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# **‘FRESH START’**

## **a model for success and sustainable change?**

**Susan Jane Matthews**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of Greenwich  
for the Degree of Doctorate in Education

July 2005

Thesis  
MAT

## DECLARATION

*I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Education (EdD) being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised another's work.*

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the rationale and debate of the 'Fresh Start' schools policy introduced by the New Labour government in 1997 as a vehicle for improvement in schools that historically had been classified as failing. Underpinning the policy is the assumption that Fresh Start can act as a catalytic agent of positive change to performance, school cultures and the school community.

The literature review examines school improvement in schools with challenging circumstances (where many Fresh Start schools are based) and includes the theoretical framework underpinning school improvement. It examines the recent political context that has driven school improvement, the role of inspection in identifying failing schools, the development of Fresh Start policy and alternative routes available to schools failing their OFSTED inspection.

The case study traces the transformation process and outlines the profile of the first Fresh Start Primary School in England with a population of 40% Travellers on the school roll. It includes an early evaluation of a number of initiatives associated with catalytic change and school improvement that have been employed in the case study school, in other Fresh Start Primary Schools in England and in socio-economically disadvantaged schools around the world. It looks particularly at the impact of breakfast clubs, a school-wide literacy scheme, '*Success for All*',<sup>1</sup> and community education based in the school. The impact of these initiatives is considered within the context of the school, the school community and government policy. The research findings conclude that Fresh Start together with the initiatives have been effective strategies for improvement in the case study school, and may provide a good model for other schools in similar circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> '*Success for All*' is a school-wide literacy programme based on early intervention and supported by cooperative learning. It was created in the USA in 1986 and introduced in the UK in 1997.

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## INTRODUCTION

The central debate of this thesis is whether a range of specific initiatives can have an impact on school improvement within the context of Fresh Start. An analysis of literature includes current research and policy documents of issues relating to: school improvement, the political context, inspection, failing schools, Fresh Start, breakfast clubs, a school-wide literacy scheme (*'Success for All'*), community education and lifelong learning.

The case study outlines the process of change and investigates key initiatives that have been implemented to date and are considered by the staff, governors and OFSTED to have contributed to the school's improved performance while increasing its long-term viability. Three initiatives are examined in the light of school improvement research both in England and internationally. They comprise the setting up of: a breakfast club, a literacy programme and a Community Wing within the school.

This thesis builds on research carried out for a mini-project and a preliminary investigation reported at the London and South-East LSRN conference at City University, London, 8 July 2003 and the JVET conference at the University of Greenwich, London, 16-18 July 2003. The analysis in these papers included initial findings of contributory factors involved in the improvement of the first Fresh Start primary school in England.

My involvement with the case study Primary School began when I became a governor four months after the school received its new Fresh Start status in May 2000. The intervening period has been a time of radical change and innovation that has had a significant impact on the school and the school community. It is an evaluation of this impact that is examined in this thesis. Working with the school has enabled me to be part of an educational institution that is 'able to make a difference'. The significance of this is something that is of great importance to me. It seems appropriate at this point to convey some of the key influences and developments that have contributed to my perspective, professional development and continuing interest in education. An unexpected event occurring in early childhood creating a degree of financial and social deprivation in my family life and in part influenced my early educational opportunity. Subsequently, failing the eleven plus examination brought a sense of personal failure which was compounded by a poor learning experience dominated by low aspirations and poor behaviour at a secondary modern school. However, a local Technical College offered an environment conducive to learning with a range of appealing subjects, a sense of independence and a respectful atmosphere leading to entry to Goldsmith's College, University of London to study drama and primary education. Teaching practice in the local vicinity of Deptford, one of the most deprived areas of southeast London, provided an exposure to the many challenges that surface in low socio-economic areas for both teaching and learning. My first teaching post in Haringey, London offered an opportunity to work in a multicultural context supported by

professional LEA advisers, which triggered my interest in second language teaching. In the mid-seventies I went on to teach English as a second language in Tientsin, China, to Chinese student teachers during Chairman Mao's reign. Living and working with the Chinese for a communist government influenced my thinking and particularly focused my attention on the appropriateness of effective teaching materials and teaching styles to promote learning. Peripatetic specialist drama teaching in Fife, Scotland, followed, providing an opportunity to work in a comprehensive school and many different primary schools each with its own context, culture and leadership style. Following this, I taught English as a second language to Japanese wives and students at the Harvard Business School in Cambridge, USA, which provided an insight into issues concerning the acquisition of language and cultural identity. Returning to Scotland, I spent several years regularly substituting for a headteacher in a Catholic school, which offered the opportunity to work in an educational ethos guided by a religious underpinning. This experience enabled me to recognise the positive potential of ethos on standards of behaviour. During this time I began an MA in Education at Dundee University, which I completed several years later in 1996 at Greenwich University, after relocating to south-east England. My thesis 'Improvement through Inspection' focused on an evaluation of the relatively new OFSTED inspection as a vehicle for improvement. My new location brought with it an opportunity to work with an architectural practice, with responsibilities for marketing and procuring work in the grant-maintained sector. This gave me an opportunity to witness the condition of many school

buildings and the impact of policy change. I was able to acknowledge the profound effect on the responsibility, accountability and sense of ownership that headteachers and governing bodies had. It was this experience that led me to becoming a governor of the case study school.

It is anticipated that this study will contribute to knowledge in the area of Fresh Start schools, where currently there is little research. Secondly, it will provide policy makers, schools and LEAs with evidence-based practice of school improvement initiatives in a Fresh Start school that could offer guidance and a model for good practice in other schools. Thirdly it provides a qualitative research record for the school.

Over the last three decades school improvement has been an issue that has occupied researchers and policy makers globally. Many countries are pursuing school improvement policies to enhance quality and raise standards of achievement, in an attempt to meet the demands of a global economy. A key turning point in Britain's educational policy was the delivery of the famous 'Ruskin' speech by the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, in 1976. This heralded a new approach to curriculum, standards of achievement and accountability in schools. Doubts about the overall effectiveness of the existing inspection system were also raised at about the same time. Almost twenty years later, in 1993, a radically different inspection system for schools was implemented, in an attempt to raise standards and increase transparency and

accountability in schools. As a consequence of the new inspection system, conducted through the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), some schools fail their inspection. One solution available for schools in this position is Fresh Start, in which a school “reinvents” itself with increased funding and new initiatives. The central focus of this thesis evaluates the Fresh Start concept, together with incorporating various other initiatives as a model for improvement in disadvantaged schools.

Chapter 1 of this thesis examines the notion and theoretical framework underlying school improvement and explores those key factors recognised as being relevant to improving schools facing challenging circumstances in low socio-economic areas.

Chapter 2 examines the political influences that have contributed to school improvement in England, with a particular focus on New Labour. It also provides an analysis of the historical framework of inspection that led to the introduction of OFSTED and evaluates its impact on raising standards and identifying failing schools.

Chapter 3 outlines the historical context of Fresh Start schools in the UK by tracing the development of the American model ‘reconstituted schools’ on which the Fresh Start model was based. Key characteristics of the Fresh Start model in the primary and secondary sectors are examined in the context of New

Labour's policy of targeted school improvement initiatives. Finally, Fresh Start is examined in its current context and its role in the future.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology.

Chapter 5 contextualises the case study by examining qualitative data to provide an overview of the transformation process involved in becoming a Fresh Start school. It also outlines some of the key factors that have led to school improvement in the case study school and in other Fresh Start primary schools.

Chapter 6 evaluates the contribution of a specific initiative, the breakfast club, examining its role as a catalyst for school improvement in the USA and the UK. This is followed by an analysis of the impact of the breakfast club in the case study school.

Chapter 7 evaluates the contribution that a school-wide literacy initiative, '*Success for All*' (SFA), has made on school improvement in the USA and in England. This is followed by an analysis of SFA in the case study school.

Chapter 8 evaluates key issues that have contributed towards lifelong learning and community education. The constituent elements of 'Community', community schools, adult education and 'Travellers' are examined; together with the contribution that Fresh Start schools can contribute to lifelong learning.



This is followed by an analysis of the Community Wing at the case study school.

Chapter 9 summarises by drawing on some of the key issues identified in the thesis for policy makers and educationalists considering the Fresh Start initiative.

## **CHAPTER 1: THE RESEARCH CONTEXT**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter examines the influences of two main research perspectives that have contributed to school improvement in a range of countries including Canada, England, the Netherlands, Scotland and the USA. ‘School effectiveness’ and ‘school improvement’ paradigms are examined with reference to evolutionary changes that have emerged from both traditions over the past three decades. The theoretical framework underlying school improvement is also examined together with a range of key factors that have been recognised as being relevant to improving schools facing challenging circumstances in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. The majority of Fresh Start schools are situated in contexts of multiple disadvantage and are likely to benefit from these findings.

### ***An overview of school effectiveness and school improvement***

Over the last 30 years, the attention given to improving schooling has become a central issue in educational discourse in much of the developed world. The view held by Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972) that ‘schools make no difference’ has changed substantially to the current view held by researchers and policy makers involved in school effectiveness, namely the widespread belief that ‘schools can make a difference’ for the better (Edmonds 1979, MacGilchrist, Mortimore, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston and Smith 1979, Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis and Ecob 1988, Savage and Beresford 1995).

This powerful belief has underpinned many changes in educational thinking and policy, particularly in the last 10 years, and resulted in a paradigm shift in the minds of educationalists. The drive for improvement in schools in the UK has been part of different governments' agendas during this period. Since 1997 when 'New Labour' was elected, and Tony Blair declared his commitment to '*Education, education, education*' (Blair 1997a), the government has pursued a programme of reform by introducing many initiatives aimed at raising standards and decreasing inequality. There is a tension between the introduction of the initiatives and the time frame allocated to their implementation, reflected in the pressure to act speedily to achieve results within the political lifetime of a government. Globalisation has also impacted on education with many nations now competing in the international arena with league tables becoming internationally based. The OECD (2000) results, for example, drawn from 20 countries representing over 50 per cent of the world's entire gross domestic product, confirmed the importance of literacy skills for the effective functioning of labour markets and for the economic success and social advancement of societies competing in a global knowledge-based economy.

The two key research traditions relating to improvement in schools are 'school effectiveness' and 'school improvement'. Both began with different core beliefs but have converged over the past ten years. The 'school effectiveness' paradigm has its routes in quantitative methods and has been primarily concerned with pupils' cognitive outcomes with very few studies on social outcomes (Rutter *et*

al. 1979, Teddlie and Stringfield 1993). School effectiveness has been organisationally-based rather than process-based, with limited, easily measurable outcomes based on specified descriptors. A key document that raised the profile of school effectiveness in UK schools was '*Key Characteristics of Effective Schools*' (Sammons *et al.* 1995). It reviewed international research from 1966 to 1995 and identified 11 factors for effective schools, creating a set of criteria that many schools used to compare themselves and implement strategies to increase the effectiveness of their organisations (appendix 1).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the school improvement paradigm also had its routes in the quantitative tradition. Innovations were introduced to schools from the outside with a 'top down' approach on the schools' formal organisation and curriculum. Over the following decades, school improvement has evolved but can still be recognised by the definition given by Van Velzen, Miles, Eckholm, Hameyer and Robin, as '*a systematic, sustained effort at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more school, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively*' (1985: 48). Stoll and Fink (1996: 43) see improvement as '*a series of concurrent and recurring processes*' taking place if a school is to improve. Since the 1980s, a 'bottom up' approach has been encouraged (Reynolds 1993), driven by the notion of 'ownership' at school level and on teacher knowledge and the process of improvement over time rather than school management or organisational

factors per se. By the mid-1990s, the main message emerging from school improvement research was that improvement would happen only if schools took control and had ownership of the change process (Hopkins, West and Ainscow 1996). In the UK, the issue of school ownership have become more complex, since the curriculum, assessment and inspection have become increasingly centrally controlled, whilst financial autonomy and the implementation of central initiatives has been relinquished to the schools and their boards of governors.

For several years, there has been an increase in more collaborative international research merging findings from both paradigms (Hopkins 1996, Stoll, 1996). This move is gaining positive recognition as Reynolds, Teddlie, Hopkins and Stringfield (2000: 230) concluded in *'The International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research'* (Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000) that in order for schools to improve they need *'combinations of improvement and effectiveness strategies appropriate to the nature of the individual schools'*. This move has been coined as a 'third wave' paradigm (Reynolds, Teddlie, Creemers, Scheerens and Townsend 2000). The 'third wave' is characterised by a new issue of 'context specificity' and draws on the findings of several international research projects, for example, *'The Halton Project'* in Canada (Stoll and Fink 1992, 1994), and the *'The Accelerated Schools Project'* based in the USA (Levin 1996). These projects emphasise that every school is unique and, for improvement to occur, planning needs to be context specific. Teddlie and Stringfield (1993) highlighted

the need for schools to consider specific factors including: pupils' socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic mix; the community the school serves; frameworks to maximise learning; factors that lead to schools' poor performance and how they can be turned to contribute positively in their development planning. Leadership suitability in different contexts also emerged as an issue of effectiveness within context specificity in terms of leadership style (Evans 1988), while Hall, Rutherford, Hord, and Huling, (1984) emphasised the importance of being an initiator in turning round ineffective schools in low socio-economic areas. It also emerged that internal and external change agents should work collaboratively to develop an improvement plan that included a combination of 'top down' and 'bottom up' inputs comprising:

- Common features that are known to work across contexts drawn from generic school effectiveness and school improvement literature;
- Components taken from contextually sensitive settings, for example inner-city schools, that highlight the importance of certain goals that are specific to that setting; and
- Strategies to counteract the factors that create the negative school environment of the school under review.

Reynolds et al. (1993) recognised that consideration of both the strengths and weaknesses of a school, hitherto rarely considered together, gave an added strength in accomplishing '*the internal transformation of culture*' (Fullan 1991: 137). This has become a key factor in recent school improvement research.

Hopkins (1996) identified that the improvement strategy chosen by a school was dependent on where that school sat in relation to its current perception of its own school effectiveness. According to Hopkins, the failing schools strategy needed a high level of external support and a clear focus on a limited number of basic curriculum and organisational issues in order to build confidence and competence. Moderately effective schools should focus specifically on teaching and learning that would usually involve external support but could theoretically improve by themselves if the initiative adopted was internally constructed. To remain in the 'effective' category, a school needs to create its own support network and share good practice similar to the current initiative, '*Excellence Clusters*' operating in UK schools (OFSTED 2003a). The case study school within this thesis has combined all three strategies outlined by Hopkins (1996) in its transformation process as it evolved from a failing school to a moderately effective school.

The recent blend of school effectiveness and school improvement paradigms has brought about a change in focus and practice. The 'third wave' includes wider considerations such as the current effectiveness level, context, culture, and the capacity for improvement, which are powerful indicators of pupil outcomes and provide a more holistic view of a school. Another area of development that is beginning to have an impact on the 'third wave' paradigm are school-wide, package models that have 'improvement potential' particularly for schools in low socio-economic areas, for example, the literacy scheme '*Success for All*'

(Slavin, Madden, Dolan, and Wasik 1996). Stringfield and Winfield (1994) indicate that, providing context specificity is considered, these programmes can make a powerful contribution to pupil outcomes and staff development. This particular package model is examined in the case study as part of this thesis.

Organisational change is obviously complex (Fullan 1991) and there are a range of interrelated issues and recurring processes that need to be considered if improvement is to be sustained (Stoll and Fink 1996), including links between school-wide development, staff development and classroom development that is internally driven (Fullan, Bennett, Rolheiser and Bennett 1990, MacGilchrist *et al.* 1995). It has also been emphasised (Stoll and Myers 1998) that a ‘one-size fits all’ approach to school improvement is inappropriate. Despite these observations, the underlying assumption remains that any model of good practice can be adapted to suit the particular needs of each school.

### ***Characteristics of schools in difficult and challenging circumstances***

During the last decade, England and the USA, particularly have focused their educational reform agenda on schools in difficult and challenging circumstances. Many of these schools face multiple forms of disadvantage. They are frequently perceived as ‘failing’ or ‘ineffective’ and have received an increase in research attention and policy focus (Barth *et al.* 1999, Borman *et al.* 2000, Harris and Chapman 2001, Leithwood and Steinbach 2002, Stoll and Myers 1998). Despite ambitious intervention strategies like the ‘Title 1’ programme in the USA (a



school-wide reform programme for funding disadvantaged schools), research has shown that in the main, positive effects from improvement programmes were found among the most advantaged students (Borman *et al.* 1998). Contrary to this, Maden and Hillman (1996) found that some schools facing difficult and challenging circumstances were able to add significant value to levels of student learning and achievement but had to exceed 'normal efforts' (Maden 2001). Research by Reynolds *et al.* (2001), Whitty (2001) and Whitty and Mortimore (1997) suggests that teachers in schools facing challenging circumstances have to work harder, be more committed and sustain their performance above that of their peers in more favourable socio-economic circumstances.

A number of socio-economic problems frequently characterise schools in disadvantaged areas, including mental and physical health issues, high levels of unemployment and low educational achievement (Gore and Smith 2001). Other challenges that schools have to face are: high staff turnover, challenging pupil behaviour, and poor environments. Research on school improvement in economically deprived areas is limited, but there is a growing consensus that many of the strategies found to be effective are not exclusive to those schools and reflect elements of more general school improvement research (Reynolds *et al.* 2000). Themes emerging from the literature include leadership, creating a positive school culture, a focus on teaching and learning, developing a learning community, continuous professional development, creating an information-rich environment, involving parents, external support and resources, and sustaining

improvement (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll and Russ 2004, Potter, Reynolds and Chapman 2002).

### ***Theoretical Framework***

Professor Pam Sammons, eminent in the field of school improvement for several decades, revealed during an interview (2004) for this research that '*school improvement theory is under developed*'. Nevertheless, a number of theoretical perspectives can help us make sense of school improvement in schools in disadvantaged areas including: *contingency* theory, the *compensatory* model and the *additivity* hypothesis.

Contingency theory is based on the notion that organisations' effectiveness is dependent on internal and external factors, which can include the complexity of the environment, the age of the organisation and its socio-economic context (Creemers *et al.* 2000). Schools have to find a good relationship between their internal organisation and policies, and the contingency factors they are faced with. One possible hypothesis might be that effective schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas would be characterised by particular forms of organisation and policies distinguishing them from schools in other contexts, and that would be common across schools in these areas. On the other hand, some factors may differ between effective and improving schools in disadvantaged areas, for example, urban and rural location or school size and will serve to highlight differences between them.

The compensatory model (Chrispeels 1992, Teddlie *et al.* 2000) is based on the idea that the school needs to compensate for the lack of resources in pupils' homes in disadvantaged areas. In order for improvement to occur, schools need to go through two phases. In the first phase, basic needs should be addressed, such as an orderly environment and high expectations, while the second phase focuses on structural improvement in which more systemic and long-term processes can take place. Implicit in this model is that schools in low socio-economic areas need additional funding.

A further theoretical perspective is provided by the hypothesis of additivity of school and background factor effects, built on Reynolds and Teddlie's (2000) findings that, after controlling for pupil background factors, schools in low socio-economic areas still do worse than those in middle and high socio-economic contexts. The additivity hypothesis emphasises that schools dealing with more difficult circumstances are more likely to be ineffective and reflect social disadvantage. Reynolds and Teddlie (2000) suggest differences in the quality of teachers recruited in these areas, willingness to work in challenging schools and flaws become more apparent in high-pressure situations as possibilities. These theories are compatible to some degree, and contribute different perspectives on the issues of effectiveness and improvement in Fresh Start schools and will be referred to in the case study as part of this thesis.

## **Improving Schools in Disadvantaged areas**

### ***The role of leadership and management in school improvement***

Effective leadership is widely recognised as being a key constituent in achieving school improvement (Harris 2002, Hopkins 1995, OFSTED 1997, 2003d, Teddlie and Reynolds 2000) and an important influence on learning for students in especially challenging schools (Leithwood and Steinbach 2002). Research from differing school contexts in England, Scotland, and the USA has revealed the powerful impact of leadership in school development and change (Harris and Muijs 2003, Hopkins 2001, Macbeath *et al.* 1998, Van Velzen *et al.* 1985). Research from international literature indicates that effective leaders have a major influence on the effectiveness and success of the school (Harris and Muijs 2003). Early empirical studies (Hallinger and Heck 1996, Lashway 1997) in the USA illustrate that leadership styles in schools facing challenging circumstances are far from uniform, although Maden and Hillman (1996) note that in many schools there was shared decision-making and collegiality. Keedy (1993) reported that no single leadership approach worked effectively in every situation or indeed during the process of change, as the case study confirms, with the headteacher drawing on several leadership styles.

Recently, there has been a move away from the traditional leadership style towards more distributed and democratic forms of leadership, involving teachers in leading their schools and showing benefits in a range of studies (Harris and Muijs 2004). Positive effects have been reported from school improvement

programmes that have attempted to increase teacher involvement in decision-making (IESP 2001). A powerful force in the quest for alternative perspectives on leadership practice is the notion of '*distributed leadership*', which is currently receiving much attention and growing empirical support (Gronn 2000, Harris and Muijs 2004, Spillaine, Halverson and Diamond 2001). Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2001) concluded in their research on successful school improvement that an improving school includes '*varied sources of leadership, including distributed leadership*' (2001: 49).

Harris and Chapman's (2002) findings reported that effective headteachers, working in challenging contexts favoured a model that was fundamentally people-centred, concerned with building positive relationships and empowering others to lead. Silns and Mulford (2002) expand on this, emphasising that student outcomes are more likely to improve in situations in which leadership is distributed throughout the school community and when teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them and encouraged to innovate, develop and learn together. Similarly, a number of studies have emphasised that teacher involvement of this kind is a crucial factor in sustaining improvement. Clear, open communication is an important aspect of distributed leadership found in improving schools in a number of studies (Harris and Chapman 2001, Hughes 1995). Collaboration and trust have also been found to be effective factors in schools in difficult circumstances as they strengthen the ability to deal with the emotional disruption

that change almost invariably causes (Lein, Johnson and Ragland 1996, Stoll 1999).

Distributed leadership is characterised as a form of collective leadership, in which teachers develop expertise by working collaboratively. This requires schools to 'de-centre' the leader (Gronn 2000) and to subscribe to the view that leadership resides '*not solely in the individual at the top, but in every person at entry level who in one way or another, acts as a leader*' (Goleman 2002:14). This form of leadership is '*made coherent through a common culture*' (Elmore 2000:15). This model does not diminish the role of the headteacher, but strengthens it by altering some of the previously accepted notions of leadership, namely, 'instructional leadership'.

Leadership in improving schools has frequently been identified as transformational. Transformational leadership is seen as better able to cope with complex situations, typically found in schools in socio-economically deprived areas. Harris and Chapman (2001) and Reynolds, Hopkins, Potter and Chapman (2001) suggest that this type of leadership is more engaging and meaningful than instructional practice, which is based on more of an exchange relationship, although instructional leadership which has a focus on teaching and learning was also found to be a characteristic of effective leaders (Hallinger and Heck 1998, Murphy 1990, Stoll 1999). Communicating a strong vision of where the school is going, the expectations, and what the school can achieve has been found to be

significant in improving schools in disadvantaged areas in a number of US studies (Castellano, Stringfield and Stone 2002, Datnow and Stringfield 2000).

The reforms of the 1980s and 1990s have collectively given greater emphasis to the concept of the headteacher as a chief executive who is expected to articulate a market mission. Their school's survival is becoming increasingly dependent on their capacity to increase the school's results, resources and rolls while projecting the best possible image of the school (Grace 1995). This is particularly relevant for Fresh Start headteachers who are under very public scrutiny. A study by Hay Management Consultants (Forde, Hobby and Lees 2000) on leadership compared the leadership qualities of headteachers and senior business executives and concluded that headteachers could teach chief executives lessons in creating the right climate for growth and that overall they excelled in minimising bureaucracy, encouraging new thinking and providing clarity. Another message from the study recognised that while headteachers are good at valuing their employees, they are less successful at matching recognition to contribution, currently constrained by the grading and salary structure but to be addressed by 2005 with internal performance reviews.

Entrepreneurs have long been recognised in business, and despite the differences, their characteristics may be applicable in education. Grace (1995:20) highlights the constraints on headteachers to be entrepreneurial in their role, particularly as '*pedagogic innovators*' due to the demanding nature of

the National Curriculum allowing little time for innovation. However, the government has this to say on innovation and competition, *'Entrepreneurship and innovation are central to the creative processes in the economy. Entrepreneurs sense opportunities and take risks in the face of uncertainty, to open new markets, design new products and develop innovative processes'* (DTI 1998:12). The Hay Group (2001) suggested that entrepreneurs have nine competencies that can be predicted with about 80% accuracy including: drive, focus, capacity for work, high levels of integrity, democratic instincts, generosity in sharing success, ability to develop a business that could stand the test of time and contribute to the community, plus a passion for their job. Many of these competencies are pertinent for leadership in the Fresh Start model and are evident in the case study. Woods (2005: 207) points out that school leadership can benefit from pressure and support found in constructive public-private partnerships, suggesting that *'we need to be exploring, supporting and enhancing educational leadership which draws on all our capacities and which is, as a result, better able to imbue a more entrepreneurial culture with a higher ethic'*.

### ***The role of governing bodies in school improvement***

Governing bodies have been identified as powerful contributors to school improvement (Creese 1995, OFSTED 1999a). Their role includes providing a strategic view, acting as a 'critical friend' and ensuring accountability of the school. Scanlon, Earley and Evans (1999) found a strong association between



the inspectors' judgements of schools' effectiveness and their judgements of its governing body. OFSTED also noted, *'there are very strong indicators to show that where there is good governance the school is more likely to be successful'* (OFSTED 2002:11). In many cases of under-performing schools, governors had not fulfilled their role of monitoring and evaluating satisfactorily (OFSTED 2001). In schools based in low socio-economic areas, governing bodies can make a positive impact, particularly if they are characterised by the high level of expertise evident in the case study. The demands on governing bodies in the Fresh Start model are perhaps more challenging than in most other schools. A completely new governing body is appointed at the outset, when the school re-opens with the responsibility of rapidly turning around a high profile failing school. These pressures are frequently compounded by the difficulty of governor recruitment, which has been recognised as an issue of concern in low-socio economic areas, particularly the recruitment of parent governors (Matthews 2002a).

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) (2001), Creese (1995) and Matthews (2002a) state that the best leadership is shared between the headteacher and governing bodies, allowing a real partnership to develop that is equal and includes all stakeholders. In these circumstances, governing bodies are enabled to contribute in meaningful ways to the school improvement process. Creese and Earley (1999) emphasise that governors can contribute to raising standards by using their specialist knowledge to broaden the curriculum,

improve the environment while being involved in policy-making, improve finance, planning and contribute to the ethos and extra curricular activities. Hopkins et al. (1996) believe that governors can contribute to improving the climate by fostering collaborative strategies within the school and with the local community. Their role as 'critical friend' has been noted in terms of providing high pressure but with high support (DFE/BIS/OFSTED 1995). Governor visits to schools, if handled responsibly, contribute to an increased understanding of what their school is trying to achieve, an improved relationship with staff and an opportunity to know where improvements are needed. Bird (2002) and OFSTED (2002) suggest that governors need to become more informed about the day-to-day running of their schools and rely less on the headteacher as a sole resource for information in order to make a more effective contribution to monitoring and evaluation. Bird (2002) and Creese and Earley (1999) suggest that linking governors to subject areas and increasing their access to LEA information would enhance their independence and accountability. Governor training is a crucial issue particularly in the light of governor continuity. For example, whole governing body training days may prove effective in team building and improving the more specific training required to fulfil their evolving responsibilities.

The relationship between the headteacher and the Chair of governors is crucial. Sallis, (2001) and Creese and Earley (1999) note that the chair is '*someone to bounce ideas off*'. Scanlon et al. (1999) point out that the Chair is often the

prime mover in enhancing the effectiveness of a governing body by ensuring that meetings are inclusive, focused and relevant. The extent to which the Chair and the whole governing body are effectively involved in school improvement will ultimately depend on the approach and attitude of the headteacher. High levels of governor continuity, training, educational expertise, respect and open communication are hallmarks of effectiveness evident in the case study model.

### ***Creating a positive school culture***

A positive school culture is one of the most important elements in improving schools, particularly in low socio-economic areas, in which a 'blame' culture frequently prevails. Open communication and supportive leadership can play a major role in achieving this (Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins 1999). High expectations are important to pupil achievement. They need to be established throughout the school and extended to coherent assessment methods across the school curriculum (Hopkins and Reynolds 2002, Leithwood and Steinbach 2002). Monitoring pupils' work, transmitting positive feedback and setting realistic pupil targets are effective routes of conveying high expectations (Maden and Hillman 1996).

High staff turnover is a common problem for schools in economically deprived areas, which can be extremely disruptive for children's learning, causing a negative effect on the shared culture and school vision (Hughes 1995). A stable staff with low absenteeism has been an important factor in raising the level of

effectiveness in the case study school. Teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of school improvement interventions have been shown to influence their work-rate and enthusiasm (Slavin and Madden 2000). These include prior success of an improvement project used in other schools and recognition of the beneficial effects for the pupils in their schools (Borman *et al.* 2000). Evidence of high teacher commitment to the implementation of literacy initiative, '*Success for All*', at the case study school has provided a vehicle to incorporate many of these findings and enable systemic change throughout the school.

### ***Teaching and learning***

Focussing on a limited number of academically orientated targets has been identified as a key characteristic of effective and improving schools (Hopkins 2001, Reynolds *et al.* 2001). Studies in the USA specifically looking at schools in areas of high deprivation report similar findings with many adopting new instructional strategies (Connell 1996, Henchey 2001, Teddlie and Stringfield 1993). Research suggests that a focus on teaching and learning should be supported by training staff in specific teaching methods at the start of the school's improvement programme (Hopkins 2001, Joyce *et al.* 1999). This supports many of the strategies employed in the teaching methods of *Success for All* (Slavin, Madden, Dolan and Wasik 1996) outlined in the case study findings.

Previous research has established that pupils in low socio-economic areas need more structure and positive reinforcement from the teacher and benefit from

receiving the curriculum in smaller packages followed by rapid feedback (Ledoux and Overmaat 2001). They also require more instruction and respond more to external rewards than students from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Teddlie and Stringfield 1993, Teddlie, Stringfield and Wimpelberg and Kirby 1989). Low achievers with low self-esteem appear to benefit from non-contingent praise (Brophy 1992). Relating learning to real-life experience and emphasising it has practical usage have also been found to be particularly important for learning. This approach may reduce disaffection as well as encourage learning (Henchey 2001, Hopkins and Reynolds 2002). Consistency in teaching is important and has been found to improve outcomes (Mortimore 1991). Changing the curriculum, with more emphasis on basic skills has also been found to be effective (Barth *et al.* 1999, Hallinger and Murphy 1986). Similarly Ledoux and Overmaat (2001) recognised the benefits of a basic skills focus coupled with a highly structured curriculum, which had benefits for under-performing ethnic minority students.

However, there is an argument that this prescriptive approach dilutes professionalism and is not in everyone's overall interest. Furthermore, a perceived danger of focussing on basic skills and applying the National Curriculum is that it delivers an impoverished curriculum that does not always support the wider development of the child, particularly the creative or aesthetic dimension suggested in *Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools* (DfES 2003c). Two improving schools in the US and the UK emphasised the arts (Connell 1996, Maden 2001), an approach that was successfully employed by one

of the sample Fresh Start schools (New Christchurch Primary, headteacher interview, appendix 7), which has used arts as a vehicle to drive their curriculum.

For effective teaching and learning to occur in any school but particularly in disadvantaged schools, it is crucial for clear disciplinary procedures and a structured environment to be established at the outset (Maden and Hillman 1996). Valuing and involving pupils in setting up the rules in a school encourages them to feel part of the school 'family' and is recognised as a positive characteristic of effective schools (Connell 1996, Lein *et al.* 1996). A School Council involving pupils throughout the school can be effective in conveying this message while emphasising citizenship and democratic practice within school.

### ***Developing a learning community***

School improvement research has highlighted the need for schools to become 'learning communities'. They need to 'embrace change' and 'engage in continuous improvement' through 'innovation and change' based on existing 'successful evidence-based practice' that can be adapted to suit their situation (Joyce *et al.* 1999). This involves staff in considering strategic development for the students teaching and learning and 'thinking outside of the box' (Louis and Kruse 1995, Louis and Miles 1990).

Research in disadvantaged areas in the USA has shown that schools that exist as professional, collaborative communities, with responsibility for student learning,

working continuously to improve their teaching practices were more effective in student achievement (Bryk, Easton, Kerbrow, Rollow, and Sebring 1994). This approach differs from specific, short-term school improvement strategies that do not create conditions for sustained improvement (Hopkins 2001). Stoll (1999) identifies the notion of the 'teacher as learner' being central to school improvement and recognises that teachers' practices are influenced by the internal school culture, along with the external influences of policy, community and global culture. The headteacher's role is instrumental in creating a supportive climate (Louis and Kruse 1995).

New solutions in learning organisations should either be drawn from the existing knowledge base or develop from a small-scale pilot with stringent monitoring (Joyce *et al.* 1999, Piontek, Dwyer, Seager and Orsburn 1998). Teamwork is crucial to creating a learning community: the benefits from collaboration that is purposeful and action-focused have been identified (Connell 1996, Piontek *et al.* 1998). This can be enhanced by rescheduling the school timetable to accommodate collective lesson planning, collaborative enquiry, and opportunities to identify good practice in observing other teachers' lessons (Connell 1996, Seeley, Niemeyer and Greenspan 1990) leading to new innovative practice (Piontek *et al.* 1998). Identifying good practice in a new initiative can in turn create learning communities within schools (Harris 2001). Current practice in the case study school incorporates many of these findings.

### ***Continuous professional development***

It is recognised that improving schools have policies in place to support staff professional development (Henchey 2001, Reynolds *et al.* 2001). In the USA strong 'Continuous Professional Development' (CPD) is linked to the most effective school reform programmes (Barth *et al.* 1999, Herman 1999). Effective professional development needs not only to incorporate individual targets but to be embedded in the workplace (Joyce *et al.* 1999). Joyce and Showers (1995) identified several factors for effective staff development to occur:

- Relevant, practical, classroom information;
- An element of theory;
- An element of demonstration;
- Using mentoring programmes for coaching and feedback.

Berends (2000) recognised that some schools lacked positive, hands-on training for professional development. Piontek *et al.* (1998) proposed that all staff meetings should be reserved for professional development. Other solutions are in the form of networks with other schools, being involved with '*Leading Edge*' seminars on leadership, run by the National College for School Leadership or being part of a '*school cluster*'. The case study school illustrates a strong element of CDP for both individual staff and as a whole school, particularly in relation to '*Success for All*' training.

### ***Creating an information-rich environment***

A key element of effective and improving schools studies in the UK and the US, has been data-richness. Data can be used as a basis for school and classroom



decision-making (Henchey 2001, Hopkins 2001, Joyce *et al.* 1999, Reynolds *et al.* 2001). School improvement can occur when schools collect and interpret a wide variety of data, including exam results, standardised and school-based test results, information on attendance, gender and ethnicity and qualitative data recorded on a continuous basis which can be used collectively to modify practice accordingly. Qualitative data can be sought from pupils and teachers on a range of issues including motivation, creativity, commitment, satisfaction, school conditions, and teaching methods (Etheridge, Butler and Scipio 1994) and the effectiveness of new programmes, mentoring and teaching styles (Connell 1996). Data provides the basis for target setting and is used as a strategy for improvement in many schools (Reynolds, Sammons, Stoll, Barber, and Hillman 1996). Internal reviews and audit data are another useful source for schools (Hopkins *et al.* 1996). The introduction of PANDA reports (OFSTED's School Performance and Assessment reports) have added another dimension to the data richness of schools. Regular monitoring of '*Success for All*' in the case study school has contributed to the development of data-rich sources.

### ***Parental involvement***

Parental involvement appears not to be easily achieved in disadvantaged areas (Connell 1996, Henchey 2001, Maden and Hillman 1996). However, broader communities involving parents, teachers, heads and local businesses, are critical for true school improvement to occur (Joyce *et al.* 1999) and particularly relevant for schools in economically deprived areas (Seeley *et al.* 1990) in which parental

support may not be immediately forthcoming (Hart and Risley 1995). Effective schools have very strong partnerships and community outreach programmes, including links with parents and local businesses (Borman *et al.* 2000). Barth *et al.*'s (1999) study found that effective schools helped to raise standards by providing knowledge of the curriculum to parents, enabling them to help their children, rather than just using parents for fundraising.

Research has indicated that some effective schools in disadvantaged areas discourage parental involvement to distance negative home influences on the school (Teddlie and Stringfield 1993), while Chrispeels, Castillo and Brown (2000) reported that effectiveness is improved by listening to the parents' voice but not including them on the team. Similar findings were reported by deputy headteachers at the Institute of Education during several National Professional Qualifying Headteacher (NPQH) training sessions (IOE 2000 and 2001). Parental involvement in family education programmes and integrating school and social services have been necessary and effective in disadvantaged areas (Leithwood and Steinbach 2002, Montgomery *et al.* 1993). Schools have successfully improved parental involvement in some instances by offering incentives to come to school, such as free breakfast, transport and childcare (Guthrie, Guthrie, Van Heusden, and Burns 1989, Leithwood and Steinbach 2002). School community workers, Traveller Support Services and members of the community who liaise between school and home, monitor families' health and welfare needs, have been employed successfully in some areas as supplementary home school links

(Borman *et al.*, 2000). Involving parents at the earlier stages while at nursery was found to be easier than later on in the primary school (Maden and Hillman 1996). Many of the aforementioned initiatives to involve parents at the case study school have resulted in a mixed record of success and are discussed in the case study.

### ***External support***

A mix of external pressure and support has been found to be a catalyst for change and set school improvement processes in motion (Freeman 1997, Fullan 1991). This supports the findings from the majority of primary Fresh Start head teachers interviewed for the case study. Reynolds (1998) emphasises the positive contribution that external support can make towards school improvement in disadvantaged areas. There are four main elements of external support, including OFSTED, the LEA, school networks and governing bodies, which have been mentioned previously. However, research in the UK by Chapman (2002) suggests that claims of improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances as a result of inspection are dubious. The inspection process has been cited as being responsible for a more autocratic leadership style and more short-term leadership along with claims that changes could have been made without OFSTED. However, Barber (1995) suggests that external support should be recognised as an enabling force that encourages schools to improve themselves rather than one that imposes improvement.

LEAs also provide significant support for school improvement by giving intensive early support to schools in difficulties, acting as a resource for professional development and helping with data analysis (Watling, Hopkins, Harris and Beresford 1998). The level and competence of this support is dependent on the individual authority, as seen in the case study as part of this thesis.

An expanding area and effective way of generating external support in the UK has been through the learning schools network. Larger, professional, learning communities can support one another by providing leadership at many levels, for example, the Advanced Skills Teachers initiative (OFSTED 2003b) which shares good practice and provides social and technical support (Hopkins and Reynolds 2002). '*School Clusters*' are another opportunity to generate external support and share good practice. At the case study school, positive gains were acknowledged as a result of becoming part of an '*Excellence Cluster*' providing more networking and training opportunities with primary and secondary schools in the area while benefiting from substantial extra funding from central government (Headteacher's report, Governors' meeting 18/11/04).

### ***Resources***

The right level of resourcing is essential if school improvement is to succeed (Reynolds *et al.* 2001). Research claims have highlighted a positive relationship between school resourcing, pupil outcomes and the success of school reform initiatives (Borman *et al.* 2000, Greenwald, Hedges and Laine 1996). Direct links

have been demonstrated between increases in financial support and school improvement (IESP 2001). Significantly, the most common reason for school reform programmes to fail after being implemented was a reduction of funding (Nesselrodt, Schaffer and Stringfield 1997). However, providing resources does not guarantee improvement. Research has shown that effective schools deploy resources wisely and are more proactive at finding resources (Piontek *et al.* 1998, Connell 1996). It has also been recognised that failing schools may not have effective management and leadership in place and therefore extra resources are unlikely to lead to improvement (Whatford 1998). Furthermore, Thrupp (1999) emphasised that school composition can influence rates of school improvement, for example, changes in the social composition of the pupil body can create a change in resourcing and the school ethos. One of the hallmarks of the Fresh Start model is its initial extra funding. Many primary Fresh Start headteachers including the headteacher at the case study school, reported that an important element of their success has been due to stringent and creative management of their extra resources, coupled with an exit strategy extended over five years instead of the customary three years.

### ***Sustaining improvement***

There is limited research in the area of sustaining improvement for schools in economically deprived areas, despite the fact that it poses a major challenge for such schools. Changes in the wider context, for example where school intake had become more middle-class, influenced the sustainability of improvement (Maden

2001). Recruiting high-quality teachers and retaining staff over a 5-year period were also recognised as important strategies for sustained improvement (Maden: *ibid*). Other relevant factors included shared values, involving other adults, targeting, mentoring, an academic focus, 'value-added' curricula, after-school programmes, good ICT, strong external networks and a tendency to interpret rather than be run by national initiatives (Maden: *ibid*). Lastly, continuous monitoring of success was identified as an essential element (Stringfield 1998).

Similar conclusions for sustained improvement have been reported in the USA (Datnow and Stringfield 2000) but the characteristics have been extended to include the following:

- heads manage and support change;
- attracting high calibre staff;
- there is a culture of continuous professional development;
- staff see methods as effective

A study in the USA evaluating 10-year old reforms found several pertinent factors that positively affected sustainability. Many of these findings are characteristic of the Fresh Start school outlined in the case study:

- consistent leadership that maintains a consistent vision;
- willingness to adopt new practices;
- new practices that are integrated into the routine;
- local policies that support reform;
- collaboration and professional development that is high on the agenda;

- good relations with the local authority;
- a supportive political framework (Florian 2000).

### *Summary*

This chapter has drawn on three decades of international school improvement and school effectiveness research as a background for the examination of key findings from more recent school improvement research pertaining specifically to schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.

It has been consistently recognised that successful schools in low socio-economic areas can overcome failure by employing specific improvement strategies, enabling them to improve against the odds, often at a greater rate than schools overall (DfEE 2001b, OFSTED 2000a). Although there is no single recipe for improvement, there are some common ingredients. These include strong flexible leadership and management, an effective governing body, a focus on teaching and learning, a positive culture, developing a learning community, continuous professional development, an information-rich environment, parental involvement, good external support and increased resources. However, as Stoll and Myers (1998) note, there are no “quick fixes” and sustaining improvement needs further research.

The strategies outlined in this chapter offer schools in a range of challenging contexts ways to enhance their improvement. As educational inequality persists, it

is important for the benefit of everyone involved, particularly the pupils, that under-performing schools become as effective as possible by drawing on current research from both the school improvement and school effectiveness paradigms outlined earlier. It would appear that contingency theory, the compensatory model and the additivity model all receive some support from these findings but no one theory provides the solution. Contingency theory has some support in the area of teaching and learning, the need for more external support and relations with parents. The compensatory model also receives some support from some of the findings outlined in this chapter. Focussing on high expectations and basic skills seems to be particularly relevant for low-achieving schools in low socio-economic areas but research evidence also points to the relevance of teaching and learning styles, leadership, the creation of a positive school culture and learning organisations as routes to improvement. This thesis highlights the importance of combining many of these factors to bring about improvement. The additivity perspective receives little support from the findings in the case study, primarily because, as will be seen, the school put positive measures in place to alleviate the potential of reinforcing disadvantage. Muijs et al. (2004) suggest that where studies have supported the additivity perspective, it may have been due to the simplistic measures that have been used, for example, eligibility for free school meals, whereas if other indicators which are much stronger predictors of achievement, such as measures of cultural capital and parental education levels had been used, the additive effect may disappear.



