

AN INVESTIGATION OF GUIDED READING WITH BEGINNING READERS
IN THE NATIONAL LITERACY STRATEGY (1998 – 2002)

Mary R. McKay

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M. R. McKay
Doctor of Education
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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports a research investigation into teachers' practices in, and perceptions of, guided reading in the National Literacy Strategy. The study was framed by two connected debates. The first debate concerns reading standards and has resulted in increasing centralisation of the education system, culminating in the National Literacy Strategy in 1998. The second debate concerns polarised models of the reading process. Recently, however, agreement has been reached such that contrasting models have been superseded by a more valid model of reading acquisition.

The research design incorporated two strategies – one a survey questionnaire, the other a selection of case studies. A descriptive analysis of the survey data provided a broad picture of teachers' practices and perceptions in relation to guided reading. The findings indicate that teachers' practices in guided reading generally adhere to NLS guidelines. Findings also suggest that teachers are generally positive about the effectiveness of guided reading and report confidence in its implementation. Analysis of the finer detail of guided reading in classroom contexts suggests, however, that there are not only variations in teachers' practices but also differing interpretations of its nature and purpose. Moreover, such are the variations that its effectiveness in raising standards may in some contexts be compromised.

Some teachers would benefit from an expanded version of the 'searchlights' to reflect a 'stage' model of reading acquisition. Additional guidance is suggested with regard to: selecting texts that promote productive reading strategies; coaching to fully exploit each part of the guided reading teaching sequence; and help in connecting guided reading with the other components in the NLS reading programme.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was established for England and Wales in 1998. One of its pedagogical components is 'guided reading' – an instructional context in which the teacher works with a group. Primary teachers are recommended to carry out guided reading on a routine basis replacing the usual practice of 'hearing children read' in a one-to-one context – a practice which Bullock had recommended children experience 'several times a week' (DES, 1975).

However, a government evaluation of the fore-runner to the NLS - The National Literacy Project (NLP), pointed to '...uncertainty in the minds of teachers about the precise nature of guided reading and their contribution to it...' (OfSTED, 1998 p.6), adding, '...it remain[s] a weaker aspect of the Literacy Hour, with a significant minority of teachers needing further advice and support...' (ibid., p. 8). Moreover, following an evaluation of the first year of the NLS, OfSTED concluded, 'many teachers still do not fully understand what their role should be in guided reading' (OfSTED, 1999, p15).

Unlike the National Curriculum (NC), the NLS is a non-statutory scheme of work (DfEE 1998a). So, in terms of whether to implement it, state primary schools could and can choose – its status is 'recommended' rather than 'statutory'. In contrast however, the NLS is a statutory component of primary Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in England (Teacher Training Agency, 2002).

Therefore, this study was carried out for the XXXX Primary ITT Partnership. Its aim was to find out what 'guided reading' is and also to find out how 'guided reading' was being implemented within the college's ITT partnership schools so that courses could be developed that met statutory requirements.

School-based teachers and tutors contributed to the design of the research instruments. Partnership school-teachers participated in the study. Moreover, trainees undertook some of the administrative tasks connected to the data collection.

The following literature review aims to establish the nature and origins of 'guided reading' such that a foundation for the study may be established and research questions formulated.

SECTION 1: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Standards Debate

For over thirty years, there has been debate about the standard of children's reading attainments in the UK. The results of this debate have included: an increase in centralised control of curriculum content and assessment by central government; greater use of school inspections; and most recently, guidance on how to teach reading. This section will outline the events that culminated in 1998, with the introduction in England of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS).

The NLS reflects a greater use of direct teaching than had been promoted as 'good practice' over a thirty-year period. Such practice had instead been influenced by ideas that focused on child-centred and more 'progressive' individual approaches that date back to the late sixties. In 1967 The Plowden Report, *Children and their Primary Schools* (DES, 1967) was commissioned by the UK central government as a follow-up to the Hadow reports of the 1930s, one of which had stated:

We are of the opinion that the curriculum of the primary school is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored.
(Board of Education, 1931, p. 39)

Plowden was successful in disseminating the then widely accepted progressivist philosophy and its associated practices. Moreover, Plowden is generally considered to have been a powerful influence on primary education through the 1960s and 1970s (though, in fact, it had very little to say about the teaching of reading).

However, in 1972, Start and Wells published a report that initiated concerns about reading standards (Moorehead, 1972). The report suggested that while reading standards, as measured by standardised tests, had been rising between 1948 and 1961, there had been a levelling off in the subsequent ten years. Central government's response to this was to set up the Bullock Committee. Its brief was to report on the teaching of English in schools and to suggest how teaching might be improved and standards raised (DES, 1975).

One recommendation the committee made was that new forms of reading assessment be found to replace the outmoded standardised tests commonly used to monitor standards in the 1970s. In response, the government set up the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) to monitor standards. The APU in turn commissioned the NFER to develop appropriate reading tests. When Bullock did report, it was less directive about pedagogical issues related to the teaching of reading and its advice was generally cautious and eclectic. It commented: '...there is no one method, medium, approach, device or philosophy that holds the key of the process of learning to read' (DES, 1975, p. 77).

In 1976, however, public disquiet about teaching approaches in primary schools was heightened by two events - the publication of research that threw doubt on progressivist teaching approaches (Bennett, 1976), and the much publicised events at the William Tyndale ultra-progressive school in London. The same year, the Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan delivered a speech at Ruskin College Oxford that raised questions about the effectiveness of different teaching approaches. He was also critical of the autonomy with which primary teachers exercised their role.

In 1978, HMI reported a survey of primary schools. The results of a reading test that had been used in earlier monitoring ('pending the introduction of a new national monitoring system' p. 157) provided results 'consistent with a rising trend in reading standards between 1955 and 1976-77' (DfE, 1978, p. 84). Nevertheless, the subsequent period marked a turning point in the relationship between education and government. By means of a series of government interventions, teacher autonomy was to be progressively reduced in moves to introduce more structured teaching methods and to raise standards. What is more, there began a reform of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) such that it too, was to become part of major moves towards centralisation in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The National Curriculum was established with the Education Reform Act of 1988 (DES). It gave the government unprecedented control of education through its statutory curriculum content – *English in the National Curriculum*, for example (DES, 1990) - and its programme of national testing. Also, since

1992, there has been a much more intensive programme of inspections in English primary schools by the government's Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

All the while, reading standards continued to be monitored. The APU commissioned tests of reading and writing in 1979, 1983 and 1988 for 11 year olds. The results of the reading tests, reported by Brooks et al. (1995), showed a slight rise between 1979 and 1983, and also a slight rise between 1983 and 1988. However, by 1990, the standards debate rekindled when information was published claiming a decline in reading standards and contentiously linking these to inappropriate teaching methods and resources (Turner, 1990). Subsequently, a dip in standards was indeed reported in an NFER comparative study of 150 schools (Gorman and Fernandes, 1992). The dip was later found to have reversed by 1995 (Brooks, et al., 1997) but the controversy about standards did not abate. 1996 saw the publication of a report showing that many other developed countries achieved higher levels of reading attainment (Brooks et al., 1996).

As the debate gained intensity, HMI, in association with some London boroughs, published the results of a survey into the teaching of reading. The report, *The Teaching of Reading in 45 Inner London Primary Schools* (OFSTED, 1996) contained damning criticism of both reading standards and the quality of teaching in some schools.

At the heart of the problem is a commitment to methods and approaches to the teaching of reading that were self-evidently not working...The bulk of time, moreover, in some of the weakest lessons was spent on hearing individual pupils read. While the overall input of time spent on this activity was high, the attention that could be given to any individual was so low that it was almost impossible for the pupil to receive any worthwhile direct teaching. (OfSTED, 1996, p. 8)

Two aspects of reading teaching received most criticism. The first concerned teaching methods: there was a call for more 'direct teaching', which for beginning readers tended to be associated with phonics teaching. The second

area of criticism concerned 'wasteful' time management: individualised teaching was judged to be inefficient as well as ineffective.

In the same year, the DfEE set up the National Literacy Project (NLP) involving 15 Local Education Authorities (LEA) (Sainsbury, 1998). The project aimed to raise standards of literacy in primary schools by targeting two areas of concern: teaching methods and the management of literacy teaching at both whole school and classroom level. The NLP provided a term-by-term scheme of work for each year in the primary school. A daily 'literacy hour' was introduced within which there were to be episodes of direct instruction with the whole class and with groups. The programme included: shared text work; direct teaching at word and sentence levels; independent work in groups and teacher led guided reading and writing (ibid.).

The Labour Party, which had been in opposition since 1979, also began preparations to address the continuing debate about standards. It established a Literacy Task Force (1997a) pledging to raise the standard of reading attainments in particular. A comprehensive campaign – a national strategy – was proposed to bring about what were considered to be necessary changes at all levels of the primary education establishment.

When, in 1997, 'New' Labour was elected, ministers immediately followed their pledge by announcing that the NLP would be extended to a national Strategy – the National Literacy Strategy (Literacy Task Force, 1997b). The measure served to bring yet greater centralisation to the literacy curriculum. It was established as a means of effecting more efficient classroom management and the use of teaching time, together with the adoption of direct instructional teaching methods within a balanced literacy programme. Such was the perceived urgency of the initiative, that its introduction involved a very brief initiation phase prior to full implementation in September 1998 (ibid.).

The *National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching (NLSF)* was published soon after the Strategy was announced (DfEE, 1998a). It set out the main features of the programme. Firstly, there was to be time dedicated exclusively to literacy teaching – a daily lesson, the 'literacy hour'. Secondly, the shape

and structure of the lessons was to be determined such that direct teaching continued throughout the lesson – some of it with the whole class, the rest with attainment groups. Pedagogy, however, was perhaps not fully rationalised. ‘The Literacy Hour is intended to promote ‘literacy instruction’ but this is not a recipe for returning to some *crude* or simple form of ‘transmission’ teaching’ (DfEE, 1998a, p. 8, italics added). However, the statement was followed by what was a nonetheless *crude* list of ‘teaching strategies’: there was no attempt to set out the underpinnings of whole class and group literacy teaching nor was the purpose of the ‘independent work’ explained in detail. Curriculum content was expressed for the whole school in the *NLSF* by a term-by-term scheme of work which, it was implied, followed from the English Order of the NC (Stannard, 1999, p. 5). To support schools there was a training component to the NLS - the *Literacy Training Pack* (DfEE, 1998b) which was a set of detailed modules, together with a recommended training timetable. The pack contained training booklets, photographs, audio-cassettes and video tapes.

The OfSTED inspection regime acted as incentive for most schools to comply with the government’s strong recommendation that every school should implement the NLS unless existing schemes of work were at least as effective (Literacy Task Force, 1997b). Moreover, the NC national testing system was exploited as a means of setting targets for improved literacy standards. The NC tests are criterion referenced, replacing the initial formulaic criteria that had been established in 1990. The criteria are arranged as a series of ‘level descriptions’. Level 4 was originally designed to represent the modal attainment for eleven-year-olds – ‘within the range 2 to 5’ (DfE, 1995, p. 25). However, in the NLS, it became, instead, an expectation that 80 per cent of eleven-year-olds would attain level 4 by 2002. In the event most schools took the decision to implement the NLS.

This part of the literature review has shown how the introduction of the NLS was embedded in a long-term debate about reading standards which culminated in a call for better managed literacy teaching and more effective instruction in whole class and small groups. However, the NLS was also embedded in a second debate – one connected to the content of the literacy programme itself: this is the focus of the following section.

All reading teaching methods are based on a conceptualisation of the reading process. It is important, therefore, that the model of reading underpinning the NLS be investigated and its instructional approach examined. There follows, therefore, an outline of the recent debate about the nature of the reading process.

The Reading Process Debate

The nature of reading skills and processes has been the subject of debate within academic and professional communities for many years. In the last fifty years the debates have been extremely polarised and it is only recently that some agreement has been reached. Debates that polarised conceptualisations of reading skills and processes have compared bottom-up and top-down models (Chall, 1983a): bottom-up models emphasise perceptual skills and processes, whereas top-down models emphasise conceptual understanding and processes. However, the emergence of interactive models is beginning to lead to some reconciliation and certainly to a more valid model of reading acquisition. This section of the thesis will summarise some of the main issues in this debate and consider their influence on the NLS in general, and on guided reading in particular.

All models of reading skills and processes share common ground: written English is alphabetic in nature. The alphabetic letters combine to represent language systems that include graphemes, morphemes, syllables, words, sentences and texts. It follows, therefore, that models of reading must account for ways in which readers access the information conveyed by all these systems such that the reading process results in meaningful communication.

Bottom-up models of reading

Bottom-up explanations of reading skills and processes are seen 'as developing from perception of letters, spelling patterns, and words, to sentence and paragraph meaning' (Chall, 1983a, p. 29). Hence in these models, perceptual processes dominate. A well-known bottom-up model is that of Gough (1972). His model explains a process whereby visual information is held

as an icon to be scanned by a 'pattern recognition device'. The recognised characters are decoded phonemically and mapped to an internally stored 'librarian'. When a string of 'lexical' items has been stored they are relayed to a 'wondrous mechanism' which processes the string syntactically and semantically before it is next relayed to 'TPWSGWTAU' (the place where sentences go when they are understood). The reading process is complete when all text elements have been thus stored.

The challenge for beginning readers, as Gough sees it, is the mastery of the alphabetic system leading to phonological knowledge that enables the reader to move swiftly from print to meaning. Whole word recognition is deemed to be inadequate: it is not sufficiently generative as it does not expose the reader to the essentials of how print works.

LaBerge and Samuels (1974) also proposed a bottom-up model. It is a memory based system. Within the system are memory functions that represent visual, phonological and semantic information. Visual information is analysed and variously 'coded'. Likewise, semantic information is routed along different paths.

Critiques of bottom-up models

Rumelhart (1985) points to some of the shortcomings of bottom-up models. First, they cannot account for the way readers appear to use surrounding letters to interpret ambiguously printed letters. Second, grammatical knowledge seems to play a part in word reading that the serial nature of bottom-up models cannot accommodate. Similarly, semantic awareness influences word reading when interpreting homonyms, for example. Recently, bottom-up models have been modified but their proponents retain their claim that perceptual processes are crucial in reading.

Top-down models of reading

Top-down explanations of reading skills and processes propose conceptually driven, rather than print driven, models that place the reader in considerable control of the communication because s/he is anticipating the meanings of words and text in advance of reading. With such active expectations the reader

merely 'samples the text in order to confirm and modify initial hypotheses' (Chall 1983a, p. 28).

Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman are the two theorists most closely associated with top-down models of reading. Smith (1978), borrowing from cognitive psychology the concept of 'hypothesis-testing', suggests that reading begins with the reader making predictions about the likely meaning of text. Having established such expectations, the reader need only sample print features in order to confirm the predictions – the 'psycholinguistic guessing game'.

Goodman assumes all readers share a natural tendency to makes sense of things so comprehension first (Goodman, 1967) signals the essence of his model. To that end readers are in constant search of 'cues' to meaning. Goodman draws parallels with speech acquisition that contains approximations to/of mature forms of language. Also, young children frequently generalise from what they have already mastered. Both these tendencies are interpreted as markers of language learning. In Goodman's model, readers approach text with expectations of the text's meaning – contextual information - that they supplement with selected print information. Goodman argues that much of this information overlaps, creating a degree of redundancy in the system, enabling the reader to exploit it strategically. This implies that teachers need to be aware of the ways they interpret and hence nurture early reading behaviours. Beginning readers are not expected to aim for accuracy or correctness so the print features of text do not need to be controlled. Instead, learners are encouraged to 'approximate' a reading of the text based on what they anticipate the text means. The implications for beginning readers are that overly contrived and controlled instructional reading texts present learners with mangled forms of the English language and hence do not support beginning readers. In other words, they prevent readers from exploiting their powerful syntactic and semantic knowledge in the process of guessing. Teaching and learning that follows from top-down models of reading tends to be associated with the concepts of 'emergent reading', 'reading for meaning', 'contextual guessing', 'real books' and 'whole language'.

Criticisms of top-down models

Some critics of Goodman's top-down model pointed out that if readers are guessing words, they need recourse to information with which to confirm the guesses (Gibson and Levin, 1975). Other critics suggest that top-down models assume language to be far more predictable than it is. Gough's studies suggest that only one in four words, at most, is predictable when all succeeding text is concealed (Gough, 1981). Moreover, those words that are most easily recognised are also the most predictable. In other words, 'function' words, e.g. high frequency words, are easier to predict than 'content' words, e.g. nouns and verbs.

Reid (1993) points out that Goodman's terminology lacks clarity in that he switches between terms such as 'predicting', 'anticipating', 'expecting' and 'guessing'. As a consequence, the functioning of his system of cues isn't made clear.

