cases negative attitudes. Findings also show how this can sometimes cause a climate of a conflict and relationships between pupils and teachers can become increasingly tense as the expectations of both teachers and pupils are modified in line with this climate. In some lessons this has prevented pupils from learning. Relationships with others, teachers and pupils, personality and mood, emotions and feelings were seen to have a profound impact on the learning and expectations of the pupils in my class as in Charlton and George's study (1993).

Personality clashes between pupils or between pupil and teacher create negative feelings by causing friction and causing pupils to focus on disagreements rather than on the classroom tasks. Teacher expectations can therefore inhibit inclusion in many ways. Teachers' perceptions of inclusion, their attitude towards pupils, access to resources and teacher's knowledge and skills are vital (Hegerty et al 1996).

Cooper (1993) claims that disaffected students respond when they feel secure, valued and respected. As discussed in previous sections, the pupils' self-esteem is strongly affected by the organisational context of the school and whether the pupils feel valued and respected. In my investigation, pupils who felt undervalued often looked for ways in which they could avoid work. Sometimes these norms create feelings of tension and anxiety and this, in turn, affects pupils' moods and learning. Emotional intelligence theory (Smith, 1996) claims that in order to learn effectively, pupils' feelings and emotions should be linked with their learning. The hierarchical, academic organisational culture of the school is such that it perpetuates the devaluation of pupils and feelings of worthlessness, thus preventing pupils 'connecting' their learning and therefore undermining inclusion.

Pupils' understanding of how they learn best

Pupils' participation improved when they understood that people learn differently and that there are a range of different learning styles (Gardner, 1993). Pupils in observation sessions were seen to be looking for different ways to learn and 'do' tasks, and to demonstrate their knowledge. Pupils were observed independently making suggestions for presenting their

understanding of a poem as 'a poster', 'a letter' and 'a rap' in the same lesson. This links with the concept that difficulties in learning arise due to a mismatch between tasks and skills of the pupils and that one way of overcoming this is to try to match the teaching and learning styles, for teachers to consider changing their delivery or teaching style (Booth and Coulby, 1987).

Pupils' perception of learning was that it is all in isolation. They deliberately compartmentalised the work they did and saw it as unrelated to work they had done either before or after. They blamed the teachers for this and said that they did not understand how things strung together because the teachers confused them (Appendix M, W). They knew that each subject was taught in topics and that all activities related to these topics but often failed to see the relationship between the two.

Pupils' participation improved in line with concepts of metacognition and mismatch. This was clear from the observation sessions in the second cycle, in which pupils spent more time on task (Appendix O,P). This is because they felt empowered and confident in what they were doing as they were given an overview of the whole topic, together with activities, pupils were more confident in what they were doing and why. This synthesises with concepts of Charlton and George (1993). Discussing the precise relationship of each task, activity and discussion and linking it to past experience enabled pupils to see the relationship between the concepts and tasks more clearly.

How is their learning connected to their experience?

Pupils may be more motivated if they believe that they have something to give to their learning, that their experience is valued by others and is connected to their learning. One of the reasons that pupils encounter difficulty in school is because of an inability of teachers to provide meaningful and relevant experiences for them (Ainscow 1998).

Booth *et al* (1998), in their study into the Richard Lovell School found that pupil participation improved when lessons were linked to pupil experience. This synthesises with findings of my investigation, where pupils worked better when they were more involved in their learning. Connecting their learning to their experience, past and present, and to their feelings and

emotions enabled them to give their learning a sense of purpose, thereby making it a more meaningful, relevant experience. Evidence of this is apparent from their answers in the first interviews about their experience of learning. Pupils quoted PSHE as one of their favourite subjects because,

'We talk a lot about useful stuff, about what we feel and think and do. We talk about us, our friends and what we do outside school. I like this it's not a waste of time' (Appendix F).

Pupils felt that their comments in this subject were valued and they said they were comfortable to talk about anything and share their experiences with anyone. They not only relate to the topics studied in PSHE, but can also see its purpose. These ideas also link with those concerning emotional intelligence in which we need to be able to be able to connect our feelings and emotions with our learning in order to recognise its sense and purpose. In order to be strongly motivated we have to feel strongly (Schilling, 1999). When this is the case, as in the above examples from PSHE lessons, pupils are keen to participate more in the lessons. Here pupils used what they brought to the lesson, that is their experience, as a starting point, and continually related what they are learning to their own, and others, relevant experience. From these examples it was evident that there were clear connections between pupils' feelings, reasoning and motivation.

How pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour.

This concept of pupil empowerment and partnership underpins my whole investigation and forms the conceptual framework which links the other key concepts and ideas. Charlton and George (1993) claim that pupils' learning is improved when they are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour. They suggest further that we should consider pupils as partners in their learning. Pupils in my study did not feel that their learning was a partnership. This is shown from many of their comments made in interview, for example,

'They (the teachers) tell us what to do and we are supposed to do it. Why? Sometimes it's just a waste of time and a load of rubbish. You can't say 'why? What's the point in doing that? It's boring. They just get mad and start shouting - I am the teacher....

Even when the whole class says things it doesn't make any difference. They give us even more rubbish work.'

(Appendix M)

Comments such as this showed that pupils felt that their learning was a shared experience with each other, but not with the teacher. They felt disempowered, making comments about what 'they' (teachers) do to 'us' (pupils). In this way, pupils perceived all the power and control to be with the teachers. Furthermore, their comments indicated that they often saw this as pulling in different, opposing, directions, as if by necessity their expectations had to be opposing those of their teachers. Comments such as those above and others in Appendix M are examples of how pupils appeared to be trying to empower themselves and to give themselves a sense of control by describing the situation in oppositional terms, in which the teachers were the 'bad guys' who 'made' the pupils do things which they perceived as 'useless' and 'pointless' for no apparent reason. In addition, creating an atmosphere of opposition and tension gave pupils more power together, as a group, and they fed on the sense of belonging and togetherness that this brought them by 'othering' different groups in the school. In addition to 'othering' teachers in interviews (Appendix M) they also talked about the 'A' classes, the top sets and pupils in other year groups in these terms, for example,

'She (the teacher) expects us to do the same as them (the pupils in the top set). How are we supposed to do that? They are brainy and swotty. We are not like them' (Appendix M)..

However, when these discussions occurred during interview, pupils referred to few specific instances. In all group discussions and sometimes in observation, a few words from one of the group were enough to 'fuel the fire' and others would quickly follow. One of the most difficult aspects of my investigation was trying to empower pupils by changing these perceptions and to encourage pupils to think of school as less a 'them and us' culture but as more of a 'sharing of knowledge'.

Pupils in the investigation were extremely insecure in their learning. This is another of the many ways in which they displayed their feelings of powerlessness. During the initial observation sessions, many were reported

as needing continual reassurance that they were on the right track and that their answers were correct (Appendix K).

Pupils made many useful comments concerning what they liked to learn, the activities and tasks they preferred and how they wanted to learn, which we discussed as a group (Appendix M). Pupils' participation improved most dramatically in those lessons following interviews where pupils had given their opinions and made choices concerning their learning. This was because pupils saw that their suggestions and comments were being valued and informing the planning and preparation of lessons. In this way pupils felt empowered in a way which was previously outside their experience. Some pupils took on an increased responsibility for their learning as they had had the opportunity to become involved and had had a choice. This provided pupils with more security and they felt happier because they understood more about what, why and how they learning. In the final interview, pupils were extremely positive about this aspect of their work. All pupils said that they felt it was an improvement and all said they looked forward to their next English lesson.

To what extent do this group of year 7-8 pupils participate in their own learning?

Pupil participation

In my rationale in the introduction to the project I outlined my definition of participation, which involves concepts of 'engagement' and 'flow'. I said that it was easy to contain pupils but more difficult to engage them. My findings indicate that the pupils in my study, however, do not like to be 'contained'. This synthesises with the views of Csikszentmihalyi (1990), discussed in the Literature Review, specifically his theory of 'flow'. In interview, pupils complained bitterly about teachers who gave them 'babyish' work, such as the kind of work that would be given to contain them. Their assumption is that they are given this work because the teachers think they are stupid.

How are pupils encouraged to participate in their learning?

Pupils participated more when teachers were purposeful, enthusiastic, gave clear directions and made efforts to link lesson activities to pupil experience (Booth *et al*, 1998). They commented that they were asked to do silly things

that were a waste of time and they mentioned several subjects where they felt they did 'useless things'. They related more easily to learning in terms of its outcome and talked about subjects and specific lessons they had enjoyed only in terms of the outcome of the lessons. In my investigation their need to see positive proof of their efforts and to have clear outcomes which they understand and to which they can relate was vital to their motivation and participation.

How do tasks create barriers to learning?

The kinds of tasks which pupils were expected to complete, and the way in which they were presented promoted or undermined inclusion in a number of ways. Activities which involved worksheets or texts prevented participation for a number of reasons. Pupils did not like to feel patronised by being asked to complete work which was too easy or involved texts or worksheets which obviously were aimed at younger pupils due to their large font, childish cartoon pictures or easy language.

However, pupils also complained when the text or the worksheets were too difficult, the explanations and instructions on the worksheets too difficult or when worksheets or texts involved long boring texts with no chart, diagram or pictures. Pupils were extremely sensitive to being labelled. Although feeling insulted when work is presented as for pupils younger than themselves, they also feel threatened and angry when the work is too difficult. At different times in the pupil interviews pupils both said that they wanted to be treated like the others and that they didn't like being treated differently and how could they possibly be expected to do work the same as the higher groups. If the task presented as too easy or too difficult, pupils had an immediate, preconceived idea of whether they would be able to complete it or not and react accordingly. Their expectations of the task in this way depended on how the task was presented not on the content of the task itself.

These preconceived ideas come from their previous experience of learning when they have been given work of which they felt incapable or when they have failed to complete exams or worksheets because they did not understand what to do. Having been given such work several times in the past, especially during exams has increased their sensitivity and their

immediate reaction when even such a worksheet is 'I can't do it' .Where difficult or complex ideas were presented to him on a text or worksheet which appeared more accessible, pupils were more inclined to attempt it. This is shown in my investigation where pupils completed work on a poem entitled 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', which they had previously found too difficult to attempt.

The idea that pupils were reluctant to engage themselves and participate in tasks which they found too easy or difficult synthesises with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory of flow. Where pupils experience a low challenge they did not participate as readily. When pupils experience a high challenge with low interest, they did not want to participate. However, when the conditions were right, when pupils had a high interest level and a high challenge, they participated more fully and engaged themselves in their work.

Within the class settings, teachers aim to differentiate for differences in attainment through resources. This does not always happen for many reasons, including financial constraints, class size and the environment. Lack of differentiation is a significant factor in impeding or denying access to the curriculum for pupil with learning difficulties. The implication is that learning difficulties are regarded by the staff as a problem for the individual, rather than as a mismatch between learner and the curriculum (Booth *et al*, 1992a) (Hart, 1996b). In the 2003 Estyn inspection, it was reported that teachers did not differentiate adequately within groups (Appendix d).

UNESCO (1993) researchers also concluded that when pupils do not have control over a task they refer constantly to the teacher for help. This is a self- perpetuating cycle since through their constant demands for help pupils do not build up the skills within which they can manage their own learning. In the second observation session pupils were seen to constantly ask for assistance and, although their body language was positive, they were less focused and spent longer off task than in the first observation session. The pupils' demands for help were mainly for reassurance rather than because the pupils were genuinely stuck. Pupils also said that they preferred to work in school, rather than at home (Appendix F). The reason for this may also be because they do not feel they have control over their work and they are not secure in the tasks set.

How to make tasks more accessible?