Successful Fresh Start primary schools have drawn on many of the school improvement strategies outlined here on their journey towards becoming changed school communities. The design and pace that they have chosen has been individual and their success seems to be substantially linked to meeting the needs of their own circumstances. Nevertheless, there are common threads that unite them in their mission to raise standards. These are outlined in the case study.

## CHAPTER 2: THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

### *Introduction*

This chapter examines the political influences that have contributed to school improvement in England. Firstly, New Labour's educational policy is examined with reference to a range of initiatives retained from the previous Conservative government together with new initiatives introduced since they came to power in 1997. Secondly, an analysis of the historical inspection structure is provided to help contextualise the current inspection framework and its impact on raising standards and identifying failing schools.

### *Contextualising school improvement within New Labour's policy*

Labour assumed power in 1997 with Fresh Start schools forming part of their initial educational policy. Labour had reinvented itself from 'Old Labour' to 'New Labour'. New Labour saw the blend of technology, innovation and inclusive education as one of the keys to the future success of the economy. Whilst it can be said that the social democratic aims of New Labour reflected those of 'Old Labour', the actual policies that have been implemented have not met with the approval of a group of 'Old Labour' supporters. New Labour has resolutely pursued a programme of reform since 1997 following Tony Blair's commitment to '*Education, education, education*' (Blair 1997a). Its new policies emphasised social inclusion '*Britain rebuilt as one nation in which each citizen is valued and has a stake*' (Blair 1997b). New Labour's education policy embraced a wide range of issues across age ranges from '*Sure Start*' (DfES

2002c) projects, aimed at helping to achieve better outcomes for young children, parents and communities, to promoting lifelong learning, particularly computer literacy under the framework of individual learning accounts in *'Learning to Succeed'* (1999) and training programmes outlined in *'Skills for Life'* (DfEE 2001a).

New Labour discarded several of the previous government's programmes including the Assisted Places Scheme of subsidies to private education but in the main chose to build on existing policies (Smithers 2001). Docking (2000: 32) suggests that New Labour's policies have been fundamentally those of the Conservatives *'dressed up in New Labour's clothes'*. New Labour's first major piece of legislation, the 1998 *Schools Standards and Framework Act*, retained many of the previous Conservative government's policies including, for example, testing, the National Curriculum, league tables and local management of schools. *'Grant Maintained Schools'* were abolished but replaced with *'Foundation'* and *'Community'* schools embracing many of the principles of *'segregation'* associated with Grant Maintained Schools (Whitty 2001:14). Beacon and Specialist schools were also introduced, selected from an OFSTED list of top performing schools. Extra funds were provided and *'Beacon'* schools were given a mandate to influence less successful schools with their knowledge and methods of success. This initiative was extended in the 2001 Green Paper, *'Schools: Building on Success: Raising Standards, Promoting Diversity, Achieving Results'* which envisaged that up to half of the secondary schools would become

specialist schools receiving additional funds (DfEE 2001b). 'City Academies', a new type of independent specialist secondary school aimed at breaking the cycle of underachievement in areas of social and economic deprivation, are currently being set up throughout the country. They enable sponsors from the private and voluntary sectors to establish new schools working in partnership with central government and local education partners with the basic running costs being met by the state *'to provide local solutions for local needs'* (DfES 2005).

Another model retained from the previous Conservative government maintaining continuity by New Labour was OFSTED, a centralised agency for national inspection based at the Department for Education and Skills. This agency plays a major role in maintaining a regulatory system of control aimed at achieving high levels of attainment, throughout the educational system. The National Curriculum, target setting, accountable national inspections, published performance tables and the more recently introduced 'performance related pay' have also contributed towards attainment, Forrester (2002) claims. However, many researchers dispute OFSTED's effects (Bell 2003, Earley 1996, Fitz-Gibbon and Stephenson-Forster 1999, Stoll and Myers 1998), pointing out that for real improvement to occur, schools need systemic change that is internally driven rather than superficial change to meet external criteria.

New Labour was not prepared to accept social arguments for failure, on the grounds that these provided excuses for poor schooling. This was in line with

much of the current research (for example, Mortimore *et al.* 1988, Teddlie and Stringfield 1993). The House of Commons Select Committee were advised by Michael Barber in 1999 that *'The Government is committed to levering up standards for all pupils, but particularly those who are underachieving most seriously'* and this could be achieved by expecting high standards and by having high expectations of every pupil regardless of their background and circumstances (Barber 1999).

This theme of raising expectations and standards has continued to dominate the government's rhetoric. *'We want a world-class education service: one with standards which match the best anywhere in the world. We want them achieved not at some indeterminate future date but as soon as possible within the decade that has just begun'* (DfEE 2001b:8). Whilst New Labour's ambitious intentions can be applauded, it is unlikely that all their aims can be achieved. Yet Tony Blair attacked the 'culture of excuses', which tolerated low ambition, rejected excellence and treated poverty as an excuse for failure (Jones 2003). Competition was seen as a force for change, with the private sector playing an active role. New Labour amplified Conservative partnership initiatives with the private sector to raise standards in disadvantaged areas. *'Education Action Zones'* (EAZs), introduced in 1998, were seen as uniting business, schools, parents and local authorities. Similarly, New Labour has continued with previous policies, expanding on a range of compensatory measures to assist children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Since 2000, there has been increased public spending with particular emphasis on education. It remains to be seen whether or not New Labour has the most coherent and purposeful education programme since the Butler Act of 1944, as its commitment to raising standards and rhetoric suggest. During his second term, Blair has maintained his Party's commitment in the Queens Speech to Parliament (2003), *'Delivering a world class education system that enables individuals to achieve their full potential remains my Government's main priority for Britain's future success. Education reform will continue to raise standards in all schools'* (Blair 2003). Fresh Start schools can be seen as an example of this philosophy in practice and as an ambitious and controversial endeavour to raise standards in failing schools.

### **School Inspection as a means to improving schools**

#### ***Historical Background***

In the UK, in different guises there have been varying degrees of continuous effort to improve schooling for close on two hundred years in the form of school inspection. Tracing the development of inspection along with changing political agendas provides an understanding of the process that has led to the highly transparent, if somewhat arbitrary system of 'successful' and 'failing' schools while providing the climate for Fresh Start Schools to develop. A starting point for the investigation is OFSTED's claim that inspection leads to school improvement (Matthews and Smith 1995).

Historically, there have been two strands to the development of school inspection. The first and most influential is Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the second is the local authority tradition (Brighouse and Moon 1995). Following the Schools Act of 1992, a further development emerged involving the establishment of OFSTED and the training of registered inspectors who were required to carry out four yearly inspections of schools.

Inspection in education goes back to 1839. The first of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools were appointed by the Privy Council, a tradition that has continued through to the present day with HMI. Denis Lawton and Peter Gordon carried out a comprehensive review of inspection for the period 1839 - 1986. However, it is the last thirty years that have been marked by changes to the inspectorate's role, development and influence from which the current system has evolved. Never at any point in its history was HMI wholly or constitutionally independent of government, although in practice that was assumed, since they were civil servants. HMI had a high profile and was charged with inspecting and reporting in the interests of the government of the day and advising on the development of policy and its implementation in practice.

During the 1960s and 1970s there was very little national reporting of inspection. Like the rest of education, it was a national system locally administered through Local Education Authorities as part of the post-war settlement of education established by the 1944 Education Act (Ainley 2001). The LEAs' power,

influence and size increased as a consequence of the recommendations in the Maud Report (1969) and the Local Government Act (1972) enforced in 1974, resulting in the LEAs' advisory services increasing in number and taking on a wider role (Lawton and Gordon 1987). HMI was forced to shift their focus, which overlapped too closely with LEA advisers' roles. LEAs' roles in evaluation and monitoring of schools continued to expand until the introduction of the Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988. According to Professor Sally Tomlinson, the aims of the ERA were far reaching: *'Consolidating a market ideology to be achieved by parental choice, establishing central control over curriculum and assessment, further eroding the powers and responsibilities of local authorities, teachers and their trainers, demanding accountability from individuals and institutions ... and encouraging selection under a rhetoric of diversity'* (Tomlinson 2001: 43). The ERA had major implications for the LEAs and heralded the move towards what has now become a national system nationally administered as argued by Ainley (1998: 43) *'if local authorities lose all their significance, there will be nothing to set between small-scale semi-representative governing bodies and a very powerful central state'*. A role that OFSTED currently fills.

The crisis in public expenditure caused by huge inflation in oil prices, the end of the long boom and rise in youth unemployment resulting in the economic crisis of the mid-1970s, all affected the work, quality and standards of the education service and resulted in them being called to account (Brighouse and Moon 1995). In 1976, the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, in his Ruskin College speech launched the



so-called '*Great Debate on Education*' signalling the government's new interest in both the relevance and quality of what was taught in schools and the expected standards and achievements of pupils (Lawton and Gordon 1987: 27). During the late 1970s, the Inspectorate began two large-scale national programmes of inspection, covering a 10 per cent sample of all secondary and primary schools in England. The purpose of this was to establish some kind of a base-line picture after years of organisational and curriculum development. Two key HMI reports, '*Aspects of Secondary Education*' (HMI 1979) and '*Primary Education in England*' (HMI 1978), had a major influence on the future role of the Inspectorate. HMI argued that there was a need for national inspection to be programmed and organised centrally under their control.

Successive governments increased the influence of central government on school and further education curricula and standards by which the education service was to be called to account. The key staging-posts in this process were Keith Joseph's White Paper '*Better Schools*' (DES 1985) promoting a broad general education with a technical element and vocational specialisation for 14 to 16 year olds; Kenneth Baker's *Education 'Reform' Act* (DES 1988); Kenneth Clarke's *Education 'Schools' Act No.2* (DFE 1992); John Patten's *Education Act* arising from his White Paper '*Choice and Diversity*' (DFE 1992); *The Dearing Report*, (1993); *Education Act 1994* (Teacher Training); *Nursery Education and Grant-Maintained Schools Act* (1996); *School Inspections Act* (1996); *Standards and Effectiveness Unit* (1997); '*Excellence in Schools*' (1997), emphasising

'standards' rather than 'structures' and a focus on challenging national targets for primary children in English and maths; *School Standards and Framework Act, Education Act – GTC* (1998); the Green paper, '*Schools: Building on Success*' (DfEE 2001) which aimed to bring about a similar transformation in secondary schools as had already been taking place in primary schools as a result of the steps put in place with '*Excellence in Schools*'; the White Paper: '*Schools Achieving success*' (DfES 2001), promoting choice and diversity at secondary level with the introduction of specialist schools and new performance 'floor targets'; the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001); the Green Paper: '*14-18: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards*' (DfES 2002), promoting the 14-19 age range as a single phase and enabling students to develop at their own pace; the Education Act (2002); the Green Paper: '*Every Child Matters*' (DfES 2003) which aimed to reform the child protection system; Tomlinson's: Working Group on 14-19 Reform (2003) promoting the introduction of a broad 'baccalaureate' style single qualification to cover learning and attainment across a broad range of subjects comprising four levels of difficulty covering the 14-19 age range (subsequently rejected in 2005).

This avalanche of legislation was a response to growing public disquiet about the quality and standards of education. 'Progressive teaching methods' employed in primary schools in England were of particular concern, as they were perceived by the government as being too 'laissez-faire'. Sensational media reporting of isolated cases such as the William Tyndale Primary School

controversy (Guillard 2004) fuelled the debate, along with perceived failing educational standards and alleged declining standards of social and personal behaviour, helping to put the reform of education high on the new and very radical 1979 Conservative government's agenda. The view held by the new government led by Margaret Thatcher, was that teachers needed to be more stringently controlled and directed if all round standards were to improve.

Margaret Thatcher's Conservative governments became increasingly interventionist in education. It was her Secretary of State for Education, Sir Keith Joseph who set in motion a series of changes to educational structures and practices, beginning with the schools' curriculum and involving HMI (*Curriculum Matters* 1985). These changes provoked considerable opposition amongst the teaching profession, who felt that there was too much emphasis on the acquisition of subject knowledge at the expense of keeping a focus on the needs of the learner and learning processes. Despite resistance, the launch of the White Paper '*Better Schools*' (1985) stressed amongst other things, the need to secure a broad agreement between the Secretary of State, the LEAs and the schools about the objectives and content of the school curriculum, as the Government believed that the present curricular of many schools was inadequate for preparing pupils for adult life and there was too much variation and inconsistency between schools and LEAs. The 1986 Education Act implemented these proposals by diminishing the importance of the LEAs, while increasing power to governors', head teachers and central government. Together they provided the foundation for

*Vocational Education Initiative* (TVEI) in 1984, and the *Youth Training Scheme* (YTS) in 1983. HMI was expanded to cater for this area of inspection after a scrutiny of the Inspectorate in 1983 by Sir Keith Joseph reported that this area of the service needed to increase and new expertise was required. The government also decided to publish HMI inspection reports rather than just having them 'issued'. The outcome was that throughout the 1980s and 1990s, HM inspections became highly visible. Simultaneously HMI found itself through necessity, dealing with policy-driven issues. Their work was almost entirely determined by central programming, for example, ensuring that various national priorities for information, inspection and advice were implemented. A shift of power had taken place and HMI was no longer in the driving seat of the proposed centralisation (Jones 2003).

Much of the work that was carried out in the late 1980s required the co-operation of people outside the Inspectorate and was a very public activity. Eventually the government decided something needed to be done to change things to meet the requirements of the ERA (1988). They decided that every school would be inspected and reported on frequently enough for parents to have access to these reports while their children were attending the school. The opportunity was also taken to change the HMI, while introducing the new arrangements for inspection relating to the recent education reforms.

Initially, the LEAs retained the responsibilities given to them in the 1944 Education Act for the quality of education provided by their schools. The emphasis of responsibility shifted after 1988 to one of increased public accountability, particularly by providing information to parents, students and governors: *'Although LEAs may have lost their "empires" there remains an important role for them to play...in the monitoring and assuring quality and providing information to parents, students and governors to allow them to carry out their new responsibilities'* (The Audit Commission 1989).

The *'Citizens Charter'* (Cabinet Office 1991) influenced a change in direction with support from the new Conservative Prime Minister, John Major. The new measures, it was argued, ensured more objectivity and greater transparency, giving parents more information to exercise their rights with access to a wider choice of schools. *'The Parents Charter'* (DES 1991a, 1991b) announced by Kenneth Clark, Secretary of State for Education and Science, included details of the establishment of a new organisation headed by HMCI. It involved fewer HMIs who controlled the quality of school inspection and monitored the standards of training and the new inspectors. Four yearly full-scale inspections would be published in a report. Clark wrote, *'I intend to take the mystery out of education by providing the real choice which flows from comparative tables, setting out the performance of local schools and independent inspection reports on the strengths and weaknesses of each school,'* (DES 1991b). Controversially, funding for inspections was obtained

by reducing the revenue support grant to the LEAs by a corresponding amount, thus further reducing the LEAs' role (Jones 2003).

HMI's role also shifted as a consequence of these changes. Concerns were expressed from within the government, with Bob Dunn M.P. referring to the HMI as a '*self-perpetuating oligarchy*' who had a lack of interest in the consumers and John Burchill, a LEA Chief Inspector, who was sceptical about HMI's lack of independence and objectivity (Brighouse and Moon 1995). The reality was that the government had been directing their energies after the ERA on higher and further education and HMI's time was focussed on reporting the effectiveness of government policies. Eventually the government decided that changes had to take place if national inspections were to progress and meet the requirements of the ERA. It is clear that the initiatives taken by the government from 1988 to 1991 were a prelude to the radical changes in inspection that have since taken place.

### ***Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)***

When funding was devolved to Schools by the ERA in 1988, the government established a rigorous accountability mechanism. The Education (Schools) Act, 1992, heralded change on an unprecedented level. As a result of unexpected amendments built into the legislation by the House of Lords, the new Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was created in 1993. The creation of OFSTED signalled a seismic shift in the education inspection system. For the

first time, every school in the country was to have a rigorous inspection once every four years carried out by independent inspection teams. *'The Parents Charter'* had already ensured the publication and distribution of summary reports to all parents, alongside the publication of performance 'league tables' involving information, previously unavailable, about the state of education in each of the 24,000 schools in England. The resulting 'evidence', it was maintained, would simultaneously assist parental choice, hold schools accountable and provide an agenda for school improvement. In the longer term it may provide a basis for international comparators.

The advent of OFSTED served other important purposes. Information gathered formed the basis of the evidence that HMCI would present in OFSTED's Annual Report to Parliament on the quality and standards of education. It still remains a major tool for school accountability in respect of the powers that they were given to manage their own affairs, particularly their substantial budgets, in the wake of the 1988 ERA. The role of HMI changed but continues to be of central importance to OFSTED. HMI continue to visit schools reporting on a wide range of educational issues such as the National Curriculum, public examinations and testing. They also have a significant role advising and inspecting schools placed in 'Serious Weaknesses' or 'Special Measures' as a result of an OFSTED inspection (HMI (jw) interview, 2004).

OFSTED's statutory function is to advise the Secretary of State for Education on *'the quality of education, standards in education, the efficient use of financial resources and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils'* (OFSTED 1993: 5), the intention being to improve the quality of teaching, learning and standards achieved in schools. A standardised full inspection framework was developed by OFSTED in 1993, revised in 1996 and superseded by the latest version in 2003. OFSTED publishes annual tables showing the performance attainment of children in each primary school in the yearly Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) in English and Mathematics at KS1 and with the addition of Science at KS2. Since 2003, value-added data has been available in PANDA reports. These tables and individual school reports provide a national attainment picture.

Twelve years on, the *'improvement of schools'* (OFSTED 1993: 5) remains OFSTED's prime objective. Despite initial opposition by the teaching profession to an external body inspecting schools, it now appears that the process has become more acceptable. *'Most schools find inspection a positive, though challenging, experience'* OFSTED now claims (2003: 6). Among the severest critics of OFSTED's classroom observation practice are Brighouse (1998) and Fitz-Gibbon and Stephenson-Forster (1999). The negative effects of inspection for the teaching profession have been well documented and include: stress, pressure and demotivation (Gray and Gardner 1999). The new shorter inspection (OFSTED 2003d) with seven days notice may help to alleviate these effects



(The Times 15/02/04). However, there is still widespread belief amongst the teaching profession and researchers that inspections and league tables distract from the real business of teaching and learning. Furthermore, Docking (2000: 33) has pointed out that New Labour has been over prescriptive with its interventionist policies, including those concerning classroom organisation, which have undermined the professional competence of teachers. According to Broadfoot, (2001: 136) the notion underpinning New Labour's educational strategy since 1997 has been 'performativity' based on the understanding that it is both possible and desirable to measure performance of the individual pupil or an institution. This approach, she argues, is driven by an obsession with performance, assessment and accountability, which is 'essentially punitive' and has become unquestionable.

The latest version of the inspection framework (OFSTED 2003d) incorporates more recognition of leadership and value-added benefits both within school and the community and features more self-evaluation, which has evolved since the early days of OFSTED inspections (Brighouse and Moon 1995). Collaboration by the governing body and headteacher in both formulating an Action plan and using it to assess their performance is designed to drive school improvement and self-evaluation.

By informing schools of their strengths and weaknesses, inspection also set out to make a major contribution to school improvement (OFSTED 2003a),

claiming a year-on-year improvement in the quality of teaching accompanied by a rising trend in national standards at all ages. Earl et al. (2001) and Torrance (2002) however, point out the negative effects that too much testing aimed at improving standards for inspection can cause for pupils and teachers. Even David Bell, Chief Inspector of Schools in England (2003) has pointed out that Inspectors visiting schools can have *'an excessive or myopic focus on targets'* which can *'narrow and reduce achievement by crowding out some of the essential and broadly based learning'* (Bell, 2003a).

Whilst many would argue that the targets and inspections have been time consuming, intrusive and costly, the question remains whether progress would have been made without such measures over the past twelve years. Without the initial 'Draconian' centralised inspections, it could be argued that the developments in school improvement would not have been achieved quickly enough to enable the evolution and implementation of the less obtrusive and more acceptable shorter inspections. Clearly, public inspection, monitoring and accountability must follow wherever public money is involved and OFSTED inspections would appear to be meeting these criteria for the majority of schools and certainly in the case study school.

In the search for improvement, there have been a percentage of schools that have been seriously affected by inspection in terms of continuing within their present designated status. If a school inspected by OFSTED fails to meet set criteria

they are categorised as having 'Serious Weaknesses' or placed in the unenviable category of 'Special Measures'. In essence, it means that these schools are not meeting centrally set criteria and are perceived as failing to provide an adequate education for pupils and are required to take focused action to deal with these inadequacies. Failure to comply may result in closure.

Although there have been school closures as a result of schools failing their OFSTED inspection (Northcourt Primary School, Oakwood Special School, Telegraph Hill Secondary School among others), it is rarely a preferred option. The implications for families and the community are always profound. It is of considerable importance to note that in many but not all failing schools, an OFSTED inspection coupled with positive change has been the driving force for a school being reborn in a different guise under the Fresh Start initiative.

### ***Schools in Special Measures***

Placing a school in Special Measures after an inspection is a serious issue. OFSTED defines schools found to be *'in need of Special Measures'* as *'Schools where the inspector concludes that the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education'* (OFSTED 1997: 40). The school needs to rapidly address the issues identified in the report in order for the label to be removed. There were just over 200 primary, secondary and special schools under Special Measures (SM) from 1993 to 1997 (DfES, interview 12/9/03). The

number of schools in England failing an inspection rose from 129 in 2001/2 to 160 in 2003 (The Times 29/02/04).

**Table 1:** Schools placed in Special Measures

	Primary	Secondary	Special	Pupil-referral units
2001/2	94	19	10	6
2002/3	99	35	18	8

Source: OFSTED, 2003c

By the end of 2003, the total number of schools in Special Measures rose from 160 to 282 (TES 16/01/2004). David Bell refers to the new framework as a possible cause noting *'A contributing factor is undoubtedly the robustness of the revised inspection framework, introduced from September 2003'* (Curtis 2004). The more rigorous criteria in the new framework gives a sharper focus on teaching, learning and leadership, and ironically serves to prolong the recovery process for some schools with serious weaknesses. This may be in part because of the time it takes for new strategies to be assimilated where existing structures are still in place and there is a lack of apparent evidence of substantial change. Scanlon (1999) highlights the impact that a negative inspection can have on a school placed in Special Measures and questions whether OFSTED is fulfilling its aim of *'improvement through inspection'*. While Bell acknowledges that *'We are now inspecting schools for the third time, and reporting in too many cases the same deficiencies'* (The Sunday Times 15/02/04).

Primary schools placed in Special Measures differ in size, type and socio-economic circumstances. Most of them have common weaknesses, which include inadequate leadership and management, a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, poor progress made by the pupils, failure to provide value for money, poor relationships with the community, parental dissatisfaction, high staff turnover, poor behaviour and attendance, insufficient implementation of the National Curriculum and inadequate development of teachers' subject knowledge (OFSTED 1997, 2003a). Our knowledge as to why some schools fail whilst others in similar circumstances do not is still limited, although OFSTED (1999a) have attempted to provide solutions in *'Lessons learned from special measures'* (1999). Gray (2000) suggests that in England the OFSTED framework highlights three common features of failing schools: the under-achievement and low level of attainment of pupils, a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and ineffective leadership.

*'Lessons learned from special measures'* (OFSTED 1999a) reporting on the first 250 schools removed from Special Measures, concluded that *'no single solution will serve as a panacea to remedy the ills that befall school'* (OFSTED 1999a: 2). It also pointed out that there are many ways to secure school improvement and that each school must find its own route. Whatever route is chosen, schools placed in Special Measures undertake a programme of precise targets to be achieved over a specific timescale in their 'Action Plan'. Monitoring is carried out after six months by HMI and followed by termly visits for up to six months.

During their monitoring of schools in Special Measures, OFSTED (1999a: 4) have identified key factors that have helped schools to improve rapidly whether they be primary, secondary or special schools. They include getting started, a better deal for pupils, promoting positive attitudes, a way ahead for teachers and support staff, the role of co-ordinators and heads of department, headteachers and senior managers moving forward together with parents, governors taking the lead, making full use of external support and coming out of special measures and moving on. The underlying ethos in *'Lessons learned from special measures'* is that schools should adopt a *'can do it'* (OFSTED 1999a: 7) philosophy. This is not easily achieved after being placed in special measures.

OFSTED (1997) noted a wide disparity between LEAs' performance of advising and monitoring schools and this continues to persist with the report *'Schools: Achieving Success'* (DfES 2001c: 48) noting that, *'Poor performing LEAs are letting down pupils, schools and local communities'*. Schools with serious weaknesses remain a concern as a *'high proportion of these schools, which some 12 to 18 months later, were placed in Special Measures because they had declined or made insufficient progress in addressing the weaknesses'* (OFSTED 2003a: 95). LEAs are still under-performing according to Bell, with only 50% *'providing high-quality intervention and support in under-performing schools'* (OFSTED 2003a: 96). The increase of centralised control has partially addressed this issue. However, this does not compensate for competent local input that has been steadily eroded since the late 1980's.

The DfES expectation for being in Special Measures is a maximum of six terms with most schools being 'lifted out' within this time frame. The rise in failing schools has accelerated since September 2003, inevitably raising questions about the strategy and mechanisms of support in place. While the new inspection framework may be a possible cause, Bell's figures could raise fears of a deeper, more long-term trend of school failure, which could exacerbate issues of teacher professionalism and low morale. Financial problems (Anyon 1995) and teacher shortages (Darling-Hammond 2001) have been cited as possible reasons for a drop in standards in some struggling schools.

### ***Failure at school and failing schools***

The notion that social disadvantage affects children's opportunities in education has been recognised for many decades (Bernstein 1968, Coleman *et al.* 1966, Jencks *et al.* 1972, Stoll and Myers 1998, Thrupp 1999). Alternative approaches to improving schools in disadvantaged areas through educational policy have been widely regarded as mainly peripheral. Attempts to break into the cycle of poverty in schools have been numerous. The Plowden Report (HMSO 1967) attempted to rectify poverty with 'Educational Priority Areas' (EPAs). A central assumption of EPAs was that they were based on the '*deficit theory*' involving '*seeing the problem as one in where children present problems because they lack experiences to make them educable, rather than seeing them as children who are already experienced participants in a way of life, albeit one different from their own*' (Keddie 1973: 73). Based on these narrow assumptions it is not

surprising that they did not substantially alter the educational and life chances of pupils (Halsey 1972). Early research on equality of opportunity (Coleman *et al.* 1966, Jencks *et al.* 1972) and a subsequent longitudinal study carried out by Rutter *et al.* (1979) formed the origins of the school effectiveness debate. Since these early studies, subsequent research has shown that despite low socio-economic status, schools can make a difference to their students' life chances (MacBeath and Mortimore 2001, Maden 2001, Muijs *et al.* 2004, Slavin and Fashola 1998, Valdez Perez, Milstein, Wood and Jacquez 1999). However Chitty (2002) and Thrupp (1999) take a cautionary approach to this view suggesting that poverty is still a factor and, as Ian Woodhead pointed out, that poverty left some students with '*a bigger mountain to climb*' (quoted in *The Guardian* 2 March 2000).

Raising the opportunities of socially disadvantaged children has formed part of this long debate, including the impact that disadvantage has on reading, performance, attendance, achievement, further education and lifelong learning. Fresh Start policy is a controversial attempt to treat these and other challenges with a 'whole school' solution that hitherto has not been attempted. Historically, governments have paid insufficient attention to tackle the problem of child poverty in a systematic way or indeed recognised the importance of the relationship between social disadvantage and educational opportunity in the way that New Labour is attempting to do. By combining social and education policy, the government has pledged to eradicate child poverty within a generation. However, recent reports of the suggested abandonment of the government's much



lauded 'Sure Start' (DfES 2002c) programme introduced to tackle deprivation in disadvantaged areas highlight the ongoing dilemma of '*whether the funding will match the ambitions*' (The Guardian 05/01/05). Danny Phillips, from Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (Phillips 2002), points out that although the policy is laudable, there is no agreed definition of child poverty in the UK and a range of approaches has been adopted internationally that depend on inadequate assessment criteria. Despite these unresolved issues, New Labour is still pursuing policies to raise standards and educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups. One such endeavour is the Fresh Start initiative.

## CHAPTER 3: THE FRESH START CONTEXT

### *Introduction*

This chapter explores the concept of Fresh Start schools within the framework of school improvement policy. Fresh Start, like many recent policies, for example *Educational Priority Areas*, originated in the USA. The underlying principles of the American model 'Reconstitution' are examined, together with an analysis of the UK model, Fresh Start. It also examines New Labour's policy of targeted school improvement initiatives that relate to the Fresh Start model and create opportunities for a new ethos within the same social environment. Finally, Fresh Start is examined in its current context and its role in the future.

### *Reconstitution: the American model*

In 1984 a radical policy initiative for failing schools was introduced in the USA in the school district of San Francisco, called '*Reconstitution*'. In essence, '*the administrator tears down the school to build it up again with a new staff, new principal, and a new curriculum*' (Whitmire 1997). School reconstitutions were aimed at troubled schools in poor neighbourhoods, recruiting staff eager to take on the challenge of educating children who are difficult to manage and teach. 'Zero tolerance' of failure drove much of this new government initiative, '*We cannot and must not tolerate failing schools,*' commented U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley (Riley 1997).

Doherty and Abernathy (1998: 45) noted the term *reconstitution* lacks a precise common meaning. It has been used to describe intervention strategies that range

from the restructuring of school leadership, mandated redesign of a school's programme and instructional practices, to state takeover of school governance. In its most extreme form, reconstitution involves the disbanding of the existing faculty and replacing nearly all the school's staff. This approach to reconstitution has garnered the most attention and engendered the greatest controversy. Doherty and Abernathy also noted less positive experiences, '*Other observers consider the threat of the reconstitution a faulty strategy that blames teachers for school failure while doing little to solve the underlying problems that contributed to low performance*' (1998: 46). By this account, school reconstitution has the potential to diminish morale in schools that are already weakened communities. Teachers in one San Francisco high school, for example, called the threat of reconstitution a *degrading process* that has *sent morale down the tubes* (Doherty and Abernathy: 1998: 46). Borman et al. (2000), Doherty and Abernathy (1998), Hardy (1999) and Rozmus (1998), report the difficulty for reconstituted schools in attracting experienced staff resulting in most reconstituted schools reopening with largely inexperienced teachers.

It is also not clear whether other school support systems would have been just as, or more successful, '*To date, there are no conclusive data demonstrating that the threat of reconstitution is an effective motivator for change*' (Doherty and Abernathy 1998: 47). Supporters in the USA concede that it can be a painful process that can take years to yield positive results. Orfield (1996: 12) suggests that '*Reconstitution is major surgery, drastic intervention, it's like trying to*

*rebuild a rapidly deteriorating train as you're running down the tracks*'. Others suggest that it should be seen as an alternative only when all else has failed (Borman *et al.* 2000, Doherty and Abernathy 1998, Peterson 1998, Rozmus 1998). 'The Guardian' (2000) was more critical of the UK version, *'The Fresh Start scheme is based on the idea of "reconstitution" developed in San Francisco in 1984. By 1997 - just when the DfEE grasped the idea - it was thoroughly discredited*'. Despite adverse criticism by 'The Guardian', it is clear that reconstitution has had success in some States under certain conditions. Bacon (1999) observes that these schools not only benefited from more generous funding, but also had reduced class sizes, and agreements with parents to get their children to school on time and to ensure that homework was completed. Rozmus (1998) also notes a more positive attitude to the schools from the community itself. Doherty and Abernathy (1998) also reported positive findings from the first four reconstituted schools in San Francisco with Rusk Elementary School, Houston, as having shown dramatic improvement within a year.

There are several different rationales for this approach (Doherty and Abernathy 1998). Some believe reconstitution is used when schools have developed 'toxic cultures', where neither students nor staff can teach and learn (Deal and Peterson 1998). Reconstitution in these cases would make it possible to 'reculture' the school. Others believe that reconstitution will make it possible to re-staff the school with educators who have more skills and knowledge to run schools more successfully (Doherty and Abernathy 1998). Reconstitution in these cases would

increase the school's capacity for teaching and learning. Others believe that the threat of reconstitution will motivate educators to learn new ways to serve the students and parents of the school (Rozmus 1998). In these cases educators would work harder on student learning. It is not clear whether reconstitution works in any or all of these ways or under what conditions.

However, Peterson (1998) identified a number of issues for stakeholders, educators, and policymakers who were considering reconstitution including: the unforeseen complexities involved in the initial change process; the varied approaches across districts and states caused difficulties with comparisons and replication; the outcomes in student achievement had been varied with student performance improving in some schools but in others remaining low; recognition that reconstitution requires a continuous coordinated effort with an enormous number of resources that include skills, knowledge and leadership; external support is needed during the preparation, implementation and at the institutionalisation stage if reconstitution is to succeed; skilled leadership is critical to success; and before the change, districts need to consider the 'fall-out' from such reform, including, conflict, low teacher morale, loss of experienced staff to inexperienced staff. Doherty and Abernathy (1998: 47) expand on Peterson's (1998) observations and recommend further key issues for the successful rebuilding of a failed school including: a clear break with past practices; focusing on a negative culture; high expectations by all staff and the

expectation that pupils meet them; school-wide professional development; and increased district and state leadership.

The UK approach was partially modelled on reconstitution despite claims that the initiative was '*politically popular but educationally bankrupt*' Orfield (2000), based on the idea that it requires a great deal of investment in creating a brand new school in a situation which is inherently difficult. More recent research suggests that reconstitution can work as a reform strategy if certain considerations are met (Finkelstein *et al.* 2000, Rice and Malen 2003) including sufficient initial and long-term funding, replacing the weakest teachers first rather than all at the start, community involvement at the outset to promote home/school links and substantial incentives to attract a skilled staff.

Further reservations outlined by Borman *et al.* (2000), Doherty and Abernathy (1998), Hardy (1999) and Rozmus (1998) came after Fresh Start was introduced in the UK. The UK approach appears to be more positive than the USA model, particularly in teacher recruitment, morale, affective gains and in the primary sector where many of the recommendations made by Finkelstein *et al.* (2000) and Rice and Malen (2003) have been considered.

### ***Fresh Start: the British model***

Twelve years after 'Reconstitution' was introduced in the USA, a similar Manifesto commitment was announced in England as part of New Labour's

vision of 'zero tolerance of underperformance'. *'Every school has the capacity to succeed. All Local Education Authorities (LEAs) must demonstrate that every school is improving. For those failing schools unable to improve, ministers will order a "Fresh Start" - close the school and start afresh on the same site'* (Labour Party's Manifesto 1997).

Fresh Start schools provide a unique focus in the area of school improvement and have been established for nearly six years. In most cases they have been introduced in schools that comprise a high proportion of pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds with below average academic attainment that have failed to meet certain criteria in an OFSTED inspection. Schools that have failed their OFSTED inspections have been an ongoing source for school improvement research and Fresh Start schools are beginning to emerge as an interesting dimension within the area of low socio-economic communities (Araujo 2003). Linking the concepts that have developed from school effectiveness and school improvement such as context, culture, leadership, learning organisations, partnerships, planning, teaching and learning, outlined by MacGilchrist et al. (1995), Muijs et al. (2004), Potter et al. (2002), Sammons et al. (1995) Stoll and Fink (1996) and Stoll and Myers (1998) and have been key to systemic change. Many of these aspects have been key issues for the development of successful practice and seen for example, in the case study school and in many other Fresh Start primary schools in England.

The Fresh Start model was a targeted attempt by New Labour to tackle deprivation and improve schools within the state educational system. The initiative was implemented in schools from 1998 and coexisted with '*Education Action Zones*' and '*Excellence in Cities*'. The Fresh Start model involves a substantial injection of funding and frequently involves interfacing with other agencies such as health services, adult education and the police, to improve the life chances of individuals within their communities. They have been largely successful, particularly in the primary sector.

Fresh Start policy was first published as an option for schools in Special Measures in the government's White Paper, '*Excellence in Schools*' (1997). It is a radical approach to securing school improvement for those schools in Special Measures showing insufficient evidence of recovery. The closure of a school is most commonly the result of an inspection by OFSTED. The legislative framework to open and close schools is covered by the Schools Standard and Framework Act 1998 (Chapter II) *The Organisation of School Places*, Circular 9/99 (DfEEa), and *Schools Causing Concern*, Circular 6/99 (DfEE, 1999b) covers logistical concerns.

Schools put in Special Measures have limited choices for survival. Staying in Special Measures for up to two years is the most popular choice, with the real hope that the school will have improved sufficiently for the tag to be lifted. There are similarities in the recommendations for improvement in schools in



Special Measures and Fresh Start schools including: strong leadership by the headteacher, effective management by senior staff, committed teachers intent on improving standards, good communications between the school, parents and the community, tackling poor behaviour and attendance and effective financial planning (OFSTED 1997). Despite the similar approach in both models, the fundamental difference that Fresh Start can make is an overall freedom and expectation to make profound, systemic change. Fresh Start schools were not only considered to be a real alternative, but also a last resort for schools that had been put in Special Measures after a poor inspection. Opting for Fresh Start involves upheaval for the school, community, LEA, and the DfEE with continuous inspections from HMI. An OFSTED inspection follows one or two years after the setting up of the new school.

A permanent closure of any school is considered as a last resort, but can arise from changes in demographic trends or as a result of OFSTED deeming it necessary. Many issues can impact on closure including: transport to alternative schools, their ability to manage a sizable intake each year and the strength of receiver schools and can have major implications on both the affected communities. In all cases where a Fresh Start school has been opened, there was an overwhelming social need to maintain that school in the community it served. By providing a higher standard of education for its pupils and parents, it should in turn, help individuals regain confidence and regenerate the community.

The majority of Fresh Start schools in the primary sector in the UK have adopted the '*most extreme form*' of School Reconstitution in the USA outlined by Doherty and Abernathy (1998: 45). Fresh Start offers the opportunity of a 'clean break' from a 'troubled past' and is an attempt to create a completely new model with an ambitious sense of purpose. The models outlined by Elmore (2000: 15) and Gronn (2000) might appear risky and unsuitable to apply to a Fresh Start school at the outset however, they provide the framework for those involved with a common mission to work in a collaborative culture and develop a positive climate for long term growth. The long-term aim is to establish a new, thriving, viable, successful school. A school may be closed on one day and opened as a new school on the following day on the same site, but with a new identity and frequently with a new staff, governors, vision, environment, initiatives and extra funding. Many of these principles have been recognised as effective intervention strategies for schools in challenging circumstances (Fullan 1992, Hopkins and Harris 1997).

Many Fresh Start headteachers need to show effective leadership in a similar vein to those identified in schools in challenging circumstances (Potter *et al.* 2002). Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinback, (1999) expand on Fullan (1991) and Gray's (1999) ideas and write of 'first order' changes, which focus on teaching and learning processes and act directly upon achievement and expectation levels, and 'second order' changes, which hinge upon the style and competence of leadership within the school. Unlike McLay (2003), I would argue that the

particular success of Fresh Start primary schools has been achieved primarily because they have incorporated both 'first order and 'second order' changes. Fresh Start schools in addition have a newly appointed headteacher whose commitment, leadership and management skills are considered to be crucially important to the future success of the new school. Data collected from primary Fresh Start headteachers' for this research would support this view.

The role of the new headteacher is similar to any successful business leader who manages change within their organisation with the help of a supportive infrastructure. The principle of replacing the management team of a failing business in an attempt to achieve success is well established in the business world. A new managing director selected on past achievements has, in some cases, reversed the fortunes of struggling companies. Similarly, Fresh Start involves difficult decisions including replacing senior management staff and governors. New procedures are introduced and often additional funding will be put in place. As in a successful business, there should be clear objectives, good staff relationships, regular reviews of progress and additional funding during the initial setting up. Although state schools seem to be moving closer to a business model with more emphasis on cost effectiveness and efficiency, they are not and probably should never be perceived as a business. Nevertheless, unsuccessful Fresh Start schools are not dissimilar to failing businesses, in which the new management team have not performed as well as expected and should be subject

to further review or replaced as the headteacher of a failed Fresh Start school reflected on BBC Radio 4, (The Choice 06/01/04).

New governing bodies have a vital and influential role to play in Fresh Start schools. In some cases governors are appointed by the LEA for expediency. Scanlon et al. (1999) specifically explore the relationship between effective schools and effective governance. The newly appointed headteacher, along with the governing body, identifies the priority needs and initiatives for the school and seeks the appropriate funding for them to be executed as outlined in OFSTED (2002). The substantial funding involved requires sound financial management.

By December 2000 when 25 Fresh Start schools were already open and two had been closed, strong guidelines were issued by the School Standards Minister, Estelle Morris, to local authorities stressing their accountability with this initiative. *'Local education authorities must be prepared to consider tough local decisions to close schools that have been failing their pupils for two years or more. Normally, a school should close if it consistently fails to raise standards for local pupils. Fresh Start is about raising standards in the most challenging circumstances - it is not an easy option and cannot be used to avoid local difficulties for schools that should close'*. She also outlined the mechanisms in place for the government's accountability. *'We are working closely with the existing Fresh Start schools to help them improve and termly OFSTED*

*inspections are showing that a number of Fresh Start schools are making real progress ... we will not provide funds or support local proposals to take the Fresh Start option unless the process is properly planned and supported by the local education authority - and there is a strong likelihood of success. When deciding the right course of action for a failing school, the Education Authorities must take a strategic approach and ensure the right provision for local pupils. We are very clear - where there is not a strong prospect of improvement, it should close' (DfES 2000).*

Despite the view held by McLay (2003) that '*Fresh Start is a dead policy*', Peter Clough, the Head of the Fresh Start Unit at the DFES believes, '*Fresh Start is not a dead policy*' particularly in the primary sector, '*only a handful of schools get a Fresh Start when there is no prospect of recovery by any other means*' (Clough interview 12/09/03, see appendix 7). Given the rising numbers of schools in Special Measures, it seems therefore surprising that the Fresh Start initiative has contracted rather than expanded as a policy option. According to Clough (ibid: 12/09/03) '*more than 75% of schools have come out of Special Measures without structural or radical solutions*'. If this is the case, it might be preferable that particularly primary schools 'causing concern' would benefit from 'radical solutions' being put in place. Evidence to support this can be seen by the numbers of schools opening in the last quarter of 2003 by comparison to figures for the preceding years (appendix 2). It seems therefore that sufficient

funding and a positive educational policy to sustain the 'whole school' model solution is needed in line with Fresh Start policy.

The Fresh Start secondary school sector is more complex and involves higher risk than the primary sector and has consequently benefited from a more moderate success, despite sensationalised media coverage depicting the contrary. Two high profile failures were announced by Estelle Morris, on the 26/04/01 in the House of Commons, *'Telegraph Hill School in Lewisham and Firfield Community School in Newcastle are due to close in July 2001 and July 2002 respectively'* (Morris 2001). Failure to implement Fresh Start at these schools highlighted the relevance of external support. The strategic approach needs to be highly individual, to suit the needs of the pupils and is not a panacea formula. Interestingly, Firfield community school uniquely re-opened in September 2002 with another Fresh Start.