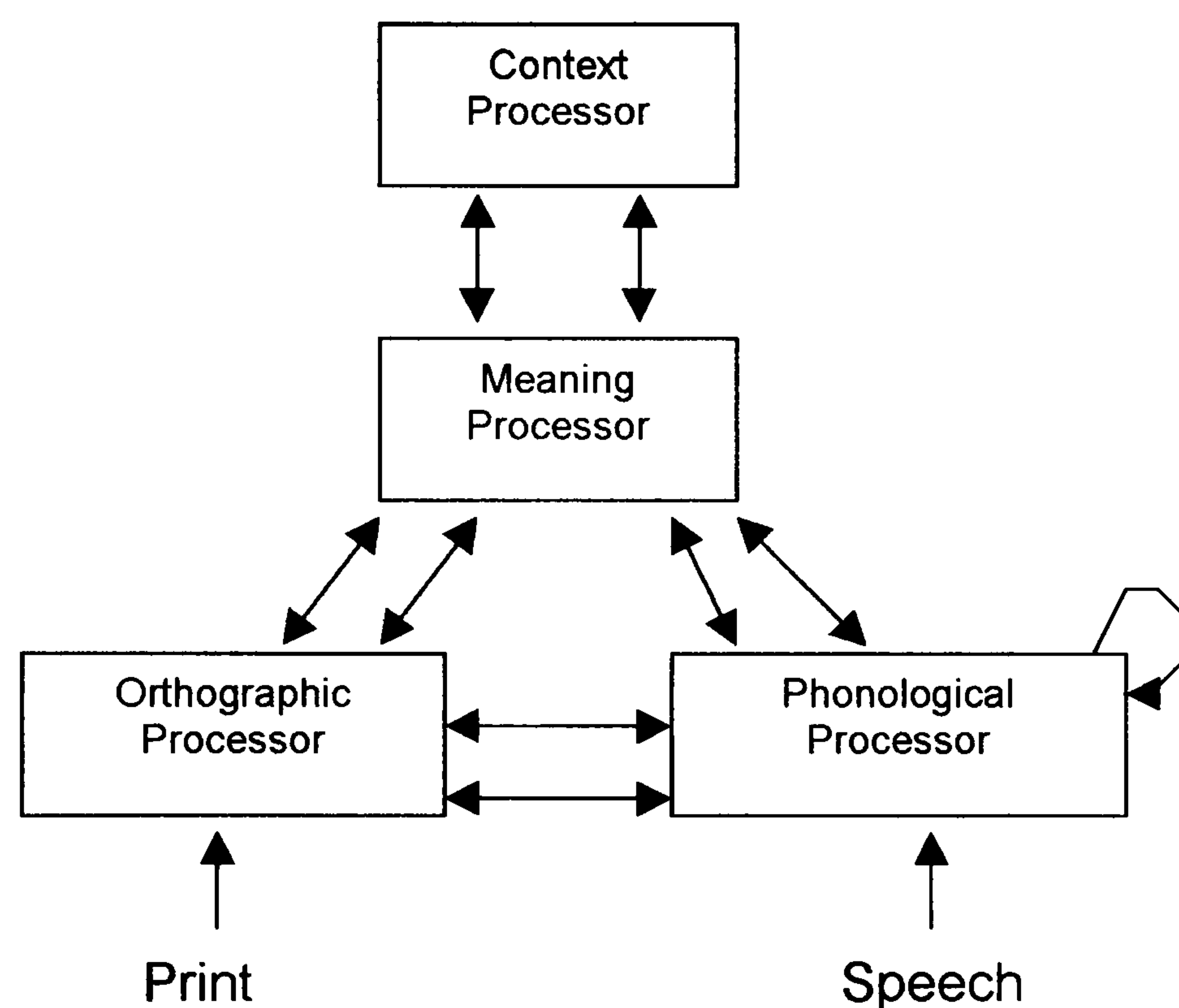
Smith's work received a detailed critique from Adams (1991) who describes a number of studies that expose flaws in his theory. For example, sophisticated technology provided evidence that readers attend to each letter in almost all the words in text (Just and Carpenter, 1987). Adams also (1996) points to the illogicality of assuming that the reader can establish so much of the text's meaning in advance of reading it.

Interactive models of reading

Interactive models emerged from the work of psychologists who exploit computer simulations in order to investigate the complexities of cognition. Essential to the models that emerged, is the concept of connectionism. A connectionist model is based on the assumption of learnt networks comprising neural connections capable of responding to perceptual or cognitive stimuli, with either a facilitating or inhibiting function. Connectionism is used to explain the primacy of print information for the development of rapid and reliable word recognition. Moreover, connectionism can similarly account for the comprehension processes that facilitate the understanding of word meanings,

sentences and whole texts via the reader's general knowledge and knowledge about language (McClelland and Rumelhart, 1987). A connectionist model of mature reading skills and processes explains why skilled readers appear to be able to process information from many different sources all at once, in parallel. Rumelhart suggested a model at the centre of which is 'meaning'. Perceptual information enters the system from the 'bottom'. Top-down knowledge primes the system to expect upcoming information which the meaning processor either accepts or rejects. In her book *Beginning to Read*, Adams illustrates these mature processes in a diagram (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Reading Process



(Adams 1990, p. 158)

In this model the mature system is purely print driven: neither what she terms the 'context' nor the 'meaning' processors can 'kick-in' without some input from the 'orthographic' or 'phonological' processors. Moreover, the role of the 'context processor' is directly connected to comprehension, not word recognition per se. Adams demonstrates that the mature system - that is, skilled reading - needs both top-down and bottom-up inputs for optimum functioning (Adams, 1991). Moreover, the following extract provides a neat rationale for guided reading:

In both fluent reading and its acquisition, the readers knowledge must be aroused interactively and in parallel. Neither understanding nor learning can proceed hierarchically from the bottom-up. Phonological awareness, letter recognition facility, familiarity with spelling patterns, spelling-sound relationships and individual words must be developed in concert with real reading and real writing and with deliberate reflection on the forms, functions and meanings of texts.
(Adams, 1990, p. 422)

Developing the interactive framework, Keith Stanovich (1980) proposes an 'interactive-compensatory' framework in order to address reading acquisition and the skills and processes of beginning and less skilled readers. His model hinges on the reader's use of contextual or top-down information in the reading process. He suggests that contextual information can be used in two quite distinct ways. First, it can be used in reading comprehension: this is how, as illustrated in Adams' graphic, it tends to be used by skilled and fluent readers. Secondly, it can be used as an aid to word reading: this is often how beginning and less skilled readers tend to use it because less skilled readers have incomplete word reading capacities. For that reason, Stanovich suggests that beginning and less skilled readers compensate by looking to contextual information for help. In summary, when word-reading capacities are under-developed, inefficient or perhaps somehow constrained, all readers compensate by - or resort to - using contextual information. While such a tendency is inevitable at the very early stages of reading acquisition or, when a particular word is for some reason illegible, it is far from effective or efficient. Therefore, Stanovich (1986) points to the long-term benefits that accrue when word reading capacities are acquired early on. What is more, he warns that reading acquisition tends to be marked by slow and protracted progress when beginners remain dependent upon - that is, resort to using - contextual information to support word reading. He refers to this phenomenon as the 'Matthew Effect', using a biblical analogy to illustrate how those who succeed rapidly in the early stages of reading acquisition, make the greatest gains in the long term. There are clear implications here for the nature of beginning reading instruction. Moreover, Stanovich suggests that the more children read the 'smarter' they become which clearly has implications for readers' comprehension capacities. Hence, beginners who make a slow start in learning

to read are likely to be the victim of a double whammy. On this point Stanovich and Smith might concur – children ‘learn to read by reading’. The implications of an interactive model of reading are that an effective instructional reading programme must combine ‘learning to read’ with ‘reading to learn’.

Criticisms of interactive models

Interactive models tend to assume mature systems rather than developing ones: to extrapolate from such models involves some conjecture. Stanovich addressed the immature system with regard its poorly developed phonological processes, the implications of which are that beginning readers need to advance rapidly in that area. His compensatory model demonstrates how beginners might become over-reliant on contextual information to support word reading. Criticisms of the NLS ‘searchlights’ will be examined in the following section.

The reading debates discussed can be seen to have influenced national curricula in that the arguments through the 1980s for a top-down model clearly influenced *English in the National Curriculum* (DES,1990): phonics received very brief mention in the sections related to reading. However, what was to emerge by the end of the 1990s was the broad consensus that both top-down and bottom-up information is crucial to reading processes. The implications of an interactive model of reading are that teaching techniques and instructional resources must be such that children quickly develop a full range of productive and reliable reading strategies – learning outcomes are likely to be depressed when progress is overly protracted. This consensus has largely determined the adoption of an interactive model at the heart of the NLS.

The National Literacy Strategy ‘searchlights’

Influenced by the two debates outlined above, the NLS was to be a means of impacting on two key aspects of literacy teaching in order to raise standards – more efficient use of time by teaching to whole classes and small groups, and more effective instructional teaching methods. The following section will examine in detail the precise nature of the NLS reading programme and how it has been influenced by the debates outlined above.

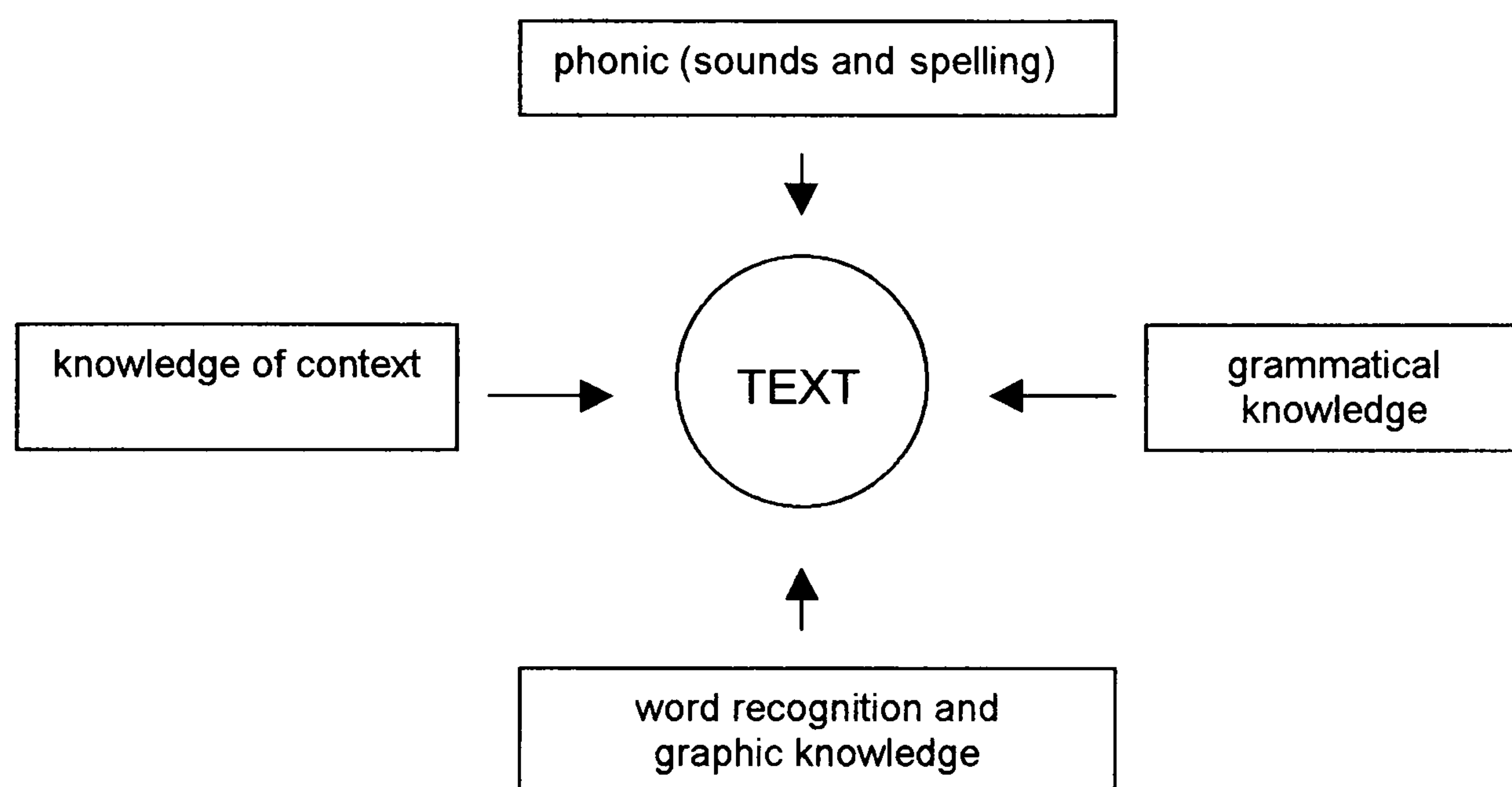
Embedded in the NLS is an interactive model of reading processes. They are conceptualised as a set of 'strategies'.

All teachers know that pupils become successful readers by learning to use a range of strategies to get at the meaning of a text. This principle is at the heart of the National Curriculum for English and has formed the basis of successful literacy teaching for many years.

(DfEE, 1998a, p. 3)

The 'strategies' are illustrated by means of a 'metaphor' (Stannard, 1999). The graphic in Figure 2 depicts the 'searchlights' metaphor,

Figure 2: The NLS 'searchlights'



(DfEE 1998a, p. 4)

John Stannard, the NLS national director, explained the functioning of this 'general model of reading and writing development' in the 'searchlights' metaphor:

It recognises that successful reading depends on the effective use of a range of strategies. Readers use these 'cues' to decode words and to get to meaning by predicting the text, checking and cross-checking, identifying and searching, problem-solving, active prediction and an ability to bring past knowledge and experience to bear.

(Stannard, 1999, p. 6)

Stannard's description and his choice of terminology, however, might be interpreted as giving some priority to top-down strategies because they will be seen in upcoming sections of this review to echo Clay, and Fountas and Pinnell. Stannard went on to explain that teaching to promote strategy development,

...equips children with as many of these searchlights as possible. Each sheds a partial light and together they make a mutually supporting system. The more searchlights we can teach children to switch on simultaneously, the less they will need to rely on a single one and the less it will matter if one fades or goes out. ... (ibid., p. 7)

In contrast to the interactive model that, for example, Adams displays, the NLS 'searchlights' do not explain the interrelationships between its 'phonic' and 'word recognition and graphic knowledge' functions except in very broad and general terms. That being the case, the model or metaphor might be interpreted as merely an accumulation of information rather than a functionally interactive system. In that sense, the model offers teachers little guidance on the intricacies of the system – an understanding of which must surely be a crucial influence on teachers' planning, teaching, monitoring and assessment decisions.

In addition, and in line with other interactive models, the 'searchlights' depict what appears to be a mature system: progress must be assumed to be the same across all the strategies in roughly equal measure and at roughly equal rates. Following a review of the first four years of the NLS, HMI raised this criticism:

The searchlights model proposed in the framework has not been effective enough in terms illustrating where the intensity of the 'searchlights' should fall at the different stages of learning to read...beginning readers need to learn how to decode effortlessly, using their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and the skills of blending sounds together. The result has been an approach to word-level work which diffuses teaching at the earliest stages, rather than concentrating it on phonics. (OfSTED, 2002, para. 58)

Discussion about the concept of there being 'different stages of learning to read' has not been prominent in the reading process debate (Beard and McKay, 1998). Stage models that have been proposed tend to refer only to word recognition (e.g. Ehri 1995). In essence, stage models assume that there are qualitative differences in the ways interacting processes function as the system develops. Jean Chall (1983b) proposed a stage model of reading acquisition in which she suggested that, at an early point in beginning reading acquisition, children's attention must 'become glued to the print – in order to achieve real maturity later. They [the children] have to know enough about the print in order to leave the print' (p. 18). This chimes with Stanovich's call for children's early control of phonological information. Chall's proposed attentional shifts are also similar in effect to LaBerge and Samuels' proposed progression from 'attention' to 'automaticity' in processing (1974). There are also parallels with Gough's claim that reading is 'unnatural' so that instruction requires a measure of bottom-up contrivance (Gough and Hillinger, 1980).

Later in their review, however, HMI (OFSTED, 2002) appear to diverge from stage model principles when they add: 'While the full range of strategies is used by fluent readers...'. On the contrary, there is now general agreement that skilled readers don't so much use 'the full range of strategies', as use them in different ways and for different purposes to unskilled readers. Specifically, skilled readers can use phonological knowledge in word reading but don't need to. Also, skilled readers generally use contextual information for the purposes of reading comprehension rather than to assist word reading (Oakhill and Garnham, 1988).

In the NLS, the 'searchlights' underpin a reading teaching programme that incorporates three inter-dependent instructional components, all of which involve 'direct teaching' with either the whole class or with children grouped by attainment. In addition, all the instructional components are designed to contribute to the efficiency with which readers use strategies to access information from different sources – both top-down and bottom-up. The three instructional components of the programme are:

- shared reading
- phonics and word level work

- guided reading.

In addition, the guidelines for the management of time and teaching in the NLS programme determine that there should also be dedicated time for children to read independently – individually or in small groups (DfEE, 1998a, p. 13). This feature is again indicative of the inter-dependence of each of the programme's components.

Shared reading

The shared reading component was already familiar to some early years teachers as it had been 'imported' from New Zealand in the 1980s. It was based on Don Holdaway's 'shared book experience' using 'big books' (Holdaway, 1979). Shared reading with the whole class involves teacher modelling and demonstration in support of children's conceptual understanding of what reading is and is for. It supports mainly top down processes. For teachers new to it, it seems to have been relatively easy to implement and was judged to be the 'most effective element of the Literacy Hour' (OfSTED, 1999, para. 48). Perhaps some found the teaching techniques similar to those advocated in Waterland's individualised 'shared reading'.

Phonics

Phonics teaching had for many years been an element in many school reading programmes (DES, 1975). However, it tended to be approached in a variety of ways and took, by the 1990s, many different forms in light of its becoming a less prominent feature of reading programmes (e.g. HMI, 1991). This was a result of the growing acceptance of whole language stances and was a reaction against direct instructional methods. HMI reported less satisfaction with its implementation in the NLS: it reported that it 'remains the weakest element' (OfSTED, 1999, para. 55). So, although phonics teaching was not new to teachers, its status in the NLS was to make substantial demands of teachers' subject knowledge (OfSTED, 2002).

Guided reading – what is it and where did it come from?