Pupils do not participate fully when they find work too challenging or too difficult. They find many things difficult, particularly creative writing. This may be because some creative writing tasks lack purpose as suggested by UNESCO researchers (1993). This is demonstrated in the findings, where pupils were seen to contribute more enthusiastically to a group conversation when discussing a character's feelings (Appendix F). The purpose of the task was clear, pupils could easily empathise and role play the main character and describe his feelings since they had prepared well in the discussion and related the events to their own experience. The lengthy discussion observed in the first half of the first lesson which preceded this task and to which all pupils contributed meant that the meaning of the tasks was stressed and pupils were encouraged to role play the character. Such an approach is similar to the scaffolding technique of Bruner (1978) and Mercer (1995). Within the observation session the group of pupils were seen to support each other, and, with the teacher's assistance were able to progress further and more easily than they could otherwise have done.

There was a marked difference in pupil behaviour in the two writing sessions in the first cycle (Appendix J). However, in both pupils were enthusiastic and keen to do well. For both they had had adequate time for preparation and to discuss the task with the teacher. The distinction between the two tasks, however, was clear and demonstrates my definition of participation in the rationale. In the first, the pupils were 'engaged'; they were secure in the task, which had purpose and they felt challenged. In the second, however, they felt less secure. The task did not have a strong sense of purpose and the pupils did not feel challenged. Pupils in the second lesson were as motivated as in the first, but, due to the task, they were, in a sense, unable to participate in the way in which they did in the first. Pupils would be more confident and motivated if they understood how and why they were learning or completing a task and saw its reason and purpose.

Pupils participated and were motivated to do the things that they can do more easily, but this is not necessarily tasks that lack challenge as suggested above and by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). They are generally more motivated to complete work when they feel a sense of challenge and do not like to be faced with work that is too easy. They have an increased motivation also

when they have the opportunity to take ownership or responsibility for their own work.

This synthesises with theories outlined by UNESCO (1993) researchers concerning the purpose of tasks. The pupils who clearly understand the purposes of the tasks will have control or ownership of it and therefore be more clearly motivated to complete it. The principles of empowerment and ownership of learning and behaviour run strongly through my project and also link with issues concerning active listening and pupil advocacy.

They are empowered in the sense that they are clear about the knowledge skills and understanding that they must possess in order to progress. In interview, they were all able to answer questions concerning what they needed to do to improve. One pupil gave an extremely detailed response concerning how to write a good story. Ownership of such knowledge is undoubtedly a first step to improvement.

How is their learning successful?

Pupils' learning is successful from two perspectives. Firstly, from the teachers' perspective they have achieved some academic success since their reading ages have improved. This point was clearly made by the Head of Year in the individual interview (Appendix C). In addition, pupils' attendance and motivation was good during the observation periods and they were keen to participate in lessons. The pupils' views, as expressed in the interviews are that they have been successful because they have some good marks and their reading is better. They are proud of their success and can talk about what they have achieved and targets for the future. Pupils say they enjoy almost all activities they do in class. How they work is as important to them as the task they are asked to do. As discussed earlier, one of the reasons why pupils have difficulty is when they do not understand and therefore they have little control over their learning.

How can they be supported to participate more fully in speaking tasks?

Pupils' contributions in speaking tasks

Pupils were unable to see the intrinsic value in the process of learning and need to see outcomes, either in terms of concrete outcomes or, if abstract, ones which relate to them and have purpose for them. This mirrored in their attitudes towards speaking tasks. Many pupils do not like speaking tasks and

will not try to participate because they cannot see its value or purpose. When pupils have a frame to complete or a task to write as a result of their discussion, they will participate more readily but only within the parameters of the particular questions or points of the frame. As a result, when they are asked to comment or write more openly or to response to a more open question, the answers are limited to these points and issues on the discussion frame.

They do not value work which involves discussion as much as written work. This may be because they need the security of written work in their exercise book, as discussed earlier. However, this idea links with issues raised in the literature review concerning the teachers skill, not only in providing meaningful and relevant experiences but also making an effort to link lessons to pupil experience (Booth and Ainscow, 1998) and giving a clear purpose and presentation to tasks. These issues also synthesise with Freeman's (1988) notion of social competence and Edward's (1992) view of the socially competent pupil, since one of the key factors in learning is knowing what and in which ways one is required to understand and regurgitate facts.

Groupwork

Also significant is how the tasks are done and the way in which pupils are expected to complete tasks. Firstly, the way in which work is completed, individually or as part of a pair or group, prevents some pupils participating in some cases. Personality plays an important part here, as pupils often know who they can work well with or who they do not want to work with. Trying to construct groups artificially does not always work well for this reason. The same applies to peer support, where a fine balance has to be made so that all pupils feel they are working with someone with whom they think they can work. Group work can be dominated by one or two pupils who find it easy to talk in front of others. Other pupils, who are reluctant to speak because they are shy or underconfident can thus be prevented from participating.

Throughout my investigation pupils reiterated that they disliked pairwork. One of the reasons for this may be because during pairwork they easily lose concentration since they have to concentrate for longer. Concentration is a

skill they find difficult and two poorly concentrating pupils can continually distract each other off task. Pairwork is an activity over which they have less individual control and are encouraged to use each other as a resource. One of the strategies employed by pupils when they feel they have little control is to constantly ask for the teachers' help and guidance. In this way they use the teacher as a resource. However, when the pairwork was more structured, such as with the jigsawing activity, they were keener and more motivated. These issues synthesise with those of UNESCO researchers (1993).

Reflection on Practice

My investigation has given me the opportunity to reflect on my own professional practice. Epistemology has a particular and highly significant place in practitioner research. For the teacher researcher epistemology is two pronged; firstly the guiding of pupils towards experiential knowledge and secondly, the creation of the personal educational knowledge gained through experiencing the process of engaging in a deliberate self- critical, reflective enquiry such as that described by McNiff and Whitehead (McNiff, 1993). In my investigation, I learnt a great deal about the nature of knowledge through guiding my pupils towards an increased participation. In the first cycle I learnt that their knowledge is closely related to their own emotions and experience and that pupils make more sense of their learning if they can 'connect' their learning and experience. They were also more able to retain the knowledge, to process it and to use it in different ways and in different situations if this knowledge is linked to their experience. I made a point of highlighting these connections whenever possible. Moreover, pupils valued such experiential knowledge highly. I was astonished at the diverse ways in which my pupils were able to demonstrate their knowledge in a number of ways, verbal, pictorial, physical as well as written.

In addition, through the process of self-reflection, I came to a deeper, more conscious understanding of my own professional knowledge, which led to an enhanced practice. Whitehead (1993) describes teachers as possessing a tacit, intuitive, personal knowledge of practice. He believes that this knowledge must be made explicit if we are to move forward. Such deliberate and conscious development of understanding leads to enhanced practice by the contributors because the knowledge produced is grounded in

the personal understanding of individual self-reflexive practitioners (McNiff, 1993). Implicit knowledge made explicit through this enquiry includes knowledge concerning pupil groups, classroom organisation and managing pupils' emotions.

Ainscow (1998) suggests that there is further diversity in epistemology through the application of knowledge itself. Knowledge, once produced through the reflexive inquiry of the action researcher can being seen as provisional. This knowledge is then used to enter into a dialogue where all judgements are open to scrutiny and the knowledge itself is given the same status as other data. The knowledge produced concerning pupils in each cycle was used as data in the next, critically analysed and became part of the reflection. In this way I gained ownership of knowledge, which I found vital as an action researcher. To the action researcher, knowledge is not perceived as the property of an external 'knower' who may use it to control others but it is the creation of the individual himself or herself.

Discussion
Summary

My investigation concerned how factors of school impinged on pupil participation in learning at the AB school and promoted or undermined inclusion. I investigated the experience of learning of one group of year 7-8 pupils and progressively focused on the identification and analysis of factors that promoted their participation in learning. Findings showed that pupils' self-esteem was extremely low, partly due to the organisational context of the school. The pupils in this group were clearly disadvantaged by their special needs, by the school culture, the labels attributed to them and the attitudes of both staff and peers which both devalued and depersonalised them.

The school culture was one of the biggest barriers to their learning as their lack of confidence rendered them reluctant to start tasks, lacking in autonomy and dependant on teacher reassurance. At other times they did not become engaged in lessons because they were inappropriately prepared for tasks, they did not fully understand what they were doing or why or they did not know how to learn.

Pupils' participation in learning and independance improved along with their self-esteem and motivation through being given a voice, being

encouraged to express their opinions and ideas about their learning and being involved in identifying their preferred learning styles and how they learned best.

Implications

Self

Through my research I have gained a more profound understanding of how pupils learn in my classroom and under which circumstances they participate best. In this way I have improved my classroom practice. Many aspects of education are non- negotiable within the wider school context. I was limited in what I could do to change things, for example, alone I could not regroup pupils, change widely held perceptions of the value and worth of particular skills and abilities compared to others or alter long standing views on how schools and pupils are best organised. In addressing my research questions, my role as both teacher and researcher was both limited and challenged.

Since completing my investigation at the AB school I have moved schools. I am now SENCO in a secondary school with a large SEN register in a different area of the country. There are three main messages which I brought to this post. Firstly, pupils participate best when they feel valued by all members of a school as this promotes their self-esteem. Secondly, pupils learn better when they are supported in finding out how they learn best and tasks given to them match their learning styles. Finally, that I, as SENCO could play a significant role in the process of teaching and learning in the school and, within a valuing school culture I could make an important contribution. However, pupils' success is also dependant on positive attitudes from all members of the school, staff and pupils.

This investigation has been an extremely personal journey. In many ways it was rather frustrating as it was impossible to change the school culture and any changes that I made were only shared by a small group of staff. My intentions were moral, and, in completing my practitioner research I 'rescued' some of the pupils through showing them how they could learn and reversing their negative attitudes towards their learning. In this way I improved their participation for the pupils' sake. As Fullen (1999) suggests, the moral purpose in education is to make a difference in the life chances of pupils.

My investigation identified three clear issues which affected the participation in learning of my pupils at the AB school. Firstly, the pupils' participation and autonomy is affected by their self-esteem and the extent to which they feel valued within the school. Secondly, the culture and ethos of the AB school strongly supports a deficit model, where the emphasis is on what pupils are unable to do not what they are able to do. This is demonstrated by the tendency of the staff to label pupils, sometimes in informal and derogatory ways. Thirdly, that the pupils learned best when their learning made sense, had purpose and they understood their learning styles and how they learned.

The implication of the first message is similar to that reported by Jelly *et al* (2000); when pupils' were taught how to learn and given a range of strategies their motivation and self esteem improved along with their participation in their learning and their chances of being successful therein. The implication of the second message is that the culture and ethos of a school can adversely affect pupils, particularly their participation in learning. In this way the placement of a young person in a particular educational institution has a profound impact on their learning. In spite of the difficulties faced in terms of the school culture, the role of the SEN department and the SENCO changed significantly during the time I completed my investigation. IEPs (Individual Education Plans) were written for the pupils and given to all staff, who started to use the information in them to inform their planning. I distributed information about the pupils on the SEN register to staff, and differentiation was more evident in all curriculum areas as the members of the Learning Support Team worked with departments during an in-service training day. A full day of professional development on pupil participation and differentiation was planned. The changes continued after I left the school, but culture and ethos inevitably take a long time to change. As a result of my investigation, the staff began to consider the appropriateness of the school ethos and at least were aware that it was not the only model.

One of the main implications for the AB school is staff development, as change will be easier to manage through a programme of professional development which addresses all strands described above, organisational culture, differentiation of tasks and consideration of 'Learning to Learn'

strategies. One of the areas for development identified by Estyn inspectors (2003) was the ineffectiveness of some senior and middle leaders. This, they said was due to a lack of vision and rigour and an insufficiciently self-critical approach. It was felt that the school lacked a strong culture of corporate responsibility for moving forward on school improvement and further staff development was suggested (Appendix d).

The mismatch between tasks and skills was an important issue for teachers at the AB school. Tasks were differentiated, but not in clear ways which matched the skills of pupils. Following the success of this part of the investigation, the 'Learning Support Group' disseminated these strategies across the curriculum and some success was reported in most areas of the curriculum.

