The development of a new school as an inclusive school:
a case study of one North London Primary School from the planning stage to the implementation stage/s.

A project submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Professional Studies

Elaine Wilmot

National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships

Middlesex University

January 2003

CONTENTS

APPENDICES

SUMMARY

In this study of the development and evaluation of a new school as an inclusive school, I explore the theme of inclusive education and show how the boundaries of inclusive practice have been expanded as this unique school has grown over the four years since it has been established. My methodology is a combination of case study and action research.

My intent is to redefine inclusive education, from the integration of children with special educational needs to being individualised community-based learning.

I consider how I developed the various aspects that contribute to the inclusive nature of the school, including curriculum, learning facilitation, learning environment, assessment for learning and look at the standards achieved within the school as one indicator of its success. I also consider my role as headteacher of the school, my background and how I came to this vision and have come to this practice of inclusive education.

Through an evaluative study I show that the inclusive practices are very effective in our school in terms of parental satisfaction, staff and pupil attitudes, a positive Ofsted report, and rising standards.

I isolate the elements that contribute to the success of the school and use them for the basis of a 'template' and a new definition. I hope that this template can then be of use to other schools to enable them to reflect on their own practices with a view to developing inclusive education more broadly.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is a case study of a unique institution.

In this study of the development and evaluation of a new school as an inclusive school I intend to explore the theme of inclusive education. I aim to show that the current definitions that I found in my literature searches do not encompass the vision that I hold or reflect the school that I, in conjunction with staff and governors have developed. I will also reflect on my own development as a practitioner and give some comment as to how I have developed, and am continuing to develop, throughout the progress of this study.

I have developed the school in this way believing it to be the way education should be developing, given my previous development activities, reading of relevant literature, key government papers and initiatives and my reflections on all of these things.

I have involved all key stakeholders in the planning and development so they feel ownership of the whole project. This was vital given that they would be contributing to its development.

Ongoing evaluation has shown that the work is successful – the stakeholders continue to give feedback and staff, governors and I continue to develop the school further.

There have been times throughout the development of the school when I have wondered whether I have been risking my professional reputation. I was taking a huge risk pursuing my own beliefs about effective education rather than implementing government policy. For the first two and a half years of the school's life I did not share our vision with anyone outside of the immediate school community. It was only after a successful Ofsted inspection that I felt enabled to speak out about the successes of our practice.

For the purposes of this study I am making the assumption that inclusive education is a good thing and brings benefits for the whole school community. My intention by the end of the study is to show what those benefits are and why all schools should be considering them as part of the national drive for inclusivity.

I am not prepared, however, to make claims about our school being a 'perfect' inclusive institution because I know that inclusion is not a state, it is a process. We can always be more inclusive.

Context

I believe that it is important to set the context for this study as it has had such a profound impact on the development of the school. I begin with a reflection about how I have become the practitioner I have become by tracing my developing understanding of inclusive practice, and the need for it in our schools, throughout my career. This has played a large part in the development of the school as an inclusive school, given that I am the founding headteacher.

I have also included as part of the context, sections on why a new school was built and what kind of new school it should be as these too have influenced its development.

My Development as a Professional

I had not had a very happy education, my self-esteem was very low and I had become very good at learning how bad I was at learning. I knew, therefore, that I had to become a teacher in order to improve the educational experiences of future generations. A grand ideal for someone of only 6 years of age, because at the time I felt that classrooms should be happy places and I was very unhappy at school.

My low self-esteem continued to be reinforced at secondary school, up to and including my examinations, where I managed to scrape enough passes to secure my place at teacher training college.

I was trained as an early year's teacher, for the 3 – 8 age range, and, as such, a large proportion of my course was based on child development and the importance of relating practice to the relevant stages of development and levels of understanding. I was taught how to understand children's play and learning.

Most of my training was based on the theories of Piaget, which placed action and self-directed problem solving at the heart of learning and development. It promotes the idea that children can pass through stages of development and therefore asserts that they cannot learn or be taught how to function at 'higher' levels before they have passed through the lower ones. In this model, the teacher provides the appropriate materials and classroom experiences and when the child is 'ready' s/he will learn (Piaget, 1967).

During my first four years of teaching I worked in two separate schools and worked for two very different headteachers. In the first school she was a very authoritarian figure, she had very little contact with the staff and pupils of the school – and if she did visit the classrooms it tended to be to criticise. My second school could not have been more different. The school was merging with its partner junior school to form a primary school and until the new headteacher could take up her post we had a 'trouble-shooter' headteacher who played the honky-tonk piano in assembly and taught all the children to hand jive. His management style was much more 'laid-back' but he was able to engage staff in debate about teaching and learning and give staff the confidence to 'have a go' at trying out new things that my first headteacher had not done. I learnt a lot about how to get the best out of people from him.

I then transferred from Yorkshire to London for a promotion. It was on transferring to my current authority as an educational visitor that I started to question some school practices. As I was working in homes with individual children, and their parents, I began to examine closely how children learn. I feel this was a 'critical incident' for me, as it changed some of my ideas about children's learning. I began to see that young children, (I was working with 3-4 year olds at the time) could be helped to grasp quite difficult tasks with guidance, what Wood calls 'contingent teaching' (Wood, 1988).

The difficulty then came in transferring my new-found knowledge about how children learn in a 1-1 situation to a class of 36 mixed-age children in my next appointment, where the school's philosophy was very different to mine.

But it was in this post, as a young deputy headteacher, appointed to a staff who were considerably older, delivering a curriculum that I felt to be inappropriate for young children, where I believe I experienced some of the most 'critical incidents' of my professional career. At that time the Education Committee had considerable influence over senior appointments within schools. I believe that the headteacher was persuaded to appoint me and I felt that she was not convinced about my abilities, either as a class teacher or as a prospective deputy.

The curriculum (although of an infants' school) was based around a subject timetable (this was in 1982) and relied on resources that I had encountered as a pupil in my own infant school days. Knowledge was the main emphasis of the curriculum, with the main teaching strategies being copying from the blackboard, and rote learning of facts, such as isolated words from a reading scheme and times tables. Learning through play was frowned upon and quality of teaching was judged by the number of workbooks the children completed in the year. The children were formally tested to ascertain reading ages, etc. and this summative assessment did not inform the learning process at all. This system seems to echo the liberal-humanist tradition as explained by Mike Golby in 'Curriculum Traditions' (1989) and as far as I was concerned was totally inappropriate for 4-7 year olds, given my training and experience.

It was during this time that I began to develop myself, and other staff with me, as 'reflective practitioners' (Donald Schon, 1983). I began to engage the teachers in staff meetings and informal discussions about the teaching methods employed. We needed to focus on what we were doing and then ask why we were doing it. If we could not justify the what with the why, then we needed to change the what.

I was given opportunities to join an LEA based 'think-tank' which involved some weekend conferences specifically focused on the management of change, including one led by Michael Fullan, which obviously affected my thinking (and practice) as a manager of change. Up until this time I had not developed an understanding of the management of change and most of my practice had been built on 'gut feelings' or 'trial and error'. Working with Fullan I began to understand the importance of the leader / manager's vision of future direction and the need for a series of flexible, short-term aims with an early opportunity for success built in, in order to achieve this vision. I was then able to use these skills within my setting, thereby refining my understanding and developing through experience the techniques that worked for me.

Therefore, on taking up my next appointment, my first headship, I felt it vital to give staff an insight into my educational philosophy, and in my first staff meeting with them I gave them a picture of what I wanted the school to be like – my vision. I explained that the process of achieving that type of school (any change) would be a painful one, but that if we could support each other and work together for the good of the children, we would not go too far wrong. We would also need to be continually evaluating our practice and reflecting on our development in order to ensure that we were on the right path. I was beginning to implement Michael Fullan's cycle of change (1979).

At this time I attended an LEA run course on Early Childhood Education, led by Tina Bruce. She introduced me to the concept of 'schema' as a way of understanding the behaviour and learning of young children. This concept dovetailed perfectly with my initial training on Piaget and my further discoveries of 'contingent teaching'. It became obvious to me, following classroom observations and aware that the National Curriculum was looming, that we needed to devise our own curriculum based on these principles.

We wanted to promote the growth of the individual through the provision of opportunities to investigate the world, in an environment where the individual would develop through encouragement.

The decision was taken to abandon the use of printed schemes for reading and mathematics because on audit we found that they were not promoting the kind of education we believed in. We spent a great deal of time formulating activities in workshop sessions on Inset days and producing resources, which were duly categorised into topic banks. Evaluation was a large part of our work and we adopted the Open University 'Curriculum in Action' materials in order to do this.

The six questions in the pack were:

1. **What did the pupils actually do?**
2. **What were they learning?**
3. **How worthwhile was it?**
4. **What did I do?**
5. **What did I learn?**
6. **What do I intend to do now?**

(Open University 1980)

These questions encouraged the teachers to discuss their skills in relation to classroom and school practice. They began to see the benefits of working together to develop the curriculum based on our joint understanding of what makes a good teacher, and this developed us as a team.

A lot of the activities we produced were devised to encourage the children to develop their problem-solving and thinking skills, but many were still too over-reliant on printed work sheets. Being aware of this, we tried to move into more practically based investigations and provide space for play-based learning.

It was, and still remains, my belief that as teachers our first responsibility (accountability) is to the children, and the performance of our duties should reflect this. By constantly appraising our performance, both individual and collective, we were continually moving forward and growing in confidence. We had become a 'reflective institution'.

> **"...a reflective institution must place a high priority on flexible procedures, differentiated responses, qualitative appreciation of complex processes, and decentralised responsibility for judgement and action."**
>
> (Schon 1983, p.19)

8

It was just at this time, just as our curriculum was beginning to embed itself that central government introduced the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum had the potential to de-skill many teachers giving them the message that what they had been doing for years was not good enough, and in some cases that was the truth. The conflict between the National Curriculum and our value of the individual child's needs led us to continue the development of our curriculum and our own schemes of work and, as a consequence, led to increased self-esteem in my teachers.

I then changed jobs, taking on the headship of a primary school, in a socially deprived area of our LEA. It was a difficult post, the (five separate) buildings were in a very poor state of repair, resources were poor and staff, pupils and parents had very low self esteem. This manifested itself in vandalism, fighting in the playground (between parents as well as children) and low levels of achievement.

Whilst at this school, (five years), we had some notable achievements – we were the first school in our LEA to achieve Investors in People status; we were the first school in our LEA to be involved in Socrates (an international collaborative project with other schools in Europe); and, some of my staff and I had the opportunity to visit and work with schools in Norway, Holland and Spain.

My confidence, which should have been high at this time, given the incredible turn-around of this school, was failing. I felt that not all staff in the school subscribed to my vision and it was difficult to secure and maintain consistency of practice. My energy levels were exceedingly low due to the enormity of the task and I was taken seriously ill and had to be absent from school for a six week period. This illness was to recur the following year and I had to take a decision – school or health.

Fortunately, at this time my current post was advertised - the headship of a brand new school with the opportunity to build a school community from 'scratch'. This had been something that I had always wanted to do. On appointment I had a term before the school opened in which to plan, to read and to think as well as staff, furnish and equip the school.

The challenge of opening a new school has enabled me to bring together all the learning from my previous posts and because the school is new, there is no history or tradition or prior expectation from our community. It has enabled the staff and I to build a school based on my philosophy of 'starting from the child'. It has been very hard work and will continue to be so but the feedback from pupils, staff and parents is so positive that it gives us the collective confidence and energy to continue.

I feel that the kind of headteacher I am today reflects my experience. I know that I need to make school a better experience for my pupils than it was for me. I know that I need to maintain my position as 'lead learner' in my school in order to encourage and support the learning of others. I know that inclusive practices are the only way to provide appropriate education for every individual.

Why a new school?

Minutes from the LEA Education Sub-Committee of Councillors and Officers (see Appendix 1) show that school places for primary age pupils were forecast to be in short supply due to housing developments in the area. Initial discussions took place around increasing the roll at surrounding primary schools, but this was not felt to be feasible or sustainable.

On 23rd March 1993, Schools Sub-Committee approved in principle the provision of a new two-form entry primary school with a nursery. The first draft of the brief was prepared at the end of 1993. It was originally decided that there were only enough children to justify a one-form entry school, so the plan was to build the school in two phases. This later changed due to financial implications and the design of the building was changed and built in one phase. The proposed site for the new school was also changed over time, linked mainly to cost of land and planning permission. The current siting of the school was agreed in 1994/95.

An initial accommodation schedule was drafted with the brief. This was amended and developed during the life of the project.

I have not found any documentary evidence to suggest that there was an underlying ideology about the kind of school that should be built or that it was built due to a rise of special needs children within the locality. Its building was merely a reaction to increasing pupil numbers within the area.

What kind of new school?

Having spoken to the architect, he advised me that the school was to be built with a special needs unit and with this in mind the dimensions of classrooms and corridors were larger than DfEE recommendations. The special needs unit included in the design of the building was originally intended to be used for visually impaired pupils, hence the larger than usual spaces. On survey of parents of visually impaired pupils within the LEA it was decided that the unit's designation would be changed as all parents were happy with current provision out of borough and did not wish to move their children. A unit for hearing-impaired children was then considered but this was also rejected by the LEA, as parents were satisfied with the out-of-borough provision.

I had had experience at my last school of including a child with severe and complex special needs, both physical and educational and had seen the significant progress that he had made being enabled to operate within a mainstream setting. I spent some of my preparation term reading around the issue of inclusive education (see the section on review of literature on inclusive education) and attended a residential training course on the inclusion of autistic children into a mainstream setting. I discussed the idea with my then temporary governing body and it was decided, in conjunction with the LEA, that we wanted our school to be an inclusive school. At this time my understanding of inclusive education was very limited and, to me, at that time, it meant including some children with special educational needs within a mainstream setting.

The school was opened in September 1998 as a completely new school, with the brief to build a new school community. 1 had been appointed in February 1998 just as the building was being completed, so I had no input into its design. I took up appointment in April 1998, giving me one term to plan, appoint staff, and furnish and equip the school for its opening the following term. It had been decided by the LEA that the school would open as a one-form entry school in its first year, with one reception class and morning nursery class only – becoming two-form entry in our second year, it would then grow by one year group each year until the school was a fully functioning primary school in September 2005.

I spent the term reading, reflecting and planning for the future. So that when the school opened 1 had a fully formed vision about the kind of school that I wanted it to be. I wanted it to be unique, seeing it as an opportunity to build a school for the future, particularly with the new millennium around the corner. 1 was dissatisfied with the way the education system was going, i.e. more centralised control from government and I wanted to make a school where all children could be seen as successful, not just the academically-gifted few. 1 wanted to build a school that would serve the needs of its community and be the hub of learning within that community.

As staff were being appointed we made one of our criteria for selection a willingness to participate in the education of special needs pupils, including a willingness to access further training. This has remained one of our criteria for selection. When we are interviewing we look for staff who have a positive approach to their dealings with pupils and who see all pupils as having something to contribute to the school. We look for solution-focused individuals who can contribute to the development of the school.

Our notion of inclusiveness has developed since we have opened and have been functioning. As policies have been developed we have based them on our developing philosophy of inclusiveness. New staff joining our team have added to our thinking.

Our LEA has played very little part in the development of our school and decisions have been made by staff in conjunction with governors. But our thinking has been shared with the LEA who are now developing an inclusion strategy that will include a planned places scheme, whereby some schools are given additional budget in order to support inclusion. We have already volunteered for this scheme, although it is unlikely to come into operation before April 2003.

In the meantime, 1 have been asked to help with the training of LEA staff, and eventually staff of other LEA schools, on what constitutes effective inclusive practices. 1 will be using this case study of my own school as an exemplar.

Contextual Data

The ethnic backgrounds of the pupils are very mixed. Just over one third of the pupils are of white United Kingdom descent. European backgrounds include Greek, Greek and Turkish Cypriot, Irish and Italian. In addition, there are pupils from African, Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. About 10 per cent of the pupils who attend speak English as an

additional language but only about 2 per cent of those are at the early stages of learning English.

Economically and socially, the backgrounds of the pupils are mixed. About 17 per cent of the pupils are eligible for a free school meal. The proportion with statemented special educational needs is just under 3%. The range of difficulty faced by pupils with statements is varied and includes emotional and behavioural difficulties; speech and language; hearing impairment; physical needs and autism.

The varied intake of our school gives us a mix of pupils that enables us to show inclusive practices in all its differing respects.

The Study Project

The study will reflect my personal struggle to establish and develop West Grove, using a reflective commentary. A lot of the study, (which began in 2000), will be the telling of the story of the school's development from 1998 to the present, with an evaluation based on research with some of the key stakeholders and a reflection on how this development has taken the form it has.

I will trace the history of inclusive education and show how it has developed over time, making some reference as to how the political climate has brought about the right climate and the necessity for change.

I will include a chronology of the school's development, showing significant events in its history (see Appendix 2).

The text covering my project activity will consider various aspects of inclusion, as I see it. These will consist of:

- Curriculum
- Learning to Learn Project
- Learning Facilitator
- Learning Environment
- Assessment for Learning
- Standards

In my conclusion, I will consider which of the above aspects contribute to effective inclusion and try to quantify their impact on the school. My ultimate aim is to re-define inclusive education in order to further the current debate on social inclusion and provide a model by which others can gauge how change may occur in their own institutions.

Given that the Government Green Paper, Excellence for All Children (DfEE, 1997) reaffirmed the intention to provide an education for as many pupils as possible within a mainstream setting; and, this continues to be the thrust of Government and LEA policy, then all schools need to be considering how they can become more inclusive in their practices. I

hope that this study will provide some insight into the kinds of areas that need to be considered.

CHAPTER 2

Terms of Reference

West Grove is a community school in the London Borough of Enfield and as such is subject to national legislation contained in the School Standards and Framework Act (1998) and regulations. This sets the Terms of Reference under which I am expected to operate.

The overriding requirements of me as headteacher are set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. They state that:

> **"A head teacher shall carry out his professional duties in accordance with and subject to:**
> a) **the provisions of the Education Acts;**
> b) **any orders and regulations having effect thereunder;**
> c) **the instrument of government of the school of which he is head teacher;**
> d) **where the school is a voluntary, foundation or foundation special school, any trust deed applying in relation thereto;**
> e) **any scheme prepared by the local education authority under section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act (1998)."**

I am responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, in consultation and under the direction of the governing body.

My professional duties include:

- formulating the school aims
- appointment of staff
- management of staff
- liaison with staff unions and associations
- determining, organising and implementing an appropriate curriculum for the school (in line with my duty under sections 351(4), 357(1) and 390(4) of the Education Act 1996 and section 69 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- review of the work of the school
- standards of teaching and learning
- appraisal, training, development and induction of staff
- threshold assessment
- advanced skills teacher assessment
- management information
- pupil progress
- pastoral care
- discipline
- relations with parents
- relations with other bodies
- relations with the governing body

- relations with the local education authority
- relations with other educational establishments
- resources
- premises
- absence

I am also expected to participate in the teaching of pupils at the school, including the provision of cover for absent teachers.

Whilst these terms of reference impose some statutory responsibilities upon me in the discharge of my duties, I firmly believe that it is possible to interpret some of the regulations in such a way as to allow creative freedom.

It was my intention, in the creation of an inclusive school, to work within the spirit of the law whilst not being bound by the letter of the law. This has led to the governors and I making decisions not to implement the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies and not to deliver the National Curriculum through subject based lessons. I do not believe that it is an appropriate curriculum for young children.

Aims and Objectives

My overall aim was to develop a school that would be an exemplar of effective practice for inclusivity because I wanted to provide a positive educational experience for all children within my school (and other schools).

One planned outcome of my study was to show that an inclusive school had to be inclusive in all its practices. I intended to document and celebrate the success of our school, provide an evaluation based on my research and provide a template of an inclusive school, which could be used within my Local Education Authority as an exemplar of effective practice. As the LEA is currently devising a new Special Needs Strategy following a best-value review, where inclusive practice is to be further developed, my study will be timely and should contribute to the LEA thinking.

My main objectives are:

- To trace the history of the development of inclusive education.

- To consider current definitions of inclusive education.

- To outline the elements which contribute to the effectiveness of an inclusive school.

- To investigate and document each element fully, quantifying its impact on the success of the school.

- To seek views from each group of stakeholders on their perceptions of the school.

- To provide an analysis of this evaluative process.

- To produce:
  - a video for parents and prospective parents so that they have a visual explanation of our practice;
  - a website for parents, prospective parents and fellow professionals that includes information about our inclusive practices;
  - a curriculum document to support the planning process for teaching staff in our school;
  - a leaflet containing a template of inclusivity that can be used by other schools as a tool to assist them in the review of their own inclusive practices;
  - a project report documenting the process.

- To develop a new definition of 'inclusive education'.

I believe this work to be of professional significance because of its timeliness. We are at a stage in education when there is much interest in 'Learning to Learn' methods and strategies. Since our school was reported in the Education Guardian in March 2000 (see Appendix 3), we have received phone calls and visits from teachers and educationalists from all over the country. Myself and two of my staff were asked by the LEA to be part of an international teacher professional development project, which involved us in travelling to Chicago in February 2001 to discuss our work on thinking skills. Finally, the Campaign for Learning project was due to publish an interim project report at the end of spring term 2002 (see Appendix 4). I was asked to lead a primary workshop at the launch of this report. A final report will be produced during 2003. I have recently been contacted by the National College for School Leadership who are undertaking a case study profile of how I have led the school to its current position, which will be featured on their website. This will generate further interest in our work.

A Review of the Literature on Inclusive Education

Throughout my literature searches I have found there to be a continuing debate about what constitutes inclusive education. This reflects the differences in perspectives on learning difficulties and disabilities prevalent at different times.

In the 1970s, the medical model was preponderant with difficulties and disabilities being regarded as inherent in the individual. Education was seen at the 'cure' or 'therapies' that would minimise or eradicate the symptoms. Children were usually admitted to specialist provision or were transferred from mainstream schools to specialist provision as soon as their 'problem' was diagnosed. This process worked on a deficit model.

In the 1980s this model came under some criticism for focusing on the disability rather than on the impact of the educational provision on the child's learning. So, there developed a more interactive approach, where the child's difficulty was seen to arise from a mismatch between the child's needs and provision, whether organisational or curricular. In this way,

the responsibility was shifted from the child (and parents) to the school or organisation. It became the school's duty to provide the necessary support for the child. The buzzword became 'integration'.

In the early 1990s a slightly different perspective was introduced (Ainscow and Hart, 1992). They suggested that inclusion of pupils with special educational needs could lead to overall school improvement, in that organisational and curricular arrangements would be under scrutiny in order to address limitations for SEN pupils.

In a paper for Barnado's entitled "What works in inclusive education?" Judy Sebba and Darshan Sachdev give a definition of inclusive education:

> **Inclusive education describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring its curricular organisation and provision and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils.**
>
> (adapted from Sebba and Ainscow, 1996)

They felt that this definition was rather prescriptive, by suggesting what inclusive education should look like rather than reflecting the realities of practice, which still sees many exclusive practices.

National Government has done little to further the debate about inclusion. They still see it as an issue of the integration of special needs pupils into mainstream education, despite their espoused commitment to social inclusion in its widest sense. David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education, in September 1999, wrote:

> **"We are aiming to encourage a more inclusive and coherent education system. We are encouraging a more strategic approach by local authorities to SEN issues, to promote more inclusive mainstream schools backed by special schools which have a clear and shared vision of how they will provide specialist skills and experience for the system as a whole. Inclusion is not about the wholesale closure of special schools. It is about building on and developing the wealth of expertise and experience within the specialist sector in the interests of the children."**

Ofsted, in their latest guidance for inspectors and schools, 'Evaluating Educational Inclusion' (2001) do little to further the debate, they say that:

> **"Educational inclusion is more than a concern about any one group of pupils such as those pupils who have been or are likely to be excluded from school. Its scope is broad. It is about equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background. It pays particular attention to the provision made for and the achievement of different groups of pupils within a school."**
>
> (Ofsted 2001, p. 4)

Although it is gratifying to see that Ofsted are beginning to embrace the notion of inclusive schooling, it is disappointing to realise that their document is a very political response to the Macpherson Report, and, as such, concentrates mainly on the issues of racism and discrimination within schools rather than taking the opportunity to address the issue more widely.

The NAHT in their SEN Policy Statement sets out the following definition:

> **"Inclusion is a process that maximises the opportunity for all children and young adults to access a broad, relevant and stimulating curriculum in a range of educational settings appropriate to their needs."**

This definition is starting to become broader in that it mentions all children and young adults but it is still a narrow definition in that it concentrates on equal opportunities for pupils alone, leaving education as a narrow view of 'schooling'. I believe education is much bigger than 'schooling' alone, especially given that children spend only 15% of their waking lives between the ages of 5 and 16 in school. Education must be broader than schooling, if it is to be more inclusive.

For my purposes, these definitions of inclusive education are still too narrow. They concentrate on provision for pupils' education in terms of schooling alone and in my terms if a school is to be truly inclusive it must have a much wider impact, it must be the centre, or hub, of a learning community, working to facilitate learning at all levels within that community.

A much closer match to my emerging definition of inclusive education was provided by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) in 2000:

- **"Inclusion in education involves the processes of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.**
- **Inclusion involves restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality.**
- **Inclusion is concerned with the learning and participation of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'.**
- **Inclusion is concerned with improving schools for staff as well as for students.**
- **A concern with overcoming barriers to the access and participation of particular students may reveal gaps in the attempts of a school to respond to diversity more generally.**
- **All students have the right to an education in their locality.**
- **Diversity is not viewed as a problem to overcome, but as a rich resource to support the learning of all.**
- **Inclusion is concerned with fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.**
- **Inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society."** (CSIE 2000, p.12)

This definition begins to address some of the issues that I believe are central to inclusive education. It talks about community; improving schools for staff as well as pupils and it is firmly established within the school improvement processes. But, I believe that it could and should be further developed so that we have a more holistic view of inclusive education. We need to extend learning beyond the classroom walls and hours of schooling for it to be the beginning of lifelong learning habits.

I have found there to be a limited availability of literature on this broader definition of inclusive education, but there are sources of literature giving theories on which my understanding of inclusive practices have been based and developed.

A review of the Literature on issues other than inclusive education that has guided the development of the school

In this section I will show how I considered authors who have influenced my thinking and practice and who therefore have had an impact on the pedagogy within West Grove. I will also explain how I shared my learning with my staff in order that they too would have pedagogy on which to base their practice.

All of the teachers within our school, apart from myself, have been trained since the National Curriculum was introduced and have therefore been trained as technicians or deliverers of content, with very little understanding of how children learn. Some had had some specialism in early years' education but most were subject trained.

From my training and experience I believed that it was vital for teachers to understand the process of learning before they could provide relevant learning experiences for the children in our school. It was important, therefore, that they were able to share some of my learning. I facilitated this through collective Inset sessions, attendance for individuals at courses, by providing a teachers' library of relevant literature and by providing opportunities for them to reflect (systematically) on their practice.

As I explained in the introduction, I was trained as an early year's teacher, for the 3-8 year age range. As such, a large proportion of my course was based on child development, psychology and the importance of relating practice to the relevant stages of development and levels of understanding. This was based mainly on the theories of Piaget and his idea that children pass through stages and cannot learn at a higher level. It was the teachers' role in this model to provide the learning experiences and almost sit back and wait for learning to take place.

These theories and beliefs were challenged for me during my time as an educational visitor. I was working with three-year old children on an individual basis in their homes. I began to see that children could be extended through the use of language and particularly questioning. Wood has studied such teaching and learning interactions and suggests that there are 5 levels to classify teaching.

> **Levels used to classify teaching in the pyramid task**
> **Level 1   General verbal encouragement**

Level 2	Specific verbal instruction
Level 3	Assists in choice of material
Level 4	Prepares material for assembly
Level 5	Demonstrates an operation

(Wood 1988, p. 79)

Wood concluded that:

"The children who learned most about the task were exposed to a style of instruction that combined showing and telling in a specific pattern."
(Wood 1988, p.79)

He called this 'contingent' teaching, with any help given being conditional upon the child's understanding of previous levels of instruction. If they did not understand an instruction given at one level, then more help would be forthcoming. When they did understand, the teacher would step back and give the child more room for initiative.

This links with the work of Vygotsky who differentiated the two ways in which children acquire concepts at school age.

1. **Everyday or spontaneous concepts are those which children learn for themselves out of their own day-to-day experiences.**
2. **Scientific or taught concepts are those which are passed on to children through the speech of adults.**

He also described two levels of intellectual development in every developing child:

1. **The actual or present level of development, manifest in what the child can do alone, without adult help.**
2. **The potential level of development, demonstrated by what the child can do in co-operation with an adult, through the medium of good teaching (with maximal, optimal help, guidance, explanation, demonstration, etc.)**

Vygotsky termed the gap between these two levels the Zone of Next Development (1934).

He saw teaching as more than the transmission of knowledge, he believed that the job of the teacher was to arm the children with the tools they needed for learning. He believed that language played a major role in cognitive development and formed the very core of the child's mental functions. He argued that teaching should be always aimed at the child's emerging skills and not at the existing ones.

Vygotsky describes this approach well;

Education must be oriented not towards the yesterday of child development, but towards its tomorrow.
(Vygotsky, 1934)

This also links with the work of Jerome Bruner, who encouraged the view that children are ready for learning if learning is adapted to the intellectual proclivities of children. He also argued that children need to be active, and not just physically active, in order to maximise their learning. Being active is what causes children both physically and cognitively to construct their own view of the world, to personalise the experience and to apply it in ways which makes sense to them as individuals. The theories of Bruner draw and build on the work of both Piaget and Vygotsky.

All of these theories depend on the understanding that thought, action and language are inextricably bound together in children's development. The successful development of all three is dependent on experiences being embedded in what is meaningful for the child.

It echoes the progressive tradition of curriculum planning (post Plowden) where knowledge of the child is paramount in curriculum design and the teacher is seen as an expert on child development, learning and classroom organisation. Planning is the provision of opportunities for the following of interests in a secure emotional framework of 'benign environment', (Fisher, 1972).

This very much reflected my own training during the early 1970's. Through experience, however, I began to see that providing an exciting environment and waiting for learning to happen was a little naïve. Children can be helped to learn by appropriate intervention. The teachers' task is to identify the level and types of interjection that will be appropriate to the individual's understanding and needs and thus facilitate learning.

But for me, placing the child at the centre of the learning experience is not enough on its own. Whilst I firmly believe that **"at the heart of the educational process lies the child"** (Plowden Report, 1967), children cannot be taken in isolation from the environment and pre-school learning experiences. Young children start school with a wealth of experience and teachers must be aware of the significance of these early experiences in order to develop an appropriate curriculum.

This belief in putting the child at the centre of the process of education is also inextricably bound with taking the child in the context of their family. As children spend such a small amount of their time at school, it is vital that we encourage the family to continue their expert role in the education of their child/ren. As Tina Bruce says:

> **"It would not make sense to try to educate a child without taking account of the most significant people in his/her environment, and trying to work with them. It is through the home context that school becomes meaningful, or not, to a family."**
> (Bruce 1991, p.15)

Bruce's work built on the work of Chris Athey from the Froebel Institute. She provided a new framework for studying the pattern of children's behaviour as they learn. These patterns of behaviour (or schema) can be seen in babies and become more complex and more numerous as the child develops. By studying a child at work or play, an observer can begin to see that learning behaviours do not happen in isolation but usually form an observable pattern. These patterns give the adult a valuable framework for observing children's learning. It then becomes the role of the adult to facilitate this learning through schema by

the provision of appropriate experiences and resources and through timely intervention and participation and appropriate use of language. As Bruce herself succinctly put it:

"The key to the early childhood curriculum is to observe, support and extend."
(Bruce 1987, p.65)

To enable the teaching staff to understand the theories that underpin Chris Athey and Tina Bruce's work, I arranged for them to attend early years' courses led by Professor Bruce. As part of an accreditation scheme within our LEA, the course incorporated a small action based research study on an aspect of learning that interested the teacher. This began to establish a learning culture within the school.

For me, this encompassed the work of Donald Schon in 'The Reflective Practitioner'. He felt that practitioners should be encouraged to reflect on their practice in order to make adjustments to their actions in light of their experience.

"When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. His enquiry is not limited to a deliberation about means which depends on a prior agreement about ends. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from action...His experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his enquiry."
(Schon 1983, p.68)

In order to maximise this learning following reflection, a mechanism needed to be put into place for staff to learn from each other's learning. I established a pattern of team meetings as well as full staff meetings to enable everyone to participate and share their experiences. For as Schon says:

"The teacher's isolation in her classroom works against reflection-in-action. She needs to communicate her private puzzles and insights, to test them against the views of her peers."
(Schon 1983, p.336)

This openness and honesty needs to be modelled within the school so that all staff feel confident to share their less than successful experiences and learn from them as well as sharing things that have gone really well. I see this as an important part of my role as lead learner.

The centrality of the individual to most of these theories has been one of the most important factors and has certainly helped to shape my understanding of what inclusive education should be. Another important element in the definition of our school and its inclusive ways, is that all members of staff consider themselves to be learners and are actively seeking to improve their practice for the benefit of the children. We all embrace new ideas and are willing to take risks, to 'have a go' and reflect on our successes and failures and learn from

them. Failure is seen as an opportunity to do better next time. This commitment to continual improvement is apparent in all of the work of the school. As someone once framed it:

"You don't have to be ill to get better."

Since our involvement with the Campaign for Learning we have also extended our own learning to encompass theories of accelerated learning and the teaching of thinking skills. These are considered fully as part of the section on Learning to Learn. We have been sharing our learning about learning with parents who then feel better able to support their child's learning at home. This then extends learning beyond school.

These theories have played an important part in my own beliefs about early childhood education and have therefore framed the kind of school that I have visioned and begun to build. Through the rest of this report, it should be possible to see how these theories have shaped my development as a professional and have formed the basis for the inclusive practices developing within our school.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research approach used

I chose to use an action research approach for the purposes of this project. I arrived at this decision having considered the positive and negative elements of methods available to me, given the needs of my project and my operational context.

Rationale for approaches and methods used

My research project took place in a working educational setting and was therefore subject to practical and political constraints and in my case was being conducted by a non-specialist researcher who would be bringing her subjective viewpoint into play at all times. I could be making value judgements based on debatable pictures of the 'real world' as I saw it from my perspective.