Guided reading, on the other hand, was newer and proved more difficult than shared reading for teachers to implement. In their evaluation of the first year of the NLS, HMI concluded:

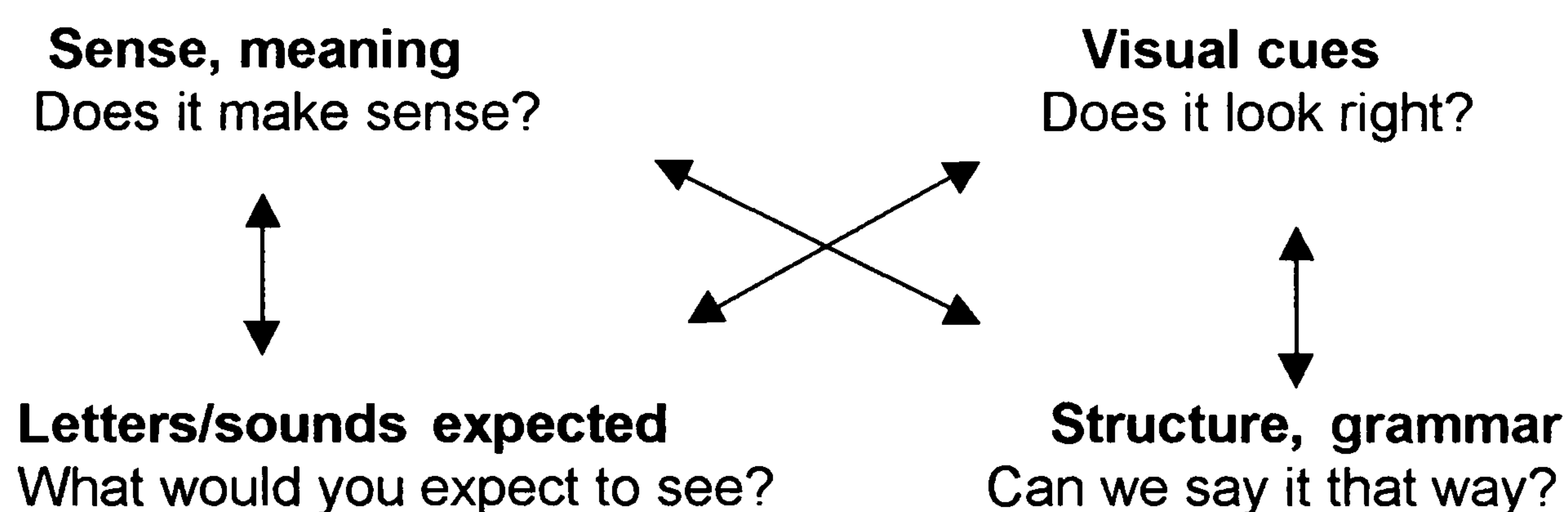
...many teachers still do not understand fully what their role is in guided reading. Frequently, what took place was little more than pupils reading in turn, or the teacher hearing individual pupils read while the others in the group read silently.
(OfSTED, 1999, para.80).

Therefore, it is first important to establish what guided reading is and what the teacher's role is within it. Guided reading has many advocates (Mooney, 1990, Bickler, 1999, Makgill, 1999). However, all its advocates regard guided reading as just one among a group of inter-dependent instructional contexts. More importantly, these various instructional contexts seem also to be underpinned not only by an interactive model of the reading process, but also by a model of learning.

Guided reading and the other instructional contexts associated with it seem to have originated in New Zealand, grounded in Marie Clay's coaching model of reading strategy instruction. Early in her career Clay (1979a) developed a particular interest in supporting beginning readers who were experiencing delays and difficulties. Clay was influenced by top-down models of reading and drew on the work of Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman. Combining this with her own extensive observations of children's early reading behaviour, she formulated her own views about literacy teaching and learning, describing reading processes in terms of interacting strategies which draw on both top-down and bottom-up information. However, Clay rejected the practice of isolated skills instruction, preferring to coach beginners in bottom-up strategies as they were engaged in the reading process itself – hence teaching as coaching. In her individualised literacy intervention programme – Reading Recovery (RR), beginning readers are taught to approach text strategically with the aim of gaining as much independence of the teacher as possible. Therefore the concept of 'independence' in reading has great salience in Clay's approach to teaching reading. For example, in the face of unknown or 'problem' words in text, readers are coached in a repertoire of strategies that prompt a search for

information with which to 'solve' the problem words with as little assistance as possible. It is not the teacher's role to point out children's errors or miscues or even to seek to correct them, but to ensure that the reader, by him/herself, detects and 'fixes' errors through a constant process of self-monitoring and self-correction. Teaching as coaching, therefore, has a significant meta-cognitive dimension. Hence, teacher-learner exchanges form the crux of RR. RR teachers receive intensive training enabling them to observe reading behaviour closely and to support children's 'searching behaviour' as they read connected text. Key coaching prompts are displayed in Clay's graphic (Figure 3). Although the prompts appear to follow from an interactive model of reading, they reflect one which affords priority to top-down information. In other words, conceptual or top-down information appears to take precedence over perceptual or bottom-up information (Adams, 1996).

Figure 3: Four types of cue to aid searching behaviour



(Clay, 1979b, p. 59)

In New Zealand, guided reading seems to have evolved from RR. However, RR is designed to promote reading strategies in a one-to-one teaching context. In contrast, guided reading is designed to promote reading strategies with a group of children whose reading attainments are judged to be similar. From its New Zealand origins, guided reading – along with other associated programme components - was adopted in other parts of the world. Ohio State University in the US established a RR network in the 1980s and the university went on to develop its own mainstream literacy 'framework', *Early Literacy Learning Initiative*, similar to those implemented in New Zealand (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996). Its aim was to provide 'good first teaching' for all children by means of dedicated time set aside for each one of its programme components. It comprises eight instructional components – four for reading and four for writing.

A further component 'special attention to letters and words and how they work' is designed to be 'woven through the other activities in the framework' (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 24). The four reading components are: reading aloud to the class by the teacher; shared reading; guided reading; and independent reading. All four components of the programme follow from Clay's model of the reading process. Moreover the components are embedded within a social constructivist pedagogical framework. Although Clay refers to Vygotsky in her later work, Fountas and Pinnell cite Tharp and Gallimore's work (1988) to rationalise the concept of assisted performance which they regard as fundamental to their literacy framework in terms of learning theory:

Children learn by interacting with each other as partners and in small groups. The opportunity to talk with others while learning contributes to the rate and depth of understanding... Children learn to read and write through active engagement in authentic literacy... The goal is for students to become self-managed learners who can take over the process for themselves.
(Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, pp. 43-44)

Figure 4 is a modified version of that provided by Fountas and Pinnell. It illustrates the assisted learning framework with its Vygotskian balance of teacher support and learner control in relation to the various components of the programme. Guided reading places the child in a position of increased control and independence of the teacher.

Figure 4: Relationship between teacher support and child control

Relationship Between Teacher Support and Child Control			
High Support		Level of Child Control	
Level of Teacher Control		Moderate/Low Support	
Reading Aloud	Shared Reading	Guided Reading	Independent Reading

(adapted from Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 26)

Fountas and Pinnell appropriated many of the teaching techniques associated with individualised RR, for the guided reading component of their programme. In their book *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All* (1996), they outline the routines, timetables, texts and techniques related to guided reading. They also make explicit that the foundations of guided reading lay in Clay's ideas about reading processes. For example, the authors draw on Clay's book *Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control* (1991).

Our view of guided reading is based on Clay's theory of reading continuous text. Letters and words within continuous text offer different kinds of informational support than they do when isolated. The syntactic patterns of the language narrow the possibilities and make it easier for children to select and use graphic symbols.

(Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 163)

Moreover, in support of their model of reading, the authors include numerous references to the work of Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman.

Guided reading sessions are clearly structured and organised. In terms of session frequency, Fountas and Pinnell recommend that beginning readers take part in three to five, 10-30 minute guided reading sessions per week – but preferably every day in the early stages: they recommend teachers set aside one hour per day for guided reading (ibid., p. 10).

Criteria for selecting texts for guided reading are similar to those recommended for RR. Fountas and Pinnell suggest that texts be chosen for their instructional and motivational qualities. The authors present a selection of texts graded at sixteen levels against nine criteria: enjoyment and interest to the children; accuracy and diversity in multicultural representation; breadth of type or genre; depth in the number of titles at each level of difficulty; links across the collection (common characters, authors, settings); quality of illustrations and their relation to the texts; content; length; format (ibid., p.107-8). They offer further selection and grading guidance for teachers and suggest teachers consider each text's: length; size and layout of print; vocabulary and concepts; language structure; text structure and genre; predictability and pattern of language; illustration support (ibid., p.114). There are no criteria related to spelling patterns. The

authors emphasise the concept of balancing support and challenge in text selection for guided reading such that 'balance' is at the hub of guided reading. Fountas and Pinnell suggest a challenge index represented by the expectation that children will read with 90 per cent accuracy following the teacher's introduction and with the teacher's support (ibid., p. 6.) The authors select texts for beginning readers so that reading behaviours can 'emerge' over time through a series of approximations to the text. For beginners, books are chosen to be 'information rich' and to provide 'clear clues to the meaning'. Beginning readers 'make the text fit the meaning [they] see in the accompanying picture' though they might at some point become 'aware of the mismatch between [their] meaning and the print' (ibid., p. 157).

Fountas and Pinnell's 10-30 minute guided reading sessions have three elements: before the reading; during the reading; after the reading. The teacher's role 'before the reading' is to 'provide a frame of meaning' in order to support children's 'thinking about the story so that comprehension is foregrounded' (ibid., p. 8). This is because 'good readers are fast, efficient problem solvers who use meaning and syntax as they quickly and efficiently decode unfamiliar words' (ibid., p. 18). The teacher does not 'pre-teach' new words but expects the children to 'be able to solve these words by anticipating the language and meaning and then checking their predictions against the visual information' (ibid., p. 140). Although the teacher may draw children's attention to specific words and letters in the text, the purpose is 'not simply to get the word right' (ibid., p. 167). 'During the reading' children 'check predictions against the print' (ibid., p. 16) and are coached in the use of 'a variety of sources of information while problem solving for meaning' (ibid., p. 115). The authors provide a list of teacher prompts which they draw from the work of Clay, Goodman, Routman and New Zealand's Department of Education guidelines. An additional role of the teacher is to prompt children's self-monitoring: information should be 'consistent with [children's] understanding of what the text means...sense of language structure, or the visual features of words...' (ibid., p. 152). Checking against print features seems to be a 'last resort' and is a clear index of strategy instruction with top-down priority. In chapter 12 of the book there are a number of transcripts and commentaries exemplifying the teacher's role as strategy instructor. The

exchanges between the teacher and each 'problem solving' child are quite lengthy as many of the children appear to be grappling with seemingly ambiguous contextual information, armed with only partial phonological skills. The children are encouraged to sample,

... only some of the letters and figure out the rest of the word. The reader is learning how to use as much of the visual information as necessary and how to check the visual information (the letters) with the text to be sure the word also makes sense and sounds right.

(Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 168)

'After the reading' the group talk about the story, personal responses to the story, check predictions made about the story and sometimes extend the story through drama or art work. Children may re-read the book to a partner or independently: 'Every day teachers make time in the schedule for children to engage in fluent, independent reading of familiar or easy texts' (ibid., p. 18). The organisation within the literacy framework enables children to read many of the guided texts 'again and again for independence and fluency' (ibid., p.2).

In summary, the programme outlined by Fountas and Pinnell has two distinct theoretical foundations. The first is its underpinning model of the reading process which is 'interactive' but with significant top-down priority. The second is its underpinning model of learning which draws on the Vygotskian concept of assisted learning: within the ZPD the learner is supported towards unassisted, automatised performance (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). So, while an interactive model of the reading process explains what reading *is*, a social cognitive model of learning addresses what guided reading is *for*.

The concept of 'assisted performance' originally evolved to explain the kind of 'instruction' that takes place outside the school – in authentic settings like the home. It has since been generalised to classroom contexts. But, Tharp and Gallimore warn:

... a profound subject knowledge is required of teachers who seek to assist performance. Without such knowledge, teachers cannot be ready to promptly assist performance, because they cannot quickly reformulate the goals of the interaction; they cannot map

the child's conception of the task goal onto the superordinate knowledge structures of the academic discipline that is being transmitted. (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988, p.50)

In relation to the teaching of beginning reading, the relevant 'discipline' is the reading process, so that, the demands of guided reading on teacher knowledge are likely to be considerable. In other words, assisted performance is reciprocal in essence: assistance must be contingent upon what the teacher assesses the learner's needs to be. Tharp and Gallimore add that assisted performance is thought to occur 'naturally' in authentic settings, and often in a one-to-one context. It is rarely thought to occur in school settings: 'Most parents don't need to be trained to assist performance; most teachers do' (ibid. p. 58). It is interesting to note that, unlike RR, guided reading as an instructional context has never been the subject of any research or evaluation. Its effectiveness is, so far, purely conjectural.

Guided reading in England

Guided reading first entered UK primary schools in 1993 when the London Borough of Westminster introduced a programme of direct and focused literacy teaching - *Literacy Initiative from Teachers* (LIFT), similar to that outlined by Fountas and Pinnell – to six primary schools with high rates of disadvantage and multilingual learners, 'In part to reduce the cost of the Reading Recovery programme for weak readers, efforts were put into improving the classroom reading programme for all new entrants' (Sylva et al., 1999, p. 618). In this respect, LIFT has a lot in common with Fountas and Pinnell's literacy programme in that they both sought to extend what they saw as the benefits of RR to mainstream classes, aiming to provide good first teaching for all children. LIFT included five components: literacy sessions – a daily literacy hour; shared reading with big books; assessment; independent group work; and guided reading - all 'consistent with Clay's model of reading' (Sylva et al., 1999 p. 619).

Hurry et al. (1999) carried out a detailed evaluation of child outcomes in the original six LIFT reception classes. Although the programme in the LIFT classrooms proved to be more effective than programmes in the study's control classrooms – a moderate effect size was calculated - the reading

attainments of the children in the LIFT programme exceeded those in the control classes in only five of the seven post-test measures. Specifically, children in the LIFT programme performed less well on tests that drew on their phonological knowledge and skills. This led the authors to question whether the teaching of phonological skills in the context of shared and guided reading was the most effective approach given emerging evidence that 'underlying weakness in the phonological area ...may become increasingly significant as time passes' (Hurry et al., 1999 p. 648).

In a corresponding study, Sylva et al. (1999) carried out systematic observation in LIFT classrooms and reported an unexpected finding which relates to the theory of assisted learning outlined earlier. Each component of the reading programme was inter-dependent and this principle carried through into classroom practice by means of carefully planned timetables. They combined sessions of direct instruction by the teacher, with regular and routine sessions in which children had opportunities to read for themselves – either individually or in small groups. A finding which particularly interested Sylva et al. was that, as a result of teachers' 'impressive classroom management' children spent a great deal of time reading individually and in pairs: 'they engage in more collaborative literacy learning' (ibid. p. 630). The programme seemed to have succeeded in its aim to increase the time children spent reading connected text. However, the increase was not accounted for by increased reading time with the teacher, but by time spent reading individually and in groups. In summary, the teachers' classroom management not only established extra time for independent reading but it also seems to have established what appear to have been authentic, social settings for such reading (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988).

The LIFT programme was a strong influence on the NLP, which in its turn was the forerunner of the NLS. However, the reading programme within the NLS includes a much more significant phonics component. The NLS has been informed by findings that indicate the value of instructional programmes which emphasise grapheme-phoneme decoding skills (Beard, 1999).

Guided reading in the NLS

Detailed guidance for the implementation of guided reading in the NLS is set out and exemplified in the *Literacy Training Pack* (DfEE, 1998b). There are three broad areas of guidance with regard to the sessions:

- time management and teaching sequence
- teaching techniques
- texts

Time management and teaching sequence

The 'literacy hour' in general, and guided reading in particular, are designed so that teachers can manage time more efficiently and use more instructional teaching methods. In 1990, HMI noted that in schools 'listening to individual children read on a regular daily basis' was considered to be crucially important, but commented that this practice had the result that 'very little time could be given to each child.' (HMI, 1991, para. 39) In the literacy hour guided reading 'replaces the individualised teaching of reading' and is designed to 'provide a significantly higher degree of teaching time for each child' (DfEE, 1998b p. 17). Therefore the management and organisation of guided reading is likely to be of critical importance to the its effectiveness. Moreover, only the careful management of time within the sessions is likely to result in the most effective sequence of teaching techniques. Sessions are recommended to be conducted at a 'brisk pace' and 'take only 10 to 12 min(ute)s' (ibid., p. 20). Teachers at KS1 are to work with two groups within the daily literacy hour. Within guided reading sessions there is a sequence of teaching that has four distinct parts, each part associated with different teaching techniques:

1. book introduction
 2. independent reading
 3. returning to the text
 4. follow-up
- (DfEE, 1998b, p.18)

The significance of time management in the NLS is further illustrated by the fourth part of guided reading, because, as in the LIFT programme, it is at this point that the teacher sets up crucial opportunities for the children in the group to re-read familiar texts independently and therefore easily and comfortably. It is also at this point that the guided reading component of the programme

connects with another of the programme components – dedicated, sustained periods of time for individual, independent reading. Without this inter-connection between the two components, the success of guided reading in particular, and the NLS in general, is likely to be compromised. Teachers must therefore be aware of, and in full control of, the management of time both for and within guided reading.

The chart in Figure 5 sets out the typical teaching sequence for guided reading with ‘beginning and less able readers’ (DfEE, 1998b, p. 21). Set alongside each part of the session are recommended ‘teaching techniques’ (ibid., pp. 42-44). The main aim of each session is to foster ‘independent reading’: children reading ‘by themselves, for themselves’ (DfEE, 1998b, Module 4, p. 17).

Teaching Techniques

The recommended teaching techniques promote the reading strategies associated with an interactive model of reading. Moreover, the teaching techniques within each part of the session are dedicated to supporting different reading strategies in different ways.