A clear, learning styles analysis helped to increase access, not only by providing staff with specific information, but also by empowering pupils with knowledge of their learning styles, enabling them to take further responsibility for their learning. O'Brien's (1998a) model is useful in gaining insight into the difficulty or needs debate. If schools such as the AB school were to consider pupils' difficulties as a learning gap, which could be bridged by a thorough needs analysis and appropriate provision, perhaps SENCOs and other staff responsible for managing pupils' learning could put adequate support in place when the need is identified, thus providing a proactive support service.

As the confidence and self-esteem of the pupils in my group improved, they became more autonomous learners with higher expectations and a belief in their abilities. The implications of this are that pupils are more successful when they are empowered to take responsibility for their learning. This synthesises with the findings of Charlton and George (1993), who suggest that we should consider pupils as true partners in their learning. The Estyn inspection of 2003 also identified oracy as the least developed key skill. Inspectors felt that pupils were too passive in lessons and were insufficiently extended to become independent learners (Appendix d).

General

There are also messages which spread further. One of the most important implications, discussed above, is that the organisational culture of schools can damage pupils and create barriers to learning. The second message is that of the problems faced by individual teachers in a hostile culture and the

limited power of the individual to change a situation which is opposed to one's fundamental educational values. The final message is that of the pupil voice. Pupils' motivation and participation improved when they were given a voice and some choice in planning and developing their learning. This has far reaching implications for assessment and raising levels of achievement in schools.

My findings showed that pupils' achievement clearly improved when tasks made sense and had a purpose for the pupils. Assessment tasks were more successful when pupils understood the assessment criteria, and were given the opportunity to mark work against this criteria. If this idea were to contribute to assessment policy, both locally and nationally, we may see far reaching improvements, both in the quality of teaching and learning and in standards of achievement in our schools.

Conclusion

My investigation and its findings clearly link to many current issues and debates. Theories concerning multiple and emotional intelligence are being widely disseminated through official courses. The Key Stage Three strategies, particularly in relation to special needs have a sharp focus on learning styles, 'Learning to Learn' strategies, their implementation and role in eliminating barriers to learning. The debate concerning how individual teachers respond within the classroom to management culture represents what is going on in education in general and specifically within special needs. Legislation drives local and national policy, but it is within the classroom that the changes have to be made and policy must be put into practice. Any number of government and LEA policies concerning inclusion will make no difference to the pupil experience, if at school level, such ideals are blocked by management structures and established cultures.

Above all, my investigation has highlighted further questions and issues for investigation. One of the most important of these concerns the pupils'over-reliance on teachers and lack of autonomy. Further investigation into pupils' learning styles and 'Learning to Learn' strategies would improve pupils' participation. Recent research completed in primary schools in Redbridge found that when the children were taught how to learn and given a range of strategies not only were they more motivated but also their standard SATS scores were higher than comparable schools (MacGilchrist and Buttress, 2005). Other issues concern the development of tasks and activities which

make sense and have purpose for the pupils and the place of the individual and the extent to which one can alter the structure of an organisation or promote ones own views in an alien environment. Can an individual initiate change to the culture and structure of an educational setting, or does one have to fit into the value set and beliefs of the majority of individuals within the organisation?

There are many factors which affect inclusion; however, the extent to which it is undermined is determined by the expectations and preconceptions of the pupils. Often it is a lack of self-esteem which affects pupils' ability to be autonomous. These expectations and preconceptions, informed by the school culture and linked to pupils' confidence and experience of learning determines pupils' level of participation and create or deny access to the curriculum.

Addendum

Four years have passed since I completed the investigation in the AB school. In 2003, two years after I completed my investigation into the AB school, it was inspected by Estyn. The report from this inspection (extracts of which can be found in Appendix d) identifies similar areas for development as those discussed here such as independent learning, the leadership and culture of the school, pupils' lack of oracy and inadequate differentiation in subject areas. However, in spite of this criticism in other subject areas, the system of peer and self-assessment in English, introduced as a result of my investigation, was cited as an example of good practice (Appendix d).

In the time that has elapsed I have moved schools. One of my reservations about such a small scale personal account is that it is not generalisable, however, many of the lessons that I have learnt and described above are transportable and these I have taken to my new school.

The culture of my present school is far more inclusive than that of the AB school. Pupils feel valued and successful and are encouraged to play an active role in their learning. I am currently working on a project with a small team on 'Learning to Learn' strategies and promoting independent learning across the curriculum. My experience of the investigation at the AB school and the lessons that I brought with me have enabled me to make a significant contribution to teaching and learning. The school is successful and adds value to pupils' learning. During the recent Ofsted the SEN

Inspector reported that the pupils in my new school are in no way disadvantaged by their special needs as they make similar gains in progress to all other pupils. Through completing this investigation at the AB school, I know that participation and access to learning is easier for these pupils as they are not disadvantaged by the culture and ethos of the school and are valued members of the school community.

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Appendices

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[3] Estyn is 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales', the equivalent of Ofsted.

Appendix A
Pupil descriptions (as distributed to staff)

1.

A's literacy and numeracy skills are very weak, which is partly due to early education being disrupted by medical conditions. A takes medication before lunch every day to control epilepsy. As a result he is tired, his concentration often lapses and he may need encouragement to stay on task. A thinks very slowly, needs time to process thought and has problems with reasoning. A's writing is very erratic as coordination is poor. D has had difficulties with peers in the past, but social skills have improved during Year 6. A's behaviour is a concern, A needs a lot of reassurance and is easily led by others. When confronted, A will overreact and will need time out.
Main difficulties
        * Behaviour* Literacy* Numeracy* Concentration * Low self-esteem

2.

B has specific learning difficulty and may have very real difficulties across the curriculum, especially when required to use literacy and numeracy skills. Although B has good ideas, she has no idea how to write them down. She tends to switch off and not listen unless everything is at her level. She has not found it easy to build up relationships with peers and has poor social skills. B will require a lot of help and support in all subjects.
Main difficulties
        * Develop reading skills* Develop writing skills* Build up self esteem and self confidence
        * Concentration

3.

C has had problems acquiring basic literacy and has problems with conceptualisation. C's organisation is very poor. C's reading and spelling are weak and writing is a real difficulty. C needs reminding to use full stops and capital letters and he has problems retaining basic spellings. C has tried hard with reading in primary school. C enjoys sport and taking part in drama. C needs a lot of reassurance, is emotionally immature and shows a lack of understanding of the world around her.

Main difficulties
        * Reading* Handwriting* Spelling* Basic grammar* Low self-esteem* Immature

4.

D has a specific learning difficulty, has very poor literacy skills but is much more able in Maths. His spelling and handwriting are weak and D finds organisation difficult. D. can be very good orally and he has excellent ideas. D finds it easier to complete longer writing tasks using a computer. At times D's behaviour is a problem and his concentration is poor

Main difficulties
        * Spelling *Reading*Handwriting*Organisation of thought

5.

E. has ADHD and used to be on Ritalin but he has not been taking it for 12 months. E is very weak all round and needs help in all areas. E is much better orally than in writing. E'S behaviour is a concern, E can be aggressive and have temper tantrums that he cannot control. E gets very tired in the afternoon and can be quite tearful at times.
Main difficulties
        * Concentration* Behaviour* Reading* Spelling* Numeracy

6.

F is quiet pupil who has very low ability in literacy and numeracy. F processes information slowly and needs time for thought. F does not understand abstract concepts. F has a tendency to rely heavily on support and F needs to be encouraged to work more independently. F'S listening is often poor and F is not always aware of instructions. F finds written work very challenging and needs help structuring responses. F has very good handwriting. Can exhibit poor behaviour when F finds the work difficult
Main difficulties
Reading Spelling* Numeracy* Processing*

7.

G has a specific learning difficulty, has very poor literacy skills but is much more able in Maths. His spelling and handwriting are weak and finds organisation difficult. G. can be very good orally and he has excellent ideas. D gets frustrated because of this. Sometimes G's concentration is poor
Main difficulties
* Spelling *Reading *Handwriting*Organisation of thought

8.

H can be an exceedingly disruptive influence on a class. H is poorly motivated and H can be argumentative and loud in lessons. H finds most work difficult. H has very low ability in literacy and numeracy. H has a tendency to rely heavily on support and he needs to be encouraged to work more independently. H's listening is often poor and is not always aware of instructions. H finds written work very challenging and needs help structuring his responses. H has poor reasoning skills.
Main difficulties
* Behaviour* Concentration* Literacy* Numeracy* Reasoning

9.

I's literacy and numeracy skills are weak, which is partly due to early education being disrupted by medical conditions. I's writing is very erratic as his coordination is poor. I takes medication before lunch every day which can cause tiredness. I's concentration often lapses and he may need encouragement to stay on task. I is keen to please and I's behaviour is generally good
Main difficulties
* Literacy* Numeracy* Concentration

10.

J is a year older than peers. J is a polite, cooperative pupil who finds listening and concentrating difficult. Her non verbal ability has been assessed as well within the average range. J is relatively confidence with number skills although J may find mental maths difficult; J struggles with spelling, word reading and writing and has a poor short term memory. J is also colour blind in the red/green ranges. J may need help and support with reading and written tasks. She is keen on, and good at, sport, DT and Arts.

Main difficulties
* Spelling* Reading* Comprehension* Writing

11.

K has very weak literacy skills. K has a history of school refusal. K lacks confidence and is likely to need support and encouragement with K's reading and writing. K has poor organisational skills and is slow to

communicate. K does not understand abstract concepts. K finds it difficult to follow instructions.
Main difficulties
Reading Handwriting* Confidence* Spelling*

12.
L. made very slow progress in primary school and continues to have poor reading and spelling skills. L's numeracy is also weak and has difficulty telling the time and with basic number manipulation. Ls handwriting is very immature. L struggles to follow instructions and L's responses are often limited. L processes information slowly and has difficulty following instructions. L rarely communicates. L is motivated to work at school and is keen to please.
Main difficulties
Processing Reading* Spelling* Handwriting* Numeracy*

Appendix B
Interview schedule with Head of School

1. How are pupils grouped?
2. Why are pupils grouped in this way?
3. When do pupils have the opportunity to move groups? How often does this   happen?
4. What effect does this have on pupils in the 'E' classes?
5. When and how often do pupils have the opportunity to mix with pupils of   differing abilities?
6. How does the school's organisation affect the pupils?

Extracts from interview with Head of School

Pupils are grouped according to examination results. The system is strict and rigid. I think it is the best way. We listen to pupils and parents who have problems with this and sometimes make adjustments, usually because of ill-health, most often we go with the examination results. You can't argue with those.

Pupils sit two sessions of examinations, one in the summer and one before Christmas. All results are place into a chart, the deputy head and I work out the scores and place pupils in rank order. We promote and demote pupils according to this order after each set of examinations.

In reality, only a few pupils are moved each time. It would be possible to move borderline pupils up and down many times, we try not to do this too often because it is not good for the children. Pupils are placed in groups according to their ability and the groups are labelled A to E, highest to lowest achievers.

The school has always been organised in this way. It is an ex Grammar School and many of the staff are ex pupils. I think that this system caters well for the whole range of pupils. Pupils at the bottom end of the ability range are taught in smaller groups. Individual pupils are diagnosed through a series of tests given by the SENCO

and the educational psychologist. These identified pupils need some extra help. and this is allocated either from the LEA, with the intervention of the educational psychologist or directly from school via the Sen budget - allocated and managed by the SENCO. Resources are targeted at this individual pupils, who, on the whole, are well catered for. That's the way we do things here. It works here, for us. We are happy with it.

A lot of departmental funding is allocated to top sets simply because textbooks to are expensive and the classes are large. These days syllabuses keep changing all the time and textbooks keep improving so a bands take-up a great deal of departmental budgets in this way.