I do not believe that there is such a thing as total objectivity for by engaging in any activity, one brings one's subjective influences to bear. There can only be degrees of subjectivity so I needed to look for some way of giving further evidence to substantiate my viewpoint throughout the study. I needed to keep these points in mind when deciding on my methodology.

When first deciding which research methodology was to be used, it was important to base the decision on what I, as researcher, was trying to show or prove. In my case, I wanted to show how a school could be developed that would meet its community's needs by meeting the individual needs of pupils and by doing so, define its inclusive practices. It was necessary, therefore, to choose a methodology that would enable me to tell the full story of the development of the school from my own perspective as founding headteacher but that would also allow me to corroborate my story with 'evidence' from external sources, e.g. parents, LEA, Ofsted. I needed also to be able to show that the direction of the development of the school had been shaped throughout the project as staff and I reflected on our policy into action.

It became obvious to me as I considered the pros and cons for the various methodologies that a 'scientific' quantitative approach would not be suitable – as a new school we had very little data available for analysis and most of the evidence that I would be gathering would be subjective reflection from myself, staff and parents or secondary evidence from external sources such as reports from LEA, Ofsted, etc.

I needed a methodology that would be flexible, enabling me to use the variety of evidence available to me and that would allow for shifts in the framework within which I was working. I also needed to be able to 'tell the story' of the development of the school in an holistic way to enable the readers of my research to have a full picture of how the school had been developed and the reality of what it looked like now. Only by providing a full picture could other schools consider its appropriateness for themselves.

My choice of methodology was also going to be influenced by my own limited skills as an evaluator and my immersion in the material, which was the school I was developing. I needed a methodology that could therefore be reliant on more qualitative data and allow me to be reflective, allowing for critical reflection at all stages in the emerging process.

I considered several methods of research such as scientific, macro-sociological and interpretive but felt that none of them met the needs of my project. Some of them were too reliant on data that would not be easily available; some were reliant on comparisons with control groups that would be difficult for me to establish and some were not sufficiently well focused for my purposes. I needed to choose a methodology that would be 'simple' for me to operate, that would be flexible to the changing needs as the project developed and could be 'open' enough to allow me to use a variety of techniques for gathering evidence.

Given the need to cover all of these elements, I chose action research as my preferred methodology because it seemed appropriate given the innovative ideas around the development of my concept of an inclusive school; my context, and my role both as headteacher and that of internal evaluator. Part of the study will be reflection on action already taken, because the school was set up before the project began, so it will be evaluative by nature. The remainder of the study will be reporting action research undertaken by the staff and its outcomes as they developed the practice for themselves in their classrooms.

Research Approaches

When considering the research approach that I should take, I looked at four main types of research as identified by Pollard and Tan (1987). They are:

1. Classical scientific
2. Macro-sociological
3. Interpretive
4. Action research

Each approach has a slightly different emphasis.

The classical scientific approach has an emphasis on quantitative data, based on a pure research style. It is a systematic and objective system of research based on generating hypotheses, running controlled experiments to test the hypotheses enabling generalisation.

The macro-sociological approach is wide ranging and assumes that specific situations, practices and perspectives can only be understood in relation to their context, (historical, economic and cultural). It uses a variety of forms of theorising to try to make sense of social structures, processes and developments.

The interpretive approach was developed from the macro-sociological approach to address the issue of lack of subjective perceptions of the people being studied. It emphasises qualitative aspects of whatever is being studied, analysing people's perceptions. This approach developed methods of participant observation and interviewing and is based on

mainly qualitative data concerned with opinion and perception rather than observable facts or behaviours.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued that interpretive sociologists should start from people's perceptions and through collection, classification and analysis of data, develop systematic and theoretically refined perspectives of social institutions and relationships that they study.

Action research was originated by Lewin (1946). It was developed by curriculum specialists working alongside teachers. It is a model for change reliant on self-evaluation and direct improvement of classroom practice. It is based on a cyclical process of planning, action, observation and reflection leading back into planning. This approach was further developed by Stenhouse (1975). In this approach, teachers can become researchers in their own classroom as part of their professional reflections on their practice. Stenhouse (1983) sees it as 'emancipatory' in that it releases practitioners from unseen constraints, e.g. habits of practice, precedents ("we always do it like that here") and coercion and leads them into doing what works best within their given situation.

There are, however, drawbacks to all of these approaches.

The classical scientific approach is not relevant in situations that are dealing with people, as they are too unpredictable. It relies on exact replicability of experiments and this does not translate easily in human terms.

The macro-sociological approach, whilst studying people in relation to their context, fails to address the subjective perceptions of people who are the subject of the study, making it rather limited in its scope.

The interpretive approach can be seen as a little too flexible in that it can be taken wherever the subjective influences of the participants of the study take it. But it can be used as a complimentary approach to the classical scientific approach. One approach generates the data and the other provides the subjective reactions to the situation, thereby creating a more holistic view.

These first three approaches all share the same drawback in that they naturally distance themselves from actual practice. It is only action research that is grounded in improving and seeking to understand practice, by the direct action and involvement of practitioners.

Action research has been criticised for being too focused on practice without considering the wider contextual issues relating to the institutions under study. But Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that such work provides a means of becoming 'critical'. They suggest that action research involves:

- **"The improvement of practice**
- **The improvement of the understanding of the practice by the practitioners**
- **The improvement of the situation in which practice takes place."**

<div align="right">(Carr and Kremmis 1986, p.165)</div>

On the next page I have constructed a chart that shows the advantages and disadvantages of each method, the type of information available from each approach and how this information might be interpreted. In this way I considered the most appropriate research strategy for my study based on the types of evidence that was available to me. From these considerations it became obvious that I could use aspects of all the approaches in my study.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Information Available	Possible Interpretations
Classical Scientific	• systematic and objective • emphasis on quantitative data	• difficult to apply a controlled experiment strategy in a school • takes no account of subjective evidence	• SATs data • Ofsted report • Attendance data	• Comparison of our data to national averages and benchmark group
Macro-sociological	• wide ranging • contextually rooted • variety of forms of theorising	• fails to address subjective perceptions of people involved • limited in scope	• historical context of school (LEA reports)	• ascertain any LEA strategy for the new school
Interpretive	• emphasises qualitative aspects • analyses people's perceptions • based on qualitative data • concerned with opinion and perception rather than observable facts or behaviours	• too flexible - can be taken wherever the participants want it to go	• questionnaires from staff, parents and pupils • interview outcomes	• statistical data analysis and comparison • subjective evidence to be used for triangulation of other data
Action Research	• model for change • reliant on self-evaluation • cyclical approach - planning, action, observation and reflection • grounded in improving as well as understanding practice	• too focused on practice • can avoid wider contextual issues	• outcomes of action research projects in classrooms • minutes / notes from staff meetings, training and Inset days	• sharing and documentation of effective practice leading to future school developments

Research Techniques or Methods

I also considered several techniques for the collection of data and evidence. Some were going to be more relevant to my study than others. Those I considered were:

Document analysis – the examination of official documents can be used to elicit background information for the study. It could be policy documents, brochures for parents, minutes of meetings, etc. Some will provide primary source material and others will need to be interpreted to provide secondary source information.

Curriculum matrices – checklists can be devised to support the collection of information, particularly for the recording of observable behaviours.

Personal construct - asking people for 'off the top of their head' judgements can often ascertain the underlying thoughts and assumptions about issues. This method can only provide the information that respondents are willing to give, so may only tell part of the story.

Observation - this is best done using a schedule, but this means that the observation may be selective. Schedules can be devised as a 'sign' system e.g. behaviour is recorded when it is shown or it can be a 'timed' system, in that behaviour is recorded as specific times only. This method can be used to record what is happening but it does not allow for the answer to why it is happening.

Questionnaires - these are designed to elicit responses to set items. They can be used to collect factual data as well as opinion. They can be designed to be closed, eliciting yes/no answers or they can be designed to be open, allowing for a fuller answer to be given.

Interviews - an interactive device that can be used to find out what participants think or do and perhaps more importantly, why. There are disadvantages though, in that because it is a face-to-face discussion, it may intimidate the respondents. This technique, therefore, relies heavily on the relationship between the interviewer and other participants. The interview can be formal, with set questions or semi-structured in that some broad areas for discussion can be set allowing for further questioning in response to the initial answers given. It can be extremely difficult to write responses to interview questions unless one is trained in shorthand or speed writing, and it may be advisable to tape record the responses so that they can be re-listened to or transposed for analysis.

Participant observation – this is a more exploratory technique than the observation method discussed earlier. There is usually an open-ended method of recording, which is responsive to the context. The observer would normally record all that happens but check it out with the adults, and perhaps

even pupils. This method should provide a greater understanding of the complexities of the classroom environment.

Research Design

Having considered the above strategies for collecting data and evidence, I was then in a position to design my research and make a plan that incorporated the collection and interrogation of the necessary evidence and consider how best to report the study.

I chose to report the project as a case study detailing my influence on the vision for the development of an inclusive school and telling the story of its development. The case study would outline how the vision for the school was constructed, firstly from my own experience and professional development, leading into how I shared this vision with governors and staff and how we further developed it together. I developed this shared vision by leading activities as part of an Inset day before the school opened – these activities will be fully detailed in the Curriculum section of Chapter 4.

To substantiate the case study, and therefore triangulate the evidence, I chose to use questionnaires (see Appendix 5) and informal interview techniques. I have chosen these techniques, as I believe that I would get a fuller picture overall by involving as many groups of people as I possibly can in the data collection. If I were to restrict myself to just reporting what staff feel and think, I may get a very different picture. The questionnaires would allow me to get a general overview and if there are any interesting outcomes from the questionnaires they could be followed up through interview, either with individuals or groups.

I would also be using documentary evidence that was produced by the school and produced by others, e.g. the LEA, Ofsted, parents, etc. This would provide me with some background information and confirmation or otherwise of my findings from an external perspective.

I would also be considering quantitative data that is available to the school, although this is limited due to the short time that the school has been opened, e.g. SATs results, as a way of reflecting on the success of the methods utilised in the school.

Three questionnaires were developed for differing participant groups, i.e. one for parents, one for pupils and a third for staff. I wanted to produce three questionnaires so that I could try to understand the varying perspectives of the three groups. I felt that it would not be possible to design one questionnaire that would be applicable to all three groups. Nor did I feel confident to be able to construct a questionnaire from 'scratch' so I intended to use ones designed by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE). The questionnaires were based on one devised by Booth et al (2000) in their Index for Inclusion published by CSIE. This eliminated the need to pilot the questionnaires as they had already been piloted by CSIE. I needed to change the wording slightly on the children's questionnaire to reflect the age and maturity levels of the children. I felt that our children would be tempted to answer all of the questions in a positive way, to please me; so I included some negative statements in order to try to ascertain their true feelings about the issues involved. I did not include any negative statements in the adult questionnaires because I expect the adults to be more 'honest' in their

responses and I included a blank box for comments for the adults to add their own thoughts about the inclusive nature of our school.

I planned to use semi-structured interviews with staff and parents who volunteered to be interviewed. This should have provided me with better qualitative data as it will allow the individual respondents to express their feelings and understandings about the school more freely than if constrained by a more formal structured interview with rigid questions. This less formal instrument would also appear to be appropriate because of my close relationship with the people involved.

The areas I want the interviews to cover are as follows:

- their understandings about the inclusive nature of our school
- what specifically contributes to the inclusive nature of the school
- whether they have knowledge of other schools and how we compare in our inclusive practices
- is there anything they think we should be doing in order to be more inclusive

Interviews would be taped, (interviewees would need to agree to this), so that it would enable me to re-listen to them as part of my data analysis. I decided against making notes during interviews as I find it difficult to concentrate on what people are saying and respond accordingly. I need to direct all my focus to active listening so that I can be responsive to what people say, drawing out issues as they arise.

I chose not to interview all of the pupils for the purposes of this case study as I felt that they were too young and most of them have no knowledge of schooling other than their experiences within our school. I did intend to interview some of the older pupils who entered our school from other schools, as I believed that they would bring an interesting perspective on their understanding of the differences between institutions.

Once the evidence was collected from the questionnaires, I intended to look at the overall percentages in each category to ascertain if there were any broad levels of agreement from the respondents. If there were any areas that showed a variance in opinion these areas would be further investigated during the interviews.

I intended to use other sources of evidence to corroborate my findings, e.g. Ofsted report, Investors in People report, letters, etc. from parents and visitors to the school.

See Page 32 for a table giving details of research techniques and data collection methods.

Research Question	Approach and Data Collection	Analysis
How has inclusive education developed over time? Is it possible to track the drive for inclusive education in the national context?	Documentary analysis of government papers and relevant literature.	Analysis of documents to ascertain developments over time. Literature searches on inclusive education.
Was there a drive for inclusive education in the local context?	A documentary analysis of Council Papers and Education Sub-Committee Papers relating to the development of the school and background to decision made.	Documents analysed and outcomes identified to identify key incidents.
How has the school developed its inclusive practices since its opening?	Documentary analysis of policies, staff meeting minutes, Inset notes, Governing Body minutes, Ofsted report etc.	Key incidents in development of school identified and reported as part of case study.
Which aspects of the school contribute to its inclusive nature?	Considered school development, key incidents, using documentary evidence and discussions with staff.	Each aspect of the school is considered in detail with comments from key stakeholders to confirm reliability of the case study.
What is the viewpoint of key stakeholders as regards the inclusive nature of the school?	Questionnaires for staff, parents and pupils. Letters from parents. Outcomes from exercises on Inset days from staff and governors.	Data collated and mathematically analysed. Data triangulated to add reliability to results.
Are pupil attainment outcomes enhanced in an inclusive environment?	Analysis of SATs results in relation to Baseline Assessment data to look at the value added by the school. Benchmark data from PANDA reports.	Data analysed for cohorts and individual pupils and comparison with prior attainment.

Case Study Approach

I will be reporting the project as a case study because it offers a qualitative dimension providing a wealth of information and ideas about context and process.

Case study is a:

> **"Way of systematically exploring in depth a unit of analysis which can be a group, a programme, an organisation, an innovation, an event, an activity or an individual. It can be used for several purposes: to explore, to portray in depth, to describe and document, to explain and analyse, to complement findings from other research strategies."**
>
> (Robinson, 1991 p.12)

Another definition of case study is provided by Yin, (1989):

> **A case study is an empirical enquiry that**
> - **investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when**
> - **the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident; and in which**
> - **multiple sources of evidence are used.**

This definition fits my study perfectly. I am studying the development of an innovative inclusive school (a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context); I will be considering the boundaries between the school and its context; and, I will be using multiple sources of evidence to enable me to try to ascertain the elements that contribute to the inclusivity of the school.

I like these definitions because of their simplicity, but for me, I would like to extend the definition to include a purpose beyond description. For unless the findings of the study are to be used in a way to move thinking forward or challenge current practice, then it is merely an academic exercise.

I will therefore, be including as part of the case study, references to the research of others and comments made about our practice from other sources, e.g. staff, parents, pupils and external bodies such as Ofsted. I will be drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of our practice and trying to isolate the aspects of our practice that make us a truly inclusive school. From these conclusions I will be producing a template for inclusivity, to provide a framework for other schools to consider their own practice.

I also needed the methodology to encompass the participation of others, as I am reliant on the work of the governors and staff to implement policy and develop practice. It would also have to be responsive to findings from our reflections on practice and the emerging needs of the situation. Case study can be flexible in accommodating changes of direction as evidence is gathered and initial findings emerge.

Case study on its own, though, did not seem to me to totally fit my needs. It, therefore, became apparent to me that I needed to use more than one methodology.

Combining Case Study and Action Research

Whilst I chose to use case study as the main agent for telling the story of the school, it would have to encompass many aspects of action research for it to be truly reflective of the processes involved. Action research is a methodology that is intended to have both action outcomes and research outcomes. For my purposes, the action research cycle could be used for both these purposes – it would highlight aspects of our practice that needed to be changed whilst providing instances of these processes for the report.

Cohen and Manion (1994) describe action research as:

> **"essentially an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation. This means that ideally, the step-by-step process is constantly monitored over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanisms (questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies, for example) so that the ensuing feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustments, directional changes, redefinitions, as necessary, so as to bring about lasting benefit to the ongoing process itself rather than to some future occasion..."**
>
> (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.192)

Whilst some aspects of action research would seem to be appropriate to my current work for this project, I feel that I need to combine it with the case study approach to document the processes fully. This is because I feel that I already have a well-defined understanding of inclusivity from my previous experience and do, therefore, not have to develop an understanding through problem-solving action research, although the staff and I have used action research as a means of ascertaining and sharing effective practice. I will, however, be using questionnaires and interviews as part of the case study in order to provide evidence to substantiate the story that I am telling.

Case study will give me the opportunity to give my own perspective as 'insider researcher' as well as the perspective of others involved in the school's development, through questionnaire and interview.

As Headteacher, I believe that my perspective is vitally important as the school has been developed around my vision of what an inclusive school should be. As part of the study, therefore, I will consider my own background and how my experience has contributed to the professional that I am today, as a way of examining my developing understanding of what makes a school inclusive. I will be considering all aspects of the school, including curriculum design and delivery and showing how we have brought innovation to our practice in an holistic way.

Using a case study approach I will be able to follow the development of the school, tell its story, and systematically collect evidence to illustrate or substantiate points. This process should enable me to identify the various interactive processes at work within the school and evaluate the success of these processes. As an outcome of this study I would hope to identify the unique features of the school and show how they affect the implementation of systems and influence the way in which the school functions. By producing a case study, it will

enable other schools to have some kind of understanding of the processes involved in its formation and implementation.

The strengths of the case study approach are that it can give an holistic picture, which is real to read, describing real-life situations. It can accommodate multiple sources of evidence and can be flexible in accommodating changes of direction. Complex social situations and processes can be explored, enabling participants to reflect on their understanding of the processes involved and it can support reflection-in-action leading to continuing improvement.

Drawbacks to my chosen approach

I am also aware that case study has some drawbacks, particularly for the internal reviewer. Case study has been criticised in the past because it can lack rigour in that it is too subjective, with too much description and not enough analysis and because of this it can lack replicability. I did have some concerns at the beginning of my study that my work would be too descriptive. Having considered this at length, I have decided that by nature of the uniqueness of what I am describing, I must provide as much detail to the reader as possible in order to give them a full understanding of our practice. I would not be able to make claims about the success (or otherwise) of our practice, for others to relate to their schools, if I did not describe it in such detail.

Another drawback of case study is that I may find myself too close to the information to draw conclusions which can be generalised, so I will need to be aware of bias which may lead to distortion of outcomes. This can be overcome, in part, through triangulation of the evidence; i.e. supporting my arguments with the comments of others associated with the school or outside agencies who have commented on our practice.

I will also need to ensure that there is sufficient evidence in order to be able to make some generalisations whilst ensuring that the evidence is not manipulated in order to prove more than I can reasonably claim. The amount of evidence available to me may provide me with some difficulty, due to the age of our school (we opened in 1998). I hope though by using more than one source of evidence the reliability of my claims will be proven.

I need to make the study detailed, without making it long-winded and boring, to provide my audience with enough information to support their own decision-making, thereby making it relatable rather than generalisable. As I have said earlier, I do not believe that this study will be generalisable, in that schools will not be able to become a carbon copy of us. But, they should be able to relate my findings to their own practice with a view to improving their own practice. As Bassey puts it,

> **"The relatability of a case study is more important than its generalisability."**
> (Bassey 1981, p.85)

Other schools need to be able to take this case study and 'relate' it to themselves rather than try to replicate it within their own institution. For we all know that every school is different and has its own particular ethos and values and will, therefore, by nature, be unique. I am not suggesting that all schools should try to be the same as West Grove, but that if they wish to

be considered as truly inclusive schools there are some aspects of their practice that they will need to consider and perhaps modify.

Ethical Considerations

I have checked with governors that they are happy for our school to be named in the study and they have responded positively, stating that they welcome the kudos that the practice within our school is gathering. I did not check with parents individually whether they would be happy to have the school studied and named in the report, having had positive responses from parent governors. I had also informed parents via the school newsletter that I would be studying the development of the school and had received no negative comments from parents about the project.

In determining to use questionnaires and interviews the ethics that would frame my study had to be considered. I spoke to staff and wrote to parents stating that I was embarking on a Doctorate of Professional Studies and that I would be offering them opportunities to participate by providing feedback on their thoughts of the school. It was important to me that no-one felt that they had to respond and contribute to the study if they did not wish to do so, particularly as they were being asked by the headteacher. I needed to be careful during the collection of evidence that people would not just be saying what I wanted to hear because of the 'power' that my role holds. I tried to overcome this by offering opportunities to everyone, so it became their decision whether they would participate or not.

Parents are used to being consulted on their feelings about the work of the school as I have established regular feedback questionnaire systems. Staff have been part of the process of building the school, for although it is founded on my vision, it is the staff who are left to implement the policies and develop the practice – this has been a collaborative exercise. (Throughout the project activity report I hope to make clear the level of staff input to the process.)

It was decided early in the process of the questionnaire design that I did not want respondents to be identified. Questionnaires would be given out to everyone and respondents would be asked to fill them in anonymously, in this way any comments used from the questionnaires would not be attributable. I did this in the belief that people would say what they really thought if they could not be identified.

I did not want a straightforward questionnaire that would be used as a mere number crunching tool, providing statistical data only. I wanted to use it as a means of ascertaining individual responses too so I created a box at the bottom of the parent and staff questionnaires to enable the respondents to highlight aspects of the school that they believed to be important in defining its inclusive nature. Because of the nature of this study, I believed it to be important to move beyond interrogating only statistical data as I did not believe that it would give the whole picture. I wanted to put as much, if not more, emphasis on the subjective comments rather than the percentage of positive or negative responses, which is a crude measure of parental satisfaction.

I struggled with the ethical considerations of asking pupils to participate in the study because they are a captive audience and might feel that they have to take part. I planned to discuss the questionnaires before embarking on the completion of them, explaining the purpose of the exercise and asking the children to participate. It was explained that it would be understood if any of them chose not to participate. The children would then be asked to volunteer to complete the task.

I chose not to include a box for comments on the children's questionnaire due to the age of the children involved. I also planned to apply the children's questionnaire in groups to talk the children through the questions as the reading age of some of them would have excluded them from the activity but I planned to confirm to the children before we begin that I want them to record what they truly feel about the issues covered.

The children's questionnaire was also to be filled in anonymously but I chose to mark the children's questionnaires with the year group and gender of each respondent. I wanted to see if the age or sex of the child made a difference to their perception of the school.

Interviews would be taped, (interviewees would need to agree to this), in order to enable me to re-listen to them as part of my data analysis.

I will do all that I can during the progress of the study to protect the identity of individuals unless they have given specific permission for the comments, etc. to be attributed to them personally. Questionnaires would be returned anonymously unless the respondent wishes to put their name on their return. Answers given during interviews will be treated confidentially. In the report itself some individuals will be identifiable by their role. In these cases I have checked with the persons concerned that they are happy for this to be the case.

Insider as Researcher

There are many advantages to being an insider researcher. Research and/or evaluation undertaken by 'insiders' is usually action-orientated because it is designed specifically for the institution whereas that undertaken by 'outsiders' can be seen as coercive and may generate a defensive response from the institution. Therefore, I, as internal researcher / evaluator am in a good position to tell the story of the school. I can use myself as a reliable informant as I have been a part of the whole process of the setting up of the school, other than the selection of the headteacher.

As a contributor of information in the form of personal perceptions and judgements, I bring a valid viewpoint to the study. I will, however, have to be aware of bias that I may bring to the process, for, of course, I believe that inclusive education is a very positive thing that should be encouraged in all of our schools (and society generally). As long as I am open about any viewpoints or stands on issues that I will be taking, I believe that my opinion is just as valid as other contributors to the process. I will also be using other people's perceptions and understanding to qualify or modify my own understandings (and beliefs), as one of the purposes of this study is to further define my understanding of inclusivity. In this way evidence can be 'triangulated' in order to support its reliability.

I have always been a self-reflective practitioner and therefore I believe that the strengths I bring from having developed that approach will be useful during the research / study project. I will be able to reflect on the outcomes from the project but also assist staff and other participants in their reflections by providing opportunities and frameworks for this to be pursued.

Another advantage of being an insider researcher is that the researched and the audience are the same. A joint understanding will be developed, thereby enhancing the relationships in the school and one of the outcomes is sure to be about further developments. In this way the study will lead to further action and change.

The staff, parents and governors know that I am totally committed to the continuing development of our school as an inclusive school and are therefore more likely to be willing to take a part in the study as they will be the beneficiaries of it.

There are obviously some disadvantages to being an insider researcher. As an insider researcher one has a familiarity with the context because of one's immersion in it, but this can be a disadvantage in that it may lead to the ignoring of some problems that an 'outsider' might wish to highlight. It could lead to a distorted picture, which is based on subjective judgements rather than a more objective viewpoint that an outsider may bring.

As an inexperienced researcher, though I am an experienced evaluator, I will also need to be aware that I may not have the mastery of research techniques needed for the project. I need to be aware that I may have to reflect throughout the study on the techniques used and the outcomes from them and be ready to be flexible and modify my plans to meet the changing needs of the project.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that using case study is the correct choice of methodology for my project. It will allow me to reflect on the action research and evaluation techniques already in place in the school and that have been developed as part of the study. It will enable me to use several sources of evidence to construct a holistic picture of our inclusive school and begin to understand the various interactive processes at work. It should provide me with the flexibility I need to adapt my methods and timetable through the project as appropriate, whilst still maintaining some rigour to the process, by using more than one source of evidence.

For, as Bassey (1981) states, if case studies

> **"are carried out systematically and critically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research."**
>
> (Bassey 1981 p.86)

Reporting the outcomes of the project

I expect the outcomes of the case study to support future planning and decision-making both within the school and the LEA (and hopefully beyond). However, 1 am aware that the reporting of a case study alone will not change the practice in other schools. For as Wilson (1979) says, such studies never demonstrate the effectiveness of education programmes so unequivocally as to convince those who doubt. 1 will need to have other strategies in place for the dissemination of my work if it is to be used to its best advantage.

One of the main purposes of the study is to share, with a variety of audiences, the effective practices that have been designed and implemented within our school; to other schools locally and nationally, to prospective parents, new staff to the school and to the wider educational community. The reporting of the study will take many forms in order to try to meet the needs of the different audiences.

1 will produce:

- A curriculum planning support document for staff, for Nursery to Year 6, which incorporate strategies that promote lifelong learning.

- A guidance leaflet for distribution to local schools by the LEA that will outline certain pre-requisites or conditions that contribute to a successful inclusive school and provide a template for other schools to consider their own practice.

- A video for parents and prospective parents about our inclusive practices showing that learning to learn strategies and techniques impact positively on pupil achievement and attainment.

- A website for access by parents and other educational establishment which provides information about the school and our inclusive practices.

- A project documenting the process in full.

As part of this project 1 have included a chapter at the end of the study about the dissemination of my work.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT ACTIVITY

In this chapter, I will be describing in some detail the practices within the school, explaining how (and why) they have been developed, siting comments from 'external' parties and key stakeholders as supporting evidence.

I will consider aspects of school practice that I have chosen to develop with staff and governors, which I believe, contribute to its inclusive nature. These aspects are:

- Curriculum
- Learning to Learn project
- Learning Facilitators
- Environment
- Assessment
- Standards
- Other significant factors

CURRICULUM

I held the belief that for a curriculum to be truly inclusive it needed to be responsive to the learning needs of the individual. The learning needs of the individual in school are also needs for a changing future as I explain below.

Our curriculum has been developed (and is continuing to develop) on the basis of continuous reflection on action by the staff. They have been encouraged, through formal and informal procedures that I have set up in the school, to consider the needs of the individual learner, how those needs can best be met and an evaluation of their practice and the outcomes of pupil learning. Their developing understanding about individual learners is then used to assist them in future planning. A lot of the curriculum developments have come about following either mini action research projects that staff have set up for themselves in their classroom as a way of ascertaining effective practice or following discussion and reflection-on-action as a whole staff in staff meetings, etc.

To me this is a more systematic approach to curriculum development than has been modelled for the teaching profession by central government, who have been taking more and more control over what should be taught in schools.

It was James Callaghan, the Labour Prime Minister who was the first national leader to make the link between England's economic problems and the chaotic state of the education system leading to a marked loss in a sense of national direction and purpose. In his speech at Ruskin College Oxford in October 1976 he suggested that the public should investigate "the secret garden of the curriculum". This would involve "the construction of a new educational consensus built around the more central control of the school curriculum, create teacher

accountability, and the direct subordination of the secondary curriculum to the 'needs' of the economy".

This was against a background of primary education where there was a reasonably well-thought through philosophy, and sufficient good working practice of experiential learning methods as described in the Plowden Report (1967). These practices were developed by teachers looking for what actually worked with their children in the classroom.

The 1977 Green Paper "Education in Schools: a consultative document" called for an agreed 'framework for the curriculum' and for a 'core or protected part'. This was followed by an HMI survey in 1978 "Primary Education in England" that called for a better planned curriculum. This eventually led to the development of the National Curriculum (1988 Education Act).

The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1989 created a subject framework built around knowledge and subject-related skills to the detriment, I believe, of the development of the pupil as an effective learner equipped with the skills needed for adult working life and life long learning. The dominance of subject content also forced out the opportunities for self-development. I believe that this disadvantaged certain sections of pupils and has led to stunted educational attainment and achievement. We were being driven down the road of 'exclusive' curriculum rather than 'inclusive' curriculum.

There has been little or no recent debate, within the educational world, about the components of the curriculum, its purpose and its relevance to the 21st century and more crucially how the various components fit together. Schools have been too pre-occupied with implementing one imposed curriculum change after another with the re-modelled National Curriculum, (Curriculum 2000), the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, Early Learning Goals, etc. to be engaged in thought about curriculum models.

Our schools are a legacy of the factory model of education. Schools were designed to keep children out of the way of working adults while at the same time providing them with the skills, values and attitudes necessary to survive in a mass-industrial society in as cost efficient way as possible (The Elementary Education Act – the Forster Act 1870). This model did not seem appropriate given the move towards the technological future and knowledge economy. Given the opportunity of opening a brand new school at the dawn of a new century, I did not merely want to replicate what was already in place. So, as we were setting up a school for the future in the 21st century, I started to do some reading and researching about the kind of future that could be expected. I felt very dissatisfied with the imposition of a curriculum on the teaching profession, particularly given that the imposition had arisen out of a perceived deficiency with what was already in place. From my discussions with colleagues and from my reading, I was aware that there was a growing dissatisfaction with the curriculum and the current educational system from employers.

I found evidence from industry and the then DfEE to support my feelings. A skills audit by the DfEE in 1996 listed the following skills needed by employers in order of importance:

- **Ability to learn**
- **Team-working**

- **Communication**
- **Technical**
- **Numeracy**
- **Intellectual**
- **IT**

John Abbot, of Education 2000, also produced a paper that compared conventional academic success with commercial success. He found:

Conventional Academic Success has involved:

- **Largely solitary study**
- **Generally uninterrupted work**
- **Concentration on a single subject**
- **Much written work**
- **A high analytical ability**

While Commercial Success involves:

- **Working with others**
- **Constant distractions**
- **Different levels across different disciplines**
- **Mainly verbal skills**
- **Problem-solving and decision-making**

This meant that there was a growing mismatch with schooling and the kind of education required for employment. This started me thinking about the kind of curriculum required for the future.

The National Curriculum has not helped the situation for schools because it is essentially a subject content framework that did not include the development of students' skills. While I acknowledge that schools probably do put some energy into skill development, I believe that the work is often fragmented and isolated. What is needed is a way of developing these skills coherently and systematically across the curriculum and throughout the pupils' school life. There needs to be a balance between knowledge, understanding and skills. The challenge for teachers is to find a way of bringing together teaching and the development of pupils' skills. I believe that the key message for schools is that they need to achieve coherence in a holistic sense through a skills framework. They need to be developing an 'inclusive' curriculum.

Another reason, I believe, to redress the balance between skills and content is the quest for lifelong learning. In that context, skills are often of more lasting importance. Curriculum content can become irrelevant and outdated, whereas skills are often transferable and should enable you to access up-to-date content, process it appropriately and evaluate the outcomes.

Even though National Curriculum 2000 includes a section at the beginning of the document about key skills, I believe that more could have been done to integrate them into a more cohesive framework that would prepare children for their future. Even though the section in

Curriculum 2000 spoke about promoting skills across the National Curriculum, it was left as a separate section in the document. Therefore, it will have had little or no influence on the delivery of subjects in most schools given that schools are very much confined by the standards debate.

Whilst I believe that the skills should have been integrated more fully into Curriculum 2000, the fact that they are included at all is a very positive step. I believe in the central importance of the curriculum as an effective tool for the development of young people, but it needs to be a relevant curriculum. In order to build in relevance, we should start with the child and their developing world. The introduction of the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals fitted very much with our philosophy of child-centred learning. So, another positive section of Curriculum 2000 was the paragraphs referring to building on the early learning goals, which are organised into six areas of learning:

- **Personal, social and emotional development**
- **Language and literacy**
- **Mathematical development**
- **Knowledge and understanding of the world**
- **Physical development**
- **Creative development.**

This very much fitted in with my philosophy of a curriculum that grows with and from the child. I used it as a basis of our developing curriculum. I particularly liked the way that Personal, Social and Emotional development was seen as the starting point and I too have put this at the centre of our curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2.

A Curriculum for the Future

At a meeting I attended (February 2001) in my LEA with David Hargreaves, the then QCA Chief Executive, he was talking about his vision for the future. He felt that initiative overload had led to short-term thinking and planning by headteachers and schools and that they had lost the longer-term view of what education was for. He believes that this longer-term view must take note that the industrial age is now over and that we have moved into a knowledge economy. This again confirmed for me that we were taking the right path with our curriculum development.

David Hargreaves spoke of the forces shaping this knowledge economy. He believes them to be:
- **Information and communication technologies**
- **Neuro-science, cognitive science and evolutionary psychology**
- **Work patterns and lifelong learning.**

John Abbott, President of 21st Century Learning Initiative says:

> **"Schools have now a vital role in starting a dynamic process by which pupils are given the confidence to manage their own learning, to co-operate with colleagues**

and to use a range of resources and learning situations which progressively wean them from their earlier dependence on teachers and institutions.

But such skills, practices and attitudes cannot be taught solely in the classroom, nor can they be developed solely by teachers."