Although the main focus of this thesis is devoted to the primary sector, secondary schools have been incorporated into a new initiative, essentially a variant on Fresh Start, recently implemented by the DfES (2003) called 'Collaborative Restart'. This is aimed at schools which are stuck below GCSE targets or which make no progress after being designated as requiring Special Measures. It involves putting a comprehensive partnership and structure in place involving the DfES and the LEA more extensively. One of the benefits of this model is having a Chief Executive who is free from the daily management of a school and who is able to view perhaps more objectively the comparative

performances of a federation of schools, similar to *'The London Challenge'* model (DfES 2003d) and import successful practice to a less successful school. Perhaps one of the drawbacks of this model is the additional costs involved and a less 'hands on', top-down approach. This model transfers the power base directly back to central control with a Chief Executive of the Federation from the DfES creating a 'top down' system whilst diminishing autonomy and responsibility at the grass roots level. A similar analogy is evident when failing businesses draft in consultants to identify new strategies to turn around their business. Although, frequently perceived as an uncomfortable option, it might well be a necessary process for a school that is consistently below floor targets and needs to refocus itself in the first instance. This model will reduce inequities at local authority level and provide more support from peer schools. In contrast to 'Collaborative Restart', Fresh Start schools in the primary sector are able to operate with a *'bottom up'* approach.

All Fresh Start schools have had turbulent histories and they range in size from about 100 to 800 pupils. The process to implement Fresh Start takes between 6 and 12 months. It is a complex and multi-faceted task and is summarised by the DfEE (workshop 14.04.00 London) under 8 Key Issues.

1. Strategic Management Issues
2. Personnel Issues
3. Resources – revenue and capital
4. Planning the new school and closing the existing school

5. Partnerships and Wider Links
6. Pupils and Students
7. Governors
8. Post-Fresh Start.

In addition, the DfES requires as a priority, a recovery strategy addressing the main issues coupled with an exit strategy.

### ***Funding***

On approval of any Fresh Start proposals, revenue and capital expenditure is made available to support their implementation through the Fresh Start support programme. The benefit of additional funding enables the school to introduce further key initiatives including in most cases, a complete overhaul of staffing with additional, new, experienced, high calibre staff. Revenue funding is allocated to all Fresh Start schools on the basis of a fixed sum, plus an element based on the size and sector. Additional funding is available for the first three financial years and resources are allocated subject to satisfactory progress against a Raising Attainment Plan and paid via the Standards Fund. The revenue grant is tapered off over the three years. Capital expenditure covers new building, refurbishment or other major items and is bid for separately. In September 2004, Peter Gough reported that, *Fresh Start capital funding is no longer the major source for new build now that PFI is an alternative option* indicating possibly a further government 'sea change' (Gough, DfES, interview 25/09/04).



One of the most controversial issues surrounding Fresh Start schools is the additional resourcing. A few Fresh Start headteachers interviewed for the case study felt other local schools held negative perceptions of the new school mainly because they were fearful that their schools' funding would be reduced as a result of the additional funding being allocated to the Fresh Start school. A key issue concerning most headteachers and governing bodies has been the management of this unprecedented revenue. Very few headteachers, except perhaps those at the helm during the grant-maintained period, have had the experience of handling such large budgets, which may have involved several million pounds. Many headteachers feel that revenue should have been phased over five years instead of three and those that planned with this in mind felt more confident about their school's future funding (Fresh Start headteacher interviews 15/10/03, 04/05/04). This supports some of the recent research findings in the USA (Finkelstein *et al.* 2000, Rice and Malen 2003) that promote sustained funding.

### ***Fresh Start and Inspection***

While Fresh Start schools are in their infancy they are regularly monitored by HMI with ongoing support from the LEA. According to Wilson and Easton (2003) and several of the primary Fresh Start headteachers interviewed for this research, the LEAs' role is not currently being maximised. The headteachers also felt there is a disparity between LEAs' knowledge and their capacity to support Fresh Start schools during their implementation and with the provision

of sufficient resources at the appropriate time, despite government guidelines. Input and expertise has varied considerably between authorities throughout the last five years creating an inconsistent picture of performance. In some cases at the outset this was due to *'Fresh Start being a new initiative, there was little past experience to draw on and the LEA having to work out its own idea of what Fresh Start meant'* (Fresh Start headteacher interviewed 27/11/03, appendix 7). In other cases, it appears that there has been a lack of interest and accountability. There also appears to be a general consensus from the majority of headteachers interviewed about a lack of continuous support from the Fresh Start team at the DfEE visiting schools once the initial euphoria had passed.

Fresh Start schools are inspected by OFSTED under exactly the same framework as any other school in their sector. When OFSTED reports on a Fresh Start school they evaluate the new school with little or no reference to its previous status. All 12 of the 16 Fresh Start schools in the primary sector that have been inspected have received favourable reports on their progress to date, recognising each school faces individual challenges. Bell commented in his first OFSTED Annual Report that *'Most of the Fresh Start Schools had their first section 10 inspection 2002/3, had made at least satisfactory progress'* (Bell 2003c). This comment refers to schools in both sectors but the reports from the primary sector depict a more optimistic outlook.

### ***The Current Picture***

The first Fresh Start secondary school opened in 1998, Fir Vale School in Sheffield, followed by the first primary in 2000, the case study school, in an outer London Borough. Currently there are thirty-nine Fresh Start schools, twenty-one secondary and eighteen primary schools including two primaries that opened in September 2004 (Gough, DfES, interview 25/09/04). This represents a very small percentage of only 0.14 % of all schools in England.

**Table 2:** Fresh Start Schools in England 1998 – 2003

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Primary			10	1	2	3	2
Secondary	3	8	4	2	2	2	0

Source: DfES, Fresh Start Unit, 2004

Fresh Start still remains a strategy for school improvement for schools placed in Special Measures in the primary sector and perceived by Peter Clough (DFES, interview, 25/09/04) to be '*a big success story*' with '*KS2 results increasing faster than the national average*'. Considering the numbers of schools being placed in Special Measures over the period 1998-2003, opting to go Fresh Start has understandably not been the favourable option for the majority of vulnerable schools. Arguably there are a number of reasons why the government and local authorities would be reluctant to opt for Fresh Start. These include the public admission of failure for both the government and the local authority, the

likelihood of limited experience within the local authority to manage the change together with the inevitable additional cost implications.

**Table 3:** Schools placed in special measures over the period 1998 – 2003

Primary schools	Secondary schools	Special schools	Pupil referral units
812	186	93	38

Source: OFSTED, 18/12/03

Even by 2001, the government's White Paper *'Schools Achieving Success'* (DFEE 2001) did not refer to Fresh Start, but provided a different focus for schools to improve standards with autonomy and diversity as its hallmarks, possibly indicating a sea change in the government thinking with *'Collaborative Restart'* seen as an alternative strategy.

Fresh Start schools have introduced new initiatives to improve their performance and many of these have been researched individually, for example, new headteachers (Draper and McMichael 2003), breakfast clubs (Shemilt *et al.* 2004, Simpson 2001), uniforms (Dussel 2005), attendance (Reid 2003), literacy schemes (Slavin and Madden 2003), inclusion of ethnic groups (Bhopal 2004), community education and governing bodies (Earley 2003, Earley and Creese 2003). However, little research has investigated the influence these initiatives have had collectively in the overall improvement in a Fresh Start school. The case study reported here addresses this issue.

### *Fresh Start and areas for development*

The government is moving towards increased private-sector involvement in schools as a means to provide extra resources. Two secondary schools based in Surrey are working successfully with private partnership involvement. Kings College is currently managed by a non-profit organisation, 3E's, whilst Jubilee High is managed by a profit making listed company, Nord Anglia PLC, who have been awarded a 7-year contract by Surrey County Council. Another example of private sector involvement is the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) that involves a joint venture with the private sector providing funding and expertise in procuring new buildings, the obvious advantages being that school buildings are being provided when needed at no immediate capital cost to the local authority. However the building costs and interest will be repayable over an extended period in the future with its obvious implications on future public sector borrowing.

Government schemes to lever private capital into education authorities have mushroomed in the past three years, heralding a shift in education provision. The latest initiative '*Building Schools for the Future*' (BSF) (DfES 2004b), promises a massive building programme of new schools and refurbishments over the next 10 to 15 years without alluding to the fact that much of the funding will be sourced from PFIs (Rikowski 2005). Private companies on multi-million pound contracts now work with heads and education authorities to set attainment targets.

Inevitably, there are concerns that centralised contractors do not have sufficient local knowledge to provide services and fears of businesses profiteering from schools (Rikowski 2005). Taylor (1998) raises pertinent issues about the conflicts of interests and values of a school-business partnership in the long term, but concedes that the practice can offer enticing short-term benefits such as the provision of new building accommodation and management expertise. Recent negative reports highlighting problems with the retention of headteachers in a similar pioneering scheme, '*City Academies*', which rely heavily on private-public sponsorship may cause the government to re-evaluate (The Times August 7, 2004). Within the current framework of government funding, this approach may offer a possible alternative source of funding to tackle costly initiatives like Fresh Start.

Another key area for development is the involvement of parents in the school by offering educational opportunities within or adjacent to the school. One of the hallmarks of the Fresh Start model has been the expansion of the schools' horizons by forming partnerships with parents, the local school community and health services which is in line with many recent government initiatives, for example *Sure Start* (DfES 2002c) and *Extended Schools* (DfES 2002c) and seen in the case study school. The positive new image that Fresh Start has frequently created in the locality is an ideal springboard to initiate those connections and many schools have already begun this process as the case study highlights. The government is focusing effort in this direction with many initiatives, but with

varying degrees of success, as they are often slow to start with hard-to-reach parents and changes in funding arrangements (The Guardian 05/01/05). Fresh Start schools can offer a new opportunity for schools, parents and the local community to work together in a way that was rarely evident in the previous school.

## CHAPTER 4:        **METHODOLOGY**

### *Introduction*

This chapter examines the two broad paradigms underpinning research. The context of this research is outlined together with the research design. Case study was the methodology chosen for this qualitative research and its various elements are discussed.

### *The quantitative, qualitative debate*

Research involves systematic enquiry, influenced by principles and guidelines and is subject to evaluation so that we may better understand and explain our world and increase the sum of what is known (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). Educational research specifically aims to contribute to knowledge or answer questions about educational theory or practice (McMillan and Wergin 2002). When scrutinising definitions of research, one common theme emerges, that of a relationship between research design and principles. There are two predominant conceptual models embodying different underpinning assumptions, perspectives and principles (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995) and frequently referred to as 'paradigms', meaning a basic set of beliefs that guides action (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). They are known as 'quantitative' (often referred to as 'positivism') or 'qualitative' paradigms. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) outline four interrelated issues from which the assumptions underpinning each paradigm are based. Ontological issues are important, as they are concerned with the very essence of the phenomenon being investigated. Epistemological assumptions are



relevant as they are concerned with the nature of knowledge, how it may be acquired and communicated, and the closeness of relationship between the researcher and that being researched. Finally, methodological issues are also important. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 35) point out that 'the significance and interplay of all these aspects cannot be overestimated' as they have a profound effect on the type of research adopted and on views about reliability.

Positivists believe that social reality can be understood by carefully dividing and studying the constituent parts, that causal links can be uncovered and that laws formulated around them can form the basis for generalisation, prediction and control (Cohen *et al.* 2000). They argue that the natural sciences provide the only true foundation for knowledge and suggest that deductive reasoning is a key ingredient to investigate the social world (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). In this way it is possible to move from general to specific statements, so that the objectivity and independence of the researcher is both possible and desirable. Positivists believe that the way in which human behaviour responds to both internal and external influences is predictable and that research statements are testable. This process involves the accumulation of data that is measurable through statistical analysis. It allows the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to present a large amount of data in a coherent way, while creating relationships between one or more variables and often carries an aura of respectability (Denscombe 2003) despite the possible dangers of oversimplification of the epistemological assumptions. Furthermore, the

assumption of the separation of the object and the subject being independent may be doubtful.

Qualitative research stresses the complexity of human beings and their world, believing that people shape experiences in an unpredictable and individual way (Polit, Beck and Hungler 2001) and the world should be seen as 'holistic, indivisible and in flux' rather than 'independent, mechanistic and orderly' (Kuhn 1970 cited in Usher 1996). A variety of methods are embraced to help understand the actions, meanings and interaction of individuals and groups. Qualitative research has many definitions. Although lengthy, Denzin and Lincoln's (1998: 3) definition provides a good basis: *'Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational historical, interactional, and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives'*.

The development of post-modernism has affected both thinking and research practice within academic circles, resulting in using a wide range of theoretical standpoints and a variety of methods, strategies and techniques. However, quantitative researchers have always remained sceptical of the interpretative

paradigm. The central message they convey is that the positivist paradigm is strong and persuasive and the research fulfils the criteria of reliability and validity. Troyna (1994: 4) describes qualitative research as '*subjective, value laden and therefore unscientific and invalid*' while quantitative research '*meets the criteria of being objective, value-free, scientific and therefore valid*'. Arguably however, quantitative research is not necessarily objective nor is it value free.

The main thrust in educational research throughout the last three decades has leant towards the qualitative paradigm, although currently it seems that the positivist model using experimental, scientific, methods is in ascendancy once again. Much of this research has been driven the government's policy of raising standards and improving transparency in the public domain, specifically with an emphasis on data tracking and performance indicators. To address the complexity of schools and schooling in large-scale, educational research, there needs to be more focus on combining quantitative and qualitative paradigms to improve the robustness and validity of the research (MacBeath and Mortimore 2001).

### ***Previous Fresh Start Research***

There has been substantial research carried out in the USA on school 'Reconstitution', (Borman *et al.* 2000, Doherty and Abernathy 1998, Hardy 1999, Rozmus 1998) but little research in Fresh Start Schools in the UK (Araujo 2004, McLay 2003). There were two main reasons for undertaking this study, one was

to create a new body of knowledge to consider the potential of Fresh Start policy in practice and the other was to investigate a particular model with a specific combination of initiatives that have been effective in one specific context but may be also applied or adapted in similar contexts.

### ***Background***

I have an interest in the concept of Fresh Start as a positive solution to turning around failing schools, since it was brought to my attention through the national press with notions of 'superheads' and 'school closure' as a result of OFSTED inspections in the late 1990s. My professional interest has grown since being appointed as a governor in April 2000, providing access to the inner workings of the first Fresh Start primary school. My involvement over the past five years at the case study school has provided me with background knowledge to make a more informed judgement both as an insider and as a 'critical friend'. However, bias was of particular concern as a researcher in the case study school. This issue has been addressed to the best of my knowledge with the design and methods employed.

### ***Research Design***

The focus of this research is in the primary sector. It evaluates Fresh Start policy and various initiatives that have brought about a changed ethos and school improvement. The research aims to investigate the process and key factors that have enabled positive change to take place within a particular school, together

with the impact of three key initiatives, a breakfast club, a literacy scheme and a Community Wing. A case study approach was the chosen option to carry out this enquiry focusing on the first Fresh Start primary school in England and, as such, is uniquely placed. The data gathering technique selected used policy documents, surveys, observations, questionnaires and interviews. These techniques have been commended by prominent researchers within the field of qualitative research (Denscombe 2003, Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

### ***Case Study***

Case study has a long history within the social sciences and there have been many contributors to this methodology. It is an approach that *'seeks to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors and consequently may be described as interpretive and subjective'* (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 81). Adelman *et al.* (1980) noted that although case studies have made a considerable contribution to the body of knowledge about education, they were frequently regarded suspiciously and their potential was underdeveloped. However, there is a need for clarification of the epistemological and theoretical assumptions underlying case study. Adelman *et al.* (1980) had already established that it is *'the study of an instance in action'*. Stake (1995) considers 'the case' as an object of study. A case study is a *'bounded system'* (Merriam 1998), contained by time and place and the 'case' can be an activity, an event, individuals or a programme. It can involve one case, a *'within-site study'*, or several sites, a *'multi-site study'* (Creswell 1998). The context of the case can be physical, social, historical or economic. It can be unique in nature

in which case it would be an *'intrinsic case study'* or it may be investigating issues which the case uses to highlight and is known as an *'instrumental case study'*. When more than one case is studied it is referred to as a *'collective case study'* (Stake 1995).

The prime research in this study was carried out in one school and as Stake (1994) describes is *'an intrinsic'* study undertaken to understand a particular case in question. The *'thick description'* (Geertz 1973) used in the analysis attempts to capture the many facets that comprise the complex reality of the social setting, process of change and improvement of the school. The study includes data from other Fresh Start Primary schools widening the analysis and giving a sense of how the findings have transferability. The inclusion of data from multiple schools extends the study to being a *'multi-site study'* (Creswell 1998). Fusing theory and practice (Cohen *et al.* 2000) in this way can perhaps strengthen the impact on government policy.

Triangulation has been achieved in this study through multiple sources of information. As Denzin (1970: 25) suggests, triangulation requires *'multiple methods of data collection over the same period of time, the same method on different occasions, different methods on the same object, different levels of the organisation'*. This is a powerful way of demonstrating validity particularly in qualitative research (Campbell and Fiske 1959 in Cohen *et al.* 2000: 112). To reduce possible bias created by the dual role of researcher and governor of the

school, several steps were taken. For example, using a multi-method approach of collecting similar data from different sources reduced bias. These included OFSTED reports and interviews with Headteachers, staff, external personnel, the LEA, the DfES and parents. Increasing the sample to include data from all Fresh Start Primary Schools reduced bias and increased validity. The time scale of 15 months to carry out this research together with the pilot studies carried out during the previous year further strengthened the credibility and validity by prolonging the engagement in the field (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 219 and 301).

### *The Sample*

The key determinants involved in selecting the sample were size, its representativeness, accessibility and the sampling strategy. The size was initially determined by key personnel at the school, including external bodies involved during and since the transition. This group was extended to include other personnel involved previously and currently, to improve the representativeness of the sample, including ancillary staff and participants at the Community Wing. The school provided an ideal point of access for the majority of the data collection. Purposeful sampling was used within the framework of non-probability sampling (Cohen *et al.* 2000, Denscombe 2003). Telephone interviews were carried out with all the Fresh Start headteachers, LEA, HMI, a Community Wing teacher and the ex-school doctor. Other venues were used for the remaining interviews. The sample for the case study involved: two governors, the headteacher, the deputy-head, all the teaching and non-teaching staff, two reception staff, the cook, the

crèche leader, two Traveller Support staff, the coordinator of the Community Wing, and thirty parents. The external bodies involved included the DfES, HMI, LEA, a Children Project leader, a school doctor, thirty-five adult students and 16 Fresh Start Primary headteachers. Prior to commencing my research about Fresh Start, I spoke initially with the headteacher and the Chair of Governors at the case study school, sharing my ideas and discussing protocol. They gave their full support. Informal interviews with members of staff, governors and parents helped clarify important issues concerning the focus of my research question. The headteacher at the case study school sees this research as being a valuable contribution to *'putting Fresh Start on the map'* (headteacher interview, 2003).

**Table 4:** Case Study Sample

People	Phase	Questionnaires	Interviews
Governors	1	10	2
Staff	2	14	2
Headteachers	3	0	16
Staff	3	14	14
Governors	3	0	3
Students/parents	3	46	11
External personnel	3	0	10

(A more detailed version appears in Appendix 7)



### ***Ethical Considerations***

It is a fundamental for any research that ethical consideration are given high priority and maintained throughout (Cohen *et al.* 2000, Denscombe 2003). After initial discussions with the headteacher and the Chair of Governors about the research outline and the ethical considerations, including the implications of the dual role of researcher and governor, informed written consent was sought. Staff were consulted and all parties gave their full support. The issue of confidentiality was addressed with the headteacher and it was decided that, as the school was easily identifiable, personnel could be identified, but parents' anonymity would be respected. Prior to any data collection, all participants were informed of the researcher's identity both as a school governor and as a student for the purposes of this research. Informed, verbal consent was sought, confidentiality was stressed and participants were offered the option to see transcripts of interviews, although this was not pursued. Information was given to all participants about who would receive a copy of the completed thesis. This would include the headteacher, Chair of Governors and the University. Letters of thanks were given to all of those involved. The headteacher and Chair of Governors were given a copy of the final thesis prior to submission and the author retains the right to report on this work.

### ***Data Collection***

Prior to the main research, a pilot study with two phases was conducted in the case study school, forming the foundation for this thesis in 2002/3. This pilot highlighted some of the main issues during the initial phase of becoming a Fresh

Start school concerning the two groups providing the data. It also provided insight into the logistical concerns of data gathering and widened the remit of the thesis to include other initiatives. The first phase of the pilot involved all governors and comprised questionnaires and two, forty-minutes audio taped interviews with two governors selected from the governing body. The Chair of Governors was selected on the basis of experience and continuity of service from the previous governing body while another governor was selected as she had the most involvement in the school and the Travelling Community. The purpose was threefold: to glean more data about why the school found itself in a failing position; what initiatives had been taken to turn itself around; and governors' role in its survival. The second phase was carried out with the staff comprising questionnaires to all staff involved in teaching SFA, two observations and two interviews. The purpose was twofold: to identify the issues involved in the implementation process and the issues involved using SFA as a literacy initiative. A third phase focused on the main data collection for the thesis. This included: 46 questionnaires issued to adult learners in the Community Wing with 35 responses; 14 members of the school staff and 14 parents. Interviews with 16 headteachers, 14 staff, 3 governors, 4 Community Wing students, 7 parents and 10 external personnel.

A time line was devised (appendix 8) and although the overall framework was adhered to, there were a number of deviations, mainly as a result of absenteeism or timetabling. The first few months were spent reviewing historical and current

literature including government policy, and recent research about the relevant issues underpinning Fresh Start policy and the main initiatives in the case study school.

Although this case study was to be based in one Fresh Start primary school, I felt it was important to put this school in context within the framework of all the other Fresh Start primary schools. My initial interview was at the DfES with Peter Clough, Head of the Fresh Start Unit, who provided a complete overview of Fresh Start policy and a list of schools. I conducted telephone interviews with fifteen Fresh Start primary headteachers each of between twenty to fifty minutes. The data collected during these telephone interviews provided an invaluable foundation for the thesis as they highlighted many of the concerning issues.

This case study research comprises an historical perspective, key factors in the change process and details concerning three key initiatives. Issues in the breakfast club literature regarding attendance and performance were examined along with other findings pertaining to this case. Together, they provide interesting findings for schools initiating breakfast clubs and for further research. The questionnaires for the breakfast club included questions on a range of issues, for example, the impact the breakfast club had on school attendance, opportunities to socialise for parents and pupils, parental involvement and other perceived benefits. The questionnaires were issued to 14 mothers and collected during one of my visits resulting in a 100% response rate (appendix 3). Similar questionnaires were

issued to 14 staff to determine whether the breakfast club impacted on: attendance, concentration, punctuality, enjoyment, personal benefits and problems, parents, children and staff socialisation and level of involvement and the implications of paying for breakfast (appendix 4). It was predominately pre-coded but included opportunity for unstructured answers.

The transcripts were analysed and the follow up interview questions were primarily constructed as a result of that analysis over the following weeks. Semi-structured interviews followed with three parents, two members of staff and the cook, creating opportunities for frank open responses (Tuckman 1972). I briefed the interviewees about the purpose of the project again, stressing confidentiality and protocol and the range of issues that I intended to cover.

All interviews were semi-structured and covered specific questions on the various initiatives. Semi-structured interviews seemed the most appropriate form for this audience, with audio recording to reduce possible intimidation, particularly with parents and adult learners at the Community Wing. Telephone interviews were also performed where distance was an issue. During this process, opportunities emerged for gathering additional data to supplement the specific issues under scrutiny. The tools used for this study were specifically designed for this study reflecting both the qualitative nature of the research and the context of the study (Cohen *et al.* 2000). The following extracts from the semi-structured interviews illustrate examples of questions and responses. Questions included, '*Would you*

*use the breakfast club if you had to pay?* Generally the response was, *'Money is tight'* but when probed further, the response was, *'I would still send them if I had to contribute'*. Regarding opportunities for communication with staff, questions included, *'Do you have a chance to talk to the staff?'* and the response was, *'Yeah they're always there'*. This was followed up with, *'Yes, but do they actually have time to chat?'* The response was typically, *'Oh yes we can always chat about any problems with them'*. Regarding the impact on punctuality questions included, *'What time do you get here in the morning?'* and responses were typically *'I'm always here well before 08.30 and it can be pretty cold waiting in the cold'* and the follow up was, *'So what do you think could be introduced to improve the system?'* *'Well it might be better if there was someone on the door'*.

The data collection for the *Success for All* part of the case study was sought initially with questionnaires to all staff, (appendix 5) and semi-structured interviews with the facilitator, Traveller support staff, an SFA trainer and one HMI and observations of a training day and a lesson. The main focus of enquiry centred on the initial effects of the implementation of *Success for All* on teaching and learning. Questions raised during the interview included, *'How has SFA affected monitoring?'* Responses were, for example, *'It's been great. We are now assessing more frequently with SFA, so we can respond to meet the pupils' needs more quickly'*. This was followed up with, *'What does that mean in practice?'* The response was, *'They don't move up if they fail to reach the required level and they have some additional one to one help outside the SFA'*

*allotted time*'. Regarding the impact on professional development questions included, *'How did you feel about adopting the SFA teaching style?'*. The response was typically, *'It felt a bit odd at first but it is very similar to my own teaching style. So it really presented no real problems'*.

A similar process followed with data collection in the Community Wing at the case study school. Initially questionnaires were issued to 46 participants (appendix 6). The response rate was 76%. All the responses were returned promptly during the next week. A major factor for this high response rate was mainly due to the co-operation of staff allowing the questionnaires to be issued and completed in class time. Semi-structured interviews followed with: five students who volunteered, one who was also a parent, two members of the teaching staff, a crèche supervisor, and several *'Children Project'* co-ordinators. Questions raised during the interview included, for example, *'Would you continue attending courses if they were not available at the school?'* and responses ranged from, *'I wouldn't be able to manage if I had to travel to town and be back in time to collect my children from school'* to *'I couldn't manage without the crèche. So it would mean I'd have to take my child on the bus which would make it quite a performance so I probably wouldn't bother'*. Questions focusing on the reasons for returning to learning included, *'Why have you chosen this particular course?'* and were often met with a response such as, *'I'd heard it was a good class to meet other people and make things to take home'*. This might be followed with a

probing question like, *'Have you actually met lots of other people then?'* and the response was typically, *'Yes, we even meet up outside the class now'*.

### ***Data Analysis***

The next step involved analysis of the data. This, according to Bassey (1999: 25), *'involves an intellectual struggle with an enormous amount of raw data in order to produce a meaningful and trustworthy conclusion, supported with a concise account of how it was reached'*. The month following researching each initiative was spent transcribing the audio interviews, analysing the data and identifying emerging themes from all the interviews and cross-referencing results from the questionnaires and documentary analysis. All participants were offered sight of transcripts after the interviews. The final months were spent collating and writing up the case study.

The interpretive paradigm *'strives to view situations through the eyes of the participants, to catch and interpret frequently complex situations, their meaning systems and the dynamics of the interaction as it unfolds'* (Cohen et al. 2000: 293). The chosen method for analysis of the case study data was discourse analysis, which seemed appropriate in this context as it enables the researcher *'to explore the organisation of ordinary talk and every day explanations and the social actions performed in them'* (Cohen et al. 2000: 298). According to Coyle (1995), discourses can be regarded as a series of organised coherent speech acts that enable people to construct meaning in social contexts. Habermas argues that

utterances are never simple but they derive their meaning from intersubjective contexts in which they are set (Habermas 1970: 368). For Habermas (1984), discourse should seek to be empowering and governed by mutual understanding between the participants allowing equal opportunity to participate with a resulting consensus from the argument alone.

Sufficient triangulation of the raw data gave substance to the analysis, as Stake (1995) recommends. The gathered data seemed relevant for four reasons. Firstly, it focused on participants' experience, both from within and 'outside' the organisation. Secondly, it included representation and a voice for a minority group that policy makers need to take account of in order to improve current provision. Thirdly, it enabled an often neglected characteristic of research to surface. This related to both the personal and professional aspects, for example, commitment, enthusiasm, hard work and humour. Fourthly, it allowed the research to be presented as a story that relays and interprets the accounts of the informants (Coleman and Briggs 2002, Walcott 2001). Bassey (1999) identifies four styles of reporting including structured, narrative, descriptive and fictional. Each style is distinct, influencing the process of the research and the structure of the report. The style of the case study is descriptive narrative, appropriate for the intended audience that will include the case study school, other Fresh Start primary schools and the DfES. The approach taken has been similar to the model outlined by Stake (1995) where an opening vignette of the case study school attempts to create a vicarious experience setting the scene of the study. Next the



reader is carried through the transformation process followed by an analysis within the framework cited by Muijs et al. (2004) that is particularly relevant for school improvement in low socio-economic areas. A detailed examination of three key initiatives follows with reference to other research and concludes with assertions being presented. Finally, a closing summary reflects on the overall study. By exploring in detail some of the characteristics and processes of the case study school, a more in-depth description of the school and its own specificity is provided. This should help in assessing the potential of generalising some of the processes and with potential transferability to other schools.

### ***Limitations***

Having established the overall framework and timeframe for the case study, it is worth recognising that the research process can rarely be carried out systematically or exhaustively. Slight changes to the original order were made, but the momentum was maintained. There were times when it became difficult to access people due to school holidays, or busy times on the school calendar which created inevitable delays in the schedule.

The least successful area of data collection was the breakfast club survey, mainly because one person was insufficient for the task of data collection, as parents arrived at the school gate in unexpected numbers. However, the data collection process for the questionnaires went smoothly for several reasons: the school supported the research; I was familiar at the school prior to the research; I made a

personal visit, explaining the purpose of the research to all possible participants and remained available while participants completed the questionnaires to maximise the return.

One of the prime reasons for carrying out any research often stems from one's personal interest and involvement, and it is advisable to reveal the researchers '*social identity*' (Troyna 1994). This was established both when issuing questionnaires and conducting interviews, by explaining my involvement as a governor of the school but primarily for this exercise as a student researcher. An opportunity for some preamble discussion unrelated to the interview encouraged a level of comfort for the participants. I was surprised by some of the candid revelations and enjoyment evident during the interviews, as I had been forewarned by some members of staff that the participants might be guarded. Two main problems emerged regarding the interviews. Firstly, there was a lack of privacy to carry out interviews at the school with some being performed in the corridor, due to space problems and being unscheduled, and, secondly, interviewees repeatedly cancelling interviews, which delayed continuity.

During the latter part of the data collection period, a further issue emerged concerning the demands that I felt this research imposed on the school, in terms of the number of visits to access participants and collect data. I made a decision that although I could continue to gather data, I actually had collected sufficient data and did not want to compromise my position as a governor by making further

demands on the school. Although protocol was established at the outset, the extensive demands made on the school should not be underestimated and are worthy of consideration for any researcher based in one school. Perhaps in this case the situation was particularly sensitive because of the demands created by my dual role as researcher and governor. However, I felt this opportunity was unique and the research was executed in a professional way with protocol being fully observed from both parties.

Although pupils would have added an interesting dimension (Rudduck, Chaplain, and Wallace 1996), they were not included in this research for three reasons. Firstly, protocol would have been extensive and delayed commencement. Secondly, the pupils who may have been able to recall memories of approximately four years and witnessed the changes were now at secondary school and thirdly, my sample was already very extensive.

Case study has its critics as a method of investigation (Hargreaves 1996, Tooley and Darby 1998), as being too individualistic and therefore may not contribute to the cumulative body of knowledge. However, advocates of the method, including Bassey (1999), recommend it as a prime strategy for developing theory that illuminates educational policy and enhances educational practice. It may not be possible to apply all the findings of one case study to other settings, but more value may be gained if there is opportunity to apply some of the generalisations to similar practice (Fourali 1997). This study is primarily '*single-site*' based with an

attempt to incorporate '*multi-site*' findings, thus broadening its appeal for the reader.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE CASE STUDY**

### **PART ONE: The Transformation Process**

#### ***Introduction***

To appreciate the case study school, as it stands today, it seems appropriate to outline the historical context of the previous failed school. The study includes the process of transformation to a Fresh Start community school, leadership and management, external and internal influences, changes to the school physical environment and social climate. Part two, chapters 6, 7 and 8, cover an in-depth analysis of three key initiatives that have contributed positively towards systemic change, turning a failing school into a successful school. The analysis is followed with recommendations for improved practice and changes to policy in order that other schools may share the benefits of this school's achievements.

#### ***Historical context***

The case study primary school is situated on the outskirts of an outer London Borough. 2.8% of the population in the immediate vicinity (March 2005) are on job seekers allowance which does not reflect the pocket of deprivation that the school serves as the ward includes some affluent areas (2.2% is the overall figure on job seekers allowance for the borough) (Nomis 2001). According to the headteacher, the school's catchment area has high unemployment, *'in the region of 80%*', although *'This borough is one of the most advantaged London boroughs'* [and] *'the proportion of adults in higher social classes is well above the national average'* (OFSTED 1998: 4). The area is one of the most socially

deprived areas in the borough with considerable social and economic challenges. The area the school serves has one of the largest concentrations of Traveller families in Europe (Traveller support staff (m) interview).

The school suffered from a bad reputation for many years and this caused many local families to select alternative schools for their children. These views are shared by many involved parties, as the ex-school doctor confirmed, *'Oh, that was an awful place. No other school was like it'*. The HMI (jw) monitoring the school recalled: *'The school was in an absolutely dreadful way'* while reception staff (j) commented, *'It was the sort of school that people said "Oh no don't go to that school!"'*. Parent (r) who had lived in the area for thirty-six years, had both her children and grandchildren at the school commented *'The school was rough, and there was a lot of bullying'*.

The numbers on roll steadily declined to a total of 68 in the mainstream (OFSTED 1998) with the school plagued by constant low attendance. The population of the school included 40% Travellers, a percentage that has not remained static. Currently in July 2005 it is 29%. The uptake of free school meals was 83% and currently that is 49%. 16.5% of pupils had a statement of Special Educational Needs and currently that is 6%. 67.5 % of mainstream pupils were on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and currently that is 45%. Traveller pupils currently on the SEN register total 40%. However, 56% of Traveller pupils are currently on the SEN register. The majority of pupils

were and still remain from one-parent families receiving benefit. Most continue to be housed in council housing. The school population was very mobile, with as many as 75% of the class in Year 6 not completing the year, as they left at the end of the spring term to travel.

Recruitment and retention of staff was a major problem contributing to the extremely low standards in the school. *'It was almost impossible to get a body to stand in front of a class'* said the headteacher, quoted in the Times Educational Supplement (14/4/00). In September 1998, the school had an OFSTED Inspection. At this point, 3 out of 4 mainstream teachers were on temporary contracts, *'The best we could do was to get people in on supply and then ask them to stay. Over two years, some classes had five teachers, and the children were leading them a dog's life'* (TES: *ibid*).

Behaviour was a leading issue. A large, 28 place Education and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD), unit comprising mainly of KS1 and KS2 children with very disruptive behaviour within the school had a major impact on this small school. A receptionist (m) verified this as being one of the problems *'The EBD unit was very large and the behaviour there was very bad'*. The 1998 inspection noted that both mainstream and the EBD Unit pupils lacked any overall continuity or expertise on a daily basis (OFSTED 1998) as there was a continuous supply of agency staff. Although the Parent Governor (c) did not live in the area at the time, her recollections were *'Before, the kids were literally running wild. Well, I*

*don't know if it was that bad but the way people talk it was quite bad*'. 'The ex-school doctor's impressions verified this: *The children were wild*'. Parent (c) reiterated this observation *The kids' behaviour was appalling*'. Parent (c) felt, *They never spent any money on the place. It was completely run down*'. Closure of the school was discussed a few years prior to 1998 but this did not occur mainly because it would have given a bad message to the school community and many Traveller pupils may have ceased to attend school if they had to travel further.

### ***Special Measures***

In November 1998, an OFSTED inspection put the school into Special Measures. Twenty-four issues for action were identified, eleven of which focussed on improving the quality of teaching and learning (appendix 9). The school's existing headteacher had resigned in the run up to the OFSTED inspection and according to those involved during this time, the school suffered due to a combination of factors including: poor leadership, inexperienced teachers on short-term contracts, an unaccountable governing body and a lack of resources and interest from the LEA and the DfEE. Governor (a) who had previous links with the school in a supportive capacity for Travellers, reflected on this period and was clear about the way forward, *When a school goes into Special Measures, everybody gets despondent. If you have fresh bodies with new ideas who haven't got hang ups of the previous school with new enthusiasm and*



*new ideas and give the head leeway and say, "take a chance we'll roll with you" That's the way to go forward'.*

The report did not hold any surprises for the newly seconded, acting headteacher who commented at the time, *'We were very aware of all the problems within the school'* (TES 14/04/00) and OFSTED confirmed the situation *'Pupils of all abilities make poor progress in their work. Only about half the teaching observed was satisfactory or better'* (OFSTED 1998: 6). While some of these issues were being addressed, it was very clear that some radical changes were needed. The acting headteacher welcomed Special Measures, *'I felt it was the best thing to happen'*, and reflects David Bell's view that *'failure is a significant moment in a school's life and it's the beginning of a recovery'* (BBC Channel 4 04.02.04). The LEA also welcomed OFSTED's verdict, as they had been lobbying central government for more financial support from the single regeneration budget. The LEA head of planning and research, John Miller, commented, *'We welcome OFSTED's findings as they added weight to this judgement'* (TES 14/04/00).

In 1999, the acting headteacher was appointed as the headteacher and felt *'the school had potential'*. She was supported by two existing members of staff, a deputy head teacher and special educational needs coordinator, and an experienced link adviser (lm), together making a potentially powerful team. The adviser's ability was recognised by many involved, as governor (a) remarked

*'They gave us an incredible link adviser who is very knowledgeable. She gave over and above her allocated time to advise the school and the governors on what should be done. That was incredible'*. Although a negative ambiance was entrenched in the school there seemed a real chance for improvement, as the link adviser remarked *'My first impression of the school was of noise, loud children and loud shouting from some of the teachers'*. It soon became evident to the main players concerned that Special Measures on its own would not be sufficient. *'A number of us felt that more of the same wouldn't work,'* commented the LEA education officer (jm).

In January 1999 the LEA proposed relaunching the school as a community school, with the DfEE suggesting Fresh Start as an alternative. At this stage there were only three Fresh Start schools in England, all secondary schools. The LEA, Governors and the headteacher were all fairly cynical and suspicious of the proposals. The headteacher recalled, *'I was very cynical at first, because Fresh Start was a new name, new uniform, new staff, same children'* There was also resistance from staff who had worked at the school for a long time. However, the DfEE representatives felt that the school's ideas about adopting a multi-agency approach towards developing the school as a community resource for early intervention and lifelong learning fitted the Fresh Start concept well (DfEE 14/4/00).

From this embryonic stage the process of becoming a Fresh Start school began and the concept received early support from parents, staff and the new governing body who were mainly appointed by the LEA. As governor (a) stated, *'We had the opportunity to raise objections but we felt very positive that this was the right way forward'* and parent (c) agreed, *'I think it's a very good idea, when people feel that a school is failing they are given the opportunity to see a Fresh Start'*. The headteacher recalled, *'The major advantage at the start was that it couldn't get worse'*. The HMI (jw) attached to the school during this period emphasised the importance of getting everyone involved, as she recalled, *'Fresh Start was planned. The head, the governors and the LEA were all involved'*. The headteacher further reinforced the notion of involvement, *'The school community was consulted on everything, from the logo to the uniform, we held meetings to discuss ideas about the uniform and the children were involved designing the logo. I felt we're in this together and we're going to make it work. We didn't want to waste any time getting it underway'*.

### ***Consultation and transformation process***

By April 1999, a Community Wing opened within the school involving a multi-agency partnership jointly funded by Education, Health, Adult Education, Social services and a local College, which is managed locally by a Community Project worker. The wing is a self-contained section within the school with its own entrance, but it is also accessible for the staff from within the school, via an internal door. It was envisaged that parents with children at the school and local

residents would be encouraged to continue their own education and training if facilities were school based. The aim of the Community Wing was to improve children's attainment and development, engage parents in their children's education, raise self-esteem, identify needs early and make appropriate interventions, tackle whole family health issues, reduce disaffection and exclusion and develop activities and programmes that are parentally driven.

Each Fresh Start School adopts their own new framework and is required to demonstrate those principles satisfactorily to the Secretary of State. In the former school those principles were *'a significant new offering to pupils, curriculum-led change, innovation, demonstrable added value, a new Governing Body, new contracts of employment, a new name , a new uniform, an exportable model, and sufficient resourcing to minimise the possibility of failure'* (London Borough Education committee 24.05.99).

Following the meeting of the Education Committee Members, it was agreed that a public consultation open to all stakeholders should be undertaken. This involved the distribution of explanatory leaflets to parents and other interested parties inviting responses, a Powerpoint presentation sited in the school entrance, three meetings with the Governing Body, two staff meetings, a poster display at information points around the borough, formal redundancy consultation notices and discussions with recognised trade unions and teachers' associations.

Further negotiations involved the new Governing Body and a new staffing structure were agreed upon. HMI (jw) made two visits during 1999 reinforcing the proposed staffing structures, *'The adult child ratio and class size were vital ... you have to encourage and pay the staff well'* (HMI, interview, 12 February 2004). The new school was comprised predominantly of staff that were able to undertake the challenge and this was one of the first issues that the headteacher addressed. As she explained, *'Only two teaching members of staff were retained. A very strong teacher in mainstream was appointed as Deputy Head and an experienced special needs teacher was retained to be in charge of the Pupil Referral Unit. Six full-time and three part-time teachers of high calibre were appointed. Three classroom assistants were also retained'*.

Inevitably this led to redeployment and redundancies. Despite advertising for teaching staff offering *'two extra points'* as an incentive, the headteacher reported that there was *'no response'*. The process was finally achieved through the headteacher's effective networking as she felt, *'We couldn't afford to make mistakes, as one bad teacher in a small school threatens everything'*. A new, special educational needs part-time teacher was appointed along with a new, part-time music teacher. Every class teacher now had an assistant and there was additional support from the LEA Traveller Team, Behaviour Support and Specialist Tuition Service. Class sizes varied, but the pupil/teacher ratio was approximately 16:1. The main focus of the curriculum was basic skills, with an emphasis on Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE). The school day was

reorganised and a 'zero tolerance' behaviour management policy was introduced throughout the school.

In November 1999, a Breakfast Club was introduced which was initially funded by the Department of Health and a local business. Just over a year after the school was put into Special Measures, the first Fresh Start primary school in the UK opened in January 2000 with a completely changed ethos. However old perceptions of the 'sink school' image are still retained by people interviewed in the locality, who do not have children at the school. The positive perceptions held by the parents with children at the school, interviewed for this case study, are likely in time, to generate a new image for the school as it stands today.

### ***Leadership and management***

#### ***The headteacher***

The headteacher's leadership and management skills have been instrumental in turning around this school and she is held in high regard within the school and at both local and national levels (Bell 2003b, Cllr. Holbrook, Civic Centre, London Borough 22/03/05). As governor (a) remarked, '*she knows exactly where she wants the school to go*'. Similarly OFSTED recognised her ability to lead under Fresh Start in the inspection report (OFSTED 2002b: 19), '*She led the school community effectively in establishing the new school under the government's Fresh Start initiative*'. Leading schools in times of change is widely recognised and by all of the staff interviewed as being extremely challenging and involves

personal investment (Costa 2004, Stiasny 2004). The HMI (jw) attached to the school had reservations about Fresh Start policy, *'You still have the same kids and the same community. It's difficult, unless you've got very special strategic planning to change things'*. This has not been an insurmountable issue for the headteacher who has been fully committed to the concept of Fresh Start and a major force in driving all the initiatives to raise the profile of the school and improve learning opportunities for children and adults in the vicinity. Her commitment, clarity of vision and entrepreneurial spirit has been key to implementing and sustaining change.