Appendix C
Extracts from interview with Head of Year

Pupils do not have many formal opportunities to mix with others of differing abilities. Pupils are placed in teaching groups A to E according to exam results and they are taught all subjects, have registration, Assembly, personal and social education etc in this groups. I teach games and we teach single classes for PE and sport. I have always felt it would be good to have larger, mixed ability groups but the opportunity has never arisen

One of the problems is that we are split site. The lower site housing years seven and eight and the other site 9 to 13. The two sites are about one mile from each other and neither has enough facilities for sport, they are too small to take more than one class at a time.

I feel that although we are good at identifying, diagnosing and allocating resources to pupils with special needs we could do far more in making them feel part of the school. Often, during the Eisteddfod and the annual prize day, these pupils sit and watch and play no part. Prizes are given for academic success only - there aren't even any prizes given for sport!
Recently the school has introduced a literacy initiative. Some mayhave some shape on them after this. As a result pupils reading ages have improved and lower ability pupils have started reading more books. Hopefully, in future, this will link to the library scheme were prizes are given for the number of books pupils read.

You can't expect these pupils to be able to cope with all that they do in other lessons. Some of them are so weak that they can hardly read. It's not fair to expect them to cope when they have no shape to them. Although some are down as having difficulties like Joanne, it's sometimes other things like just spelling or a medical problem. Joanne's a good girl really, she's in the top set.

Appendix D
Extract from Research Diary - Rachel at Lunchtime

My classroom, in the middle of the playground makes an excellent
observation point. I spend a good deal of my time during break and
lunchtime watching the pupils interact in the schoolyard, watching
how friendship groups form and reform and seeing how individual
pupils are accepted or rejected from these friendship groups. This
provides excellent food for thought and rich data for my diary.
At lunchtime, the pupils are playing noisily in the school
playground. There is much laughter and shouting. Groups of
children play with footballs, tennis balls, a large group is playing tag
on the edge of the playground, jumping in and out of the bushes.
Rachel walks into the playground slowly, her coat still on in spite of
the fine weather and her bag casually hanging over her shoulder. She
wanders awkwardly and self-consciously across the school yard,
looking at the ground all the time. She reaches the edge of the
building and follows it around until she reaches the outside of my
window. There she stops, unaware that I am watching her from
within. She studies the groups of children silently, averting her eyes
if they look in her direction. She looks thoughtful and sad. None
makes any comment or reference to her, nor she to them. She
remains there silent, like a statue until the bell goes for afternoon
registration when she slowly walks back towards the main entrance
to the school.

Appendix E

Interview schedule with Rachel
1.   What do you like about school? Why?
2.   Is there anything you don't like about school? Why?
3.   What would you like to change? Why?

Extracts from Interview with Rachel
I don't like much about school. I don't like being here at all. Some
of the teachers are OK, the ones you can talk to. That's not many.
I like some lessons, not many. Art is Ok and so is PSE sometimes. I
kile the things where you don'e write. I am not good at writing.
Except PE. I hate PE. I am useless at it. They call me names, nasty
names. Technology is OK but I hate the teacher, she moans all the
time.

I don't like all the lessons where all you do is write, write, write. Its
dull. Some teachers make you copy, copy. Thats not learning, that's
dull. What's the point of all this writing and copying? I hate it. I
can't write fast and then the teachers nag at me. Nag nag nag. Some
teachers are rubbish because they nag and scream and shout. I just
go off then. I can't be bothered with teachers like that.

I don't like it in this school (the Lower School). Is boring and
babyish. There are all little kids, immature and stupid. I don't like
the school or this room because it makes me feel stupid, like I am a
baby. 'I hate it in the playground because they are all kids there -

playing games and stuff, it's childish'. I hate it here. I have asked my Mum for a new school but she won't let me.

I hate it here. I hate it here because I hate being in this 'hut'. It's horrible and cold and wet. It's away from everyone else in the big building. Like there's something wrong with us, out of the way. I feel stupid and thick coming here. I would like to be in the next class because that's where my friends are. I know the kids in my class and year group from primary school. They are all younger than me. Next year allmy friends will go up to the big school. I hate it here.

Appendix F
Group interview schedule

What do you like best about lessons and why?

Is there anything you dislike? Why?

Are you successful in lessons?

What do you feel about the class you are in?

Do you always work hard in class?

How often are you asked to give your opinions on your work or other people's work?

Why is it a good idea to ask for pupil's opinions?

How could you do better?

Extracts from Group Interview

What do you like about lessons?

I like reading, answering questions and comprehension.
I reading a story and rewriting it.
I like taking books home and reading them to my little brother.
I like reading them to my Mum and Dad.
I just snuggle up in bed and read.
I like the individual reading books because they are funny and they are good stories.
You learn better when you are reading.
My reading is good now I know more words.
I like working in class.
I dislike working at home.
Pair work is hard because it is difficult to do work without talking about other things.
I enjoy individual work.
You need good marks to get a good job (4).
Yes You have to work hard to get good marks.
Yes - Mum says I need to do well at school to get a good job.
I like writing stories and poems too.

I like writing answers to comprehension question after we have listened to a story.
We like spelling, reading and punctuation because they are important.
We all like reading.
My favourite is individual reading from boxes.
My best thing is reading like that too (2).
I like being in a large group not a small group to do my work.
I like comprehension work tape and story (4).
I like answering questions on stones.

Is there anything you dislike?

I don't like making up stories.
writing stories I don't like writing because my spelling isn't good.
My spelling isn't good either.
I hate writing because of the punctuation.
I can't spell words very well.
I can't decide what words to write down. I know what I want to say but I can't decide what words to use. I know how to write a story - you make it exciting. A good story has a good choice of words, a good ending and suspense. It's exciting for the reader.
I don't even know how to write a good story or what to write.
I don't like pairwork - it is hard (6).
Creative writing is boring and too hard.

Are you successful?

My reading has improved.
My reading has improved a lot my mum is very pleased with me.
Because my reading is better there is more choice about what books to take home.
my mum was pleased with my school report because the teacher said I worked hard and tried hard.
We have been successful because we have good marks.
My mum is proud of me.
We have improved since we came to this school we have learnt a lot

What do you feel about the class you are in?

The work is too easy
Teachers all give us easy work because they think we are stupid
I don't like babies work it's a waste of time
But we are stupid and thick
This is the thick class
I have always been in the thick group
The teachers tell as we are not in the thick class, we are here because it takes us longer to learn things than the other kids
The teacher only says that to make us feel better
Anyway if I was in the higher group I couldn't do the work
I can't do the writing work in this class I could never do it in the other classes

Do you always work hard in class? When do you work best?

I don't work when I don't like the teacher
I don't like teachers who shout.
I don't work well when teachers shout
We like Miss Green and Mr Brown because they are nice teachers.
They talk to us and help us with our work.
We like subjects with nice teachers.
I like history and Maths but I hate RE because the teacher shouts all
the time and we don't understand the work.
We love French its great
I am always happy when I have got French
I hate Friday's because I have got RE and games
I don't work hard if I don't like the teacher
In PSHE we talk a lot about useful stuff, about what we feel and
think and do. We talk about us, our friends and what we do outside
school. I like this it's not a waste of time'

*How often are you asked to give your opinions on your work or
other people's work?*

Nobody ever asks what we think.
We are not allowed to say things about teachers and stuff.
We are not supposed to talk about teachers to other teachers.
People would say we were cheeky if you talked about other teachers
like if they are bad or something.
Like Mr Smith.....
Be careful! She's probably spying for the teachers! She'll go to the
staffroom and say we are the ones who are cheeky and rude.
She'll tell everything we said. Then we'll be in trouble - you just
wait!!

Yes we fill those things in in some lessons. English, Science, Maths,
Technology....
...and RE (12)
I can't remember.
I have written those before, in some lessons. I put what I could do to
do better and improve (6). I say what I have done (4). I say what I
like (2).
Sometimes you have to stay behind after the lesson and talk about
how you have done.
That's only because you are bad and you play up.

Nobody asks us to look at other people's work, that's stupid!
That's the teacher's job, not ours!!
I would not know what to say.
No one is looking at mine, that's private, that is.

Why is it a good idea to ask for pupil's opinions?

We could help each other.
I don't know.
We could tell each other what to do best.

We could tell the teacher how to make us learn better. Then we would get better marks in our tests.
We might all go up to the next set!!!
This is great! Why can't we talk like that all the time? Why don't all the teachers ask us to talk about it? It would help us to learn better.

How could you do better in class?

I need to improve my skills (7)
I need to concentrate more
I need to learn my spellings
and break words up
I need to go back to learn the sounds of letters
I need to make my writing stories more exciting and plan my work better
Sometimes I rush my work and it's not good
I need to improve my paragraphs and punctuation.
I need to learn to read the teacher's writing.
I need to learn my spellings. My punctuation should get better if I practice.

Appendix G

Interview schedule

When do you work hard?

Are you successful in lessons?

How could you do better in lessons?

What do you feel about the class you are in?

Extracts from Individual Interview
Extracts from individual interview with Kim

I work hard all the time. I always try to do my best. There is no one time that I work best.

I don't like working with other people. I hate pairwork because other people keep talking to me and then I can't do my work. Gemma always talks and sometimes copies me. That gets on my nerves. I hate it. I don't like it when the others talk.

My mum is pleased with my progress. My report is good and my reading is better. I have improved my spelling and I can read long books now. Before I came to this school I could only read short books quite babyish books really.

I need to work harder to to better. I need to concentrate harder. I enjoy reading now because I know more words and have to ask less. I like working on reading in class. I like the books and tape, the class novel but individual reading is best.

If I say something is boring it means I don't feel like it - usually I don't feel like hard work. Reading or writing.

I like it in this class I wouldn't like to be in one of the other classes because I probably couldn't do the work. I am dull I can't do my work.

Interview with Nick

I hate the morning I hate waking up. That is why I don't like first lesson in the morning because I'm too tired. I can't concentrate when I am tired.

I work hard if I like the teacher . I don't work if I don't like the teacher. I can't be bothered. Most of the teachers are nice but some - a few- are horrible. Some teachers are always in a bad mood and then I can't be bothered.

In some subjects when the teachers are in a bad mood all the time I won't ask for help. I pretend to work but if I don't understand it I won't ask. I won't ask if I don't like the teacher. If it is too hard I can't do my work and it is boring.

I have improved. I know what I have to do to do better I must concentrate more.

My reading is much better now and I writes a lot but my spelling is bad.

I like to read good stories that are funny or scary. I like the book boxes in this class.

Sometimes I say it (boring), but I don't really mean it all the time. Sometimes I can't be bothered to think. I just want a rest.

I like being in this class because I can do the work and I like most of the teachers. The class is small so it's more relaxing and you do not have to wait for the teacher for so long.

Sometimes the others don't behave. I don't like it when they don't behave - I can't concentrate. Sometimes some of them get to pick on people. I don't like it when they pick on me. It's hard to work then. And if I am upset I can't work then either. I can't do my work if I am upset because I keep thinking about my troubles.

Sometimes teachers give us easy baby work. It's funny. I can do it but I don't like teachers who give easy work - it's embarrassing. They only give us easy work because they think we are stupid. I know I am thick I am in the bottom class.

Interview with Pat

I always work better in the morning because I concentrate better.

I have improved since I have been in this class. my spelling is better.

I don't like some of the teachers and I can't do good work then they shout and nag us all the time. I won't ask for help if I don't like the teacher or if she's in a bad mood.

I don't like it when everyone is talking because I can't do my work. When we all talk somebody starts arguing. When they argue I can't do my work.
I must concentrate more to do better and I must try to improve my spelling and punctuation.

I like individual reading and I like the book boxes. I like being able to choose and take them home.

I hate being in this class. I hate being in this room. It's embarrassing. I knew I need help, it's just being in this room that I hate. It's walking across the yard when everyone can see us. I don't like it here I am older than them and I hate it when they play kid's games in the playground. I should be going up next year but I have got to stay I don't like it here. I hate it in the playground because they are all kids there playing and it is so babyish.When I say lessons are dull, boring, I mean that I don't want to be here. I want to be at home.