This also ties in with my belief that education is so much broader than schooling. Education is a 24-hour a day / 7 days a week process. We are all learning wherever we are and whatever we are doing and to restrict our thinking about education to only what happens for 38 weeks a year, 5 days a week, 5 hours a day is naïve and restrictive. We should be looking at children's learning experiences across the whole of their life and provide time for them to make linkages. In order to do this we cannot restrict learning to just school and we cannot restrict teaching to just teachers. This issue will be considered further in the study in the section on 'The Learning Facilitator'.

Whilst Curriculum 2000 made a half-hearted attempt at trying to include the generic skills needed for the knowledge economy, because they were put into a separate section of the document and not related to the subject specific content, they appear to have made very little difference in most schools. But, there are some positive parts to the document.

I believe that the twin aims of National Curriculum 2000 provide a good starting point. They state that:

"The school curriculum should aim to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve"

and

"It should aim to prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life."
(QCA 1999, p.11)

What is missing is the link from these aims to the content of the curriculum, which appears to have no particular pedagogical model.

Given my firm belief in the centrality of the child to their own learning, when planning our curriculum I wanted to provide a much broader education than the National Curriculum. I recognise that the curriculum consists not only of the taught subjects but also the planned and incidental learning opportunities, which are available to pupils throughout the day.

Curriculum Aim

With this in mind the staff and I began to debate our curriculum aim. It was finalised in autumn 1999 during a staff meeting discussion on the curriculum as it was developing at our school. The Aim reads:

"To enable all students to achieve high standards of learning and to develop self confidence, optimism, high self esteem, respect for others and achievement of personal excellence."

The aim reflects my belief that each child is an individual and should be taught as such. Staff felt able to subscribe to this belief. This echoes Charles Handy's (1989) statement that:

"What is needed is not a National Curriculum, but an individual curriculum for every child."

Whilst this would appear to be an unmanageable task for any teacher, we, as a school became very focused on it as our ultimate aim.

We had begun our school life in 1998 by devising a group of school aims. They are:

- **We aim to create a secure, happy, stimulating, well-resourced environment for all.**
- **We expect and value high standards of achievements, where each child performs to the best of their ability.**
- **We provide a broad, balanced, relevant curriculum through which children will develop knowledge, skills, understanding and an enthusiasm for learning.**
- **The staff will work co-operatively together to enjoy maximum job satisfaction and opportunities for professional development.**
- **We work in partnership with parents, governors, LEA and community, in a climate of trust and co-operation.**
- **We support children who have special needs in a sensitive and caring manner.**
- **We promote equal opportunities for all.**
- **We will encourage children to develop good relationships with other children and all members of our school community, based on mutual respect.**
- **We expect good behaviour from all pupils, based on positive reinforcement where possible.**
- **We will promote children's spiritual and moral development through the curriculum and in the general life of the school.**
- **We will provide a range of experiences for pupils to expand their personal interests and their social and cultural awareness.**

These aims still exist but with our overall curriculum aim as an overarching statement. I believe that it was important to set our school aims within this broader context in order to provide focus for all the activities that take place within and from the school. It became a statement against which we could be judged by all stakeholders (including ourselves) and we later supplemented it with our quality charter that states:

- **Quality learning and teaching comes first.**
- **Staff, children, parents and governors work together.**
- **Everyone is special and enriches the life of our school.**

- **Hard work and achievements are always celebrated.**
- **We are kind to each other.**
- **We take pride in ourselves.**
- **We are always ready to listen.**
- **We make all visitors welcome.**

This gave us a baseline on which to build our curriculum and a quality standard to measure it against.

Curriculum Design

The discussions about curriculum have been interesting at West Grove. The school opened during the moratorium on the National Curriculum and just as the Literacy Strategy was being introduced. This enabled us to have a debate as a staff, with governors, about the kind of curriculum we wanted to offer.

During an initial training day, which I led, before the school opened we worked together to construct a shared vision for our school. We began by brainstorming what we would like our 11-year-olds to be like when they leave our school in 2005. We worked in four groups to generate the lists. Each group had a mix of staff and governors, some of whom were parents in the school.

Group 1
Good Communicators
Confident – challenge – stand up for rights
Able readers and writers
Interact with different cultures
Independent thinkers
Ambitious
Knowledge into practice
Respect for others – community – property
Flexible
Law abiding
Self pride

Group 2
Numcracy
Literacy
IT skills
Social
Communication
Application
Practical
Sciences
Career opportunities
Arts

Group 3
Independent learner
Communication
Literate
Numerate
Social and interaction skills
Show respect and care about the feelings of others
Confidence in themselves and their abilities
Self motivated
Ability to apply knowledge in different circumstances and situations
Awareness of the necessity of fitness and health
Enquiring mind – enthusiastic learner

Group 4
Independence
Ability to understand – tasks, differences, knowledge, people
Individuality
Caring and respect for self, others and environment
Communication
Make relationships
Literate / numerate
Inquisitive
Open-minded
Confident – high self-esteem
Express opinions
Conscientious
Broad interests
Know how to learn
Team skills – leadership, negotiator, timekeeper, finisher, etc.

From these lists, I asked groups to look at the kind of experiences that the children would need and then, and only then, we began to discuss curriculum design. It was from these discussions that we decided that a fully-rounded individual was at the top of our wish-list and that our curriculum must have a broad and balanced base. We all agreed that we wanted our children to be literate and numerate but we also wanted them to be good with people and to be self-knowledgeable, developing skills that would lead them into life-long learning.

It was, therefore, decided, against this background, that our curriculum should start with each child and what they could do and that we would design experiences to **"support, enhance and extend" them** (Bruce 1987, p.65).

As we began to design our curriculum, following the above agreements we discussed the elements that we wanted to be a part of what we offer. As we were beginning with a blank canvass we decided that we should build in elements such as Citizenship and key skills rather than have them as 'extras'. These form the core of our curriculum and our long-term plans are PSHE and core skill based (See Appendix 6). It was also decided at this time that we would introduce a modern foreign language to the children, so we decided to introduce

French from Year 1. Governors and staff saw these as important elements of preparing our children to be world citizens.

We decided that our long-term objectives for our curriculum should be child-centred and focus on the skills and values and attitudes that we wished the children to develop. We looked at several sources, including the Oxfam document on citizenship, and extracted what we considered to be the key skills. We decided that the skills that we wanted to develop were:

- **Intrapersonal skills**
- **Active citizenship skills**
- **Interpersonal skills**
- **Communication skills**
- **Problem-solving skills**
- **Research skills**
- **Thinking skills**

David Hargreaves provided a list during his presentation in the LEA of the knowledge and skills needed for the knowledge economy. These are:

- **Meta-cognitive skills – thinking about how to think, learning how to learn**
- **Ability to integrate formal and informal learning**
- **Ability to access, select and evaluate knowledge in an information-soaked world**
- **Ability to develop and apply several forms of intelligence**
- **Ability to cope with ambiguous situations, unpredictable problems and unforeseeable circumstances**
- **Ability to cope with multiple careers, learning how to re-design oneself, locate oneself in a job market, choose and fashion the relevant education and training.**

This list seems to cross-reference with our own lists very well, again confirming for us that we are developing the curriculum in accordance with enlightened thinking.

Through my reading and research, followed by discussion with staff, it was decided that we would deliver our curriculum through broad and balanced topics, which over a course of a year would take varied foci, e.g. science, history, geography, etc. It was felt that learning and teaching through topics helped the children construct meaning within the real world and enabled them to relate to and better understand their learning. It is through these topics that the National Curriculum is delivered and whenever possible links are drawn with the literacy and numeracy strategies. Where these links are not natural, literacy and numeracy skills are taught separately. As a Governing Body and staff we decided not to implement the strategies in full. We have adopted the content of the Literacy and Numeracy strategies but we do not follow the Literacy Hour or Numeracy Lesson formats. I know that young children cannot sustain concentration for these extended periods of time on such activities, so lessons are broken across the day into 'pulse' sessions. These will be discussed in more detail later in the study.

I asked groups to discuss the key experiences to which they believed our children should have an entitlement during their primary school years. We considered a list produced by a previous primary adviser in the LEA and came up with the following list:

Each child should have the opportunity to experience:

- Taking part in a 'public performance' on an annual basis.
- Seeing a creative artist at work within the school, to include visits from authors, storytellers, etc.
- Seeing people from the community, who visit the school to explain their work.
- Activities outside school: School journey
                                 Day visits to galleries, museums, places
                                 of worship
                                 Field work
                                 Local history and further afield visits
                                 Visits to theatre, cinema, etc.
- Using artefacts and primary sources.
- Collecting data over a long period of time, e.g. weather and processing it.
- Taking part in sports activities, including Borough events.
- Making a positive contribution to the community, both school and wider, through participation in classroom discussions, School Council and collections, etc. for the wider community.
- Discussing contemporary issues.

I have tried on more than one occasion to produce a curriculum model diagram as a representation. I have found this task almost impossible given the complexities involved. One of the first models devised, I produced during my term of preparation before the school opened.
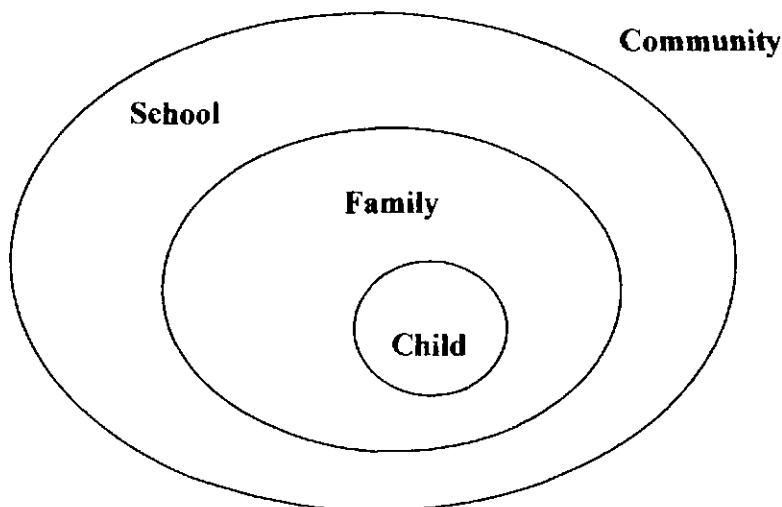
This diagram shows how I believe the curriculum should start with the child and grow out as the child develops within their growing world.

I then created a model that showed how we would begin with the key skills and develop the curriculum from there.
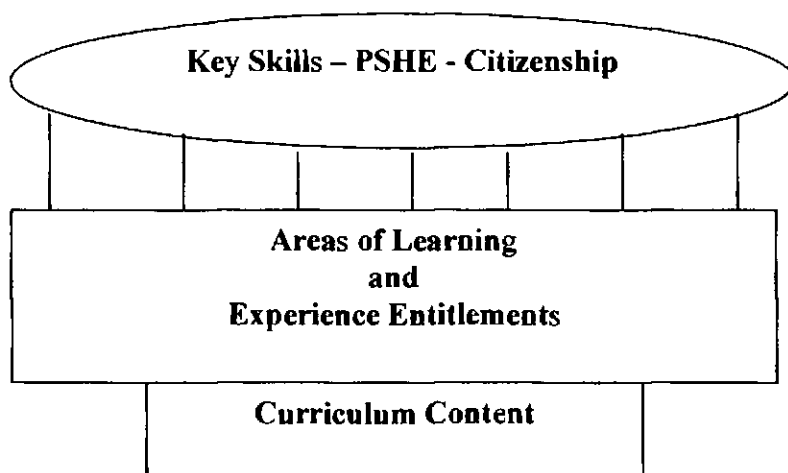
This model shows how we built our curriculum from the key skills, Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship through the areas of learning and experience and then adding the curriculum content.

We were then faced with the problem of which key skills to develop and how to put them within a cohesive and progressive framework. Through my links with the local Education Business Partnership I became aware of a scheme developed for disenfranchised secondary aged pupils – PEPI – Personal Effectiveness Programme Initiative (Bell, 1995). This is a skills development programme that can be used in many different ways. Although it had been developed for secondary aged pupils I knew of one local infant school that was using it successfully within its reception classes. I talked to my staff about it; invited its author to attend a staff meeting to present the scheme to staff and it was then decided that we would adopt the scheme within the school. We decided to use it as a self-evaluation tool across the whole school and it was left to each year group to design their own recording format.

The key skills covered by the programmes are:

- **Presentation skills –** **presentation of self**
  presentation of written work
  spoken presentations
- **Time management –** **planning ahead**
  estimation
  concentration
- **Research skills -** **using different sources of information**
  analysing and selecting relevant information

- **Problem solving -**   type of problem
  recognising a problem, selecting a solution
  deciding with others
- **Communication skills -** spoken communication
  Written communication
  non-verbal communication
  listening skills
  reading skills
- **Organisation skills -**   work style
  work outcomes
- **Working with others -** team working
  interpersonal skills

Staff felt that this programme covered the main key skill areas and liked the way that children were encouraged to become self-evaluating. Following the first year of its implementation and the success that we had had with the programme, we decided to develop a more systematic recording format. Children would be responsible for monitoring their own performance against 'I can' statements under each of the headings, (see Appendix 7). This will continue to be developed as the children move through the school. I see it eventually leading to the pupils keeping their own learning log so that they will be able to reflect on key tasks and highlight significant experiences as moving them on in their learning. I believe that this empowers the pupils and focuses them on the key task of learning to be effective learners.

The PEPI programme, we believe, ties together the key skills and makes links to PSHE and Citizenship. Since September 2001, Year 3 children have decided that they need to move away from PEPI, as he is for the younger children! and in conjunction with their teacher have devised a learning log sheet that they use to set and review weekly learning targets (see Appendix 8). We intend to extend this from Year 4 so that the children will be choosing their own learning objectives from a computer-based planning programme. In this way we will be working towards individual learning accounts for pupils.

Our Citizenship programmes includes a Red Cross Junior First Aid course at Year 2 and Year 5 and a School Council with representatives from each class from Year 1 to Year 6. Representatives are democratically elected by their peers. The School Council representatives are responsible for leading discussions with their class peers to elicit issues for discussion at the Council, they chair and take minutes of the meetings and report back to their classes on any outcomes.

PSHE concentrates on healthy mind and healthy body so children are ready for learning. We talk particularly about handling emotions, with extensive use of Circle Time and Bubble Time to help children handle their emotions and work constructively to manage conflict. These will be discussed fully in the Learning to Learn section.

By combining these three elements as our 'core curriculum' we firmly establish the development of the whole child as our prime concern.

This is almost directly opposed to the way most schools construct their curriculum. They usually plan out the curriculum content first, from the National Curriculum and Literacy and Numeracy strategies, plan activities from the given learning objectives and review the effectiveness of their teaching through the learning outcomes of the children. In their model, the pupils are considered last. In our model of the curriculum pupil individual needs are considered much earlier in the process.

As Tina Bruce and Carolyn Meggitt say in their book "Child Care and Education":

> **"The best curriculum is one which is based on:**
> - **Observations made of individual children;**
> - **Matches the needs and interests of individual children;**
> - **Creates a learning community."**
>
> (Bruce and Meggitt 1999, p.378)

Curriculum Planning

Planning in Nursery and Reception classes is based on the areas of learning and the Early Learning Goals from the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. These provide a sound basis for a high quality and integrated early education. The planning is based on observations of children's learning and is intended to support and extend that learning for each individual, who at several times across the foundation stage will be the subject of focus planning.

In order to build on this good early years' practice, staff have considered many ways of planning. I suggested that in Key Stage 1, staff should use the nine areas of learning and experience from the Curriculum Matters series produced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1985). In this document, HMI state that:

> **"There are limitations in a curriculum which is no more than a list of subjects. For example, it is too easy to define the content of each subject with no reference whatever to the learning processes to be used or what is happening in the rest of the curriculum."**
>
> (DES 1985, p.9)

The paper was written to stimulate the professional discussion about the whole curriculum. It was HMI's attempt at providing a framework for curriculum planning to ensure a broad, balanced, relevant and coherent curriculum. We liked these broad areas and their definitions because it made links across subjects and seemed to reflect the real world much better than the National Curriculum. The areas they defined are as follows:

- **Aesthetic and creative**
  The capacity to respond emotionally and intellectually to sensory experience; the awareness of degrees of quality; the appreciation of beauty and fitness for purpose; the exploration and understanding of feeling and the processes of making, composing and inventing.
- **Human and social**

Understanding people and how they live, their relationships with each other and with their environments, and how human action, now and in the past, has influenced events and conditions. The significance of place and its effects on the natural and created world – this area includes historical, geographical, technological, political and sociological perspectives; the study and preservation of environments. Understanding of how economic systems work, and the way in which costs and benefits to society and to the individual must be evaluated when making choices about the use of scarce human, financial and material resources.

- **Linguistic and literary**
  Increasing pupils' understanding of the role and power of language in all aspects of life; their confidence as language users and their enjoyment of a wide variety of literary and other texts from a range of sources and cultures.

- **Mathematical**
  Developing mathematical concepts and processes to enable pupils to understand and appreciate relationships and pattern in both number and space in their everyday lives and be able to express them clearly and concisely.

- **Moral**
  Bringing together moral actions and the principles which underline them; providing experiences which help to form and test moral convictions and to modify attitudes; providing opportunities to reason about values if people are to make sound moral judgements. Moral aspects of Personal and Social development.

- **Physical**
  Those activities which normally belong within the field of physical education and dance which aim to develop control, co-ordination and mobility and to provide for the development of knowledge, understanding and attitudes. Manipulative and motor skills and knowledge of how the human body works, the development of a healthy attitude toward it and adoption of an active way of life to keep it in good condition.

- **Scientific**
  Increasing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the natural world, the world as modified by human beings and with developing skills and competences associated with science as a process of enquiry. These include: observation, selection, hypothesising, experimentation and communication.

- **Spiritual**
  Developing feelings and convictions about the significance of human life and the world as a whole; Religious Education is contained within this area but is not identical with it.

- **Technological**
  The search for ways and means to extend and enhance our powers to control events and order our environment. The essence for technology lies in process of bringing about change or exercising control over the environment. This process is a particular form of problem-solving, of designing in order to effect control.

Staff agreed with me that these areas developed well from the early learning goals in the foundation stage, thereby enabling progression to Key Stage 1 in skills as well as knowledge and understanding. The areas of learning and experience covered all the subjects of the

National Curriculum but seemed to us to be more relevant to the context within which we are operating. They also encompassed some generic skills rather than being content led.

Following discussions with staff, we have chosen to deliver the curriculum through a topic-based approach, except in the Foundation Stage. We choose topics that begin with the child's immediate world and gradually extend them as the child grows and their world expands. In the Foundation Stage we have moved away from topics as we felt these to be too restrictive. In the Nursery they plan across all six areas of learning as per the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, choosing one area each half term to be a particular focus for observations, etc. In the Reception classes the children's interests lead to topic choice. Following staff's observational assessments of the children, topics will emerge and these are negotiated with the children. The children are aware why the topics have been chosen and which child's 'specialist field' it is based on. In this way we can make the curriculum truly responsive to children's needs.

The topic chart is included on page 55. Some topics have a bias to one particular area, for example, Light and Colour is a science-based topic, where Romans is a history-based topic. Although there are these biases in the topics, we try to cover all areas of learning and experience through each topic and draw the links across subject barriers through the activities provided.

WEST GROVE TOPIC GRID

	AUTUMN		SPRING		SUMMER	
NURSERY	INDUCTION	OURSELVES		HOUSES AND HOMES		WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENT
RECEPTION	NURSERY RHYMES AND STORIES BASELINE ASSESSMENT		FOOD	CLOTHES	MINIBEASTS	WATER
YEAR 1	THE BODY	TOYS AND MACHINES	DINOSAURS	SEASONS AND WEATHER	GROWTH AND LIVING THINGS	LOCAL ENVIRONMENT CONTRASTING WITH FARM
YEAR 2	JOURNEYS	LIGHT AND COLOUR	MATERIALS	HOW PEOPLE USED TO LIVE	SATS	LIVING WORLD AND MINIBEASTS
YEAR 3	PLANETS AND SPACE	WATER	ROMANS	PLANTS	LOCAL ENVIRONMENT CONTRASTING AREA	FORCES
YEAR 4	LIGHT AND SOUND	ELECTRICITY	TUDORS	FOOD AND FARMING (ST. LUCIA)	LOCAL STUDY HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY	MATERIALS
YEAR 5	LIVING THINGS ANIMALS AND PLANTS	ANCIENT GREECE	BRITAIN SINCE 1930	RIVERS	FORCES	CONTRASTING UK (WALTON ON THE NAZE)
YEAR 6	ANCIENT EGYPT	HUMAN BODY	MATERIALS		SATS	TOPOGRAPHY

At the beginning of each topic, staff ask the children in Key Stages 1 and 2 for their input through a brainstorm session. They are asked the following three questions:

- What do we already know about the topic?
- What do we want to know about the topic?
- How can we find out?

This is charted as a mind-map and displayed on the classroom wall. It is then referred to as the topic progresses so that the children are involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of their own learning. I see this as a key skill.

Staff and I tried to produce mid-term plans based on the areas of learning and experience for Key Stage 1 and used this format for the first two years. On reflection, we found that this form of planning did not show curriculum coverage and was too restrictive, not allowing for creativity and responsiveness to pupils needs. Ofsted confirmed this for us following their inspection in March 2001. They reported that:

> **"The requirements of the National Curriculum are met in broad terms through these topics but at the detailed level of medium term planning, gaps are occurring."**

This led us to review these plans and move away from using them. Our medium term plans now are based loosely on the QCA schemes of work, but I have linked them to appropriate topics, and the content of the Literacy and Numeracy strategies. This addresses the issue of curriculum coverage as raised by Ofsted whilst maintaining our skills based curriculum. In this way, the teachers can produce a topic overview sheet showing coverage of all subjects (for accountability purposes) and use this then as a basis for their weekly plans. I have also produced for each year group a sheet showing coverage of the QCA schemes of work across the year (an example is shown on Page 57) – this reflects the subject-bias of each topic. In this way I have tried to reduce the amount of paperwork that the teachers have to produce. This gives them more time to be creative with the formulation of activities and time for reflection and assessment of the pupils.

The weekly plans have also been through several formats since the school opened. I have always insisted that I have an evaluation of the previous week's work with feed-forwards of issues to be considered in the following week and I also insist that teachers produce a timetable so that any teacher covering their class can continue with the work planned. What has been debated by staff is the way in which we show the learning objectives for the week and the activities planned to achieve those objectives. Staff have piloted several formats and reviewed them regularly, suggesting alterations or new formats to meet their planning needs.

Through negotiation we have chosen to have differentiated plans for the foundation stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 because of the differing learning needs of the children within those stages and the different ways in which teachers prefer to record their plans.

Some of the formats tried are attached in Appendix 9.

	Science	ICT	D&T	History	Geography	Art	Music	PE	RE	MFL
Autumn Term	Light and Shadows Earth, Sun and Moon	Combining text and graphics Manipulating sound Introduction to databases Exploring simulations	Moving monsters Storybooks			3D Painting	Exploring descriptive sounds Exploring rhythmic patterns Exploring arrangements Exploring pentatonic scales Exploring sound colours Exploring singing games			
					Going to the Seaside	Photography IT Printing				
Spring Term	Teeth and Eating	Introduction to spreadsheets		Why have people invaded and settled in Britain in the past? A Roman case study What was it like to live here in the past?	Village Settlers	3D Drawing				
	Helping Plants Grow Well Rocks and Soils					Painting Textiles				
Summer Term					Investigating our local area	Drawing Collage 3D				
	Characteristics of materials Magnets and Springs		Packaging Money Containers			Painting 3D				

We have come to these current plans through debate about the kind of learning that we are trying to promote and how individual teachers like to record their plans. Varied formats are provided to try to meet teachers' individual needs whilst providing some coherence across classes. We recognise that all children have a preferred learning style and some have a left or right brain dominance and they differ in terms of their preference as audio, visual or kinesthetic learners. We have tried to reflect this in our weekly plans. In this way we are working towards achieving our ultimate goal of a curriculum that will meet each individual's needs.

Observational assessment remains a focus on each of our planning sheets and underpins all our work. All staff believe that what the children can do and understand should be the starting point of any following work. All adults working in our classes are encouraged to be observers of learning and in the foundation stage this is systematically recorded. As the children move further up the school, observation of children's learning remains a focus but there is more written work to use as a basis of assessments. Assessment will be considered more fully in a following section of this chapter.

In order to keep parents informed about the work their children will be engaging in, each year group sends home a topic information sheet (see Appendix 10), where the teachers record the main aspects of each topic and offer suggestions for how parents can support at home.

The planning documentation will continue to be reviewed and amended, as staff and I feel necessary. The planning sheets need to be a useful tool for every individual teacher and so it will probably continue to be necessary to have a variety of planning sheets in use. Unless the planning tools we use meet the needs of the staff and pupils then they are merely a bureaucratic burden.

Curriculum Delivery

Following discussions with staff and governors, we have chosen as a school not to adopt the Literacy and Numeracy strategies because the structured lessons demand extended, imposed concentration periods that we do not believe young children should be asked to sustain.

Most teachers deliver our curriculum through our broad and balanced topics and through an integrated approach. This means that there can be a variety of 'subjects' being taught at the same time in the classroom or that some subjects are taught through multi-media. Again this draws links for the children with their own developing understanding and knowledge of the world.

As the children have been involved in the planning of each topic through their initial brainstorming and mind-mapping exercise, they feel that they have some input into what they are learning. I then see it as the teachers' job to create activities that draw on children's individual preferred learning styles. By delivering through these multi-sensory methods, we aim to give each child a 'peg' on which to hang their learning.

Weekly plans show the learning objectives for each area of learning and these form the basis of the focused teaching. This is then supplemented with individual or group activities for practice, etc.

As a school we do not use published schemes and staff try not to rely on worksheets. Staff plan activities that will engage children in 'real' learning opportunities, usually based around problem solving or collaborative group activities, based on first-hand experience. Learning is shown through the language the children use and the quality of the discussion with each other and the adult/s engaging with them. We believe that all learning does not need to be recorded by the children, it is their developing understanding that is paramount. Recording does take place in some cases to enable the teacher to check understanding and provide evidence of achievement.

In order to maximise learning we are using several accelerated learning techniques, including:

- Brain gym
- VAKs (Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic)
- Multiple intelligences
- Learning cycles
- Pulse learning
- Fruit and water available in classrooms at all times
- Use of music
- Memory techniques

These will be explored more fully during the section in this chapter on Learning to Learn.

We enrich our curriculum as much as we can with visits and visitors. Teachers try to plan a visit to a place of interest linked to each topic, with at least one visit per term. We also bring people into the school to talk about their work or show skills and talents in order to motivate the children. First hand experience, I believe, is very important for the young learner, contributing towards making the learning real.

We also wanted to enable children to develop their particular skills, talents and passions from an early age and staff, therefore, decided to provide out-of-hours learning opportunities through after-school clubs. These clubs are offered to all pupils from Year 1 and they can choose from music, art and sports clubs. The clubs are run by staff as part of their commitment to extending learning beyond the classroom and beyond the school day.

Where we are now.

We had followed a development plan to bring about an innovative curriculum that all the key stakeholders had been involved in bringing together. The next stage was to consolidate what we had done and decide how the continuing evaluation and working of the curriculum would take place.

PEPI, Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship still form the core of our curriculum, we then have the content curriculum delivered through multi-sensory approaches, an enriched curriculum of key entitlement experiences and an extended curriculum provided through out-of-hours learning. I believe this gives every child the opportunity to learn through their own preferred learning style/s.

The model of our current curriculum is produced below:

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 EXTENDED CURRICULUM                      │
│  ┌────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐  │
│  │              ENRICHED CURRICULUM                   │  │
│  │  ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐  │  │
│  │  │            CONTENT CURRICULUM               │  │  │
│  │  │                                             │  │  │
│  │  │        ┌──────────────────────────┐         │  │  │
│  │  │        │           PEPI           │         │  │  │
│  │  │        │           PHSE           │         │  │  │
│  │  │        │        CITIZENSHIP       │         │  │  │
│  │  │        └──────────────────────────┘         │  │  │
│  │  │                                             │  │  │
│  │  │   DELIVERED THROUGH MULTI-SENSORY           │  │  │
│  │  │              METHODS                        │  │  │
│  │  └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘  │  │
│  │                                                    │  │
│  │              KEY ENTITLEMENTS                      │  │
│  └────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘  │
│                                                          │
│                 OUT-OF-HOURS LEARNING                    │
│                                                          │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
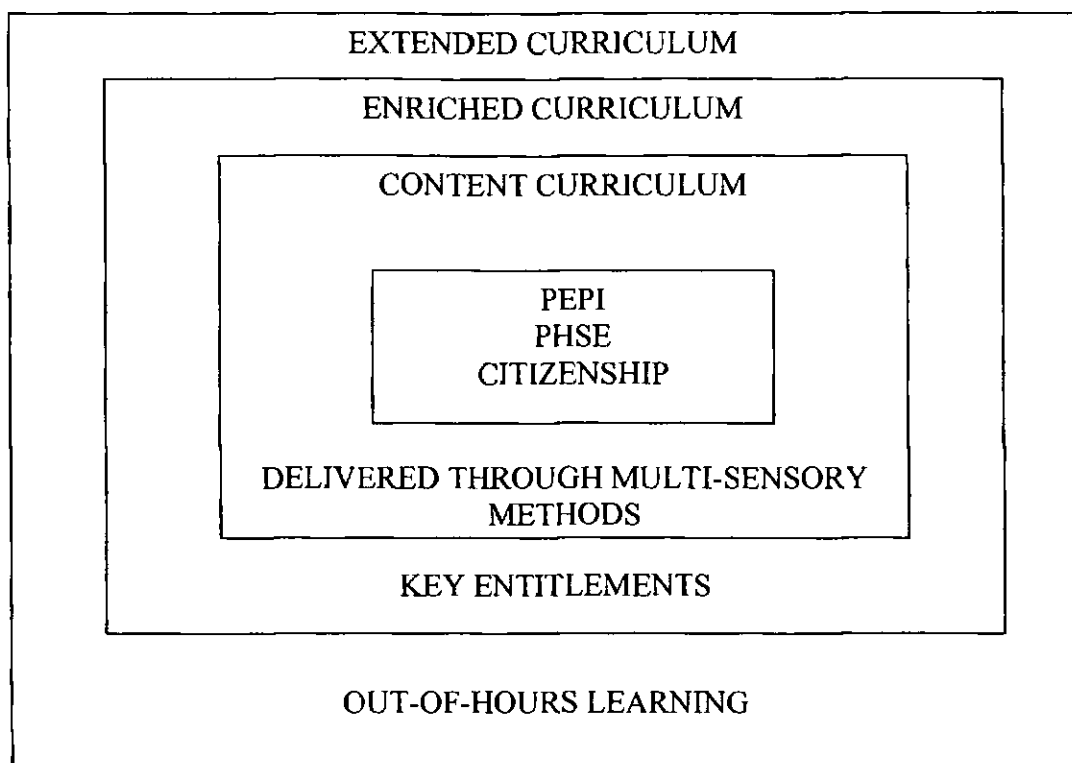
Curriculum Monitoring

Because we do not follow the traditional methods of curriculum planning and delivery it becomes even more imperative that our curriculum monitoring procedures are rigorous. Each week, teachers present their plans to me and at the beginning of each topic they present a topic overview sheet showing coverage of all areas of the National Curriculum. This provides evidence that we are meeting Statutory Requirements. The Headship Team (Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher) undertakes termly classroom observations; this is complemented by work scrutiny sessions, termly teacher assessments of individual progress and a computer system of tracking pupil progress.

But perhaps most importantly, every teacher in the school is a 'reflective practitioner'. They are encouraged to be reflective as part of their weekly plans and monthly Team meetings enable them to share their learning and experiences with colleagues. I have set up frameworks to support them in their reflections and try to model this behaviour for staff by constantly reflecting on my own practice. A staff meeting is held each term to focus on

learning and teaching within the school, discussing Learning to Learn, where we reflect on the successes and areas for development and teachers can share the outcomes of their action research.

Teachers know that they are trusted to do the best for the children in their care and that they will be supported in their efforts to improve their performance. They are encouraged to refine their work and evaluate it thoroughly and honestly.

The focus for all of this work is the quality of learning and teaching. It is the main stated aim of the school and our core purpose.

What is effective? Why?

I believe that the key to the effectiveness of the way we plan and deliver the curriculum is the centrality of the child in the process. In other schools I know and have worked in, teachers have seen their job as the deliverers of the subject curriculum and have planned the content in isolation of the context.

We put the child at the centre of the process and the curriculum experiences are planned around the development of the child as a learner. In an ideal situation, this would lead to individual learning accounts for all pupils – taking differentiation to its limits. In reality, it is not possible to plan for every child individually all of the time, but teachers have a rolling programme of 'focus' children for whom specific learning activities will be planned and reviewed at set times across the year. Some children who have specific individual learning needs will have these needs planned for on a more continuous basis. Teachers keep a profile of each pupil showing their development as an individual learner and this is shared with the pupil and their parents.

In practical terms, the teacher plans a range of activities that will address many individual learning needs. They try to make the activities as 'open-ended' as they possibly can, allowing each child to have their own individual response to the task and a lot of time is spent in giving individual feedback to children about their learning. Our ultimate aim is to encourage each child to take responsibility for themselves as learners. The content of the curriculum becomes less important and the primary purpose is the development of the child as a lifelong learner.

By building our curriculum on their observational assessments of the children, the teachers make the curriculum fit the child rather than make the child fit the curriculum. In this way, because we are responding to individual needs, we provide an inclusive curriculum.

What people think of our curriculum

It is important to the governors and I that we receive constant feedback on our work, with a view to continuous improvement. We have therefore, set up formal and informal systems for gathering such evaluative comments from key stakeholders. This feedback is discussed by the governing body curriculum sub-committee as part of their annual review processes and the outcomes of their discussions are then fed into future developments for the school at the annual school improvement planning day, usually held in May or June. At this joint staff and

governors inset day we discuss the outcomes of our monitoring over the previous year, agreeing a current 'state of the nation', we then discuss any areas for development and agree a working plan for the coming year.

Learning outcomes are also discussed, using national and local data as a benchmark against which to measure ourselves. In this way, staff and governors are able to make some judgements about the efficacy of our methods.

Children's comments:

> **"I like West Grove quite a lot 'cos I've been here, I've gotten used to it because I've been here quite a long time. I think I'm getting cleverer because now I know how West Grove works."**

During our Investors in People assessment staff made comments to our external assessor. They are recorded in her final report.