‘Book introduction’: Teaching techniques recommended for the ‘book introduction’ appear to support both top-down and bottom-up reading strategies. The techniques serve to establish expectations about the text which support the children’s comprehension of both word meanings and the text as a whole. For example, teachers can draw children’s attention to new or unfamiliar vocabulary in the text. They can also prime the interactive system for any upcoming ambiguous vocabulary - homonyms, for example. This is crucial to comprehension. Teaching techniques in this part of the session also support bottom-up strategies: teachers are advised to point to ‘known words’ and ‘new words’ thus ‘ensuring children can recognise them’ (Figure 5). In contrast, the teaching techniques in Fountas and Pinnell’s ‘book introduction’ appear to promote a good deal of top-down contextual guessing.

Figure 5: Typical teaching sequence and teaching techniques for guided reading at KS1 in the NLS

Sequence of Teaching	Beginning and Less Able Readers	Teaching Techniques
<p>Book Introduction (2 or 3 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introduce title, cover and discuss expectations - quickly work through book page by page looking at pictures, talking through sequence, language patterns, settings, characters, significant events etc. in the text - demonstrate book handling, point out and use print concepts in the process - identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - known words i.e. words met in previous texts - new words i.e. those with special significance – locate them in the text, ensure children can recognise them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - keep this brief and lively - stimulate and motivate - talk through illustrations - make predictions about the story; list predictions - relate own experiences to the text. <i>What do we know about...?</i> - clarify concepts and terms that may be barriers to meaning. <i>What does the word 'selfish' mean?</i> - set focus question. <i>What did the giant do that was selfish?</i>
<p>Independent Reading (5 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - children read aloud at their own pace - teacher monitors and supports to maintain pace, accuracy and sense - during the reading, teacher notes several key points for the group - teacher assess individuals as they read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reinforce a 'recipe for self-help'. Children need to know what to do if they come across a word they cannot decipher. A suggested approach to word 'attack' might be to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - try to sound it out phonemically - recognise how parts of the word or familiar spelling rhymes (sic) - use known letter/sound correspondences and predict from content and grammar to see what might fit - check prediction against spelling pattern
<p>Return to the Text (conjecture 3-4 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discuss story: characters, events, places etc.; find significant words again - use discussion to reinforce book and print concepts - discuss words that cause difficulties - find rhyming words, words starting with the same sound, words beginning with letters in children's names etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - draw attention to 'print detail' using 'focus taken from the NLSf' - return to points 'raised in discussion'. <i>What did the giant do that was selfish?</i> - discuss whether predictions were right or not - share responses to the story - list new words on the board
<p>Follow-up (conjecture 1 minute)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - set follow-up independent re-reading task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - re-read the text for 'extended involvement with the text and reinforcement of all they have learned and applied through guided reading'

'Independent reading strategy check': The meta-cognitive dimension of guided reading is represented by the 'recipe for self-help' or strategy check. This is recommended as a prelude to 'independent reading' and it too gives priority to self-help strategies that focus on information from the print rather than the context. Instead of guessing unknown words from context, teachers are advised to prompt children to use contextual information merely as a check after having first attended to familiar letters and spelling patterns. Unfortunately, there are no sample prompts given (Figure 5). But, teachers formulating their own prompts to bottom-up information might pose such questions as: 'Can you see any letters/letter strings/chunks you know?' or 'Does it look like a word you know?' or 'Sound it out then blend the sounds.' The choice of prompt will of course depend on what for the readers are manageable phonological, morphemic and orthographic features of the unfamiliar word. In summary, and in contrast to the prompts in the RR 'strategy check', instructional exchanges in support of word recognition are likely to prioritise attention to letters, letter strings and syllables rather than to reinforce beginning readers' tendency towards contextual guessing. Of course, it is very difficult to promote bottom-up strategies if instructional texts contain a significant number of unique, irregular, polysyllabic and generally unmanageable words or spelling patterns. Therefore, word level features in instructional texts for guided reading in the NLS are likely to have great salience if the intended balance of productive reading strategies is to be fostered.

'Return to the text': In the third part, 'return to the text' the content of the text again becomes a key focus followed by some revisiting of new words or other print features. Again, there is a balance of instruction directed at the finessing of both top-down and bottom-up reading strategies.

'Follow-up': The fourth part of the session has significance in two important respects. First, it follows from learning theory (assumed to underpin the NLS reading programme). The purpose of this part of the guided reading session is to promote individual, independent (of the teacher) reading within authentic settings. Sylva et al. (1999) considered this a noteworthy feature of the LIFT

classrooms. Children appeared to benefit from the time that the teacher had set aside for reading individually or in small groups. Secondly, this part of the session follows from the model of the reading process which underpins the NLS. The model assumes that re-reading familiar texts leads to independence (automaticity) in reading; re-reading easy texts (Adams, 1990) increases fluency and enhances text comprehension. Many texts have multi-layered meanings, some of which even skilled readers can 'miss' on first reading. The NLS advises that teachers direct children to re-read familiar texts enabling 'extended involvement with the text and reinforcement of all they have learned and applied through guided reading' (Figure 5). Hence, this final part of the session is an essential element of not only the guided reading session itself but also of the NLS reading programme as a whole.

Texts

The recommendations regarding the structure, teaching sequence and teaching techniques for guided reading in the NLS follow generally from an interactive model of reading. However, the recommendations for guided reading texts are less convincingly complementary to that model. Three broad criteria relating to text selection for beginning readers are addressed in the NLS documentation. First of all, teachers are advised to consider the word level features of text: 'usually reading scheme books in a series of graded difficulty with cumulative vocabulary...' (DfEE, 1998b, p. 9). The *Literacy Training Pack* (DfEE, 1998b, Module 4) elaborates by re-commending books with a 'graded, cumulative vocabulary i.e. words that children will meet again in subsequent books'. Further guidance suggests that, 'Early Guided Readers should...normally be based on a reading scheme to ensure some continuity and cumulative build-up of familiar vocabulary' (ibid., p. 19). However, it could be argued that the advice regarding the word level aspects of text selection does not go far enough: the terms, 'graded, cumulative vocabulary' and 'familiar vocabulary' are open to a variety of interpretations. The meaning of the term, 'familiar vocabulary', might be interpreted as referring to the irregular, non-decodable 'high frequency' words in books. Or, it might be interpreted as referring to 'content words' in books – those often held constant both within and between 'reading scheme' books or sets of non-scheme books, and which relate to familiar characters and settings. A surprise omission, however, is the

dearth of advice on ways to connect ongoing phonics instruction with connected text reading. Phonics teaching in the NLS has a high profile. However, phonological knowledge and skills have to be regularly applied for connections to be strengthened and automatic word reading achieved (Adams, 1990). Is the potential of the NLS reading programme in some way compromised by its neglect in advising teachers to consider including texts with some manageable phonological, morphemic or spelling patterns? HMI commented on the value of such texts in its review of the third year of the NLS,

In the best guided reading sessions, teachers ensure that pupils read texts which are matched well to their reading level and which give them opportunities to apply the strategies which they have been taught...including applying the phonic knowledge and skills they ha[ve]d gained ...' (OfSTED, 2001a, para. 47)

Additional, and potentially valuable advice about instructional texts is available in the *NLSF* sections related to text 'range'. Teachers are 'expected to select texts...within this range' and for the Reception year this includes:

Fiction and poetry: a wide variety of traditional, nursery and modern rhymes, chants, action verses, poetry and stories with predictable structures and patterned language.

Non-fiction: simple non-fiction texts, including recounts (DfEE, 1998a, p. 18)

Within this range of texts there is a great deal of scope to include some texts within which spelling patterns are to some extent controlled. The inclusion of poetry and rhymes of various sorts, for example, would enable children to 'apply phonic knowledge'.

The second set of NLS criteria guiding text selection for guided reading, relate to sentence and text level features. The *Literacy Training Pack* recommends books with a 'sensible grammatical structure, i.e. familiar and predictable structure, sequence and sense' together with 'a lively and interesting content' (DfEE, 1998b, Module 4, p. 19).

The third criterion for text selection is grounded, if not fully explicated, in the strategy's pedagogical underpinnings rather than its model of the reading

process. Fountas and Pinnell refer to Vygotskian learning theory in their rationale for guided reading, aligning it with the concept of assisted performance. In contrast, the NLS does not address this element of its programme in any detail. Nevertheless, the NLS advice contains a great deal of what is common in the writings of Clay, and of Fountas and Pinnell.

Select a text that is at the children's instructional level; not too easy; just difficult enough to be a challenge. Remember that the children are active problem solvers. They expect to meet challenges in reading, but also expect to overcome them. Too many problems and there may be a decline in interest.
(DfEE, 1998b, Module 4, p. 42)

However, the terms 'challenge' and 'instructional level' are open to different interpretations. Unless teachers are familiar with either the practice of RR or the theory of social cognition, this task matching might prove demanding.

In summary, guided reading in the NLS appears to be grounded in an interactive model of the reading process. Teaching techniques are designed to foster reading strategies that exploit both top-down and bottom-up information in and about the text. Shared reading is a teaching context within which teaching techniques foster mainly top-down strategies: teachers model and demonstrate what reading is and is for. They address the conceptual and contextual elements of learning to read. Teaching techniques used in systematic phonics instruction that promote whole word recognition and foster reading strategies that exploit bottom-up information. Finally, guided reading is 'at the heart of the literacy hour' (DfES, 1998b, p. 17). It is central because it is the point at which the strategy instruction that has taken place in both shared reading and discrete word-level teaching can be brought together or 'orchestrated', in independent, authentic, connected text reading. Guided reading must enable children to apply, and therefore consolidate, strategies that exploit both top-down and bottom-up information.

However, although the NLS guidelines relating to teaching techniques are consistent with an interactive model of reading, the guidelines for the selection of texts are not. They do not address word-level features of text with reference to spelling patterns. This points to possible neglect of the inter-dependent

nature of the programme as a whole. There is a danger, therefore, that such neglect might affect learning outcomes. For example, Hurry et al. (1999) suggested that the LIFT programme might have benefited from a stronger phonics component. It might be conjectured that the NLS programme would benefit from greater connection between its phonics component in the literacy hour and children's independent reading of connected text.

Text selection is therefore an issue that merits investigation not only because it may determine what goes on in guided reading itself but also because of its relationship with the other components in the NLS beginning reading programme as a whole.

Teaching Reading: The Prevailing Context of Practice and Perception

The debate about reading standards, outlined earlier, had been taking place at national level among politicians and statisticians. Likewise, the debate about the nature of reading had been taking place at an international level, largely within the academic community. At the same time, communities of teachers, teacher trainers and LEA advisers had been exposed to a number of events, trends and publications which were clearly influential in determining perceptions and practices with regard to the teaching of reading leading to a set of orthodoxies. What, therefore, were the prevailing perceptions of reading processes and the prevailing practices in the teaching of reading at the time of the NLS's introduction? How might such a context have influenced the way in which teachers interpreted and implemented the NLS in general and guided reading in particular? What kind of tensions might be caused by the prevailing orthodoxies as teachers set about meeting the new demands posed by the NLS in general and guided reading in particular? Six such areas of tension are proposed.

First, teachers' perceptions and practices are likely to have been influenced by the model of reading underpinning the National Curriculum of 1989 which was largely top-down. In *English for Ages 5 to 16* (DES, 1989), chapter 16, 'Reading', opens with a quotation from Frank Smith. This is followed by the statement: 'Reading is much more than the decoding of black marks upon a

page: it is a quest for meaning and one which requires the reader to be an active participant... (paragraph 16.2). The proposed Programme of Study (PoS) for reading in the same document outlines the detailed provision to be made for Key Stage 1 (KS1) and states that children should be guided so as to,

- build up, in the context of their reading, a vocabulary of words recognised on sight;
 - use available cues, such as pictures, context, phonic cues, word shapes and meaning of a passage to decipher new words;
 - be ready to make informed guesses, and to correct themselves in the light of additional information, eg *by reading ahead or looking back in the text*;
- (ibid., para. 16.23)

There are clear echoes of the 'psycholinguistic guessing game' in this extract. Although the model was substantially modified in 1995 following the Dearing revisions (DfE, 1995), most of the debate surrounding the NC at that time concerned issues connected to curriculum overload rather than pedagogy or the nature of the reading process.

A second feature of prevailing practice and perception connected to the teaching of reading concerns pedagogy. The status of direct teaching might have been influenced by the non-statutory guidance that accompanied the introduction of the NC (National Curriculum Council, 1989, para. 9.0). In it was a list of what constituted the role of the beginning reading teacher. It included: organising opportunities for reading; being a model of reading behaviour; engaging in discussion about books and reading; being 'a support, helping children to use all available cues to make sense of their reading'. The teacher is set in a largely facilitating role to which Margaret Donaldson (1989) alluded in her reference to a 'minimal teaching movement'.

Following from the above model of reading and perceptions about pedagogy, the third feature of the prevailing context relates to the teaching of 'phonics'. The National Curriculum 'Attainment Target 2: Reading' contained the following in a statement of attainment at level 2 (the end of KS1), 'Pupils should be able to...use picture and context cues, words recognised on sight and phonic cues in reading (DES, 1990, p. 7). Phonological skill might have been interpreted as

a less important reading strategy – a last resort. Moreover, direct instruction in discrete word level knowledge and skills did not feature in the NC non-statutory guidance (NCC, 1989). With so little attention being paid to bottom-up skills and processes, the direct teaching of phonics was unlikely to have been prominent in 1998. Therefore, until teachers became more confident about the benefits of phonics teaching they might be hesitant or less competent to teach phonological knowledge and blending skill and less confident in prompting children's application of that knowledge and skill.

The fourth feature of the prevailing context is to do with the prominence of individualised teaching. Most teachers carried out the long established practice of 'hearing children read' in a one-to-one context, a practice which had rarely been questioned (Arnold, 1982). The teacher generally listened, perhaps pointing out errors. It did not tend to be viewed as significantly instructional in nature and its status is perhaps reflected in the common practice of delegating the task to additional adults in the classroom – including parents. Although the practice is considered to provide few opportunities for sustained, independent reading, its salience for teachers might have been strengthened by Waterland's individualised 'apprenticeship' approach. So, whilst teachers in New Zealand and elsewhere, were pioneering more structured approaches to the teaching of reading involving more focused instruction with groups of children, reading in authentic contexts, UK teachers were perhaps continuing to favour individualised approaches.

The fifth feature of prevailing practice and perceptions concerns books. Most school book stocks appear to have been an eclectic mix combining both graded schemes and non-scheme books (HMI, 1991, para. 6v): the scheme representing an instructional 'core' (HMI, 1989, para. 9) and the non-scheme books a sequence of levelled bands, often 'colour-coded'. HMI, however, found no evidence to suggest that the Waterland-inspired 'real book' approach... 'was taking the country by storm' (HMI, 1991, para.77). Instead, HMI went on to report a 1993 survey finding that 'all teachers used structured reading schemes as the backbone of their approach to the teaching of reading (OfSTED, 1993, para. 38). Some teachers' continuing preference for a 'core' scheme might be explained by the publication by the Oxford University Press in 1986, of the

Oxford Reading Tree (ORT). It must have appealed not only to teachers who wished to retain a core reading scheme but also to those persuaded to embrace some of the principles and practices associated with ‘reading for meaning’, ‘shared reading’ and ‘real books’. Moreover, its rationale had all the hallmarks of the ‘psycholinguistic guessing game’ model of reading. The *Teacher’s Guide 1* (Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 6) describes its approach as ‘whole language’ employing the ‘story method’. It continues, ‘when we read we use information from the context to predict what is to come, confirm it, and carry on’. *ORT* components and resources include ‘big books’ for shared reading; extended versions of key stories to promote discussion about how books work and what the stories mean; sentence cards containing high-frequency words for reading in context; short stories with a close picture-text match for both shared and independent reading. The graphic representing the *ORT*’s underlying sequence,

MEANING → SENTENCES → WORDS/LETTERS

is seen to reverse the sequence underlying ‘most vocabulary-controlled schemes’ (ibid.). In the *ORT* books, high-frequency words and words related to the characters and settings are the ones that are held constant within and between the books but there is no control of word count as in traditional vocabulary controlled schemes. Instead, the high proportion of unique words in each book is deliberate because ‘nouns are context words and should not be considered key words’ (ibid., p. 10). Therefore, the stories contain unique ‘content’ words whose recognition is prompted by contextual and picture clues. It was a marketing triumph and as such was likely to represent a powerful influence on both practice and perceptions relating to the teaching of beginning reading.

In summary, during the 1980s and 1990s teachers’ perceptions and practices relating to the teaching of reading were embedded within a largely top-down model of reading. Beginning readers might have been expected to rely quite heavily on contextual guessing as a reading strategy – one that is now viewed as neither reliable nor productive. The design of the most popular core instructional book resource – *ORT* – reflected both the prevailing models of reading processes and reading acquisition. In other words, books like those in the *ORT* scheme were likely to foster contextual guessing rather than a

balance of top-down and bottom-up reading strategies. Teaching methods were more likely to be facilitative rather than instructional. The teaching of phonics was more likely to be indirect and incidental rather than direct and systematic. Lastly, 'teaching' was more likely to be individualised and frequently shared with additional adults in the classroom.

In contrast, the NLS is embedded in an interactive model of reading and therefore emphasises the role of phonological skills and processes. Teaching techniques for guided reading, for example, echo this model in that teacher prompts are designed to direct children's attention to print related information in support of word reading, and contextual information in support of comprehension. Instructional texts are needed to provide opportunities for children to access both the top-down and the bottom-up information. Beginning readers are not expected to rely on contextual guessing but to use a range of increasingly reliable and productive reading strategies. Moreover, in the switch to guided reading, the class teacher must be prepared to take full responsibility for all the teaching in the literacy hour – including the guided reading. Teachers must adapt to focusing attention on all the members in a group of children rather than on just an individual child when 'hearing children read' in a one-to-one context.