The teachers think we are thick and give us babyish work. It's babyish. People in this class never go up. I have always been in the thick group.

My mum wants me to do well and I try to do my best. The other kids laugh at us and call us names like thick, bottom, dull, mong. They laugh at us and call us thick or stupid but I am not stupid.

Appendix H

Extracts from Observation Notes for Cycle One, Lesson One

9.15 -9.25
Pupils arrive 5 mins late due to assembly. Knock at door wait for teacher to invite them in. They enter, get books out, and sit down in an orderly manner. Teacher reminds them to get equipment out, pens, pencils books. When they are settled the teacher does the register. Tells pupils to sit in circle around teachers desk.

9.25 -9.35
Teacher tells class aims of lesson, to discuss story in relation to character. This is leading to writing a letter from the character's point of view. Pupils all respond to questions, putting hands up continually. Good contributions. One pupil is clearly not on task - staring and looking unhappily into space. Teacher reminds pupil to stay on task.

9.35 -9.45
Discussion moves on to role playing character. Hot seating. What do you think/ feel/say? Very involved discussion from all pupils.

Even quieter pupils make good relevant contributions. One pupil switches off and stares. Teacher notices and reminds pupil to remain on task.

9.45 -9.55
Teacher describes next task, to write a letter from the central character using work from discussion. All pupils start lively conversation concerning task. Teachers calms them down. Pupils move to desks and sit in pairs to do written work. To start, all are on task. One or two lose concentration and teacher goes over to speak to them.Pupils say that the task is 'boring' and 'dull'.

9.55 -10.05
4 of 8 pupils are working consistently, 3 are staring into space and one is trying to engage another in conversation . Teacher moves from group to group, assisting the pupils, helping to keep focus.

10.05 -10.15
Teacher stops pupils working. They read their work to each other all listen attentively. Teacher recaps lesson and pack up. Bell goes. Pupils leave.

Appendix I
Extracts from pupils letters

A
 I like English because we do all sorts of different things. I have worked hard at reading. I like choosing my own books and reading them at home. I like writing stories because they are good. I don't like comprehension

B
I like writing poems because they sound good to read. I like listening to the tape and reading books. I don't like it when teachers talk fast. I hate morning lessons because I am sleepy and can't concentrate. I don't like pair work. I like classwork. I need to concentrate more to get better marks.

C
I don't like spelling. I don't like writing all the time. I work at individual work because I can finish it. I hate pairwork because the person that I work with always talks to me so I can't finish. I like writing and working on the computer. I have moved around 10 times I just want to settle into a school so that I can do my work. I don't like morning lessons because I feel sleepy

D
I prefer reading because it is relaxing. I don't like talking or doing exams English is fun and I like the teacher. I don't work as well at Maths and other things I don't like. I hate pairwork.

E

I want to learn. I like being in this class because I can learn better. You learn lots from English. I like listening to the tape and reading the book.

F

I like reading books with the tape.
It's brilliant in this class. I like the spelling. I don't like lessons in the morning because I am tired. I think I am doing well I have got a good report and my reading is better I need to get high marks for a good job when I leave school. I hate pairwork.

G

I like listening to stories, poetry, spelling but I hate pairwork. Work sheets are fun and I like playing games in English.

H

I like the computer, reading, the class book and the listening work. I don't like comprehension, pairwork or spelling. I work hard because I like the teacher. I like being in this class.

I

I like comprehension and poetry. I hate spelling, writing and pairwork. I prefer working on my own. theft alike topic reading books activity reading boxes and writing my reading long.
Sometimes I don't like things because they are not colourful. Some of the words we do are quite hard

J

I don't like class novel or poetry because we talk too much about things. I don't like talking or pairwork. i prefer writing and working on my own, comprehension and computer.

Class likes and dislikes from letters

	Likes	Dislikes
Creative writing	3	2
Comprehension	2	2
Class novel	2	1
Individual reading	3	
Listening/Reading (class)	4	
Computer	3	
Spellings	1	3
Speaking/ Listening	2	2
Pairwork		7
Individual work	3	
Poetry	3	1

Appendix J
Observation Data for Cycle One
Contributions to discussion session - Lesson One (20 minutes)
Role play a character

Key
1 = contribution made to discussion
2 = talking to someone else (off task)

Pupil	Contribution	
	1	**2**
RT	21	0
GS	1	0
JD	20	2
AW	16	0
CP	12	0
KF	11	0
SJ	15	0
SAJ	3	0

Participation during written work - Lesson One

1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring
3 = on task/ talking about work
4 = off task/ talking about other things

Pupils	5mins	10mins	15mins	20mins	25mins	30mins
RT	1	1	1	3	2	2
GS	1	1	2	1	2	2
JD	1	2	4	1	4	4
AW	1	1	2	1	4	4
CP	1	1	1	3	2	2
KF	1	1	1	1	2	2
SJ	1	2	2	1	1	2
SAJ	1	1	1	1	1	2

Body Language - Lesson One

a = positive body language (Head down, writing, reading, talking to
partner about work, smiling)
b = negative body language (Leaning back, leaning on elbows,
looking unhappy, playing with equipment)

Pupils	5mins	10mins	15mins	20mins	25mins	30mins
RT	a	a	a	a	a	a
GS	a	b	b	a	b	b

JD	a	a	a	a	a	a
AW	a	a	a	a	a	a
CP	a	a	a	a	a	a
KF	a	a	a	a	a	a
SJ	a	a	a	a	a	a
SAJ	a	a	a	a	a	a

Contributions to discussion session - Lesson Two (20 minutes)
Discuss a story

Key
1 = contribution made to discussion
2 = talking to someone else (off task)

Pupil	Contribution	
	1	**2**
RT	7	1
GS	1	1
JD	12	2
AW	2	0
CP	7	0
KF	19	1
SJ	2	0
SAJ	10	0

Participation during Spelling/ Reading work - Lesson Two

1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring
3 = on task/ talking about work
4 = off task/ talking about other things

Pupils	5mins	10mins	15mins	20mins
RT	1	1	1	1
GS	1	1	2	1
JD	1	1	2	2
AW	1	1	2	1
CP	1	2	2	2
KF	3	1	4	4
SJ	4	4	4	1
SAJ	1	4	4	1

Participation during Writing work - Lesson Two

1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring
3 = on task/ talking about work
4 = off task/ talking about other things

Pupils	5mins	10mins
RT	1	1
GS	1	1
JD	1	1
AW	1	1
CP	1	2
KF	3	1
SJ	4	2
SAJ	1	2

Appendix K

Extracts from Observation Notes for Cycle One, Lesson Two

9.15 -9.25
Pupils arrive on time. Knock at door wait for teacher to invite them in. They enter, get books out, and sit down. Teacher reminds them to get equipment out, pens, pencils books. Teacher does the register. Tells pupils to sit in circle for discussion

9.25 -9.35
Teacher tells class aims of lesson, to discuss a story read last lesson. Pupils all respond to teacher's questions, putting hands up continually. Mostly good contributions. One pupil is clearly not on task - starts her own conversation. Teacher reminds pupil to stay on task.

9.35 -9.45
Teacher finishes off conversation and goes over what has been said. Pupils go back to sit at desks for written work..

9.45 -9.55
Teacher describes next task, to complete spelling and comprehension activity. These activities were suggested by pupils themselves in the earlier discussions. To be done in pairs. Pupil gives out work. Pupils start. All are keen to start and are focussed on the task.

9.55 -10.05
Teacher moves from group to group, assisting the pupils. Pupils keep raising hands for assistance. Most are motivated and keen to do well.

10.05 -10.15
Pupils all working but continue to ask for help. Teacher recaps lesson and pack up. Bell goes. Pupils leave.

Appendix L
Interview schedule (Cycle 1)

How do you feel about the lessons?

Did you enjoy the work you did?

What parts did you enjoy beat and least and why?

What did you learn?

How could it be improved?

Notes from Group Discussion (Cycle 1)

How do you feel about the lessons?

I think they went well.
It was good, they both were but one was better than the other.
I enjoyed them
Everyone worked quite hard
I think everyone concentrated hard and tried hard
Nobody was bad. We did well. I tried hard

Did you enjoy the work you did? What parts did you enjoy best and least and why?

I liked the bit when we had to pretend to be Jake or someone.
I liked writing the lwtter to my mum (or pretending to)
I liked talking about what the person did and why
It was more interesting talking about the people and the things they did than talking about the other stuff, like the story. That was a bit boring
Its like real life
If you pretend you are someone in the story and think what you would do – it's like real life
It's like us. Its quite ewasy to think what you would do in the story if it was really you
The first lesson was more interesting was more interesting than the second

What did you learn?

About capital letters and punctuation.
Letter writing (3)
We learnt to guess about why people do things
Yes – we learnt about other people

How could it be improved?

It is better to do a mixture of stuff, but not like in the second lesson.
We should do more stuff like lesson 1.
We could write and pretend more about people like us kids and their lives
The bit when you worked with a partner was boring – I don't like doing that. It would be better if we did it on our own, in our books.
We didn't know what to do till you came to tell us.

We should do more like the first one.

Appendix M
Interview schedule (Cycle 1)
What do you think of the activities you are asked to do in class?

What makes tasks difficult? Describe why a task might be difficult for some people.

What is successful and why?

Extracts from Group Interview (Cycle 1)

What do you think of the activities you are asked to do in class?

Not speaking. Why do speaking work when you could be writing it into your book? It's not real work, that!!
I hated the stuff on that poem about the ship (Marie Celeste)
Everybody in our class thinks the same. We all hate Science, History and RE.
Science is lots of writing and long words. Nobody understands it. RE is dead, dull, boring, pointless and meaningless
Some of the tasks were so long that the pupils lost concentration.
We hate History because we always write. The teacher says it and we write. We all lose our place and pretend to write.

What makes tasks difficult? Describe why a task might be difficult for some people.

In some lessons it's the teachers. Some of them are so boring.
The teachers talk too much. It's boring just sitting there, listening. I just want to go to sleep.
They are dull some of them.
Teachers always talk too much. Then they just expect you to do your work and shout at you when you can't.
They don't explain things properly – some teachers
Its the teachers that make it hard. They do my head in. They tell us to do something then nag at us because we haven't done it quickly enough. Its rush rush rush all the time and I can't do my work properly when I am stressed
I think teachers expect too much from us, they expect us to do same work as pupils in the top sets. How can we do that? They are brainy and we are dull.
She (the teacher) expects us to do the same as them (the pupils in the top set). How are we supposed to do that? They are brainy and swotty. We are not like them'
Some teachers nag us all the time to work and finish things when we want them to leave us to do it in our own time
We don't do our best work when we are rushed
I like to do things from the beginning to the end. Then I understand it properly and it makes sense. Doing bits doesn't make sense so I just can't be bothered to do it.

Teachers give us work that we can't do, then tell us off because
we haven't done it
We get shouted at because they we don't finish our work
It's not fair, it's because we don't understand what to do or where to
start
We are just too thick to do some things
(Pupils showed some examples of material which was easier, such as
pages which were well set out, with diagrams and boxes giving key
words and information).
We don't like worksheets which you can't read because the writing
is tiny or bcause it's all smudged and blotchy because of the
photocopier
…or lots of hard writing with long words and sentences
…or too much on the sheet
Sometimes the things are not copied properly and we can't see the
end of the words so we haven't got a hope of reading them
We don't like stupid, babyish stuff. Sometimes the teacher gives us
easy stuff because they think we are stupid, dull, thick
Sometimes the work is too easy
I like those spelling sheets and they have long words on them
….but they don't have loads of writing
…and those pictures are funny
I hate worksheets
They are easier when the teacher gives us the important words first
Some teachers put them on the wall, but not all of them. Sometimes
we don't have them at all
I like the keywords near me when I work (2)
The sheets are too difficult

What is successful and why?