> **"I've never been so inspired."**

> **"We feel like we are bouncing off the children all the time."**

> **"I had heard of the West Grove Way at my previous school and now I can see how well it works."**

> **"The school thinks further than education and considers the whole child."**

Parents comments (taken from questionnaire responses and letters from parents):

> **"The West Grove Way recognises and makes use of children's interests and strengths and uses that to help them learn."**

> **"I particularly want to share my view with you that I support the Schemas method used and feel it has enabled me to better understand my son and play a key role in his learning development along side his teacher. I like the flexibility this method offers in preparing and easing the children into education in a relaxed environment and the fact that it allows us to be driven by them. After all, we learn a lot from our children."**

What Ofsted said:

> **"A broad and interesting curriculum."**

> **"Pupils are very well motivated and show high levels of independence and willingness to learn."**

> **"Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities are good."**

"Extra-curricular provision is good."

"This is a socially inclusive school."

"Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their difficulties and are fully included in all lessons."

"Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good. Pupils are well supported and the curriculum makes appropriate provision for enhanced speaking and listening opportunities."

SUMMARY

I have led staff in trying to develop a curriculum that is responsive to the changing needs of society, i.e. more multi-cultural, more families who speak English as an additional language, more families with children who have special educational needs, etc.

- We try to ensure an inclusive curriculum by offering a curriculum that changes in response to individual pupil needs, based on the pupil's previous knowledge and understanding.

- Pupils are expected to take some responsibility for planning and monitoring their own learning through reflection on the processes involved and the quality of their learning outcomes.

- Staff involve pupils in the review of the learning covered at the end of each topic.

- Our curriculum aims and models are based on the widest definition of achievement and not just academic subjects, including key skill development that is necessary for life long learning.

- Our curriculum delivery is responsive to pupil's individual learning styles. We do not plan a curriculum, deliver it and hope that some children learn something. Effective learning is always our focus.

- Comments included above confirm that 'external' partners see the benefits of working in this way and consider the practices to be inclusive.

LEARNING TO LEARN PROJECT

The story of our involvement with the Campaign for Learning

Around the time that we were devising our long-term plans based on our vision of a rounded 11 year old, I saw an advertisement in the Times Educational Supplement looking for schools to become a part of a 'Learning to Learn' project being launched by the Campaign for Learning. The project was officially launched on 29th February 2000, seeking to understand what we know about how we learn. The Campaign for Learning was particularly interested in recent work on the brain and on intelligence and its potential impact on standards and motivation in schools. They reflected that in today's business world, companies are increasingly seeking to understand how people learn and then trying to accelerate the process. This related very much to my experience and findings, that businesses are no longer satisfied with the kind of students leaving our schools. They stated that from across the world there is a growing body of evidence that, by focusing more on learning to learn, standards of achievement and motivation can be improved. There are indications, too, that certain approaches to teaching are most likely to create confident lifelong learners. There is also recognition by the Campaign for Learning that confidence in the power of learning is not a new phenomenon.

> **"Nothing is impossible to someone willing to learn."**
> (After John Heywood, Late 15th Century)

> **"They know enough who know how to learn."**
> (Henry Adams, Mid 19th Century)

The key principle underpinning the Learning to Learn project is that **"learning is learnable"** (Lucas and Greany 2000). The Campaign for Learning believes that there are two distinct aspects to Learning to Learn. The first is about encouraging better learners, young people who achieve more and reach higher standards with the help of their teachers. The second, and ultimately more significant, involves becoming an autonomous lifelong learner, someone who is capable and motivated to learn throughout their life.

This seemed to fit very neatly into my developing thoughts and I sent for an application form, which was duly completed and submitted. Twenty-four schools were selected, from over 200 applications, to form the pilot project and each school was asked to produce its own plan for implementation of the first year of the project.

Through early meetings with other project schools we came up with a list of aspects that we believe framed the project for all of us, even though we may study isolated aspects. These were:

- Being ready to learn – emotional state, self-esteem, etc.
- Being able to set and achieve goals – motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, etc.
- Knowing how to learn best – learning strategies, learning styles, how memory works, knowing when to ask questions, etc.

64

- Harnessing creativity – strategies for thinking different thoughts and solving difficult problems, etc.
- Being able to reflect, adapt and change – self-evaluation, attitude to making mistakes, receiving and giving feedback, etc.

Staff and I chose to implement our project across the whole school (which was two nursery classes, two reception classes, two year 1 classes and one year 2 class, approximately 210 pupils when the project began). I consulted with all staff, including office staff and site staff and they all wished to be involved in the project – 21 in all (at that time).

I was aware at the beginning of the Learning to Learn project that my own knowledge and understanding was limited. But, through Inset sessions provided by the Campaign for Learning I developed my understanding and refined my vision of what 'learning to learn' would look like in a school and how we could develop children as lifelong learners. I read the work of Howard Gardner on multiple intelligences. He developed a theory of Multiple Intelligence, comprising at least seven different types of intelligence, which are not fixed but are capable of development and expansion. They are:

- **Linguistic intelligence: relating to language and expression through words written or spoken;**
- **Logical-mathematical intelligence: relating to mathematical and scientific approaches, manipulation of numbers and abstract symbols, logical structured approach to problem-solving;**
- **Visual-spatial intelligence: relating to visualisation and manipulation of images, construction of models, understanding of spatial relationships;**
- **Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence: relating to movement and use of the body in a controlled way;**
- **Musical intelligence: relating to a sensitivity to music, sound and rhythm;**
- **Interpersonal intelligence: relating to a sensitivity towards other people, understanding and predicting their responses, and communicating well;**
- **Intrapersonal intelligence: relating to a sense of self and awareness of own feelings, strengths and areas for development.**

(Gardner, 1984)

He also argued for education which values all the different aspects of intelligence, not just those which can be easily measured using paper and pencil tests. I found his theory very interesting and it certainly explained why some children excelled in different aspects of the curriculum. I felt more comfortable attributing their successes and failures to multiple intelligence theory than to the more simplistic notion of IQ. I firmly believe that all children have strengths in at least one area and it is our job as educationalists to find that area and use it to develop other areas.

I also attended a course led by Alistair Smith on his Accelerated Learning Programme and began to apply these to what we were trying to do in school. They all seemed to fit perfectly to our curriculum in that it all related to the individual child and their preferred learning styles. I shared these ideas with staff who were more than willing to try them out in their classrooms as part of their continuing professional development through reflection on action.

It was after one such feedback session that we became interested in Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and the impact this had by shifting our thinking from 'how intelligent is each child?' to 'how is each child intelligent?' This may seem to be a subtle shift but for the staff and myself it was the turning point in our understanding more about learning. Through training days and staff meetings that I planned and led we spent time reflecting on our own intelligences and how these affect our learning preferences and began to relate these to our work with children. We found in the early years (before Year 1) that it was almost impossible to observe preferred intelligences in the children and we found that using Tina Bruce's schema a more appropriate tool for explaining early learning behaviours. Schemas are patterns of linked behaviours that the child can generalise and use in a whole variety of different situations. From Year 1, depending on the maturity of the child, it became possible to engage the children in talking about how they liked to learn, getting them to consider their preferred activities and why they worked well for them.

As with all theories though, no one theory provides the total answer. We continue to consider multiple intelligences as one aspect of a child's individual learning profile, backed up with observational assessments.

Following discussions with the staff we formulated our plan for the first year of the project. It consisted of:

- Curriculum design with a focus on learning to learn and skill development (this aspect has been fully considered in the previous chapter)
- Provision of fruit and water in classrooms   }these will be
- Use of music as background and focus for learning activities   }considered in
- A programme of outdoor play to enhance the indoor curriculum}the chapter on
                                                                                                          environment
- Accelerated Learning Programme techniques (ALPS)

The Accelerated Learning Programme techniques that we chose to implement were brain gym, VAKi – which is Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learning, Pulse learning and the introduction of Meditation, Circle Time and Bubble Time, philosophy or thinking skills. I felt that by introducing all of these aspects of learning, it would enable staff's understanding of learning processes to be developed. They have been encouraged to set up mini action research projects in their classrooms to evaluate the effectiveness of each of these elements and decide which work for them. The outcomes of their projects have been shared during staff meetings or team meetings so that effective practice can be shared across the school. In this way it has been possible to agree as a staff which elements we will adopt, which need amending in order to meet the needs of our pupils and which we will not use.

Each of these elements will now be considered in detail:

Brain Gym

Brain Gym involves simple movements, which, it is claimed, have the effect of integrating the left and right brain hemispheres, making learning easier. It can be used to improve almost any skill, whether mental or physical and to bring emotional and physical well being into balance.

The Preface to the Brain Gym Teacher's Edition states that:

"Brain Gym activities... enable students to access those parts of the brain previously inaccessible to them. The changes to learning and behaviour are often immediate and profound, as children discover how to receive information and express themselves simultaneously."

<div align="right">(Dennison and Dennison 1994, Preface)</div>

Brain Gym activities help form a bridge between the two sides of the brain and help children to stimulate the whole brain to be ready for learning. Staff at West Grove use Brain Gym exercises as part of their daily teaching programme to reinvigorate children if they are beginning to flag or as a bridge between activities. It helps to focus children's attention and re-oxygenate the brain. As Dennison and Dennison say:

"When students are introduced to Brain Gym, they seem to love it, request it, teach it to their friends, and integrate it into their lives, without any coaching or supervision."

<div align="right">(Dennison and Dennison 1994, Preface)</div>

Our children love their Brain Gym exercises and have great fun learning new ones or showing their skill at more familiar exercises. When I am leading an Inset session I also build in Brain Gym exercises for adults. It's a great way of keeping your audience engaged and ready to listen.

VAKi

As part of considering individual learning style preferences we have considered each child as to whether they are a visual learner, an auditory learner or a kinaesthetic learner. Essentially, visual learners learn from what they see, auditory learners from what they hear and kinaesthetic learners from movement and what they touch. We all learn through all three methods but each of us will have a preferred style of learning. This will obviously have an impact in the classroom and following observations of children in this area we have seen it to be of great significance, so much so that we have chosen to begin our curriculum planning under those three headings. This gives each child across a week's activities the opportunity to learn and express their learning through their preferred style. This is another example of making the curriculum fit the child and not the child fit the curriculum.

I have been interested to see, through staff observations of children, that they start, in the main, as kinaesthetic learners and develop through auditory learning into a visual learning ability. This appears to have age and maturity links with some gender bias, with boys remaining in the kinaesthetic mode for longer.

By planning learning objectives to VAKi, we try to enable more effective learning, through efficient targeting of learning time.

Pulse Learning

Our understanding of Pulse Learning has been developed from Alistair Smith's work on Accelerated Learning. He refers to 'chunking it down' whereby you deliver content and knowledge in 'bite-size chunks' for the children so that they do not become overburdened or confused by too much information at any one time.

Staff were asked to try this out in their classrooms and reflect on the outcomes. Following this small action-research task we have developed our pulse learning sessions, whereby the teacher will give the children an input session for no longer than five minutes. The children will then be dispersed to work on other activities and called back for a second pulse session input for no longer than ten minutes. This can be repeated several times across the day thereby making content or knowledge more accessible to children.

During the pulse sessions, teachers or learning support assistants will use a variety of stimuli. Some inputs will be visual, others will be auditory and others will have a kinaesthetic slant. In this way we try to address the preferred learning styles of the children and address the issue of concentration spans. (Children's task time should be limited to no more than 2 minutes in excess of their chronological age.)

Staff have found that by repeating the input in different ways, children are retaining information and using it in their work in a more systematic way.

Meditation

In order to prepare our children mentally for learning, meditation sessions have been introduced to help them centre themselves before beginning work. David Fontanta in Fontana and Slack (1997) describe the practice as:

> **"essentially a state of poised directed concentration, focused not upon a train of thoughts or ideas, but upon a single clearly defined stimulus... as the opposite of wandering thoughts or even a directed train of thinking... it is a very special kind of sitting quietly doing nothing, in which the mind is held clear and still, alert and watchful, and free from losing itself in thinking."**

(Fontana and Slack 1997, p.5)

Again, staff have found that the children have responded very positively to such sessions, helping those, particularly, who arrive at school with 'baggage from home'.

A member of staff uses music to create a positive, relaxed atmosphere and takes the children and staff through the meditation exercise/s. They have discussed why meditation is important and the benefits from doing it and the children have a firm grasp about its positive impact on their learning.

Circle Time and Bubble Time

The use of Circle Time as a whole school system provides every individual with the knowledge that they will be listened to. Teachers plan systematically for Circle Time, often taking issues raised by the children, and everyone is given the opportunity to contribute.

Jenny Mosley in her book "Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom" states that the benefits of Circle Time are:

- **"Sitting in a circle symbolically promotes the notion of equal responsibility.**
- **Participation in Circle Time enables children to have a sense of belonging to a group they can trust.**
- **Circle Time activities motivate those involved into willingness to share thoughts and feelings.**
- **Circle Time initiates collective responsibility for the promotion of self-esteem and positive behaviour.**
- **Circle Time establishes a forum where children can help one another.**
- **Circle Time encourages self-discipline, as each child can identify their own behaviour or work problems and formulate an action plan to deal with them with the support of others."**

(Mosley 1998, p. 34)

She has since gone on to extend Circle Time with Bubble Time. This gives children an opportunity to express themselves on an individual basis with a chosen adult or another child. It works particularly well for children who tend to be shy or withdrawn if they do not have the confidence to speak in the Circle. They can demonstrate to the teacher by an agreed mechanism, e.g. a peg on a flower petal, that they need to have a private five minutes with an adult and this will be provided so that they can discuss issues or concerns individually.

All staff agreed to try out these approaches for themselves and reflect upon the outcomes, sharing their learning with each other during team meetings and staff meetings.

At the end of the first year of the project our evaluation showed that there was high teacher morale, teachers were confident to try out new ideas and be honest with each other about the outcomes. Many staff had embarked on further study for Masters degrees. When we advertised new jobs we were inundated with applications. There was high parental satisfaction, pupils who were confident learners that could articulate their learning preferences. We had had a good Ofsted report and had seen an increase in applications for places at the school. Following an article about our work in the Education Guardian we had also received many calls from other schools and LEAs who wanted to know more about what we were doing. We had been asked by the DfEE to feature in a training video on provision for gifted and talented pupils. It was too early at this stage in the school's development to draw any inferences about the impact on attainment as we only had one set of Key Stage 1 SATs results.

Following the excitement of the first year of the project when the learning curve for all of us was a steep but fascinating one, we decided, as a staff, that we wished to continue with the project into Phase 2 and submitted our project proposal.

The extension of the project for phase two included the more consistent use of mind-mapping, introduction of philosophy to Year 3 and further investigation of neuro-linguistic programming and how it can be used in classrooms to support learning.

During this year of the project I released three teachers to attend an extended course on Neuro-linguistic Programming and they have been feeding back the outcomes of their research to other colleagues. We are beginning to explore the use of these techniques, particularly for memory and information recall and have had some good results with Year 3 spelling. They use modified version of the Look, Cover, Write and Check system.

1. Look at the word, and write it in the air with a finger, up and to the left. Letters can be vocalised internally or externally if it helps.
2. 'See ' the word internally at the same time, imagining the letters in different colours. Cover the original word.
3. Read the letters from the internal image and write them down.
4. Compare the result with the internal image – does it look/feel right? If not, try again.
5. Check the word with the original.

Philosophy

The introduction of philosophy has also been very interesting. We have introduced philosophy or thinking about thinking as we want children to challenge traditional wisdom and knowledge for themselves so that they become creative, inventive and progressive thinkers. But, you cannot teach thinking; you can only create space for it to happen. Some classes have been having these debates as part of their Circle Time. The children have been asked to bring in questions to debate and the staff have had questions to use if the children have not generated them for themselves. There have been some very deep and meaningful discussions and it certainly shows that even young children can have high level debate, if supported by adults.

But introducing philosophy or thinking has had an impact on the adults in the school too. They keep questioning their assumptions about knowledge and learning and what matters in their classrooms and this process has contributed to the development of the school as a learning institution. Carol McGuiness (1999) has seen this phenomenon in other schools as part of a research report on thinking skills in schools. In her report she suggests that it be increasingly recognised that developing thinking skills has implications not only for pupils' thinking but also for teacher development and teacher thinking as well as for the ethos of schools as learning communities.

The Campaign for Learning project finishes in the summer of 2002 and we have been concentrating on devising hypotheses that can be supported with available data in order to strengthen our argument that learning to learn makes a positive impact on pupil attainment. The final project report is due to be published in 2003.

Parents have been fully informed about the learning to learn methods through workshops and updates in our regular newsletter.

The impact of our involvement with the Campaign for Learning

Through the school's involvement with the Campaign for Learning we have explored various aspects of learning to learn, including preferred learning styles, multiple intelligences, brain-friendly learning and accelerated learning. Staff have been given the opportunity to hear about these aspects of learning and try them out for themselves in their own classrooms, as mini action research based projects. They have then been enabled to share their learning about learning through their team meetings, staff meetings and inset days, therefore leading to further sharing of effective practices within the school.

Whilst this has not influenced our curriculum design it has certainly influenced our curriculum delivery. It has definitely led to our curriculum being more learner-focused and participatory and hopefully therefore more relevant and effective. As Jerome Bruner (1996) puts it, a curriculum is arguably at its most effective when it is participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative and given over to constructing meanings rather than receiving them.

West Grove was the only Campaign for Learning project school to implement a whole school learning to learn strategy. Other schools within the project chose to focus on one particular year group or one particular subject or introduced a curriculum slot called 'learning to learn'. I feel that by approaching the project in an holistic way, we have a better understanding of the learning processes and the complexities involved in applying these processes in a developing school. Being a part of this project has certainly contributed to the development of our school as an inclusive school.

SUMMARY

- Staff, through their own action research based projects, are more focused on the process of learning and its outcomes rather than the content of the curriculum.

- Children are becoming confident in themselves as learners and more articulate about their own learning needs.

- Through the regular school newsletter item on "Learning to Learn", parents are fully informed about the strategies we are using and are developing their understanding of them through attendance at school-run workshops and feedback on the project at our Annual General Meeting.

- Being part of the 'Learning to Learn' project has certainly accelerated our own learning about learning and as such has contributed much to our inclusive practices, for by understanding more about the learning process, staff can try to make it relevant to every individual.

LEARNING FACILITATOR

Why Learning Facilitator and not Teacher?

If I believe that learning happens everywhere and at all times during the conscious state then it is being facilitated by many and varied individuals not just in school and just by teachers.

The premise upon which the school is run can be viewed in the same way as an old African proverb that states:

"It takes a whole village to educate a child."

Children are learning from everyone around them and it would be presumptuous and unjustified to think that a teaching qualification alone entitled an individual to adopt that role. Indeed, the steepest learning curve for most individuals takes place long before they see a school or a teacher – in the first three years of life. At this stage, babies and toddlers are learning from their parents, siblings and wider family and community members. My argument is why should this stop just because a child enters formal education?

We all need to be involved in educating our children, preferably in a co-ordinated way so as not to confuse the child, so it is vital to establish close partnerships and working relationships with parents and carers at the earliest opportunity.

Working with Parents

Why involve parents? Because, I believe that parents are the first and best teachers of their children, and because it has been proved through extensive research that parental involvement improves children's school performance and anything that does so should be given careful consideration. Evidence has been gathering from the early 1970s that whatever the form of involvement, the effect on children's school performance is positive, provided the involvement is well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting and serves to integrate the child's experiences at home and school (for example, Herman and Yeh, 1980 and Hewison, 1982). Also, my own experience as an educational visitor had confirmed for me that working closely with parents was beneficial for children and their families.

I, also, had another reason for working with parents. As the school was a completely new community without previous history or reputation, it was important for me to establish close relationships with our parents, particularly as most of them had not chosen to send their children to our school but had rather been allocated places there because the schools of their choice were full. It was vital, therefore, that I established early in our relationship with parents that I wanted them to be true partners in the educative process. I had to build their trust in us in order to overcome early feelings of hostility. I needed to show them that I was totally committed to doing the best for their individual children, so time and effort has been put into establishing these relationships and making time to learn from each other.

Most of our families were coming to us without previous experience of being a parent of a school-age child and therefore they did not know what they should expect from us or what

would be expected of them. All of the above factors made working closely with parents a big part of what the school would be about.

Whilst in the early days of the school 1 was able to devote a lot of time to working with parents, as the school grew and my own commitments evolved, it became increasingly difficult for me to allocate the amount of time that 1 felt necessary. After seeking approval from the governing body I appointed a Community Nursery Nurse to take on the role of home/school-relations development officer. 1 have asked her to run a full programme to establish close working relationships with our families, with a view to sharing our understandings about the learning process.

At West Grove we begin the relationship with parents early, shortly after the birth of their child. The Community Nursery Nurse has established a baby massage class to enable parents (usually mothers) to bond with their baby through physical contact. The school paid for a member of our staff to attend a course to learn the technique of baby massage and she now runs a regular group for parents and babies. This has proved to be very popular with our parents (and babies) and is now well attended.

The member of staff operates music and art sessions for babies and toddlers and these sessions are also well attended. During the sessions the member of staff models good activities that parents can carry on at home and insists that parents take an active role during the sessions so that the babies and toddlers get the most out of the activities. She can also talk informally to parents about any concerns or issues arising for them and they can ask for advice and offer support to each other.

We have received some very positive comments from parents who attend these groups showing that they feel that they groups are worthwhile for themselves as well as their children:

> **"All the classes Adam attends at West Grove are a great source of fun, inspiration, learning and a chance for him to interact with other children. We don't miss them if possible."**

> **"I found the idea of a group for parents very interesting as the skills needed to be a good parent are not formally taught... As a first time mother it can be a bit daunting... It was interesting to learn about different types of play and what we as parents should be encouraging our children to do... The groups offered at West Grove are a great help to me and it's great to see Ben's face when we approach the school gates."**

Every Friday afternoon she operates a Toddlers Club that is very well attended. Parents and children can stay and play all afternoon and at the end of the session borrow toys, games or activities to use at home.

She also offers a support group for parents of pupils who have special educational needs. This has been particularly well received by these parents who have commented that they often feel isolated, as two parents have stated:

"I found the support group an eye opener to know that you are not alone and that other people can relate to you."

"Fabulous idea to have a support group. Everyone has more or less the same problems. It's nice to know you are not alone."

Whilst we began these sessions for parents with children already in the school, they are now opening up to other members of our local community. We are even beginning to receive referrals from the local Health Visitors who are aware of families in the local community who are in need of support. These children may not go on to attend our school, but nevertheless the support we can provide is felt to be worthwhile by staff and governors.

This work with pre-school children and their families establishes a partnership in education right from the very beginning. Parents begin to trust that their own knowledge and judgements about their children are valid and their confidence in parenting grows.

To enable us to access this knowledge from parents, our teachers and classroom assistants make home visits to all the children before they enter our school for the first time. It gives the parent an opportunity to ask questions about the school in the comfort of their own environment and it gives the child an opportunity to see their 'teachers' working together with their parents. We ask parents to complete a 'Starting School' booklet (see Appendix 11) with the member of staff. This is an opportunity for handing over information about medical needs, etc. but also more social information about favourite toys and books, language used at home for personal routines like asking for the toilet and any specific words used to comfort the child if they are upset, etc. Parents find this very reassuring that staff are taking a genuine interest in finding out about their child as an individual rather than just as one in a class.

The child is also asked to participate in the visit by completing their very first picture for school. Their picture is then displayed in their classroom before they begin school so that they have it as a reference on their first day. Staff can talk about the day they visited the child at home and remind them of the picture they drew for school on that day. This has more recently been extended by the use of a digital camera. A digital photograph is taken of the child in their home and displayed in the nursery – drawing an explicit link between home and school for the child.

The dialogue with parents then continues as their child develops and moves through the school. Like any other school we offer formal opportunities to meet with the teacher to discuss individual progress and we provide an annual written report of pupil progress for each child. But we also provide many other opportunities for parents to meet informally with teachers to discuss any areas of concern.

Parents have twice daily contact with adults working with their child at the beginning and end of the school day as they deliver or collect their child from the classroom. They can pass relevant information or ask questions informally or staff can offer comments about any special events for the child during that day.

As headteacher, I see it as part of my role to be available to parents and children throughout the day. I begin every morning at the school gate where I can greet every parent and child as

they arrive at school. I can make individual comments about new haircuts, shoes, etc. I can inform parents about things that have happened at school worthy of note – good work, eating all their dinner, accidents in the playground, etc. This face-to-face contact I find invaluable. It makes me available to all parents and can often 'nip things in the bud' before they become huge issues that require a formal appointment.

As well as daily gate duty, I operate an open-door policy so that pupils, parents (and staff) can come to my room at any time for a chat or to show me things or just to pass the time of day. If I am not in my office I always ensure that I am contactable from the main office so that I can be available at all times. I believe this to be more efficient and effective than operating a formal appointment system. If people need to talk to you, they need to talk to you now, not tomorrow or the end of the week, often giving time for a small problem to become insurmountable.

Parents have often commented that staff at West Grove are accessible and approachable and that they have no difficulty in coming to any one of us with their problems or concerns. This is confirmed by the 93% of parents who responded to the inclusion questionnaire that they would feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem.

Some parents can feel inadequate to support their child's learning, often not having any contact with mainstream education since their own schooling and this often being a negative experience. In order to support them to support their child we offer curriculum evenings that explain how we teach subjects at school and gives them ideas of how to continue with this learning at home. Whilst we offer these evenings on subjects we present in a cross-curricular way, drawing links with the real world. The evenings follow the same format regardless of the subject under discussion. The parents have a short presentation about the content and the process of learning in that subject and then they have an opportunity to 'have a go' themselves at some of the activities available to their children. These evenings are always well attended and our parents are used to the format now so come prepared to have a go. Staff are available during these sessions to work alongside parents, describing the learning that they are doing or offering further suggestions for development at home. At the end of the evening parents go away with a short leaflet recording the main points, with a list of suggestions for activities – some of these are included in Appendix 12.

Following the school's involvement with the Learning to Learn project, I felt that it was vital to keep parents fully informed about the work in which we were engaged because I did not want them to think that we were using their children as 'guinea pigs'. In order to keep them informed, I have held evening sessions on 'Learning to Learn' where I have explored preferred learning styles with parents, getting them to reflect on their own preferred styles and those of their children and partners. This has been a fun activity to do but has raised some interesting discussion points where styles are contrasting. Parents have begun to understand the behaviour being displayed by their children (and partners) in a more positive light. They have seen that some behaviours merely reflect the preferences of the individual and are not deliberately acted out to upset or annoy!

To continue the developing understanding of 'Learning to Learn' for our parents, I have a section in our fortnightly newsletters, that I write, that highlights a given aspect, sometimes with fun activities to try out at home. Several parents have commented about this item in the

newsletter, particularly in the issues where I was discussing the differences between the male and female brain.

In our third year I offered a special session on understanding learning behaviour by discussing schema with parents. They were then invited to keep an observation diary of their child's play at home. Several took up this invitation and the resulting diaries provided fascinating reading. These parents would often bring in their diaries to discuss with a member of staff who would confirm that they had observed similar behaviour at school. Together they would discuss the type of learning behaviour displayed and come up with activities to enable the child to explore and develop the behaviour further.

Some of our parents also wish to support their child's learning during the school day. In order to make them a useful member of the classroom team, we offer a parent helper course that I run with my deputy. It operates at two levels. Level one is a practical session that covers child protection issues and handling conflict positively whilst learning to use school equipment such as a comb binder, laminator and paper strimmer. Level two is a more theoretical session, looking at multiple intelligences, how children learn and the role of the adult in modelling language and asking questions that move on children's thinking. All parents who wish to support in classrooms have to complete Level one but most of the parents have completed Level two also. In spring 2002 our list of trained parents was standing at over 80.

Working with parents takes up a lot of time at school but I believe that it is time worth spending as the spin off for the children is having parents that understand them as learners and can therefore contribute effectively to that learning outside of school.

Our work with parents contributes to the inclusive nature of the school because all parents have the opportunity to engage with the activities on offer, rather than in some schools where they operate a formal Parents or Friends Association and only a small group of parents become involved. We do not have a PTA, as I believe it can lead to exclusive practices. Our fund raising activities do involve all those parents (friends and families) who are able to give their support. In this way we get a wider variety of parents involving themselves in these activities.

Parental comments taken from the comments box on the parents' questionnaire:

> **"I can safely say I have been impressed with what I have seen so far. The enthusiasm and commitment shown by all the staff has been clearly visible and more importantly, filtered down to the children."**

> **"I particularly want to share my view with you that I support the Schemas method used and feel it has enabled me to better understand my son and play a key role in his learning development along side his teacher."**

> **"Bold, open, honest, forward thinking, flexible, individual, learning through inclusion, learning through independence."**

> **"Parents input is valued a lot."**

"School staff all care about the children and the children feel this."

I do not wish to paint a 'rosy' picture of our work with parents. We, as all schools, have our share of dissatisfied customers, though these are in the minority. On the whole they are parents that have not attended the curriculum evenings or parent helper workshops and who therefore have not had the opportunity to understand our methods of working. They think that school should be the more 'formal' setting that they remember from their own school days. We continue to work with these parents as far as we are able and if they remain unsatisfied with the levels of attainment achieved by their children, we will have further discussions about possible ways forward. On occasion this has led to parents withdrawing their children from the school. I do not see this as a failure on our part, but as a very positive step. Firstly, it removes a negative influence from the school and secondly, it reduces the time taken working with these parents, who are often very demanding. I am always able to fill the place with a child from our waiting list. This would appear to be a very arrogant attitude, enabling me to build a school of sycophants. I see it as a natural consequence of our innovative approach to education – not all parents will be able to subscribe to it and they should be entitled to find a school that they believe serves the best interests of their child.

Staff

Due to the changes in Initial Teacher Training, teachers are leaving university with very little, if any, training in understanding the process of learning. They tend to be trained in subject delivery rather than in how to facilitate effective learning. This assumes that teachers are the holders of the knowledge and their role is to impart that knowledge to their pupils. This is contrary to my beliefs that children need to make their own understandings through exploration and experimentation. When I interview for staff I am looking for learning facilitators rather than teachers. I want teachers who are interested in learning more about learning both for themselves and for their pupils.

This makes staff selection an interesting exercise for us. Very few applicants for posts at our school have the background to fit them perfectly for the post. In this process, previous experience almost becomes irrelevant because we want staff to work in a different way. So during their interview they must show ' a light in the eye and a fire in their belly'. Staff are appointed to West Grove if they show a genuine interest in learning – both for themselves and for the pupils in their charge. At interview they have to speak with passion about their previous experiences and relate them to the post for which they are applying. Teaching staff are asked to make a presentation on a pre-given topic, but support staff are asked to relate their previous experience and say how it has made them the professional they are today. The selection committee look for commitment to improving themselves further and a real desire to extend their own understanding of learning. This process has provided us with a very strong team of individuals who are totally committed to their work at West Grove.

As part of their induction, staff are asked to spend at least one day with us before taking up post. They can begin to understand the routines of the establishment and get to know some names and faces; thereby enabling them to come more relaxed on their first day. They are also invited to meet their class and some of the parents before they take up post, again eliminating barriers before they begin.

77

On taking up their post, everyone is offered a mentor who is the person of first contact if they have any queries. In reality, I do not remember an occasion where someone has asked for a mentor because everyone has always said that you can ask anyone here for anything and they will oblige. Perhaps this is a by-product of being a new school – all staff have been new at some recent stage in their working life here and therefore are probably more sympathetic than in some other schools where I have worked.

I make a commitment to every member of staff that I will be available to meet with them on a termly basis, should they wish, for a Professional Development Interview. This gives staff an opportunity to reflect on their performance, their training needs and opportunities for further development, either personal or professional. I insist that all staff have at least one of these discussions every year, but most come for at least two and some come on a termly basis.

Training is offered to all staff. Our policy on Staff Inset (see Appendix 13) states that its purpose it to support school improvement and should directly relate to raising pupil achievement. Training needs are identified as part of the induction process, performance management and school evaluation systems. Not all courses that staff attend are to support school development priorities, as we highly value staff entitlement to their own personal professional development. We also support staff financially where they are engaged in study for a nationally recognised qualification.

Many of our staff are engaged in study leading to HND in Childcare, first Degrees or Masters Degrees in Education. They see themselves as lifelong learners and provide excellent role models for pupils in their care. They support each other through discussions about books read or research in which they are engaged and they are always willing to take learning risks and have a go, knowing that they will be supported.

Their research projects, or reflections on their current working practices, enable them to develop as professionals and much of their thinking feeds forward into their work at school. I see evidence of this in their weekly planning sheets, their practice that I observe both formally and informally around school and from individual discussions with me in Professional Development Interviews.

Another important aspect of our staffing policy, is the decision not to employ 'dinner ladies'. The Classroom Assistants cover the lunchtime playground duty and therefore it is possible to extend learning beyond the classroom and formal curriculum time. The Classroom Assistants have worked with one of the teachers on providing an interesting learning environment for the children at lunch-time and there is a programme of activities that is applied so that children are always engaged in a variety of activities. I have found that this reduces incidences of bad behaviour because it encourages children to work collaboratively.

This policy of continuous care is also applied before and after school with our own staff running a Breakfast Club and an After School Club providing childcare. This service is paid for by the parents but is offered at a cost that is much lower than other traditional child care services available. Both clubs were established in response to parental requests and are well used by our community.

Children as learning facilitators

I believe that all children need to be in a position to facilitate their own learning and we, as adults, have to make that possible for them. We need to make them as independent as possible. This independence can be seen physically, as in knowing where resources are kept in the classroom, how to use them appropriately and effectively and to take responsibility for their care and return to their kept position.

But independence can also be a mental state. Children need to learn self-help skills. They need to know what to do when they don't know what to do. I encourage staff to have these kinds of discussions with children regularly in order to keep them focused on the process of learning as well as the content of each lesson or activity.

In order to be an effective learning facilitator, children need to be confident in themselves. This confidence develops through self-knowledge and a high self-esteem that is supported by other adults and children in the classroom.

Children can also be effective learning facilitators for others. We use a lot of collaborative group work in our school where children are encouraged to think about their role within a group situation and give feedback to others on their contribution to the group. Unless we model group roles for them and give them opportunities to use, develop and refine them then they will not know how to collaborate and co-operate effectively.

Children reflect on their learning to be an effective learner and record their skill development on their PEP1 sheet (see Appendix 7) or in their learning log (see Appendix 8).