The headteacher's considerable influence on school improvement is evidenced by OFSTED, *'The school is well led and managed The headteacher provides the school with a very clear sense of direction: her vision, high expectations and professional insight give a positive sense of purpose to the life of the school. Good teamwork, under the very effective leadership of the headteacher, has helped the school progress well in these first three years'* (OFSTED 2002b: 19). This progress has now been sustained for more than five years. Research in the UK and the USA indicates that sustaining improvement is particularly difficult for schools in challenging circumstances (Datnow and Stringfield 2000, Florian 2000, Maden 2001).

David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, emphasises leadership as a significant contribution to success in his annual report, *'Strong and effective*

*leadership lies at the heart of it'* (OFSTED 2003a). Discerning comments by Bell after visiting the school recognised these vital attributes in the headteacher, *'May I congratulate you on the quality of your leadership and management. Good schools do not happen by accident and you should rightly take credit for all that has been achieved in the last three years'* (Bell 2003b) and he elaborates further, *'leadership must be effective at all levels of the school'* (OFSTED 2003a). The reception secretary (j) reinforced this point as she felt distributed leadership was evident and worked in their favour, *'we discuss things and the headteacher just lets us get on with it'*.

*'Selecting and retaining staff has been a major factor to the success of this school'* governor (b) reported. The headteacher managed the selection process and her good management of the staff is recognised by governor (a), *'She's a great team leader. She's been able to keep the staff together and we've not had problems with resignations. She's always prepared to talk about any problems. She's fired them into making Fresh Start work and I think she's succeeding admirably'*. These comments echo the thoughts of Franey (2002) that the challenge involved in leadership in the urban school emphasises strategy, vision, and team building.

The headteacher is supported by an able deputy headteacher and together they form a well-balanced management pair, which OFSTED recognised (OFSTED 2002b). Mortimore et al. (1998) noted the importance of involving the deputy



headteacher in the decision making of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work harmoniously together, complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses while providing support for each other. As the headteacher explained, *'It's a great working relationship. We are always bouncing ideas around'*. They both have a 'down to earth' approach and share a good sense of humour that was particularly evident during the potentially stressful period of the OFSTED inspection. This combination creates a climate conducive to a positive but relaxed working atmosphere. The deputy head has a vital role as 'facilitator' of the SFA programme and has been a pivotal force in steering it forward as OFSTED recognised: *'The coordinator provides very good leadership and management and supports teachers very well. Through focused monitoring of teaching and learning, she has identified areas for development and produced a clear action plan to continue to raise standards, especially in writing'* (OFSTED 2002b: 34).

Several Fresh Start headteachers interviewed raised the issue of the benefits of being seconded prior to becoming appointed headteacher. In the case study school, the headteacher had the benefit of being in place at the school, in an acting headteacher capacity, for two terms coupled with a mentoring opportunity with a more experienced headteacher. The benefits of this sort of mentoring are widely recognised (Alred, Garvey and Smith 2003, Goddard 2004). The headteacher revealed that the benefits included *'Valued support from a mentor head and the school was given assistance formulating the Action Plan'*. Other

Fresh Start schools have also received this benefit (Charlotte Turner Primary, New Christchurch Primary, Nunsthorpe Primary, Parringdon Junior, Tivedale Primary).

Another issue that emerged concerned the headteacher's role being executed as a teaching or non-teaching post. Many headteachers interviewed felt that it was unrealistic to expect the headteacher to have a teaching role on top of all the additional administration. The case study school headteacher felt that her role as a non-teaching headteacher put her at an advantage, as she could focus on strategy, and the day-to-day issues but was also free to substitute for staff, which helped retain a degree of coherence and teaching continuity. Her decision to cover occasionally for absent teaching staff rather than using resources on supply teachers, not only reduces the staffing budget but also enables more contact with the pupils. Other schools of a similar size (Heathcote Village Primary) have teaching headteachers, with the obvious implications of less time for strategic management and staff observation that is in place at the case study school.

Another factor that contributes towards success as a new Fresh Start headteacher is previous experience in a similar type of school (Hayes 2004). This point has been illustrated in several documentary programmes that have exposed the challenges involved for experienced teachers who are placed in very different, demanding cultures to teach. Examples include the ex-headteacher of Benenden

School, attempting to teach at Forest Gate Secondary School in the London Borough of Newham (Back To The Floor, BBC 2, 1997) and a headteacher with 25 years of experience in the private sector taking on a failing school that had seven headteachers in the last 10 years (The Choice 06.01.04). These examples demonstrated the benefits when headteachers are able to transfer skills gained in one school to a new but related culture in another school. McLay (2004 interview) argues that *'Heads need to have a background in the needs of the school'*. The headteacher at the case study school has a background in 'special needs', which although unusual for a headteacher in the mainstream, is eminently suitable in this context, as she has been able to apply those skills for the needs of this school.

Many headteachers who have turned around failing schools were branded in the late 1990s as 'super-heads'. When asked by the media not long after the school opened, *'Are you a super-head?'* She replied, *'No I've got a super staff'*. The HMI described the headteacher as *'Being different, she's not in it for the self-glorification. It's not about her'*. This comment typifies her low-profile image and disinterest in self-promotion as the headteacher verified during an interview as part of this case study.

Headteachers need to be imaginative and entrepreneurial if they want to make a difference by changing the ethos of a school. Patience Wheatcroft suggests, *'Entrepreneurs have to be swift on their feet, spotting opportunities and diving*

*for them*' (The Times 2003). Perhaps common to all entrepreneurs is the desire to change things. *'This desire may not always be "reasonable" but it may be the very unreasonableness of entrepreneurs that is the motor of change'* (Hay 2001: 15). Many of the nine competencies of entrepreneurs outlined in the study (Hay: *ibid*) were mentioned by the headteachers interviewed for this study. For example, the headteacher at Nunsthorpe Primary revealed *'It's my passion. I could talk about it forever'* and the headteacher at Orion Primary commented that he felt that he had changed the vision and the ethos by believing that *'No matter what the circumstances, you can do well'*.

Similar conclusions about the headteacher's entrepreneurial approach should be acknowledged from the findings at the case study school. While many others perceived the school as *'going nowhere'*, her perception was different. She felt that *'The school had potential. It soon became evident that many of the mums, (we don't see many dads), have had a poor educational experience themselves. They would come in groups, ready for confrontation and were quite aggressive. It was a matter of always having the door open all the time, treating them politely, talking things through with them, writing letters for them, being non-threatening. It was all about building up trust'*. Parent (c) reinforced this point *'If I went along there right now with an issue that I had to talk about there would be someone there to talk to. And that's rare. The headteacher is incredibly approachable. I know she's got loads of things to do but she's always given me time to talk things over until I've felt better'*. Her 'open-door' policy

has been effective for both parents and staff to clarify any issue before it becomes a problem. Changes in levels of trust have been brought about by the open door policy and the personal skills of the headteacher and staff, coupled with the entrepreneurial initiatives that have been implemented by her, for example the breakfast club, the nursery, the Community Wing and Success For All.

The popularity of 'Extended Schools' offering 'out of school hours services' has increased particularly since the publication of 'Extended Schools' (DfES 2002b). The case study school was a forerunner of this philosophy, as it has offered an extended day since the outset in 2000 without the additional funding that has since been attached to these ventures. The headteacher commented: *'We consider ourselves to be an extended school. We offer a breakfast club, lunchtime activities and after school activities and the Community Wing incorporates the community. I want to extend this further and stay open until 6 o'clock to give children the opportunity to do homework'*. The school cook recognises the benefits: *'I think all schools should introduce a breakfast club, especially for working mums. I used to have to pay a childminder in the mornings for my children'*. Many parents appreciate the developments in the extended provision but the cost implications were a concern as parent (c) explained: *'I think it's a great idea. The problem is the cost, particularly when it comes to full-time till 6 o'clock, if you're not working it's going to be difficult. That will be prohibitive for a lot of people'*. The headteacher has managed with

current funding for the after-school club to keep costs to a minimum of £2.50 per session.

Fresh Start brought a high profile to the school. It was an exciting time for all of those involved except perhaps for those who were re-deployed or took early retirement. The first term was hectic with visits from LEA Officers, the Mayor, DfEE, HMI, and the press. At that time as governor (s) recalled *'the headteacher remained quietly focused, just going about her business as usual without any fuss'*. She was also involved in a seminar at DfEE (14/04/2000) and a support group has been formed to share ideas and key issues and to facilitate the process for other LEAs considering Fresh Start. Research findings from different school contexts and diverse countries, confirms the powerful impact of leadership in securing school development and change (Harris 2002).

### ***Staff***

A committed, experienced, integrated small team with high pupil expectations are the hallmarks of the school staff according to OFSTED which described them with praise (OFSTED 2000b): *'Much of the credit for this should go to the staff who have created such a positive atmosphere. I should say that I was most impressed by the way in which the staff were engaging with the task they face in the school'* (Bell 2003b). A small team has allowed virtually no cliques or hierarchy to develop. There is also real sense of goodwill evident by the support the staff show one another, and has contributed to creating a team with a mission.

All the Primary Fresh Start headteachers interviewed also reinforced the importance of staff competency. Staff had high expectations of pupils' ability and this was seen as an important contribution to improvement by headteachers interviewed and is also widely recognised in the literature (Maden and Hillman, 1996). Many headteachers recognised that failing schools are dominated by low staff expectations (St John and St James Primary, Manor Oak Primary, Nunsthorpe Primary, Orion Primary, St and Tivedale Primary). The case study school has been singled out for praise by Bell (2003b): *'Everyone associated with the school should take credit. They certainly are trailblazers'*.

Prior to my appointment as a governor, the governing body and headteacher were involved in new staff appointments. All teaching staff had to reapply for their posts. The headteacher felt that the circumstances in the school were so challenging that teachers needed to be able to handle the pupils effectively and the majority of those in post were not suitably skilled for the new position and did not re-apply, as she explained, *'The teachers that were here would have been satisfactory in any other school, they worked hard, did their best, but we needed better than that'*. Recruitment was addressed by ensuring that job descriptions attracted a suitably competent, experienced, teaching staff. Despite national advertising, there were no applicants and recruitment was achieved by way of 'the old boy network'. The headteacher admitted, *'It was achieved by twisting people's arms'*. As a result, it would appear that *'The school has been successful in creating a team of teachers and support staff that works well*

*together and provides a positive and purposeful environment in which pupils learning is well supported'* (OFSTED 2002b). Two experienced competent members of staff and three support assistants were retained. Quality of teaching and learning was reported to be *'very good'* in the nursery and reception and *'good'* throughout the school, re-emphasising the relevance of recruiting quality staff and recognising their worth with remuneration (OFSTED: *ibid*). This practice was adopted by other Fresh Start primary schools (Charlotte Turner Primary, Heathcote Primary, Tivedale Primary) while others have indicated that recruitment was a more complex task often due to inexperienced applicants and location (Loughborough Primary, Orion Primary, Parrington Primary, Walter Lane Primary).

The Hay Study (Forde *et al.* 2000) drew attention to the problems of headteachers not matching staff recognition to contribution. The headteacher at the case study school confirmed, *'We have an expensive staff'*. It is significant that the headteacher also offered increased financial incentives upon appointment. Similar practice in other Fresh Start primary schools has been inconsistent. Some have offered *'extra points'* for retention and recruitment for a limited time period (Charlotte Turner Primary, Orion Primary) while others have offered none (Parrington Junior, Tivedale Community Primary).

Low pupil/teacher ratios were seen as a priority to tackle diverse learning needs through the behaviour management strategy and subsequently they became



crucial to the teaching structure for SFA throughout the school. The inspection recognised this benefit, '*Staffing levels are very good. The school has a very favourable pupil ratio*' (OFSTED 2002b: 12) supported by a teaching assistant attached to every class, and was seen as a key ingredient for creating the right climate for the school by the headteacher (Governors meeting 15/02/01). Parallel findings regarding low staff pupil ratio are evident in other Fresh Start primary schools and considered to contribute to their success (Goose Green Primary, Walter Lane Primary). However, not all schools have been in the fortunate position to employ experienced staff (Heathcote Primary, Parrington Junior).

Another interesting issue for Fresh Start schools is teacher retention, especially in the light of poor retention of staff throughout the UK (Richin, Banyon, Stein and Banyon 2003). '*The recruitment and retention of good, experienced teachers has been a priority. It has been successful in this*' (OFSTED 2002b: 12). As an additional incentive for retention the headteacher revealed '*I paid them in a lump sum at the end of the year if they're staying on for the next year*'. Although many involved in education oppose the idea of performance related pay, David Bell's (HMCI) view is that headteachers were hemmed in by '*rules, regulations and bureaucratic boundaries*' when trying to reward good work by their staff (Bell 2003c). By 2005 heads and school governors will be able '*maximise the flexibility*' for staff pay (Bell 2004).

The headteacher reported *'staff absenteeism is minimal'*. Their extraordinary low-level absenteeism of 4.8% is well below the national average of 7.4% for 2003/2004, reflecting their commitment (BBC1 News 07/05/04). Another contributory factor for improvement is staff continuity. All twelve members of staff are those originally recruited over four years ago and noted by reception staff (j) as one of the examples why the school has improved, *'We've really had no one leave since Fresh Start'*. Additional salary may well have been a recruitment incentive, but unlikely to be sustained over five years if other emotional factors were not involved. For example, the headteachers' influence, as the deputy head remarked *'She is very gentle, hugely encouraging and positive to the staff'*.

Evidence of high commitment amongst the staff is seen throughout the whole team including the headteacher and deputy head, support staff and reception staff. This is not only apparent in the retention figures but in the extra involvement that everyone shows, without any extra reimbursement. There is a shared agreement amongst the team of keeping costs down and seeking value for money, which clearly comes from the headteacher *'I can't bear to waste resources. I might be shooting myself in the foot, but that's the way I am'* For example, the headteacher with a teaching assistant help every morning at the breakfast club, which involves a daily commitment of early arrival.

Goodwill has been a major contribution to the school's current success and evident by all of those involved in the daily operations of the school with staff regularly offering to help each other as a matter of course. This point was reinforced by a classroom assistant (m), when asked if supervising at the breakfast club was part of her remit, she replied, *'I volunteered to do it. It's the same for the head. She's got children to get to school. It must be difficult for her'*. The headteacher's commitment and goodwill was evident from her own comments, *'One of the assistants is there every day and so am I. If I can't make it for any reason, the deputy head will stand in, but I'm usually there'*. Several Fresh Start headteachers reported similar stories about staff goodwill, *'It's all the hidden extras that make the difference, that may involve taking children to the dentist after school'* for example, (Manor Oak, Nunsthorpe Primary, St John and St James Primary).

The future role of support assistants is under scrutiny at a national level through, *'Workforce Remodelling'* (DfES 2003f) as changes to policy are imminent, driven by issues of teacher recruitment, retention, planning time and reduction in public spending. The benefit of using support staff in additional roles is evident at the case study school and has been successfully implemented in the nursing profession in the National Health Service (Department of Health 1999). Providing the staff have a proven level of ability, are competently managed and there is goodwill from all involved, there seems to be every reason for this increased responsibility to be encouraged.

Finally, the strengths of the staff were aptly summed up by parent (t) *'There's such a positive mental attitude from the staff in the school. We've turned it into a bit of a joke in our house. We say, "If you're naughty you're not going to school"'*!

## **The role of the Governing Body**

### ***Former Governing Body***

Two of the governors serving on the new governing body were involved for a brief period with the old governing body when the school was put in Special Measures, and described some of the issues that influenced the effectiveness of the old governing body. Unconstructive personal political agendas apparently dominated meetings of the former governing body. Relationships between the governing body and the Council were poor and governors had lost confidence in the LEA, which they believed had treated the school negatively and given insufficient support over the years. This was further aggravated by the majority party of the council being predominately of a different political persuasion than the governing body.

Many schools in the time preceding a Fresh Start are faced with an overlap of governing bodies, which can create obvious tensions. At the case study school there was a six months overlap of the old and new bodies running together, which was very unproductive and as governor (a) recalled, *'it didn't make for good relations'* and reaffirmed by governor (b) *'the new Governing Body looked positively to creating a new school serving the needs of the local community'*.

Interestingly governor (b) was and remains actively involved with the local community forum, which is committed to regenerating the area. His commitment to the local community strengthens his role as Chair and is seen as 'prime mover', an attribute recognised as a strength for effective governing bodies (NCSL 2001 and Matthews, 2002a).

### ***New Governing Body***

The Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and an LEA advisor drove the strategic planning for the innovative Fresh Start policies, supported by the deputy head, the Governing Body, the LEA and the DfES. Continuity, commitment and a high level of educational and commercial expertise amongst the new governing body were key ingredients to the success of this group and recognised as a major benefit for governing bodies (Creese and Earley 1999). The Chair recognises the strengths of the governing body *'I've got a group of governors who've worked in education and they've got years of experience'*. The headteacher supported this view, *'I'm very lucky with the governors. Nobody comes with their own agenda and they're a nice mix'*. There is no sense of the Chair being any more elevated than anyone else involved: his sentiments are, *'The governing body works as a group'* and governor (a) supported this, *'There's a real sense of a teamwork going on but very professional too'*. In the early stages, although there was no parental involvement and while that was not ideal, it did allow the governing body to act positively and cohesively without any deviations from the prime focus on school improvement. There was a clear demarcation between the governing body and the headteacher that worked to

everybody's advantage allowing the headteacher to focus on the day-to-day management of the school and endorsed by OFSTED (2000b).

Once it was established that the school was going down the Fresh Start route the new governing body took control, as governor (a) put it, *'We weren't going to put up with any of the old baggage'*. Political allegiances are no longer evident as governor (a) remarked *'Politics are not high on the agenda now and no one is involved in local politics'*. Everybody became involved and pursued training in finance, curriculum and staffing. Most decisions in the early days were taken by the whole governing body but as it has progressed sub-committees have evolved and as governor (b) commented, *'There's more confidence in terms of reaffirmation from the positive progress that has been achieved'*. There are up to two full governing body meetings per term with most of the work effectively delegated to a number of sub-committees that report back to the main body. This practice reflects the thinking of many working in the field of governance as being elements of good practice (Esp and Saram 1995, Martin 2002).

Being able *'to speak honestly with governors and letting me get on with the job of managing the school'* is how the headteacher views and values her relationship with the governing body. She also feels they are *'really supportive and they work in partnership'*. She recognises that some are more involved than others and all staff know the governors, as they have been visible in the school during SFA days and other events. Governor presence during the normal course of events and relating to staff is recognised as having positive benefits (Bird

2002, OFSTED 2002). The headteacher also suggested that more involvement might be an area for development by having *'open days for governors once a term, to get to know the children and see what is happening in school'*.

Using the criteria of how *'Investors in People'* (DfES 2002b) see the governor's role, it is evident that the governing body carries out an effective strategic role. They review funding, staffing, and professional development policies. They have helped formulate a school development plan, an Action Plan, and a post-OFSTED Action Plan, while also agreeing policies and resources to enable all staff to have access to staff development. A combination of pressure and support has been evident in their contribution at meetings. Fullan (1991) recognised the importance of these elements in relation to their impact on successful leadership. In their role as a critical friend they actively debate issues at meetings and have supported the commitment of the school to promote staff development and are actively involved in performance management of the headteacher. *'Accountability of the budget has always been a priority for the governing body'* governor (b) highlighted, *'without that control, none of the rest would be possible'*. This has been carried out by monitoring staff development expenditure, raising school achievement, ensuring *'value for money'* providing evidence for parents and community leaders about the school's performance with regular newsletters, press coverage and talking about the success of the school amongst other colleagues.

Governors' effectiveness might be improved if the level of informal participation increased as governor (a) revealed *'because I've worked in school before I'm lucky in that I can drop in'*. This approach might be seen to be a bit intrusive for other governors who have not developed a relationship in that capacity. However, other possibilities for more involvement might include helping during a lunchtime club. Governor (a) suggested that, *'If we could just be a little more informal and drop into the school rather than being the governor at a distance that might improve things'*.

The level of involvement also depends on the amount of time governors have available to contribute. As the largest volunteer group in the country (Matthews 14/11/2002) some governors are more able than others to give freely of their time and in this instance it should be borne in mind that 75% of the governing body are working, which reduces their availability to participate. 62.5% felt unsure about further involvement in terms of their current commitment to the school. Perhaps governors will be reassured since the interviews, by the comments in the recent OFSTED report recognising how well the school is led and managed and how well the governors fulfil their responsibilities. *'The governing body plays a purposeful and effective role in shaping the direction of the school and fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and are fully involved in planning and in decision and policy-making'* (OFSTED 2002b: 7).



Parental representation on the governing body is another issue of concern. The position in November 2004, was that there were two parent governors who are actively involved in the local community. Parent (c) described her involvement locally: *'I work as an area advocate for Broomleigh Housing Association, which is seen as a very large forbidding organisation by a lot of the residents. Being a parent governor could be seen in the same way, but I think it's an opportunity to have a say in the way the school is run. There's a huge amount of apathy round here. Nobody wants to get involved. Hopefully with more pupils coming to the school we will pick up some more parent governors but I think it's going to be very difficult'*. Sourcing other parent governors has been problematic mainly because of constraints arising from their single parent status and their lack of educational skills and confidence. This challenge is being addressed, and should evolve, as parents become more involved in school functions.

### ***Role of the Chair***

The Chair has overseen the transition from the old failing school to the new Fresh Start school and he has been closely involved in the decision-making process with the headteacher and identifies with that success (Gann 1998). He regards his working relationship with the headteacher as successful: *'I try not to interfere and I know the head involves me where she thinks it's appropriate. I wouldn't presume to tell her how to do her job and she leaves me to get on with mine. We went into the Fresh Start together and it's worked and that has been a big plus point for us'*

All full governing body meetings are efficient with adequate time to raise any other business. This is an important part of the chairman's role recognised by (Scanlon *et al.* 1999) and is being carried out accordingly at the case study school. The Chair takes his responsibilities seriously and sees his role as '*conducting decent productive meetings*', bringing his experience in commerce to the job where he feels he can '*talk with some experience*' on financial matters. He keeps governors abreast of their statutory requirements by ensuring that all current documentation from the DFEE is circulated promptly with any changes highlighted.

It was illuminating to note the level of uncertainty that he felt about his role. The role of the Chair in all the governor guidelines is quite specific and it might be presumed that there would be a stronger sense of identity in the role as he revealed, '*The school is going in the right direction but whether I've had an impact on the school, I just don't know. I just try to do the best I can as Chairman and make sure the governing body works together for the same ends*'. This attitude reflects his unautocratic manner, which in practice results in an inclusive atmosphere where all governors feel they can make a contribution. The perception of uncertainty about one's role as a governor is commonly felt amongst governors and also supported by feedback from 'Governance and Headship' training days for the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) at the Institute of Education (30.10.02, 14.11.02 and 21.11.02).

The governors recognise that the Chair takes on the bulk of the responsibility. Copious amounts of paperwork are sifted in advance and only highly relevant issues are brought to their attention. This is advantageous in terms of time and focus but it could also be unproductive in terms of more involvement. Governor (a) reflected, *'The Chair has done an awful lot and I don't think it's fair that we rely on him. If we are going to be of real use we've got to get more involved'*.

#### ***LEA and DfES support and contribution***

The governors and HMI involved with the school pre-Fresh Start shared similar views about LEA involvement as governor (b) remarked, *'The LEA had absolutely no intervention'*. Governor (a) reinforced this sentiment, *'It wasn't really until OFSTED put the school into Special Measures that it was like a wake up call for the LEA'*. The HMI (jm) noted that *'The LEA have to respond to HMI and they have a financial duty to support the school but they weren't good at supporting struggling schools'*. It appears that this local authority is not alone, as being perceived to have failed to sufficiently support a struggling school. Several other headteachers of Fresh Start schools interviewed held similar views of their former schools. This was mainly because of a lack of funding and an accepted notion of the school being a sink school.

The DfEE suggested the idea of Fresh Start as a way forward to the headteacher and the Chair of Governors in 1999. As initiators of the project, they were *'incredibly supportive'* the headteacher recalled. While governor (b) recalled, *'We were impressed with the idea and championed it amongst the other*

*governors*'. Over the following six months, the headteacher liaised with the DfEE. A stronger partnership formed between the DfEE, LEA, the headteacher and the governing body. The headteacher recalled that she *'had worked in the borough for twenty years and the LEA were brilliant on this. It provided a wealth of support with funding and resources. They provided one of their top link advisers who gave over and above her allocated time to advise the school and the governors*'. Early and continuous support from the LEA was fundamental to the success of this new, high profile Fresh Start transformation. They allowed an opportunity to relax some of the financial constraints that would have hindered the long term planning, enabling more financial control from within the school. There also was good, early support and advice from the DfES team. However, this initial euphoria has not been sustained. Although the policy appears to be in transition, the majority of Fresh Start headteachers feel there should be more continuous involvement from the DfES team, which appears to have become more bureaucratic, focusing on new policies rather than supporting existing ones and removed from the 'grass roots' level. Many of the headteachers interviewed reported that the DfES should visit schools more regularly and there should be opportunity for more networking amongst headteachers to share good practice with each other and the Fresh Start policy unit.

### ***HMI's role***

Her Majesty's Inspectors have a crucial role to play in the overlap of a school in Special Measures and in the early months of gaining Fresh Start status. The HMI

(jw) pointed out that *'most Fresh Start schools did not want the same HMI that had overseen the previous school'* (Interview, HMI 13/03/04, appendix 7). This was not the case at the case study school as the headteacher recalled *'We had a superb HMI. The staff actually welcomed her. She had a positive approach and the staff respected her and asked her opinion and they trusted her'*. McLay during her interview (2004, appendix 7) pointed out that this is not a general perception, *'Some HMI's can come across as being quite destructive. If you say, "I'm struggling with this", they'd say, "oh failing teacher"'*. The HMI (jw) revealed that behind the scenes the picture was very different, *'They had to fight to get LEA to support them'* suggesting that all was not as it appeared to the various players initially. In her view the case study school was *'a very special case and it has made very special progress'* and she added, *'there was good strategic planning involving the headteacher, governors and the LEA. The headteacher was not pressurised and went at the right speed for the staff. She stayed calm and gave the impression that we'll get this sorted and we'll enjoy life along the way'*. The school benefited from the relationship with a proactive and supportive HMI who remained involved with the school after she had completed her remit.

### ***Funding***

Fresh Start offered an initial injection of funding that was clearly needed to support the initiatives to turn this school around. During the process of securing the funding, the headteacher worked closely with the LEA. This allowed an opportunity to develop a good working relationship while securing the school's

future. As the headteacher commented, *'There was going to be quite a lot of money allocated that they could not risk losing'*. Governor (a) felt that *'the OFSTED report was very damning with major issues to be resolved which presented an opportunity for joint funding from the DFEE as well as the LEA'*. Governor (b) indicated that joint support was evident, *'The DfES were incredibly supportive, because it was the first primary school that was going to try to go Fresh Start'*. Involvement from the newly elected, local council with cross-party member support and an LEA Action Plan created a productive way forward.

The LEA took a positive role advising the school and governors on the allocation of money and resources. Not everything had to be spent immediately and they advised holding some in reserve. *'We'll let you have a roll over so that you don't have to spend unwisely'*, the headteacher recalled them saying and also added that, *'They've been very positive with their supportive approach'*. For example they said, *'It's OK we know that you've got an under spend but we are not going to punish you on next year's budget because you've already had it'* as *'they could see that we had to plan for two or three years ahead to have that money in hand'*. As a result of good financial management governor (b) reflected that this had been an added bonus, *'Because the headteacher had done so much homework and raised the profile, the LEA have had to come up to scratch and match everything that's been done. But without her doing it I don't*

*think it would have happened*' indicating a change in the LEAs attitude towards the school.

Funding for the various initiatives at the case study school came from many sources. A successful Cray Valley Single Regeneration Bid provided money to develop crèche facilities and subsidise a support assistant within the Community Wing attached to the school. *'New Deal'* for schools provided £80K for the school to be fully refurbished. Further funding was sourced from the Standards Fund – Priority Schools, £17K for the Post-OFSTED Action Plan. Council Funding provided £17K for the nursery and Capital Funding was used to develop the self-contained Community Wing in the school equipped with IT facilities and a Health Clinic.

In order to implement new initiatives under their Fresh Start status and create viable enterprises, schools need a substantial injection of resources. Funding for the case study school was spread over 3 years comprising, £125,000 in year one, £110,000 in year two and £95,000 in year three. After the initial euphoria of gaining their new status many Fresh Start schools are faced with a dilemma caused by the lack of continued, sustainable funding. Jill Clough (BBC4 *'The Choice'* 06.01.04) and other Fresh Start headteachers interviewed for this research (Heathcote Primary, New Christchurch Primary, Parrington Junior School) along with Peter Clough (interview, 12.09.03, appendix 7) have confirmed the dilemma of limited sustainability. One of the key issues that has

led to the success at the case study school has not only been the injection of funding but the management and the 'value for money' attitude from all of those involved with the budget. Long-term sustainability has always been high on the governors' and headteacher's agenda and has been achieved by building up reserves to last for five years rather than the three years expected by the Fresh Start School funding policy, thus providing a more viable future. The combination of effective financial management at school level, and a flexible proactive LEA and DfES, have created obvious benefits to the successful strategic planning for the school.

## **Environment**

### ***Premises***

All Fresh Start headteachers interviewed reported that there was a legacy of poor funding for premises. The headteacher of New Christchurch Primary referred to the premises as '*absolutely appalling*'. One of the first jobs undertaken is upgrading the premises (Orion Primary, Westmorland Primary). The headteacher at Walter Lane Primary School stated, '*The first job was to physically sort and clean the building*'. McLay's (interview 2004, appendix 7) findings reaffirmed this point, '*Many of the Fresh Start schools have been in boroughs of the more affluent areas and they haven't spent any money on the fabric but there was still plenty of money in the reserves*'. The physical environment of schools has been recognised as being important (Bennis and Townsend 1996, DfES 2001, Maden and Hillman 1996) but it remains a perennial problem of under investment in capital spending.



It was a similar story at the case study school. The headteacher recalled, *'Everything was grey here'*. Part of the new ethos was to transform the shabby premises hoping that an improved learning environment would help children feel valued. During the summer holiday prior to Fresh Start, every mainstream classroom was re-decorated. New carpets, white boards, blinds and furniture were purchased creating a new image. Initially there was some resistance to ploughing in valuable resources to transform the environment as the headteacher recalled, *'People thought everything would get trashed, just like the old days'*

Over the past five years the school has injected considerable resources into a continuous programme of upgrading the internal and external environment. This has a positive impact on the school community. An older pupil at the school remarked at a Harvest Festival service that governors attended (October 2004) that *'This school is so different to the way it use to be. It's all painted in bright colours and we've got all that equipment for gym over there. We never had anything like that before'*. The pupils are encouraged to take ownership of their surroundings and interestingly there has been no damage to property from pupils. Teacher retention has also been found to benefit from improved school buildings (Buckley, Schneider and Shang 2005). Work carried out in the local environment by pupils and staff has recently been recognised by external bodies with the school winning the Environmental Awards schools category, presented by David Bellamy (2004).

All Fresh Start Schools have benefited from substantial capital funding. The majority have received it direct from the government while some have benefited from PFIs resulting in two brand new schools (Nunsthorne Primary, Westmoreland Primary) while others have had major refurbishments transforming the environment (Childwell Valley Primary School). A common finding from all the headteachers interviewed was that funding for capital projects was not transparent. Successful sourcing was frequently dependent on a resourceful headteacher coupled with the level of expertise offered by their LEAs. However, there were also wide discrepancies between schools creating an inequitable and unsatisfactory situation for many headteachers. Arguably, this situation is further exacerbated with the introduction of *'Learning Networks'* promoting collaboration on school improvement projects between schools with substantial financial rewards.

### ***Behaviour***

High levels of anti-social behaviour have been a common finding by all sixteen Fresh Start primary school headteachers interviewed for this study and each school has introduced a new policy to suit the needs of the school. There was a general consensus of opinion reported by the Fresh Start headteachers interviewed that staff in the school prior to Fresh Start held low expectations of pupils both for behaviour and academic performance (Hopkins and Reynolds 2002, Leithwood and Steinbach 2002). Behaviour policy was a high priority for the new headteacher when Nunsthorne Primary went Fresh Start, as the headteacher recalled, *'I'd never seen any thing like it in 30 years of teaching. We*

*had children jumping on the roof, taunting staff. If we didn't get our behaviour right by Christmas we might as well pack up and go home. It involved the whole team. We introduced an isolation room with no furniture for pupils to rampage in which we no longer need. Now we have no graffiti or vandalism'. Tivedale Primary put a behaviour policy in place within three weeks as a high priority. As the headteacher explained, 'Six out of ten classes were out of control'. Parrington Primary introduced a 'zero tolerance' discipline policy while involving parents and introduced meticulous record keeping by the whole school.*

From the outset of Fresh Start, the headteacher at the case study school changed the structure of the EBD unit with 28 children on roll. Many of the children were transported to the school from other areas in the borough and the behaviour of the pupils in the unit dominated the ethos of the school. A few pupils in Year 5 and 6 remained at the school, some were placed in a new referral unit in the borough and the majority went back to schools in the boroughs where they lived. The headteacher recalled, *'It was an LEA initiative to reduce the unit and that was essential'*. It now caters for 7 pupils at KS1. A school wide 'zero tolerance' behaviour policy was introduced supported by a consistent approach from all staff resulting in an immediate impact on the school ethos. *'Putting procedures in place that are fair for the children was important as previous procedures were seen as unfair'*, the headteacher commented *'and we introduced different strategies and every different incident was recorded. Also every teacher*

*volunteers to do a lunchtime duty*'. The policy focuses on teachers and pupils sitting, listening and speaking in a calm manner. The headteacher remarked that, *'Staff stability is a crucial element for the improvement of behaviour in the school, as we all work in a similar way*'. Throughout the school, children are treated courteously and shouting is a thing of the past. The tone is set in the nursery and sustained throughout the school. As teacher (s) commented, *'the pupils are beginning to value education and each other. Much of this behaviour has developed from the co-operative learning strategies that have been put in place with the SFA literacy scheme and have transferred to other areas*'. Much research in the field of co-operative learning recognises SFA as an effective strategy for behaviour management and learning (Hopkins *et al.* 1998). One of the Traveller support team (a), who are employed at the school to support the Traveller children and their families felt that: *'The whole co-operative learning side has had an impact on getting the school turned around, especially on the behaviour. It's embedded in its success*' and the facilitator commented, *'You can see the knock on effect in all subject areas. The children are learning to respect each other*'. Margaret McLay (senior lecturer Manchester Metropolitan University) remarked when she visited the school in 2004, *'It feels just like a normal school*'.

Since the introduction of the new policy there have been a number of further improvements. A solution to reduce the number of behavioural incidents occurring during the lunch break was revealed by the headteacher, *'Most*

*incidents happened during the lunch break and to reduce those happening we reduced the lunch break*'. Whilst the immediate effect of this was to shorten the day, this has now been addressed by the introduction of the after-school club, which is in line with the government's *'Extended Schools'* (2002b) policy. The school has also introduced a 'Playground Pals' scheme whereby older children take some responsibility for younger children. This complements a structure already in place for the ability-based groupings of the SFA literacy scheme. There have been a few temporary exclusions and one permanent exclusion since the school went Fresh Start indicating the effectiveness of the new behaviour policy.

A decision to provide a free school uniform for all pupils has contributed towards an improved image, good behaviour, a sense of belonging and less visible inequality. The headteacher felt it had contributed towards the children feeling valued: *'Behaviour is better because the children feel good about themselves. There was a uniform before but people could not afford it. It helps everyone feel they belong to the school'*.

### ***Special Educational Needs***

Since 1998, EBD policy nationally has been focused on reducing numbers in mainstream schools. The impact of this, coupled with the LEA's strategy (2004), to reduce 'statemented' children by 50%, has had a positive effect on the current intake at the school. Although there is external pressure to expand, in terms of accepting children from other schools, this reduction is seen as an important

factor in managing and creating the right ethos in the school. 45% of pupils on the school roll are on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register (July 2005). This is a significant reduction from 68% when the school was put in Special Measures but considerably higher than the national school average of 26%. The figures for SEN pupils are significantly higher in Key Stage 2 (60.5%) than Key Stage 1 (13.5%) and reflects government policy since 1998. The SEN provision at the school is a coordinated effort from the Special Educational Needs coordinator and creative use of the Traveller Support team and support assistants. Generally, staff are not assigned to individual children but pooled as a resource, to benefit the whole school, particularly with SFA. A policy of total integration of SEN pupils has been the school's philosophy.

### ***School roll***

Historically, low, unstable school rolls have been a feature of several Fresh Start schools prior to their new status (Manor Oak Primary, New Christchurch, Tivedale Primary, Walter Lane Primary,) but currently (01.01.04) all have successfully stabilised their rolls and 50% have increased their roll by between 10% and 60%. The case study school has now reached its 5th anniversary and currently there are 127 pupils on the mainstream roll, 7 in the Nurture Group and 15 in the nursery (January 2005), an encouraging increase of 30% (mainstream) since the school went into Special Measures in 1998. A low roll has always been a concerning issue for the school's future viability. It changes almost weekly, reflecting particularly, the Travellers families' transient lifestyle. An indication of the high mobility is evident from the figures for 2003/2004

with 24 new children and 10 children leaving. However, with the school's improved reputation, coupled with the prospect of comparatively low house prices in this area and an expansion in the housing market, there seems to be a slight shift taking place in the school intake as a result of a small influx of young, professional couples moving into the area. The headteacher felt that more Travellers and other ethnic groups settling in the area might have a positive effect on mobility and parent involvement at the school (Governors meeting, 15/01/05). A local parent (s) attending the Community Wing classes supported this view, *'They've had a couple of major new housing schemes aimed at first time buyers or young families. We really have got a good mix here now'* Parental satisfaction of the school is high as OFSTED (2000b) reported, and very few children leaving to attend other schools. As the headteacher remarked, *'We haven't lost one child since Fresh Start, only Travellers, because they've off travelling'*.

### ***Attendance***

It is recognised that life chances are considerably reduced for pupils who consistently abstain from school. Michael Howard highlighted the truancy situation with his comments, *'Since 1997, truancy in the primary sector has risen by 15% and in the secondary sector by 22%'* (BBC Radio 4, 3/11/03). The DfES national average for attendance at primary schools for 2002/3 was 93.17% compared with 88% at the case study school. Authorised absences were 6.13% nationally compared with 9% at the case study school and unauthorised absences were 0.7% nationally compared with 3% at the case study school. With

figures well below the national average for attendance, this is another contributory factor reducing the life chances of many at the case study school (DfES 2003g).

Recent changes in the law relating to the prosecution of parents whose children constantly 'bunk-off' school, highlighted by the re-imprisonment of Patricia Amos (BBC 1 News, 12/03/2004) demonstrates the government's determination to penalise the adults responsible. Poor attendance is an issue for many Fresh Start schools to varying degrees. At the case study school, Travellers have a history of poor attendance due to extensive travelling for work or holidays. The Traveller support staff (a) outlined one of the strategies used locally, *'We do have certain fairground children that come through the borough and they have long distance learning packs they bring from their winter based schools and we have a teacher that goes up onto the sites where they are, and maybe adds to the pack or marks what they are doing. We're in a contact book so that members of the fairground families contact the team'*. However, this system relies on good tracking procedures, which inevitably are difficult to administer and therefore children will continue to be absent from school.

### ***Inclusive policy***

The school has a fully inclusive policy and was recently filmed for *'The Primary Strategy'* website as an example of good practice. All children are fully incorporated into the school. The Traveller Support Team of two, supplied by the Traveller Education Service (TES) have specific expertise and give Traveller



children additional help at school. They also support families with visits to their homes particularly when there are educational problems. Bhopal (2004) highlights similar examples of positive good practice by the TES involving and empowering parents. The TES have been established in the school for over ten years and have developed links with the Traveller families acting as mediators between the families and the school. The team are fully deployed throughout the school particularly in the teaching of literacy. As teacher (a) pointed out, *'Before we were teaching one to one or doing group withdrawal work and we weren't making enough progress. Now we are both taking a group for SFA and supporting all the Travellers across the whole school. This way we've helped to reduce the size of the teaching groups. We are basically providing the school with two extra teachers for SFA'*. This strategy adopted by the headteacher effectively incorporates several key management issues. She revealed that some Traveller families prefer not to admit their identity, which ironically results in a reduction of funding and consequently overall support for Traveller children. However, the canny strategy of deploying the Traveller teachers throughout the school for SFA recognises differing needs but operates on a level of meaningful inclusion while reducing class size but maintaining costs and contributing to school improvement.

### ***Nursery***

Nursery places have been offered in several Fresh Start schools (Childwell Valley, Goose Green Primary, Nunsthorpe Primary, Orchard Fields Primary, Richard Heathcote Community Primary). New Labour's aim was *'a comprehensive and integrated approach to pre-school education and childcare'*

DfEE 1997:16). Nurseries are seen as an important early intervention strategy for tackling childhood deprivation and many educationalists have argued that quality provision should be made universally available, regardless of financial circumstances. Despite New Labour's commitment to a national provision of nursery places there has been a decline in the number of maintained nursery schools and availability throughout the UK has been inequitable. Moss and Penn (1996) point out that early childhood services have been fragmented, incoherent inequitable and under-resourced. The case study school's decision to offer nursery places to all three year olds was seen as a vital element of their strategy to benefit the children in the catchment area including the Travellers, who historically had not always sent their children to school even in Reception. Despite recognition that nursery provision is an essential element to the case study school's overall vision (OFSTED 2002b), a controversy over insufficient funding from the LEA developed. This became a major issue for the school during the first three years, but has recently been resolved after constant pressure from the school has resulted in the funding being maintained. *'The children in the Nursery and Reception get a very good start to their education, because provision for them is very good especially in the Nursery'* (OFSTED: *ibid*: 4). Parent (t) reinforces OFSTED's findings, *'I like the set up in the nursery. The teaching is far superior to any other nursery in the area. There's lots of structure and they need it at that age'*. Parent (g) held a similar view and highlighted other benefits, *'I think it's important that they are introduced to the school at that age. They know who they are moving up with and they know their way around the school'*. SFA has been introduced in the

nursery, with early monitoring and collaborative learning strategies being put in place at the outset, allowing remedial work to be initiated if necessary, at a very early stage. As one of the nursery teachers interviewed commented, *'We are really seeing a difference between those children who have been in the nursery and those who haven't by the time they get to reception in terms of achievement and social skills'*.

### ***Other Partnerships***

The school is further strengthened by the partnerships formed with various other agencies. A formal link with the police has been developed, bringing a local policeman into the school on a fortnightly basis to hold a 'police surgery'. Preventing crime and reducing fear of crime are closely related to community regeneration. A heightened presence in this form using education, counselling and persuasion is an attempt to improve local community standards and civil behaviour (Giddens 1998). An arrangement has also been set up with Age Concern named 'Our Bank' based on the notion of input by senior citizens coming into the school to help, which is later reciprocated with an invitation to an event at the school. This provides opportunities for the children benefiting from a wealth of knowledge and often providing a relationship with the next generation that many of the children have not experienced, while giving a real opportunity of involvement and value for the senior citizens. Links with the Probation Service have provided an opportunity for young offenders to make a real contribution in the community while making a substantial improvement to the school grounds.