Everyone's favourite lesson is art (7)
I like art because you are always doing things
My best thing was making paper mache masks (3)
We did everything for them. We had to have a plan and design and
we had to evaluate after we made them
        It was part of our project in technology
We like the stuff we do in PSE lessons
They are sheets with interesting things on them
..and they have got pictures and jokes, and the main words and stuff
in boxes so you know where to look for the important bits
We like the spelling tests

I like PSE because I like talking about things which happen to us and
it is about us – it's useful (4).

Extracts from Group Discussion following the intervention

How was the lesson?
It was OK but it was hard to do all the things
I enjoyed it
I got confused there were too many things to do

I don't like doing all those things
I didn't finish anything – and I hate leaving things unfinished in my book, it looks messy

Did you enjoy it?
It was OK
I quite liked some of the things but we should have spent more time on them to get them finished
It was too much. My head is still buzzing. Did I like it? No
I don't like working in pairs much I can't concentrate
I don't like working with Sam
I like working with a partner that bit was OK

Appendix N
Individual Likes and Dislikes (Cycle 1)

The things I like best about English lessons are...

Because

The kind of speaking tasks I like best are....

because...

The kind of listening tasks I like best are....

because...

The kind of reading tasks I like best are....

because...

The kind of writing tasks I like best are....

because...

I don't like...

because...

I think I am/ am not successful in lessons. I am most sucessful when...

I am least successful when...

I am/ am not happy in my class because...

I do/ don't always work hard in class. I work best when...

How could you do better? I could

Appendix O
Extracts from Observation Notes (Cycle 2)
Lesson One

Several pupils had difficulties with the activities or parts of the task. Some of the words on the worksheets were to difficult for the pupils. The language was too technical – it was jargon. The behaviour of some pupils in the group made it difficult for others to concentrate. This is a hard skill for these pupils because some have short concentration spans and limited attention and memory. Their memories are not good, so several interruptions by a few pupils in the group can cause a real problem for some pupils. Several of whom could not focus on their work and kept losing track of what they should be doing.

Some pupils had problems starting the written work. Some did not know where or how to start a task. Three pupils were told several times to start, but still spent a long-time wasting time through copying questions and underlining headings in colours.

In the speaking tasks, pupils answered mainly in single words. Pupils wanted to answer questions which were more factual. They were reluctant to give their opinions and say why they felt certain things would have happened.

Lesson Two

Pupils settled quickly at the beginning of the lesson and at the beginning of each task. I also noticed that when the teacher asked the pupils to start the tasks, they used fewer 'stalling' techniques and only 3 pupils asked for help or said that they didn't know what to do. This is half as many as in the other observations. Their body language was more positive and there was only one incident of negative body language. Pupils were enthusiastic and keen to talk about this lesson.In the discussion, pupils said that they were more motivated to do tasks because they enjoyed them.

Appendix P
Observation Data for Cycle 2
Contributions to discussion session - Lesson One (20 minutes)

Key
1 = contribution made to discussion
2 = talking to someone else (off task)

Pupil	Contributions	Off Task
RT	16	0
GS	0	8
JD	23	1
AW	10	5
CP	17	0
KF	4	2
SJ	21	3
SAJ	9	2
PB	1	6

Participation during written work - Lesson One (20 mins)

1 = on task/ talking about work
2 = off task/ staring/ talking about other things

Pupils	5mins	10mins	15mins	20mins
RT	1	1	1	2
GS	2	2	1	2
JD	1	2	2	1
AW	2	2	2	1
CP	1	1	1	1
KF	2	1	1	2
SJ	1	2	2	2
SAJ	1	1	1	2
PB	2	1	1	2

Participation during group work - Lesson One (20 mins)

1 = on task/ talking about work
2 = off task/ staring/ talking about other things

Pupils	5mins	10mins	15mins	20mins
RT	1	2	1	2
GS	1	2	1	2
JD	1	2	2	1
AW	1	1	2	2
CP	1	1	2	1
KF	2	1	1	2
SJ	2	1	1	1
SAJ	1	2	1	1
PB	2	2	1	2

Body Language - Lesson One

a = positive body language (Head down, writing, reading, talking to
partner about work, smiling)
b = negative body language (Leaning back, leaning on elbows,
looking unhappy, playing with equipment)

Pupils	10mins	20mins	30mins	40mins	50mins
RT	a	a	a	a	a
GS	a	b	b	a	b
JD	b	a	a	a	a
AW	b	a	b	b	b
CP	a	a	a	a	a
KF	a	a	a	b	b
SJ	a	b	a	a	b
SAJ	a	a	a	a	b
PB	a	b	b	a	b

Contributions to discussion session - Lesson Two (20 minutes)

1 = contribution made to discussion
2 = talking to someone else (off task)

Pupil	Contribution	
	1	**2**
RT	23	0
GS	3	9
JD	22	1
AW	6	8
CP	18	0
KF	10	2
SJ	18	1
SAJ	12	1
PB	12	6

Participation during Pairwork - Lesson Two

1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring
    Activity One

Pupils	5mins	10mins
RT	1	1
GS	1	2
JD	1	1
AW	1	1
CP	1	2
KF	1	1
SJ	1	2
SAJ	1	2

PB	1	2

Activity Two

Pupils	5mins	10mins
RT	1	1
GS	1	1
JD	1	2
AW	1	1
CP	1	2
KF	1	2
SJ	1	1
SAJ	1	1
PB	1	2

Participation during Writing work - Lesson Two

1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring

Pupils	5mins	10mins
RT	1	1
GS	2	2
JD	1	1
AW	1	2
CP	1	2
KF	1	1
SJ	1	1
SAJ	2	1
PB	2	1

Body Language - Lesson Two

a = positive body language (Head down, writing, reading, talking to partner about work, smiling)
b = negative body language (Leaning back, leaning on elbows, looking unhappy, playing with equipment)

Pupils	10mins	20mins	30mins	40mins	50mins
RT	a	a	a	a	a
GS	b	a	b	b	a
JD	a	a	a	a	b
AW	b	b	a	b	a
CP	a	a	a	a	a
KF	a	a	a	b	a
SJ	a	a	a	a	a
SAJ	a	a	b	a	a
PB	a	b	a	b	b

Appendix Q
Extracts from Research Diary
Diary following interview

Pupils said that they absolutely hated Science, History and RE. Some
of them were passionate in their hatred of the subject, teacher (or
both). I felt I had to follow this up and I asked their teachers about
their progress and achievement.
I was astonished to find that their achievement was high in these
three subjects. Using the benchmarking data and their predicted
levels from the CATs and SATs was amazing. They had all acieved
higher than expected. Their achievement in Science was particularly
impresssive; all had a level higher than expected. Their overall
achievement in all three subjects was higher than in many other
subjects except for Art and Technology.
Their difficulty with these subjects is therefore not indicative of their
achievement in the subject.Why?

Things in common wth all 3 subjects:
- strict teachers who shout a lot
- subject matter/ materials old fashioned
- lots of writing (they find this difficult)
- does not relate to them or their lives
- does not use their experience or what they bring to the lesson
- no sense or purpose

Frames
In order to try and give pupils a starting point in the lesson, and to
prevent them using stalling techniques to prevent atarting work, I
gave them a frame to use to make a start. Pupils can use them by
placing ideas as words or whole sentences in the boxes. Some pupils
used the frame as their entire written response to the tasks, others
used them in writing more freestyle responses.Writing frames are
widely used in the school, although they are not easily accessible to
some pupils. I also used other strategies such as adapting the frame
to help those who could not access the writing frame. I gave some
pupils the beginning of sentences and the words in a frame with
multiple choice answers to complete. Others were given gap filling
exercises requiring a word or sentence per gap.

I think that inappropriate differentiation can undermine inclusion.
Sometimes differences between pupilsare accentuated through
differentiation and this creates further barriers to learning (Hart).
Pupils need to feel challenged and'in flow' in order to give of their
best (Czechzenmihayli). In the interviews for previous cycles, pupils
complained that often the work given was too 'babyish' for the task
was not interesting. Perhaps this is because there is little challenge in
tasks which are too easy. Pupils described some lessons as 'boring'
and 'dull' because they 'don't learn anything'. Perhaps this is
because their confidence is undermined and they feel undervalued .

Worksheets which are too simple can also have this effect.At the same time there is a fine line between this and presenting pupils with work which is clearly inaccessible. My pupils were extremely sensitive about being given different work from other groups and complained about babyish language or sheets containing cartoons etc. I am often challenged by pupils saying, 'The other groups don't have to do this'. My group want to be seen as trying the same as the others but, at the same time they want to be able to complete the work. I remember vividly Jackie in interviews saying that she was fed up with teachers expecting them to do the same as the higher groups.

The challenge for me is to give them work which motivate, stimulates and challenges them and is not inaccessible yet does not appear childish or babyish to them. One way of presenting such material in a differentiated, challenging interesting way is to use what they bring to the lesson as a starting point. The class have a wealth of knowledge, experience and ideas which I could use as a potential resource in promoting their participation. The work could be related to them. As a strategy, I could use this to generate interest and motivation and to give them a starting point for their ideas.

In the next action research cycle I will try to give lessons and differentiate subtly, not by reducing the challenge but by encouraging them to use the skills, knowledge and experience which they bring to their learning and to use this as a benchmark throughout their work. As a teacher this could be very time consuming and could make work very difficult to plan because there are many unexpected factors.

I will not choose textbook work which does not stimulate them to be creative. I will see how the worksheet tasks were set out and was careful not to include cartoons or childish scripts or fonts. I will try to give them the same as the others but to accept different attempts as a layered approach when tasks change.

Difficulties in learning arise from a mismatch between tasks and skill level of the child (Potts, Booth, Hart and Mercer). I believe that there are three important aspects to the tasks set in a classroom; the learning styles of the pupils, the sensory channels favoured by the pupils and the context in which the activity takes place (individual, pair, small group or whole class).Gardeners theory of intelligences supports the notion that there are a number of different kinds of intelligence which can be demonstrated although traditional academic school curriculum only appear to value one. These kinds of intelligence are also referred to by Gardner as 'learning styles'.

It is important to try to match the tasks and learning styles of the pupils. I believe this to be extremely important for completion of the tasks. In order to do this, firstly I interviewed the pupils together as a whole group, where they discussed how they felt they learned best as individuals. I did this as part of a study skills unit in PSHE. I then interviewed them individually, and we discussed questions from a learning styles questionnaire which relates to Gardeners Intelligences.

For the next lesson, I analysed and reflected on my previous findings and carefully prepared a lesson in which I tried to match the pupils' skills and tasks as identified from the analyses.

One of the problems in improving participation is that they don't value tasks equally, for example in discussion with a group of boys.
'But we don't know what to say'

'It's not important, is it? I mean its not like written stuff which is going to be marked'

I don't want to do this - give me a pen and I'll write it down'

Appendix R
Extracts from Research Diary

An English lesson with year 8, lesson three on a Tuesday morning, just after break. All but one of the pupils was present. We were studying a module on poetry and for this lesson I had prepared a lesson in which we used similies to describe aspects of nature.

We read and discussed a poem as a class and we also wrote one verse of a poem together. For the next task I asked pupils to work in three small groups of three or four. Their task was to write another verse of the poem as they had done on the blackboard. They were given the first part of the first four verses and were asked to write something similar for the last verse themselves.

I moved from group to group, keeping the pupils on task, keeping their focus sharp,helping them with ideas and wordsand helping them to organise themselves to complete the task. Each time I visited the second group Sam was leaning back in his chair and not contributing. Each time I asked him to contribute. I watched him carefully as he looked more and more uncomfortable as I got closer to his table and relieved when I had passed. At the end of the session he had contributed nothing.