Using the wider community as learning facilitators

We need to provide opportunities for children to learn from adults other than those that work in their school. They need to see the relevance of what they are learning at school to the real world and what better way than taking them into the real world to see it for themselves or by bringing the real world into school.

We try to build in opportunities for visits or visitors to each of our topics so that the children are exposed to these kind of experiences.

We work with local businesses, such as a local supermarket where children have visited behind the scenes to see how food arrives at the shop and what happens to it before it gets into their shopping baskets. The baker from the same supermarket also visited school to make bread with the children as part of our Harvest celebrations. Experiences like this make learning real. Children can hear about the skills and processes used by people in the real world and relate it to their own learning – thereby helping them see its relevance.

We are also beginning to extend our community now through the use of technology. Children (and staff) have links to the Internet that they are encouraged to use as part of their research.

SUMMARY

I think our basic philosophy of "the whole village to educate a child" is a significant factor in defining our school as inclusive. We share our developing knowledge and understanding about learning in our community in order that they can continue learning for themselves.

- We try to include all parents in the process of educating their child.

- We see all staff as having a valid contribution in the education of every child – it is not just a job for teachers.

- We try to include the wider community in our curriculum delivery.

- Any policy decisions are based on what is appropriate for our pupils.

- We all see ourselves as learners.

- We are developing a community of life-long learners.

ENVIRONMENT

In this section I will be considering both the physical environment and the emotional environment and their impact on learning and teaching in an inclusive school. To me, this is one of the most crucial aspects I will be considering, for if the individual does not feel comfortable and at ease within the learning environment then learning will be hindered.

Having a brand new purpose built school is an obvious advantage to us in providing an environment conducive to effective learning. Our children have space as the school was built slightly larger than DfEE regulations to give us additional area to accommodate wheelchairs and additional adults in the classroom. The classrooms on the ground floor have easy access to the external environment so that this can be incorporated into the learning space provided. The rooms are light and airy with low windows providing a link to the outside world. All of these factors contribute to the aesthetics of the environment but for the staff and myself an effective learning environment is so much more than these superficial elements, however important they can be.

We have had discussions on a regular basis about what constitutes an effective learning environment, basing some of our ideas around our mini action research projects linked to the Campaign for Learning project, e.g. the use of music, availability of water, brain gym, etc.

Staff are encouraged, as part of their weekly evaluation reports, to consider the effects of the environment on the learning in their classrooms and to discuss within their team meetings any changes that they wish to effect. Any changes are then monitored and reviewed before they are adopted as standard practice within the school. Using this action research approach has led to some consistency across the school, whilst not generating uniformity. Staff and pupils are enable to reflect on what works for them.

Below, I consider the elements of environment that staff and I have discussed.

Physical Environment

This can be further separated into the indoor and outdoor environments within the school itself and the environment surrounding the school that can be used to enhance and extend the curriculum.

The physical environment should also take cognisance of internal physical requirements.

Internal Physical Requirements

We need to ensure that our learners are comfortable within themselves because they will not be able to learn if they are cold, hungry, thirsty, in need of fresh air, etc. These are all important aspects to be considered and they are often sadly overlooked in schools. To try to overcome some of these conditions, we provide fruit and water in all of our classrooms. They are available all day and children can graze as they feel the need. Initially this was quite disruptive and children were visiting the grazing table rather too frequently, but as the novelty wore off, they began to use it more appropriately and they now will only graze if they feel a real need.

Some children need to work in quiet and others need a background noise, so again we have tried to consider this. Most of our classes use music as a background as well as a stimulus for some aspects of work. But it has been decided that if children find this distracting they can ask for the music to be turned off at any time or they can withdraw themselves to a quiet area outside of the classroom to complete their work.

There must also be some time allocated for reflection, and whilst I want children to be active learners there must also be space and time available in the classroom for quieter times for as Hoyles (1989) says:

> **"It is perhaps in silences that real 'learning' can take place."**
>
> (Hoyles 1989, p123)

I have also asked staff to consider the individual and their learning cycles. As we know of ourselves, some of us are morning people and others prefer to burn the midnight oil. It is no different for the children in our classes and we need to observe and discuss with the children the time when they feel they do their best learning. Teachers can then ensure across the week that they provide opportunities for children to work at their optimal time.

To reflect our school philosophy about a cross-curricular approach to the curriculum we operate an integrated day. This allows the children to follow their own interests and to be in control of their own learning (Rowland, 1984). It can serve as a motivational device by freeing children from the constraints of starting and finishing tasks according to organisational requirements, and by allowing them to follow their own pattern of learning. This reflects my belief in children as active, intrinsically motivated learners as the curriculum is open-ended based on children's interests and gives the children some responsibility for their own learning. An example of this was when School Council came with a concern about playtimes interfering with their learning. They wanted to know why we had to have set playtimes because they were often deeply engaged with their work and had to stop for playtime. This issue was discussed fully with the School Council and they came up with the idea that they could take a playtime whenever it fitted in with their work cycle. I then took this back to the staff who agreed to trial this for one term. We are now well into our third year of not having set playtimes and it works very well.

The strength of our approach is in considering the individual learner. As I have stated elsewhere in this study, we make the learning fit the child and not the child fit the curriculum. This enables us to maximise learning, being able to tailor make it for the individual.

Indoor Environment

Rollisson (1990) suggests that:

> **"Children need opportunities to apply skills if they are to learn thoroughly. In order to apply skills effectively, children need an environment in which learning is irresistible; one which provides the necessary motivation; one in which the process of learning is so exciting that they recognise the need to acquire certain skills in order to participate fully in what is on offer."**

She goes on to suggest that if this is to be achieved, organisation in the classroom needs:

- **Well organised and structured resources;**
- **A system which children know how to operate;**
- **A range of supplementary activities;**
- **Effective use of classroom space;**
- **An established routine.**

(Rollison 1990, p.7)

One of our key aims for the children is working towards independent learning and we must organise our environment to enable children to take on this independence. Staff within West Grove have considered carefully all aspects of classroom organisation and management to maximise opportunities for children to develop independence – in some classrooms a banner is displayed with the maxim:

"Please don't help me to do anything that I can do for myself."

This is a useful reminder for all the adults working within the classrooms for it is all too tempting to do things quickly for a child in order to save time or cut corners, but if it undermines a key educational aim then it should be avoided at all costs.

I have established a framework for classroom organisation whereby resources are stored so that children can have ready access to them for the task in hand and they are expected to tidy up after themselves and leave their classroom tidy and ready for work the next day. As they move up the school we show them how to use resources safely and efficiently, such as scissors, rulers, paper strimmers, laminator, photocopier, etc. so that they can begin to take responsibility for mounting their own work, etc. This gives the child the skills in order to be independent but it also releases the teachers and classroom assistants from administrative and organisational tasks to make time for teaching and facilitating learning.

One of the most important aspects of classroom organisation for independence is that children need to know what to do when they don't know what to do. They need to be 'trained' to get support and advice from wherever they can, be it from peers, adults in the room, resources such as dictionaries, word lists, etc., from books within the classroom and the school library, the Internet, etc. They need to be encouraged to solve their own problems wherever possible in order to develop their independence and gain confidence from being independent. We are trying to adopt a solution-focused approach to thinking and problem solving in school whereby one does not discuss a problem until one has at least two possible solutions. This is generating some creative thinking among pupils and staff.

Outdoor Environment

Having considered multiple intelligences to be an important part of our work we must make provision for individuals who prefer to learn outdoors or through movement. The development of the outdoor learning environment therefore becomes crucial.

I have employed an external consultant to work with us on the design of an external learning environment that will reflect our approach to learning. With her support we have devised an aim and objectives for what we wish to achieve through this project.

Our aim is 'to create a unique environment which enhances and extends the educational aims and vision of the school'.

Our objectives are:
- To maximise the value of the asset.
- To redress as far as possible existing defects in design and condition in particular in relation to pedestrian safety.
- To facilitate the development of complimentary 'out of school' provision for children, their families and the local community.
- To create opportunities for income generation.
- To enhance the wildlife value and bio-diversity of the environment.
- To have due regard for maintenance implications and sustainability.

From this aim and objectives she has designed, following several discussions with staff and pupils, a 'discovery park' that we will be starting to build from Spring 2002. It is likely to be an extensive project as it is a complete redesign of the total external environment and as such will be costly, in the region of £80,000. Staff are very excited by the project and see it as an extension of the work we have been doing on curriculum design and delivery.

Local Environment

As we are preparing the children to be lifelong learners, it is important that they see the relevance of what they are learning to real life. Wherever possible, I encourage staff to try to incorporate visits to places of interest, this can be:

- a walk round the local streets looking at door numbers,
- a walk round the local streets looking at street furniture,
- a visit to a local business to see product management and production
- a visit to a museum or gallery, etc.
- a visit to the local French restaurant to order breakfast using the French vocabulary that they have been learning.

We also use people from the local environment to come into school to enrich curriculum experiences, wherever possible. This can be inviting nurses, police, fire personnel, the local baker, etc. to discuss their work and the skills that they use in their line of work. This enables the children to see the relevance of what they are learning.

The Wider Environment

As the school develops and the children grow their environment is extended beyond their locality.

I invite performers into the school to show their expertise and skills and staff take the children out to the theatre and cinema and to local and national galleries and museums.

It is my longer-term plan to take them on residential trips as they become older and a day trip to France to enable them to use their French is being planned.

Electronic links are also enabling us to engage with the wider world, through the Internet and the use of e-mail.

Emotional Environment

> **"Emotion plays a vital part in learning. It is in many ways the key to the brain's memory system. And the emotional content of any presentation can play a big part in bow readily learners absorb information and ideas."**
>
> (Dryden and Vos, 1994, p.351)

I know from my own experience how low self-esteem affected my learning and it is therefore vital that we create a supportive emotional environment for our pupils. They need to have a realistic self-image but at the same time we, as educators, must do everything to give them the confidence to 'have a go'. We know that learning from mistakes is a very positive thing to do and that no-one will think any the less of them for getting things wrong. Nothing breeds success like success, so we must create opportunities for children to be successful but we must also help them understand what constitutes success and how to achieve it more consistently. If children know what success looks like and how to achieve it then they should achieve it more consistently, therefore reinforcing their self-esteem. In this way a positive learning cycle can be fostered in classrooms.

In our school we spend a lot of our time celebrating success. It is celebrated in classrooms through plenary sessions or circle times when children are asked to focus particularly on their achievements. It is celebrated across the school by displaying children's work for others to see and appreciate and I lead a weekly achievement assembly. During this assembly I discuss why the children were nominated for inclusion in our 'gold book' and it is often for things other than academic work, such as, positive attitudes towards others, effort, excellence in the arts or PE and occasionally behaviour. Children are awarded a special headteacher's sticker, not particularly as an extrinsic reward for their achievement but more as a reminder for others. Adults are encouraged to ask anyone wearing the sticker why it was awarded, thereby providing another opportunity for the child to discuss their positive achievement and receive praise from another individual.

As part of our curriculum, based on the whole child, a lot of our work is developed from Personal, Social and Health Education so that children get the opportunity to discuss their feelings, attitudes, values, etc. By giving the children the vocabulary to discuss their emotions and opportunities to discuss their management of them, they can be expected to begin to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Following our discussions about our approach to discipline, we operate a positive behaviour management system within the school based on our 'Golden Rules'.

At West Grove Primary School we respect each other.

1. **Do be gentle; don't hurt anyone.**
2. **Do be kind; don't hurt other people's feelings.**
3. **Do be honest; don't hide the truth.**
4. **Do look after property; don't waste or damage it.**
5. **Do listen well; don't interrupt.**
6. **Do work hard; don't waste your time or others' time.**

Treat others as you would like to be treated.

The golden rules are explained to everyone and a copy of the rules is provided for the parents so that they can be used outside of school too. We explain to the children that they are not school rules but rules for life.

If the children keep the golden rules then as an entitlement, they have twenty minutes 'golden time' which is usually taken on a Friday. Children can choose what they do with their golden time. It can be a favourite activity within their own classroom or they can choose to visit another classroom to join activities there or they can job shadow the site manager, deputy headteacher, office staff or headteacher. Job shadowing is probably the most popular choice of activity and children are given real tasks to complete alongside the person they have chosen to shadow. Staff have found golden time to be a great motivator and they very rarely have to remove golden minutes from children for the infringement of the golden rules. If they do have minutes taken away, they have the right to earn them back from the person who took them away – this system was implemented to enable the children to learn about forgiveness.

What Ofsted said about our environment:

> **"The newly built school provides very good facilities and a spacious environment in which pupils can learn."**

> **"Pupils are very well motivated to learn, concentrate well, and show good attentiveness in lessons."**

> **"Almost all pupils show good levels of independence and initiative."**

> **"Relationships are strong and appropriate."**

> **"All pupils are encouraged to become independent, show initiative, and accept responsibility. This percolates all aspects of school life."**

> **"This is a socially inclusive school."**

SUMMARY

- A positive environment is crucial for effective learning.

- Learners need to be comfortable and confident in themselves and in their environment if they are to learn effectively.

- Learners need to be able to function efficiently within the environment and be confident that their learning risks will be supported. This is as true for the adult learners in the school as it is for the pupils.

- By considering all aspects of the child's needs, not just their cognitive development, the staff and I are creating an environment conducive to effective, and therefore, inclusive learning.

- Children are developing an understanding of themselves as individuals and as learners and are able to articulate their learning preferences with confidence. This helps them to build and maintain high self-esteem. Success leads to more success.

ASSESSMENT

Background

As I have put the child very firmly at the centre of our curriculum development then it should follow that I will favour an assessment strategy that also reflects this approach. I believe that assessment should enhance learning opportunities for the children by making the teacher more aware of the individual's strengths and areas for development, so that this knowledge can influence future curriculum planning.

Unfortunately, formative assessment was not part of the national agenda. By 1997, summative assessment was the emphasis from national Government in England. Teacher assessment was even seen as a levelling of pupils at the end of each key stage rather than as an ongoing information gathering tool to assist planning. A group of academics, in opposition to this emphasis on summative assessment, decided that they needed to prove that formative assessment was indeed a powerful tool.

Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, from King's College, University of London, were commissioned to find out whether or not formative assessment could be shown to raise levels of attainment. Through their research, that looked back at all studies since 1988 that involved such aspects as sharing learning goals, pupils self-evaluation and feedback, they found that formative assessment strategies do indeed raise standards of attainment, with a greater effect for children of lower ability.

From their study, Black and Wiliam produced a digest entitled "Inside the Black Box" (1998), where they bullet-pointed the conditions for success in the classroom.

> **"The research indicates that improving learning through assessment depends on five, deceptively simple, key factors:**
>
> - **The provision of effective feedback to pupils;**
> - **The active involvement of pupils in their own learning;**
> - **Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment;**
> - **A recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial influences on learning;**
> - **The need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve." (p.4)**

> **"This was further broken down to include:**
>
> - **Sharing learning goals with pupils;**
> - **Involving pupils in self-assessment;**
> - **Providing feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them;**
> - **Underpinned by confidence that every student can improve."**
> **(p7)**

"The inhibiting factors identified included:

- **A tendency for teachers to assess quantity of work and presentation rather than the quality of learning;**
- **Greater attention given to marking and grading, much of it tending to lower the self-esteem of pupils, rather than to provide advice for improvement;**
- **A strong emphasis on comparing pupils with each other which demoralises the less successful learner;**
- **Teachers' feedback to pupils often serves managerial and social purposes rather than helping them to learn more effectively."**

(Assessment Reform Group 1999, p.5)

Black and Wiliam's findings complemented our work on curriculum development and delivery and again placed the child at the centre of the process of learning. I presented their findings to staff and we have tried to use them as an underpinning to our policy on assessment. As a staff we produced our assessment policy in the Spring Term 1999. During a staff meeting that I planned and led, I asked staff to begin by defining assessment for themselves to ensure that we were all using the same terminology. They devised aims for assessment and discussed the various methods of assessment. Principles of assessment were agreed and we firmly stated our commitment to pupils being involved in the assessment process. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined and a schedule of assessment opportunities was devised. The policy is included as Appendix 14.

The process of generating this policy assisted us in the formulation of our practice. Staff and I were able to consider the forms of assessment that we were going to implement and the purposes for which the information gained would be used. This then led us into considering the marking policy that we were going to implement.

We produced a marking policy to be used in conjunction with our assessment policy and following discussion with staff this was revised in the Autumn Term 2001, following an Inset led by Shirley Clarke that I attended. Shirley Clarke has been a leading authority on using formative assessment to enhance pupils' learning in primary classrooms. Her latest book, "Unlocking Formative Assessment" (2001) provides an excellent framework, starting with planning, sharing learning intentions with pupils, pupils self-evaluation, feedback, target setting, underpinned by the most vital aspect of her work, raising children's self-esteem. I used this book as a basis for a staff meeting where we reviewed our marking policy and we found that we were indeed undermining children's learning with our marking and comments. With our revision of the policy we have incorporated Clarke's work and are already beginning to see the benefits of this in the work children are producing. Clarke suggests that all marking and feedback must be related to the stated learning intention that is shared with the children at the beginning of the lesson. Children should be involved in setting the success criteria and they should be used at the end of the lesson as part of the plenary. The success criteria should also give children helpful hints, whilst they are working, about what constitutes an effective piece of work. Feedback is always best given as the child works but distance marking has to be done by teachers, then she has suggested that every child should have three places where they have written the best aspects against the learning intention and one place where some improvement could be made. The child should be given time at the

start of the next lesson to make that improvement. In this way, the child sees that learning is a continuum and work can always be improved, but every child is having the same amount of positive feedback, thereby supporting high self-esteem for all. Clarke calls this system 'focused marking'.

Clarke reports from her research that **"the impact of focused marking on children is:**

- **Self-esteem increases as a result of children's more visible improvements.**
- **Children like the system and are very motivated to make their improvement.**
- **Children are eager to look at their marked work and enjoy looking back at previous comments.**
- **In one class, every child came in before school to do their 'closing the gap' improvements and talk about them.**
- **Children's writing improves, as well as the quality of their oral comments about their work.**
- **More able children are able to suggest 'closing the gap' comments.**
- **Children find it more useful than previous marking.**
- **Children kept looking up at the success criteria when they know work will be marked in this way.**
- **Children make better connections between their work and the learning intention.**
- **By focusing on one thing at a time, children improve their repertoire of skills.**

The impact of focused marking on teachers is:

- **Teachers who have applied the marking system consistently, say that it is one of the most useful of the formative assessment strategies in enabling the teacher to see tangible results of change and in providing evidence of improvement.**
- **The quality of the child's improvement depends on the quality of the 'closing the gap' comment.**
- **There is a clearer purpose in marking, so teachers feel more confident and satisfied about spending time on it.**
- **The strategy again focuses the teacher on the learning intention of the task.**
- **Looking for the three highlights challenges teachers' knowledge of the learning intention and can lead to learning intentions being broken down or made clearer in planning sheets."**

(Clarke 2001, p.66-67)

I asked staff to revise our marking strategies document in order to adopt the best principles from Clarke's research. Our Marking Strategies document appears as Appendix 15.

Whilst it is early days in the implementation of this revised strategy, staff can see that it fits better than our previous strategy, which was summative in its nature – in that work was marked or commented on, and, generally not followed up by the child (or teacher). This could have led to some children seeing themselves as unsuccessful learners. Self esteem and belief in oneself as an effective learner plays such an important part in learning.

This formative assessment is demanding for teachers in that it involves careful observation and interpretation of children's responses and obviously takes more time than more traditional testing. But,

> "It will invariably provide the teacher with far greater insight into the children's understanding and the nature of their learning difficulties. Moreover, it enables the teacher to hecome more skilled, professionally, in understanding how learning proceeds, in analysing what skills and understandings are implicit in particular tasks, and, consequently, in developing greater formative assessment skills. Thus formative assessment seeks to serve students interests by helping teachers teach more effectively."
> (Denvir 1989, p.283)

Dweck (1986) found a vast difference between positive and negative approaches to learning. She found that positive attitudes exist when children:

- **Believe that effort leads to success;**
- **Accept that they have the ability to improve and learn;**
- **Prefer and feel satisfied on completing challenging tasks.**

Negative attitudes, on the other hand, are manifested when children:

- **Believe that success is related to ahility;**
- **Enjoy doing hetter than others;**
- **Evaluate themselves negatively when the task is too difficult.**

SUMMARY

- Our revised strategy is inclusive in that all children are given the same amount of positive feedback, always based on the stated learning intention and each of them is given one point for improvement which is acted upon.

- It is understood by all that everyone can improve, no matter how good their work is to start with. In this way no pupil is being excluded from extending their learning and improvement is made at the individual's level of understanding. It is a positive approach to learning.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT FACTORS

During the planning stage of this study, I believed that I had considered all aspects relevant to my project, in terms of outcome. As the project has progressed and through my own reflections, it has become apparent that other factors have significance, they will be discussed below.

Whilst they refer to aspects of the school that were considered as the school was being set up, they have progressed and developed during the time of this project.

Inclusion of SEN pupils

Whilst 1 spoke in the introduction about the school being developed as an inclusive school, I have given no space within the study to the inclusion of special needs pupils as an issue. 1 feel that this is significant, reflecting the fact that I do not see them as children with special educational needs but see them as individual learners within the school. In this way they are considered no differently to the other pupils.

I have worked with my staff, particularly my SENco (Special Needs Co-ordinator), who also happens to be my deputy, on policy and as a result we have included children with complex and varied needs to the school. These include children with autism, Down's Syndrome, hearing impairment, emotional and behaviour problems, physical deformities and disabilities that require medical attention. There are ethical considerations in becoming an inclusive school and we have to consider at length before we admit a child to our school. The underlying principle is that we must be able to meet their educational needs within a mainstream setting. This can mean that some children will not be admitted to the school because their educational needs require specialist teaching or support that is beyond our means to provide. Being an inclusive school does not mean that you admit anyone who wants to come to your school. This is always difficult when meeting with parents to discuss their preference for mainstream education but I have found that keeping the focus of the discussion on the child's educational needs has clarified the situation for all.

The number of pupils with Statemented SEN has risen since the school first opened. On opening, the school had one child with a statement of need, equal to 1.7% of the school population. In our current year of operation we now have eleven children who have a statement, equal to 4.4%. This is in comparison to the national average figure that stands at 2%. These figures represent an increase in the number of pupils in our school with physical or medical needs and do not include any children who have an emotional or behavioural difficulty.

Because of our approach to the curriculum, i.e. looking at the needs of each individual, it has been possible to develop specific programmes for the SEN children as part of their curriculum entitlement without having to exclude them from any activities. For the staff it becomes an issue of differentiation for individual learning needs rather than an SEN issue. In this way we can include our SEN children in all aspects of school life through careful planning and consideration of their individual needs.

Our Ofsted inspectors reported that:

> **"Pupils with all types of special educational need achieve well. They make good progress in relation to their prior attainment due to careful planning by class teachers and the close support they receive from staff with special needs responsibilities and classroom assistants. The level of inclusion of pupils with special needs into work in lessons and all aspects of school life is very good. In most classes, those with recognised behavioural difficulties achieve particularly well due to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and good discipline."**

These children were admitted to our school, mainly without Statements of Special Educational Needs, in the first instance. This changed in autumn 2001, due to a change in the funding of support for Statemented Pupils from April 2002. The money for the support of Statemented Pupils was delegated to schools from April 2002, rather than being centrally managed as previously. Before April 2002 we were able to submit evidence to a 'panel' of independent people who would decide the level of support required by a child. The support would be provided by a centrally run service and the school would only have the day-to-day management of the Learning Support Staff. This enabled us to provide support for children without going through the Statementing process. Our LEA had been criticised in their Ofsted report for the number of children with Statements.

With the delegation of these funds, it would have meant that we would not have been able to receive any further support or funds with which to provide that support for ourselves without Statementing our pupils. This policy led to the increase of Statements within our school.

This policy can be reviewed from April 2003, when it is hoped that we will become a planned places centre for the LEA. This will give us additional funding to enable us to continue our inclusive practices by establishing a set number of places which will be funded. This will enable us to meet needs without necessarily having to have children statemented.

The role of the Headteacher

Whilst I cannot take sole responsibility for the setting up and running of the school, I do take sole responsibility for the frameworks within which we operate. It was my vision for the school that the temporary Governing Body responded to positively at interview for the post of headteacher, hence my appointment. I have appointed all successive staff, mostly successfully. Where appointments have not been successful I have worked with that staff member on becoming a part of what we do or helping them to secure positions elsewhere.

My management style has had an impact on how the staff have functioned within the school. I try to operate a collegial style of management because I believe that it develops and extends the professionalism of staff.

Williams and Blackstone (1983) suggest that:

> **"Any organisation which depends on high-level professional skills operates most efficiently if there is a substantial measure of collegiality in its management procedures."**
>
> (Williams and Blackstone 1983, p.94)

It has been a vital part of the process of development of our school that all staff have felt some ownership and therefore commitment to its success. This was particularly pertinent to our curriculum development. For as Wallace (1988) says:

> **"In essence, good curriculum management is seen as a process where all professional staff participate actively in negotiating an agreed curriculum and contribute jointly to planning, implementing and evaluating its delivery (including evaluating and giving feedback upon each other's performance as managers and class teachers). Where this model is implemented, it is held to be a contributory factor in ensuring that pupils receive a desirable, consistent and progressive educational experience."**
>
> (Wallace 1988, p.25)

My role as headteacher has been to establish the vision, share it with all staff, governors and parents and ensure continuous improvement, through consistent monitoring and evaluation. I have developed a collegial approach to management finding it to be the most effective for me and my schools. Barth (1990) believes that a number of outcomes may be associated with collegiality:

> **"Decisions tend to be better. Implementation of decisions is better. There is a high level of trust and morale among adults. Adult learning is energised and more likely to be sustained. There is even some evidence that motivation of students and their achievements rises, and evidence that when adults share and co-operate, students do the same."** *
>
> (Barth 1990, p.31))

Roland Barth also refers to the crucial role of headteachers in this process. He believes they should be seen as the head learner (Barth, 1990, p.46) and emphasises the importance of their behaviour in connection with modelling and passing on implicit and explicit messages to pupils and staff. He believes that in this way the head sets a climate conducive to learning for both pupils and staff.

I find that by being open in my management practices fosters an atmosphere of trust and confidence in individuals and in the learning community as a whole. I truly believe that it is the way to get the best out of people.

In Michael Fullan's latest book, "The New Meaning of Educational Change" (2002) he writes about successful principals (headteachers). He found that the most successful principals had:

1. **Inclusive, facilitative orientation**
2. **An institutional focus on student learning**
3. **Efficient management**
4. **Combined pressure and support**   (Fullan 2002, p.142)

I like to think that I show all of these aspects in my daily work within the school. This is certainly reflected in the feedback that I receive from colleagues, parents, Ofsted and the profile that was created of me following a 360 degree appraisal as part of the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers, (see Appendix 16).

I also maintain the position of 'lead learner' in the school and have encouraged the staff to become action researchers within their own classrooms in order to develop their practice further. By being 'lead learner' myself, I have been able to share my learning with staff, providing information from my reading and attendance at courses to stimulate debate or share my current thinking. I feel that this modelling of learning behaviour has had a significant influence within the school, both for staff and pupils.

> **"To succeed in their full potential, teachers need to work in a school that is creative, enabling and flexible. The biggest influence is the head. Every teacher is a leader in their own classroom. Every head must be a leader of these leaders. And their greatest task is the motivation and deployment of their key resource, staff."**
>
> (David Milliband, June 2002)

Staffing Levels

Visitors to the school always comment about the number of adults in each classroom and I always respond that we do all that we can to maintain high adult: pupil ratios as I truly believe that appropriate and timely adult intervention is what makes the difference between active children and active children learning.

Governors have therefore made staffing a priority when budget setting and I always ensure that I have a minimum of two full-time equivalent adults in every classroom. This is then supplemented by one-to-one support for children with special educational needs, trainee teachers or nursery nurses, work experience students or trained parent or governor helpers. On some occasions, I can have as many as five or six adults working within a class of up to 30 children.

This high adult: pupil ratio enables us to respond to individual needs more easily than if one adult is trying to respond to the needs of a class of thirty individuals.

STANDARDS

West Grove, as an inclusive school is going to be measured, by some in the public arena, against other schools in terms of its league table position. This increased focus on measuring success only in terms of academic performance has had an inhibiting effect on moves towards increased inclusive practice (Booth, Ainscow and Dyson 1997, Rose 1998). It is an issue which need to be addressed at national level if inclusion is to become standard practice in more schools.

I believe that standards should be considered in the broadest sense. The problem is that standards other than pupil and cohort attainment against nationally set objectives are very difficult to measure. We, as a new school, without SATs history, etc., are reliant mainly on anecdotal evidence and/or subjective reporting. These are not easy to report on in the public arena. So we are in danger of only valuing what is worth measuring, rather than trying to find systems that measure what we value.

Historically, the standards debate has done little to support my broader view about what is important about a school. In society, standards can mean levels of performance on a test, and in the widest sense, standards can encompass notions of social and moral behaviour and discipline as well as educational attainment. The two have become inextricably linked over time and education bears the brunt of society's anger for falling standards.

Background

In an effort to improve standards, the government introduced benchmark assessment to follow up their concern in the White Paper for the definition of levels of attainment (DES, 1985a, p.26). This followed the official concern about standards in the Green Paper published in 1977. This was based on the public conception that educational standards were in decline following the introduction of 'progressive forms of education'. Even though following HMI reports disproved this misconception, there was little impact on public, and government, perception.

The Secretary of State, in his statement to the Select Committee in April 1987, gave raising standards as the main generalised justification for the introduction of the National Curriculum. He stressed especially the role of attainment targets, which would identify what pupils should 'normally be able to know, understand and be able to do' at or around the ages of 7 and 11.

The 1988 Education Reform Act therefore puts schools within a narrow framework within which schools are held accountable. The relative success of schools is largely determined by factors over which they have no control, e.g. social factors within their 'catchment area'.

TGAT, Task Group on Assessment and Testing recommended that the basis of the national assessment system should be essentially formative, but designed also to indicate where there was a need for more detailed diagnostic assessment. It was only at age 16 that they suggested that it should incorporate assessment with summative functions. This advice was not taken on board and national testing systems were put into place for 7, 11 and 14 year olds.

The introduction of SATs has led to the narrowing of the curriculum and in some schools teaching towards the tests.

> **"Evidence from QCA monitoring indicates that national testing of 11 year olds has changed the way nearly eight out of ten primary schools plan their curriculum. Out of 400 schools surveyed, the majority reported that national testing had changed their focus of curriculum delivery. Almost one in four primary schools said they 'taught to the tests' while fewer than half said it was possible to cover the curriculum satisfactorily in the teaching time allowed."**
>
> (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 2001, p.109))

Even though West Grove is an inclusive school, we will still be measured against all other schools in the league tables. We receive our PANDA every autumn and are benchmarked against other schools, both locally and nationally on SATs results, attendance, etc. Whilst the PANDA does contain some contextual data, it is still a crude instrument that places schools in direct competition with each other.

Whilst being at the top of the league tables is not a main priority for us as a staff or Governing Body, we must be realistic and understand that parents will use the league tables, in part, to measure the success of our school. This could have a long-term impact on numbers of applications for admission to the school, though currently we are finding that we are heavily oversubscribed each year. Reasons given by parents for choosing West Grove as the school for their children include:

> **"It is very understanding and accepts children with disabilities and treats them all the same and not any different."**

> **"Child centred policy helps her to develop according to her own needs – encouraging autonomy as opposed to compliance."**

> **"The staff are all kind, caring and enthusiastic, and they are genuinely interested in the children. Their positive outlook rubs off on the children so that they feel happy and well motivated to learn as well. The head has a strong sense of direction for the school and has all the right priorities. She recognises the vanity of league tables and focuses on what is right for the children. All the children are valued for themselves."**

> **"It offers better all round education in a non-regimental fashion. It serves to improve my child's life chances."**

> **"Because of its progressive approach to teaching the curriculum. It is interested in developing a child as a whole. It is a very caring school."**

> **"Good local reputation, excellent facilities – very impressed when attended school visit prior to choosing. Impressive head with clear educational philosophy that makes a lot of sense who seemed to instil high morale amongst staff – fizzing**

with energy, ideas, commitment to children, etc. We had no doubt our children's educational welfare would be in safe hands."

"My health visitor recommended it to me. I have found West Grove to be friendly, supportive and professional. Above all, my son absolutely loves school. I can't ask for more than that."

Parents would appear to be more than satisfied with the quality of education we offer and their comments show that they have a good understanding of the philosophy that underpins the work of the school. The above comments also highlight several points that can be taken and used as quality benchmarks in discussions we have as staff and governors about standards.

When first showing parents around the school prior to admission, I make it clear to them what kind of school we are and that they will need to subscribe to our philosophy if their child is to do well here. The parents therefore have an expectation that whilst we may not be at the top of the league tables when we appear in them in 2005, we will always do the very best we can for their child.

The comment about standards from our Ofsted report (March 2001), states that:

> **"Pupils are very well motivated and show high levels of independence and willingness to learn. They attain typical or better standards for their age in most subjects and the proportion of seven-year-olds on course to attain the expected level in the forthcoming national tests is broadly average in English and mathematics."**

They went on to report on the aspects of the school, where we did very well, being graded as good or very good in most categories. The one aspect where we had not been graded as at least satisfactory was in attendance. This was graded as well below average. This was reported to parents as being something over which they had ultimate control and attendance has since improved. Two other categories where we were deemed to be only satisfactory were how well the governors fulfilled their responsibilities and the strategic use of resources. This was due mainly to the fact that it was a new governing body and they were still developing their role and we were in receipt of budget protection because of the size of our school population versus the size of our school building. This situation will become naturally redressed as the school population grows.

These factors being taken into account the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection were very pleasing given that the school had only been open for two and a half years and that over 50% of the staff were new to the school that academic year.

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall
Personal development and relationships	Very good
Attendance	Well below average

Lessons seen overall	Good
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, with excellent provision for pupils with statements
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory

Standards of Attainment

In order to make any sense of standards at age 7 and eventually as the school grows at age 11, it is necessary to look at the data in a 'value-added' framework. The only way to do this, currently, is by looking at cohort profiles on entry to the reception classes (Baseline Assessment) and comparing that three years later with the cohort profile at Year 2 SATs. This is not a totally satisfactory process given that pupil mobility, etc. cannot be taken into account.