The sixth and final tension that is proposed concerns the management of change. Educational change generally takes place against a background of prevailing practices and perceptions. When, however, the implementation phase is preceded by an initiation phase – a period in which teachers can prepare and receive appropriate training and coaching (Joyce and Showers, 1980) implementation is likely to be facilitated. As mentioned earlier, the NLS had no such initiation phase. Participating teachers had only the summer term of 1998 to prepare for its implementation in September 1998. Moreover, the 'cascade' training received early criticism (OISE/UT, 2000). To what extent, therefore, might these factors have affected teachers' confidence in their competence to implement the NLS in general and guided reading in particular?

Given these areas of potential tension, this study seeks to find out about teachers' practices in, and perceptions of, guided reading, following its implementation in their classrooms.

SECTION 2: RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS

Tensions Related to the Implementation of Guided Reading in the NLS: the research problem

The literature survey included a review of recent debates relating first, to national reading standards and second, to the reading process. The introduction of the NLS was shown to be embedded within both debates.

The review also noted that outside the mainly academic and political contexts of such debates, there were certain orthodoxies relating to the teaching of reading that prevailed in English schools. In considering the implementation of guided reading at KS1, six potential tensions were outlined and it was suggested that they resulted from the sharp differences between prevailing practices and perceptions, and those enshrined within the NLS in general and guided reading in particular. Moreover, coupled with the rapid implementation timetable that the government 'recommended', such tensions may have been further heightened. The tensions fall into four broad areas constituting the research problem and from which the research questions emanate.

Management and organisation for teaching reading with groups of children

The first broad area concerns the management of time for the routine and regular teaching of groups of children rather individuals. Teachers are likely to have been switching from the traditional practice of 'hearing children read' in a one-to-one context, to direct teaching with a group. 'Hearing children read' had also frequently been delegated to additional adults. In contrast, the successful implementation of group teaching would rely on teachers being in full control of time management. As discussed earlier, the NLS *Literacy Training Pack* (DfEE, 1998b) recommends that guided reading should take place during the literacy hour. Each session is structured so as to have four distinct parts and each part must be managed to allow time for: teaching the group; independent reading by the group; teacher monitoring, and supporting and feedback to each child in the group. Additional demands on time management are likely to arise as teachers perhaps assume increased responsibility for the teaching of reading. Finally, and crucially for the success of the programme as a whole, the last part of the

guided reading session requires teachers to manage the timetable so that there are opportunities for the children to re-read guided reading texts - perhaps individually and/or in a small collaborative group. This too involves careful and strategic management of time.

Teaching techniques

The second broad area concerns the specific teaching techniques associated with guided reading which contrast with practices that might be associated with 'hearing children read'. Whereas individualised 'hearing children read' might have placed the teacher in a reactive position, guided reading places the teacher in a far more proactive and purposeful role, in line with the concept of assisted performance. Moreover, each part of a guided reading session has its own particular purpose and related teaching techniques. Set out in the *Literacy Training Pack*, they are carefully worded to reflect the various processes associated with the interactive model of reading that underpins the teaching methods contained in the NLS reading programme. In summary, guided reading requires teachers to adopt a much broader repertoire of teaching techniques and instructional exchanges designed to foster two types of reading strategies. First, they must foster reading strategies that exploit bottom-up information in support of word reading. At this point, it is vital that teaching techniques are selected to foster the phonological skills that have been the focus during episodes of direct instruction. Second, teaching techniques must foster reading strategies that exploit top-down information to support the comprehension of both word meanings and the text as a whole: NLS teaching techniques are not designed to foster contextual guessing. Teachers may face challenges as they gain both an understanding of, and competence in, this particular repertoire of teaching techniques.

Text selection

The third broad area is connected with the selection of texts for guided reading. This needs to be based on two areas of teacher knowledge. The first is an understanding of the interactive model of reading that underpins the NLS. In other words, texts need to be chosen that enable children to develop reading strategies that exploit bottom-up information in support of word reading and

strategies that exploit top-down information to support the comprehension of both word meanings and the text as a whole. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of children's reading attainments and also the various qualities of the books in their stock. The second is an understanding of the dual pedagogical concepts of 'support and challenge' which are features of assisted performance in a social constructivist learning framework. Teachers need to know which text features represent support for reading performance and which challenge and finesse that performance.

An additional tension might be related to the distinction between 'reading schemes' – which are referred to in the NLS – and 'real books'. Does this distinction have any current significance when it comes to selecting texts for guided reading?

Teacher confidence

Underpinning the above is the issue of teacher confidence in this newer feature of the NLS – guided reading. The NLS was introduced at some speed (Literacy Task Force, 1997b) and this may have compounded the demands on teachers implementing it.

These problem areas were translated into the following research questions connected to teachers' practices in, and perceptions of, guided reading, around which the investigation reported in this thesis, was structured.

Research Questions

Teacher Practices

- How do teachers manage time for guided reading, time within guided reading and time to follow-up guided reading?
- What techniques do teachers use to teach 'interactive' reading strategies?
- What kind of books do teachers use for guided reading and how do they choose them?

Teacher perceptions

- How do teachers view the purpose and organisation of group teaching?
- What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of guided reading?

- To what extent are teachers confident about implementing guided reading?

SECTION 3: RESEARCH METHODS

The study was designed to answer the research questions set out on the previous pages.

Methodology

The study has a two-phase design and combines two research strategies – one quantitative, the other qualitative. A combined approach was chosen to ‘better understand the concept being...explored’ (Creswell, 1994, p.177). Phase 1 of the study employed a quantitative strategy - a questionnaire survey of teachers’ practices in, and perceptions of, guided reading. Phase 2 of the study employed a qualitative strategy – case studies designed to open up the finer detail of some of those practices and perceptions. Case study data were gathered through: observations of guided reading sessions; interviews with teachers; and teachers’ planning and recording documents. These provided a measure of ‘data triangulation’ (Denzin, cited in Robson, 2002). The study was carried out over a four-year period (Appendix 1).

PHASE ONE OF THE STUDY: THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Research instrument: the questionnaire

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) comprised three sections. The first section was designed to establish general characteristics of the survey sample. As discussed earlier, the study’s findings would inform the development of college courses in the teaching of reading – and guided reading in particular. Therefore, it was important to be able to establish whether the responses of survey teachers could be generalised to other teachers in XXXX Primary Partnership schools. To that end, items were included that would make it possible to judge the representativeness of the teacher sample. Items included requests for the following information:

- the ‘best fit’ location category of the school
- the number of years spent teaching children of primary age
- the number of years teaching in Key Stage 1
- the roles of responsibility currently held

- the age groups represented in classes at the time of completing the questionnaire

The final item had an additional function. The focus of the study is on 'beginning reading'. Therefore it was necessary to be able to distinguish between teachers in the sample who were teaching the youngest and therefore least skilled readers, and those who were teaching older and therefore more skilled readers. It would permit a search for any patterns in the findings linked to the children's age.

The questionnaires were anonymous. However, respondents were given the option to volunteer further participation in the study. They did this by supplying contact information – name, name and address of school, and a telephone number. This provided a pool of potential participants for the more detailed case studies.

Item construction

Quantitative data was collected in a standardised form with the purpose of examining the incidence, distribution and possible interrelationships of a set of variables connected to teachers' practices in, and perceptions of, guided reading. The items in the second section were to answer the research questions about guided reading practices. Items in the third section were formulated in order to answer the research questions about perceptions of guided reading.

To answer the research questions, the questionnaire items had first to be suitable indicators of the three broad areas of guided reading practices – timing and management; teaching techniques; and text choices. In addition, the items had to be suitable indicators of a range of teacher perceptions.

In order to ensure the validity of the variables related to teacher practices, it was logical to formulate the questionnaire items by drawing on relevant NLS documents - *The Framework for Teaching* and the *Literacy Training Pack*. However, the implementation of the NLS was also supported by teams of LEA based Literacy Consultants (Literacy Task Force, 1997b) whose role it was to

provide training for teachers. Moreover, Literacy Consultants had themselves received intensive training. They had been provided with materials and resources additional to those in the *Framework for Teachers* and the *Literacy Training Pack*. Alongside this extra source of influence on teachers' practice and perceptions, there had been contributions from overseas literacy educators. Some of the Literacy Consultants' trainers had extensive experience of New Zealand literacy programmes (Bickler, 1999). Therefore, teachers' practices in guided reading together with their perceptions of it, were likely to have been open to a variety of influences. As a consequence, it was decided to convene a series of XXXX Primary Partnership focus groups in order to inform the construction of the questionnaire items related to both teachers' practices in guided reading, and their perceptions of it.

Focus groups

The college is an ITT provider. Within its primary ITT partnership there were, at the time of the study, approximately 120 partnership schools. The primary ITT course is a four-year undergraduate course within which trainees undertake four six-week school-based placements. Prior to every placement, the college hosts meetings for school-based tutors involved in each upcoming placement. Meetings always include a variety of elements including course development. In October and November 1999, two such meetings took place within which the course development elements were given to discussing guided reading in the NLS. Groups of early years school-based tutors were asked to provide college tutors with information about the implementation of guided reading in their classrooms. Also, they were asked for their views about the ways in which their children benefit from guided reading. It is routine for teachers in such focus groups to be provided with an A4 prompt sheet (Appendix 3) for three reasons. First, the discussion remains focused. Second, the prompt sheet facilitates some feedback at the end of the meeting – an important feature of the meetings. Third, the record of teachers' responses serves to inform college tutors' course planning and development. The discussions proved valuable in informing the formulation of questionnaire items.

Case study

Bradford LEA, though not officially part of the NLP, had introduced the project to some of its schools in 1997. As part of a very small study in 1998, one teacher – a Y1 class teacher and literacy co-ordinator – from one of the college’s partnership schools agreed to talk at length about guided reading. The interview was audio-recorded, fully transcribed and annotated. Its content also served to inform questionnaire items for the present study.

Likert scales

The questionnaire design incorporated four point Likert scales (de Vaus, 1990). The four response categories that accompanied the ‘practice’ items were: ‘almost always’, ‘very often’, ‘not very often’ and ‘hardly ever’. The category labels were formulated to represent teachers’ general tendencies rather than absolutes such as ‘always’ and ‘never’ etc. Moreover, a four-point scale was chosen in order to eliminate neutral responses. The categories represent ordinal scales and for analysis of variance they were to be merely ranked. They did not represent absolute quantities nor could it be assumed that the intervals between the categories were equal.

The four response categories that accompanied the ‘perception’ statements were taken from the traditional Likert scale for ‘measuring’ attitudes and beliefs: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’. They too represent ordinal scales and in the analysis they would be merely ranked

Items related to ‘guided reading in practice at KS1’

This section of the questionnaire was designed to provide answers to the following research questions:

- How do teachers manage time for guided reading, time within guided reading and time to follow-up guided reading?
- What techniques do teachers use to teach ‘interactive’ reading strategies?
- What kind of books do teachers use for guided reading and how do they choose them?

This section opens with the directions below and is followed by 16 statements.

In conversations about guided reading, KS1 teachers described some of their routine practices. Please show how often each occurs in your guided reading sessions by ticking the appropriate boxes

Items related to time management for and in guided reading

There were 18 items in total related to practices in guided reading. 7 of the items were designed to answer the research question 'How do teachers manage time for guided reading, time within guided reading and time to follow-up guided reading? The item 'I do guided reading during the literacy hour' reflected NLS guidelines with regard to the management of the literacy hour itself. The question item 'How long does a guided reading session last?' invited teachers to indicate how many minutes a 'typical session with one group lasts'. This was also to provide information about time management. The question item 'Who teaches the guided reading?' was to find out about the ways in which teachers manage their time and that of additional classroom adults for guided reading - teachers had frequently shared the responsibility for 'hearing children read' with additional adults, and sometimes parents. Two items were designed to find out about the management of time within the sessions. The item 'Guided reading sessions give me time to monitor each child in the group' was to find out whether a switch from mainly individualised to group teaching, resulted in time management that enabled teachers to attend to all the children in the group. The item 'I run out of time to talk about the book in the kind of detail I'd like to' was included because it represented a commonly reported practice within the focus groups whose testimony had contributed to the design of the questionnaire. The final item linked to time management concerned the interrelation between guided reading and another component within the NLS reading programme – individual, independent reading. 'I make sure children have further opportunities to read the book in class or at home' is linked to the fourth part of the guided session in which teachers make time for two components of the reading programme to connect – guided reading and individual, independent reading.

Items related to teaching techniques in guided reading

Of the 18 practice related items in the questionnaire, 6 were included in order to answer the research question: What techniques do teachers use to teach

interactive reading strategies? One item referred to techniques that foster a bottom-up strategy, word reading 'I pre-teach new words at the start of each guided reading session'. Teachers less inclined to promote the strategy of contextual guessing might reject this technique. In contrast, teachers more in tune with the NLS might be less likely to practise this technique. Two items represented teaching techniques recommended to support top-down strategies: 'At the beginning of the session we all look together at the book and talk about it' and 'I set the children off with one or two questions about the content of the book'. There was an item which addressed what is variously termed in the NLS 'a recipe for 'self-help' and a 'strategy check'. The wording of the item, however, was chosen to reflect language more frequently used in the teacher focus groups: 'We talk about cueing strategies for reading unfamiliar words'. Two further items address teaching techniques associated with the 'independent reading' part of the session: 'When the children are reading independently I spend time checking whether they are reading the words accurately' and 'I encourage children to guess words using context cues'. The first of the two reflects a strategy recommended in the NLS whereas the second does not. However it was a commonly described by focus group teachers.

Items related to texts for guided reading

Four items were included in order to answer the research question: What kind of books do teachers use for guided reading and how do they choose them? One addressed the use of reading schemes 'In guided reading I use books from a commercial reading scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*'. One addressed non-fiction texts 'I use non-fiction books for guided reading'. The third addressed word level features of texts 'I choose books that provide repetition of new words'. The fourth reflects the NLS recommendation that beginning readers should read complete texts: 'Children read the whole book during a guided reading session'.

A final item was included as it provided a broad indicator of teachers' overall compliance with the NLS: 'I tend to stick to the NLS guidelines for guided reading'.

Items related to 'viewpoints on guided reading at KS1'

The items in this section were designed to answer the following research questions:

- How do teachers view the purpose and organisation of group teaching?
- What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of guided reading?
- To what extent are teachers confident about implementing guided reading?

The section has an opening (see below) followed by 21 statements.

The following views were recently expressed by teachers in XXXX Primary Partnership schools during conversations about guided reading. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of them by ticking the appropriate boxes

Items related to perceptions of the purpose and organisation of guided reading

Twenty-one items were included in the questionnaire in order to answer the research questions about teacher perceptions. 6 items addressed the research question: 'How do teachers view the purpose and organisation of group teaching?' They were:

- It just isn't possible to do a worthwhile guided reading session in only 10 minutes
- Just one guided reading session per group, per week isn't enough to make a difference to children's reading at KS1
- There isn't really time to check each child's performance during guided reading sessions
- I couldn't do guided reading quite so well if I didn't have extra help in the classroom
- I still think beginning readers need one-to-one reading with the teacher.
- I don't believe in changing the groups round too often because it disturbs the relationships that children form

Items related to perceptions of the effectiveness of guided reading teaching techniques

Seven of the items in this section of the questionnaire were formulated to answer the research question: 'What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of guided reading?' They were:

- Anyone who doesn't do guided reading doesn't know what they're missing
- I find guided reading makes a big improvement to children's comprehension
- Guided reading is by far the best way to promote reading for meaning at KS1
- I am confident that guided reading has improved the reading standards in my class
- Guided reading is a marvellous context for actually fostering the habit of independent reading
- The children love guided reading

Items related to teachers' confidence about implementing guided reading

Nine items sought to answer the research question: 'To what extent are teachers confident about implementing guided reading?' They were:

- I don't really understand what I'm meant to be doing in guided reading
- Guided reading isn't easy to put into practice
- I just wish we'd been given more training to do guided reading
- I wish I was more confident in my understanding of teaching reading in general
- Guided reading is just another fad
- Guided reading is the only part of the literacy I don't like
- Parents don't like guided reading
- I am not yet certain how to select books for guided reading
- I haven't really got enough books to do guided reading the way I'd like to

Trials and any necessary modification of the questionnaire

Throughout 1999/2000 drafts of the questionnaire were constructed and trials were conducted. A pilot version of the questionnaire was distributed in January 2000 to 22 KS1 teachers attending in-service courses in the college. The teachers were also asked to comment on the clarity of the instrument.

There followed a number of changes to the instrument. First, it was reduced to a two-sided A4 document. Second, questions were reformulated to eliminate ambiguities.

The survey sample

The population relevant to the study included those KS1 (including YR) teachers in the college's primary partnership schools who had implemented guided reading. At the time of the survey (May/June 2000) a cohort of trainees was being hosted by approximately 80 of the college's 120 or so primary partnership schools for a 6-week school-based training placement. Within those schools there would have been around 240 KS1 teachers – not all of whom, however, were expected to have implemented the NLS because of its 'recommended' rather than 'statutory' status. In the light of this uncertainty, batches of the questionnaire were dispatched, via the ITT trainees on placement, to the head teachers of those 80 schools. It had been estimated that, by that time, at least two-thirds (approximately 160) of those teachers might have been expected to have implemented guided reading in their classrooms (OfSTED, 1999).