Appendix S
Task Analysis (Cycle 2)

Firstly I isolated the learning styles and skills of the pupils in my class and then tried to match the tasks and activities I gave to the pupilswith these learning style.
In order to find out to what extent the pupils skills matched the tasks in my lessons I looked at my lesson plans for two weeks (5 hours) for the same year 8 class in English. Over the 5 hours there appeared to be a good balance of skills. Pupils spent 1 hour 40 minutes listening to the teacher,1 hour 10 writing, 1 hour 25 minutes in discussion and 20 minutes listening to or giving presentations
I then broke each lesson down into tasks and worked out how much time each pupil actually spent on each task over the two week period. I then identified which skills are needed for each of the tasks, and whether each task was completed individually, in a pair or in a group.
The context in which each of these opportunities were presented to pupils is also important, whether individually,in a pair or small

group. Over the 5 hours pupils spent 1 hour 20 minutes working individually. They spent 50 minutes in a pair or small group discussion and 1 hour 5 minutes in whole class discussion. They spent the remaining time listening to the teacher speak .

As the final part of this task analysis, I separated the tasks out depending on the three 'channels which are used, visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. The results were quite concerning as no balance was apparent between these three. In spite of my ongoing efforts to allow for a range of skills and abilities in my lessons, over these 5 hours 1 hour 10 minutes was spent on activities which used the visual channels, 3 hours 25 miutes were spent on activites which used the auditory channels and no time whatsoever was spent on kinaesthetic activities.

Over the last two week observation period, of the 5 hours of English lessons, 70 minutes were spent on visual work and 205 minutes on auditory. The pupils preferred learning styles are predominantly interpersonal and visual-spatial which would indicate that they would learn best from looking at images, collaborative discussion, paired and small group activities, collaborative learning and looking at issues from a number of perspectives and empathisising (Smith....). This synthesises with previous findings when pupils participated more when discussing aspects of a character. During the 5 hours they had spent only 50 minutes in small group discussion and in interview they said that they did not enjoy this kind of work.

Appendix T
Learning Styles Analysis (Cycle 2)

Intelligence	Number	Pupil	Score
Linguistic	2	A	18
		B	12
Mathematical	4	C	13
		D	19
		E	14
		F	12
Visual-spatial	8	C	13
		A	18
		H	20
		F	14
		B	12
		L	10
		E	12
		D	11
Musical	4	J	18
		K	14
		L	10
		B	12
Interpersonal	7	A	18
		D	17
		J	20
		I	15
		L	12

Intrapersonal	1	F	12
Kinesthetic	1	J	18

Appendix U
Extracts from Observation Notes (Cycle 3)

Lesson One

When pupils were told to get into their pairs to work with a partner, they started making comments which disrupted the others in the group. Some said, 'Not this again', 'This is dull', 'I hate working with him' etc. It took them a long time to settle before having the task explained to them. Having settled, they were much quieter and and got at the start of the work. They made many comments about not liking pairwork tasks.

Lesson Two

In discussion at the end of the lesson, several pupils said how much they enjoyed the lesson. Some said it was more interesting but there were some who complained that because there were so many changes of task, the instructions were too difficult. Pupils and listened to the teacher giving instructions for a long at the start of these tasks. All together pupils listened to the teacher for 15 minutes. During this time several pupils found it hard to concentrate; AW was reading a book from the book bank, CP and HU were doodling. At the end of the lesson, in the plenary, many could not answer even the most basic questions about the lesson content.

Pupils had obvious difficulty absorbing the information and translating it into steps to do in order to complete tasks. After the explanation, there were several pupils who sat uncomfortably and did nothing. Some asked the teacher what to do again. They also found it difficult to find material to support their points, recognise the literary devices and to transfer the techniques to their own writing.

In discussion at the end of the lesson, pupils were more motivated and said that they enjoyed it more. However, although the skills and tasks were better matched this did not make the big improvement that I had expected, particularly in speaking tasks.
For this part of the investigation, R taught a lesson on poetry. The first part of the lesson involved reading and discussing a poem and the second involved writing a poem using the model given in the first part of the lesson. R tried to match the tasks set to the learning stylesof the pupils. R ensured that the tasks changed often, that the pupils had a lot of opportunity for collaborative and small group learning and R also gave them opportunities to use all sensory channels, including kinaesthetic.

At first she presented pupils with a poetry frame in which they could explore their own ideas on a number of themes. She wrote a poem with the class on the blackboard and we talked about the choice of words both in terms of language and rhythm. Pupils were given the worksheets and divided into groups. Firstly pupils were asked to

match the word cards together to make the poem. Each group was asked to produce at least one set of poems.

The next task was a listening exercise, where each group was asked to present one of their poems to the rest of the class. For the next task pupils were presented with another kind of poetry frame, but this one was less structured. Pupils were given the first line and a picture from which they had to complete a short poem on their own. They worked in the same groups that they had worked in previously. For the final task pupils were given a first line and encouraged to complete the poem in any way they wished. We observed and made notes on each of the groups.

Appendix V
Observation data for Cycle 3

Range of Opportunities in Speaking Work

Range	Time
Explain, give reasons through talking	10 mins
Tell a story or give an account of an event	
Give a presentation	10 mins
Answer a question	10 mins
Express a point of view	30 mins

Contribution to discussion
Key
1 = contribution made to discussion
2 = talking to someone else (off task)

Pupil	Contribution	
	1	**2**
RT	10	0
GS	2	0
JD	9	1
AW	7	5
CP	6	0
KF	7	3
SJ	8	0
SAJ	1	0
PB	1	4
AF	0	1
JW	3	1
CN	0	0

Participation during pairwork
1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring

Pupils	5mins	10mins
RT	1	1
GS	1	1
JD	1	2
AW	1	1
CP	1	1
KF	1	1
SJ	1	2
SAJ	1	1
PB	2	2
AF	1	2
JW	2	1
CN	1	1

Participation during small group work

1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring

Pupils	5mins	10mins
RT	1	1
GS	1	1
JD	1	2
AW	2	2
CP	1	1
KF	2	2
SJ	1	2
SAJ	1	1
PB	1	2
AF	1	2
JW	2	1
CN	1	1

Appendix W
Extracts from Group Interview (Cycle 3)

What skills are important in English?
How are they linked together?

I asked how they thought the aspects of English (SLRW) linked
together. Pupils had little concept of any coherence between the
skills in English. They thought of them as completely separate
skills, totally unrelated to each other. Speaking and Listening were
perceived as the least important of the skills. When asked why they
rated these skills so low, nine pupils out of twelve said that it was
because there was no concrete evidence to show for such work

Appendix X
NC and NLS Data

National Curriculum Speaking Levels
Level 3 – I can….
Talk and listen confidently and understand what is said
Discuss ideas with other people
Listen to others carefully and understand what they say
Ask questions if I don't understand
Change the way I speak when I talk to different people

National Curriculum Speaking Levels
Level 4 – I can….
Talk and listen with confidence and different situations
Change the way I speak depending on why I am talking
Explain ideas and opinions and describe things which have happened
Listen to others carefully in a discussion and respond to their ideas and views
Use standard English

NLS Framework
Speaking Frame Sheet

Category of speaking	Activity
Explain through talk	
Tell	
Shape a presentation	
Give answers, instructions and explanations	
Give my point of view	

Appendix Y
Extracts from Observation Notes (Cycle 4)

Pupils completed a piece of creative writing focusing on description using a passage from Dickens as a stimulus. The lesson involved reading a Dickens passage from 'Great Expectations'. Teacher discussed writing a short account of why and how the passage holds

the reader's attention before asking pupils to attempt the task. The task was for pupils to write a similar passage about a place they know. Pupils had said previously that what makes work difficult is when they do not know where to start. In order to overcome this, she broke down the task into more manageable chunks.

She introduced the lesson by explaining how it fitted into the whole topic and by telling pupils what they were expected to achieve at the end of the series of lessons. She explained how they would be assessed and the criteria which would be used. The teacher introduction took 10 minutes out of a 60 minutes lesson. She decided that it was important to allow a 10 minutes space at the end of the lesson to round off and to put the task into perspective As discussed in phase 2. That left 40 minutes for pupils to complete tasks.

She moved the pupils to sit next to those who would be their coaches or supporters.She ensured that there was a mixture of skills and style in each group she explained to their coaches their role and how to go about it. She was careful also not to group together pupils who did not get on or who could not work together as this would influence their work.She gave the pupils three short tasks one 10 minutes (vocabulary) and two longer 15 minutes tasks. For each part of the tasks there were clear instructions, together with a number of ways of approaching it.

In the observed lesson following the intervention some improvement was apparent but there were still two pupils who only contributed minimally in class discussion. Pupils also contributed more widely across the range having been given the speaking frame sheets to use as a guide. Pupils participated more and made more contributions, both to class and small group discussion than they did in the initial observation. In the final observation session pupils appeared more enthusiastic and made more comments in each category (Appendix Y).The biggest change was that pupils made more contributions in the 'explanation' and 'opinion' categories than they had before.Pupils appear to place more value on speaking work. This was evident through the increased number of contributions overall and through their comments at the end of the lesson.Pupils were slow to take part in this exercise and needed a lot of support in the first lesson. In the second they were quicker and more enthusiastic because they felt more secure about what they were doing.The frame sheet also served as a reminder to pupils that they needed to contribute in a number of ways. Pupils responded well to this method of judging each other's work and started to contribute more in lessons. Pupils were keen to make more contributions. They also spent more time on task and were more enthusiastic to work.

Appendix Z
Extracts from Observation Data (Cycle 4)

Contribution to discussion
Key
1 = contribution made to discussion
2 = talking to someone else (off task)

Pupil	Contribution	
	1	**2**
RT	8	1
GS	3	0
JD	7	1
AW	8	5
CP	4	0
KF	5	3
SJ	9	0
SAJ	1	0
PB	1	5
AF	0	1
JW	2	1
CN	0	0

Participation during pairwork

1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring

Pupils	5mins	10mins
RT	1	2
GS	1	1
JD	2	2
AW	1	1
CP	1	1
KF	1	1
SJ	2	2
SAJ	1	1
PB	2	2
AF	2	2
JW	2	1
CN	1	2

Contribution to discussion
Key
1 = contribution made to discussion
2 = talking to someone else (off task)

Pupil	Contribution	
	1	**2**
RT	15	1
GS	4	0
JD	6	1
AW	11	4
CP	7	0
KF	8	2
SJ	3	2
SAJ	2	0
PB	5	3

AF	1	1
JW	4	1
CN	1	0

Participation during groupwork

1 = on task
2 = off task/ staring

Pupils	5mins	10mins
RT	1	2
GS	1	1
JD	2	1
AW	1	1
CP	1	1
KF	1	1
SJ	1	2
SAJ	1	1
PB	1	2
AF	2	1
JW	1	1
CN	1	1

Appendix a
Extracts from Research diary (Cycle 4)

Getting pupils to work together in more effective ways
There are many reasons why the pupils in my group appear not to
participate in group work. Sometimes it is the pupils' emotional state
which prevents them from participating at all. This is exacerbated
when they are asked to work in a group if they are upset by a class
argument.This can lead to pupils not being able to concentrate and
work at all. One of the first observations which we set-up, to observe
the class during a poetry lesson had to be abandoned because two of
pupils had been involved in a fight earlier in the day and the
beginning of the lesson involved lots of note passing, whispering and
arguing, resulting in one of pupils dissolving into tears and another
running out of the classroom. At such times it is more prudent to
discuss the real issues of the day with pupils and I abandoned the
planned lesson in favour of an informal chat. Jigsawing has been
widely used with children across all disciplines including children
with severe learning difficulties (Hart, Sebba). It is said to work
within certain disciplines but is not so good with others. In the past, I
have used a form of this kind of information gap exercise very
successfully in my teaching of Modern Foreign Languages to
encourage otherwise reluctant pupils to speak in a foreign language.
Perhaps this technique should be modified in order to encourage
further participation and co-operation between groups of pupils in
my lessons. I think jigsawing is appropriate for these pupils because
each piece of the jigsaw and group activity is dependent on the
others therefore there is a regular need for communication between

groups and individuals. However, the technique is not easily translatable into an English lesson.