### *Summary*

This chapter outlines important conditions and processes that led to the initial transformation of a failing school. It includes a description of the context, and perceptions from key people highlighting many aspects leading to systemic change and school improvement. It illustrates how the key players, their approach and Fresh Start policy can combine to change embedded cultures and bring about improvement on many levels. Fresh Start requires commitment, vision and entrepreneurial leadership to initiate and steer change that suits the users needs and leads to improvement. The case study model emphasises that this has been achieved by fostering a collaborative culture involving internal and external support from staff, the LEA, HMI and the DfES and the wider community, who over the transformation period have been committed to the change. Underpinning this model has been continuous additional funding over the five-year period. The following three chapters examine the key initiatives that were used to bring about school improvement in the case study school.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE CASE STUDY**

### **PART TWO: The role of 'Breakfast Clubs' in Fresh Start Schools**

#### ***Introduction***

Breakfast clubs were introduced to schools in disadvantaged areas in the United States of America in 1975 and in Britain in 1999 as a measure for raising standards and increasing school effectiveness. According to Kennedy and Davis (1998) and Street and Kenway (1999), this initiative has been successful in improving overall attendance, punctuality, concentration, social cohesion and interaction amongst pupils, more frequent parent and teacher dialogue, a calmer start to the day and fewer incidents of disruptive behaviour. Many of these issues were priorities for improvement in Fresh Start schools. Breakfast clubs have been introduced in seventy-five per cent of Fresh Start Primary Schools since 2000 as part of their overall school improvement plan. In Britain, research on breakfast clubs is still limited. Simpson's (2001) quantitative study supports much of the earlier work in the USA (Kennedy and Davis 1998) and the UK (Street and Kenway 1999), while emphasising the importance of good planning and management for successful outcomes. Shemilt et al. (2004) report on the nutritional benefits and changes in eating habits as a result of the provision of fruit for breakfast. Waddington, Rees and Frost (2003) expand on Shemilt et al. (2004) findings stressing the importance of a balanced nutritional school breakfast for improved performance. This case study attempts to expand on these findings by identifying a range of significant factors that have made a positive contribution

towards school improvement through the introduction of breakfast clubs and may be applied to schools in similar circumstances.

This chapter outlines key issues that breakfast clubs have improved. It examines recent research on the breakfast club initiative from the USA and the UK. The objectives of the breakfast club at the case study school are outlined followed by a commentary based on an observation and survey of the breakfast club in action. The tools for analysis comprise the categories outlined in chapter one including leadership, creating a positive school culture, attendance and punctuality impacting on teaching and learning, developing a learning community, continuous professional development, creating an information-rich environment, involving parents, external support and resources, and sustaining improvement which have been identified as being particularly relevant for improving schools in low socio-economic areas (Muijs *et al.* 2004, Potter *et al.* 2002). The analysis also includes consideration of the case study school's stated objectives and further issues that have emerged during the research which have been recognised as having a positive impact on school improvement in other schools and could be applied in due course in the case study school. The chapter concludes with a summary and recommendations.

### ***Key improvement issues***

The breakfast club comprises four key dimensions:

- Providing food, which has an impact of children's learning and performance;

- Social interaction providing a forum for children, their parents and staff;
- Building a better relationship between home and school through encouraging interaction by head teachers and parents in an informal setting;
- Overcoming lateness to school and poor attendance by improving punctuality.

### ***The School Breakfast Programme in the USA***

The potential role of breakfast in helping children perform at a higher capacity in the classroom was first documented more than 30 years ago at the University of Iowa Medical College. Researchers found that children who missed breakfast had trouble concentrating at school and became inattentive by late morning. Behaviour problems were linked to low blood sugar levels, which had not been replenished by a morning meal allowing fatigue and restlessness to develop (Kid Source 2001). These findings confirm the hypothesis that children who go to school hungry cannot perform to their best ability. To address this problem the USA Congress enacted the School Breakfast Programme (SBP) as part of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. A pilot programme was established in 1966 in areas where children had a long bus ride to school and in areas where many mothers were in the workforce, then as a permanent entitlement programme in 1975 to assist schools in providing nutritious morning meals to the nation's children. Breakfast clubs are currently operating in public and private schools throughout the USA (Kid Source 2001). On a typical day during the 2002/3 school year, 8.2 million children in more than 76,000 schools and institutions participated in the SBP. Of those, 6.7 million received their meals free (costing \$1.20 each) or at a

reduced-price. For the fiscal year 2003, Congress appropriated \$1.68 billion for the SBP, a significant amount of funding to support nationwide coverage of the scheme (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003).

The SBP operates in the same manner as the National School Lunch Programme. Schools that choose to take part in the breakfast programme receive cash subsidies from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve breakfasts that meet Federal nutritional requirements and offer free or reduced price breakfasts to eligible children. Local school food authorities make the decision about what specific food to serve and how it is prepared. The SBP is seen as a '*smart start*' to the school day without any social stigma. According to Melinda Turner, president of the American School Food Service Association '*The SBP provides essential nourishment for students who might not otherwise eat breakfast*' The nation's school nutrition professionals encourage children to '*Get Up For School Breakfast*'. She also acknowledges that '*Busy parents need to know that their children can receive nutritious, tasty meals at school each morning*' (Kid Source 2001).

Similarly research carried out in a series of studies by Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School document the negative effects of hunger in U.S. children and show a link between participating in the national SBP and improved academic performance and psychosocial behaviour in children. The American School Food Service Association, the American Dietetic Association,



National Dairy Council, Kellogg Company and Harvard researchers in 1998 expanded upon previous data showing improved mathematics scores and attendance among children who eat a nutritionally balanced breakfast. Furthermore these studies also concluded that students who eat school breakfast increase their reading scores as well as improve their speed and memory in cognitive tests (Food Research and Action Centre 1998). Research also shows that children who eat breakfast at school closer to class and test-taking time perform better on standardised tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home (Food Research and Action Centre 1998). These findings were strengthened by results of another study carried out by the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School that confirmed a relationship existed between increased participation in the school breakfast programme and improvements in academic and psychosocial success. Furthermore, Murphy et al. (1998) highlighted a link with participation and significantly fewer behavioural and emotional problems. Another issue raising concern on both sides of the Atlantic involves breakfast club personnel. A pilot study carried out in Minnesota found that teachers are important supporters in implementing a successful School Breakfast Programme. Teachers are not only educators but also role models for the students during the SBP. They also found that it opens up curriculum opportunities by integrating school breakfast and nutrition education into their curriculum in home economics, health education, and physical education (Murphy et al. 1998)

Some of the larger research projects carried out in the USA have involved medical, educational and commercial contributions, which might raise questions about their legitimacy. However, research in the UK, although less extensive, supports many of the findings of USA studies.

### ***The School Breakfast Programme in the UK***

Thirty years later, in spring 1999, the UK Department of Health (DH) announced a national multi-agency pilot initiative to promote the development of school breakfast clubs across England. The main aims of the initiative were:

- To provide breakfast for children who might otherwise start the school day without having eaten;
- To establish a positive relationship at the start of the school day, improving attitude, behaviour and motivation to learn and helping to reduce lateness and poor attendance;
- To offer healthy eating choices, providing the opportunity for children to sample and hopefully develop preferences for healthy options.

Research has shown that 20% of British school children leave home in the morning without anything to eat (UK Consumption Study 2000) (Marshall 2003). But, for as little as 35p per day per child, breakfast clubs can provide pupils with an effective nutritional start to the day (2003). Policy options to improve the dietary health of children are wide ranging as MacLeod and Nelson (2000) indicate with feeding children directly at school being one option.

The breakfast club initiative stands at the intersection of key developments in public policy, not least the childcare revolution, the rise of out-of-hours school learning, and the government's agenda for social inclusion. The introduction of breakfast clubs is very much in line with the government's educational policy announced in the '*Extended Schools*' initiative in 2002. An extended school is one that provides a range of activities and services often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. Breakfast clubs fall into the sort of provision that government policy envisaged and according to a number of schools offering this service they have already seen major benefits for pupils, families and communities and cited as models of good practice (Donovan and Street 1999). These include higher levels of pupil achievement, improvements in child behaviour and social skills, better supervision of children outside school hours, enhanced partnership, working with the community and a closer relationship with the school for everyone involved. Although the management of out-of-school learning as a whole is seen as generally under-developed (OFSTED 2002b).

Whilst there has been a significant amount of research in the USA about breakfast clubs and issues relating to improving school performance, there is little by comparison in the UK, but more research is beginning to emerge as breakfast clubs are spreading throughout the compulsory education sector. Breakfast clubs have been introduced both in the UK and in the USA, in schools with challenging circumstances, comprising of a high proportion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds where major issues are health, welfare,

attendance and punctuality. This form of out-of-school provision can be a key means of helping children, make a success of nursery and primary school as recognised by Wyon, Abrahamsson, Jartelius, and Fletcher (1997), '*Evidence is increasing to support the view that children who eat breakfast concentrate and perform better at school*'. In areas of high social need, breakfast clubs also provide much-needed childcare for parents who work by supporting the social needs of young people and their families. They can play a useful role in school and local strategies tackling social inclusion, health inequalities and community regeneration.

In England, an extensive study, '*Improving Breakfast Clubs: Lessons From The Best*' carried out by Harrop and Palmer (2002) analysed the impact on the pupils, staff and parents of thirty-three UK school breakfast clubs. Seventy-five per cent of the schools reported that breakfast clubs had a positive effect on attendance and punctuality whilst reducing truancy and bad behaviour. Eighty per cent said children concentrated better during morning lessons after attending the club because they were more settled, attentive and motivated to learn. A third of the parents reported that childcare provision was the most important benefit of their child's breakfast club because it provided them with safe facilities when they had to leave home early in the morning (Street and Kenway 1999). Although there are many positive effects from the introduction of supplementary, institutionalised, mealtimes in schools, Hymowitz (2001) highlights the negative impact this can have in some circumstances, on family time.

Some breakfast clubs across the UK have developed innovative twists to the concept. St Edmund's School in King's Lynn actively encourages family participation in their club, rather than it being a substitute for a family breakfast, which has led to greater links and bonds between families and parents, as well as pupils. Other schools have discussion groups over breakfast based around the morning papers, while the Channel High School in Folkestone operates a book-swapping scheme in which pupils exchange favourite books and discover new authors.

Extended or full-service schools have developed significantly over the last 20 years particularly in the USA (NFER 2002). The idea of extended schooling has its immediate roots in the development of *full-service schooling* initiatives in the United States. The establishment of the *new community school* initiative in Scotland (DfEE 1999c) was the first major implementation of the approach in the UK. The underlying premise of extended schools is commonly understood to be one of partnership. USA literature appears to emphasise stronger partnerships between health, particularly mental health, and education providers although Dryfoos (1998) and Dryfoos and Maguire (2002) point out that only a few schools have come close to the original full-service model involving quality education and support services. The UK literature suggests that extended schools seek to provide a range of services as an augmentation of their traditional educational role, with less emphasis on a partnership arrangement envisaged in the full-service school although many schools were working towards this (Cummings, Todd, and Dyson 2004). They also concluded that

most projects built upon previous work in this field and continued their work, using other sources of funding, when the formal funding arrangements ceased (Cummings *et al.* 2004). The findings from the case study would certainly support this view.

Despite the introduction of recent policy initiatives structured on evidence based practice (National Healthy Schools Standard 1999, Excellence in Schools 1997, The Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health 1998) Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation 1999, Schools Achieving Success 2001 and Sure Start 2003) that have been put in place as part of the government's drive to reduce health inequalities, promote social inclusion and raise educational standards there still remains the question of a parallel policy to be initiated to support universal, transparent and equitable funding of these schemes. This would help alleviate the current situation of uncertainty and inequality, resulting from the current 'ad hoc' bidding process that seeks funding from various sources and ensure a more equitable distribution of benefits nationwide. Funding issues are highlighted in the case study school.

The Schools Minister David Miliband (2003) outlined many sources of funding for breakfast clubs through '*the Standards Fund grant ... the National Healthy Schools Standard, the New Opportunities Fund, voluntary organisations and commercial sponsorship*' [and] '*in disadvantaged areas, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal funding*' [alternatively] '*schools can also fund breakfast*

*clubs from their own budget*' (Education Parliamentary Monitor 30 June 2003: 6). This piecemeal funding creates an inequitable minefield and illustrates a lack of clarity regarding government policy on breakfast clubs.

Charities working in the field of extended education are voicing their concerns about funding issues in out-of-school clubs, which includes breakfast clubs. Kids Club Network reported that the current expansion of out-of-school clubs would meet only 60% of demand, and pointed to a problem of sustainability in disadvantaged areas (GLA 2003). In December 2002, the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills agreed new national targets for:

- All schools with 20%+ free school meal eligibility (approximately 7000 schools) to achieve National Healthy School Standard level three status by 2006;
- All schools in England to continue to be provided with the opportunity to access the services of a nationally accredited local healthy schools programme 2003-2006 (DfES and Department of Health 2003)

They also recognised that the present strategy to implement breakfast clubs throughout the UK is rather piecemeal. Unlike the USA where a pilot study initiated in 1998 in Maryland, and later extended to ninety schools in several districts including Maryland, Minnesota and Massachusetts where a 'free universal breakfast' was offered to everyone as part of the school day regardless of income. Until a nationwide policy is introduced in the UK it may not be

possible to fully assess the benefits of improved nutrition and academic achievement.

Another potential avenue for development is the 'business in the community partnership' model that is working already in the UK. The 'Greggs Breakfast Club' programme provides a free breakfast for primary school children in areas of particular social disadvantage although there may be concerns about the nutritional content. There are currently 62 clubs across the UK. Primary schools that fit the programme's key criteria of clear social need and a commitment to improvement are supported in establishing a pre-school breakfast club open to all pupils. It claims to provide a simple but nutritious breakfast entirely free of charge in a safe, fun environment. The model is built on a partnership between Greggs, who fund the equipment and foodstuffs, and volunteers from the school community who prepare and serve the meal. Schools build on the basic model by adding other activities such as reading, games and music during the pre-school time. The most critical element of this model is the involvement of the community volunteers. This keep the clubs' running costs at a sustainable level and benefits the school, society and the volunteers (Greggs 2004). This model has far wider implications for increasing communities' social capital within the context of schools extending lifelong learning opportunities (Schuller *et al.* 2000).

One of the leading educational charities in the UK 'ContinYou' is currently working with a network of over 11,000 schools, to develop the breakfast culture in schools through a national Breakfast Club Award scheme, funded by



Kellogg's, which has granted £165K to clubs from 1999-2001. Breakfast Club Plus, a UK-wide Breakfast Club Network for schools and communities launched in early 2004 will incorporate:

- An interactive 'Breakfast Club Website';
- Regional 'Breakfast Club Seminars';
- Professional Development for those delivering breakfast clubs;
- Development of a 'Nutritional Standard';
- A comprehensive, regularly updated, funding guide;
- Monitoring and evaluation tools for measuring impact (ContinYou 2003).

It is currently compiling a comprehensive funding guide to support breakfast club development, aimed at raising awareness and improving the present inequitable situation.

The health and education issues highlighted in this chapter with research carried out in the USA and the UK are particularly pertinent for many Fresh Start schools school improvement programmes. A nationally funded, breakfast club policy, including some of the current initiatives would help improve educational performance, particularly in low socio-economic areas.

### ***The Breakfast club at the case study school***

The OFSTED report (2000a) 'Improving City Schools' focuses on schools that are severely disadvantaged and reports 'Neither good behaviour nor good

attendance is easily won'. It is not surprising to find 75% of Fresh Start Primary Schools have introduced Breakfast Clubs as a vehicle for school improvement, as substantial evidence from previous studies has shown strong links between a healthy diet and children's school performance, social skills, self-esteem and behaviour.

The breakfast club at the case study school was introduced in 1999 just prior to the school going Fresh Start as a vehicle to tackle:

- Punctuality;
- Truancy;
- Poor nutrition.

The staff felt that the pupils' poor school performance had been adversely affected by the above and needed positive compensatory action to change both the parents and pupils' behaviour patterns. Typically the children arrived late for school or skipped school or came to school without breakfast. A breakfast club was seen as a solution to improve all three issues. The following description of the survey and one of the visits set the scene and amplifies the contextual evidence.

### *Survey*

The aim of this survey was to establish why some children did not attend the breakfast club. It provided an opportunity of gathering more incidental, anecdotal data, including conversations between parents about the breakfast club that strengthened the robustness of my research. All the parents surveyed were female. The only male who was approached did not respond due to work

pressures. The survey was carried out on November 10<sup>th</sup> in the school playground between 08.30 and 09.15. I targeted all the parents entering the school via the pupils' entrance. 50% of the sample had children who used the breakfast club, which reflects the percentage on the school roll that attend. The remaining parents surveyed had children who did not use the breakfast club, primarily for the following reasons:

- *'wanted to give them breakfast at home'*
- *'felt their children were too young'*
- *'don't eat breakfast'*
- *'had other siblings to consider'*
- *'it started too early'*

Only one parent revealed that she had a problem with her child eating. Her previous child, who had moved to senior school in September, attended the breakfast club and enjoyed the experience. However, her second child would not eat breakfast at home or at school.

All the respondents were positive about the club and recognised the benefits as:

- *'getting them in school'*
- *'playing with their mates'*
- *'having a good breakfast'*

Two grandmothers have been bringing their grandchildren to the breakfast club since it started *'They love it'*, they said. Another parent revealed that she had two children of six and eight years and they, *'Take themselves in for breakfast. They*

*ask me on Saturdays, "Can we go to breakfast club?" and I have to say "No it's Saturday!"*' The majority of the parents whose children did not attend the breakfast club said that they preferred to give them breakfast at home as they didn't have to get up so early.

### ***Breakfast Club Visit at the Case Study School 14/10/03***

The following commentary represents a typical morning at the case study school. This report is based on an observation and data gathered from an interview with the school cook during the visit.

It's an early start in the morning for one of the key people at the case study school School. The school cook ensures that Breakfast club happens every day for the children at the school. She leaves home, with three teenagers getting ready for school, most mornings by 7.30 in a taxi, provided by the catering company, Sodexo, for her short journey to the school, making sure that everything is in place in the kitchen before the children arrive at 8.30. She is conscientious, committed and a vital part of a small team that provides breakfast for the children. The headteacher is another key figure in the main hall mingling with the children and parents who along with a support assistant (b) arrives every morning ready for an 8.30am start to help with serving, clearing and chatting to the children and parents. They both have been helping in that capacity for four years.

This October morning about sixty children are making their way to the school in good time for the start of breakfast club. At 08.30 the doors open and the children enter the hall, some accompanied by parents and queue orderly by the servery. There are two choices on offer today and every day. The cook prepares about forty-five hot and fifteen cold breakfasts every day. Each child carries polystyrene, disposable plate filled with a choice of “hot” consisting of sausage, hash brown and spaghetti hoops, or “cold” which is a popular cereal and milk. Apple or orange juice is also provided. All the children sit at long, trestle tables before eating. Two members of staff and some parents help carry plates to the tables, encouraging the children to eat and actually feeding those that show little interest in eating. It would appear that the children sit wherever there is a space at the tables.

Parents stand or sit near their children while others chat amongst themselves. There are several pushchairs with younger siblings parked close by. It feels very sociable. In no time the children are eating or being fed and chatting amongst themselves, with parents or to staff. Then suddenly the buzz is over. The children go into the playground while parents mingle in the hall for a few more minutes. They continue chatting in the playground before the bell rings at 08.55 when everyone goes about the rest of their daily routine.

On the above visit there were fifty-seven children attending and receiving a free breakfast. Uptake varies depending on illness or punctuality but generally there

are between fifty and sixty children attending daily, representing between 50% and 60% of the school roll (December 2003). Several families have been attending on a daily basis since the club began four years ago.

### ***Leadership and management of the breakfast club***

The breakfast club at the case study school was introduced by the headteacher after consultation with the staff and the governing body who were fully supportive of this initiative. Evidence from research supports the notion of leaders of schools in low socio-economic areas as being initiators, who have a strong vision of the school's expectations and how these can be achieved in practice (Castello *et al.* 2002, Teddlie and Stringfield 1993). In the case study school, the headteacher's strong vision of the initial idea has been complemented by her ability to apply herself with the practical 'hands on' day-to-day management every morning, supporting the findings relating to good management (Simpson 2001). This practice also illustrates to other staff her ability to be 'a learner' herself (Stoll 2001). The headteacher and classroom assistant (m) have been the main supervisors of the breakfast club for the past six years, providing continuity and consistency for the pupils attending. These two members of staff share the bulk of the work, both contributing approximately one hundred minutes each week. The majority of the staff 64% are not involved with the breakfast club, 22% are occasionally involved and 14% are fully involved. Providing a supervisory role at the breakfast club has been a means for improved accessibility and contact for the headteacher, staff, parents and children on a regular, informal basis. Improving

communication between leadership and management and other stakeholders has been shown to make a positive contribution to school improvement (Coleman 1998).

Evidence of a collaborative, distributed leadership style has been found to be related to effectiveness in schools in challenging circumstances (Harris and Chapman 2001) and was also evident in the case study school with the recent introduction of a book club. A Traveller support staff member (m) approached the headteacher to start a book club within the breakfast club to improve literacy and inclusion of Traveller children. Research evidence highlights the importance of good links between the Traveller Education Service (TES) and schools from the parents perspective, they viewed the TES as the *'single most important link for ensuring Gypsy Traveller families' ... to engage with the educational system and for educational institutions to understand the needs of Gypsy Travellers'* (Bhopal 2004: 57). The headteacher provided an enabling climate for this initiative to succeed while allowing the teacher concerned to take full responsibility recognising the impact that the TES contributes towards inclusion. Consequently the routine outlined in the visit carried out on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2003, changes once a week when the Traveller Support teacher (m) voluntarily runs a book club as she explained *'It was mainly a way of the children being able to afford to have books at home. I sell them for 20p maximum and that goes into the school funds'*. The book club also provided the framework to make contact with parents, as teacher (m) commented, *'I see a lot of the parents*

*there*’ The benefit of this enterprise was acknowledged by parent (c), *‘My kids absolutely love it. They come home with handfuls of books. It’s great because it gives the kids a chance to take books home. If you go into the houses round here, a lot of the kids have one book if you’re lucky, partly because there’s a lot of low literacy’*.

An issue for improvement that became evident on two further visits to the club was the initial disorder caused by parents and children desperate to get across the hall to the front of the queue as soon as the doors opened for breakfast. The assistant (m) suggested that *‘Putting a staff member on the door first thing when there is a rush of people would help ease this problem’*. This issue remains to be resolved so that there is a more orderly start to the day.

### ***Governing Body***

Although the governing body was involved in the financial feasibility of the breakfast club, there has been little governor participation since its inception, except in an observational capacity. Governor (a) pointed out, *‘The Chair had involvement at the outset, writing letters and approaching people and we’ve visited the breakfast club but we haven’t actually get ourselves involved in helping to find funding’*. The governing body have continued to support the concept by recommending that the breakfast club continues but there has been no evidence of the kind of collaborative strategies that can contribute to improving the climate by direct involvement of governors and parents. Hopkins et al. (1998)



research emphasises the benefits in fostering collaborative strategies within the school and with the local community.

The head teacher has provided information about the breakfast club to the governing body. Bird (2002) and OFSTED (2002) suggest that governors need to become more informed about the day-to-day running of their schools and rely less on the headteacher as a sole source of information, in order to make a more effective contribution to monitoring and evaluation. There clearly is a need for the governing body at the case study school to become more effective by increased monitoring and evaluation strategies in line with the recommendations by Bird (2002) and OFSTED (2002). The governors' role as a 'critical friend' has been noted in terms of providing high pressure with high support (DFE/BIS/OFSTED 1995) but this role is strengthened by independent judgement. Governor visits to schools, if handled responsibly, contribute to an increased understanding of what their school is trying to achieve, an improved relationship with staff and an opportunity to know where improvements are needed.

### *External Support*

To date, there has been little external support by the LEA, the DfES or indeed collaboration of any substance from governors or parents for the breakfast club, nor has the school sought any. Fullan (1991) and Hopkins and Reynolds (2002) emphasise the benefits that external support can bring by creating larger professional communities. 'School Clusters' that disseminate good practice

amongst each other are an example of this type of model. The case study school became part of an 'Excellence Cluster' in May 2004 which should create a good network for sharing and generating ideas amongst four schools in the area. Furthermore the school has recently (December 2004) become part of a national pilot (*The Collegiate Learning Network*) that involves promoting good practice across both sectors with opportunities to share experiences of different types of breakfast clubs which may be a catalyst for change that Fullan (1991) writes about.

### ***Resources***

Proper resourcing has been shown to be essential if school improvement is to succeed (Reynolds *et al.* 2001). The headteacher and the governing body decided that some of the Fresh Start funding would be used to implement a breakfast club. There was a small contribution of funding from a local business at the outset but in the main it has been funded from Fresh Start money at a cost to the school of £3000 per term. The headteacher remarked, *'Initially funding of 2K came from the Health Standards Fund and this was a big breakthrough as there was little consultation with outside bodies, which helped make the process of setting it up expedient, but since April 2000 we've been self-financing. It comes from our Fresh Start budget. So we'll be in trouble when that runs out'*. 93% of the staff felt the funding for the breakfast was *'money well spent'*.

The provision of a free breakfast was chosen on the basis of the current levels of socio-economic deprivation in the school indicated by 87% free school meals. This approach is in line with policy regarding the provision of free breakfasts in the USA implemented on a far larger scale than in the UK (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003). Successful pressure on the government by the celebrity chef, Jamie Oliver has successfully increased spending on school meals whilst raising the nations awareness of good nutrition (The Times 30/03/05). Despite some authorities providing funding for breakfasts, the situation in the case study school is more precarious. The prime source came from Fresh Start funding and discontinued in 2004 but is currently under review by the governing body. The government has failed to provide the necessary resources to sustain the viability of breakfast clubs that benefit those most in need. By contrast the USA, provides an annual budget for the provision of free breakfasts (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003).

The question of purchasing breakfast was explored with parents in the questionnaire. It is current practice in several Fresh Start schools where a nominal charge is made (Orion Primary, Parrington Primary). The question of future funding at the case study school was raised and mixed views were expressed. Many responded positively while recognising their own constraints like parent (n) *'Well I'm a single parent and the money is tight. But I think I would still send them if I had to contribute'* while parent (c) commented, *'Yes I would pay for it. I can't believe it's free'*. Results from the questionnaires indicated 72% would send their children to the breakfast club if they had to

make a financial contribution while 28% said they would not. It is not known whether the latter figure represents the poorest parents, as parental income levels are not part of this study.

Surprisingly the current costs for a hot breakfast consisting of hash brownies, spaghetti hoops and a sausage is 55p and a cold breakfast of cereal and milk is 62p. Alternative avenues of funding are currently being explored for the continuation of this initiative, as it has clearly been beneficial in more ways than envisaged at the outset. Clearly parental contribution may become the only solution however problematic this may be. Extra resources from The Childrens' Fund (September 2004) have provided a Children's Fund project worker and mental health worker who use the breakfast club once a week as a venue to support the school.

### ***Attendance and punctuality impacting on teaching and learning***

The breakfast club has transformed levels of punctuality particularly for approximately 60% of the school roll that are currently attending, mainly because the breakfast club starts at 08.30 and finishes at 08.45, fifteen minutes before school officially starts. OFSTED stated: *'The successful breakfast club has the additional benefit of encouraging children to come to school before lessons start'* OFSTED (2002b: 17). A majority of the parents, 72% felt that the breakfast club was responsible for good punctuality at the school, while 28% felt that it had not affected their timekeeping. Several parents reported a similar story as parent (s)

commented *'I'm not late any more because I bring the kids to breakfast club even though I have to get up even earlier to get her here'*. 93% of the staff felt that punctuality had improved as a result of the breakfast club. The findings at the case study school support other key findings (Donovan and Street 1999, Harrop and Palmer 2002) that attending a breakfast club improves school punctuality and coincidentally improves attendance and performance.

Poor school attendance linked to poor performance has been well documented (Bhopal 2004, OFSTED 1996, Save The Children 2001). Some Fresh Start schools have implemented breakfast clubs as a vehicle to tackle attendance (Manor Oak, Orion Primary, Parringdon Primary) felt they had benefited from improved punctuality as a result. Nunsthorpe Primary introduced a club but it failed to address their problems due to poor attendance. The headteacher reported they *'tackled their problem by phoning home on the first day of non-attendance and knocking on doors'*.

Attendance has been a problem at the case study school both before and after Fresh Start status. The headteacher commented that *'Attendance was a real problem as was lateness, it was very disruptive'*. 100% of the staff felt that an improvement in attendance has been successful in part due to the implementation of the breakfast club. This is partly due to approximately 40% of the school roll having a Traveller background and having an itinerant lifestyle. For some families it involves moving away from their site and the 'catchment area' to visit relatives

for an extended period while others take their children off school for inessential tasks. Although there is evidence that some families have been housed on the permanent site adjacent to the school for as long as 34 years, and reported changes in their inherent itinerant lifestyle (Governor (a) 20/01/05). Bhopal's (2004: 48) research highlights the issue of '*marginalisation felt by Gypsy Travellers from the non-Traveller community*'. This was contrary to OFSTED's findings at the case study school, '*Teachers positive acceptance of the diversity of Travellers' culture adds significantly to the pupils' ease. Travellers' children are well integrated in the school life*' (OFSTED 2000b). The report also recognised the Traveller Service staff for their achievement in influencing the families to continue with their children's education at secondary level, illustrating an absence of marginalisation and evidence of good practice. The survey for parents and carers (OFSTED 2000b) indicated an 85% response in support of '*feeling comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem*', again reflecting an absence of marginalisation.

Although overall school attendance is still below the national average, it is improving with a set target of 93% and remains a high priority for school improvement (Governors meeting 20/01/05). The head teacher commented, '*The average score shows a false picture as we have many Travellers on roll who go away for long periods. There are still a few children who are persistent poor attenders*'. The deputy head commented with reference to pupil progress, '*Attendance, that's a big issue. Particularly with some of our Travelling children*

*who are often in houses now, living locally but it's still part of the culture to have a day off here maybe to buy some new shoes, rather than do that on a Saturday. For those children if they miss a day or two every week, yes they are consistently failing'. OFSTED recognised the school's efforts to tackle attendance, 'The very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are strictly enforced and are making parents think twice before taking their child out of school for reasons that cannot be authorised' (OFSTED 2002b: 16).*

The headteacher has put clear procedures and monitoring in place as she explained, 'I liaise fortnightly with the EWO. She makes visits, sends letters, arranges meetings etc. The office makes telephone contact but this is often difficult as lines are disconnected and mobile numbers change frequently. We have an awards assembly every term when children are given an award and a certificate if they meet our attendance target of 93%. Last term, from September to December 2004, 15 children had 100% attendance, 45 had over 95% and 11 had over 93%'. The headteacher recognises that the school has exhausted its efforts and has now adopted a different strategy to improve attendance, 'Rather than raising the attendance target, we are now aiming to increase the number of pupils achieving the target'.

In 1998, Home Office Minister, Paul Boateng said: 'Bunking off school is not acceptable' (Boateng 1998), and as part of government's measures to stop truancy and petty crime, they have strengthened the power of the police to 'pick up'

children on the streets which is a current problem for disillusioned youth in the catchment area of the school. In the light of children (16-19) extending their education it seems particularly relevant to set the right pattern of school attendance at an early age. The Traveller support staff (m) also commented that: *'This borough is known as having a high proportion of housed Travellers. The children still remember their grand parents, aunts and uncles going travelling. Some of them would like to travel and still have caravans, trailers in the garden but it's increasingly difficult for them to move around due to all the legislation'*.

A general feeling of malaise was acknowledged by several parents and may contribute towards poor attendance and performance, as parent (c) mentioned *'I think that ties in to the apathy. Even to get up and go round the corner for some people is too much trouble'* and parent (t) revealed that she's heard some parents say, *"I can't be bothered to take Jonnie to school this morning. I think I'll have an extra half hour in bed"*. Children who are exposed to this sort of apathy could benefit from attending a breakfast club with all its associated gains (Murphy *et al.* 1998).

### ***Nutrition impacting on teaching and learning***

Although there is worldwide concern about the increasing rise of obesity in childhood at the case study school there was clear evidence that many children were coming to school on an empty stomach. The Poverty and Social Exclusion (2000) survey, the largest study of poverty carried out in the UK, found that 21%



failed to have two substantive meals daily. Initially the headteacher's aim was *'to get food in childrens' stomachs... we didn't seek any advice, we didn't speak to dieticians or anybody'*. It would appear from many of the supporting comments that this decision was well founded. Staff reported that *'breakfast club gave them a good start to the day'*. Some parents commented on the difficulty of feeding children breakfast at home, as parent (m) put it: *'He won't eat breakfast at home'*. The main concern shared by many of the parents was their interest in making sure their children ate something in the mornings. Healthy eating was a relatively small concern as parent (m) remarked: *'If they were offered fruit they wouldn't eat it. My boy wouldn't come if they had fruit'*.

Schools have been cited as a powerful influence for change in eating habits along with manufacturers, the advertising industry and more recently the chef, Jamie Oliver. Similarly, the breakfast club at the case study school could also have an impact on healthy eating. For example, offering more nutritious options including, porridge, oats, fruit and wholemeal bread would be a start. Older children and parents could be involved in the preparation and there could be direct links to the National Curriculum. These sorts of initiatives would gradually have an impact on all of the users.

In addition to tackling the three stated school objectives, there have been supplementary positive benefits that have contributed towards teaching and learning that have been attributed to the breakfast club, and also recognised in the

literature. There have been noticeable improvements to pupils' concentration. Staff at the case study school noticed that levels of concentration dipped during the morning sessions, which affected the children's work. In part this was due to lack of sleep but also to skipping breakfast. The headteacher reported that prior to Fresh Start they regularly provided cereal and milk for children that consistently came to school without breakfast. 100% of the staff felt the breakfast club helped improve childrens' concentration in the morning, as one member of staff reported, 'It is really noticeable that the children are more alert now. Before they would find it really hard to stay awake before break and by lunch they were almost finished'. As a result of this observation timetabling of the curriculum was reorganised to include the literacy programme, 'Success for All' (SFA) immediately after the breakfast club, when pupils achieve better test results (Food Research and Action Centre 1998). Several staff members commented on the effectiveness of the re-timetabling of SFA, 'We have noticed a big difference in the childrens' concentration now that SFA starts immediately after breakfast club when the children have just had some food inside them'.

### ***Creating a Positive School Culture***

A noticeable benefit of the breakfast club at the case study school has been the increase of informal contact between staff and parents. Bhopal (2004: 59) noted the positive benefits of this contact for Gypsy Travellers, '*Informal contacts between school and parents opened up useful communication lines*'. This initiative has promoted access and involvement for parents, staff and pupils on

an unprecedented level. It is particularly evident amongst the Traveller parents who generally are more difficult to reach, but enter school for the breakfast club. 93% (13) of the staff agreed that the parents' socialisation has improved as a consequence of attending breakfast club while 7% (1) felt that the breakfast club had not contributed to improving the parents' socialisation. OFSTED recognised the contribution the breakfast club has made to the Travellers, *'Many Traveller children attend breakfast club and this provides good opportunities for parents to talk to the staff about their children's progress and other school matters,'* (OFSTED 2000b: 18) which has been one of the benefits of initiating the club in the school. Socialising between parents and staff was evident on the three visits to the club. Many parents commented that they valued this aspect of the club as parent (n) commented, *'They're always there and we can talk to them if we need to'*. The headteacher pointed out *'I manage the breakfast club and staff come in and out. We've been very informal about it and we have really got the parents on our side'*.

Another benefit has been the opportunity for mothers to chat amongst themselves as parent (n) commented *'Once the kids are all eating up we have a good chat in the morning with all the other parents'* It was noticeable after several visits that the same parents consistently gathered together which highlighted the issue of whether the mums actually integrate. Parent (c) pointed out *'The parents mix to a degree. You tend to get a group of the Traveller mums sitting and a group of the other mums on the other side. Although funnily*

*enough, there has been more mixing lately. You do tend to gravitate towards somebody you know rather than somebody you don't know'.*

Many parents recognised that being in school for breakfast club gave their children more opportunity to socialise, which they valued, as parent (n) noted *'It helps them to mix with other children that they don't usually sit with'*. The relaxed format works well for everyone as parent (s) noticed *'She eats her breakfast a lot easier because her mates are with her and she enjoys the extra time with her friends in the morning'*. It particularly works well for family groups as parents can oversee their own children sitting near each other. An additional benefit recognised by many parents was improved social skills, as parent (n) remarked *'It also helps them with their table manners. They see others eating up and they just do the same. Mine are used to sitting at the table'*. Research findings by Kenway, Fuller, Rahman, Street, and Palmer (2002) and Street and Kenway (1999), recognise that there is improved social interaction both between pupils and between pupils and staff as a consequence of attending a breakfast club. The findings at the case study school supports this with 93% of the staff agreeing that children's socialisation has improved as a consequence of attending breakfast club while 7% were not sure that it had made a difference.

Another benefit has been its popularity. This is probably in part due to its informality, continuity of staff and breakfast being provided free of charge. The headteacher who is involved with supervision of the club recognises its popularity

*'We've had them queuing right across the hall. Our numbers have really gone up'*. 100% of the staff felt *'the breakfast club should continue'*. 100% of the parents confirmed that their children enjoyed attending the breakfast club. Affirmation of its popularity was evident during an interview with one of the parents (m) when her son came up and said, *'What are you talking about?'* His mother replied, *'About the breakfast club and whether you like coming?'* Her son commented *'Yeah, I love it'*. 72% of the parents felt that their children actually enjoyed school more because they attended the breakfast club while 14% were not sure and 14% felt it hadn't had that effect.

The club enables large numbers of children from several families to benefit. Parent (c) commented *'I've got two children they are eight and nine years old and I've got one of my own she's four years old'* further reinforced by parent (n) who commented as she was trying to get all the children settled, *'I'm a bit busy today I've got nine of them. Five of my own, and four of my friends'*. Parent (c) recalled, *'Take last Friday she was ill and couldn't come to school and she moaned and moaned because she was missing breakfast club'*. The current policy of breakfast clubs does not include nursery children. If the opportunity was extended to include the nursery, all the benefits could be shared amongst all the children. There are several families that cannot take full advantage of this facility because of this restriction.

The breakfast club has brought about positive change for the Travellers who attend the school. The introduction of the breakfast club has had an impact on improved school attendance with approximately 47% of the Travellers attending, representing 35% of the total number of children at the breakfast club in year 2002/2003. These figures are based on the available SFA data for this period. OFSTED (2002b) noted that because many Traveller children attend the breakfast club it, *'provides good opportunities to liase with Traveller families and parents to talk about their children's progress and other school matters'* (OFSTED 2002b: 18). A relaxed approach encouraging parents to come into the school has helped create an inclusive atmosphere, involving parents rather than intimidating a group that historically had been suspicious of authority and schooling. As a Traveller grandparent (r) commented, *'I come up here with my daughter and her children. I bring them if she can't come and I chat to the other mums'* and another Traveller parent (m) remarked *'Yea it's good. There was some talk about coffee for the parents but nothing came of it. I don't think there was anyone to do it but that would be good'*, indicating her desire for more involvement.

The breakfast club provides one of the few opportunities to convey the school's effective discipline policy in practice to both parents and pupils simultaneously while offering parents the chance to learn from good practice in an informal environment rather than the more formal route of 'Parenting Classes'. Discipline has not been an issue at the breakfast club in the case study school, which supports Murphy et al. (1998) findings that there were significantly fewer

behavioural and emotional problems associated with the introduction of a free breakfast programme in many schools.

### ***Developing a learning community***

Initiating and sustaining a breakfast club over the past five years was part of a long-term strategic development plan at the case study school that has helped to create the conditions for continuous improvement evident in learning communities (Hopkins 2001). The school initiative was introduced at about the same time as the breakfast club national pilot in the UK (1999) began and is an example of successful evidence-based practice that has been adapted to suit a particular situation (Joyce *et al.* 1999).

Teamwork is essential to creating a learning community. The team at the breakfast club is small and reliable comprising the headteacher, cook, support assistant and occasionally the deputy headteacher, who all relate well to each other and with the parents. They are purposeful and action focused, recognised as effective qualities in building a learning environment (Connell 1996, Piontek *et al.* 1998). The case study school has initiated and embraced change by introducing the breakfast club. Efforts now need to be focused on continuous improvement through innovation (Joyce *et al.* 1999), by extending their good practice, which is already evident in this learning community.

### ***Creating an information-rich environment***

Evidence from several countries illustrates that effective and improving schools are data-rich (Henchey 2001, Reynolds *et al.* 2001). The case study school is data-rich in the area of monitoring pupil progress and attendance but somewhat limited on breakfast club data. This is probably due to the flexible attitude towards attending. However quantitative data might indicate any trends that could be useful for targeting different groups attending the breakfast club while qualitative data might provide data that might be helpful for introducing additional improvement strategies similar to those in the 'Greggs Breakfast Club' programme that involve a wider audience.

### ***Parental involvement***

The majority of parents (72%) do not help at the breakfast club, while 28% do help occasionally. There was no clear majority of parents that would be happy to help on a regular basis. Regarding parental involvement the support assistant (m) felt *'I think they help the younger ones. Some don't help though. They look after their own, but I would say they might be happy to help out more if that was expected of them'*.

The school has not involved parents in any formal way in the running of the breakfast club, nor is it currently on the agenda (19/10/04). The headteacher feels that the formula in place at present is manageable and gradually evolving with the introduction of the book club. Some schools in the USA and Canada



have effectively mobilised parents or community members to run breakfast programmes, which has created a sense of ownership and led to more school involvement. Although there is a lack of parental involvement at present, it is an easy and unthreatening environment to initiate future changes in policy that might also build confidence and improve home school links. A further development reported by the head teacher (Governors meeting 09/02/05) is that parents now use the breakfast club to sign their children up for after school clubs.

### ***Continuous Professional development***

Although there is a policy in place at the case study school that supports continuous professional development, the breakfast club has not been a vehicle for any formalised professional development. It has however, provided indirect learning opportunities from a social and managerial perspective for all the staff involved. There are opportunities for the school to enhance its professional development in the delivery of the breakfast club. The charity 'ContinYou' (2003) and 'Breakfast Club Plus' (2004) are national networks aimed at expanding good practice and sustaining breakfast clubs in the UK and the school should be encouraged to widen its remit on this subject in an effort to become more effective (ContinYou 2003).

### ***Working parents***

Much research supports the benefits of breakfast clubs for working mothers (Street and Kenway 1999) and while this may be relevant for many schools it is not a key issue at the case study school as the majority of the mothers are single and unemployed. However, the provision of the club allows parents to be available for work or study, when the opportunity becomes available. The breakfast club also provides a venue for a sizable group of parents to enter the school on a daily basis without feeling threatened that under other circumstances would be more difficult to achieve. However opportunities to involve the parents in activities within the school have not been explored within the breakfast club. Links with *The Children Project* for example, have not been formed. The breakfast club venue provides an ideal base for the coordinator of the Project to develop a good relationship that could lead to recruitment opportunities for the adult education courses sited within the school. Timetabling of courses could be rescheduled to cater for the parents' needs if this became a viable option.

### ***Impact***

The breakfast club has contributed a positive impact by changing the ethos of the school. This has been achieved with the provision of breakfast that historically had been skipped thus improving pupils' nutritional well-being. It has also contributed towards the school's stated initial objectives of improving punctuality and reducing truancy. Sustaining improvement in these areas and the breakfast club's future viability are issues currently being considered by the governing body (20/01/05). Funding can be sustained at the present pupil levels from the school's

budget, but there are implications for its long-term viability with a rising school roll, currently at 127, the highest since the school opened. The headteacher is also currently involved in discussions with the provider Sodexo, looking at alternative provision arrangement that will improve standards of nutrition (20/01/05).