Timing and logistics

In May 2000, envelopes containing batches of the questionnaire were dispatched, via a cohort of trainees embarking on a block school-based placement, to the head-teachers of approximately 80 primary partnership training schools. Trainees were briefed to deliver the batch of questionnaires, with an accompanying covering letter (Appendix 4) to head-teachers. The covering letter explained the nature and purpose of the survey. In addition, the letter requested that head-teachers distribute copies of the questionnaire to those of their Reception and KS1 class teachers who had implemented guided reading in their classrooms. Moreover, school-based tutors had already been briefed during college meetings to expect the questionnaires. In addition an 'article' outlining the survey had been posted on the college's school-based training web-site (Appendix 5). One post-paid, addressed envelope was included with each batch of questionnaires so that the trainees could assist by collecting and posting completed questionnaires. In addition, and so as to facilitate the return of questionnaires, trainees had been briefed to encourage host teachers' participation in the study. Aligning the survey with the school-based placement, added a measure of 'incentive' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 99) with the expectation that the proportion of returned questionnaires would be maximised.

PHASE 2 OF THE STUDY: CASE STUDIES

Part 2 of the study, like the survey in part 1, follows directly from the literature review and serves to throw further light on the associations found in the survey (Robson, 2002).

In the literature review it was proposed that certain tensions might be likely to accompany the implementation of guided reading. It was suggested that such tensions might be caused by the sharp differences between new teaching techniques and prevailing practices. Two of those areas of tension and related research questions formed the basis for a more detailed investigation using case studies. In preparation for this part of the study, items were strategically placed within the questionnaire. One item concerned an aspect of teachers' practice – selecting texts for guided reading. The other concerned an aspect of teachers' perception of the nature and purpose of guided reading vis-à-vis individualised teaching.

The sample

The cases for this part of the study were selected from a sub-sample of respondents who had indicated on the questionnaire a willingness to participate further in the study. The cases were chosen to allow cross-case comparison with some scope for replication (Yin, 1989). They represented contrasting practice and contrasting perceptions in the two respects: two teachers were selected whose responses to the questionnaire item: 'In guided reading I use graded books from a commercial reading scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*' contrasted. Second, two teachers were chosen whose responses to the item: 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher', also contrasted. This array of cases (Table 1) would allow the 'phenomenon' of guided reading to be studied in 'contexts' that might contain 'important explanatory information' (Yin, 1993, p. 31).

Research instruments

Multiple sources of information were exploited in each case studied to ensure that data were rich (Yin, 1989) and had internal validity (Robson, 2002).

Table 1: Case study sample

practice perception	Scheme book used in guided reading	Non-scheme book used in guided reading
Beginning readers need one-to-one reading with the teacher		
Beginning readers don't need one-to-one reading with the teacher		

Observation and audio-recording of guided reading sessions

In each site, guided reading sessions were first observed and audio-recorded. For the recording, teachers were fitted with lapel radio-microphones. A radio receiver and audio-recorder were placed to the side of the teaching space. The equipment was sensitive to everything the teachers said during the sessions. It was also sensitive to exchanges between the teacher and a child if the child was in close proximity to the teacher's microphone. The equipment was not expected to record all the children's utterances during the sessions.

The observation, 'protocol' (Bogdan and Bicklen, 1992) was prepared to fulfil two purposes. First, it was designed so that field notes followed the expected teaching sequence in the guided reading sessions. Second, prompts were focused so that field notes would also relate to the two dimensions of guided reading that were being investigated in greatest detail. The field notes were made to facilitate both the transcription and the analysis of the audio-recorded data (Appendix 6). In summary, field notes were made with regard to:

- title of text/s and description of any additional resources
- session duration, timing, teaching sequence and location
- group names, gender and position on a seating plan
- teaching techniques

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews followed each observed guided reading session observed and recorded. As mentioned above, the interviews were to add validity to the case data. To that end, interviews were scheduled to follow the taught guided reading sessions so that aspects of the teachers' practice could be incorporated within the interviews. The interview protocol (Appendix 7) sets out the prepared questions and also shows how some questions were tailored to draw upon the responses made to particular questionnaire items – specifically, those connected to texts used in guided reading and the issue of individualised tuition with beginning readers. The interviews, therefore, were focused and the questions quite specific, but they were also semi-structured in that, the order in which the questions were posed was flexible. Also, because the interviews were post-observation, questions or topics could be changed in ways that seemed appropriate to particular events in the observed session or an interviewee's particular point of view.

The interview protocol (Appendix 7) included:

- *a question related to the typicality of the session*
- *points of interest arising from the session*
- *six key questions related to the particular text used in the session*
- *two key questions related to the teacher's views about the nature and purpose of guided reading vis-à-vis individualised 'hearing children read'*
- *a question relating to the impact of guided reading on the teacher*

Use of documents

Teachers provided photocopies of planning and record-keeping documents relating to the observed session. This source also contributed to the internal validity of the data.

Timing and logistics

The observations and interviews took place in July 2002. Contact with participating teachers was made by telephone. The second phase of the study was outlined and data collection visits arranged. Teachers were requested to carry out a typical guided reading session. The teachers agreed to have the session observed and audio-recorded. Also, the teachers agreed to be

interviewed about guided reading in general and their guided reading session in particular, following their taught sessions.

SECTION 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Data set

Of the 240 questionnaires dispatched to YR and KS1 teachers in the 80 XXXX Primary Partnership schools, it was estimated that approximately two-thirds of teachers (having implemented guided reading) would be in a position to respond – some 180. Given this uncertainty, it is not possible to calculate exactly the proportion of returned questionnaires. In the event, 105 useable questionnaires were returned – indicating that an estimate of the proportion of returns was in the region of 58 per cent. Some of the returned questionnaires had to be rejected because KS2 teachers had completed them.

Questionnaire items were treated individually. Each item in the questionnaire was coded and entered onto a computer spreadsheet (SPSS, Brace et al., 2000).

Statistical analysis

First, a computer analysis (Brace et al., 2000) was carried out to provide simple descriptive statistics showing the frequency distribution of responses to each item in each section of the questionnaire.

Second, comparisons were sought. Analyses of variance were carried out. Responses provided by the whole sample to selected variables were recoded in order to form two new groups whose responses could be compared. Following the literature review a number of patterns were anticipated in teachers' responses to some of the questionnaire items. Therefore, the items selected for recoding were:

- the age of the children in teachers' classes
- the item: 'In guided reading I use graded books from a commercial reading scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Scheme, Ginn 360 or All Aboard*'.
- the item: 'I choose books that provide repetition of new words'.
- the item: 'I pre-teach new words at the beginning of each guided reading session'

- the item: 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher'

The distribution of responses to the questionnaire, which were measured at an ordinal level, was not assumed to be normal so a non-parametric test - Mann-Whitney U Test - was used to compare the responses of the newly formed groups to the questionnaire items listed above. The test focuses on differences in central location and makes the assumption that any differences in the distributions of the two groups are due only to differences in locations. The computer output (SPSS) provided mean ranks for each new group. Comparing the two mean ranks revealed whether there were differences in the groups' responses and moreover, whether those differences were statistically significant.

Findings

Representativeness of the sample

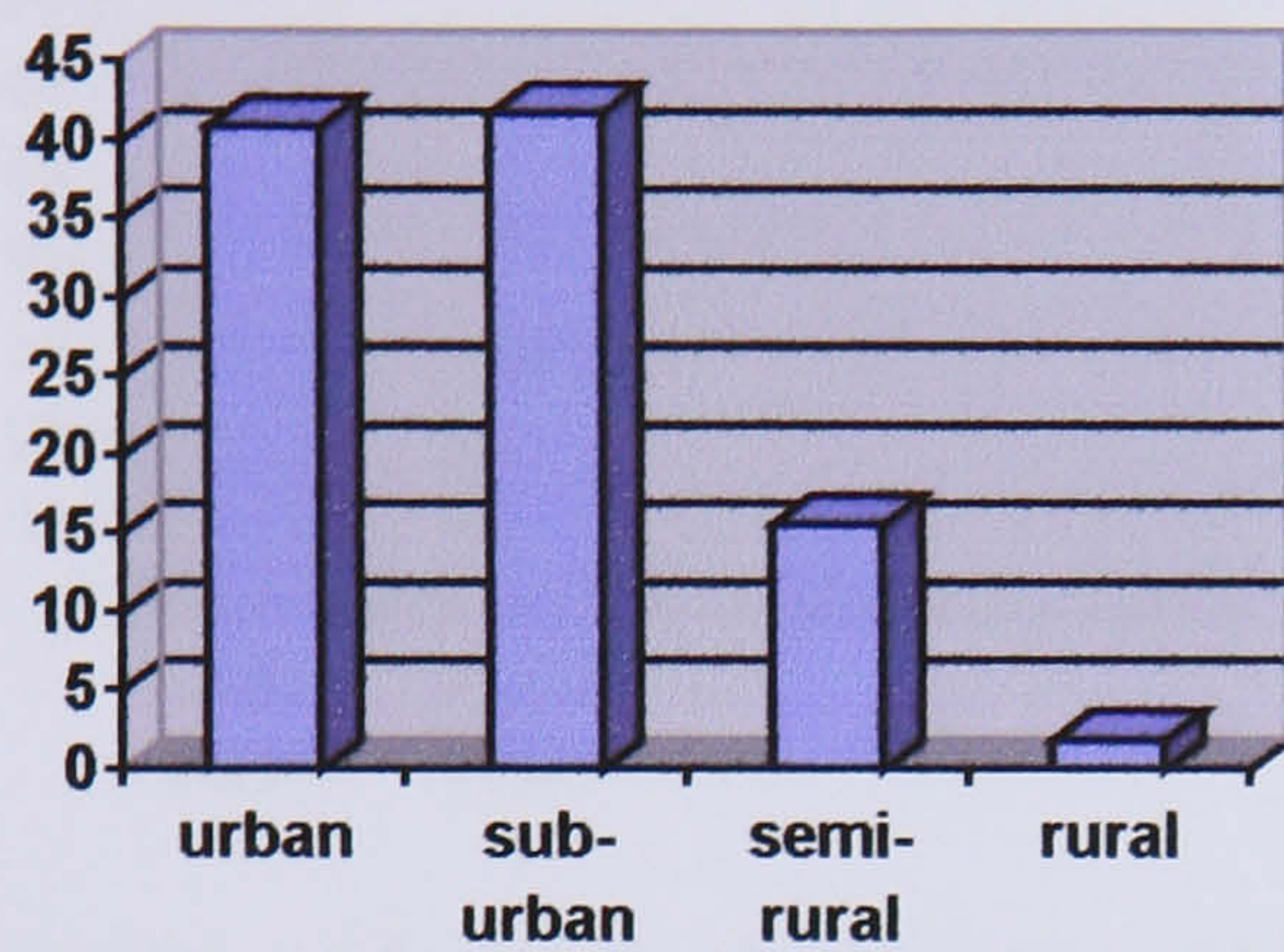
First, a computer analysis was carried out to provide simple descriptive statistics showing the frequency distribution of responses to each item relating to the representativeness of the sample. As explained earlier, the study was to inform course development within the XXXX Primary ITT Partnership: the findings would be used to support course planning. It was therefore necessary to be able to generalise from the findings to all schools in the partnership. To that end, items were included in the questionnaire that would establish the representativeness of the sample. Requests were made for the following information:

- the 'best fit' location category of the school
- the age groups represented in respondents' classes at the time of completing the questionnaire
- the number of years respondents' had spent teaching children of primary age
- the number of years respondents' had been teaching in Key Stage 1
- the roles of responsibility respondents currently held

There were four broad categories that respondents could select to describe the location of their school. Of the 105 respondents, 41 per cent described their

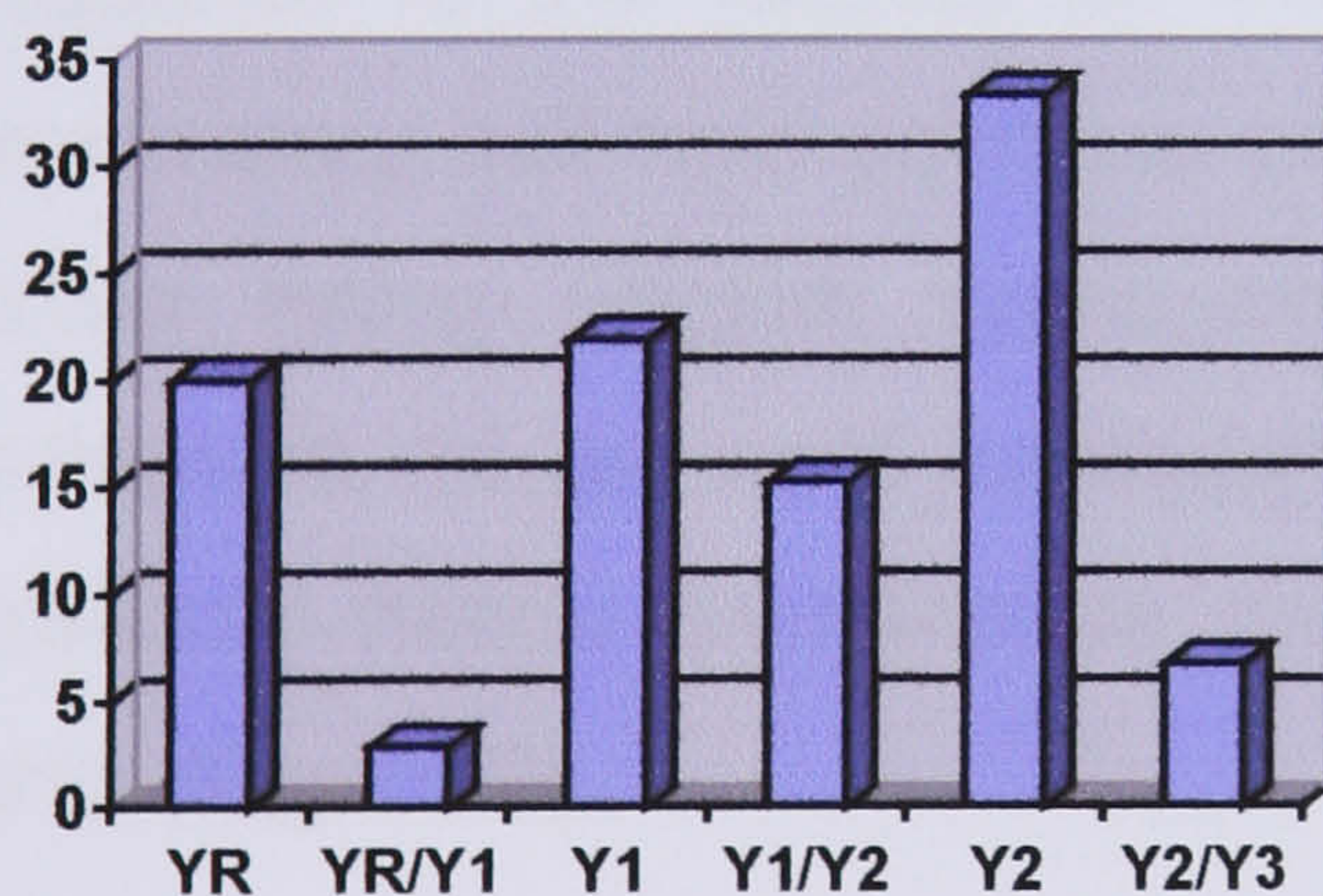
schools as urban, 40 per cent sub-urban, 15 per cent semi-rural, and 2 per cent rural (Figure 6). The college ITT partnership schools were at that time mainly drawn from the West Yorkshire conurbation so the findings reflect the anticipated pattern.

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents indicating each school location



Of the sample, 20 per cent taught in Reception classes, 3 per cent taught mixed Reception/Y1 classes, 22 per cent taught Y1 classes, 15 per cent taught mixed Y1/2 classes, 33 per cent taught Y2 classes and 7 per cent taught mixed Y2/3 classes (Figure 7).