One of the topics on the year eight English syllabus which pupils find most difficult is a study of the poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. In order to fully understand this poem pupils must read it in its entirety although pupils have described it as rather long and tedious, particularly since the language is very difficult to understand.
I find pupils in the past have enjoyed the study but feel that it has been too long and has taken several sessions to complete. I believe that if I split up the activity into separate tasks I would increase the participation of all pupils, whilst giving them a challenge and supporting the pupils who experience difficulty. I believe that this would also offer a variety of tasks to overcome boredom, and ensure that pupils remained focused. I will try to do this in a way which will allow for improved participation and improved quality of learning.

Appendix b
Extracts from Observation notes (Cycle 4)
Several pupils had difficulties with the activities or parts of the task. Some of the words on the worksheets were to difficult for the pupils. The language was too technical – it was jargon. The behaviour of some pupils in the group made it difficult for others to concentrate. This is a hard skill for these pupils because some have short concentration spans and limited attention and memory. Their memories are not good, so several interruptions by a few pupils in the group can cause a real problem for some pupils. Several of whom could not focus on their work and kept losing track of what they should be doing.

Some pupils had problems starting the written work. Some did not know where or how to start a task. Three pupils were told several times to start, but still spent a long-time wasting time through copying questions and underlining headings in colours.

In the speaking tasks, pupils answered mainly in single words.Pupils wanted to answer questions which were more factual. They were reluctant to give their opinions and say why they felt certain things would have happened.

In the second lesson, pupils were more enthusiastic in the lessons and became more actively involved in what they were doing and produced better quality work when it was preceded by a discussion, in which the tasks and activities were put into context and the speaking part of the lesson was explained with reference to the whole task and was seen not as an isolated task but as an integral part of a larger task Observations took place of three small groups of pupils who were writing poetry during this part of the investigation. The pupils produced poetry work which was of a better quality and used more descriptive language than in the initial observation. Pupil participation improved in these lessons, they showed more positive

body language and finally produced better quality and longer written work after the intervention.

The poetry they produced contained more adjectives and other poetic devices such as similies and was more complicated in structure than those produced previously.
Following the intervention and the extended discussion the pupils asked for teacher help three times, they did not stop working and all contributed to some extent. In their group conversations two pupils were leading, but the others were less reluctant to contribute and all made valuable comments.

Pupils settled quickly at the beginning of the lesson and at the beginning of each task. I also noticed that when the teacher asked the pupils to start the tasks, they used fewer 'stalling' techniques and only 3 pupils asked for help or said that they didn't know what to do. This is half as many as in the other observations. Their body language was more positive and there was only one incident of negative body language. Pupils were enthusiastic and keen to talk about this lesson.In the discussion, pupils said that they were more motivated to do tasks because they enjoyed them.

Appendix c
Chart showing the common, distinct and individual needs of pupils in the group

Common Needs
- a need to belong and feel part of society, the school and the wider community   - to relate to people   - self determination   - to access   - a need to communicate and be communicated with   - be respected   - interaction   - a need for respect as a human being

Distinct Needs
- poor literacy skills   - orally better than written   - low reading age   - poor written skills   - weak numeracy skills   - poor self esteem   - lack of concentration   - limited memory   - no confidence   - low scores on the CAT (cognitive ability tests) verbal test

Individual Needs	
Pupil	**Needs**
1	- lack of emotional intelligence - poor behaviour - medical condition; epilepsy causing absences, tiredness, increased

		lack of concentration due to medication • slow processing • insecure- needs constant reassurance • poor housing – very large family in a small house – no space to do homework • lives in a 'problem' area with high incidence of violence and crime related to drugs and alcohol, regular conflicts between the police and gangs – unsettling environment causing insecurity and lack of self esteem • poor reasoning skills • heightened sense of justice – can become confrontational
2		• parental split – lives with parents alternately (4 days with each). This is extremely unsettling • emotional needs • SpLD • Low concentration levels • Poor organisational skills • Very good non verbal reasoning • Boredom – understands far more than can produce in written form and therefore constantly working at a level lower than her intelligence suggests • Frustration due to above • Streetwise – disinterested in things, does not want to appear enthusiastic • Mature • Insecure
3		• MLD • Slow processing • Weak conceptualisation • No organisational skills • Slow to communicate • Immature • Does not take on ideas easily • parental split – causing insecurity and anxiety • emotional needs • fearful • lack of understanding of the world around her • Shy • No friends
4		• Boredom – understands far more than can produce in written form and therefore constantly working at a level lower than her intelligence suggests • Very weak written skills • Frustration due to above • Streetwise – disinterested in things, does not want to appear enthusiastic • Mature • parental split causing insecurity • emotional needs • SpLD

	• Lack of concentration • Poor organisation • Poor behaviour
5	• Poor behaviour • ADHD • Aggression • No control • Temper tantrums • Poor attitude towards school • Poor attendance • Low motivation • Very weak written skills • Family has had to move home a lot for social reasons causing lack of security • Unsettled • Insecure • Orally much better than written • Streetwise – disinterested in things, does not want to appear enthusiastic • Mature • Previously excluded from 2 schools • Negative reputation from last school
6	• Slow processing • weak conceptualisation • Insecure –needs constant reassurance • heightened sense of justice • poor housing – very large family in a small house • lives in a 'problem' area with high incidence of violence and crime related to drugs and alcohol, regular conflicts between the police and gangs • Orally much better than written • Keen to please • Motivated to succeed at school • Poor behaviour • Twin brother in a secure home
7	• Lives in care • emotional needs • SpLD • Concentration • Organisation • Boredom – understands far more than can produce in written form and therefore constantly working at a level lower than her intelligence suggests • Frustration due to above • Insecure
8	• Behaviour • Low motivation • Poor attitude towards school • Poor attendance • Very weak literacy skills

	• Slow processing • poor housing – very large family in a small house – no space to do homework • lives in a 'problem' area with high incidence of violence and crime related to drugs and alcohol, regular conflicts between the police and gangs – unsettling environment causing insecurity and lack of self esteem • poor reasoning skills • family history of poor school attendance
9	• medical condition. X takes medication for the condition causing tiredness and increased lack of concentration • has missed a lot of school due to this medical condition • Orally much better than written • Keen to please • Motivated to succeed at school
10	• Boredom – understands far more than can produce in written form and therefore constantly working at a level lower than her intelligence suggests • Very weak written skills • Frustration due to above • Low motivation • Poor attendance • Weak listening skills • Streetwise – disinterested in things, does not want to appear enthusiastic • Mature • parental split • emotional needs • SpLD • Concentration • Organisation • Behaviour – becomes confrontational
11	• Low motivation • Poor attitude towards school • Poor attendance • Very weak literacy skills • Slow processing • poor conceptualisation • No organisational skills • Slow to communicate • Immature • Does not take on ideas easily • Cannot follow instructions
12	• Elective mutism • Weak literacy • Difficulty following instructions • Slow processing • poor conceptualisation • rarely communicates • Keen to please

| | | • Motivated to succeed at school |
| | | • insecure |

Appendix d
Extracts from the Estyn Inspection (2003)[4]

School Context
The area as a whole is economically disadvantaged. Twenty-five per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals compared to 18.5 per cent in Wales as a whole.
Pupils represent the full range of ability, though tests on entry show that there is an above average proportion of pupils of lower ability. 23 pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN), 42 are supported at School Action Plus and a further 160 have been identified as needing some support at School Action.

Staff
Changes in staff have been low in recent years but increased last year. The school has a higher than usual proportion of experienced and long-serving teachers; nearly 40 per cent have been at the school for over 15 years, and over half of these over 20 years.

Leadership and Efficiency - Shortcomings
• There is not a sufficiently strong culture of corporate responsibility for moving forward on school improvement.
• Not all staff with posts of responsibility, at senior and middle management level, carry out their role effectively. There is some lack of vision and rigour, and an insufficiently self-critical approach in a number of areas. Further staff development is needed.
• There is little monitoring of standards, teaching, learning and pastoral provision, and of the implementation of policies, at senior and middle management level, to eliminate inconsistencies.
• Good practice is not identified and promoted.

Standards and Quality – Shortcomings
• Pupils of average to lower ability, in particular, are insufficiently challenged.
• Pupils are not always sufficiently extended to become independent learners, using the school's resources.
• The quality of assessment varies across the curriculum. Good practice is not shared.
• There are shortcomings in the accommodation, particularly in the lower school, where groups of lower ability pupils are taught in portacabins. This adversely impacts on the life and work of the school.

Standards across the curriculum
Pupils with SEN are well supported and make progress in most subjects across the curriculum. They do well in specific sessions designed to boost literacy and numeracy, including individual help from sixth formers. Reading ages improve significantly as a result.

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[4] Estyn is 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales', the equivalent of Ofsted.

Pupils of average to lower ability generally do less well, in relation to •
ability, than the most able pupils and those with SEN. Expectations of them
are not always high enough, nor tasks challenging enough. Also, written
work is sometimes incomplete, standards of literacy are not well developed
and sporadic absence slows the pace of progress.

Oracy and ICT are the least well developed of the key skills. There is still
insufficient emphasis on speaking, a key issue in the last report. Too
many pupils are passive in lessons and particularly pupils of average to
lower ability. There is some good pair and group work in most subjects,
but not consistently across departments. In many subjects,
pupils do not develop their oral skills sufficiently and extended speech is
underdeveloped

In the majority of lessons pupils are too passive and insufficiently extended
to become independent learners. This relates to all levels of ability to a
varying degree. A significant minority of the teaching is over-directive and
does not allow pupils to explore their understanding and develop their oral
skills. Extended speech is not promoted sufficiently and good behaviour
appears to relate to passivity. Nor are there sufficient opportunities for
pupils to engage in enquiry-based learning through creative and problem-
solving activities and individual research using the very good ICT facilities
and the libraries. In this the most able are disadvantaged the most.

Whilst there is a reasonable match of work to pupils' abilities, helped by the
banding system at KS3, there is little differentiation of work to support the
range of abilities within groups, which can be fairly
wide, particularly at KS4. Expectations of pupils of average to lower ability
are generally too low, because insufficient consideration is given to the
strategies which will enable them to reach their potential, such as writing
frames to support literacy, across the curriculum. Admonitions to complete
work are not followed up with rigour in all subjects, resulting in significant
gaps in pupils' work.
A variety of assessment methods is used such as end of unit tests,
common tasks, annual examinations and trial examinations. Pupils'
involvement in their own and peer assessment is insufficiently spread but
there is some good practice in English.
Areas for Development
The role of the form tutor is not sufficiently developed. The split-site nature
of the premises results in forms having more than one tutor. However, apart
from this constraint, the use of tutorial time
is unsatisfactory. At present, pupils do not receive adequate pastoral support
from form tutors, neither is sufficient time made available at the start of the
day. Although mentoring has begun in Y7 and Y8, this is not always carried
out by the pupils' form tutor. Overall in the
Lower and Upper schools, form tutors are not sufficiently involved in
monitoring academic progress and in re-enforcing the school's expectations
of work and behaviour. This also results in heads and deputy
heads of school spending a considerable amount of time dealing with issues
which could often be resolved by form tutors.

There are some other areas for development. There is not yet a
sufficiently strong culture of corporate responsibility for moving forward on
school improvement. In a number of areas, there is some lack of
vision and rigour, and an insufficiently self-critical approach. Overall, there
is insufficient monitoring of classroom practice, of pastoral provision and of
the implementation of policies. Not all staff with posts of responsibility at
senior and middle management level carry out their management role
effectively in these respects and this results in inconsistencies in practice.
Roles and responsibilities at senior and
middle management level are not sufficiently clear for the school to drive
forward collaboratively. Good practice is not sufficiently celebrated and
shared.

Unfortunately since the last inspection no progress has been made on the
issue of a split-site, though the school continues to make requests. Therefore
many of the problems highlighted then remain the same
and the school still has a range of external blocks and portacabins on both
sites to meet accommodation requirements. Only a few subject departments
have suites of rooms and a large number of lessons are still taught in non-
specialist rooms. Classrooms in the Lower School are small and congested
for larger class sizes.