For example, our first cohort profile at reception age showed the class of 30 pupils

> **"entered that year with typical or better levels of knowledge for their age. Few of them exceeded the typical level in reading and writing when aged four but about two thirds did so in mathematics."**
>
> (Ofsted report, March 2001)

Compare this profile at reception with the outcomes of our first SATs results in summer 2001.

SCHOOL DATA	Percentage at each level						
	W	1	2C	2B	2A	3	4+
Reading Task	0	23	3	33	30		
Reading Comprehension Test			7	37	23	10	

Writing	0	13	17	50	10	10	
Spelling			50				
Maths	0	17	30	33	10	10	

The SATs results for that cohort show that compared to average National Data from the previous year we can see that we were below average in reading, maths and spelling and above average in writing.

NATIONAL DATA	Percentage at each level						
	W	1	2C	2B	2A	3	4+
Reading Task	3	13	16	21	19		
Reading Comprehension Test			16	21	17	28	
Writing	5	10	28	30	18	9	
Spelling				50		22	
Maths	2	7	17	23	25	25	

On looking more closely at this data and feeling a little disappointed with the results, I began to look at the context of the class. I saw that we had had a large turnover of pupils, with 9 out of 30 pupils being new to the school within 6 months of taking the SATs (56% of whom spoke English as an additional language); and 16 out of 30 were summer born children (born between April and August). The context gave some explanation for what otherwise could have been a disappointment with the attainment levels. But rather than accept this as reasons for the results I decided to do further analysis.

On examining individual children's attained levels against their predicted levels from their Baseline Assessment scores, I saw a very different picture, with 100% of the original 21 pupils achieving or over-achieving at their predicted levels.

This can look like excuses as to why the children did not reach the national average. But, realistically, it shows that data cannot be taken in isolation – there are too many variables. It became obvious to me that I needed to be able to track individual progress. Whilst this can be done with paper records, it was a cumbersome task. I, with my Office Manager, researched other possibilities. We became aware of a product called Assessment Manager, which appeared to fulfil all of our requirements. The programme was bought and installed and she and I input all the data necessary, which was time consuming in the first instance. The programme enables me to track every individual's progress but also allows me to interrogate the data. The programme can also be used to make predictions about future

attainment based on previous attainment. I can now make predictions on likely SATS scores for cohorts of pupils based on their baseline assessment data.

For our second cohort of pupils, I am already beginning to see a very different picture. Computer predictions for our second cohort's SATS results showed that 91% should achieve Level 2 or above at KS1, with 18% expected to achieve Level 3.

This computer programme is obviously quite a crude instrument and I was expecting more children to achieve at Level 3 than it predicted. The actual results for our 2002 cohort below, show that they did in fact achieve roughly in line with predicted levels at level 2 and above, with 87% in reading, 91% in writing and 98% in maths. The achievement at level 3 was almost twice that predicted in maths, with reading being well over the expected level. The performance in writing was nearer the expected level with 15% at level 3. These results become more impressive when we start to look at other factors, 33% mobility within the cohort and 51% are summer born.

SCHOOL DATA	Percentage at each level						
	W	1	2C	2B	2A	3	4+
Reading Task	0	13	25	15	15		
Reading Comprehension Test			25	21	10	31	
Writing	4	6	31	35	10	15	
Spelling				33		27	
Maths	0	2	13	25	25	35	

The computer predictions for our third cohort show that 100% are expected to achieve at Level 2 or above. This, of course, will be dependent on all factors remaining the same. If the actual results deviate from this prediction, the programme can be used to provide evidence of individual pupil achievement, thereby giving us some possible reasons for the fluctuation.

In talking to staff about what they believe has contributed to this predicted improvement in attainment and standards, they have come up with the following possibilities:

- More consistent teaching through 'Learning to Learn' methodologies
- Better curriculum planning through preferred learning styles
- Better tracking of individual pupil attainment and intervention for pupils who are perceived to be under-achieving
- More confidence of teachers as they settle into West Grove ways

It is not possible to quantify any of the above, but I, with staff, share the belief that all of these factors have had a significant impact on results.

This upward trend may not be sustainable. I believe that every cohort must be looked at closely. Some cohort profiles will be significantly higher than others on entry to the school. Some will make significantly better progress than others due to many and varied factors.

This, of course, looks only at standards of attainment in National Curriculum terms. We, as a staff and governing body, believe that standards in other aspects are just as, if not more, significant. We know that we have high levels of motivation in the school, both for pupils and for staff. We know that we have low instances of poor behaviour in the school. We know that relationships are of a particularly high quality, between adults and adults, pupils and adults and pupils and pupils. These are much more difficult to quantify but we know through what parents and pupils say and through our own experience of working in the school and being aware of other schools.

My role as Headteacher, with the support of the Governing Body, is to ensure that the quality of learning experiences within the school remains consistently high and that we continue to interrogate the outcomes of those experiences to ensure quality for all of our pupils.

SUMMARY

- The methods of learning in the school appear to show (improving) levels of academic attainment that are at least in line with national averages, and in some cases exceed national averages, despite some of the contextual issues which have been shown to affect academic achievement.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF PROJECT FINDINGS

Findings from the questionnaires

The feedback received from the questionnaires sent out to staff, parents and pupils in Years 2 and 3 (see Appendix 5) have proved to be very enlightening. In the main they have confirmed my feelings about the inclusive nature of our school.

180 parent questionnaires were sent out and 41 were returned (23%). Whilst I was a little disappointed by the percentage of replies I was aware that parents had already filled in two questionnaires that academic year – one for the purpose of monitoring by the governing body and one for Ofsted before our inspection. I will refer to these returns later as part of the triangulation of evidence. The results from the parents' questionnaires are as follows:

	FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS	Agree %	Don't Know %	Don't Agree %
1	I think West Grove is an inclusive school.	95	5	
2	All children are treated as individuals.	97.5	2.5	
3	All families are valued regardless of their background.	95	5	
4	Staff encourage all children to do their best, not just the most able.	95	5	
5	Before changes are made at the school, parents are asked for their views.	52.5	32.5	15
6	The regular newsletter keeps me informed about the work of the school.	95	2.5	2.5
7	The school provides me with clear information about how to help my child at home.	80	5	15
8	My child(ren) join in with clubs and other activities taking part at lunchtime or after school.	82.5	10	7.5
9	I think the school keeps me well informed about how my child is doing.	87.5	7.5	5
10	If I am concerned about my child's progress, I know who to talk to.	97.5		2.5

Extracts from the comments box on the parents' questionnaires have been used throughout the study.

Because of the low return to this questionnaire, it becomes less reliable and I must be tentative in my interpretation of this data. Nevertheless, this questionnaire shows me that the parents who responded generally think very highly about the school. They agree that children are valued as individuals and that there is a two-way interaction between staff and themselves on everything that concerns the pupils. The results on question 5 surprised me as I felt that we consulted parents endlessly on issues to do with the school so I checked this out with parent governors. They responded that they felt there were some decisions that should

rest with the staff, particularly the headteacher and that parents should not always be consulted about issues of policy.

The findings from the Ofsted parents' questionnaire that was completed as part of our inspection in March 2001 are as follows:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	81	17	1	0	1
My child is making good progress in school	60	35	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good	55	37	4	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	26	35	16	10	13
The teaching is good	67	26	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	54	34	7	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	70	23	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	56	30	4	0	10
The school works closely with parents	66	24	6	2	2
The school is well led and managed	71	25	2	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	68	27	1	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	65	17	3	0	15

There was a 55.7% return on this questionnaire. This is in comparison to other local schools that ranged from 19.8% to 42%. I take this to mean that our parents are more able to participate and have their say about the work of the school and wanted to support the school during its Ofsted inspection. This was confirmed by the inspectors in their final report where they said:

> **"Partnership with parents is very good...Parental help in school is positively encouraged..."**

The results of the questionnaire give a very positive picture of parental feelings about the school. With the percentage of strongly agrees and tend to agrees falling within the 61% - 98% range, with a mean average of 89.1%. This compares with other schools locally whose parental responses fall mainly within the following ranges: 78% – 99% (mean average 91% on a return of 42%); 73% -96% (mean average of 87% on a return of 37%) and 64% - 94% (mean average of 82%).

The third questionnaire which governors have decided will be distributed to parents every two years to ascertain customer satisfaction was last issued in Spring 2001.

S.A. = STRONGLY AGREE A = AGREE D = DISAGREE S.D. = STRONGLY DISAGREE D.K. =DON'T KNOW

		S.A.	A.	D.	S.D.	D.K.
1	The school has high expectations of staff and pupils	61	37			2
2	The school is a safe place	29	66			5
3	Standards are high in most areas	56	41			2
4	Pupils and teachers respect one another which helps to create a good working atmosphere	80	17			2
5	Visitors are made to feel welcome in the school	76	20			5
6	The school is well thought of in the local community	29	44			27
7	If I have a concern about the school, I know that someone appropriate will listen to me	71	27			2
8	There is no evidence of vandalism and graffiti around the school	80	20			
9	Pupils are generally well behaved and well mannered	51	49			
10	When change is needed and agreed, the school is willing to adapt the way it does things	37	41			22
11	There is a broad and varied curriculum catering for a wide range of needs	59	34			7
12	Pupils get help and support to do their best when they need it	51	41			7
13	There is good leadership	73	22			5
14	The school is outward looking and contributed to activities in the local community	49	32			20
15	The school actively encourages the involvement of governors, parents and other people in its work	59	37			5
16	All pupils are encouraged to reach their maximum potential	51	41			7

17	Most pupils have a positive attitude to the school and want to do well	56	34			10
18	Most staff are very committed to the work of the school and want pupils to achieve high standards	73	27			
19	The school is well organised	61	39			
20	I get all the information that I need to help me support the work of the school.	59	39	2		

A copy of the questionnaire was sent to all families on roll (approximately 90) and 44 were returned (48%).

As you can see from the replies to this questionnaire, the only negative feedback was on the last question and that was 2% saying that they did not receive all the information they need to help them support the work of the school and that equals 1 respondent. On the whole a very positive picture.

Taking the overall picture from the three questionnaires that were administered within a very short time span, I conclude that the majority of parents are satisfied with the work of the school, the progress their children are making and their contribution towards this.

FEEDBACK FROM PUPILS	Agree	Don't Know	Don't Agree
Sometimes my class is divided into groups for work.	99	1	
Sometimes I do work in pairs with a friend.	93	2	5
I help my friends with their work when they get stuck.	83	5	12
My friends help me with my work if I get stuck.	83.5	1	15.5
My work is put on the walls for other people to see.	84	11	5
My teacher likes to listen to my ideas.	94.5	3.5	2
My teacher likes to help me with my work.	91	7	2
I think our classroom rules are fair.	98	2	
Some of the children in my class call others by unkind names.	67	6	27
Sometimes I am bullied at school.	54	6	40
When I feel unhappy at school there is always an adult to look after me.	95.5	3.5	1
When children in my class quarrel, an adult helps us to sort it out fairly.	90	5	5
Sometimes my teacher lets me choose what work to do.	78.5	6	15.5
I feel pleased with myself when I've done a good piece of work.	97	1	2
When I have homework I usually understand what I have to do.	85	8	7
My teacher likes me to tell her what I do at home.	80	6	14

My family thinks that West Grove is a good school.	96.5	3.5	
I think that West Grove is a good school.	100		
I like coming to school.	97	2	1
I think I am doing well at school.	95.5	3.5	1

All pupils in Years 2 and 3 chose to participate in the completion of the questionnaires – this was 84 children in total, (30 in Year 3 and 54 in Year 2).

I also analysed these results in terms of male and female responses and Year 2 and 3 responses to see if there were any significant differences. I found that there was no significant different in the responses from the two year groups and from boys and girls.

Having had 100% return on this questionnaire, I can confidently say that pupils feel that there is excellent interaction between themselves and the staff and that pupils feel valued within the school. I was concerned about the responses to the questions about name calling and bullying so I pursued this with small groups of pupils. They said there was some bullying in the school but that they felt confident that it was always dealt with if reported to an adult.

FEEDBACK FROM STAFF	Agree	Don't Know	Don't Agree	
I think West Grove is an inclusive school.	100			
There is a partnership between staff and parents / carers.	100			
Staff and pupils are treated as individuals.	100			
The school seeks to admit all students from its locality.	81.25	18.75		
All pupils new to the school are helped to feel settled.	93.75	6.25		
Pupils are actively involved in their own learning.	100			
Pupils learn collaboratively.	100			
Assessment encourages the achievements of all pupils.	100			
Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.	93.75	6.25		
Staff are concerned to support the learning and participation of all pupils.	100			

All staff, teaching and support, were offered the opportunity to respond (20 staff in all at that time). All questionnaires that were taken by staff were completed and returned. 17 questionnaires were returned, an 85% return.

As you can see, the responses from staff are extremely positive about the inclusive nature of our school.

I also asked staff to write what they felt the three most significant factors that contributed to the 'West Grove Way' were. Their responses included only positive comments that covered issues around the strength of relationships within the school, the school ethos, meeting

individual pupil needs, attitudes to learning and the learners, the philosophy and pedagogy underpinning our work and team work among staff. No negative comments were recorded. The comments can be read in full in Appendix 17.

Following these very positive and consistent responses on the questionnaires, I decided that I would not interview staff as I did not believe that I would gain any further insight of their understanding of our school as an inclusive school, particularly as they have been the people who have implemented the policies and developed their practices to be more inclusive. I inferred from their questionnaire responses that they were committed to their continuing professional development and further school improvement based on the learning outcomes of our action research projects.

PROJECT FINDINGS

The findings have come from the outcomes of the project itself and my reflections on the process of the development of our school. I am aware that they are subjective and reflect my own beliefs about the true purposes of education, i.e. to prepare all pupils for an unknown future by giving them relatable skills and practice in using those skills. But I believe that the evidence from others cited throughout the study provide it with some wider credibility.

I am also aware that it is the story of the development of one school and as such may not appear, at first, to have practical implications for other institutions. However, having considered all of the elements that contribute to our school's inclusive nature, I believe that other schools can use this as a template for their own reflections as they move towards being more inclusive.

The outcomes are many and varied and are presented below in no particular order of importance as I believe that it is the interconnectedness of the processes within our school that contribute most to its inclusiveness.

The first main outcome from the project would seem to be an obvious one and that is:

1. Inclusive education can work for all pupils

From the tracking we do of individual pupil progress we can show that every child is making progress in line with national expectation, i.e. two-thirds of a level each academic year on average and some children are making progress above this expectation. This is reflected in the SATs scores compared to the SATs predictions from baseline assessment data.

Ofsted comments praise the inclusion of children with special needs or English as an additional language and state that they make good progress within the school.

Most of our children can speak with confidence about their learning needs and have a developing understanding of themselves as effective learners. I believe that this is an outcome of our development of an inclusive curriculum and inclusive methods of delivery.

2. Inclusive education is motivating for teachers

We have no problem recruiting staff for the school despite the current recruitment crisis in some other local schools, in fact we often have three or four times the number of applications than we have vacancies.

Staff comments throughout the study reflect their total commitment to developing their inclusive practices and show that they find working in the school rewarding and stimulating.

3. Inclusive education enables parents to support their children as learners

Comments from parents used throughout the study show that they have a good understanding of the 'West Grove Way' and have seen benefits for their children.

The number of parents who attend our curriculum evenings and have given up their time to become trained parent helpers in the school shows that they are willing participants in the process of extending learning beyond the classroom for their children.

4. West Grove is considered by others to be an inclusive school

Staff, parents, Ofsted and the LEA consider us to be an inclusive school and our reputation for such is growing across the LEA. We are being held up by LEA officers and advisers as an example of effective practice and local schools are attending training where I have been leading sessions or have been visiting the school to see our practice for themselves.

5. Others across the country are interested in our practice

We have been case-studied in an article in the Education Guardian (March 2000) and reported on the Campaign for Learning website and in their project reports. This has led to education professionals from across the country contacting us and visiting us to find out more about our practices.

6. West Grove is a unique organisation

Reflecting on the kind of school we have become, I can see that we are very different to other schools. I believe that the difference lies in our total commitment to meeting individual needs and that we do not take inclusion for granted. We are continually monitoring and evaluating the progress that each pupil makes and taking practical steps in the classroom and beyond to meet their needs effectively.

The governing body and I have acted as 'gatekeepers' to the school, deciding together what national and local policies are relevant for the needs of our pupils and which are not. Those

that we have believed to be relevant we have made our own and those that are irrelevant have been rejected, despite external pressures from bodies such as Ofsted.

For me though, I think that the most important outcome of the project is that we are still developing our practice and learning more about being inclusive every day. Not one of us within the school sees ourself as the 'expert' on inclusive education and the only thing that I am totally convinced about is that we need to go on developing our practice further. I believe that we will never have a definitive answer to the question of effective inclusive practice because by its very definition it needs to be different for every individual learner.

The path that the staff and I have followed has not always been an easy one and there have been many painful learning experiences on the way, for us as individuals and as a team. But I believe that our strength is in our total commitment to providing the best for each individual within the school and ensuring that all our policies and practices contribute positively to that end.

I cannot say that if I were to go back and begin the school again whether I would do things differently. My philosophy and experience have contributed to the way I work and I continue to use all experiences to learn from, whether positive or negative.

All I can reflect on is the uniqueness of the organisation as it now stands. I cannot speak of the future of the school and what that holds or, indeed, whether I will be a part of that future. I do know that the school has a very firm foundation on which to continue its development with a very committed team of staff and governors and parents who now have high expectations of what we can achieve together.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

By case studying the planning and implementation of an inclusive school and receiving feedback from the participants about their experiences of the school, I believe that I have formulated a deeper understanding of what makes it inclusive. The important elements that contribute to the inclusive nature of the school are:

1. Placing the individual at the heart of the process.

By considering every person as an individual, getting to know them as a unique learner, we can begin to address their needs through curriculum provision.

This takes a lot of time, beginning with home visits, extensive induction programmes, observational assessments, etc. but the outcome of a meaningful understanding of each individual and acceptance of what they can do and planning of a programme for what they could do next is a powerful model.

As a school staff we are not interested in deficit models and lists of weaknesses. We take every child for what they can do and build on that. We look for the positive in every child, enhance their belief in themselves as learners and extend their learning boundaries.

Parents have commented:

> "Thanks to you and your team for making it such a lovely environment to learn in."

> "Thank you for keeping S... inspired and making West Grove a great place to be and learn."

> "Thank you for making West Grove what it is today and for making each child feel special."

The same entitlement is extended to everyone, not just pupils. So staff are encouraged to be individual, whilst working within clear frameworks to enable us to maintain minimum entitlements for all pupils. Parents are accepted for what they can bring to the process of learning for their child and no judgement is made if they are not able to contribute much. It is then our job as professionals to try to compensate so that the child has the same opportunities as everyone in the school.

2. Partnership with parents

Lots of schools talk about developing partnership with parents and then do all they can to actively discourage participation by parents in the education process. I firmly believe that parents are the first and best teachers that a child will ever have. Parents understand their own children so well and see them functioning in many contexts. We need to enable parents

to use their skills more effectively in a non-patronising way in order to maximise learning opportunities.

Through our extensive programme of parental involvement (and education) activities, we begin to share some of our knowledge about learning and learners. Parents are given access to the same information and training provided for staff. We ask parents to participate actively in the process of observation of their children's learning and to share that knowledge with the child's teachers. In this way we can develop, together, a seamless approach to education.

3. Professional development for all staff

All of us see ourselves as learners at West Grove. All staff are involved in all learning opportunities – everyone is invited to attend all Inset days and relevant staff meetings. Many staff are engaged in further study with Further Education or Higher Education institutions.

Reflection-on-action is actively encouraged, through our planning system and through evaluation of policies, etc. Everyone's opinion is valued and we operate a non-hierarchical, collegiate system of management. If someone is allocated a task then the power is delegated with it.

This has been built on a solid feeling of 'trust'. Although not everyone likes everyone else on a personal level, we all have a healthy professional respect for each other. Discussion and debate are vital and consensus of opinion is striven for. There are occasions when, as headteacher, 1 will need to take a decision but generally we discuss our priorities and try to ensure that all our decisions support our inclusive practices.

4. The development of an inclusive curriculum

We have taken control of the curriculum in our school, with a focus on what is right for each individual child. We have filtered external intervention and have determined for ourselves what has been allowed to get through.

We concentrate more on the process of learning than we do on the content of the curriculum and have made this a focus of our teaching and assessment for learning.

At West Grove we make the curriculum fit the child, not the child fit the curriculum.

This does not mean that every child is taught individually – this would not be possible given staffing ratios. What it does mean is that most preferred learning styles are catered for across the pattern of a week and so that every child has access to learning. 85% of the National Curriculum is traditionally delivered through two intelligences – linguistic and mathematical and therefore some children will never be able to access their full learning entitlement. By providing the same curriculum through other intelligences children will be able to access the learning more readily.

We have retained the 'passion' for learning that some schools seem to have lost. We have done this by maintaining control over the content of our curriculum and held on to the time for teachers and other learning facilitators to be creative by encouraging learning risks to be taken, both for themselves and for the pupils.

5. Ethos

All of the above factors are underpinned by the ethos of the school. Everyone is valued, we are always willing to listen, there is a high level of trust and we care about all individuals. The physical and emotional environments support the individual to take learning risks. We always try to look for the positive in everyone and every situation – the cup is always half-full and not half-empty. We have spent a lot of time discussing among staff and governors and with pupils the kind of school that we want and how we will achieve it and every year as part of school review processes revisit our vision. All staff share this vision and want to be a part of this successful school.

Ofsted reported:

> **"The headteacher and her staff share a strong, appropriate vision of what they want to achieve and this is fully reflected in the work of the school."**

To confirm this, at our most recent review day (June 2002), I asked staff and governors to construct an aspirations wall by writing on a paper brick a response to: "In five years time West Grove...". There were an abundance of positive responses, which can be read in full in Appendix 18. Here is a small selection:

> **"... will have children who have moved on with not only academic skills but with skills of tolerance and be able to help others."**

> **"... will continue to have an inclusive approach, i.e. children and staff working as equals."**

> **"... will be a place where children are proud to be. It will create individuals, not cloned groups. Children will learn about life and skills needed to survive in this tough world. Staff will feel they are actually making a difference."**

> **"... will be a school of excellence having continued to explore and develop alternative teaching and learning styles. All children will be competent, independent learners with teachers as facilitators of learning."**

All of the contributions confirm the confidence that the staff, governors and I have in our approach to education and maintain their commitment to developing the school further as an inclusive school.

Having considered in detail all of the aspects of the school that I believe contribute to its inclusive nature, I cannot draw any conclusion about which of the aspects is more important or more significant. I believe that it is the inter-relatedness of all of the aspects that makes

the largest contribution. It is only through our consistent practices and total commitment to inclusive education in its broadest sense that makes us so successful. I believe that the whole is greater than the sum of all its parts.

But in order for this study to be relatable to other schools I need to break it down into its constituent elements for their consideration. The five elements highlighted above would form the core of my 'blue-print' of an inclusive school.

Whilst the elements that contribute to the inclusive nature of our school may not, at first sight, be ones that other schools can readily subscribe to, I believe that some of the elements would be relatable and could be worked upon more easily than others and could begin to make a significant difference to those school working towards becoming inclusive.

I feel that I have shown that inclusive education is about so much more than integration of children with special educational needs, as cited in most documented definitions, although this remains as a central element, for if schools are truly inclusive then they will be able to meet the needs of most children who live within their community. I say most, because there will always be a small number of children whose needs are so complex and varied that they will need specialised settings. For education to be truly inclusive it has to be about meeting individual needs in order to enable each individual to become a lifelong learner.

So my new definition for inclusive education is:

For schools to be truly inclusive they have to:

- **Ensure that all policies promote and support inclusive education;**
- **Be focused on the individual and what they can do;**
- **Provide a needs-based, skill-focused curriculum based on observational assessment and incremental learning;**
- **Be learner-focused and needs driven;**
- **Be reflective with a view to continuous improvement;**
- **Support staff in their development as learners;**
- **Interact positively with the community and be the hub of their learning community;**
- **Extend learning beyond the school day and the school building,**
- **Continuously strive to become more inclusive.**

If schools can provide individual learning accounts for their pupils in this way and enable pupils to learn throughout their lives, whether in formal schooling situations or just through life itself, then we will have a truly inclusive system of education.

Benefits of inclusive education

I see the following as potential benefits of inclusive education and whilst I have no conclusive evidence at this stage to substantiate my claims, I believe that my study begins to show the outcomes from our inclusive practices in a positive light.

- The children benefit from being in an inclusive school by learning the skills that they will need in order to be effective life-long learners.

- The parents benefit from being part of inclusive schooling as it gives them a deeper understanding of how to support their child's learning.

- The staff benefit from working in an inclusive school because it develops them as professionals, extending their skills, knowledge and understanding of the learning process.

- Society benefits from inclusive education because future generations will have learned to be part of a diverse society.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusion is very firmly on the national and local agenda and will not go away. All schools need to become more inclusive. Therefore, my recommendations are that:

- All schools need to consider their own practices in terms of becoming more inclusive.

- There needs to be Inset for all teachers and support staff on the meaning of becoming more inclusive and on the processes involved in effective learning.

- Schools need to be more responsive to individual needs rather than delivering a curriculum that is the same for all, thereby creating some disaffected learners.

- Teachers should be helped to use the learning to learn principles and practices in terms of how they structure their learning environment, deliver information, facilitate learning opportunities and provide formative feedback.

- Parents in all schools should be offered the opportunity to understand learning so that they can more effectively support the learning of their own children.

- Initial Teacher Training institutions need to put learning back onto the curriculum for trainee teachers, so that all teachers leave their training institutions with a firm understanding of how humans learn effectively.

Whilst not a direct recommendation of this project, 1 feel that it would be interesting to track the progress of children who have attended our school and have received a firm grounding in understanding themselves as learners, across the rest of their school career and beyond. For it is only in the longer-term impact of attending an inclusive school that any firm conclusions can be drawn about its effectiveness.

CHAPTER 8

DISSEMINATION

There has been a growing interest in the work of West Grove and the results it is achieving since the publication of an article about us in the Education Guardian in March 2000. Before that time I had kept very quiet about the work in which we were engaged due to the huge professional 'gamble' that I was taking, after all I could have been wrong about my theory of learner-centred education. There had also been some antipathy from local schools about our work because it had had an adverse effect on their school rolls, as parents have exercised their preference. Until I had some firm evidence from my study about the success, or otherwise, of the school, I did not share my learning.

Following the publication of the Guardian article, we were inundated with requests for further information and visits to the school. Facilitating these requests has become a major part of my work. I now feel that it is 'safe' to talk about our work as the growing evidence shows that our practice is having a positive effect on learner outcome and the school is seen as successful.

The school has a growing reputation, both locally and nationally, for its inclusive practices. As a consequence, I have been asked by many individuals and groups to share my learning with them through presentations at courses and conferences about a variety of themes and subjects, including out-of-hours learning, learning to learn, effective classroom practice, curriculum planning and more specifically inclusive education. Groups I have addressed include trainee teachers, newly qualified teachers, curriculum leaders from schools, SENcos, headteachers and deputy headteachers as well as individual visitors to the school who have been parents, governors, teachers and senior management teams from other schools.

As part of the project I have produced a video for parents and prospective parents so that they can see an explanation of our practice. The video itself also contributes towards our inclusivity for it assists those who have difficulty accessing written English, who would find our normal school brochure difficult to access.

I have designed our web site so that it meets the needs of prospective parents, giving them a feel for the school, but also for fellow professionals who wish to learn more about our inclusive practices. My intention is to keep the website regularly updated, adding any new outcomes from my research.

I have developed a template for inclusivity, see Appendix 19, that can be used by other schools as an aide memoir. It gives key areas and questions to consider and has been produced as a leaflet that has been offered to the LEA for distribution to its schools as part of training that I am providing on the nature of an inclusive school.

I have become involved with other organisations such as the Campaign for Learning and University of the Third Age, which has led to my being approached by national groups such as the Teacher Training Agency, QCA, General Teaching Council and the National College for School Leadership. I am currently in discussion with these agencies about how my work can be shared more widely across schools nationally.

I am about to begin negotiations with a publisher who has shown an interest in the work of the school.

There has definitely been a groundswell in the number of schools who are wishing to step away from an imposed national agenda and want to start doing things for the children again. I hope, in some small way, that I have contributed to this movement.

REFERENCES

ABBOTT, J. (1997) *To be Intelligent* Education 2000

AINSCOW, M. & HART, S. (1992) 'Moving practice forward' *Support for Learning* 7, 115-120

ATHEY, C. (1990) *Extending Thought in Young Children: A Parent-Teacher Partnership.* London. Paul Chapman.

BARTH, R. (1990) *Improving schools from within.* Jossey-Bass. San Francisco.

BASSEY, M. (1981) 'Pedagogic research: on the relative merits of search for generalisation and study of single events'. *Oxford Review of Education* 7 (1) 73-93

BELL, G. (1995) *Personal Effectiveness Programme Initiative* Chester. Bell.

BLACK, P. & WILIAM, D. (1998) *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment.* London. King's College School of Education.

BLUNKETT, D. (1998) *The Learning Age* London. DfEE

BOOTH, T., AINSCOW, M. & DYSON, A. (1997) 'Understanding inclusion and exclusion in the English competitive education system'. *International Journal of Inclusive Education.* (4) 337 - 355.

BOOTH, ET AL (2000) *Index for Inclusion* Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education

BRUCE, T. (1987) *Early Childhood Education.* Sevenoaks. Hodder and Stoughton.

BRUCE, T. (1991) *Time to Play in Early Childhood Education.* Sevenoaks. Hodder and Stoughton.

BRUCE, T. & MEGGITT, C. (1999) *Child Care and Education.* Sevenoaks. Hodder and Stoughton.

BRUNER, J.S. (1966) *Toward a Theory of Instruction.* Cambridge. Harvard University Press.

BRUNER, J.S. (1977) *The Process of Education.* Cambridge. Harvard University Press.

BRUNER, J.S. (1996) *The Culture of Education.* Boston, MA. Harvard University Press.

CACE (1967) *Children and their Primary Schools* (The Plowden Report) London. HMSO.

CALLAGHAN, J. (1976) *Speech at Ruskin College, Oxford.*

CLARKE, S. (2001) *Unlocking Formative Assessment.* Hodder and Stoughton.

COHEN, L. & MANION, L. (1994) *Research Methods in Education.* 4th Edn. London. Routledge.

DENNISON, P. & DENNISON G. (1994) *Brain Gym: Teacher's Edition* revised California. Edu-Kinesthetics.

DENVIR, B. (1989) 'Assessment Purposes and Learning in Mathematics' In MURPHY, P. & MOON, B. (eds) *Developments in Learning and Assessment* Hodder and Stoughton.

DES (1870) *The Elementary Education Act.* (Forster Act). London. HMSO.

DES (1977) *Education in Schools: A consultative document.* London. HMSO.

DES (1978) *Primary Education in England.* London. HMSO.

DES (1985) *Better Schools* London. HMSO

DES (1985) *The Curriculum from 5 to 16* Curriculum Matters 2 London. HMSO

DfES (1988) *Education Act.* London. HMSO

DfEE (1997) *Excellence for All Our Children* (The Green Paper) London. The Stationery Office.

DfEE (1999) *The National Curriculum: Handbook for Primary Teachers in England.* London. DfEE / QCA

DRYDEN, G. & VOS, J. (1994) *The Learning Revolution,* Accelerated Learning. Aylesbury.

DWECK, C. (1986) 'Motivational Processes Affecting Learning' *American Pyschologist,* 41, 1041 – 8.

FISHER, R.J. (1972) *Learning How to Learn* New York. Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich.

FONTANA, D. & SLACK, I. (1997) *Teaching Meditation to Children.* Shaftesbury. Element.

FULLAN, M. (1979) *School-focused In-service Education in Canada.* Report prepared for the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, (OECD). Paris.

FULLAN, M. (2001) *The New Meaning of Educational Change* London. Routledge Falmer.

GARDNER, H. (1984) *Frames of Mind* New York. Harper Collins.

GLASER,B. & STRAUSS, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.* Chicago. Aldine.

GOLBY, M. (1989) 'Curriculum Traditions' in MOON, B., MURPHY, P. & RAYNOR, I. (eds) *Policies for the Curriculum* Hodder and Stoughton

HANDY, C. (1989) *The Age of Unreason* Boston. Harvard Business School Press.

HERMAN, J.L. & YEH, J.P. (1980) *Some effects of Parental Involvement in Schools.* Resources in Education.

HEWISON, J. (1982) 'Parental Involvement in the Teaching of Reading'. *Remedial Education,* 17 (4) pp. 156-62.

HOYLES, C. (1989) 'What is the Point of Group Discussion in Maths' in MURPHY, P. & MOON, B. (eds) *Developments in Learning and Assessment.* Hodder and Stoughton.

LEWIN, K. (1946) Action research and minority problems, *Journal of Social Issues, 2, 34-6.*

LUCAS, B. & GREANY, T. (2000) *Schools in the Learning Age.* London. Campaign for Learning / Southgate Publishers

MCCORMACK, R. & JAMES, M. (1983) *Curriculum Evaluation in Schools* London. Routledge.

MCGUINESS, C. (1999) *From Thinking Skills to Thinking Classrooms* DfEE Research Report 115 London. DfEE.

MILLIBAND, D. (2002) *Speech to TTA ITT Partnerships Conference.*

MOSLEY, J. (1998) *Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom* Wisbech, Cambs. LDA

NACCCE (2001) *All our Futures, Creativity, Culture and Education* London DfEE Publications

NAHT (2001) *SEN Policy Statement Haywards Heath NAHT Publications*

OFSTED (2001) *Evaluating Educational Inclusion* London. HMSO

OPEN UNIVERSITY (1980) *Curriculum in Action: practical classroom evaluation* Milton Keynes. OU Press.

PIAGET, J. (1967) *Six Psychological Studies* London. University Press.

POLLARD, A. & TANN, S. (1987) *Reflective teaching in the Primary School.* London. Cassell.

QCA (2000) *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* London. QCA / DfEE

ROBINSON, B. (1991) *'Doing Case Studies in Educational Research and Evaluation' in Easter School Booklet for Educational Evaluation. Milton Keynes* OU Press.

ROLLISSON, K. (1990) 'Organising for Effective Learning' in CRAIG, I. (ed) *Managing the Primary Classroom.* 2nd Edition. Harlow. Longman.