### ***Summary and Recommendations***

Providing a free breakfast at school has been an excellent vehicle to tackle several school improvement issues including: punctuality, attendance, nutrition, concentration and inclusion while simultaneously improving socialisation opportunities for everyone involved, positively reinforcing behavioural expectations and providing further opportunities for literacy experience. Parents value this free provision and it is widely recognised as a goodwill gesture by the school. Since beginning this research in 2003 the breakfast club has evolved to the current position where changes are imminent. However there are a number of areas that could be considered for further improvement and have an impact on the current position including:

- Increased and sustained government funding should ensure the future viability of the breakfast club. This funding would also create opportunities for expanding the menu to include healthier options. If government funding is not forthcoming then the Governing body would need to initiate alternative sources of funding including local businesses.

- Increased governor and community involvement along the lines of the 'Greggs' model might expand opportunities beyond the present remit. The book club for example could be used for extra reading time involving some of the older children as listeners for the younger readers.
- Increasing professional development opportunities could be achieved by joining an organisation like 'Contin You' who promote established good practice and sustainable funding information for their members.
- The Community Wing coordinator could use the breakfast club as a vehicle to recruit mothers for classes. These classes could start immediately after the breakfast club when the children go into school instead of the current time, which allows a gap of 30 to 60 minutes when people tend to go home.
- Supervision at the entrance would ensure a more orderly start to the morning.
- Pupil, parental and community involvement could be increased with a structured, whole school initiative linked to the National Curriculum focusing on ideas set out in the '*National Healthy Schools Standard*' (1999). Particular emphasis on incorporating involvement in healthy eating through food preparation could be used to encourage higher standards while also promoting social inclusion.
- Breakfast club could be an avenue to introduce some background music in line with New Labour's proposal to increase music in schools (The Times 06/07/04).

The health and education issues highlighted in this chapter and supported by the research carried out in the USA and the UK have raised many important issues for the introduction of breakfast clubs particularly for pupils in low socio-economic areas. Breakfast clubs are an example of a compensatory model outlined in chapter one (Chrispeels 1992, Teddlie and Reynolds 2000) that have contributed to positive change and school improvement for all of those involved at the case study school. These issues are particularly pertinent to many Fresh Start schools' agendas being situated in areas of high social deprivation. A national funded, breakfast club policy, including some of the current initiatives would go some way to improving many of the concerning issues that impinge on educational performance.

## **CHAPTER 7: THE CASE STUDY**

### **PART TWO: The Role of Literacy in Fresh Start schools:**

#### **'Success for All'**

*'The most important idea in Success for All is that the school must relentlessly stick with every child until that child is succeeding'* (Slavin *et al.* 1996: 3).

#### ***Introduction***

New literacy programmes have been implemented in schools in an effort to raise standards and increase school effectiveness. *Success For All*, (SFA) is one such literacy programme based on early intervention, 90 minute daily lessons, ability not age based groups, phonic and orally based, with co-operative partnership and team work at its core. It is running in over two thousand schools in the United States (Slavin and Madden 2001). It is also in use in Canada, Australia, Israel and more recently in the UK (Hopkins *et al.* 1998) for children with poor literacy skills frequently situated in low socio-economic areas. SFA is currently operating in three Fresh Start primary schools in the UK and many 'Reconstituted' schools in the USA.

This chapter sets SFA in context by expanding on the issue of illiteracy from a global perspective and outlining the government's strategy for improving literacy in the primary sector. The origins and structure of the early, interventionist, literacy programme, SFA are examined both in the USA and the UK. The objectives of SFA at the case study school are outlined followed by an observation of SFA lessons at the school. The tools for analysis of SFA are those

categories outlined in chapter one, on page 10, which Muijs et al. (2004) identify as being particularly relevant for improving schools in low socio-economic areas. The analysis also includes the case study school's stated objectives and a discussion of further issues that have emerged during the research that have been recognised as having a positive impact on school improvement in the case study school and could be applied in due course in other schools. The chapter concludes with a discussion of policy issues and a summary with recommendations resulting from of the case study.

### ***Illiteracy in the developed world***

Illiteracy has become a concerning issue for all governments in the developed world particularly over the last two decades. It is thought that throughout the developed world, nearly a quarter of 16 to 65-year-olds are functionally illiterate and that too many children are leaving school unable to read and write (OECD 2000). Functional illiteracy appears to be highest in the United States and Canada and lowest in Sweden. According to some international organisations this situation is an indictment of the primary-school system in rich countries (TES 11 February 2000). However, the most recent, largest scale, research project carried out to date '*Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*' (PIRLS), (2003) involving 150,000 children aged 9-10 years old in 35 countries found that England did better than the other major English-speaking countries in the study (Twist *et al.* 2003). One of the most striking things about the results was the wide range in performance. There is a long tail of weaker performance, in the bottom

quartile which is of particular concern for this thesis, as is highly representative in Fresh Start schools.

### ***The Government's strategy in the UK***

The pledge by the government to raise literacy standards was clearly outlined in New Labour's manifesto in 1997, '*ensuring a stronger focus on literacy in the curriculum ... to meet our new target that within a decade every child leaves primary school with a reading age of at least 11 (barely half do today)*' (Blair 1997c). The DfES recognised in '*Schools: Building on Success*' that, '*Our education system will never be world class unless virtually all children learn to read, write and calculate to high standards before they leave primary school*' (DfES 2001b). '*The National Literacy Strategy*' (NLS) (1998b) was an outcome of the manifesto pledge, and refined in 2002 with '*The Primary Strategy*' (DfES 2003e). These have produced a defined curriculum for all schools to adhere to and to be assessed at Key Stage 1, 7-8years, Key Stage 2, ages 10-11 years and Key Stage 3, 14-15 years. Public accountability for all schools at these stages is in the form of *Standardised Assessment Test Scores* (SATS). By 2001 the government was able to report that progress had been made as a result of their initiatives outlined in '*Excellence in Schools*' (DfEE 1997) and the '*National Literacy Strategy*' (1998b) that the lowest scoring LEA in Key Stage 2 English was now doing better than the national average in 1996 (DfEE 2001b: 13).



The main priorities for literacy in *'The Primary Strategy'* include securing the role of speaking and listening, strengthening the early systematic teaching of phonics, further promoting the use of ICT as a tool for improving the teaching of literacy and encouraging children's access to the widest range of high-quality texts. The majority of primary schools are using the framework outlined in *'The Primary Strategy'* to raise literacy standards. However some schools have opted for an alternative route to deal with particular challenges in their schools. Many of these schools are in socially disadvantaged areas often with a high proportion of non-English speaking children or children with very poor literacy skills, requiring additional input. One such strategy for raising literacy levels is *'Success for All'*.

### *Origins of 'Success for All'*

SFA is a school wide, research-based, literacy reform model, which was developed by Robert Slavin and his associates at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA, in 1986. It is based on the premise that all students can and must succeed in the early grades (Slavin *et al.* 1996). In the belief that reading is fundamental to other skill areas, the programme targets students in lower elementary school grades. It provides students with intensive instruction in language arts, extensive professional development to help teachers succeed with every student, and an active family support program. Results from research conducted by the programme developers, as well as by external evaluators, have shown the SFA programme to be effective in enhancing the reading achievement

of economically disadvantaged and non-native English speaking students. (August and Hakuta 1997, Slavin and Fashola 1998).

In 1987, Slavin et al. (1989) developed a literacy pilot to ensure the success of every child in schools serving large numbers of disadvantaged students. It was carried out in an all black school in which 83% of students qualified for a free school lunch. The initial results were very positive (Slavin et al. 1990). In comparison to the control students, SFA students had much higher reading scores, and retentions and special educational placements were substantially reduced. By 1989 the scheme had expanded in Baltimore to run in five schools. By 1991 a Spanish version had developed to cater for bilingual children in one of the poorest schools in the area. In 1992 a grant from the New American Schools Development Corporation, (NASDC) funded development of the two levels 'Roots' and 'Wings' and added constructivist maths, science and social studies to the reading and writing programmes of SFA.

This comprehensive literacy programme for primary aged children minimises failure by laying strong foundations in oral literacy when children are in nursery. Evidence from Germany and Scandinavia where children remain in Kindergarten until 7 years of age with more emphasis on play and less emphasis on formal learning have produced some of the highest reading scores at 11 years and supports SFA strategy (Twist, Sainsbury, Woodthorpe and Whetton 2003). The assumption at the heart of the SFA is that preventing the occurrence of early

learning problems with immediate comprehensive intervention is more effective than later remediation of academic difficulties (Slavin *et al.* 1996). This premise is reinforced by David Hopkins, head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the Department for Education and Skills, '*SFA is based on two essential principles: prevention and intervention. Learning problems must be prevented by providing children with the best available classroom programmes and by engaging parents in support of their children's school success*' (Hopkins 1999).

SFA is designed as a school-wide programme providing early intervention when a child falls behind. The purpose is to ensure that every child succeeds. Children are organised into teaching groups first by their phonic knowledge and then by their ability to comprehend texts, frequently resulting in different ages working together. Year one of the programme, the 'Roots' component focuses on the development of oral skills backed up with phonetically based storybooks and specific comprehension strategies. Their writing development depends heavily on their developing knowledge of phonics.

From year two to year six, the 'Wings' programme, comprises of fiction and non-fiction materials, used for interactive reading and writing activities. These sessions are built around partner reading and emphasise co-operative learning. Characters, settings, problem solutions in narratives and story summarisation are explored along with a spelling programme. Twenty minutes free reading each evening is expected for homework.

### ***The Programme components***

The strength of the programme lies in the overall structure, which includes co-operative learning, tutoring, termly assessments, a nursery and reception programme, a facilitator, professional development, and a family support team. The vehicle that drives the SFA curriculum is co-operative learning. Children work together in partnerships and teams, helping one another to become strategic readers and writers. Emphasis is placed on individual accountability, common goals and recognition of group success. Talking is encouraged and children are placed in carefully selected partnerships so that they can build up confidence explaining their ideas before being expected to share and justify them with the whole class.

Specially trained teaching assistants supplement the main teaching with supplementary work with small groups of children who are having difficulty maintaining the same progress as their class. Year one pupils have a priority, although this support is available to year three providing early identification of failing children. Children are assessed every eight weeks. Results of these assessments are used to re-group and identify those showing difficulties, in order that they can receive additional support. The programme for four year olds (nursery) primarily emphasises oral language development, phonic knowledge, readiness to read and personal development.

The role of the facilitator is pivotal in the successful implementation of SFA. A member of staff is released part-time or full-time from the classroom to implement the programme. They provide support via team teaching, observation and regular training ensuring the programme is effectively implemented. The facilitator also co-ordinates the eight weekly assessments, assists the Family Support team, and helps all teachers make certain that every child is making good progress. Before the programme begins two days training are required by all teachers, followed by in-service workshops throughout the year. SFA trainers follow-up with classroom visits, coaching and team meetings whilst providing support and sharing new developments with facilitators and headteachers. After school workshops are offered throughout the year. A team promotes parental involvement. It focuses on developing plans to support those children having difficulty, implementing attendance plans and integrating community resources. It comprises the headteacher, facilitator, school nurse, social services and sometimes a school governor.

### ***Research findings in the USA***

SFA is not without its critics. Pogrow's (2000) claims that objectivity is an issue for Slavin and his research is self-serving, as one of the founders of SFA. He challenges several studies that Slavin had involvement with, on the grounds of a conflict of interests by the researchers who were linked to Slavin's research centre. The overall success of SFA has also been challenged by Venezky mainly because he believed that the programme could not be considered successful if it

did not bring children to grade level. However he clearly acknowledges that by 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students were substantially ahead of matched controls, with substantially reduced absenteeism and special education placements, *'The sample of students tested in SFA schools significantly outperforms those tested in control schools in reading and language arts... We also found analyses of retention data and of attendance to be valid'* (Venezky 1994: 12). Others also claim that Slavin's research illustrates major biases and methodological invalidity. One cites the programme as having *'an average effect of near zero -- that is, Success for All students scored about the 50th percentile or the same as matched control groups'* (Walberg and Greenberg 1998)

Slavin and others refute these findings, stating that SFA has been discredited as part of a wider debate about the philosophy supporting 'Title 1' funding, which became essential to high-poverty schools. 'Title 1' grants to Local Educational Agencies, (LEAs), supplement state and local education funding, for low-achieving elementary and secondary children especially in high-poverty schools, to help them master challenging curricular and learn to the same high state standards that other children are expected to meet (U.S. Department of Education 1965). Slavin argues that SFA has been the most extensively and successfully evaluated of all the whole-school reform models. Joe Stubbs, director of planning, assessment, and support services for the Houston Independent School District, endorses this view, *'Success for All is exceptionally comprehensive. I've worked with a number of effective programs in the last 25 years and this has the single*

*largest impact because it affects every child in a school'* (Cromwell 1998).

Independent reviews have concluded that the impact of SFA on student reading achievement has been convincingly demonstrated. Pearson and Stahl (2002) conducted a review of research on twenty reading reform models. SFA was the only school wide reading programme to receive the maximum possible rating for 'Evidence of Effectiveness'. Herman (1999) carried out a review of research on 24 comprehensive school reform models. SFA was one of only two elementary models (Direct Instruction was the other) that received the maximum rating for 'Evidence of positive effects on student achievement'. Borman, Hewes, Rachuba and Brown, (2003) also found that the SFA programme had the 'Strongest evidence of effectiveness' based on research quality, quantity and impact. UK studies have found strong positive effects of SFA on students' reading achievement, as well as avoidance of special placements, retentions and other outcomes (Hopkins *et al.* 1998).

### ***Research findings in the UK***

In 1997, Professor David Hopkins and Professor Alma Harris based at Nottingham University brought an adapted version of SFA to the UK, to pilot at five primary schools and one secondary school based in a relatively deprived inner-city area of Nottingham. The 'new' Nottingham City LEA with its challenging literacy targets was ideally suited to piloting the American reading programme.

During the School Year 1997-1998 the DfEE commissioned a research study on the initial implementation of SFA. The purpose was to provide empirical evidence on the process of implementation, and to assess how such an innovative programme could contribute to the DfEE's '*National Literacy Strategy*', (NLS), (Hopkins *et al.* 1998). The main findings of the pilot study were that:

- Students appeared to make as much progress in one term as would normally have had been expected in one year;
- Students motivation, behaviour, attitude and skill towards learning had also increased;
- The majority of teachers reported that they had learnt a great deal from SFA, particularly about the effective teaching of reading, co-operative teaching strategies and their own professional development;
- SFA had forged Community links, especially through the Volunteer Tutoring Scheme and parents' participation;
- There was an excellent fit between Reading Roots and the National Literacy Strategy (NLS at Key Stage One (KS1)).

Despite these positive findings the DfEE failed to provide the funding to expand SFA in the UK. It was on the strength of positive feedback from the pilot schools, these findings, and initial generous funding, provided by the benefactor Mike Fisher that a charity was established to expand SFA in the UK. It has been implemented in 35 schools based in Derbyshire, Essex, Hull, Leeds and London.



Leeds educational authority is implementing SFA in five schools per year from 2004, with a budget of £75,000 per annum of matched funding. This is the first educational authority to make a commitment at this level. Further expansion of SFA is likely to occur in the Essex Educational Authority since SFA's founders and several headteachers who have already implemented the programme, held a training day to report positive findings and created substantial interest amongst other headteachers (Culver Center, South Ockenden 12 February 2004). Recent changes to the NLS resulting in the '*Primary Strategy*' (2003) include more emphasis on speaking and listening, further improving the fit between SFA and the NLS outlined in the UK pilot (Hopkins 1998). Further research in the UK, is due to be published by *The Mike Fisher Foundation* in 2005 (SFA-UK).

It was documented over ten years ago that '*Ordinary teaching (no intervention) does not enable children with literacy difficulties to catch up*' (Schweinhart 1993). Intervention in this case refers to additional remedial work. Since then there have been numerous independent studies of the effectiveness of literacy intervention schemes available worldwide (Arlington and Cunningham 1996). In the UK, the research of 25 studies commissioned by the DFES, failed to provide conclusive evidence recommending any one particular reading scheme. The report does not include SFA, as it was not established in the UK at that time (Brooks 2002). '*Reading Recovery*', established now for 10 years, is the only scheme that can be compared in a limited way to SFA (Clay 1999). '*Reading Recovery*' provides further evidence of the effectiveness of early intervention

strategies, but it is limited in its effects as it focuses only on tutored students while SFA affects all students (Slavin *et al.* 1996: 211).

The NLS indicates that children should be taught to work independently of the teacher. SFA emphasises this skill. Co-operative learning strategies are employed throughout the programme. These strategies foster high levels of critical thinking and encourage active involvement and participation for the maximum amount of lesson time. The positive effects of co-operative learning on other learning and behaviour both in education and in industry have been well documented (Jacobs, Power and Loh 2002).

### ***Success for All and Fresh Start Schools***

The strategy to tackle improvement in literacy at the case study school has been through '*Success for All*'. Commencing in May 2001, with initial intensive training, and implemented from Nursery to Year 6 during the autumn term. A project of this type is an excellent example of '*raising performance of an organisation through the effective development of all staff*' (DfEE 1997: 3) and at the core of SFA's philosophy.

To date (April 2004), SFA has officially been introduced in three Fresh Start schools, (Goose Green Primary, Manor Oak Primary and St John and St James Primary) as a vehicle to raise literacy levels and recognised as being effective in that purpose (Borman *et al.* 2003, Slavin *et al.* 1996). In addition the

headteacher of Orion Primary School, a Fresh Start School, has, '*adopted some elements of SFA to create their own literacy scheme based on the SFA ideology*'. St John and St James Primary headteacher stated that '*SFA has contributed to bringing the school together as a unit and has raised attainment levels*'. Goose Green Primary School's teaching and learning has been specifically recognised in their inspection report as being good, '*Largely because of the school's decision to pursue the Success for All programme*' [and] '*it is having a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning, the quality of their learning and the progress they are making*' [and] '*it has had a beneficial impact on the teaching of other subjects*' (OFSTED 2003f: 10).

#### ***Stated objectives of SFA in the Case Study School***

SFA was introduced almost two years after the school went Fresh Start as a school-wide improvement initiative to:

- raise low literacy levels,
- incorporate Traveller pupils
- improve monitoring and evaluation
- improve discipline
- focus whole school staff development.

Although there was initial scepticism, the staff unanimously agreed that this compensatory model was a good fit for their needs.

### *An observation of an SFA class at the case study school*

My role as a governor had provided opportunities to observe SFA being taught throughout the school, so I was familiar with the structure of the SFA programme. However, an observation of 90 minutes in one class allowed the opportunity to focus on several areas that are specific to the SFA programme. The main purpose in this observation was to collect some qualitative data to illustrate the effectiveness of SFA co-operative learning strategies.

### *Observation*

The class began immediately after registration at 09.05. A group of 14 children ranging from 7-11 years came into the class in an orderly fashion and sat at tables in groups of 3 or 4. A teaching assistant sat with the 3 youngest pupils, sitting beside a boy with behavioural problems from the Nurture group. The teacher had already informed me that this was day 1 of a 6-day cycle that forms part of the 8-week assessment programme. The teacher began by raising her hand in the air with a signal to bring the class to attention. This action was repeated by all the pupils, resulting in a high level of engagement between the pupils and the teacher. This control strategy was used throughout the lesson a total of 44 times, illustrating a high degree of co-operation and class management, without resorting to the more common practice of a raised voice to combat disruptive behaviour and gain attention. This was supplemented on 4 occasions with one-to-one private discussions with pupils who were creating minor disturbances.

The teacher broadly outlined the structure of the lesson. She emphasised the importance of being part of a new team and how co-operative strategies would help them to gain points for their team. The class set about a given task for 5 minutes of creating a drawing that would become their team 'cheer' (a slogan). During this activity there was a high level of concentration and participation in each group. This was followed by one of the team performing their 'cheer' to the general amusement of the class. This activity promoted team bonding and ownership while all groups received positive encouragement from the teacher. Points were awarded to each team on the 'Team Score Sheet' but not disclosed to the rest of the class (appendix 10). At this point the teacher reminded the class of the 'Co-operative Learning Standard', which emphasises the benefits of co-operative learning (appendix 11). The next short task was an oral, partner based activity involving a discussion around their notion of the contents of a fairy story. Each pair shared their ideas with the group and then another team member conveyed the agreed team version with the class. This type of rehearsed activity supports co-operative learning theory, *'simple peer practice routines are used throughout the lessons as a means of reinforcing and building mastery of basic reading skills'* (Slavin *et al.* 1996: 16). An abbreviated 'Cinderella' text was issued to the class and read simultaneously by each team. The teacher questioned the class about how well this text matched the concept of a fairy story. When an individual responded this was followed with further questioning by the teacher requiring an extended reply, given by the individual or the team.

The next activity involved 'modelling' which is another component of SFA teaching. The teacher and teaching assistant played the role of a pair of disruptive pupils in a lesson with the pupils playing the role of passive teachers. This improvisation immediately attracted everyone's attention and the pupils promptly identified this behaviour as unsuitable for learning. A modelling exercise of this type clearly reinforces the positive benefits of co-operative behaviour.

The text 'Grey Wolf, Prince Jack and the Firebird' by Alan Garner was introduced with more discussion in pairs, followed by the team sharing with the class their ideas about the suitability of the book cover design. This was followed by whole class reading of the text and partner reading while the teacher checked on each pair and made three seating adjustments where she felt pupils were not working effectively in pairs. Every pair was given a 'Treasure Hunt' pertaining to the text of the week and involved a whole class vocabulary based oral task followed by a partner-based reinforcement tasks (appendix 12), and a team based oral response. The lesson concluded with the whole class acting out a popular 'cheer' nominated by the lead team called 'Ghost Train'. The class filed out in an orderly manner but with plenty of animated chat with the teacher.

In terms of teacher/pupil interaction this session was dominated by a very high level of positive reinforcement both as a whole class and on an individual level. There were 66 instances of positive reinforcement throughout the session. These included comments like '*Brilliant*', '*You're doing well*', '*Excellent*', referring to

individuals or the class generally. Other comments specifically encouraged partner work, *'You're so supportive of each other'* [and] *'You support (a) really well'*. Other comments reinforced good teamwork, *'Remember to be very supportive to your team'* [and] *'I think you work really well as a team'*. This level of support created a facilitative ethos, evident from a positive atmosphere brought about by a teacher displaying a happy disposition, coupled with comments in response to the odd incident where a pupil's concentration lapsed like, *'Remember how to sit on a chair, so that your back is very comfortable'*, *'Don't let your pencil get the better of you'* [and] *'I'll help you out'*. The benefits of positive high-level support for pupils' in low socio-economic areas have been widely recognised as being a benefit to learning (Brophy 1992, Ledoux and Overmaat 2001, Teddlie et al. 1989).

There were only 10 instances of the teacher directly instructing the pupils. However there was no doubt at any time that the teacher had complete control of the class. In the main this was achieved by repeating the hand signal whenever the teacher felt the children were not giving their full concentration coupled with zero tolerance of poor behaviour. There were 23 interactions with the whole class and this accounted for the majority of the lesson time, although there were 29 interactions with individual pupils but these were usually short comments of positive encouragement.

In terms of the pupil/pupil interaction there was an even spread throughout the 90 minutes of activity at all levels for individual work, partner work, teamwork and class work. This illustrated a high degree of co-operative activity, as there was an overall higher incidence of shared activity. There were only two instances of unsatisfactory partner work, with one pupil complaining, *'Miss, he doesn't read as quickly as me and he's holding me up'*. The teacher managed the situation by diluting the atmosphere with this response, *'As a partner you need to keep with your partner'*. More than 50% of the activity was focused on speaking with the remaining activities shared equally between listening and reading.

### ***Interpretation***

It would appear that the success of SFA is bound up with a highly structured approach of delivery. This comprises of short activities that sustain pupil's interest (Ledoux and Overmaat, 2001, Teddlie et al. 1989) coupled with a framework that depends on teamwork and co-operation and discipline. Control is maintained subtly with reciprocal hand signals that everyone accepts. The disciplined ethos of the classroom facilitates learning as it is conducted in a positive and encouraging atmosphere. Johnson (2005) reports that research findings in the USA over the last several years support the view that, *'Virtually all classroom teachers (97%) say that good discipline and behaviour is one of the most important prerequisites for a successful school'* (Farkas, Johnson and Duffett 2004, Johnson, Duffett, Farkas and Collins 2002).



### ***SFA in the case study school***

SFA was perhaps the main vehicle that brought about systemic change in the case study school contributing to school improvement in this context. The main findings from the data collection are presented below.

#### ***Leadership and Management The Headteacher***

The headteacher at the case study school introduced this initiative after seeing it being taught successfully in schools with similar, challenging circumstances during a visit organised by the DfES to the USA in 2000. After a presentation was made to the governing body, it was agreed that it seemed an appropriate strategy for school improvement. As governor (s) commented, *'there seems to be a good fit between the programme and the needs of the children at this school'* which supports research findings in the USA and the UK (Hopkins *et al.* 1998, Schweinhart 1993, Wordsworth 1998). Furthermore, it reflects the proposals outlined in *'Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools'* where schools should *'take ownership of the curriculum shaping it and making it their own'* (DfES 2003b: 3).

The headteacher's decision to introduce this recently UK piloted, alternative literacy programme could be viewed as being 'high risk'. However it is supported by research evidence (Castello *et al.* 2002, Teddlie and Stringfield 1993) that good leadership involves entrepreneurial initiatives, a strong vision of the school's expectations and an identification of how these can be achieved in

practice. Furthermore the introduction of this initiative strengthens claims that '*Entrepreneurs sense opportunities and take risks in the face of uncertainty*' (DTI 1998:12). This example of entrepreneurial behaviour by the headteacher would lead us to question Grace's (1995:20) findings that headteachers are constrained in their attempts to be entrepreneurial, particularly as '*pedagogic innovators*'. Furthermore, it would support Hallinger and Heck (1998) in their claims that effective leadership of a headteacher has a highly measurable effect on pupils' achievement, which was a high priority objective for school improvement.

The initial introduction of SFA showed evidence of the inspirational traditional view of leadership who 'turn round' schools (Harris and Chapman 2001). Once it was clear that the staff supported the new initiative, a distributed style of leadership was evident in the management and noted as being effective in a range of studies (Harris and Muijs 2004, IESP 2001). This was initially accomplished with the appointment of the deputy headteacher as facilitator of SFA, who had the overall responsibility for managing the programme. Harris and Chapman (2002) recognise this dimension of leadership as it empowers others to lead. In addition, the choice of the deputy headteacher was effective because she displays clear open communication skills which have been identified as an important factor associated with improving and effective schools in a number of studies (Harris and Chapman 2001, Hughes 1995). Another element in the empowering process has been through teacher involvement. The teaching staff voted (by a secret ballot) on whether or not to adopt the programme. There was a 100% support

illustrating a high initial commitment. Theoretically a school needs an 80% supporting vote of to participate. As the deputy head recalled, *'The whole staff looked at it and decided we wanted to take it on. We couldn't have done it without that level of staff support.* A member of staff (a) verified this point, *'We've been included in the decision making but it's been really useful to have someone taking such a positive lead at the beginning because we were all a bit in the dark and have had to learn together'*. One year later questionnaires revealed that 88% were still happy with the concept of SFA as a way forward in literacy for the school and generally felt, as teacher (m) put it, *'It seems to fit with the sort of children we are teaching here'* supporting the findings of Borman *et al.* (2003).

A key priority at the school was recruiting staff with an emphasis on experience in an effort to ensure stability and develop a shared vision for improvement. A high proportion of the teaching staff (77%) have more than ten years experience (Table 5). Retention of staff became the next priority. To date staff retention has been successful in that all the teaching staff recruited at the outset for Fresh Start have remained in place. Currently there is an all female staff at the case study school, which is not uncommon in the primary sector. However, consideration might be given to the impact that male staff could contribute in a currently female dominated environment, both at school and at home for many of the children. The retention rates and low absenteeism rates (compared to the national average) are both good reflection on the headteacher's management skills.

**Table 5:** Teaching staff: Length of experience in education

Experience	0-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15yrs	16-20yrs	21-25yrs
Staff	1	1	2	3	2
Percentage	11%	11%	22%	33%	22%

### ***The Governing Body***

The governing body has been somewhat passive regarding its input in SFA apart from the initial consultation when the headteacher first raised the notion of SFA in 2000. One governor has specific responsibility for SFA and attended the initial training seminar. This has been followed by regular observations. The majority of governors have visited the school to see SFA being implemented and subsequent presentations to the governing body have involved the facilitator of the programme who has outlined the programme's benefits and progress. The primary concerns for the governing body have been about funding and raising attainment. Both aspects have been addressed along with regular updates from the headteacher at governors meetings over the past four years. However the area of raising attainment through SFA has not been given the close scrutiny that it deserves by the governing body as they have relied mainly on the headteacher's reports and the facilitators presentations for information, which is not unusual (OFSTED 2001). It is essential that monitoring takes a higher priority and this can easily be achieved by creating direct links to the curriculum with less reliance on the headteacher as a sole resource as Bird (2002) and OFSTED (2002) suggest.

## **Resources**

Funding is key to effective implementation (SFA-UK, Interview, Jones-Hill, 2004, appendix 7). Reynolds et al. (2001) emphasise that proper resourcing is essential for school improvement to succeed and lead to improved student outcomes (Borman *et al.* 2001). Despite the school being in a strong position with Fresh Start funding, there were major concerns initially as governor (a) recalled, *'Adopting the SFA programme was a major financial commitment for the school with a degree of risk in that this was a newly piloted concept in the UK'*.

The initial cost of implementing SFA for the first year in a one or two form entry primary school is approximately £25,000. Schools have a minimum three-year contract with the SFA charitable trust with a final cost of approximately £35,500.

**Table 6: SFA Implementation Costs**

Year	1: Sept to March	2: April to March	3: April to March
SFA materials	£10,000	£3,000	-
Training/ Support	£8,500	£2,500	£2,000
Trade books	£6,500	£3,000	-
Total costs	£25,000	£8,500	£2,000

Source: SFA-UK, 2004

In comparison to similar literacy schemes in other primary schools, these costs appear disproportionately high, particularly in respect of the large initial outlay. This was also the view held by staff, confirmed by the questionnaire whereby 100% of the staff perceived SFA as expensive. This comparison is misleading since the costs pertaining to SFA include training costs whilst the other literacy schemes exclude training costs. Furthermore, it is difficult to compare with other schemes because the SFA package covers a wider range, from nursery through to Year 6.

The value of prevention has been acknowledged in US evidence, which suggested that every dollar spent saves seven dollars on social remediation later (Schweinhart *et al.* 1993). If literacy is a priority then a scheme like SFA with all the additional benefits seems a small price to pay if the outcome means that children are able to read and write at expected levels when they leave primary school. Julia Douetil of the Reading Recovery National Network dismisses claims that these type of initiatives are expensive. *'Reading recovery is like installing a lightning conductor. It's a preventative measure, which is a lot less expensive than the consequences of not installing one. It's a sound investment which will prevent today's non-readers from being socially excluded tomorrow'* (Douetil 2000). Brooks (2002: 15) also emphasised costs of schemes can be misleading, *'Large-scale schemes, though expensive, can give good value for money'* (Brooks 2002).

### ***External Support***

Although research suggests that external support has been found to be an important factor for improvement in schools in disadvantaged areas (Reynolds 1998) the case study school neither received nor sought external support from external bodies like the DfES or the LEA, as recommended by Hopkins and Reynolds (2002). External support was sought almost entirely from SFA-UK who provided all the necessary expertise.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

SFA at the case study school focuses on a limited number of academic goals and supports the findings that have been identified as a key characteristic of effective and improving schools (Hopkins 2001, Reynolds *et al.* 2001, Teddlie and Stringfield 1993). Changing the timetabling to devote more time and emphasis on literacy coupled with a highly structured curriculum has also been found to be effective for low socio-economic pupils (Barth *et al.* 1999, Hallinger and Murphy 1986, Ledoux and Overmaat 2001). Research in the USA (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003) and the UK (Wyon *et al.* 1997) indicates a link with nutrition and improvements to pupils' concentration and learning, particularly when lessons immediately followed a meal. Staff at the case study school noticed that levels of concentration dipped during the morning sessions affecting children's work. In an effort to combat this fatigue and improve learning, timetabling of SFA has been rescheduled to the first period supporting

Murphy et al. (1998) findings. 100% of the staff felt the breakfast club helped improve children's concentration in the morning.

SFA also requires a high level of staff training in a specific teaching style involving all the teaching staff in the case study school to focus on teaching and learning as part of its school improvement measures and widely supported in the literature (Hopkins 2001, Joyce *et al.* 1999). As a school-wide programme it has brought continuity throughout the school in the overt teaching style, structure of the programme, monitoring and professional development. This is recognised as bringing positive benefits to teaching and learning (Hopkins *et al.* 1998). As one staff member pointed out, *'The common look of the lessons helps the consistency and continuity'*. This supports the findings of Mortimore (1991) that consistency in teaching has been found to improve outcomes for pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds. The recent assessment of English carried out by OFSTED supports this, concluding that *'Provision for English is good and the school is working hard to address unsatisfactory achievement in the past through its structured and intensive literacy programme (SFA)'* also that *'Analysis of pupil's work and information from the school's assessment and tracking systems indicate that standards are rising as a result of the measures the school has taken'* (OFSTED 2002b: 9).

The eight-week assessment structure and the re-organisation of classes into smaller groups have created a more focused approach to learning and supports



(Hopkins *et al.* 1998) findings that pupils make faster progress. The facilitator commented, '*This programme has allowed the teachers to see that their good teaching is now really moving the children on. We weren't able to pinpoint it and monitor it in quite the same way before, as we've been able to do with SFA. It's really encouraging to say that this child has moved from 1C to 1A in an eight or ten week slot*'. The case study school also has made provision for all the SFA resources to be accessed easily by both staff and pupils and was recognised by 100% of the staff as a factor that contributes towards teaching and independent learning for the pupils. Research in the USA (Ross, Sanders, Wright, Wang, and Alberg 2001) examining the experiences and perspectives of teachers and facilitators with reference to the implementation of SFA indicate that where the individual components are rated highly by the implementers, the effects on students' reading achievement was also higher.

### ***Creating a Positive School Culture***

A 'blame' culture that frequently prevails in schools in low socio-economic areas is not evident at the case study school. The new staff brought a new order to the school with high aspirations (Joyce *et al.* 1999), which has had a major impact on the culture that now prevails. Several factors have contributed to changing the culture. Although 100% of the staff had high expectations for the children, SFA has been a vehicle that has capitalised on that belief. The instant impact of enthusiasm, high expectations and co-operation from the staff has had a similar impact with the pupils and the total effect has had a positive effect on discipline

(Hopkins and Reynolds 2002, Leithwood and Steinbach 2002). As the facilitator commented about the staff, *'We were all fired up with enthusiasm and that probably had a knock on effect amongst the children. It was new to us and that's all we seemed to talk about'*. This supports the findings of Borman *et al.* (2000) indicating that school improvement efforts have been found to be strongly influenced by teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of the intervention which in turn, influences their enthusiasm and work-rate. Another element that should be recognised is that the success of SFA is bound up in teacher commitment as Ritchie, a teacher from the USA reported, *'This has truly been a teacher-driven process. This is not something imposed by administration or downtown'* (Ritchie 1998). The same conclusion emerged from this study, where teacher commitment emerged as a factor in both the scheme and staff teamwork.

The SFA ethos of co-operation has extended to the staff. Although any member of staff can theoretically become the 'Facilitator', the deputy head took on the role from the outset and made these remarks, *'I'm driving it, but the whole ethos is based on staff co-operation. That's part of the SFA ethos. We couldn't have done it, if we didn't have this high level of co-operation'* Extremely low staff absenteeism and high retention has had a positive effect for the pupils because SFA is totally dependent on specialised teaching skills that are only acquired through specific training. The pupils have not been exposed to untrained supply teachers as the school made a decision to utilise the fully trained headteacher and the facilitator to cover for absenteeism. This practice has contributed

towards maintaining a positive school culture as the staff have maintained continuous responsibility and a sense of achievement through their collective involvement. Several members of staff have affirmed this sense of achievement observing that, *'The whole SFA experience has been demanding but really fulfilling'* and *'There was a steep learning curve for all of us, but it has been worth all the benefits'*. 44% had no problems with implementing the scheme, while 56% had difficulties with time management, relevance of topics, Americanised material, the amount of learning required at different levels, wide age range within one class, and pupils repeating sections. 88% felt SFA created more pressure than the previous method used for literacy. 12% felt unaffected by the change. Both Hopkins et al. (1998) and Ross et al. (2001) highlighted the importance of the way the implementation process was handled by the school and linked it to the success of the programme. Furthermore, SFA-UK, (Interview, Jones-Hill, 2004) stressed the importance of strictly adhering to the implementation and monitoring process as it has been found to affect student performance.

The underlying principles of this school-wide scheme are widely recognised as being co-operative learning. There have been noticeable benefits including increased verbal confidence, an atmosphere where positive reinforcement dominates that has led to an increase in self-esteem, as the facilitator commented, *'I can see that the very best teaching and the very best learning is where the co-operative learning and co-operative enforcement is highly visible'*

Evidence recorded during the observation at the case study school reinforces this view. Similar findings were found by in the USA (Herman 1999, Maden and Hillman 1996). Co-operation between pupils increased with positive effects evident in other areas of the curriculum including behavioural management. Teachers commented on the change in classroom atmosphere throughout the school, *'The children are more involved with each other and engaged in learning and they're easier to control with the hand commands. It's so much easier than raising your voice'*. Governor (a) recalled, *'It now feels like a normal school'*. Similar findings were evident from USA research (Slavin and Madden 2000, 2001, 2003) and in the UK (Hopkins *et al.* 1998) where pupils motivation increased, attitude to learning and behaviour improved. Another benefit of SFA reported by the staff was considered to result from each pupil within the group working at a similar level in a non-threatening environment creating opportunities for open discussion and increased confidence. Effective bonding within teams may also improve confidence levels. Teaching at an appropriate level for the children's needs, allowed more focus on interaction with the text. The children responded positively to the structure and repetition of the programme and there was consistency and continuity throughout the school creating a secure known expectation (Maden and Hillman 1996).

### ***Developing a learning community***

Teamwork that is collaborative, purposeful and action focussed is characteristic of improving schools (Connell 1996, Piontek *et al.* 1998). This has been an

important element at the case study school and in part has resulted from the whole teaching staff team including support assistants being involved with SFA training from the outset. The headteacher has incorporated support assistants within the teaching staff for SFA illustrating the effective use of distributive leadership while also extending opportunities for 'teachers as learners' to the whole staff (Joyce *et al.* 1999, Stoll 1999). Employing support assistants, as teachers can be a contentious issue in schools. However, in the case study school it has contributed to the success of the initiative. 67% of the staff felt classroom assistants should be involved in teaching while 33% were not sure. This level of support had implications for the success of the scheme as the implementation relied heavily on co-operation and participation of the full-time teaching staff, support assistants and the Travelling support teacher to maintain small class sizes. There was recognition of higher expectations from classroom assistants and summed up by the facilitator *'I would say even higher expectations have been placed on the classroom assistants who are being used more like teachers. Although that sits well in this situation, I can think of other schools where they'd be outright riots if they'd used classroom assistants. I think we're very lucky with the classroom assistants we've got'*. Several teachers emphasised that one of the reasons for the scheme working well so far, has been due to the high calibre of the classroom assistants.

All the staff felt they were, *'singing from the same song sheet'*. A member of staff (m) said, *'One of its strengths is that everyone has got the same ideas and*

*aiming for the same thing. SFA has helped to illustrate that'* Continued professional development as a whole staff based on SFA has increased the feeling of being part of a team. Various positive mechanisms were described including '*regular contact*' and '*updates on progress*' and '*peer observations*' by the facilitator that were both '*non-threatening and positive*' (Connell 1996, Seeley *et al.* 1990). The facilitator pointed out, '*The teachers come to me and say, "What do you think about such and such?" Then I'll either teach that part of the lesson for them or we'll discuss it*'. Learning schools are characterised by the presence of reflective dialogue evident in this type of behaviour (Louis and Kruse 1995, Louis and Miles 1990).

### ***Creating an information-rich environment***

SFA has made a positive contribution towards the case study school's data sources. Schools that collect and usefully interpret data sources are cited as a component of effective and improving schools (Henchey 2001, Hopkins 2001, Joyce *et al.* 1999, Reynolds *et al.* 2001). Regular eight-week assessments on every child are measured against integral SFA expected performance and have been instrumental in monitoring performance. The SFA performance data collected since 2001 combined with attendance data over the same period indicates as one might expect, a strong correlation between attendance and performance. Learning schools are characterised by being open to change and evidenced-based adaption and innovation (Joyce *et al.* 1999).

Qualitative data collected by the headteacher in 2002 was used to modify practice at that time (Etheridge *et al.* 1994). A year after the implementation of SFA, specific changes were incorporated to improve the programme. 33% of the respondents involved with teaching felt no changes were needed with the SFA materials, while 67% respondents felt some changes were necessary. These included more anglicised books with improved editing, more non-fiction, earlier writing programmes, more contact with 'own' class, provision of a second layer of books for those who need to repeat, more scope for creative writing, the amount of partner reading in the second stage, and removal of silent reading. Several teachers raised concerns over a lack of ICT within the SFA programme. A member of staff pointed out that *'The computer room is used as a classroom in the mornings, rather than a computer room, we're not actually getting full use of it because of the structuring of SFA'*. ICT is now fully incorporated into the teaching as resources have improved and supplemented with the use of interactive whiteboards (Governors meeting, January 2005).

### ***Parental involvement***

Parental involvement is not easily achieved in disadvantaged areas (Connell 1996, Henchey 2001, Maden and Hillman 1996). In the case study school 100% of the staff felt there was a poor level of parental involvement and as a teacher remarked, *'this area is going to be an uphill battle'*. Staff felt in 2002, that more effort was needed to increase effective parental involvement. However the nursery emphasised (02.04.04) that the issue of parental involvement remained a

problem. They had reluctantly decided not to release material for home use, as there had been problems with materials going astray and evidence of lack of parental interest. UK research emphasises the importance of parental contribution to the overall success reading (Hewison 1985, 1998, Hopkins *et al.* 1998). SFA places strong emphasis on involving parents in supporting the curriculum at home (Hopkins *et al.* 1996), however this aspect at the case study school, although improving, is only being partially met. Attempts to involve parents in basic skills classes and parenting classes at the Community Wing have been met with mixed enthusiasm. Now the school is gaining the parents' confidence with more parents attending school events, there needs to be a concerted effort to incorporate parents in school workshops to help familiarise parents with the SFA curriculum outlined by Hopkins *et al.* (1996: 160) which should contribute to raising standards (Barth *et al.* 1999). If there was sufficient funding, some of the incentives that Guthrie *et al.* (1989) and Leithwood and Steinbach (2002) outline, including free breakfasts, might be a way forward to attract parents to a reading workshop in the morning. Another route to parental involvement found to be effective in the primary school (Maden and Hillman 1996) has been through incorporating parents at nursery level rather than at a later stage in the school.

Parental involvement during and after implementation is an important factor for positive gains. Tizard *et al.* (1982) found parental involvement to be more effective than extra teacher help with reading in school. More recent work with parents who had not had the benefit of a 'front loaded' education but had



benefited from adult basic skills classes were found to contribute more positively with their children's reading (Brassett-Grundy and Hammond, 2003). These results have implications for the relevance of parental involvement in the SFA programme.

The UK pilot findings recognises the relevance of reading tutors, '*One of the most important elements of the Success For All model is the use of one-to-one tutoring to support students' success in reading*' (Hopkins *et al.* 1998:18). The Boots Company has provided some 200 tutors to support this aspect of the programme' (Hopkins 1999). Volunteers from the school community, for example parents, governors or local residents also have an important part to play in reading programmes and have been used in many areas as additional support for teachers. Many schools including the case study school are missing out on this valuable resource.