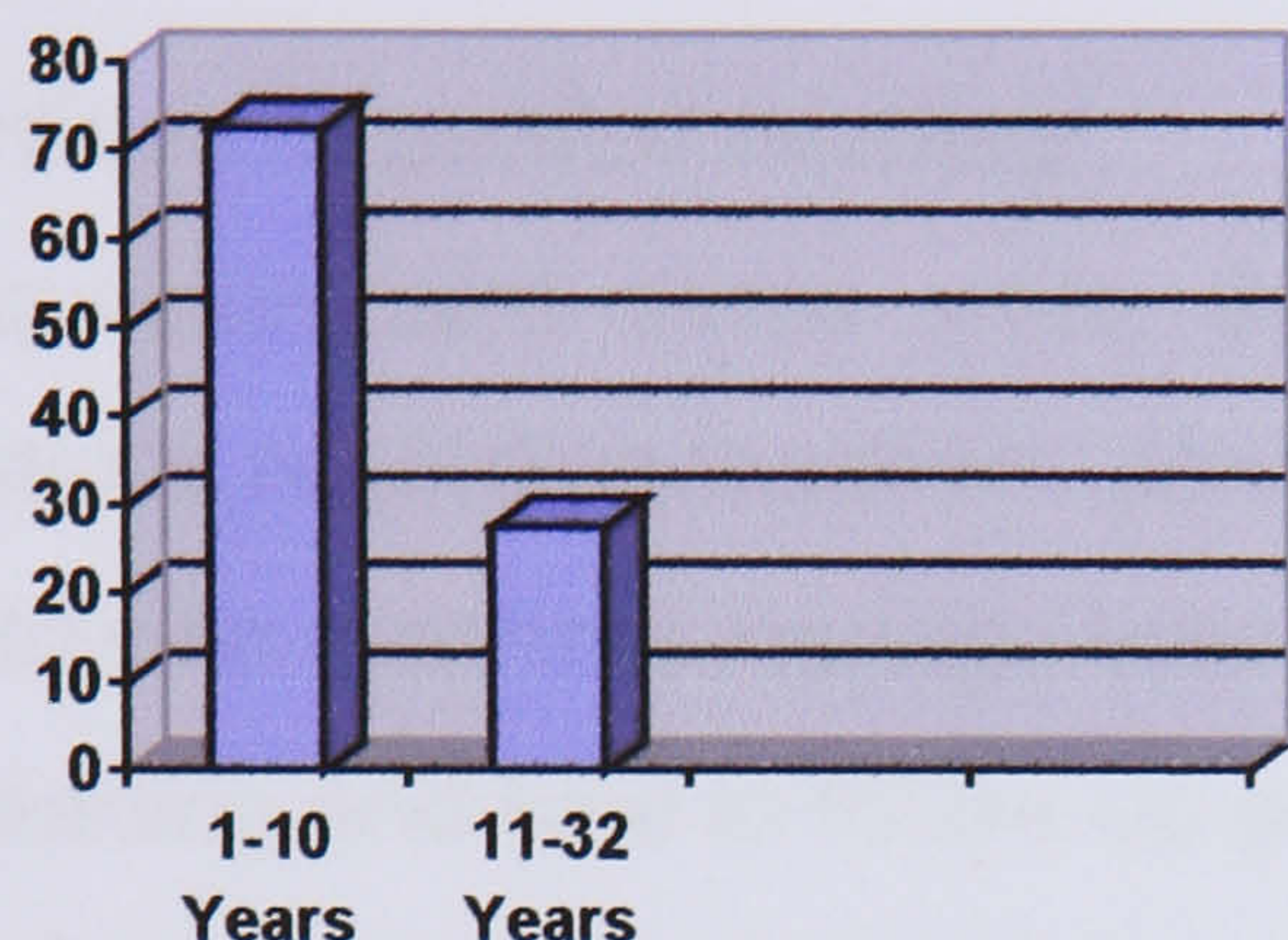
Figure 7: Percentage of respondents indicating each age group/s taught



This suggests that the sample included teachers from across KS1. In order to find out whether there were patterns of responses attributable to the age of children in the respondents' classes, the data were re-coded to form two groups. The first group included those teaching in Reception, mixed YR/1 and Y1 classes. The second group included those teaching in Y2 and mixed Y2/3 classes. Teachers in mixed Y1/2 classes (16) were excluded from these groups in order to establish two distinct groups.

The number of years that respondents had been teaching primary age children ranged from between 1 year and 32 years with an average of 12 years, and a mode of 10 years.

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents indicating number of years teaching in KS1



The number of years that respondents had been teaching in KS1 also ranged between 1 year and 32 years with an average of 9 years and a mode also of 10 (Figure 8). With such similar patterns of distribution it would appear that the majority of respondents' teaching experience has been in KS1. This in turn suggests that the sample of teachers represented a range of years of experience.

In response to the request for information about positions of responsibility approximately half held positions beyond their class-teacher role. 17 per cent reported being English curriculum leaders, 15 per cent Key Stage 1 coordinators, 11 per cent curriculum leaders (not English), 3 per cent special educational needs coordinators and 1 per cent (1 person) a deputy head-teacher (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents indicating positions of responsibility in school



The remaining half were class teachers only. Again, the sample appears to represent a range in terms of the status of respondents. Had the sample included a large proportion of English curriculum leaders, for example, it might have provided findings not generalisable to all KS1 teachers.

Practices in guided reading

16 questionnaire items were designed to answer the following research questions regarding teachers' practices in guided reading:

- How do teachers manage time for guided reading, time within guided reading and time to follow-up guided reading?
- What techniques do teachers use to teach 'interactive' reading strategies?
- What kinds of books do teachers use for guided reading and how do they choose them?

A computer analysis was carried out to provide simple descriptive statistics showing the frequency distribution of responses to each item in the section relating to 'guided reading in practice at KS1'. The wording of the questionnaire items and the distribution of responses to each of them, are shown in Table 2. The items invited responses in the categories: 'almost always', 'very often', 'not very often' and 'hardly ever'.

There were a number of questionnaire items which drew a large proportion of responses in the categories, 'almost always' and 'very often', suggesting that a number of routines and practices were common to a large number in the sample. These particular practices were ranked with regard to the frequency with which teachers reported using them. This provides a broad picture of guided reading in practice and indicates the degree to which teachers have generally complied with NLS guidelines because most of the items derived from NLS sources.

The figures in this section include the following abbreviations: **AA**: Almost Always; **VO**: Very Often; **NVO**: Not Very Often; **HE**: Hardly Ever.

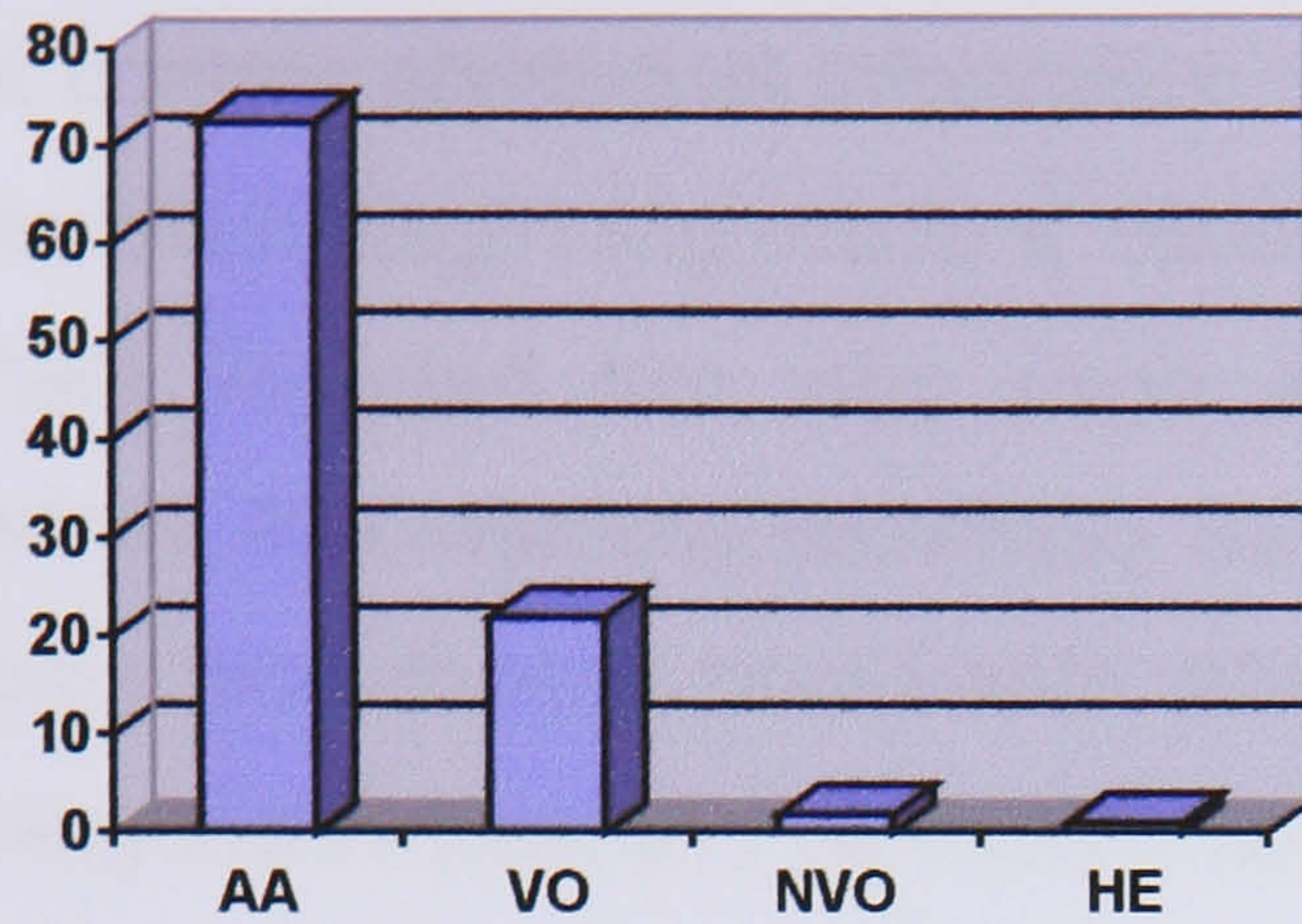
Table 2: Percentage of respondents making each response to each questionnaire item related to practices in guided reading

Item	Almost Always	Very Often	Not Very Often	Hardly Ever
I do guided reading <u>during</u> the literacy hour	56.7	26.0	5.8	11.5
My preparation for guided reading sessions is thorough	41.9	43.8	13.3	1.0
In guided reading I use graded books from a commercial reading scheme(s) like <i>Oxford Reading Tree</i> , <i>Ginn 360</i> or <i>All Aboard</i>	58.1	25.7	12.4	3.8
I choose books that provide repetition of any new words	32.7	49.0	16.3	1.9
I pre-teach new words at the start of each guided reading session	12.4	41.0	35.2	11.4
I use non-fiction books for guided reading	5.7	52.4	36.2	5.7
At the beginning of the session we all look together at the book and talk about it	75.2	21.9	1.9	1.0
We talk about the use of cueing strategies for reading unfamiliar words	53.8	40.4	5.8	–
I set children off with one or two questions about the content of the book.	46.7	40.0	13.3	–
When the children are reading independently I spend time checking whether they are reading the words accurately	60.2	32.0	7.8	–
I encourage children to guess words using context clues/cues	66.3	33.7	–	–
Children read the whole book during a guided reading session	37.1	33.3	27.6	1.9
I make sure children have further opportunities to read the book in class or at home	35.6	26.9	26.9	10.6
I run out of time to talk about the book in the kind of detail I'd like to	13.3	40.0	39.0	7.6
Guided reading sessions give me the time to monitor each child in the group	26.9	44.2	21.2	7.7
I tend to stick to the NLS guidelines for guided reading	23.1	51.9	22.1	2.9

Looking at the book together

The questionnaire item to which most teachers responded 'almost always' - 75.2 per cent, was: 'At the beginning of the session we all look together at the book and talk about it'. Combined with responses in the category 'very often' - 21.9 per cent, the total is 97.1 per cent (Figure 10). This suggests a high degree of adherence with this NLS recommended teaching technique for the 'book introduction' part of guided reading.

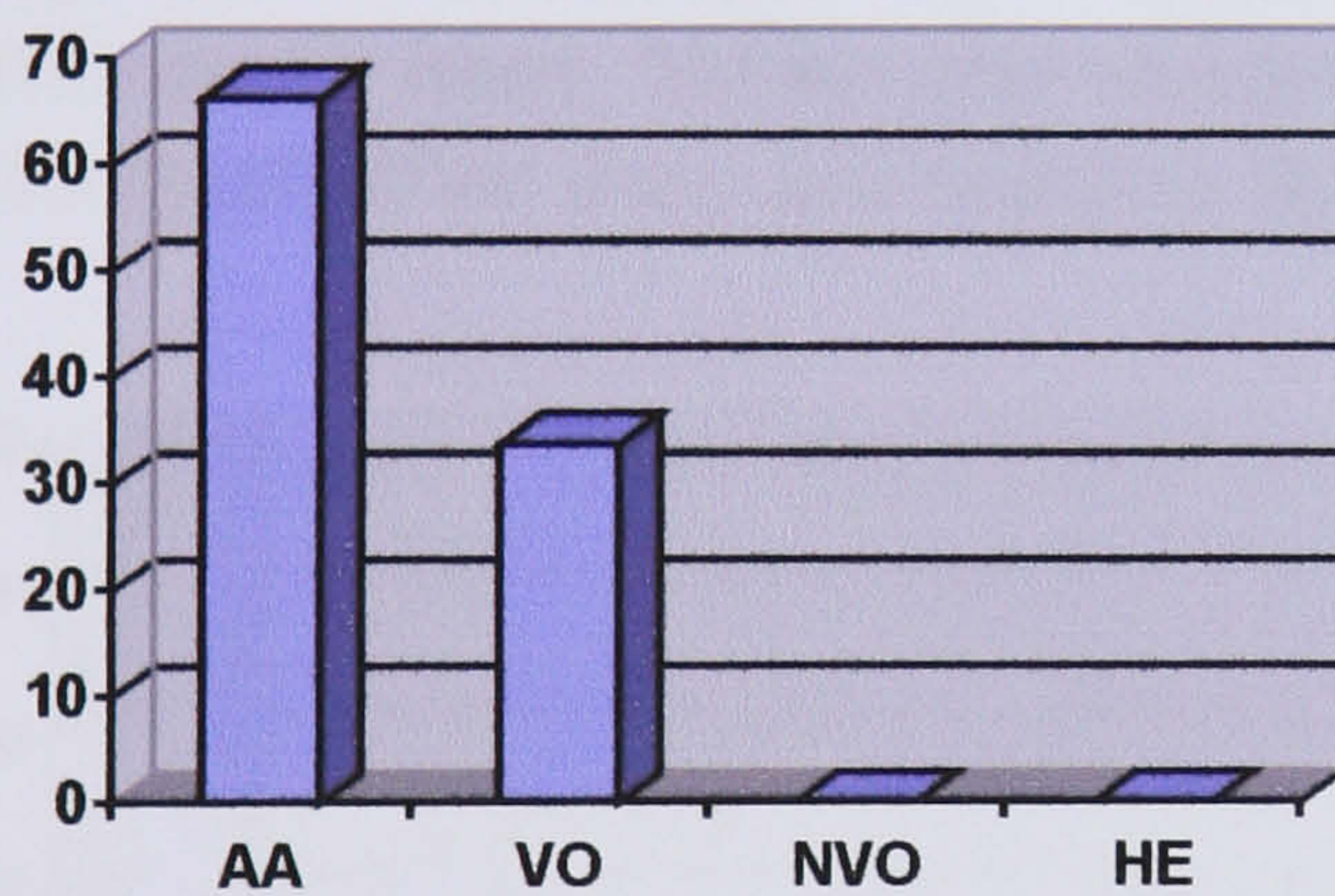
Figure 10: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'At the beginning of the session we all look at the book together and talk about it'



Prompting contextual guessing

The item, 'I encourage children to guess words using context clues/cues' drew the responses: 'almost always' from 66.3 per cent and 'very often' from 33.7 per cent of the sample – a combined total of 100 per cent (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I encourage children to guess words using context clues/cues'



The item did not derive directly from NLS guidelines but from the case study and focus group teachers who contributed to the questionnaire design: many referred to 'guessing', 'good guesses', 'guessing from the context' and 'using the pictures to guess'. The question remains as to whether teachers are more likely promoting the use of contextual information in support of word recognition, than in support of comprehension of words and the text as whole.

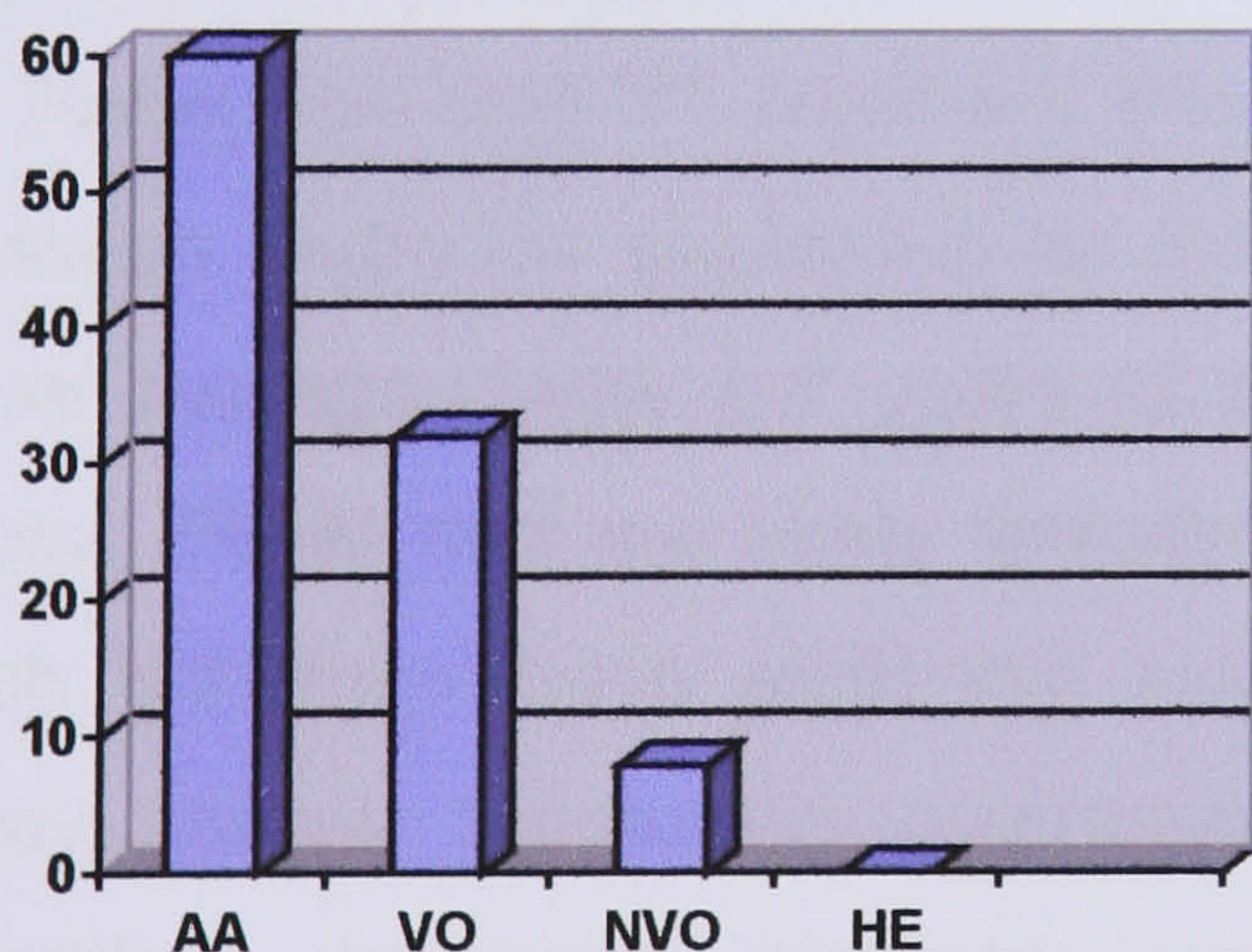
There was evidence that the teachers who reported using scheme books were less likely to report encouraging children to guess words using context cues. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.038$). This is an interesting finding and might be explained by the fact that scheme books hold

constant contextual content – characters, setting, story structure and book design. Therefore, children might be expected to access contextual information unconsciously, without teacher prompting. In contrast, non-scheme books might contain contextual information that is both less familiar and less easily accessible to beginning readers, causing teachers to prompt it. The case study teachers included two who used scheme books and two who did not. Therefore, this teaching technique can be investigated further. Specifically, do teachers who choose books with different key features demonstrate different teaching techniques and perhaps promote different reading strategies?