ROSE, R. (1998) The curriculum: a vehicle for inclusion or a lever for exclusion. In TILSTONE, C., FLORIAN, L. & ROSE, R. *Promoting Inclusive Practice.* London. Routledge.

ROWLAND, S. (1984) *The Enquiring Classroom.* London. Falmer Press.

SCHON, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner.* London. Temple Smith.

SEBBA, J. & SACHDEV, D. (1997) *What works in Inclusive Education?* London. Barnardos

SMITH, A. (1996) *Accelerated Learning in the Classroom* Trowbridge, Wilts. Redwood Books.

STENHOUSE, L. (1975) *An introduction to Curriculum Research and Development.* London. Heinemann.

STENHOUSE, L. (1983) *Authority, Education and Emancipation.* London. Heinemann.

TGAT (1988) *National Curriculum Task Group on Assessment and Testing* London, DES and Welsh Office

VYGOTSKY, L.S. (1934) *Thought and Language* New York. Wiley.

WALLACE, M. (1988) 'Towards a Collegiate Approach to Curriculum - Management in Primary and Middle Schools' *School Organisation,* 8 (1) pp. 25-34

WILLIAMS, G. & BLACKSTONE, T. (1983) *Response to Adversity.* Guildford. Society for Research into Higher Education.

WILSON, N.J. (1979) 'The ethnographic style of research' in Block 1 (Variety in Social Science Research), Part 1 (Styles of Research) of Open University course DE304, *Research Methods in Education and the Social Sciences.* Milton Keynes. Open University Press.

WOOD, D. (1988) *How Children Think and Learn.* Oxford Basil Blackwell.

YIN, R.K. (1989) *Case Study Research: Designs and Methods* London. Sage Publications.

Appendices

.

Education Committee Papers

COMMITTEE: SCHOOLS SUB - 23.3.93	AGENDA - PART	1	ITEM	7
REPORT OF: Director of Education	SUBJECT - PRIMARY SECTOR ACCOMMODATION: SOUTHGATE AREA			

1. PURPOSE

The Report outlines the known housing developments in the Southgate area, describes the current situation with regard to accommodation in local schools and suggests a development plan for the further provision of school places to meet the increasing pupil population.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that approval be given in principle to:-

   (i) a new two-form entry school with a nursery being developed on the Oakwood Allotments site;

   (ii) Grange Park Primary School being developed into a three-form entry primary school;

   (iii) Merryhills Primary School being developed into a three-form entry primary school;

   (iv) voluntary contributions from developers being sought in recognition of the increased pressure on Education Services arising from new developments.

2.2 It is recommended that this report be referred to a joint panel of the Education Committee and Property Sub-Committee for detailed consideration of the land issues arising from these proposals.

3. SOUTHGATE AREA

3.1 The Southgate area, as defined in this report, includes the following schools and their catchment areas together with the Hillel Primary School and St. Andrew's Primary School, N14.

De Bohun Primary
Walker Primary
Eversley Infant and Junior Schools

Grange Park Primary
Merryhills Primary

3.2 Appendix 1 provides a map which marks the schools in their catchment areas together with the proposed housing developments.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The following table illustrates the current capacity of the schools according to the Department for Education (DFE) guideline and projects future pupil numbers over a five year period from natural growth in the area. It further shows the additional forms of entry (FoE) needed within five years, based on 210 pupils i.e. 7 classes of 30 children for primary schools.

Table 1 School Capacity

SCHOOL	CAPACITY	ROLL 9/92	FoE 9/92	PROJECTED ROLL 9/97	FoE 9/97
De Bohun	350	374	2.0	366	2.0
St. Andrew's	206	220	1.0	235	1.2
Walker	406	423	2.0	483	2.3
Eversley Infants	198	190	2.0	188	2.0
Eversley Juniors	264	264	-	244	-
Grange Park	399	428	2.0	463	2.2
Merryhills	400	399	2.0	503	2.4
Totals	2,223	2,298	11.0	2,482	12.1

NB. Wolfson Hillel omitted because classrooms will become available as the school roll grows.

These figures indicate the need for at least the addition of one form of entry within five years, the equivalent of 210 to 230 places. This will accommodate the increasing numbers and alleviate in part the capacity problem, which is caused principally by the classrooms being smaller than average in size.

5. HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

5.1 Predicting future pupil numbers from possible housing developments is very difficult and rests on a number of inter-related factors. The number of units and their size together with the percentage of private housing and social housing tends to fluctuate in relation to market forces and planning issues.

5.2 The major housing projects at the moment in the Southgate area are thought to be at Highlands Hospital, the former St. Ignatius Lower School site, the former Southgate Lower School playing fields, Oakwood Allotments and the Minchenden Site. There are a number of smaller developments which need to be aggregated to provide an accurate assessment of our future needs.

5.3 The following table provides an indication of possible pupil numbers from the main known developments, which have been started or are likely to start in the foreseeable future. The percentage figure indicates the level of social housing as opposed to private housing. The number of houses or flats being built is shown according to the numbers of bedrooms and the total number of possible primary age children is shown for the whole period of the development.

Table 2 Projected Housing Developments

Housing Development	Est. % Social Housing	No. of Bedded Units				Pupil Nos.	
		1	2	3	4	0-4	5-10
Highlands Hospital	30	115	400	351	125	1,170	618
St. Ignatius Lower	100	0	0	60	0	168	113
Southgate Lower	75	0	36	34	17	197	107
Oakwood Allotment	25	23	37	27	13	101	57
Minchenden School	0	115	64	28	51	99	60
TOTALS		253	537	500	211	1,735	955

5.4 Table 3 provides planning figures for developing new school places. Column 2 indicates the highest number of reception age pupils expected from the development in any one year. Column 3 gives the average number of reception age pupils expected from the development across the whole period of the development and Column 4, an average of Columns 2 and 3, provides a notional planning figure. This is calculated into forms of entry (FOE) at 4÷ on the basis of 30 pupils per class.

Table 3 Additional Reception Age Pupils

Housing Development (1)	Maximum 4÷ p.a. (2)	Average 4÷ p.a. (3)	Mean 4÷ p.a. (4)	Additional F.o.E. (5)
Highlands Hospital	68	33	51	1.7
St. Ignatius Lower	11	9	10	.3
Southgate Lower	13	8	11	.4
Oakwood Allotment	7	5	6	.2
Minchenden School	7	5	6	.2
TOTALS	106	60	84	2.8

5.5 With the inclusion of the one form of entry needed for the natural growth in the area, planning should take account of a further four forms of entry.

6. PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION

6.1 At the moment the Authority has retained three acres of land on the Minchenden site with the intention of building a one-form entry primary school with a nursery. Provision for the design and construction of a new school has been made in the Uncommitted Capital programme. However, the Directorate of Property Services has suggested that the Oakwood Allotments site, which is adjacent to the former Southgate Lower School site, might be more suitable for a new primary school than the area reserved on the Minchenden site. The Oakwood Allotments cover approximately 4.8 acres and this would be large enough to accommodate a two-form entry primary school with a nursery. It is suggested that this report be referred to a joint Panel of the Education Committee and Property Sub-Committee for consideration of the land issue.

6.2 A proposal to develop Grange Park Primary School from two forms of entry into three forms of entry has been discussed with the Headteacher who has approached the School Governors. An additional year group will be phased in, starting with a reception class, in September 1993. A feasibility study for the design of additional buildings will be essential and consequently a sum of £15,000 was included in the Education Committee's list of essential growth items for 1993/94.

6.3 The Authority has retained 16 acres of Metropolitan Open Land which stretches from Grange Park Primary School in the south, northwards bordering Worlds End Lane. Some of this land will be needed for the expansion of Grange Park Primary School, not only to enlarge the buildings but also to increase the playing areas. At the moment approximately 1.2 acres have been retained for use as playing fields for the Hillel Primary School. There is sufficient land remaining for the provision of an additional primary or secondary school although there would be considerable difficulties in building on the sloping terrain and in satisfying a number of planning requirements.

6.4 <u>There are two options for development:-</u>

<u>Option One</u>

(a) Continue with the proposal to build a one-form entry school on the Minchenden site.

(b) Continue with the proposal to develop Grange Park Primary School into a three-form entry primary school.

(c) Develop a new two-form entry school with a nursery on the land bordering Worlds End Lane and opposite Merryhills Primary School. The school would be built on part of the retained Metropolitan Open Land.

<u>Option Two</u>

(a) Develop a new two-form entry school with a nursery on the Oakwood Allotments Site.

128

(b)   Continue with the proposal to develop Grange Park Primary School into a three-form entry primary school.

(c)   Develop Merryhills Primary School into a three-form entry primary school.

6.5   Although Option 1 provides for the accommodation needs of the area, it has distinct disadvantages in comparison with Option 2. Building a one-form entry school on the Minchenden site where expansion to two-form entry at a future date is unlikely to be possible, is limiting both in terms of future planning for the Authority and in terms of financial management under Local Management of Schools (LMS) arrangements, for the school. A further disadvantage would be the uneven distribution of new places throughout the area, with three schools located together in Worlds End Lane.

6.6   Option 2 provides a new school, centrally located and better placed for serving the Southgate Circus area. The distribution of new places would be wider with at least three schools able to support the Highlands Hospital development, namely Merryhills, Grange Park and Eversley (which could expect some relief from a new school on the Oakwood Allotments site). A further advantage would be that the Authority would retain the possibility of further development, at a later stage, on the Worlds End Lane site should it become necessary.

7.   LONGER TERM ISSUES

7.1   Predicting longer term growth, beyond five years, is very difficult. Birth rate projections suggest a period of relative stability, but the effects of the recession and the growth of homelessness have meant a need to respond year by year to housing development, wherever an opportunity has been possible. If the current growth rate of 2.7% in the primary pupil numbers were to continue (at 0.61% above the birth rate projection) there would be a need for additional primary places, which could possibly be provided by the future development of Winchmore Infant and Junior Schools to the east and De Bohun Primary School to the west.

7.2   Although planned development takes account of predicted secondary numbers up to and including 1996, a continuation of growth in the primary sector at current rates would mean a need for additional secondary places beyond 1996. In view of the current popularity of Southgate School, the distribution of the secondary schools in the Borough and the fact that each school site will by that time have been developed to the full, there is likely to be a need to build a new secondary school, preferably in the west of the Borough. The only piece of land large enough for such a development, and identified for Education use, is the Worlds End Lane site.

8.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1   Increasing pressure is being placed on Education and other Authority services by new developments in the Borough. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, developers may make voluntary contributions to the Authority in recognition of this fact. In the case of

large developments, such as Highlands Hospital, it is relatively easy to determine the pupil numbers which are likely to result from such developments. Where there are a number of small developments within an area, however, the impact on Education Services may be equally serious; the possibility of voluntary contributions in such cases is being examined.

8.2 Attempts to identify such sources of funding are in addition to the normal procedures of annual bidding to the Department for Education for the Annual Capital Guidelines and for Supplementary Credit Approvals as appropriate.

8.3 For the Southgate area, the following items relating to increasing pupil numbers are included in the approved Three Year Plan:

	Estimate £000
Minchenden - Design	220
Grange Park - feasibility study	15
TOTAL	235

If Option Two as outlined in paragraph 6.4 above is approved in principle, the provision for the Minchenden scheme in the programme will not be required. It will, however, be essential to retain the sum in the capital programme for design work on the Oakwood Allotments site. The use of the capital provision for this purpose will be subject to the approval of Finance Sub-Committee.

8.4 Given the capital resources problems facing the Authority, it is extremely unlikely that all the capital schemes included in the approved Three Year Plan will be allowed to proceed in 1993/94. It will therefore be necessary for schemes to be prioritised across all Committees; Finance Sub-Committee will allocated any available resources, in accordance with the Council's priorities to enable projects to proceed. The first stage of the prioritisation process is currently being undertaken by the Capital Expenditure Group which has been established by Policy Committee for this purpose. Reports on individual scheme s will be submitted to this Committee and to Finance Sub-Committee in due course.

Background Papers

None.

Chronology of School Development – significant events

February 1998	Headteacher appointed
April 1998	Headteacher took up appointment
Summer 1998	Headteacher reading and planning – forming clear vision Staff appointed Furniture / equipment purchased
September 1998	Closed for training week for staff Inset day with governors and staff – policy decisions Home visits to all new pupils School opened – am Nursery Reception class Grand Opening Ceremony and celebration Coffee mornings for parents began Parent Helper courses began Curriculum evenings for parents began
November 1998	Discussions with SEN Adviser about inclusive practice Last meeting of temporary Governing Body
January 1999	Hot meals produced for first time at school Prospective parents visits Toddler Group started Breakfast Club started
March 1999	Nursery Stay and Play sessions started HT attended Leadership Programme for Serving Heads
April 1999	Staff appointed for September Early Years Adviser inspected Nursery and Reception – gave governors a good report on practice observed HT attended course on Intelligent Schools – about how school development planning can be used for school improvement – through a programme of action research.
May 1999	Inset day to devise our first School Plan – (included some governors and staff joining in September)
September 1999	School became two-form entry New staff took up post Induction days for new staff Introduced 'West Grove Way' curriculum

	Introduced PEP1 am / pm Nursery 2 reception classes 1 Year 1 class Introduced French from Year 1 Joined Healthy Schools Initiative
November 1999	Introduced Learning to Learn project to staff Applied for Learning to Learn project Toddler Group began
January 2000	Prospective parents visits
February 2000	Accepted for Learning to Learn project
March 2000	Site Manager died on site – funeral, etc.
April 2000	Staff appointed for September HT attended residential Learning to Learn seminar
June 2000	HT and DHT attended Effective teaching, thinking and learning conference
July 2000	Learning to Learn seminar held at West Grove for project schools
September 2000	New staff take up post Induction for new staff am / pm Nursery 2 Reception classes 2 Year 1 classes 1 Year 2 class Learning to Learn project begins Fruit, water and music in all classes
October 2000	Applied for Investors in People status
November 2000	Story Sack Project begins – reading bags with artefacts to support story-telling, etc. as part of our reading policy
December 2000	Awarded Investors in People status
January 2001	Prospective parents visits
February 2001	School Council began HT heard David Hargreaves speak about schools for the Future

	Film crew in school – EiC video on Gifted and Talented pupils
	Trip to Chicago for HT, DHT and classteacher
March 2001	Ofsted inspection
	Year 2 First Aid course began
April 2001	Staff appointed for September
May 2001	Accelerated Learning inset day – new teachers attended
	School plan review day – (some governors involved)
	First SATs for Year 2 pupils
June 2001	First KS1 SATs results
	Ofsted Action Plan agreed by Governing Body
	Community workshops for parents and toddlers began
July 2001	First year of Learning to Learn project completed
	Staff agreed to participate in Phase 2 of L2L project
	Awarded Healthy Schools status
September 2001	New staff take up post
	Induction for new staff
	am / pm Nursery
	2 Reception classes
	2 Year 1 classes
	2 Year 2 classes
	1 Year 3 class
	Team meetings introduced
	Planning sheets revised
November 2001	Training day on Mind Mapping
February 2002	Training day on Accelerated Learning
April 2002	Staff appointed for September
June 2002	2nd year of KS1 SATs results
July 2002	2nd year of L2L project completed
September 2002	New staff take up post
	Induction for new staff
	am / pm Nursery
	2 Reception classes
	2 Year 1 classes
	2 Year 2 classes
	2 Year 3 classes

1 Year 4 class

Year 4 children begin planning their own learning using a computerised planning programme.

Guardian Article

March 2000

Traditional vs modern: **John Crace** finds a school thriving on unconventional methods of teaching

Mind games

Y ou could be forgiven for confusing the low-slung, pale brick exterior of West Grove primary in Southgate, north London with a leisure centre. Come to think of it, you could be forgiven for confusing the interior with a leisure centre, too.

The classrooms are bright and airy, and the children are busy organising themselves into different activities. In the reception class, one little girl has some earphones clamped to her head, a boy and a girl play race the snail, a clump of kids play with finger puppets, another group create Elmer the Elephant storybooks and a few just chill out and natter. Amid the ordered disorder, everyone is having a good time.

West Grove's headteacher, Elaine Wilmot, believes that not all children learn in the same way. "Some respond best to conventional aural and visual teaching methods, but others learn best through physical exploration," she says, "and the key to maximising a child's potential is to tailor their education to their learning styles".

This approach is everything that Chris Woodhead, the chief inspector for Ofsted, detests. In his annual lecture at the end of last month, Woodhead put the boot into all new approaches to learning in a bid to reclaim the classroom values of the 1950s. To underline the point, he launched a personal attack on Bill Lucas, chief executive of the Campaign for Learning, an organisation that endorses West Grove's teaching methods. "There's nothing really new," said Woodhead, dismissively. "It does not justify the hype. It certainly does not justify Bill Lucas's confident assertion that learning to learn will be the skill for the next century."

Lucas himself would almost certainly agree with Woodhead's assertion that there was nothing new in what he was saying. The Campaign is not hanging on to the latest, tenuous research; it is working from well-established scientific research by, amongst others, Howard Gardner and Susan Greenfield, into theories of multiple intelligences and how the brain works, which, when reduced to simple language, shows that people learn in different ways, that they respond best to high-challenge, low-threat environments, that we really only concentrate for 20 minutes at a time and most of us are almost permanently dehydrated. The implications are potentially seismic. Far from Woodhead's claim that modern practice already takes note of this research, a new MORI survey commissioned by the Campaign into young people's attitudes to learning suggests that the opposite is the case. Classroom activities are dominated by copying from the board or a book and listening to the teacher talk. What the pupils actually wanted was more balance, including group discussion and problem-solving, more computer time, and a more brain-friendly environment with background music and the freedom to wander round and get a glass of water.

Many parents may be tempted to raise an eyebrow at the idea that children are the best judge of how they learn; my own would probably say they did best with unlimited sweets and no maths tests on Friday. But any scepticism is kicked to one side when you see the principles in action.

In most schools, the sight of kiddies wandering around the classroom mid-lesson would be enough to send a teacher apoplectic and to get the children labelled disruptive. At West Grove it is positively encouraged. "We want the children to explore for themselves how they learn best," says Wilmot. "We start with what they can do; we observe them in action and then try to reframe ideas into methods and activities that make sense to them."

Jack Newton, one of the reception teachers, explains how it works in practice. "One four-year old boy is very into enclosures at the moment," he says. "He's been playing with building blocks and his language is amazing. At one point he said, 'I'm putting this block here to increase the strength'. Another girl loves ordering things and has spent some time rearranging the books. I talk to them about what they're doing and try to get them to think about how it relates to numbers and language. I then try to suggest similar activities that will develop these skills in other ways."

It's hardly the normal way of teaching the three Rs, but Wilmot is adamant that, amongst the creativity, the basics of phonics and numeracy are still hammered home — just more gently. West Grove is an average multicultural primary school; its pupils include those from emotionally and socially deprived backgrounds, children with special needs, and a smattering of children from well-off homes. But the achievement levels are anything but average. Tiffany, aged four, writes out the word elephant from memory, spelling it correctly; Joshua, also four, happily jots down a rudimentary sentence. Now you might expect one or two gifted children in any class, but many other members of the class are also working at this level.

You find a similar story in year 1. By request of the parents, all children learn French and most can count to 30, identify the colours and can hold a basic conversation along the lines of "Who are you? What's your name?" etc. Wilmot reckons that most of the class already meet the key stage 1 assessment test a year ahead of schedule. West Grove was only established in 1998 and there are no classes above year 1, but the school has no intention of altering its approach as the demands of the curriculum increase with age.

This may sound a bit gung-ho, but West Grove is hardly out on a limb. Business has long endorsed the theories of multiple intelligence. The Department for Education's Standards and Effectiveness committee has accepted the Campaign's ideas, and over 500 schools, including whole local education authorities, applied to be one of the 24 schools on the Campaign's Learning to Learn pilot scheme that starts this September.

If Woodhead is not yet ready for the Campaign for Learning, West Grove is more than ready for Woodhead. The school has not yet received its first Ofsted inspection, but Wilmot insists that when it comes, the school will not change its practices one bit. And somehow you believe her.

Walkabout: children want the freedom to roam during lessons, to fetch a glass of water ... at West Grove school, this is actively encouraged — and the results are excellent Photographs: Graham Turner

Extracts from Campaign for Learning Interim Report

Executive Summary

About the project
The Learning to Learn project was launched in February 2000. Its objective was to evaluate the impact of applying new understandings about how we learn in 24 schools throughout England and Wales with pupils aged three to eighteen years. Phase 1 of this two-year project ran from September 2000 to July 2001 and the findings are summarised here.

For the purpose of the project, the Campaign for Learning defined Learning to Learn as '...a process of discovery about learning. It involves a set of principles and skills which, if understood and used, help learners learn more effectively and so become learners for life. At its heart is the belief that learning is learnable' (Lucas and Greany, 2000b, pp5).

The research drew on disciplines ranging from neuro-science and cognitive psychology to nutrition and health. Its aim was to evaluate the impact of new thinking about learning itself, such as that on learning cycles, memory, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, e-learning and accelerated learning, in terms of standards of achievement, motivation and the development of positive learning attributes.

The twenty four schools involved were selected from over 200 research applications according to a set of criteria which ensured that the overall project was representative of the wider educational system, the diversity of England and Wales and the key areas of interest in Learning to Learn. Each school defined its own research agenda and approach within an overall framework and methodology.

Twenty-two schools submitted reports for Phase 1, summarising the findings from their school-based enquiries. Pre and post questionnaires were analysed to identify changes in pupil attitudes to and understanding about teaching and learning processes with target and comparison groups. Two schools were unable to submit reports about their work in Phase 1, mainly due to changes in key staff involved in the Learning to Learn project.

Focus of the research
Within the project's overall definition of Learning to Learn (see page _, Lucas and Greany p5), the following areas of interest were explored:

- Five schools explored the emergence of, and preference for learning styles and multiple intelligences with children aged between three and eight years in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage1.

- Ten schools investigated the impact of Learning to Learn induction courses and ongoing sessions for Year 7 pupils to learn how to learn, to understand how to prepare themselves for learning, to develop a toolkit of learning techniques and when to adopt specific learning strategies.

- Seven schools explored the effects on performance in specific curriculum areas of teaching metacognitive skills to pupils in Years 8 to 11.

- The impact of changes in teaching strategies to include delivering information through visual, auditory and kinaesthetic approaches and teaching to meet the needs of different intelligences was examined by teachers for pupils throughout the age range.

- The nature and impact of different 'learning-friendly' environments in schools on attitudes to learning and performance were explored by many schools.

Findings
The key messages emerging from the first year of school-based enquiry indicate that pupil learning, motivation and standards improve when:

- Teachers help prepare their pupils for effective learning by creating learning-friendly environments that promote physical, emotional and mental well-being and minimise barriers to and factors that inhibit learning;

- Teaching approaches are applied that recognise and respond to pupils' different learning styles and intelligences. These differences can be observed among pupils from the youngest ages and the impact is strongest for those with a preference for receiving data kinaesthetically;

- Teachers take time to help pupils understand themselves as learners, to acquire learning-conducive dispositions and to teach them strategies that enhance learning effectiveness and performance;

- Teachers enhance pupils' motivation for learning by connecting it to pupils' personal experiences in relevant and meaningful ways;

- Pupils are helped to understand that learning takes place in and outside the classroom; and parents and members of the wider school community understand about, and are included in, learning.

Importantly, given current concerns about teacher morale and retention, strong evidence from the project indicated that teacher involvement in Learning to Learn has extensive and far-reaching benefits for teacher effectiveness, professional development, motivation and confidence.

Teachers who are informed about and experienced in Learning to Learn approaches can effect change in the learning culture of a school and thereby contribute to improvement in pupil motivation and standards.

Recommendations
This report covers the first year of a two-year project and the research findings inevitably require further investigation and validation over time. Our belief is that Learning to Learn should always be implemented as an enquiry-based investigative process, rather than a 'how to' solution to effective teaching and learning. On this basis we believe the following recommendations flow from the findings to date.

138

Given Learning to Learn's potential impact on teacher morale and motivation:

- Initial training and ongoing career development for teachers and school support staff should include modules and structured research opportunities on how humans learn and the factors that promote and inhibit effective learning. This should initially be piloted through a minimum of three ITT institutions and the schools in three Local Education Authorities.

Given Learning to Learn's potential impact on pupil standards and motivation:

- Teachers should be supported with curriculum time and resources to help pupils take responsibility for their own learning by helping them understand the process of learning and themselves as learners.
- Teachers should be helped to utilise Learning to Learn principles and practices for pupils of all ages in terms of how they structure the learning environment, deliver information, facilitate learning opportunities and provide formative feedback.
- Teachers should be assessed on their competence in utilising Learning to Learn approaches.

- Parents should be offered opportunities to understand learning so that they can effectively support their children's learning.

These proposals have a number of practical resource and policy implications, including:

- Learning to Learn should be seen as a central plank in the shift towards more individualised teaching approaches and should involve teaching assistants and new technologies as appropriate.
- Learning to Learn should be embedded within schools and Local Education Authorities through its explicit inclusion in School and Local Education Authority Development Plans.
- Learning to Learn Specialist and Beacon schools should be established as a means of furthering our understanding in this area and spreading good practice.
- The Effective Teaching and Learning component of the Key Stage 3 strategy should reflect the project's findings and should allocate curriculum time and resource to support their implementation.
- Further funded research into the impact of new approaches to teaching and learning should be conducted by teachers, academics and researchers.

139

Inclusion Questionnaire for Children

		Agree	Don't Know	Don't Agree
1	Sometimes my class is divided into groups for work.			
2	Sometimes I do work in pairs with a friend.			
3	I help my friends with their work when they get stuck.			
4	My friends help me with my work if I get stuck.		.	
5	My work is put on the walls for other people to see.			
6	My teacher likes to listen to my ideas.			
7	My teacher likes to help me with my work.			
8	I think our classroom rules are fair.			
9	Some of the children in my class call others by unkind names.			
10	Sometimes I am bullied at school.			
11	When I feel unhappy at school there is always an adult to look after me.			
12	When children in my class quarrel, an adult helps us to sort it out fairly.			
13	Sometimes my teacher lets me choose what work to do.			
14	I feel pleased with myself when I've done a good piece of work.			
15	When I have homework I usually understand what I have to do.			
16	My teacher likes me to tell her what I do at home.			
17	My family thinks that West Grove is a good school.			
18	I think that West Grove is a good school.			
19	I like coming to school.			
20	I think I am doing well at school.			

Inclusion Questionnaire for Parents

		Agree	Don't Know	Don't Agree
1	I think West Grove is an inclusive school.			
2	All children are treated as individuals.			
3	All families are valued regardless of their background.			
4	Staff encourage all children to do their best, not just the most able.			
5	Before changes are made at the school, parents are asked for their views.			
6	The regular newsletter keeps me informed about the work of the school.			
7	The school provides me with clear information about how to help my child at home.			
8	My child(ren) join in with clubs and other activities taking part at lunch time or after school.			
9	I think the school keeps me well informed about how my child is doing.			
10	If I am concerned about my child's progress, I know who to talk to.			

I chose West Grove for my child(ren) because:

		Agree	Don't Know	Don't Agree	
1	I think West Grove is an inclusive school.				
2	There is a partnership between staff and parents / carers.				
3	Staff and pupils are treated as individuals.				
4	The school seeks to admit all students from its locality.				
5	All pupils new to the school are helped to feel settled.				
6	Pupils are actively involved in their own learning.				
7	Pupils learn collaboratively.				
8	Assessment encourages the achievements of all pupils.				
9	Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.				
10	Staff are concerned to support the learning and participation of all pupils.				

I think the 3 most significant factors that contribute to the West Grove Way are:

1.

2.

3.

Long Term Aims

WEST GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CURRICULUM – LONG TERM PLAN

SKILLS	VALUES AND ATTITUDES

Independence and responsibility
    Assertiveness
    Setting own goals
    Recognising own abilities / areas for development
    Self esteem
    Feelings
	Enjoy life at school, acting confidently and appropriately.
	Recognise their uniqueness.
	Feel good about themselves.
	Value their achievements.
	Want to do well, make the most of opportunities and talents.
	Be willing to persevere and overcome difficulties.
	Recognise the importance of self-presentation.
	Take responsibility for themselves and their bodies and their behaviour.
	Understand about trust and reliability.
	Take responsibility for self and others in and out of school.
	Understand that it is wrong for children to be bullied or abused by other children or adults.
	Look forward to the transition to secondary school.

Respect for people, environment and property	Value cultural background of self and others. Demonstrate and promote goodwill, understanding, respect and acceptance of difference. Value diversity of lifestyle, the choices made within them and possible influence/effect upon health. Accept our responsibility to maintain a sustainable environment for future generations.

Personal management / healthy lifestyle	Understand the value of keeping healthy and attitudes to health and illness. Accept responsibility for personal cleanliness. Develop a positive approach and self motivation towards personal safety and risk taking. Explore attitudes and beliefs about different drugs and the people who may use or misuse them, be able to recognise stereotypes.
Play an active role in society	Develop a concern for people and communities where human needs are not met. Develop a sense of fair play in their dealings with peers and others. Take a constructive interest in their local community and begin to take on a wider sense of social responsibility. Appreciate the positive impact of human activity on plants, animals and the environment and value the aesthetic qualities of their surroundings. Appreciate home, school and community values. Refuse to support values or actions that may be harmful to individuals or communities.
Managing relationships in a variety of contexts	Respect other people's feelings, decisions, rights and bodies. Understand the meaning of, and earn, friendship, loyalty, trust and confidence. Be able to be honest. Appreciate different ways of loving and its importance to a range of relationships. Be able to work harmoniously and constructively with others in a joint activity.

WEST GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CURRICULUM – LONG TERM PLAN

Effective communicator
  Critical listening
  Ability to debate effectively
  Ability to use a range of ICT tools
	To understand and value other's contributions.
	To value different forms of communication.
	To value and evaluate differing points of view.
	To have the confidence to offer their own views / ideas.
	To understand the needs of the listener.

Problem solving	To be motivated and to persevere. To value other's contributions. To have the confidence to make judgements / decisions. To take responsibility for their judgements / decisions. To evaluate the solution to problems. To be open to change. To recognise that many problems have more than one solution.
Research skills	To be able to recognise and use a range of different sources of information. To be able to analyse relevant information and select what is relevant.

Thinking skills
   Information processing
   Reasoning
   Enquiry
   Creative thinking
   Evaluation
	Value the 'knowing how' as well as the 'knowing what'.
	Develop a sense of what it is to be a learner.
	Understand that information is not always 'factual' that it can reflect bias and opinion.
	To judge the value of what they read, hear and do.
	To have confidence in their judgements.

PEPI – FOUNDATION STAGE AND KEY STAGE 1

Presentation Skills

- I can dress myself smartly.
- I can write my name neatly.
- I can speak clearly to a group.
- I come to school ready to learn.
- I always remember to title and date my work.
- I can mount my work.
- I can speak clearly to a variety of audiences.

Time Management Skills

- I can listen at carpet time.
- I can finish my work on time.

Research Skills

- I know how to find out things.
- I know lots of ways to find out things.
- I can sort and use information.

Communication Skills

- I can talk about something of interest.
- I know how someone else is feeling.
- I can make my talk interesting.

Organisation Skills

- I can get what I need for my work.
- I can set up my table for work.

Team Working – Interpersonal Skills

- I can share with others.
- I can work as part of a group on a piece of work.
- I can organise a group.

Name:	Class:

Target:

I achieved this target by

What I will do next

How I felt about my learning

WEST GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

DATE: **YEAR GROUP:**

AREA OF LEARNING	ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES	CONCEPTS, SKILLS, KEY VOCABULARY
Assessment/Observations:		Support:

	TOPIC:	SUBJECT:	YEAR GROUP:

DESIRABLE OUTCOMES	ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES	RESOURCES	LINKS

KS1 Planning Sheet

Subject	Learning Objectives	Activities and Resources	Concepts, skills, key vocabulary	Assessment / Observations	Support
Linguistic and Literary					
CGR					
Mathematical					
Scientific					
Technological					
Human and Social					
Aesthetic and Creative					
Physical					
Moral					
Spiritual					
MFL					

KS1 / KS2 Planning Sheet

	Language	Maths	Science	ICT	D & T	History	Geography	PE	Music	Art	MFL
Learning Objective											
Linguistic											
Logical Mathematical											
Musical											
Visual and Spatial											
Bodily Kinaesthetic											
Naturalist											
Interpersonal											
Intrapersonal											

KS1 Planning Sheet (Current)

	Language	Maths	Science	ICT	D & T	History	Geography	PE	Music	Art	MFL
Learning Objective											
Visual											
Auditory											
Kinaesthetic											

KS1 Planning Sheet (Current)

	Language	Maths	Science				
Learning Objective							
Visual							
Auditory							
Kinaesthetic							

WEST GROVE PRMARY SCHOOL

TOPIC INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Class: ....

Your child's topic this half term is ....

The class will be concentrating on the themes/concepts of ....

....

....

The maths focus is ....

Please send in resources of ....

....

Other relevant information:-

Starting School
Booklets
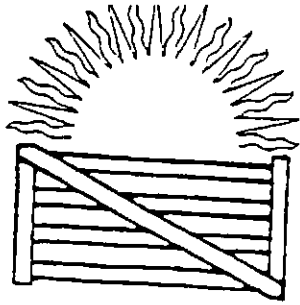
WEST GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

STARTING SCHOOL BOOKLET
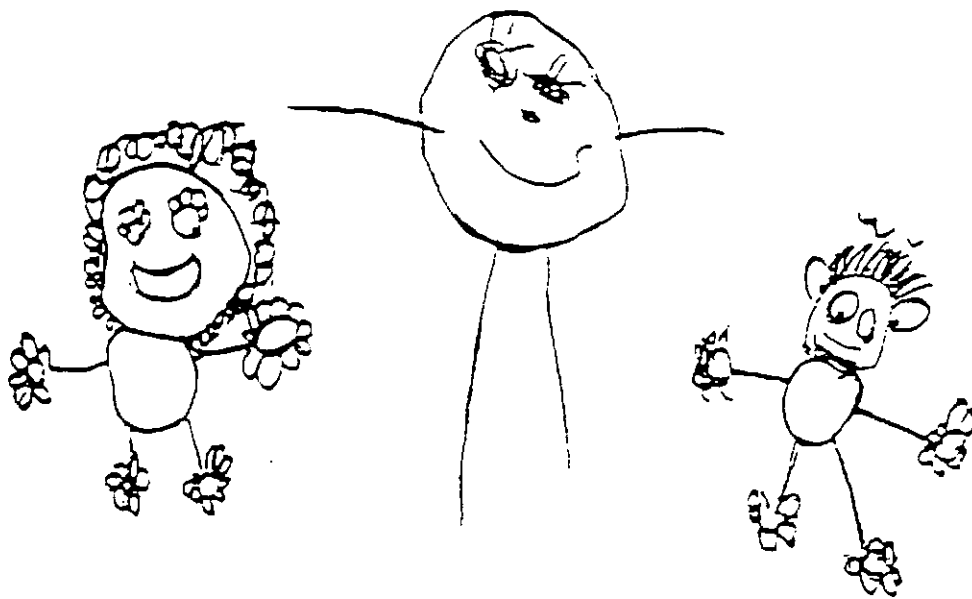
My name is ....