### ***Continuous professional development***

SFA as a school-wide reform programme has been a very effective means of supporting continuous professional development for all the staff at the case study school and supports research findings (Barth *et al.* 1999, Henchey 2001, Herman 1999, Reynolds *et al.* 2001). SFA initial training and annual follow-up sessions have involved a considerable amount of professional development time and has been given priority during the first two years during the implementation phase. This supports the findings of Freeman (1997), who emphasises that improving

schools need to spend more time and effort on professional development than stable schools. The questionnaire response from the initial three day training session held at the school reported that 55% felt the training was satisfactory but improvements could include opportunities to see other model lessons, videoing examples of good practice and shadowing experienced teachers. 45% felt the training was good, but initially the staff felt overloaded and there were concerns about the quality of the trainers. The training from SFA-UK at that time was still in its infancy and as the facilitator reported two years later, *'The training has really developed now as SFA has become more established in the UK. They are incorporating facilitators from all over the country to do the training now so new schools going SFA are getting more benefits'*.

SFA training provides the tools for 'real change in teachers practices' to take place in the classroom, not the workshop (Hopkins *et al.* 1998), which has been evident at the case study school over the past four years. Implementing SFA has involved a considerable change to teaching style. The staff reported that it was more teacher-led, with more emphasis on whole class teaching. Additionally, there was more co-operative learning, teaching in a positive environment, more encouragement of effective questioning by the teachers and more analysis of pupils responses. This supports the findings from the UK research (Hopkins *et al.* 1998). The delivery of SFA was 100% compatible with the teachers' own teaching style. Although several teachers felt that they had to adopt some of the language as part of the programme, which did not feel natural, *'It felt really odd*

*using the puppet and using the catch phrases at first, but you could see it was working pretty quickly*'. 88% felt their confidence had increased as the programme progressed while 12% did not notice a change. Much of the success at the case study school for individual staff has resulted from SFA professional development who have benefited from the training continuity provided by SFA-UK coupled with the whole school sharing the experience. Another promising solution for CPD in the UK has been in the form of networks with other schools. This potential of sharing good practice outside the school has not been fully explored probably because other schools teaching SFA are not close by.

### ***Policy Implications and Further Research***

The SFA Nottingham pilot had many features in common with the National Literacy Strategy (Wordsworth and Morrison 2000). Since 1998 there have been more developments in the UK SFA version and it has become more closely aligned with the new '*Primary Strategy*' (PS) introduced in schools in 2003. Schools can be confident that SFA meets all the objectives in the NLS and the PS while providing an intensive approach to teaching literacy for students in challenging circumstances.

Policy for literacy in the USA has been further reinforced with the '*No Child Left Behind Act*' (2002) when it was publicly recognised that '*Too many of our neediest children are being left behind*', and comprehensive reforms were needed to change the tide. As part of this national initiative, '*Reading First*' was

introduced, aimed at helping every child in each state become a successful reader with nearly \$6 billion to fund the project. Many of these initiatives are supported by 'Title 1' funding, enabling all children, particularly low-achieving children meet challenging academic standards.

The UK funding policy is very different. Funding appears to be much more on an 'ad hoc' basis, with bidding from various sources and disparity amongst the recipients being the norm. The funding for SFA in the UK has been provided in the main by *Education Action Zones* (EAZs) and *Excellence in Cities* (EiC) with a couple of schools relying on self-funding. If a school does not fall into either category, EAZs or EiC, where extra funding is available for such initiatives then there is little choice but to opt for the self-funding route thus demonstrating the inequity. Fresh Start schools are the exception, and perhaps in an enviable position to have sufficient funding, unlike schools that have an existing piecemeal scheme in place. Leeds Education Authority are adopting a more coherent policy through the introduction of interventionist programmes like SFA and providing matched funding to support the strategy (Interview, Jones-Hill, SFA-UK 2004). If the problem of low achievement in high-poverty schools is to be taken seriously in the government's drive for school improvement, then it would undoubtedly benefit from a transparent funding policy that would remove the current discrepancies in funding that have led to a lottery in resources. Schools would then be in a position to adopt effective methods to confront their own issues.

The conclusions of the UK pilot noted that SFA should be recognised as a literacy programme compatible with the NLS (Wordsworth 1998). '*SFA has a potential role in raising literacy levels ... as one of a series of strategies that directly addresses the Government's literacy goals ... particularly in areas of high underachievement and relative deprivation*' (Hopkins *et al.* 1998:26). In the light of Hopkins *et al.* (1998) and Wordsworth (1998) evaluations, SFA has demonstrated that it is a more intensive way of delivering the government's NLS and has a potential potent role in raising literacy levels in areas of high underachievement while promoting co-operative learning. It is with the direct experience of working in the field of *Education Action Zones* that Chris Edwards, Director of Education in Leeds, felt it was a relevant model for Leeds to implement.

The UK research picture regarding SFA provides a stark contrast to the USA. Apart from the Nottingham pilot there has been no further research to date on any scale. However, the findings of *The Mike Fisher Foundation* (due late 2005) and any future research resulting from the Leeds initiative, where SFA has been implemented on a large scale, will undoubtedly expand interest in the scheme as a vehicle for school improvement.

Overall, the data at the case study school revealed that there were no significant differences in the perception between younger and established teachers towards training, the SFA concept, changes to the programme, and increased confidence

as the scheme progressed. There were however significant differences in response to teaching style, benefits, implementation issues, classroom assistants, and increased pressure that the implementation of SFA created. Despite these differences, all the staff agreed that SFA had made a significant and positive contribution towards school improvement in this Fresh Start School. This sentiment was echoed by the ex-headteacher of Goose Green Primary School when she reflected on the impact SFA had on her school, '*SFA undoubtedly was a major tool in leading us all forward under Fresh Start*'. SFA is expanding in the UK and will be implemented in more than twenty schools over the next year, it is appropriate to reflect on the case study school experience, so that other schools might benefit.

## **Recommendations**

### **Training**

There needs to be a standardised training programme carried out over a slightly longer time frame and incorporate videos of good lessons. Opportunities to visit schools where SFA is already established would be beneficial in the initial phase. A programme of observation should be established to identify good practice.

### **Facilitator training**

The role of the facilitator could be rotated amongst staff after a few years with provision for appropriate training. This would increase opportunities for participatory leadership, teamwork, professional development and expertise within the school.

## **Materials**

SFA is becoming established in the UK and will require more anglicised resources. In the case study this might include references to Travellers, elsewhere other ethnic groups may need to be considered. This would make a positive contribution towards teaching and learning.

## **Use of Classroom Assistants**

The incorporation of classroom assistants in teaching the SFA programme at the case study school has been effective. To import this practice in other schools it may involve extra training and monitoring by the facilitator or by SFA-UK and considered as an option as part of the implementation process.

## **Rapid Feedback**

The benefit to the pupils in terms of rapid progress is clear from the school records in relation to the National Curriculum at the case study school. Positive achievement needs to be transmitted clearly and frequently to pupils in order that self-esteem and progress are maintained.

## **Communication to Staff**

Regular structured meetings need to be timetabled to inform all staff of progress with time to share concerning issues. This practice would enable the facilitator to consider making adaptations to the curriculum where necessary.

## **Monitoring the Curriculum**

SFA requires a larger daily time input than the National Curriculum recommends with the '*Literacy hour*' and has implications for other areas of the curriculum. Although the government are beginning to shift their focus and recognise the

benefits of a broader curriculum, (DfES 2004a), nationalised testing and targets are still centre stage and need to be considered in the light of an OFSTED inspection, by both staff and governors.

### **Role of Governors**

Governor involvement should be encouraged with a continuous programme of observation visits to increase their knowledge and demonstrate interest. Governor participation on the family support team should also be addressed.

### **Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement in SFA at the case study school has been poor. High levels of illiteracy are partially responsible. A high level of parental involvement would positively contribute to schools in similar circumstances and efforts to raise parental involvement need to be addressed at the implementation stage. They might include involvement in coffee mornings, fetes, playground or classroom visits. A supplementary source of support could be in the form of volunteers who could help with homework during lunch breaks or an after-school club. Another aspect to consider might be a type of 'family support team' involving volunteers and have been highly effective in helping families with low levels of literacy (Hopkins *et al.* 1998).

### **Conclusion**

The introduction of this innovative strategy to improve literacy at this Fresh Start school has been smoothly implemented. The research highlighted some difficulties with training, implementation, materials, and parental involvement.



The benefits in terms of school improvement are also recognised. These include a strong sense of vision and leadership from the headteacher in driving the concept initially, which has been supported and sustained over five years by the deputy head teacher, as the facilitator of the programme. Distributed leadership and teamwork has been key to the successful implementation of the programme. Co-operative learning, improved pupil behaviour, high expectations, shared visions and regular monitoring have all contributed towards improved teaching and learning. It is clear that the whole underlying ethos of SFA is totally compatible with raising standards and school improvement and this school has many strategies already in place to tackle both endeavours. The following years will reveal just how effective and sustained that improvement has been for the children in the case study school.

Several issues have emerged from this case study relating to staffing that illustrate evidence of successful implementation and continuity of SFA and have implications for other schools implementing SFA. Many of these issues have not been evident in research carried out in the USA or the UK (Venezky 1994, Walberg and Greenberg 1998). High staff/pupil ratios have been critical to the scheme being delivered effectively in this school, which is a consideration for implementation in schools in similar low socio-economic areas. Staff retention has had a major impact on costs by keeping funding for training at low levels. Continuity has been provided not only by the staff but also with the facilitator,

who has played a key role in the implementation and is now recognised externally as a trainer by SFA-UK.

SFA has been a positive benefit for the pupils and staff at the case study school. It has been an excellent vehicle to bond the whole school in literacy and high expectations. The tight structure of the programme coupled with close monitoring ensures supplementary intervention strategies are put in place as necessary. The added benefits have included, co-operative learning which has impacted on behaviour, and easier inclusion of new pupils and transient Traveller pupils as they are more easily integrated in ability based groups rather than age related classes.

## **CHAPTER 8: THE CASE STUDY**

### **PART TWO: Lifelong Learning, Community and Fresh Start Schools**

#### ***Introduction***

'Lifelong learning' has become a significant part of New Labour's educational agenda since coming to power in 1997 (DfEE 1998a, 1999, 2000, 2001a, DfES 2002a). In Britain and elsewhere, governments are actively encouraging citizens to learn and to apply their learning across their lifespan (Field 2000, Leicester and Field 2003). There has been more focus on the contribution that schools can make to encourage lifelong learning within the communities they serve. Many schools have incorporated lifelong learning and community involvement as part of their school's improvement strategy. The case study school is one such school.

This chapter outlines key issues that have contributed towards lifelong learning and community education. It examines recent government interest in the learning society, traces the development of lifelong learning and the impact of human and social capital. The 'Community', community schools and adult education are examined with specific reference to 'Travellers'. The role that Fresh Start Schools can play in relation to school improvement initiatives embodying lifelong learning is also examined. The case study outlines the aims of the Community Wing based at the school and uses the framework for analysis outlined earlier (Muijs *et al.* 2004) to examine its contribution to school improvement and the impact to the school community. The chapter concludes with a summary and recommendations followed by the implications for policy and practice.

### ***Government's policy on lifelong learning***

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Conservative government proposed turning Britain into 'a learning society' by the year 2000. Whilst New Labour endorsed this policy, it has not always been clear what exactly is meant by a learning society. Ranson (1998: 157) defines it as '*A society whose citizens value, support and engage in learning, as a matter of course, in all areas of activity*'. Most members of any society involve themselves in learning at some level everyday, but whether people universally are able to value and support learning and involve themselves to a level acceptable by government, '*in all areas of activity*', remains questionable.

New Labour pledged its commitment to lifelong learning in its Manifesto in 1997, '*We will promote adult learning both at work and in the critical sector of further education*' (Labour Party Manifesto 1997: 5). Helena Kennedy's report '*Learning Works: Widening participation in Further Education*', endorsed New Labour's vision by focusing on widening participation in adult education. The Green Paper, '*The Learning Age: A Renaissance for a New Britain*' (DfEE 1998) followed, emphasising a culture of learning. Later papers for example '*Learning to Succeed*' (DfEE 1999) established the framework for the policy. Evidence to support this policy can be seen with the provision of funding for these initiatives for both the employed and unemployed, collaboration with industry to develop a more skilled workforce to compete globally and widening participation in adult education both in the community and at university level. Lifelong learning is not only about

group empowerment, it is a significant factor in achieving personal autonomy and fulfilment (Docking 2000:130).

Despite the government's proactive efforts to tackle social exclusion (New Deal 1997, New Start 1997, Education Action Zones 1998, Excellence in Cities 1999) the problem remains that participation in adult learning in any form is directly related to status, gender, age and experience. The 'learning rich' are likely to be among the middle and upper classes, white, employed and urban dwellers who have gained from a sustained 'front loaded' education, while the 'learning poor' are likely to be unemployed, working class, ethnic minorities, and the geographically isolated, including Travellers who have had an abbreviated, disjointed experience of initial education (Bhopal 2004, OFSTED 2003). Despite many educational initiatives to redress the balance by improving opportunities for all, both the 'learning rich' and the 'learning poor' have in the main replicated themselves in the next generation (Coffield, 2000a) and it will take more than a generation to redress the balance. According to Bourdieu (1985) the 'learning rich' continue to be empowered with 'cultural capital' while the 'learning poor' become increasingly disempowered.

Lifelong learning and community education have been developing as an area of interest for more than three decades. Lengrand's seminal paper in 1965 at UNESCO's International Committee for the Advancement of Adult Education first raised the concept of lifelong learning to prominence. A few years later,

*'Learning To Be'* (Faure 1972) deployed the notion of lifelong learning as an instrument for developing civil society and democracy. Faure's humanistic paradigm was a vision based on a person being *'unfinished'* *'divided'* and *'incomplete'* but with the direction and influence of education can be developed into the *'complete'* person.

Policy over the last decade in lifelong learning has narrowly focused on the investment of human capital almost to the complete exclusion of social capital, which encompasses common values, and a sense of solidarity (Giddens 1998). Human capital is defined by the OECD (1998: 9) as *'the knowledge, skills and competences and other attributes embodied in individuals that are relevant to economic activity'*. The underlying implication of a human capital perspective is that investment in knowledge and skills brings economic returns, individually and collectively. Although clear links are made in current lifelong learning policies between economic prosperity and social inclusion (Hyland 2002), the concept of economic capital always takes pride of place, and there is a real danger that the important *'social capital'* (Schuller and Field 1999) objectives may be neglected in the drive for economic competitiveness.

However there is now a substantial body of work on lifelong learning suggesting that learning is *'inescapably a social creation'* (Ranson 1998: 20) and recognises the value of teamwork (Engestrom 1996) and *'collective intelligence'* (Brown and Lauder 1995: 28) as being crucial to the development of learning organisations of

all kinds. The important social context of learning needs to be taken into account if we are seeking to achieve the 'social capital' aims in addition to the more economic objectives.

By contrast with the human capital perspective, social capital owes its prominence mainly to the work of Bourdieu (1985), Putnam (1993, 1996), Coleman (1988), Fukuyama (1996), Sturges (1997), Woolcock (1998), and Schuller et al. (2000). Social capital focuses on networks, the relationships within and between them, and the norms that govern these relationships. It has strong normative connotations, implying that trusting relationships are good for social cohesion and for economic success (Leadbeater 1999). If we confine ourselves to measuring the success of current policy in the sphere of adult education to the achievement of often arbitrary targets, then the measurement for the success of current policy, adding to the wealth of human capital is easily quantified through, for example, duration of schooling and levels of qualification.

The measurement of social capital is far more problematic. As a policy concept there are several reasons why it should be explored further. It is central to the debate of this thesis, as many Fresh Start schools are located in areas of deprivation where social capital has almost been eroded. However, it is recognised that Travellers do have strong inherent social capital and could contribute to create opportunities to expand their human capital and provide a

starting point for regeneration. The Community Wing initiative at the Fresh Start School in the case study offers one such opportunity.

### *Community*

The concept of 'community' was laid down in 1887 by Tonnes. He defined 'Gemeinschaft' (often translated as community), as a group that forms around essential will, which is underlying, organic, or instinctive driving force, in which membership is self-fulfilling and exemplified by the family or neighbourhood (see English translation, Loomis 1955 pp. 223-231). Post-modernists have fiercely contested the notion of 'community' and it has clearly become something far more differentiated than the notion based upon ties of blood and soil introduced at the end of the nineteenth century by Tonnie's. In many urban areas, the idea of 'community' in its traditional sense as something referring to a place or neighbourhood may well be waning. Putnam (2000) refers to American citizens increasingly 'bowling alone', suggesting that formal and informal networks have declined dramatically in the USA since the 1950s. There is evidence that many people are experiencing a growing sense of isolation on both sides of the Atlantic as connections among individuals and their communities are fraying (BBC1, 10 o'clock News, 28/03/05)

### *The Community School*

One way to improve this sense of isolation has been through education. Attempts were made to bring 'education' and the 'community' in closer



proximity more than sixty years ago. One of the earliest attempts to integrate education and community services was in the form of the Cambridge Village Colleges of Henry Morris during the World Wars (Ree 1985: 148). This model was based on a geographical understanding of the nature of 'community'. The model was based in a rural context, with a modest range of out-of school activities enabling non-school activities to take place during the school day as well as in the evenings when the buildings were available. Morris's vision was similar to Faure's notion of a learning society, but it encompassed an innovative approach by combining community and education in a school setting, somewhat similar to the Community Wing model.

According to Harold Marks and other advocates, this model worked well, as it was of value to school pupils (Elsdon 2001). The 1950s and 1960s created the climate for change and the '*community schools*' model did not survive. The concept was resurrected during the 1970s, but only in urban areas and a few LEAs (Jennings 1980, Mee and Wiltshire 1978).

By the early 1970s, major changes in the educational and training systems were afoot, due to the growing body of opinion that existing systems were neither meeting the needs of the majority of young workers nor the needs of the employers. The Newsom Committee (1963) identified that many young people were leaving school without qualifications or relevant vocational guidance. The Prime Minister, James Callaghan, voiced concerns about, a lack of basic skills

provision within the prevailing progressive primary education agenda, and an inadequately skilled teaching profession, when he called for a public debate on education in the famous Ruskin speech (1976). This was at a time, when the UK was fuelled by a volatile economy caused by rapid oil price rises, high inflation rates, and an accelerated pace of technical change. Post-16 education provision became a major focus of government policy with the advent of the Technical and Business Education Councils promoting technical and commercial qualifications to the Manpower Services Commission, which promised a major expansion of vocational education (Ainley and Cornley 1993). In this climate, '*community school*' policy and provision eroded.

### ***Lifelong learning in community schools***

In the light of more recent government policy and this case study, we need to look again at schools having valuable resources for the provision of lifelong learning sited in the heart of the community (Clark 1996). If schools are to expand and be used successfully as venues for post-16 learning, then we need to take heed of Coffield's (2000b) findings that pedagogy and all that it entails needs to be redesigned in order that there can be greater benefits for all learners and that policy and practice needs to be informed by research rather than political dogma.

Initiatives have been introduced to improve the social capital of disadvantaged groups in the UK, particularly during the last decade. In many cases, schools have been the vehicle to promote access to these initiatives for disadvantaged groups.

*'The Children Project'* is one such initiative. It began in 1997 based on a large housing estate in southeast London as a direct result of concern about the rise of school exclusions. Conceptually, *The Children Project* was aimed at early intervention and prevention work with families to help make the most of their children's time at school, with longer-term aims of reducing school exclusions and crime. Initially, the project identified families most in need of provision, including crèche facilities, health education, parenting skills groups, after-school provision and toy libraries (Davis 2000). Since its conception, *The Children Project* has expanded to include 11 schools across the borough and has widened its early remit both in terms of the type of delivery and the numbers of accredited courses. Currently, there are over 700 families on the database, with at least 500 accessing, and completing courses (Davis 2003). At the launch of *'The Children's Fund'*, (2000), David Blunkett cited *The Children Project* as an example of 'good practice' that made a positive contribution towards transforming the first Fresh Start primary community school.

### ***The re-emergence of the 'community school' concept***

The White Paper, *'Schools Achieving Success'* (DfES 2001c) recommended that legislation be introduced which would remove the barriers that schools might face in seeking to provide more support to pupils, families and communities and urged the development of pilot schemes to *'test out such "extended schools"'* (England, Parliament, House of Commons, 2001). *'Developing schools in the community'* (LGA 2001) is a vital part of the strategy to improve dialogue between central and

local government. As a result, there has been a re-emergence of the '*community school*' concept recently, with many schools reinventing or '*extending*' themselves (DfES 2002a). Chris Edwards, Chief Executive of Education in Leeds, (2004) affirmed his commitment to: '*Encourage and support children and young people to achieve their full potential and become independent lifelong learners*' with the introduction of extensive mentoring provision throughout the borough and '*transforming traditional 'school' buildings into a resource for the whole community*' (Edwards 2004). '*The London Challenge*' (DfES 2003d) initiative to transform secondary education in challenging circumstances in key London communities is another example of expanding the community idea while linking every secondary school in the capital with a leading London business.

There has been growing recognition that schools cannot solve the problems associated with social exclusion and multiple disadvantages on their own. The concomitant demands that this places on school staff have been widely recognised (DfEE 2000, Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2001), together with the need for the '*availability and accessibility*' (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2001) of specialist advice. One response has been the development of multi-agency approaches (DfES 2003c). The provision of a base within schools for outside expertise has been suggested as a means of coordinating multi-agency approaches while at the same time creating a solution to the growing demands placed on school staff and in line with government policy announced in '*Extended Schools*' (DfES 2002a).

A number of schools offering extended activities and services have recorded the following benefits:

- The benefits for pupils have been:

higher levels of pupil achievement; increased pupil motivation and self-esteem; specialist support to meet pupils' wider needs; additional facilities and equipment; greater opportunities for staff for flexible working and career development; enhanced partnership working with the community and better school security; easier access to essential services for staff and helping staff recruitment and retention.

- The benefits for families have been:

improvements in child behaviour and social skills; greater parental involvement in children's learning; more opportunities for local adult education and family learning and greater availability of specialist support for families.

- The benefits for the community have been:

better access to essential services; improved local availability of sports, arts and other facilities; local career development opportunities; better supervision of children outside school hours and closer relationships with the school (DfES 2002a: 5).

### ***Social exclusion and adult learning***

'Social exclusion' is frequently used to describe groups that are perceived by the government and others to be disadvantaged socially, economically or politically. Education can help adults overcome the problems of social exclusion, whilst

emphasising the importance of the community (OECD 1999). A key issue is the ability of organisations to meet the needs of ordinary people in their communities (Kennedy 1997). Ian Nash, (TES 11 February 2000) acknowledges that while much of what is in the post-16 White Paper, *'Learning to Succeed'* (1999) provided optimism, including the move towards partnerships within communities, he also expresses concern about the provision for excluded groups, including teenage drop-outs and unemployed ethnic minorities that would prove to be either hopeless or costly. Furthermore, the OECD (2001) *PISA* report from schools in 32 countries concluded that there was too big a gap between 'high' and 'low' attainers in Britain and *'that socio- economic background remained a barrier to educational success'* (Chitty 2004: 197).

Both reports (OECD 1999, DfEE 1999) called for sustained investment in local communities rather than 'scatter gun' funding of large projects, a sort of rebirth of 'community' but in a new context. Fresh Start schools offer one such context. A conclusion from the (OECD 1999) study is that lifelong learning policies, which focus primarily on jobs, are not as effective as those that support existing networks (unions, community groups, professional bodies), which bolster employment long term. Employment measures without sustained investment in social capital, such as health and welfare and basic education, fail to equip people for recession or sudden changes in new global markets. As Kleinman (2000: 57) points out, *'social capital is as important to economic development as economic capital'*. It appears that as a result of systematic lobbying from those working in

the field, government policy is demanding joint action from all departments of health, welfare, education, employment and culture, in an effort to address this concern. Encouraging results are beginning to emerge from several successful projects around the country (Davis, 2000).

### ***Travellers and social exclusion***

The term 'social exclusion' is common currency in British social policy and attracts much academic debate throughout developed nations. New Labour's pledge to tackle social exclusion is based on, *'the principle that everybody has the right to participate in society, and the opportunity to achieve their full potential'* (DSS 1999: 30). The concept of 'social exclusion' is complex and contested. A range of policy interventions are required, even to begin to address issues of social exclusion including those of inequality in participation and achievement in education, which have been shown to be significant factors affecting life chances (Hobcraft 2000, 2002, Walton 2000). Sparkes and Glennester (2002: 178) suggest that *'individuals who leave school with low levels of educational attainment are at a high risk of experiencing social exclusion as adults'*.

Increasing globalisation is transforming traditional communities by diluting their sense of solidarity. MacIver (1961: 293) describes this sense of belonging as *'we-feeling': a true feeling of 'us'*. In many communities this sense of belonging has frequently been associated with a place or neighbourhood. One community that has not relied on 'place', as a determinant to shape their identity for centuries are

Travellers. This group is of particular relevance to the case study, since they form 40% of the school population and live on a permanent site close to the school. Their ties are based on blood and, historically, travel. Their blood ties and itinerant way of life have been instrumental in creating an inclusive close knit community that until recently has survived with minimal exposure to any continuous, formal education or participation in a wider community (Naylor and Wild-Smith 1997).

The introduction of the 1968 *Caravan Sites Act* placed a responsibility on local authorities to provide sites for Travellers. This Act heralded change for Travellers' intrinsic, cultural patterns of movement and, basically, impeded their freedom to stop and settle anywhere. The provision of sites has been patchy in the UK, with the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) removing this duty from local authorities. However, provision has continued in their structured plans. Changes in housing laws, coupled with school improvement measures, have impacted on Travellers, mainly because of their historical non-attendance and poor performance at school (Bhopal 2004, DfES 1985, 2003a, OFSTED 1999c).

Whilst Travellers have historically been a marginalised group (Bhopal 2004: 48), measures being introduced to encourage a pattern of continuous education can impact on a community where they reside. Continuous schooling has previously been denied to both this generation of school age children and previous generations in a 'front loaded' setting or in a 'second chance' scenario of lifelong



learning. Several generations have benefited from *'The Traveller Support Service'*, set up in the late 1980s and early 1990s in selective boroughs throughout the UK to enhance educational opportunity and attainment for Traveller children. This service is dependent upon LEA funding and implemented in a variable way throughout the UK.

School improvement initiatives, together with Fresh Start, offer opportunities for Travellers to improve their previously impoverished human capital. Hall (1997) suggests that people from low socio-economic backgrounds, including Travellers, are more likely to centre their informal social contacts on close kin. This inclusive network has provided the basis for Travellers to build on their inherent, strong, social capital foundation developed over the centuries and may assist them in embracing the new policy framework. However, the effects of years of embedded suspicion to authority and 'Gorgias', the term used for non-Travellers by Travellers, will undoubtedly take many years to overcome.

The theme of community is fundamental to the new politics of the 'third way' (Giddens 1998), an idea broadly adopted by New Labour. In this sense, 'Community' means furthering the social and material refurbishment of neighbourhoods, which is particularly relevant in poorer areas (Giddens: *ibid*). The Travelling community frequently reside in poorer neighbourhoods that are now beginning to benefit from regeneration programmes. The case study school is based in a regeneration area.

### ***Community Education in Fresh Start Schools***

Fresh Start schools are an excellent vehicle for community involvement. The majority of Fresh Start primary schools are involved with the community in some form of adult learning and it is an integral part of their ethos (Headteacher interviews, December 2003). Some schools have been fortunate to benefit from having extra space on site to run classes during the day for adults, while their children attend school or crèche facilities.

- Many Fresh Start schools have relied on multi-agency partnerships to deliver the kind of services that are dynamic and practical examples of the vision outlined by Kennedy (1997: 4) *'In a system so caught up in what is measurable, we can forget that learning is also about problem-solving, learning to learn' ... 'It is a weapon against poverty. It is the route to participation and active citizenship'*. A partnership of agencies drawn together to deliver services to families in the area based on early intervention and lifelong learning can include:
  - the Local Education Department
  - the Social Services and Housing Departments of local government
  - one or more Further Education Colleges
  - the Health Authority
  - the Voluntary sector.

If these agencies 'join up' with the school, they can strengthen the school's effectiveness in health, welfare and education of children, while also providing

an important contribution to the success of the leadership and teamwork within schools in accordance with the government's objectives in '*Schools Achieving Success*' (DfEE 2001c). However, there can be difficulties with multi-agency involvement when agencies fail to work together as a team and focus on their own priorities, losing sight of the purpose of the endeavour.

Many courses are free for participants and funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). However, free availability of such facilities does not ensure over-subscription. Each community has its own attitude and agenda towards courses and learning, as the case study highlights. These are frequently formed by cultural, ethnic and religious traditions, which can be barriers or forces for learning. If the end goal is the expansion of inclusive practice, then it is essential that we develop a truly positive belief to achieve this result. Otherwise, the status quo will continue and the transformation of social systems within and beyond the educational system, into learning communities, will not materialise. Furthermore opportunities and empowerment will be reduced (Clark 1996, Feinstein, Hammond, Woods, Preston and Bynner 2003). A recent report by The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA, 2003), supports the findings of Feinstein et al. (2003), recognising that if neighbourhood renewal is to have any impact in the long term, the emphasis needs to be on incorporating both social and human capital into the framework of courses that 'learning providers' are creating. In this way the 'hard to reach' in deprived communities will in time be able to contribute to the learning society.

Since 1997, however, there has been a drive by the government to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills for adults in the UK. Adult-classes in the community have been a useful vehicle to promote this endeavour. The OECD (2000) provided the first reliable and comparable estimates of the levels and distribution of literacy skills in the adult population worldwide. The results confirm the importance of skills for the effective functioning of labour markets and for the economic success and social advancement of both individuals and society. The definition of 'literacy' used for the OECD survey is *'the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work, and in the community'* (OECD 2000: 10). Britain's performance is compared with 14 other developed countries where *'at least 15% of adults have literacy skills at only the most rudimentary level - making it difficult for them to cope with the rising skill demands of the information age'* (OECD: *ibid*: 13). *'The Moser Report'* (1999) reported that 7 million adults (24%) in the UK have literacy and numeracy difficulties and made a number of recommendations on how government should address them. As a result, strategies have been introduced aimed at improving the basic skills of 750,000 adults by 2004 (Adult Basic Skills 2000, Skills for Life 2001). This case study highlights the issues involved in incorporating basic skills in Lifelong learning for a disadvantaged community.

### ***The case study's schools contribution to Lifelong Learning Introduction***

Becoming a community school was one aspect of gaining Fresh Start status. The headteacher, the governing body and the LEA decided to use capital funding to

develop a self-contained Community Wing in the school, equipped with I.T. facilities and a Health Clinic. This project is having a modest impact on parental involvement and a greater impact on the local community. Through education and training opportunities, participants are beginning to build trust and confidence in the school. The case study school's OFSTED Inspection Report (2002b: 19) noted *'The school's partnership with parents promotes effective links between home and school'*.

A Community Wing opened in 1999 as part of the Fresh Start school improvement strategy. It serves a group who are disengaged with each other and the community, as parent (c) commented: *'A lot of people are disenfranchised they really don't feel they have anything to offer. They are single parents and long-term unemployed'*. A compensatory type of educational provision was seen as a solution to tackle social inclusion and 'front loaded' educational deprivation in the catchment area of the school. The wing is part of the school building, with its own separate entrance, comprising two classrooms, one with a computer suite, a crèche, a co-ordinator's office and several smaller consultation rooms. The Community Wing is an extension of *The Children Project* set up *'to work with parents of primary school children in areas with few social or educational advantages'* (Davis 1997).

There is growing interest in the role schools can play in contributing to area regeneration (Crowther, Cummings, Dyson and Millward 2003) with integrated

services providing 'one-stop shop' family centres. Schools serving disadvantaged areas are encouraged to be outward-looking, to engage with families and communities and to coordinate their efforts with those of other agencies. Research findings by Crowther et al. (2003) demonstrated that schools' attitudes towards regeneration and supporting activities is variable and have been influenced by many different factors, including a feeling of disconnection from the wider regeneration efforts, partners that were inward looking and a policy that lacked coherence. Headteachers have a powerful role in determining their school's response, which is partly determined by the imperative to maintain a relentless focus on their 'core business' of teaching and learning in order to drive up pupils' attainment. Furthermore, the development of a wider community role can be problematic, especially since available funding tends to be short-term and unpredictable (Crowther *et al.* 2003). These researchers also found some good evidence to suggest that community involvement activities in schools were making a difference to the lives of their pupils, offering support to families and extending the resources available to the community. These findings support the more recent work carried out in two low socio-economic areas in Scotland where parents particularly valued school based 'one-stop shop' family services (Tisdall, Wallace, McGregor, Millen and Bell 2005).

A Single Regeneration Bid for the Cray Valley provided initial funding for the wing and crèche. Currently funding is provided by Education, Health, Adult Education, Social Services and a local College. A substantial figure was pledged

by The Children's Fund in 2003, for the following three years, to ensure the project continues and expands. The multi-agency partnership delivering services involves six partners: the Borough's Education Department, a Primary Care Trust, two Adult Education Colleges, the Borough's Social Services, and the School. 'Making Connexions' (Ainley, Barnes and Momen 2002) illustrates a similar model of social service delivery and is recognised as a way forward to strengthen schools effectiveness in health, welfare and education of children (DfES 2002c) and build on the 'social capital' of the community '*which has a large and measurable economic value*' (Kennedy 1997: 6). This practice is in line with the current thinking of providing these resources in schools as outlined in the '*Extended Schools*' programme. Furthermore 'Sure Start' (DfESb 2002a) has attempted to expand this policy whereby one school in every local authority will provide a full range of community services by 2006. Power (1997) would support this new government initiative, indicating that with appropriate external support, local initiatives can reverse even strongly embedded processes of decline.

My initial research of *The Children Project* carried out in 2003, incorporated the community dimension and serves as a preliminary investigation for this research. The aim of my current research has been to investigate the background and status of the adults attending courses and to evaluate the contribution that *The Children Project* based in the school is having on the community, particularly with reference to the initial aims of the project. My findings are the result of 35 questionnaires issued to all of the 46 current participants, interviews with 4

personnel and 4 participants, a visit to the crèche and a visit during the afternoon to a 'Crafty Recycling' class with 12 adults. Current classes include Basic Skills, Computing, First Aid, Parenting, Cake Decoration and Crafty Recycling. Five courses were on offer at the outset in 1999 and at its peak in 2002/3, eleven courses were available. Class participants are predominantly female with an all-female staff. The initial aims of the project were to:

- Improve children's attainment and development
- Engage in their children's education
- Raise self-esteem
- Identify needs early and make appropriate interventions
- Tackle whole family health issues
- Reduce disaffection and exclusion
- Develop parent-driven activities and programmes.

### ***Leadership and management of the Community Wing***

Harris and Muijs (2003) observe that in most countries, effective leaders have an indirect but powerful influence on student achievement in schools. It is also recognised that headteacher and teacher involvement are crucial to the success of reform programmes (Ross *et al.* 2001). It is significant therefore, that the Community Wing, although physically based on the school premises, is not under the headteacher's leadership, nor has there been any direct involvement until late 2004. Furthermore there is no formal requirement for it to be linked with the school, despite recognition at the outset that both organisations would



benefit from this arrangement. This management structure obviously has an impact on the way the school and the Community Wing interact and the overall strategic development of the two organisations. *The Children Project* manages the Community Wing at the case study school independently, but under the local authority umbrella, with the day-to-day management carried out by a part-time coordinator based on site. There are shortcomings with this management structure. These include the following:

- 'off-site' executive management;
- part-time day-to-day management;
- a lack of 'hands on' involvement by the headteacher.

In part, these shortcomings have been overcome by personnel (a co-ordinator), who has maintained continuity and provided consistency from the outset. This is a crucial factor for this type of provision, particularly when the aim is to attract an audience whose 'front-loaded' experience has been poor. Approachability, sensitivity and accessibility are key ingredients and were recurrent themes. Parent (t) commented, *'It's really handy having the coordinator here. She's really approachable'* while parent (j) recalled, *'Sometimes the coordinator will phone me up and tell me about a course and I'll put my name down'*. This approach reinforces findings that effective leadership needs to be fundamentally people-centred and concerned with building positive relationships (Harris and Chapman 2002).

One key factor of the project's success has been that it is needs-led, as the coordinator pointed out, *'I respond to need. So if enough people want a course and if I can tap into it and get funding, I can put it on. But I have to have a minimum of eight students'* Parent (t) verified this, *'Several of us have asked for different courses to be run and now there's a waiting list for some of them'*. Parent (s) commented on how courses were advertised, *'There's a newsletter outside the classroom and there's a whole list you can sign up for and the coordinator says you can ask too'*. This approach supports the notion of *'de-centering'* the leader in Gronn (2000) and Goleman's (2002: 14) notion of including *'every person at entry level who in one way or another, acts as leader'* while promoting coherence *'through a common culture'* (Elmore 2002: 15). A positive aspect of providing needs-led courses is that they are fully subscribed, for example *'Crafty Recycling'* and although these courses do not relate to the employment agenda they provide a stepping stone for adult returners.

The additional revenue from *'The Children's Fund'* (September 2003) has provided an expanded service, with extra part-time personnel for the Project including, a mental health worker, speech therapist, dietician and a nurse working within the school. The expansion of this multi-agency support may provide the impetus for change to the leadership and management role at the Community Wing. The coordinator felt the new posts would add to the development, *'There is a nurse here now for two days a week and she provides any kind of health support that she can give. A dietician is also provided by the*

*Children's Fund and she goes into schools where the project's running to talk about diet and healthy eating'.*

However, the changes in policy (DfES 2002c) that have involved more multi-agency personnel have also brought a negative influence to the headteacher's perception of the overall management of the Community Wing. It also appears to have had a negative impact on the school staff by reducing the focus of the core business of teaching. The headteacher feels that, *'So much is down to personality. Many of the specialists have difficulty relating to the needs of this catchment area which is very different from anywhere else in the borough'*. In this situation, the role of the educator needs to undergo a transformation as Flude and Parrott (1979: 84) recommend. They need to become *'an impresario, a guide, a course compiler and link person'* and move away from the historical formal teacher's role, as a provider. Practitioners need to take heed of the practices and values of the networks of the communities in which the students operate, or aspire to enter (Clark 1996, Fenstein *et al.* 2003). In practice, this means listening and understanding at the 'grass roots' level, not imposing externally, with courses that have been designed to a set formulae but have little value to the recipients concerned and further alienate the learner. This new initiative might be more effective if it was coordinated under the leadership of the headteacher rather than an external body, as it is at present. If the management structure was changed to one that was driven by an entrepreneurial headteacher who is already involved with the parents and school community, a

more integrated approach may result that supports existing networks (Kleinman 2000, Leadbeater 1999) rather than one that is currently in place, driven by an increasing bureaucratic and distant management.

The coordinator considered the drawbacks of her role as being, '*The ever increasing amount of administration*' and the post being part-time, '*which means I'm not here all the time when the students are here*'. The demands of this role have changed over the last five years and more time needs to be given to strategic planning if widening participation and expansion is to be achieved.

### ***Governing Body***

The governing body has limited involvement in the Community Wing. The initial decision to incorporate the wing in the school premises was ratified by the governing body and a presentation about the activities was given to governors by the coordinator in 2002. Governors could have been more effective in their leadership roles by creating more of a partnership through the school, with those who had overall responsibility for *The Children Project*, thereby involving all the stakeholders and being recognised as effective (Creese and Earley 1999, NCSL 2001). Governors have been involved more recently with discussions about possible changes to classroom spaces that are currently being used by the Community Wing. The school may require these rooms, as the roll has substantially increased due to more families moving into the area (January, 2005). The implications caused by this possible change of use are far-reaching

and as yet unresolved. However, governors could make a positive contribution towards this change process by fostering collaborative strategies with the school and local community and by encouraging a continuation of this type of provision in whatever form is seen suitable (Bird 2002, Creese and Earley 1999, Hopkins *et al.* 1996).

### ***Teaching and Learning***

My findings from the questionnaires revealed that the majority of the participants currently attending courses at the Community Wing are over the age of 31 years. The majority of those enrolled are married, which does not reflect the current marital status of parents at the school and reinforces the findings that 87% currently attending do not have children at the school, indicating that parents attending courses are in the minority. 41% of parents with children at the case study school have attended the centre since April 1999 and 15% are currently attending a course or on a waiting list. This indicates that there has been a fall in parents attending, but an increase in adults unconnected with the school. A small majority of the current intake had not attended a course before at the school.

Ledoux and Overmaat (2001) and Teddlie *et al.* (1989) argue that pupils' learning in low socio-economic areas benefit from more structure and more positive reinforcement, with a curriculum presented in smaller packages. This finding seemed to be also relevant for adult learners as parent (t) commented,

*'My teacher doesn't overload us with work. She'll go over things several times until we get it'.* Brophy (1992) highlighted the benefits of non-contingent praise for low achievers, which is reinforced by parent (r), *'I get a real sense of achievement here because the teachers are full of praise. It makes you want to do better'.* A visible pattern emerged from the interviews that many participants had not sustained continuity in their 'front loaded' educational opportunity for varying reasons and consequently felt disadvantaged in this respect. Parent (r) acknowledged, *'When I went to school I had some difficulties, especially when it comes to certain words. But the teachers here teach differently'* and parent (s) felt, *'I had a lot of time off school so I fell behind and I just couldn't catch up'* reinforcing OFSTED (1999b, 2002a) findings. Several parents commented on a sense of satisfaction as a result of increased ability and confidence, for example, parent (t) noted, *'If I have to fill out a form, I do it in rough first, I set it out. So it has really helped me'.*

Basic skills classes are still being provided at the Community Wing, but have the lowest enrolment. However, as parent (c) commented, *'The courses are pitched right. Not overly academic which is good'.* Basic skills, it appears, are seen as an unnecessary or a threatening step for many of the participants, as parent (t) remarked, *'I think a lot of people think it's like school. But it's not like that at all with the English class. I get taught in real easy steps. I never feel that things are too much for me'.* This reinforces the findings of Ledoux and

Overmaat (2001) that students from low socio-economic backgrounds benefit from receiving the curriculum in smaller packages.

Several students who were attending basic skills courses spoke of the personal benefits, particularly for their own language skills, as parent (t) explained *'I've got an exam in June that's a level two. I've benefited quite a lot really. Mostly with spelling and writing. I've learnt a lot'*. A Traveller grandparent who had recently joined the basic skills course after much persuasion commented *'I'm having a second chance really. I'm learning things for the first time now'*. Pitching courses at the right level helps create an unthreatening environment enabling participants to increase their confidence and self-esteem (Ledoux and Overmaat 2001).

Parent (j) and other participants recognised some of the possible outcomes that could lead to future employment as a result of studying at the Project, *'One of my friends said why don't you come to the school. She was always looking after her younger brothers or sisters and missed a lot of school. She's passed a sort of secretarial course and she's going to start work'*. The precarious step back into the world of formal education is not generally seen as a direct route to employment as indicated by 88% of the participants in their questionnaires with supporting interview data. Parent (s) remarked, *'I'm starting a new course 'Children are Fun' in a couple of weeks. So once I've done everything I think I will be ready to go back to work'* and parent (t) commented, *'Well I didn't start*

*out thinking about working, but now I want to go back to work*'. Many recognised that networking has been a positive outcome and might be useful when employment becomes a higher priority. It was evident that the majority of participants were not seeking employment and consideration should be given to courses that assist in the preparation for employment, for example CV writing or mock interviews. Improving their education was the highest priority for 49% of the current intake.