ABOUT ME

Name:	Date of Birth

I am usually called:

Address:

Postcode:

Mother's Name:	Father's Name:
Address:	Address:
Postcode:	Postcode:
Home Tel:	Home Tel:
Work Tel:	Work Tel:
Mobile No.:	Mobile No.:

These people will collect me:

My brothers and sisters names and dates of birth are:

These are my friends:

Pre-school group I have been to: Borough:

Number of full days per week:

Number of half days per week:

At home I speak:	My religion is:

My favourite play activity or interests are:

My particular comforter is:

These are my pets:

Any special medical conditions or allergies: (Asthma, Peanut Allergy, Diabetes etc.)

My special dietary requirements are:

This is how I ask for the toilet:

I am right handed/left handed or undecided:

When I am upset I

....

GENERAL
Is your child happy to play while you are in another room?
Is s/he used to leaving you to visit relatives/friends?
Does s/he do this readily?
Does your child play with other children regularly?
Does s/he have the opportunity to play outside?
Does s/he enjoy listening to stories?
Does s/he enjoy looking at books?
Has s/he a favourite story/book?
Is s/he used to sharing toys with other children?
Does your child have any particular fears or dislikes?
Is there anything else we should know about your child?

This was filled in by: .... Date: ....

My first drawing for West Grove Primary School:
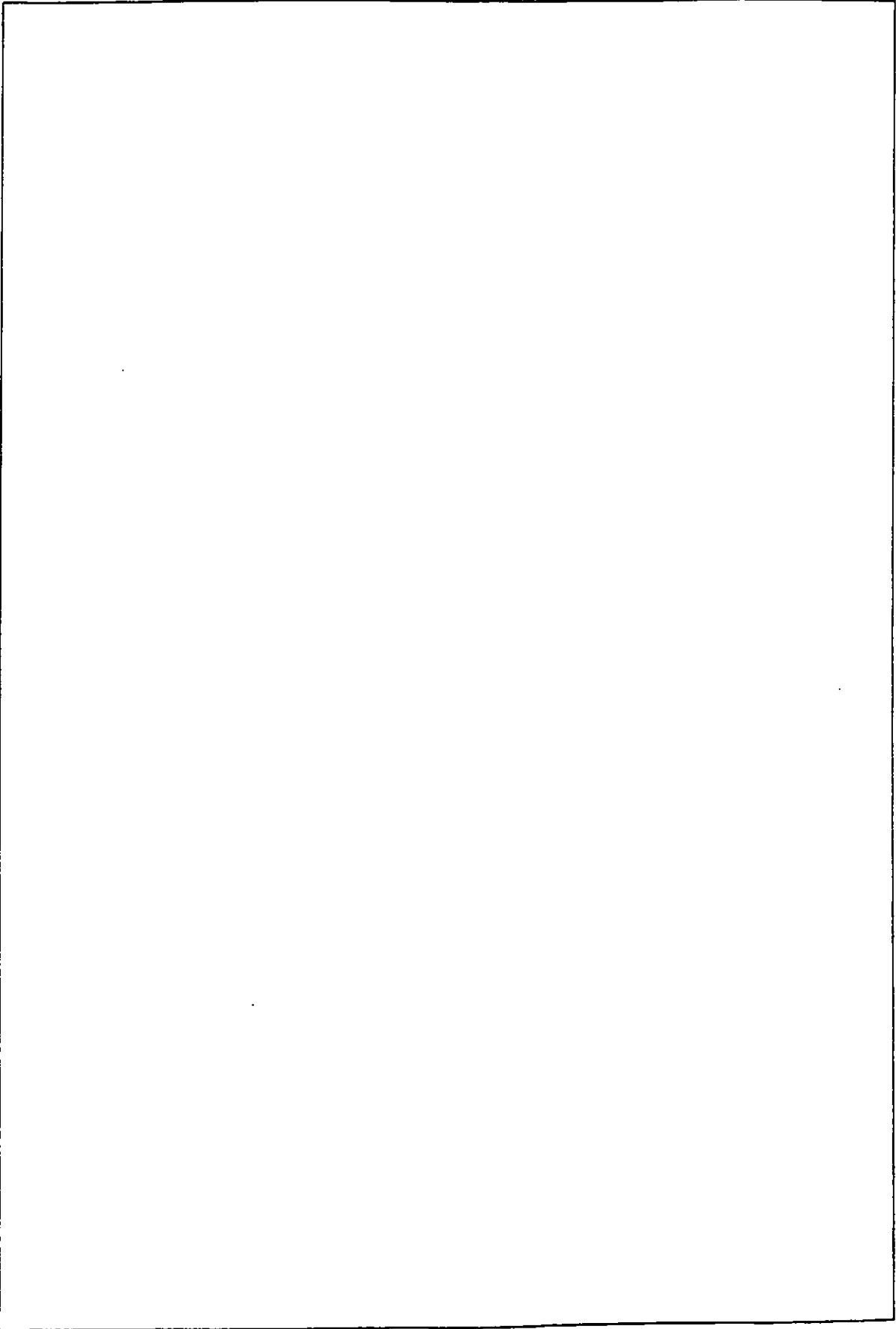
THINGS I LIKE TO DO
My favourite toy is:
My favourite games are:
These are the friends I like to play with:
My favourite TV programme is:
My favourite songs or rhymes are:

Curriculum Booklets
for parents

At home we can help by...

- Singing rhymes, jingles, etc.

- Listening to tapes, CDs, radio, music on the television

- Talking about music, what you like, don't like and why

- Talking about sounds in the environment, loud and soft, high and low, long and short, etc.

- Enjoying music together with your child.

West Grove Primary School

MUSIC

The importance of Music

- Music is a powerful, unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act.

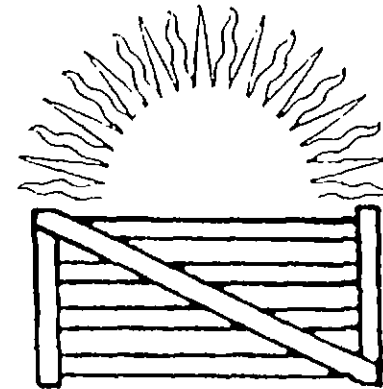- It brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development.

- As an integral part of culture, past and present, it helps pupils understand themselves and relate to others, forging important links between the home, school and the wider world.

- The teaching of music develops pupils' ability to listen and appreciate a wide variety of music and to make judgements about musical quality.

- It encourages active involvement in different forms of amateur music making, both individual and communal, developing a sense of group identity and togetherness.

- It also increases self-discipline and creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment.

FOUNDATION STAGE

During the Foundation Stage, pupils recognise and explore how sounds can be changed, sing simple songs from memory, recognise repeated sound patterns and match movements to music.

KEY STAGE 1

During Key Stage 1 pupils listen carefully and respond physically to a wide range of music.

They play musical instruments and sing a variety of songs from memory, adding accompaniments and creating short compositions, with increasing confidence, imagination and control.

They explore and enjoy how sounds and silence can create different moods and effects.

KEY STAGE 2

During Key Stage 2 pupils sing songs and play instruments with increasing confidence, skill, expression and awareness of their own contribution to a group or class performance.

They improvise, and develop their own musical compositions, in response to a variety of different stimuli with increasing personal involvement, independence and creativity.

They explore their thoughts and feelings through responding physically, intellectually and emotionally to a variety of music from different times and cultures.

How can parents help?

We need volunteers who can:

- Draw

- Sew

- Knit

- Make games

- Shop for artefacts

- Donate material

- Read stories onto tape
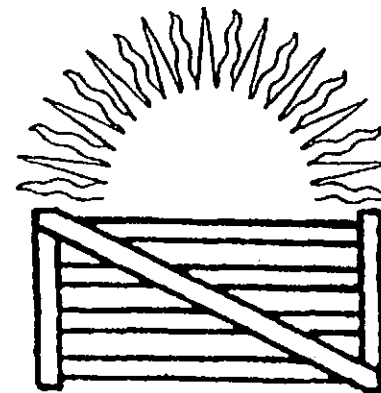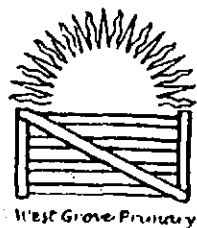
West Grove Primary

West Grove Primary

Storysacks

at

West Grove Primary School

What is a Storysack?

A storysack is a large cloth bag containing a good quality young child's picture book with supporting materials to stimulate reading activities.

To bring the book to life, soft toys of the main characters, artefacts relating to items in the story, a non-fiction book relating to the fiction theme, an audio tape and a language game based on the book are included.

Additionally a card of ideas is inserted, suggesting to parents ways they may develop listening, reading and writing skills using the contents of the Storysack.

Storysacks will help develop and improve your child's reading skills and encourage a life-long love of reading.

By using the sack together, you will provide opportunities for your child to:

- Listen to good stories read aloud

- Talk and extend their vocabulary

- Read for meaning

- Extend their general knowledge

- Develop social skills

- Improve confidence and stimulate an interest in books and stories
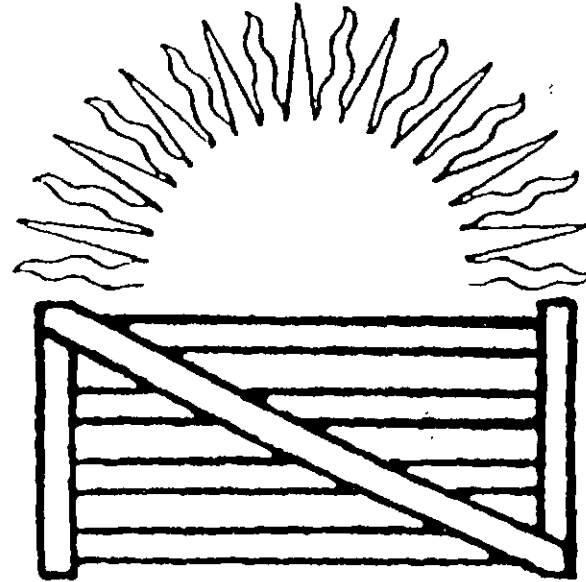
West Grove Primary
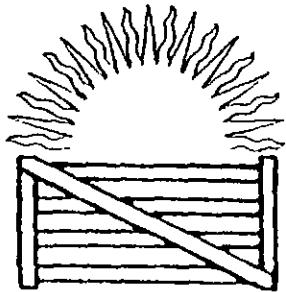
West Grove Primary

Learning to read

at

West Grove Primary School

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO READ

INTRODUCTION

Our reading programme consists of:-

1) the work we do in school, e.g. introducing books to your child, monitoring their progress, children making their own books, sharing big books, etc.

2) the help you give at home by reading and sharing books with your child.

This is very important, as we need to work together.

WHAT WE DO IN SCHOOL

a) using books - we have a range of books, chosen because they are the sort of books your child will love to listen to and read for themselves. We will also have core books which the teachers will use for the specific purpose of teaching the skills of reading. These books will be fiction and non-fiction.

h) hearing reading - children will have a regular reading time with their teacher. Some of the following activities will occur during that time:-
- talking about books, authors, etc.
- discussions as to why the book was chosen
- child or teacher reading some, or all, of the book
- discussing the story, plot, characters, and child's understanding
- encouraging the child to predict what will happen next
- encouraging the child to have a go at unknown words by reading on and making meaning or by guessing

During the reading times the teacher will be observing what your child can do and making notes for their records.
Our main approach to hearing reading will be through collaborative group reading though at other times during the week the children may be involved in individual or paired reading.
Quiet reading times will also be used to provide opportunities for children to browse and become independent in their choice of books.

c) Teachers read to their classes and have book promotion sessions. In this way children build up their repertoire of good reading material from which to choose for their own reading.

d) Books in classrooms - we try to make sure that we have a large variety of books in classrooms, covering all abilities and interests. Children also make their own books. Each class will have time in the school library from where they will be able to borrow books.
We are emphasising the quality of reading material offered to the children.

HOW CAN YOU HELP ?

a) At the beginning - read to your child as much as possible. Share books together, talk about stories and pictures.

b) Later on - when your child has heard a lot of books, s/he begins to join in. At this stage children begin to pick out words, point to them, etc. They love to feel that they are reading, do encourage this. Don't worry if the reading is not word perfect at this stage, as long as it makes sense. If it doesn't, help your child, and offer help if your child asks. Sometimes if children enjoyed a book, they will read it several times. This is a good thing, you might find a well loved story will be the first one a child learns to read for themselves.

c) Later still - as your child's skill and confidence grows they will read to you more and get better at it. This can take some time, please be patient. Also give help if your child chooses a book that is too hard for them to read alone.

d) Help us monitor your child's reading - fill in the comments section in the reading diary which will be coming home with the books your child chooses. Let us know what your child liked, or disliked about the book Did they recognise any words in the book ? Could they talk with confidence about the story, and what they thought might happen next ? Are they starting to guess at words they don't know using the initial sounds ?

Finally, do not apply pressure. Help your child to feel comfortable and enjoy reading. Make sure you praise their efforts.

REMEMBER - WHAT A CHILD CAN DO IN CO-OPERATION TODAY, HE CAN DO ALONE TOMORROW.
Vygotsky.

WEST GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

INSET POLICY   Autumn 1999

The purpose of Inset is to support school improvement and should directly relate to raising pupil achievement. **This can be done by:**

> encouraging staff to be engaged in the continuous process of self-evaluation, whereby they are continually reflecting on the quality of their work and their interactions with colleagues;

> giving staff the freedom and encouragement to innovate as a staff, without fear of punishment or failure;

> shared planning and evaluation;

> observing each other's performance and using each other for feedback;

> and seeking opportunities for individuals to experience leading other adults.

TRAINING NEEDS

Training needs should be identified as part of induction, performance management and school evaluation systems.

Staff individual needs can be met through school based training opportunities, e.g.

> leading staff meetings;
> preparing draft policy statements through membership of working parties;
> leading parent meetings;
> working collaboratively with other colleagues;
> job shadowing;
> or through attendance at centrally run courses.

Funding of courses and cover will be maintained, as far as possible, to enable staff's learning to continue.

Not all courses that staff attend will be to support school development priorities, as we highly value our entitlement to our own personal professional development.

Feedback from courses attended will be facilitated through staff meetings or workshops.

EVALUATION

The Inset Policy will be reviewed annually as part of the School Development Planning processes.

ASSESSMENT POLICY

Assessment is a continuous process of curriculum planning, gathering, reviewing and evaluating information in order to support children's success in their learning in all areas.

It is a key educational activity, which enables us to discover a pupil's knowledge, understanding and skill development.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

- Informal assessment (formative) – arising from observation of pupils, information for everyday class, group and individual management. Informs short term planning which is part of the long-term assessment procedures. This can be recorded but may not be.

- Formal assessment (summative or diagnostic) – this is a more structured attempt to gather evidence and make judgements about the learning which takes place. It is used to identify specific strengths and areas for development of particular children to inform future teaching and learning. This may include formal testing administered internally as well as statutory requirements at the end of Key Stages. In addition teachers will assess at the end of an activity or topic and the results will be recorded.

- Pupil self-assessment – pupils making decisions about their own learning. Teachers will need to acknowledge the value of their comments and judgements on their personal performance.

PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

- To provide information to help individuals make decisions about future teaching and learning.

- To provide information for a variety of audiences, i.e. parents, pupils, colleagues, other schools.

- To assist pupils in their learning.

- To diagnose particular difficulties that children may be encountering.

- To assist the teacher in evaluating the curriculum and their teaching.

- To motivate pupils and ourselves.

- To select working groups within the class.

- To celebrate achievement by recognising children's progression.

- To comply with legal requirements.

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

- Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and as such assessment opportunities are built in at every stage of planning the curriculum.

- Assessment takes account of every aspect of the child's development: social, emotional, physical, personal and academic and the influence these areas have on each other.

- We have shared responsibility to ensure that:

    a) decisions made about children's performance are accurate, fair and consistent in practice.
    b) all children have the opportunity to demonstrate their achievements.

- Reporting ensures that clear communication with parents develops an understanding of the school's practices, purposes and principles.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS – PLANNING FOR ASSESSMENT

Planning is essential to effective assessment. Learning experiences are planned and an assessment of what a child can do within this is made.

Long term	Topics should be planned to achieve a broad, balanced curriculum and ensure continuity and progression. Assessment opportunities and activities should be planned at this stage. End of Key Stage assessments should be built in to topic grid.
Medium term	Topic planning in year groups half termly. Copy of plans should be sent to the Headteacher. Sampling of pupils work for their Records of Achievement should be made half termly.
Short term	Weekly planning. Clear learning objectives should be identified and assessment opportunities / activities built in. Weekly observations are recorded in order to inform future planning.

RECORD KEEPING

Records supplement the teacher's personal and professional knowledge of the child. Individual running records should be kept for each child and added to as relevant, but at least half termly.

REPORTING TO PARENTS

During the summer term teachers will draw upon their records of formal and informal assessments to prepare a summary of the child's progress enabling them to report accurately to parents.
Reporting takes place annually in July and in the context of statutory requirements. A written report is provided to parents.

In the autumn term, teachers will meet with parents to discuss the child's progress, and in the spring term a written agreement of targets for the child for the following year will be agreed between the child, parents and teacher. This written statement of targets will then be used for review purposes at following consultations between teacher, child and parents.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Headteacher	Has overall responsibility for assessment in the school.
Assessment co-ordinator	Responsible for the implementation, monitoring and reviewing of assessment in the school.
Class teacher	Responsible for implementing assessment in the class.
Curriculum managers	Responsible for incorporating assessment into the subject guidelines.
Parents	Provide information to the school, working in partnership, being made aware of school's policy through consultation.
Governors	Make resources available to support the assessment policy and practice and have an overview of what is happening in the school through the curriculum sub-committee reports.
Pupils	Take an active part in assessment of their own learning and be encouraged to develop self-assessment skills.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The policy will be monitored by the Senior Management Team, reviewed regularly by staff and the curriculum sub-committee of the Governing Body, and evaluated at least every two years as part of the School Development Planning processes.

Issues to be addressed in the future

- To develop a clear system of moderation involving the whole staff to achieve consistency of interpretation when agreeing standards and expectations, leading to school portfolios.

- To examine systems of marking work to achieve consistency of approach.

To devise a manageable system for teachers' observational notes to accompany samples of work.

MARKING STRATEGIES

Summative Feedback / Marking

This usually consists of ticks and crosses and is associated with closed tasks or exercises. Wherever possible, children should self-mark or the work should be marked as a class or in a group.

Formative Feedback / Marking

With oral feedback, in the course of a lesson, teachers' comments to children should focus firstly on issues about the learning intention and secondly, and in a whisper, on other features.

Quality Marking

Not all pieces of work can be 'quality marked'. Teachers need to decide whether work will simple be acknowledged or given detailed attention.

Wherever the task is open or narrative, feedback should focus first and foremost on the learning intention of the task. The emphasis in marking should be on both success against the learning intention and improvement needs against the learning intention. Focused comment should help the child in 'closing the gap' between what they have achieved and what they could have achieved.

With English narrative writing, codes can save time and make the feedback more accessible to the child:

- Highlight three things which are best against the learning intention
- Put an arrow where improvement against the learning intention could take place (including a 'closing the gap' comment)

Where codes are inappropriate, success and improvement should be pointed out verbally or in written form.

Useful 'closing the gap' comments are:

- A reminder prompt (e.g. what else could you say here?)
- A scaffolded prompt (e.g. what was the dog's tail doing? The dog was angry so he…. Describe the expression on the dog's face)
- An example prompt (e.g. Choose one of these or your own: He ran round in circles looking for the rabbit / The dog couldn't believe his eyes)

Secretarial Features

Spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. should not be asked for in every piece of narrative writing, because children cannot effectively focus on too many things in one space of time. When work is finished, ask children to check for things they know are wrong in their work

when they read it through. They should not be told to correct all spellings, or they are likely to write further misspellings or waste time looking words up.

Only give children feedback about those things you have asked them to pay attention to. This will mean that some aspects of writing are unmarked, but over time will be marked.

Self Marking

Children should self evaluate wherever possible. Children can identify their own three successes and look for improvement points. The plenary can then focus on this process as a way of analysing the learning.

Shared Marking

Using one piece of work from a child in another class to mark as a class, using OHP, at regular intervals, model the marking process and teach particular points at the same time.

Another strategy is to show two pieces of levelled work, with the same title, and discuss their differences.

Paired Marking

Before ends of lessons, children should sometimes be asked to mark narrative work in pairs. The following points are important:

- Paired marking should not be introduced until Key Stage 2, unless teachers feel younger children are ready for this
- Children need to be trained to do this, through modelling with the whole class, watching the paired marking in action
- Ground rules (e.g. listening, interruptions, confidentiality, etc.) should be decided, then put up as a poster
- Children should, alternately, point out what they like first, holding the highlighter pen, and then suggest ways to improve the piece, but only against the learning intention and not spellings, etc. The 3:1 success to improvement ratio should be followed, to avoid over-criticism.
- Pairings need to be based on someone you trust – best decided by teacher.
- Pairings should be ability based, of two middle, two brighter or one middle and one lower together.
- Encourage a dialogue between children rather than taking turns to be the 'teacher'; they should discuss each other's work together (e.g. I think this bit really shows how that character feels, what do you think?)

Organisation

- The first 5 – 10 minutes of a lesson should, wherever possible, be used to get around the class to establish understanding and act on it where the work is too easy or too difficult.
- Where possible, children should be encouraged to self-mark.

- Set less work, so that time can be allowed to go through work and mark as a class.
- Wherever class discussions take place, feedback is given orally. Notes might also be necessary to inform future planning as a result of the discussion findings.
- Children need to have some feedback about their work, but flexibility is important, depending on the nature of the task and the time available.
- Distance marking should be accessible to children and manageable for teachers. Use codes against learning intentions wherever possible.
- When work has been distance marked, time should be given for children to read and then make one focused improvement based on the improvement suggestion (linked with the arrow when codes are used). In order for the marking to be formative, the information must be used and acted on by the children.

Portfolio Summary:

Cluster/Competencies	Level of Performance	Portfolio Components
Group 1		Have Need
Strategic Thinking	▲ ⊐	●
Impact and Influence	⊏⊃	● — 2 ✓
Group 2		
Drive for Improvement	▲ ⊐	●
Personal Conviction	▲ ⊏	● — 1 ✓
Group 3		
Transformational Leadership	▲ ⊡	●
Hold People Accountable	⊡ ▲	○ — 1 ✓
Group 4		
Initiative	▲ ⊡	●
Scan the Environment	▲ ⊏	● — 2 ✓
Analytical Thinking	▲ ⊐	●
Group 5		
Develop Potential	⊏○ ▲	○
Teamwork	▲ ⊐	● — 1 ✓
Group 6		
Respect for Others	▲ ⊐	●
Challenge and Support	▲ ⊡	●
Understand Others	▲ ⊡	● — 2 ✓
Social Awareness	▲ ⊐	●

⊏ Total Others   ○ Self   ▲ Target Level

"The encouragement from staff to pupils."

"Team Work."

"All staff are working towards the same goals."

"Children are allowed to work in their preferred way."

"Calm and positive ethos."

"Positive behaviour."

"Child centred approach."

"Positive attitudes of staff."
"Senior management's approachability and support (staff, children and parents)."

"Children are happy and secure in their learning environment."

"Individual needs and interests are starting point for learning."

"Everyone is friendly and smiles are everywhere."

"Everyone seems to sing from the same song-sheet regarding behaviour, etc. so the children always know where they stand."

"The children learn better by being able to learn in the best way for them."

"The importance placed on everyone's individuality."

"Partnership with both parents / staff."

"Staff are here for each child and support each child's needs and learning."

"School is built on trust."

"We do what we believe, not what we are told to do."

"The empowerment and confidence given to staff and children – allowing us to be the best we can be."

"Being trusted to make own judgements and decisions for the benefit of the children – given that flexibility."

"Working in a happy, relaxed environment knowing there is unanimity of understanding in what we're doing and why we're doing it."

"Everyone is invited to participate and contribute to our journey of inclusion."

"We change philosophy and policy to meet children's needs."

"Concentrating on learning rather than teaching."

"Action based on research and experience rather than just experience."

"... will be a unique centre of excellence."

"... will have children who have moved on with not only academic skills but with skills of tolerance and be able to help others."

"... will still be a positively progressive place... full of happy, confident children who will transfer to secondary school, well rounded and able to follow and achieve their own aspirations (not just the ones set by the gov.)."

"will continue to be a happy, independent and welcoming environment which is an inspiration to other schools."

"... will set the trend academically for all schools everywhere."

"... will continue to work and achieve higher levels of achievement for our pupils, to the best of their ability."

"... will continue to have an inclusive approach, i.e. children and staff working as equals."

"... will become an inspiration for other schools."

"... will continue to work and achieve bigger expectations for staff and pupils."

"... will be giving children a wide range of opportunities, to stretch children in any strengths they may have, to their full potential. A very broad curriculum is paramount."

"... will be a school full of happy, intelligent children."

"... will be liasing with other countries, have children setting their own curriculum based on their learning styles, with a more global view for everyone."

"... will be a world leader in the techniques of learning, releasing time for development of social skills and enjoyment of life for our children."

"... will be an early years centre of excellence. Planning will be developed through the children's needs and interests. Parents will be involved in a continual cycle of planning and evaluating. Team teaching will become more of a 'norm' rather than the exception."

"... will have its own interactive web site; have a wonderful explorative outside area; maintain and strengthen its ethos as the school grows; will maintain consistent and focused communication systems."

"... will be a place where children are proud to be. It will create individuals, not cloned groups. Children will learn about life and skills needed to survive in this tough world. Staff will feel they are actually making a difference."

"... will continue to work as a team to build a greater achievement throughout the school."

"... will be an established, well regarded primary school serving the local community and its future."

"... will be a fully run learning, community school."

"... will be a team (teacher and parent)."

"... will be a school of excellence having continued to explore and develop alternative teaching and learning styles. All children will be competent, independent learners with teachers as facilitators of learning."

"... I see children becoming more independent and achieving good standards."

"... will be emulated by all schools in Enfield."

"... will continue as an inclusive school in all aspects, i.e. special needs, staffing and a positive ethos throughout. Hopefully to continue our positive behaviour, staff and pupils towards learning. Keep the spark going."

"... the outdoor plans will have been realised and the school will be offering an outstanding outdoor curriculum."

"... will be the highest achieving school in London."

"... will have established itself as an educational centre of excellence."

"... will be everything everyone is trying so hard to make it, an all children will have the opportunity to receive this form of education."

"... will be a beacon school."

"... will be a beacon school for learning."

"... will be an excellent, fully inclusive, educational facility."

"... will be a recognised pioneer of the learning community, with children planning their own curriculum from KS2, with research and data to back methods. Will be a training school, centre of excellence, reversing recruitment issues; where children will be articulating benefits to visitors."

Template for Inclusivity

Inclusive Education

Elaine Wilmot   July 2002

David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education, in September 1999, wrote:

"We are aiming to encourage a more inclusive and coherent education system. We are encouraging a more strategic approach by local authorities to SEN issues, to promote more inclusive mainstream schools backed by special schools which have a clear and shared vision of how they will provide specialist skills and experience for the system as a whole. Inclusion is not about the wholesale closure of special schools. It is about building on and developing the wealth of expertise and experience within the specialist sector in the interests of the children."

So what can we do, in our schools, to promote and develop inclusion?

The inclusive agenda is here to stay. How can we ensure that all our schools are inclusive?

Ofsted in their latest guidance for inspectors and schools, "Evaluating Educational Inclusion" (2001) write:

"Educational inclusion is more than a concern about any one group of pupils such as those pupils who have been or are likely to be excluded from school. Its scope is broad. It is about equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background. It pays particular attention to the provision made for and the achievement of different groups of pupils within a school."

Inside are some areas for consideration with suggested key questions that we should all be addressing.

A template for inclusivity

Key Questions:

- How do you assess for quality of learning?
- Do you value only what is measurable?

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ • Quality of learning       │
│   • SATs                    │
│   • Progress made           │
│ • Bench-marking             │
│ • Attitudes, Behaviour,     │
│   etc.                      │
└─────────────────────────────┘
```

Standards

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ • Pedagogy              │
│ • Learner-centred       │
│ • Skills-based          │
│ • Individual            │
│ • Developmental         │
│ • Needs-driven          │
└─────────────────────────┘
```
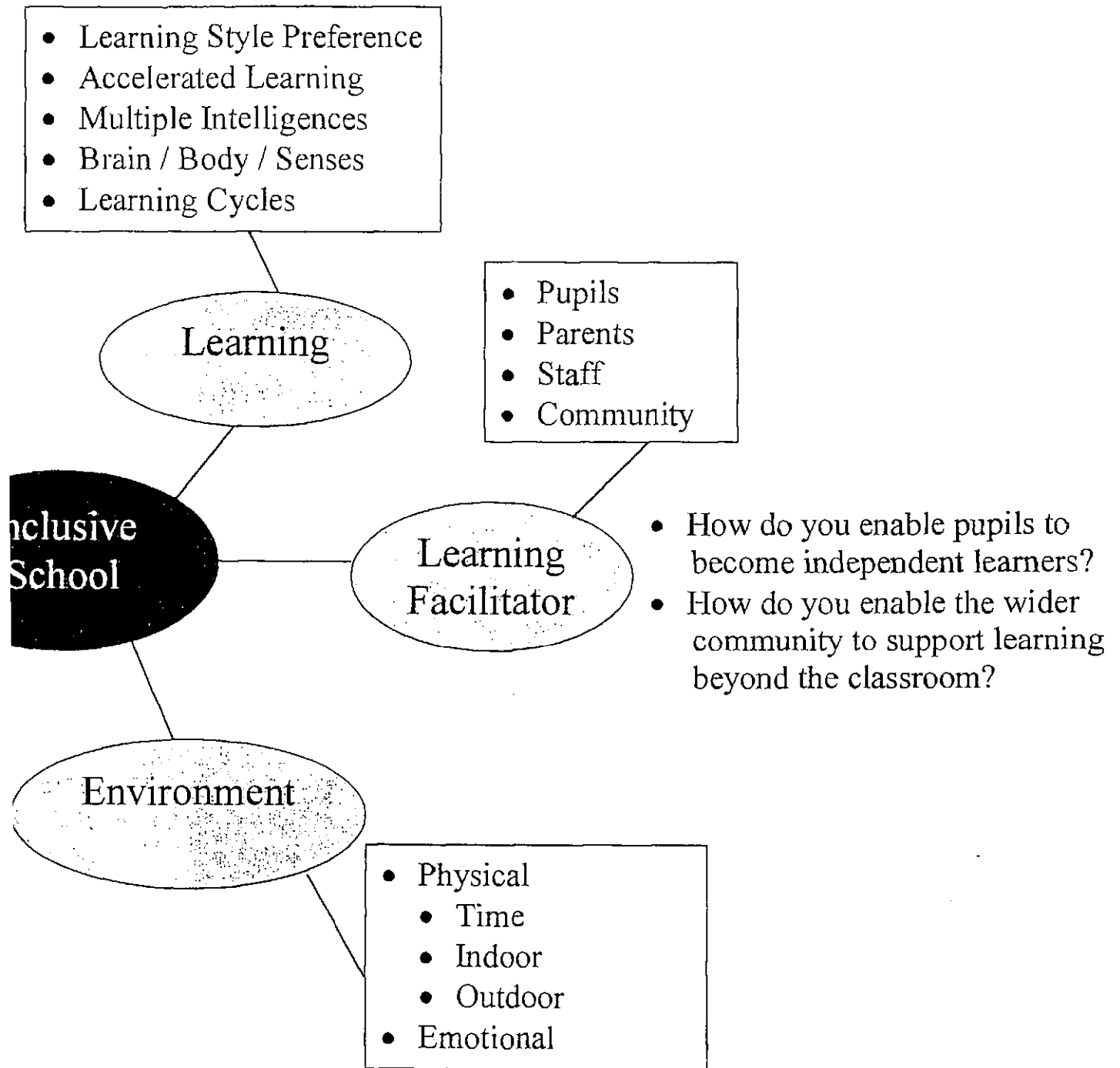
Curriculum

- Is your curriculum grounded in educational theory?
- Is your curriculum responsive to individual needs?
- Is your curriculum a curriculum for life?

Assessment

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ • Whole child           │
│ • Cognitive             │
│ • Formative / summative │
│ • Self-assessment       │
└─────────────────────────┘
```

- Are pupils engaged in self-assessment?
- Do you use assessments to inform future plans for individual learning?

- Do you consider each child as an individual learner?
- Do your teaching styles enable all children
  to access the curriculum?

- Learning Style Preference
- Accelerated Learning
- Multiple Intelligences
- Brain / Body / Senses
- Learning Cycles

Learning

- Pupils
- Parents
- Staff
- Community

clusive
School

Learning
Facilitator

- How do you enable pupils to
  become independent learners?
- How do you enable the wider
  community to support learning
  beyond the classroom?

Environment

- Physical
  - Time
  - Indoor
  - Outdoor
- Emotional

your environment conducive for effective learning?
it safe to make mistakes?
there a balance of support and challenge?

For schools to be truly inclusive, they have to:

- Be focused on the individual and what they can do;

- Provide a needs-based, skill-focused curriculum based on observational assessment;

- Be learner-focused and needs driven;

- Be reflective with a view to continuous improvement;

- Support staff in their development as learners;

- Interact with the community and be the hub of their learning community;

- Extend learning beyond the school day and the school building.

If you would like to talk with Elaine,
she can be contacted at:

West Grove Primary School
Chase Road
Southgate, London N14 4LR
Phone: 020 8351 9200

Drwilmot@hotmail.com