Several people expressed concern about the continuity of basic skills classes due to low rolls. Parent (t) remarked *'I've been coming here for about 2½ years now for literacy and I would really like to brush up on my maths because I'll need that for a job. Nobody else around here seems to want to do it'* and parent (g) pointed out *'I used to come to the maths class but that was closed because there weren't enough numbers'*. The literacy class was perceived to be threatened with closure as parent (t) pointed out *'There's three off sick so I'm the only one here today. It's a shame if they'll have to close the wing'*. A characteristic of adult learners is that they have very little inclination to really learn something they do not perceive as meaningful for their own life goals (Illeris 2003). For disenfranchised groups, the concept of educational programmes actually being useful to life goals is probably even further removed. A solution for this audience might be to deliver Mathematics and English in a more creative format to promote learning and reduce disaffection (Henchey 2001, Hopkins and Reynolds 2002).



The crèche makes a significant contribution as it enables teaching and learning to occur for many of the adult learners. However the crèche is not running at full capacity. Although there are 30 children on the roll, the numbers using the crèche varies considerably throughout the year. An issue of concern therefore is the future viability of the crèche. The main concern of those parents interviewed was expressed by parent (d) *'If this crèche wasn't here I couldn't get out and learn something different. It's such a benefit to a lot of people'*. Offering crèche facilities on a fee paying basis to working parents in the community may be a way forward to provide additional revenue for a service that is essential for the operation of the Community Wing while offering good early childcare provision in the community.

### ***External Support***

Several adult education colleges provide teaching personnel while *The Children Project* provides the overall management and training for the coordinator at the wing. Research findings indicate that external support can be a catalyst for change while making a positive contribution to school improvement in disadvantaged areas (Fullan 1991, Reynolds 1998). There is little evidence of external support or the sharing of good practice with similar organisations that could benefit the Community Wing to improve its practice (Hopkins and Reynolds 2002).

## ***Resources***

Research indicates that proper resourcing is essential if school improvement is to succeed (Reynolds *et al.* 2001). The initial funding provided by the Single Regeneration Bid for the conversion of the premises and subsequent funding from *The Childrens' Fund* has secured its longer-term viability of the Community Wing. However, funding for courses has been more of a lottery, relying on the coordinator to bid from various sources as the coordinator pointed out: *'I spend a lot of time sourcing funding. It all depends on what type of course is being provided as to whom I go to for the funding. There really isn't a clear picture'* (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2002). This supports Kennedy's (1997: 50) findings that *'The inequity of the current arrangements is the most compelling reason for change'*. Piontek *et al.* (1998) and Connell's (1996) findings show that effective schools deploy resources wisely and are more proactive at finding resources. The main concerns from the data relating to resources include the sustainability of funding (Nesselrodt *et al.* 1997), increasing the roll and the continuation of basic skills courses due to low numbers.

Free provision of courses was an issue for several people interviewed as parent (c) commented, *'It's all free, which is a consideration if you're on income support'* Parent (d) felt, *'I couldn't afford to pay for it'*. However research has also indicated that having good resources does not guarantee success (Piontek *et al.* 1998). As the crèche leader pointed out her concerns were bound up with the

lack of parental responsibility, *'If I'd been offered the opportunity to have free classes and this sort of crèche facility, I'd have been out all the time. Sometimes they start a course but they drop out. I'm sure if they paid, they'd think twice before not turning up any more'*.

### ***Creating a Positive School Culture***

Developing coherence throughout a school is recognised as a key element of school improvement (Maden and Hillman 1996). Opening a Community Wing at the case study school was part of the overall improvement strategy to create a positive school culture by incorporating parents and reducing the prevailing negative home influences (Teddle and Stringfield 1993). However, without the headteacher's direct involvement in policymaking and key management decisions, the coherence potential may not be fully realised. 100% of the respondents reported in their questionnaires that they had derived positive benefits from attending their courses. The main advantages included:

- use of the crèche,
- increased confidence;
- meeting other adults;
- staff continuity.

One of the key features of the project is the crèche facility. It is ideally located in a bright, purpose-built room adjacent to the classrooms with plenty of capacity for its present demands. The main feature in the room is a miniature traditional Traveller caravan providing a play space for the children and a

meaningful reference point for Traveller children. The Traveller support teacher (m) pointed out, *'When you talk to the children they still remember their grand parents, aunts and telling them about the trailers they used to have'*. The positive effects of placing the caravan in the crèche were reinforced by the Traveller grandparent (r), *'Having the caravan in the room makes us Travellers feel a bit special. This school has done a lot towards recognising our way of life'*.

All of the participants interviewed involved with the Community Wing have made use of the crèche and commented on the varying benefits for both parents and children. This facility allows many children an earlier opportunity to socialise in a safe, semi-structured environment, which for many is the first exposure to any external influence particularly for Traveller parents. As Parent (a) recalled, *'My son loved the crèche. He still talks about it now'* while parent (s) felt *'The children get a bit of independence too'*. Staff were also appreciated by the parents, as parent (t) explained, *'They're brilliant in the crèche. They know how to handle the children'*.

Many parents revealed their initial lack of confidence to attend classes. The comment from parent (r) was fairly typical, *'I didn't want to go, but one of the girls said, "Come with me," and I thought right go for it'* and parent (t) recollected, *'I found it so good that I couldn't make out why I didn't want to go in the first place. You also meet all sorts of other adults that you've seen around*

*but don't actually know*'. The majority of participants are involved in less academically demanding courses as parent (c) explained, *'A lot of people are terrified of signing up. You're worried whether there's an exam or a piece of written work. You feel that you're being judged. That's what puts people off. They're afraid of making a silly comment and showing themselves as being idiots and they don't want to risk that'*. 94% of the participants were interested in pursuing more vocational courses. Staff continuity has been recognised as contributing to creating a positive culture (Hughes 1995) and has been a feature at the wing, as parent (c) commented, *'We nearly always get the same teacher and they know us and what we can do'*.

Some parents who had attended basic skills classes felt it has given them confidence to help their own children with homework, and had a positive impact on their parenting skills which would support research findings (Barth *et al.* 1999). Grandparent (r) commented that she didn't have the time when she had her family, but having attended the 'Parenting' course and the 'Basic Skills' course she has, *'More time to sit with the grandchildren and help them. I find it's a lot easier now'*

It was evident from the questionnaires, interviews and visits to the wing, that the most popular class currently running is 'Crafty Recycling'. The ambiance in this class was very lively with everyone totally engaged with their own project while simultaneously conversing with other participants. The class involved creating a waste bin from recycled materials having seen a sample made by the tutor. Many

people expressed their personal satisfaction, as parent (t) remarked, *'I love taking things home and showing my kids. A number of times I've made more with them'* and parent (s) stated, *'I made one of those bins in green for my living room and so many people have remarked how good it looks and I've made one for them'*. The teacher (a) claims the success of this class is because *'It's a venue for people to socialise with other adults in a non-threatening environment and share experiences, while giving them the opportunity to gain confidence about themselves through producing something that they take pride in making'*. Grandparent (r) elaborated on the same theme, *'I think it's wonderful that you can still have the chance and the ability to do something for yourself'*. Several people felt positive about ownership of the curriculum, as parent (s) remarked, *'We make our own choices as to how we go about making our own thing'*. This type of provision is an example of a *'bottom up'* approach (NAGCELL 1997) and supports Kennedy's findings, *'That women returners blossom in courses specifically designed for them'* (Kennedy 1997: 8).

### ***Developing a learning community***

School improvement research recognises that schools need to become innovative and adopt evidenced-based good practice. Engaging and collaborating with the wider community is one of those options and particularly relevant for the case study school (Joyce *et al.* 1999, Harris 2001). Being school-based ensured easy accessibility for the community. There was almost unanimous support (97%) in favour of courses being available in school. Parent (r) felt that, *'I think college is*

*too formal for me. I can take my time here with the literacy learning*'. This point was reinforced by parent (t) who felt *'Going to a college would feel like I'm starting school again'* and parent (s) felt *'It's so easy here. We've all got to know each other and it's a bit like a club'* while parent (r) mentioned, *'I've lived here for 36 years. My grandchildren have come here. It's close for me and I know the place well'*. However, 68% said they would be prepared to travel to a college to attend courses.

Learning communities are built around the notion of continuous improvement being achieved through collaboration amongst professionals. The Community Wing relies on part-time staff, working on an independent basis with very little time or opportunity to develop the sort of good practice found in learning communities and outlined in much of the research (Harris 2001, Louis and Kruse 1995, Piontek et al. 1998, Stoll 1999). For example, one of the issues highlighted by various respondents was the lack of Traveller children attending the crèche. The crèche leader commented, *'We don't get the number of Traveller children. They used to come years ago when it was a playgroup and they could stay. The Travellers don't really like to leave their children'*. One solution might be to incorporate Traveller parents in the crèche to build their confidence in using the adult learning facility. The Traveller support team revealed that the numbers of children were low at the school in the early years due to a fluctuating birth rate, which accounts in part for the current low numbers.

### ***Parental Involvement***

Parental involvement is a key characteristic of improving schools in low socio-economic areas (Joyce *et al.* 1999) but is not always easily achieved (Henchley 2001). However, parental involvement is a large contributory factor in terms of evaluating the success of the Community Wing at the case study school, particularly in the long term. The findings at the Community Wing reflected Kennedy's (1997) findings on the *Knowsley* housing estate where parental participation helped to bridge the home/school divide, raise confidence levels, increase comfort levels in the school vicinity, increase involvement in school activities while increasing their ability to help their children learn. My interviews expanded on these findings and included other issues as they emerged.

A similar model to '*Knowsley*' is in place at the case study school with much of the success of the project resulting from making learning feel real and relevant to the participants lives, as parent (s) commented, '*At the moment it's about networking, meeting other mums at the school and making new friends*'. The main objective for 37% of the participants was to meet people.

Many parents commented on their lack of ability with language skills. They felt inadequate helping their children as they progressed through the school. Parent (t) explained '*I came here to freshen up from school, but I've learned loads of other things*' and parent (t) revealed, '*My son started school in September and*



*the books are easy now, but soon they'll be more difficult and I want to have some knowledge and help him a little bit*' and a grandparent commented, *'When your grandchildren ask you different things you want to be a bit ahead of them so you can help them'*.

One of the issues concerning the headteacher was the low number of parents with children at the case study school who have attended classes since 1999. The current figure is 13%, with 2% on a waiting list for courses. Although there were early efforts to attract parents, particularly by the coordinator and the headteacher, currently there seems to be a lack of direction. The two favoured routes of recruiting parents are through 'word of mouth' or by advertising. Most people interviewed had learnt about the Project by word of mouth as parent (t) remarked, *'I met a girl at the community centre who told me about this place and I've done most of the courses here'*. According to several participants living in a nearby area, the facilities are widely known, as parent (t) remarked, *'A lot of people in my son's school know about it'*, but the location has an impact as parent (j) pointed out, *'There's been flyers put up on the board. I've put them up at my son's school but the school is at the other end of St Paul's Cray quite a way from here'*. Although recruiting by 'word of mouth' was an effective method, numbers are currently not sufficiently increasing and these concerns were shared by some of the parents.

Raising the profile of the Community Wing with an active campaign, involving presentations made by current participants during a school function may be a way to increase parental recruitment. A positive suggestion made by parent (j) to attract more parents was, *'Maybe at assemblies when the parents are there, parents could come in and talk about the class. That way people might want to come and give it a try'*. A number of participants felt a targeted advertising campaign would be effective, parent (t) commented, *'In the early days I used to see 'ads' everywhere. They should put an advert in the doctor's surgery so people can see it when they sit there'*. The recent expansion of multi-agency support at the Project may also be a vehicle to bolster the numbers of parents attending classes if it is used to its best advantage.

Another issue of recruitment at the Community Wing relates to gender. Currently there are 94% females attending courses, while the national average for females attending adult education classes during 2001/02 is 58% (National Official UK Statistics 2003). All the males (6%) only attend computer courses. This point was raised by a female participant (j), *'You can't get guys. There are single dads around. They should come along as well'* and participant (c) commented, *'The guys seem to be even more difficult to reach'*. A concerted effort to bolster male recruitment may be by offering more courses involving practical skills that might have more male appeal (Kennedy 1997).

To increase and widen participation within the parent community (Clark 1996, Feinstein et al. 2003) it is essential that more courses are ‘pitched’ at the right level to attract people back into a learning environment. Educators need to disguise basic skills within other types of practically based, relevant curriculum that will engage this group. As the headteacher remarked, *‘Their needs are very simple. There’s an element of self-esteem. If they can make something to take home at the end of the session, that has got to be a good thing’*. This aspect was evident from feedback in the Crafty Recycling class. Coffield (2000b) highlighted the importance of informal learning in the formation of knowledge and skills and that we should not underestimate the submerged mass of learning that takes place informally and implicitly within this kind of context.

A venue like the Community Wing can be used to establish informal contact between school and parents while opening up useful communication lines. Travellers remain a difficult to reach group in terms of sustained education during the ‘front-loading’ period or indeed engagement with lifelong learning in a formal educational environment. This is apparent at the case study school by the low intake of Travellers with children at the school who have participated in classes at the Community Wing since its inception being 24%, representing 5% of the overall intake. This figure could be misleading, as the data provided by the project does not give a breakdown relating to purpose for attending the wing, for example, a participant may have just visited the nurse, attended one class or actually completed a course. The headteacher confirmed that of the 24% of the

Travellers who were registered as attending, 41% of that figure have since moved on, indicating the high mobility of this group.

High mobility can be seen as a barrier to learning in this instance. There are also other barriers that are threatening for parents about re-entering a learning environment. Many of these barriers have been removed at The Project, as it is very informal, needs-led, and accessible. Initially, the Project utilised the expertise of 'The Traveller Support' service as teacher (m) pointed out, *'We are not involved so much now. If parents come and say they want to learn, we tell them who to speak to and put them in touch'*. If the aims of the Project remain as they were at the outset, then it is essential that the team continue to network in an attempt to increase the Travellers attendance, as teacher (m) pointed out, *'When the project was first set up I had a lot of contact with the coordinator and letting her know about the Traveller families and who might be interested'*. Although the Travellers Support Team's role is expanding, it appears to be losing fundamental links with the Project as teacher (a) pointed out, *'We do work with other agencies, the Children's Fund and with the Gypsy Traveller Project. I go to a lot of meetings to raise the profile of the team'*.

Travellers' cultural identity still precludes them from overcoming the barriers that prevent them from attending formal places of learning (Bhopal 2004, DfES 2003a). With Traveller participation at the Community Wing in decline, it is worth examining a successful class that ran in the first year of operation that

specifically targeted Traveller women using cookery as a vehicle for learning, with basic skills as the foundation. While recognising the difficulties involved in attracting this group, a concerted effort needs to be made to incorporate them into adult learning. This might include a focused needs-led survey using key personnel involved at the multi-agency level, targeting mothers at the breakfast club and the resurrection of the popular cookery class that provided a non-threatening, positive environment that encouraged learning.

All Fresh Start schools with a community education provision within their schools are faced with different challenges, frequently involving different ethnic minority groups that impinge upon the success of recruitment. Many of the strategies used in this model are transferable to other schools, even though the presenting circumstances may appear to be different.

### ***Continuous Professional development (CPD)***

There is strong evidence that effective and improving schools have policies in place to support staff development (Henchley 2001, Reynolds *et al.* 2001). It would appear that there is little CPD in place for the staff involved in *The Children Project* across the borough. There was also little evidence of opportunities to network and share good practice that is embedded in the workplace (Joyce *et al.* 1999, NCSL 2001) between the eleven coordinators of the various venues where *The Children Project* is currently operating. This type of CPD is widely recognised as being effective for staff development (Joyce and

Showers 1995). Furthermore, positive links could be established with all the personnel involved in the Community Wing at the case study school to develop a constructive CPD programme.

### ***Creating an information-rich environment***

Research indicates that schools can become more effective when they turn their data-rich sources into information to improve their practice (Henchey 2001, Hopkins 2001, Joyce *et al.* 1999, Reynolds *et al.* 2001). Although there seems to be substantial record-keeping at the Community Wing, it appears that this is driven more from the external demand to justify funding than internally driven to improve practice. Sharing data sources with the school may also be a way forward to improve and modify practice (Hopkins *et al.* 1996).

### ***Summary***

The impact this Project has made on this community is difficult to measure except in terms of the qualitative effect. In terms of the initial aims of the project outlined earlier, it would be reasonable to conclude that there has been limited success in relation to attracting a larger audience, including Traveller parents. There has also been limited success in terms of identifying needs and designing appropriate courses and tackling whole family health issues. Progress in these areas has been hindered by a lack of a coherent strategy. This has ranged from the withdrawal and then subsequent injection of personnel, a lack of coordination between the Project and the school, reduced involvement from the

Traveller Support Team, a lack of overall management and varying degrees of apathy on behalf of the community. Furthermore, there is a lack of transparency in funding arrangements.

This model highlights the relevance of adaptability as it has provided needs-led courses while also illustrating the development of good links and trust between the professionals and the community. Some parents and people in the locality who may have been historically socially excluded have had the opportunity to access a learning experience at the Community Wing, allowing them to build on inherent social and human capital while improving lifelong learning. Further effort needs to focus on incorporating the remaining disenfranchised community back into the world of learning in the community.

A positive contribution has been made in terms of good childcare provision with the crèche and increased socialisation opportunities for children. In addition, adults have benefited from improved confidence levels, self-esteem and increased socialisation opportunities. For a few, it has been the springboard to employment. This project has made an important step by starting '*to build confidence in the community that historically was absent*' by widening participation and offering an opportunity, however small, to participate that will hopefully lead to active citizenship, as outlined in '*Learning Works*' (Kennedy 1997: 15). This is a developing model that could be modified for other schools in the country where the community has few opportunities in place to improve

their '*cultural capital*' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). However, in terms of value for money, this enterprise currently must have a negative return. At present, courses are free and although for the next three years funding is not an issue, it could be a dilemma for future sustainability if the project relies on self-funding.

It is in the realm of the multi-agency that that this model has both strengths and weaknesses. Ironically, it is the link with the school that seems the weakest and where one might hope to see more involvement in the future. However, at the time of writing, (January 2005) the school's roll has expanded and will be requiring more teaching space that will undoubtedly call for a change of use for existing space at the Community Wing which brings into question the structures currently in place for adult education and childcare provision. This may provide an opportunity for change in the overall leadership of the Community Wing and incorporate lifelong learning opportunities into the Fresh Start concept as originally intended.

### ***Recommendations***

In order for the project at the case study school to be more successful and ensure sustainability, several measures need to be implemented, including:

- a joint strategy with the school and *The Children Project* involving all key personnel;



- extended provision of learning opportunities for adults to assist in preparing them for employment;
- extended provision in the crèche for working parents and longer opening hours;
- more creative marketing;
- a drive to recruit more males;
- a drive to recruit more parents during breakfast club in the school.

***Implications for policy and practice***

- High levels of mutual understanding and co-operation are required for multi-agency partnerships to work effectively.
- A ‘bottom up’ approach appears to be more appropriate in this model but ‘top down’ approaches can be effective in some circumstances.
- This ‘bottom up’ approach can be applied in many other venues, including shops in the High Street that have been converted for community education, offering easy accessibility from youth to senior citizens. Fresh Start schools are a useful vehicle to initiate learning in the community, but all schools should be available for this purpose. Bringing learning opportunities closer to other aspects of daily life may encourage more people to participate.
- Recognition that high levels of both ‘human’, ‘social’ and perhaps cultural capital will enable any community to move towards becoming a learning society, but the process is evolutionary and worthwhile for all participants involved. There is an inherent danger in the ‘over interpretation’ of lifelong

learning as participation in formal educational opportunities for which credit is gained. But wider participation might include learning from informal networking with scope for improved social inclusion, which is also of value.

- Projects of this nature have inherent problems with evaluation. ‘Social capital’ is far more diffuse than ‘human capital’ to evaluate. Network membership provides important access to ideas and information, frequently in an unstructured way. The impact of how learning affects health, and family life beyond the individuals concerned needs further research.
- Recognition that sustained government funding is vital for projects like this to develop.
- Crèche and community facilities need to be available throughout the day.

### ***The Fresh Start Community School Model***

The Community Wing has offered educational opportunity within the school community, while having a positive effect on neighbouring communities who attend classes. Ensuring the participation of under represented groups in lifelong learning is central to the creation of a true learning society and this endeavour illustrates evidence of some good practice. Schon (1971) stressed the importance of the function of government not only to become a learning system itself but also to facilitate society to become a learning society, by adapting to change, in order for society to learn to identify and solve its problems. Fresh Start can be seen as a positive move in this direction, with a good fit with the concept of a learning society. However, without the overall leadership being under the headteacher, this

model is somewhat fragmented and lacks the cohesion and successful practice evident in the school. Recent changes in educational policy focusing on inclusion and wider participation in our schools will impact on both the 'human' and 'social capital' of this particular community. Appreciating the diversity of needs of students in the community, opportunities need to be continually extended to attract and retain a wider audience (Lucas 2004).

This Fresh Start Community School model is an example of sensitive, inclusive practice in action, building on strong, inherent 'social capital' in this group of Travellers. It is an attempt to expose the parent community and Travellers to learning through *The Children Project*, and the Fresh Start concept, moving towards Ranson's (1998) definition of a learning society, suggesting that people need 'to value support and engage in learning' (Ranson 1998: 157). It is recognised there is still a long way to go before these citizens will 'engage themselves as a matter of course' (Ranson: *ibid*) and Ainley (1998: 43) would support this view that 'the rhetoric of the learning society does not match the reality of the situation on the ground'. Despite those who are sceptical of the various initiatives that have attempted to improve lifelong learning opportunities, we must not undervalue the opportunities that these small endeavours have brought to thousands of people in the UK and other countries.

The whole philosophy underlying Fresh Start is that success can be achieved by innovative change that meets the users' needs. In this instance, there is a real

attempt to deploy the notions outlined by The National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, (NAGCELL 1997: 3) *that 'lifelong learning at whatever stage of life, engages people to identify their learning and development needs whilst moving in a steady direction towards the notion of a learning society'*. It is essential that educational policy retains the flexibility to embrace, where appropriate, alternative solutions for lifelong learning, as has been the case in the Fresh Start model.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This thesis draws on international educational research and policies that have provided the climate for the development of Fresh Start, seen as a solution to school improvement in low socio-economic areas where schools have failed their OFSTED inspection. Fresh Start embodies the belief that '*schools can make a difference*' for the better and improve the life chances of their pupils (Edmonds 1979, MacGilchrist *et al.* 2004, Mortimore *et al.* 1988, Rutter *et al.* 1979). The key factors that contribute to this belief becoming a reality provide the basis for analysis of the school improvement initiatives in the case study school. This study also highlights the importance of the interpretation of the key factors, essential to the complex change process being successful and school improvement being sustained in a low-socio economic context (Fullan 1991, Stiasny 2004, Stoll and Fink 1996).

This case study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the weaknesses of the former school that led to it being placed in special measures. It also outlines the complex change process involved in the Fresh Start renewal that has led to school improvement. It is the combination of a specific coherent strategy involving key factors, supported by three initiatives, that have been crucial for success in this context. This model has brought complete structural change to the former school.

The key factors of this model are:

- A new headteacher with an entrepreneurial approach, and a vision that has been consistent and shared with staff, parents, children and external agencies. This has been achieved through a transformational and distributed leadership style. The headteacher was specially appointed and has remained in post since the outset, providing continuity for the school.
- A new staff that were recruited on the basis of the headteacher's former personal experience of their capabilities and suitability for the new school context. They have been recognised and remunerated accordingly and all have remained in post since the outset, providing continuity for the school.
- Additional government funding covering the first three years of Fresh Start was essential in the initial transformation process, and equally important, has been phased and managed by the school over a five year period. This has ensured the school's future sustainability.
- The school has benefited from the support from several external agencies that have provided a commitment and expertise from the outset and have all worked effectively together. Previous knowledge and expertise of Fresh Start by the DfES in the secondary sector, provided a good foundation for supporting a new venture in the primary sector. The HMI endorsed the Fresh Start option and has provided expertise and continuous support that has been constructive and well received. The LEA gave positive support providing a very competent, link adviser who has remained with the school since the outset, providing continuity for the school.

- The new governing body brought a considerable amount of educational expertise and have been committed to on going school improvement. The majority of governors are still in post after six years, which has provided continuity for the school.
- Sustaining school improvement has been achieved over the past six years by all the above factors, together with the adopted initiatives outlined in the case study.

Supporting evidence in the case study school illustrates, that by creating links between the three main initiatives, namely, a breakfast club, SFA and a Community Wing, an opportunity has been provided for focused school-wide development, staff development and classroom development while creating a coherent positive school ethos (Joyce *et al.* 1999). Furthermore, the school has focused on broader notions of accountability to turn itself around, including investments in teacher knowledge and skill, organisational change to support teacher and student learning, systems of assessment that drive curriculum reform and teaching improvements which reinforce the findings of Darling-Hammond (2004) emphasising the relevance of these aspects to positive reform. It is the powerful combination of these initiatives in this context together with the headteacher's entrepreneurial leadership style and support from the governing body, the LEA, HMI and the DFES, that is the key to the school's current success. Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) endorse this approach.

The adopted initiatives have helped counteract the negative influences evident in the previous school. They have proven to be a successful strategy for improvement in this context. This model uniquely combines a range of interrelated initiatives that are relevant in the context of this school and could be adapted for other schools where similar circumstances are present. The impact of the transformation process and the initiatives together with dynamic leadership has brought about change and improvement on many different levels. Fresh Start has been the policy initiative that has generated the change.

It is rare that a school is given an opportunity to establish systemic change so rapidly and so extensively. The model in the case study school has successfully embraced the four distinct strategies outlined by Sachkin and Egermeir (1993) cited in Dalin (1998: 134) suggesting that reform can be achieved by 'fixing the parts', 'fixing the people', 'fixing the school', and 'fixing the system'. However, the case study model illustrates that, in reality, this is a far more comprehensive and complex process than the simplistic formula suggested by Sachkin and Egermeir (1993). Amongst other things, the process has primarily been driven by a positive attitude towards innovation from all of those involved.

Changing the school as an institution was accomplished by the appointment of a new entrepreneurial headteacher with a range of leadership skills and a vision for school improvement incorporating a belief that all the pupils should be offered more opportunity to develop their abilities and talents in a supportive



environment. The headteacher has been supported by a competent and experienced committed staff, who together have developed a sense of school ownership through distributed leadership, a 'can do' philosophy and school-wide CPD in SFA. The DfES, HMI, LEA and the governing body contributed to systemic change by providing strong support together with sufficient funding that historically had not been evident. It is these second order changes relating to *'altering organisational structures, patterns and practices of individuals'* that Fullan (1991: 287) emphasises, that enable new policies like Fresh Start to succeed.

Changing the manner in which the entire school system functioned was achieved by the school becoming an *'extended school'* offering breakfast and after-school clubs to pupils, lifelong learning at the Community Wing, reducing the size of the EBD unit, introducing a school-wide discipline policy and a staff with low absenteeism and high retention. This has had a positive effect on the impact of the school's ethos by bring more stability, pastoral care and opportunity.

The three initiatives outlined above and described as part two of the case study in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, have made a major contribution to school improvement and its sustainability. The introduction of a breakfast club at the case study school has improved attendance, punctuality, concentration, behaviour, nutrition and socialisation opportunities for approximately 60% of pupils who attend it, while increasing opportunities for socialisation for parents and staff. These finding are

supported by current research (Harrop and Palmer 2002, Simpson 2001, Street and Kenway 1999, Wyon *et al.* 1997). The combination of these individual aspects has made a positive impact on teaching and learning and the school climate.

Implementing the innovative school-wide literacy strategy SFA has positively contributed towards co-operative learning, discipline, inclusion, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous professional development, while constructively involving the whole school in the focused task of raising literacy levels. These findings support the current literature (Borman *et al.* 2003, Hopkins *et al.* 1998, Pearson and Stahl 2002, Pogrow 2000) and raise issues for further SFA research focusing specifically on Traveller inclusion.

The Community Wing initiative has provided learning opportunities for the school community and locally based Travellers. It incorporates government policies including lifelong learning, inclusion and community schools embracing initiatives like '*Extended Schools*'. The Community Wing has been limited in its success in terms of attracting parents, embracing extensive school involvement and latterly a coherent strategy due to its imminent possible closure. However, for those who have taken advantage of these learning opportunities it has made a positive impact. A school based multi-agency 'bottom up' approach underlies the success of this initiative. It has increased learning opportunities while reducing social exclusion, particularly at the outset for Travellers in the local area. The

future of the Community Wing in its present form is uncertain and any decisions involving change are likely to impact on the whole school community. The parties involved need to focus on finding the most effective way forward for this school community to continue to access non-threatening, accessible lifelong learning opportunities.

Fresh Start schools have generally improved against the odds, particularly in the primary sector, in which a positive view is portrayed both by OFSTED in their school inspection reports, and by the examples of the case study headteacher interviews in this study. However, occasional negative media reports (All Saints Secondary School, Telegraph Hill) have had a damaging effect on their image. The HMCI has acknowledged uncertainties about Fresh Start that, *'The initiative has not been universally successful'* (Bell 2003a). Understandably, there are still reservations about the degree of success achieved by Fresh Start schools, particularly as they are frequently reported to be near or at the bottom of league tables. However, it would appear from the interview with Peter Clough, Head of the Fresh Start Unit when he acknowledged that *'Fresh Start primary schools are a big success story with Key Stage 2 results increasing faster than the national average'* (Clough interview 08/10/04, see appendix 7) and from the findings documented in this thesis that these reservations should be regarded with a degree of scepticism. The extended services provided by the case study school are in line with initiatives like *'Every Child Matters'* (DfES 2003c) and support the more recent government's ten year strategy to invest in childcare, early education

and work-life balance outlined in 2004 in '*Choice for Parents, The Best Start for Children: A Ten-year Strategy for Childcare*' (HM Treasury 2004). There are many aspects within the successful case study school that, if considered, should enhance the government's long-term strategy.

The case study school has been strengthened by the reform initiative of Fresh Start. This initiative has incorporated change at a national, local and school level, combining entrepreneurial leadership, professional autonomy and intelligent accountability with comprehensive external support bringing rapid and radical change and sustained school improvement while positively transforming the lives and raising aspirations within a small community. This surely should be applauded as an example of a successful venture that fulfils many intrinsic aims of education.

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## **APPENDICES**

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

## Appendix 1

**Table 3. Numbers of schools in different categories of schools causing concern at the end of 2002/03 (Percentages of all schools of their type are shown in parentheses)**

	Primary	Secondary	Special	PRU	Total
Special measures	185 (1.0)	58 (1.7)	25 (2.2)	1 (1.5)	292 (1.2)
Inadequate sixth form	-	10 (0.6)	-	-	10 (0.6)
Serious weaknesses	279 (1.5)	73 (2.1)	16 (1.4)	8 (2.6)	375 (1.5)
Underachieving	79 (0.4)	14 (0.4)	-	-	93 (0.4)

**Table 4. Numbers of schools placed in each of the categories of schools causing concern in inspections in 2002/03**

	Primary	Secondary	Special	PRU	Total
Special measures	99	35	8	9	160
Inadequate sixth form	-	6	-	-	6
Serious weaknesses	123	38	8	4	63
Underachieving	34	6	-	-	40

**Questionnaire: Parents****Breakfast Club****Susie Matthews**

I am carrying out some research on Fresh Start schools as part of my Doctorate in Education and would be very grateful if you would kindly take part by completing this questionnaire. Your comments will be totally confidential. It would be very helpful if you would put your name on this questionnaire, for a possible follow-up discussion. Thank you for taking part.

**Please circle your answers.**

Your name:

1. Does your child attend the breakfast club?                      Yes                      No

2. How many days a week does your child attend?

   1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. Does your child enjoy coming to breakfast club?

   Yes                      No                      Sometimes

4. My child enjoys school more because he /she comes to school for breakfast.

   Yes                      No                      Not sure

5. Does the breakfast club help your child to arrive in time for school?

   Yes                      No                      Sometimes

6. Do you help at the breakfast club?

   Yes                      No                      Sometimes

7. Would you be happy to help at the breakfast club on a regular basis?

   Yes                      No

8. If you had to pay for breakfast would you send your child to breakfast club?

   Yes                      No                      Not sure

9. My child benefits from coming to the breakfast club.

   Yes                      No                      Not sure

10. What benefits do you think your child gets from attending the breakfast club?

**Appendix 3**



**Questionnaire:Staff**

**Breakfast Club**

**Susie Matthews**

I am carrying out some research on Fresh Start schools as part of my Doctorate in Education and would be very grateful if you would kindly take part by completing this questionnaire. Your comments will be totally confidential. Thank you for participating.

**Please circle your answers.**

Your name:

1. The B.C. has made a positive contribution towards improved attendance.

Agree                  Disagree                  Uncertain

2. The B.C. has helped the children's concentration during the morning.

Agree                  Disagree                  Not sure

3. The B.C. should continue.

Agree                  Disagree                  Not sure

4. The funding for the B.C. could be better spent elsewhere.

Agree                  Disagree                  Not sure

5. Are you involved in the supervision of the B.C.?    Yes    No  
Occasionally

6. If yes, approximately how many hours per week? .....

7. The B.C. has improved the childrens socialisation.

Agree                  Disagree                  Not sure

8. The B.C. has improved opportunities for the parents socialisation.

Agree                  Disagree                  Not sure

9. What are the benefits arising from the B.C.?

10. What are the problems arising from the B.C.?

Appendix 4



**Questionnaire: Community Wing**

**Susie Matthews**

I am carrying out some research on Fresh Start schools as part of my Doctorate in Education and would be very grateful if you would kindly take part by completing this questionnaire. Your comments will be totally confidential. It would be very helpful if you would put your name on this questionnaire, for a possible follow-up discussion. Thank you for taking part.

**Your name:**

**Please circle your answer.**

1. Are you:    male    female
  
2. Are you:    16-20yrs                21-25yrs                26-30yrs                31-40yrs                41+yrs
  
3. Do you have children attending the School?                Yes    No
  
4. Are you:    single    married    divorced    separated  
(you can circle both divorced and married if you married again)
  
5. Are you:    employed full- or part-time    unemployed
  
6. What course are you attending?  
.....
  
7. Have you attended courses before at the school?    Yes    No
  
8. If you answered yes to question 7 which courses have you attended?  
.....
  
9. Are you attending this course because you want to?  
    meet people    improve education    get a job
  
10. I have benefited from attending this course    agree                disagree                not sure
  
11. If agree, what have been the main benefits?  
.....
  
12. Courses for adults should be held at the school    agree                disagree                not sure
  
13. I would still attend this course if I had to travel to college  
    agree    disagree    not sure
  
14. What other courses would you be interested attending?  
.....
  
15. If you would like to make any other comments please do.

**Appendix 6**

## INTERVIEWS

### **Fresh Start Headteachers**

Charlotte Turner Primary, Childwell Valley Primary, Goose Green Primary, Heathcote Village Primary, Loughborough Primary, Manor Oak Primary, New Christchurch Primary, Nunsthorpe Primary, Orchard Fields Primary, Richard Heathcote Primary, The Orion Primary, Parringdon Junior, St John and St James Primary, Tivedale Community, Walter Lane Primary, Westmoreland Primary

### **External Connections**

Ward, 2004 HMI interview (jw)  
McLay 2004 interview (McLay)  
Clough, DfES 12/9/03 & 8/10/04 interview (Clough)  
LEA Link adviser's (lm)  
LEA head of planning and research education officer (jm).  
JONES-HILL, M. 2004 telephone interview SFA-UK Nottingham 10/1/04 & 19/1/04

### **Case Study school**

Headteacher  
Deputy headteacher/facilitator  
  
Teacher (a), Teacher (b), Teacher (s)  
  
Teacher (nursery)  
  
Traveller teacher (a)  
Traveller teacher (m)  
Classroom assistant (m)  
Support assistant (b)  
School cook  
Reception staff (j) Reception staff (m)  
Governor (a)  
Chair of Governors / Governor (b)  
Parent Governor (c)  
Parent (a)  
Parent (c)  
Parent (d)  
Parent (n)  
Parent (s)  
Traveller grandparent (r)

### **Community Wing**

Co-ordinator  
  
Creche leader  
  
Teacher  
  
Parent (c)  
Parent (g)  
Parent (j)  
Parent (r)  
Parent (s)  
Parent (t)  
Traveller parent (m)

## **Timeline for thesis**

September - February write literature review with constant updates until submission. Prepare questionnaires and Fresh Start headteacher interviews.

December carry out Fresh Start headteacher interviews

December - February collect my first round of data via questionnaires.

March - May carry out interviews.

June - July transcribe interviews.

September - October analysis and interpretation of interviews followed by any additional interviews and further data collection if necessary.

November - March writing up case study.

April - May final revisions.

June submission.

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To improve the standards of work and learning of the pupils the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- xvi improve the quality of teaching through:
- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve;
  - *improved planning for individual lessons, identifying clear learning objectives and appropriate activities to achieve them;*
  - planning with support assistants more effectively;
  - ensuring that work is matched to pupils' previous attainment and is both challenging and interesting;
  - encouraging a faster pace of working, and making better use of time;
  - making greater use of individual education plans when planning work for pupils with special educational needs;
  - better questioning, especially of younger pupils, to check and extend their understanding;
  - identifying weaknesses in individual teachers' subject knowledge and taking steps to improve them, especially for the under-fives, English, mathematics, science and information technology;
  - improving the marking of pupils' work;
  - senior managers monitoring the quality of teaching and working closely with teachers to develop their skills
  - taking steps to reduce the high number of staff changes (see paragraphs 33-40, 65, 73);
- develop an appropriate curriculum for the under-fives (see paragraphs 41, 90);
  - raise standards in English, mathematics, science (see paragraphs 11-17, 91-110);
  - ensure that the full National Curriculum programme of study for information technology is taught (see paragraphs 71, 112);
  - continue the development of policies and detailed schemes of work for those subjects that do not have them (see paragraphs 42-43);
  - plan further opportunities for pupils to work in groups, take greater responsibilities and develop their initiative (see paragraphs 36, 50);
  - assess pupils' attainment in those subjects for which there are presently no procedures (see paragraph 47);
  - implement the appraisal policy for teachers (see paragraph 71).

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- continue working to improve attendance (see paragraph 31);
- ensure that there is a clear policy for child protection procedures (see paragraph 56);
- review job descriptions (see paragraph 71);
- improve the library and how it is used (see paragraphs 76, 93);
- improve the deployment of staff (see paragraph 79);
- use the school grounds more effectively( see paragraph 80 ).

# Team Score Sheet

TEAM: \_\_\_\_\_

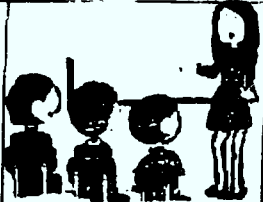



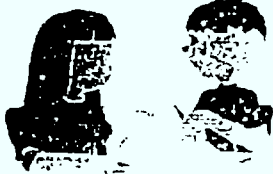
BOOK TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Members	Points per	Weeks Out (and Test)	Vocabulary Test	Story Test (including Main Theme for Non-Reader)	Performance Level Test (Level 2 only)	Advantages in Writing	Book Club Responses	Co-operative Learning Team Points	Total	Average
<b>Team Total</b>										
<b>Team Score</b>										

Co-operative Learning Points

Term

	 Active Listening	 Help and Encourage	 Everyone Participates	 Explain and Tell Why	 Complete tasks



**TREASURE HUNT****Grey Wolf, Prince Jack and the Firebird**

Alan Garner

**Vocabulary**

Words and Page number	Definition	Sentence
muffled Page 17	Silenced; made quieter	The sound of their footsteps was muffled by the deep snow, so the fox didn't hear them coming.
foolish Page 20	Silly; idiotic	It's foolish to think that having all the money in the world would make you happy.
surged Page 20	Moved forwards all together	At the end of the match the crowd surged onto the pitch to congratulate the players.
beyond Page 24	Further on	Just beyond the trees I could see the roofs of the houses.
false Page 34	Not real	After the accident, the poor man had to have a false leg fitted to replace the one he had lost.
mounted Page 36	Climbed onto	Josh mounted his horse easily but I couldn't get onto mine because it was too high.
wanderings Page 39	Journeys	Our cat, Billy, goes off on his wanderings each night and sometimes covers many miles before coming home with some kind of present for us!
brazen Page 41	Fearless; brave	The brazen boy dared to steal the giant's treasure from right under his nose.
seized Page 41	Grabbed	The policeman seized the boy by the scruff of his neck as he tried to escape.
spurted Page 44	Splashed out suddenly	The little old granny punched the robber in the nose and we watched in disbelief as blood spurted down his face.

**Treasure Hunt Questions - Section 1**

1. What was the problem in the king's garden?
2. What features of a fairy tale can you identify on the first page?
3. How did Jack stay awake all night?
4. Why didn't Jack catch the Firebird?

### Treasure Hunt Questions - Section 2

1. Why did Grey Wolf help Jack?
2. What happened when Jack tried to take the golden cage?
3. Why did the King set Jack a task?
4. Why did Jack take the gold bridle?

### Story Test

1. What happened when Prince Jack met his brothers again? Why do you think they did this?
2. How did the Grey Wolf know what had happened to Jack?
3. Why did the Grey Wolf grab the crow's baby?

### Vocabulary Activity

#### TEAM CONSENSUS

##### Vocabulary Practice - Cloze

- Write the numbers 1 to 4 in your book
- Take turns with your partner to read the passage.
- Discuss with your partner and team which word best fits in each gap.
- Go back to the passage to check your choices.
- Write the right words next to the numbers in your book.

muffled	mounted	wanderings	brazen
---------	---------	------------	--------

We \_\_\_\_1\_\_\_\_ our willing horses and set off on our \_\_\_\_2\_\_\_\_ through the countryside. We saw lots of wildlife, including a \_\_\_\_3\_\_\_\_ deer which grazed close by, either not caring that we were near, or not hearing us as the horses' hooves were \_\_\_\_4\_\_\_\_ by the soft leaves underfoot.

### Adventures in Writing

You will rewrite the story from the point of view of the Grey Wolf

Vocabulary Activities  
Team Mastery

**Vocabulary Practice - Cloze**

- Write the numbers 1 to 4 in your book
- Take turns with your partner to read the passage.
- Discuss with your partner and team which word best fits in each gap.
- Go back to the passage to check your choices.
- Write the right words next to the numbers in your book.

foolish	beyond	surged	false
---------	--------	--------	-------

I walked through the field of cows, a \_\_\_\_1\_\_\_\_ smile on my face as I pretended not to be scared. Suddenly the herd \_\_\_\_2\_\_\_\_ towards me. I ran to the gate and jumped over. Once safely \_\_\_\_3\_\_\_\_ the gate, I looked back and felt very \_\_\_\_4\_\_\_\_ when I saw that the cows had just been running towards the farmer who was bringing fresh food.

**Vocabulary Test**

**Vocabulary Practice - Cloze**

- Write the numbers 1 to 4 in your book
- Read the passage.
- Decide which word best fits in each gap.
- Go back to the passage to check your choices.
- Write the right words next to the numbers in your book.

surged	seized	mounted	beyond
--------	--------	---------	--------

The warriors \_\_\_\_1\_\_\_\_ quickly, \_\_\_\_2\_\_\_\_ their bridles and \_\_\_\_3\_\_\_\_ towards the arched gateway. Once \_\_\_\_4\_\_\_\_, they galloped off in search of the enemy.



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