Monitoring the accuracy of children's independent reading

The item, 'When the children are reading independently I spend time checking whether they are reading the words accurately' drew the responses: 'almost always' from 60.2 per cent and 'very often' from 33 per cent of the sample – a combined total of 92.2 per cent (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'When the children are reading independently I spend time checking whether they are reading the words accurately'

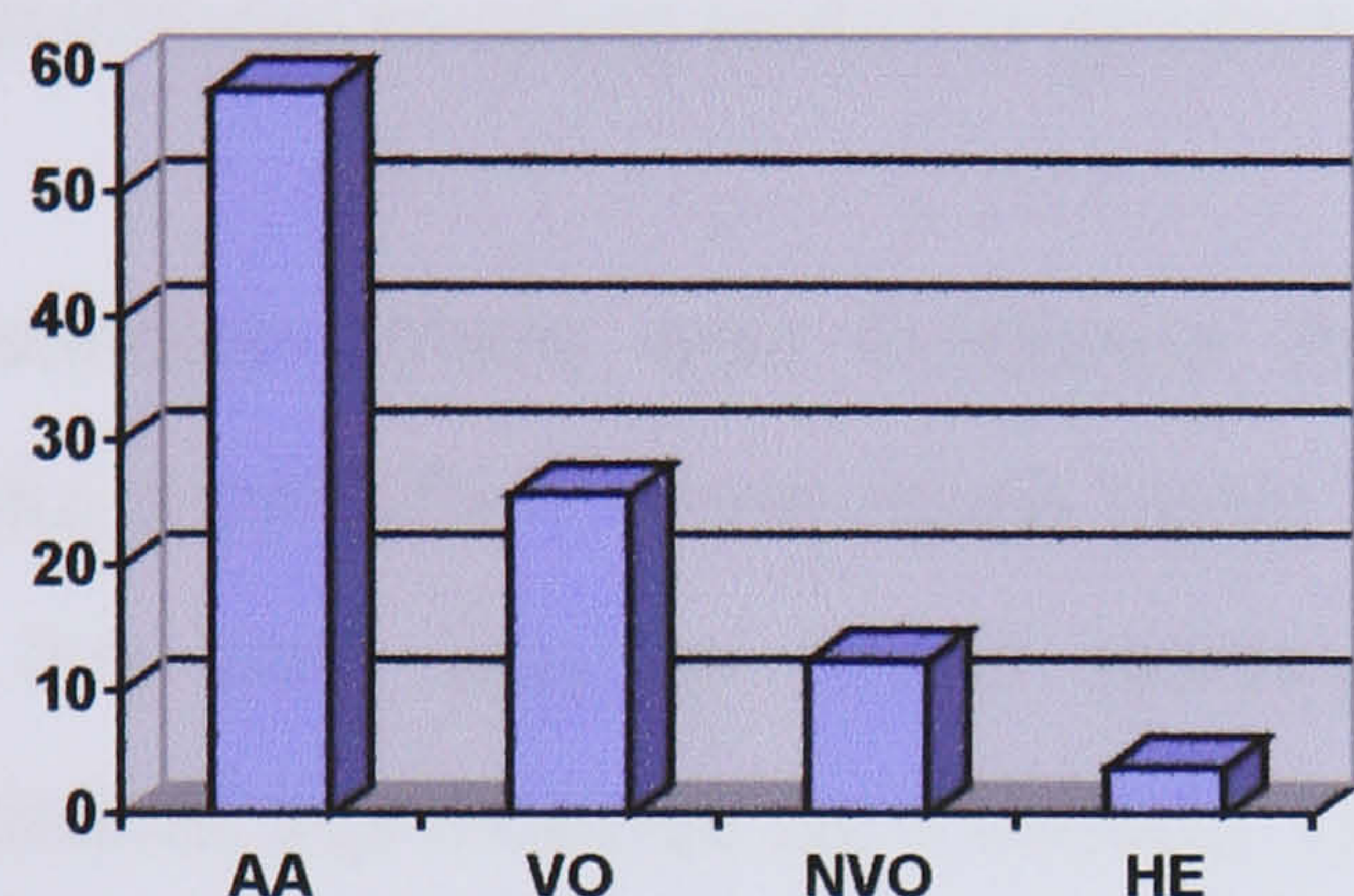


This might suggest that reading accuracy is, for many teachers, a salient indicator of independent beginning reading. Moreover, there was some evidence that teachers in Reception and Y1 classes reported that they monitored reading accuracy more often than teachers in Y2 and Y2/3 classes. The difference almost reached statistical significance ($p = 0.061$). This might indicate a developmental pattern: perhaps teachers of older and therefore more skilled readers expect their children to have mastered a level of accuracy which the younger and therefore less skilled readers have not.

Use of graded books/reading schemes

The item, 'In guided reading I use graded books from a commercial scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*' drew the responses: 'almost always' from 58.1 per cent and 'very often' from 25.7 per cent of the sample a combined total of 83.8 per cent (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'In guided reading I use graded books from a commercial scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*'



This shows that a sizeable proportion of the sample reported using graded schemes and appears to match NLS recommendations. Contrary to expectations, computer analysis of variance between different age groups revealed no evidence that the use of schemes was more commonly reported by Reception and Y1 teachers than by Y2 and Y2/3 teachers. This lack of variation might be explained by the fact that most of the current 'schemes' cover the age-phase 5-7 years of age (e.g. *Oxford Reading Tree*, University Press, 1986) and are likely therefore to be used throughout KS1. Moreover, such 'schemes' have additional sets and series attached to them. The case study sample represents contrasting practice with regard to text selection. Therefore, teachers' interpretations of the term 'scheme' will be further investigated.

There was evidence that teachers who reported using scheme books were also more likely to report planning thoroughly for guided reading sessions. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.013$). This suggests that the features of scheme books may have some influence on teaching techniques. The upcoming case studies have been designed to provide more detailed

information about how precisely teachers plan when using either scheme or non-scheme books for guided reading.

In line with what might be expected, there was also evidence that teachers who reported using scheme books most frequently were more likely to report choosing books that provided repetition of new words. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.002$). It is not clear from the survey however, which types of words are repeated in the books. So questions still remain as to the nature of teachers' perceptions about the word level features in instructional reading texts for guided reading.

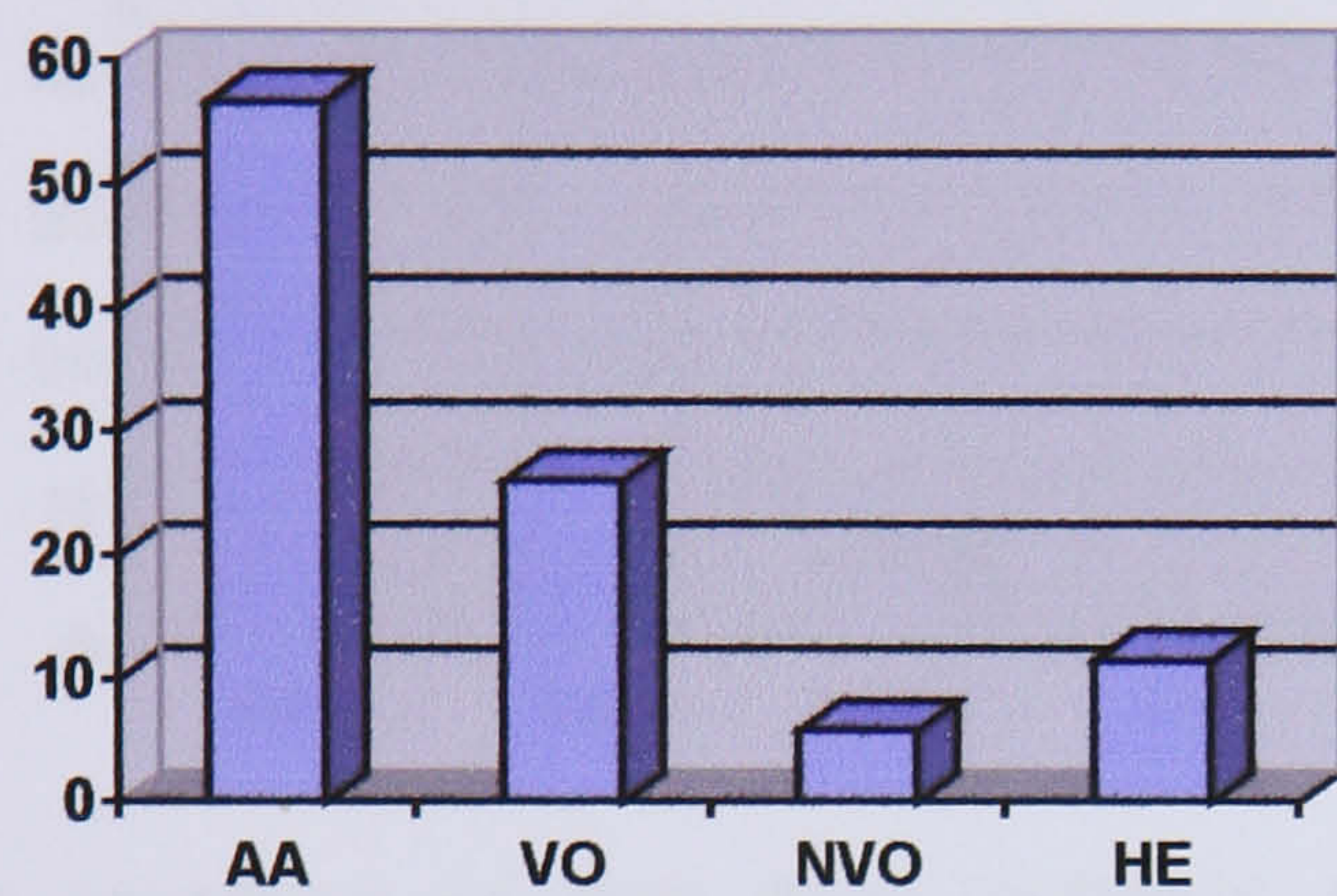
In addition, there was evidence that teachers who reported using scheme books most often, were more likely to take the view that 'guided reading is by far the best way to teach reading for meaning'. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.030$). This finding is open to many interpretations: if the teachers using schemes feel that the schemes provide opportunities to focus on reading for meaning, perhaps it is because children's accuracy and fluency are being sufficiently well supported to free-up processing capacity for attention to the comprehension of the text. This exemplifies Stanovich's (1980, 1986) 'interactive-compensatory' model of beginning reading. An additional element to the explanation is that in scheme books the contextual information is generally held constant and can, therefore, provide essential prior knowledge common to the group. Such prior knowledge is thus easily accessible and can readily provide topics for group discussion both before and after the independent reading. Moreover, this prior knowledge and 'easy' discourse might guard against exchanges in the group being teacher led and teacher dominated. This again is crucial to promoting more authentic 'reading for meaning' – 'real reading'.

Guided reading in the literacy hour

The item, 'I do guided reading in the literacy hour' drew the responses: 'almost always' from 56.7 per cent of the sample and 'very often' from 26 per cent of the sample a combined total of 82.7 per cent (Figure 14). This too complies with NLS guidelines relating to the literacy hour and how it should be structured and organised. The findings also reflect the recommendation that KS1 teachers

retain guided reading within the literacy hour: 'At Key Stage1 in particular there should be a strong focus on reading in the hour itself, not least to provide immediate opportunities for pupils to apply the word-level work taught earlier, particularly phonics.' (OfSTED, 2001, para 46).

Figure 14: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I do guided reading in the literacy hour'



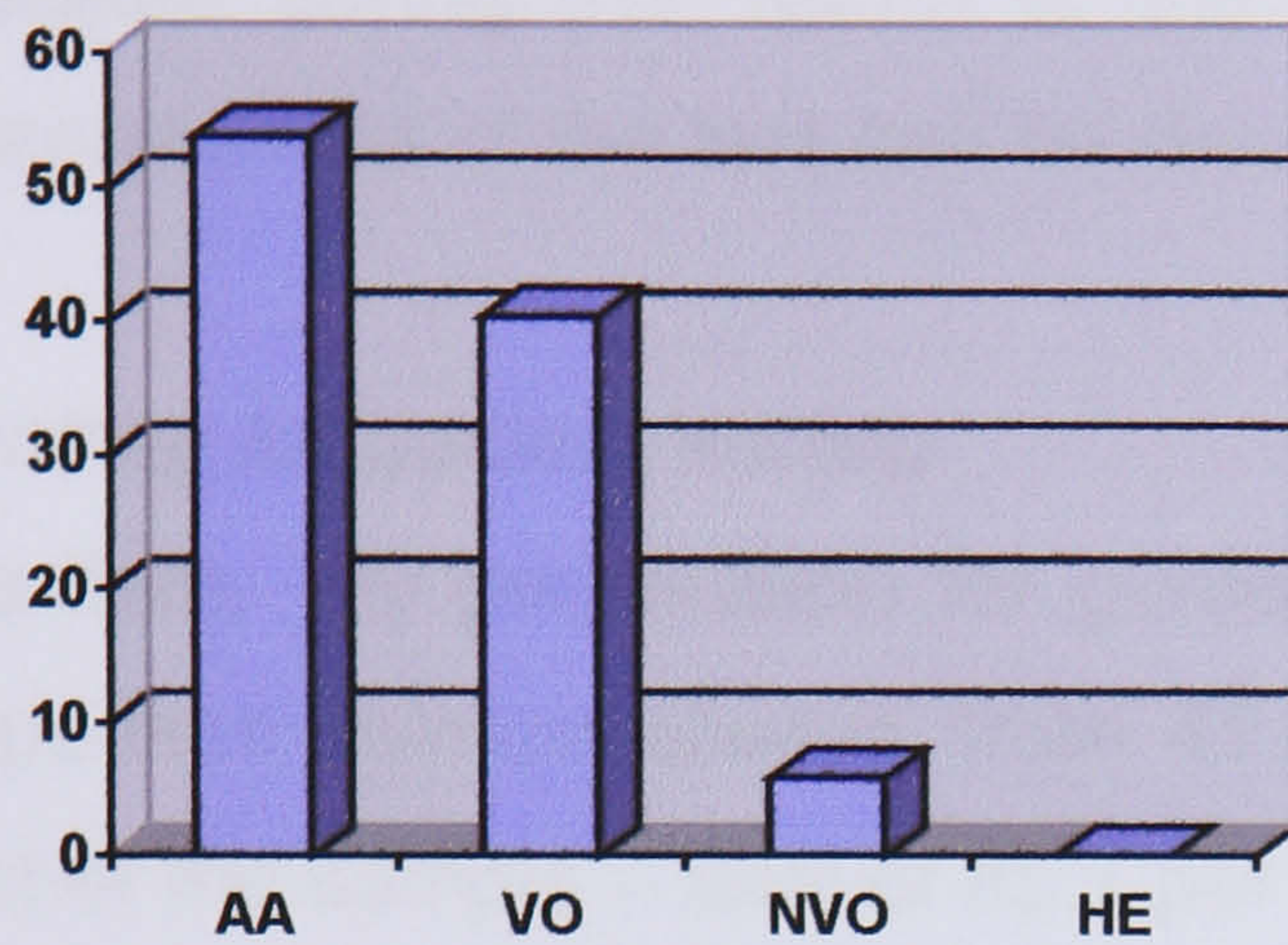
There was evidence that teachers in Y2 and Y2/3 classes were more likely to report doing guided reading in the literacy hour than teachers in Reception and Y1 classes. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.007$). This might be explained by the fact that the 'literacy hour' is usually phased-in during the Reception year (DfEE, 1998a) and therefore may not be a routine organisational feature. This would therefore skew the findings. Moreover, curriculum delivery in Reception classes is usually far more flexible and often involves more additional adults than in Y1 and Y2 classes.

Strategy check

The item, 'We talk about the use of cueing strategies for reading unfamiliar words', drew the responses: 'almost always' from 53.8 per cent and 'very often' from 40.4 per cent of the sample a combined total of 94.2 per cent of the total (Figure 15). This item relates to the so-called 'recipe for self-help' or 'strategy check' children are trained to carry out if they encounter a word they do not instantly recognise. The finding signals teachers' general adherence with NLS guidelines with regard to this teaching technique. However, the responses to this item cannot shed light on which particular strategies are rehearsed and for what purposes. The question remains, therefore, as to how the strategy check is used. To what extent is it used to promote the exploitation of bottom-up

information to support word reading and top-down information to support comprehension of word meanings and the text as a whole?

Figure 15: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'We talk about the use of cueing strategies for reading unfamiliar words'

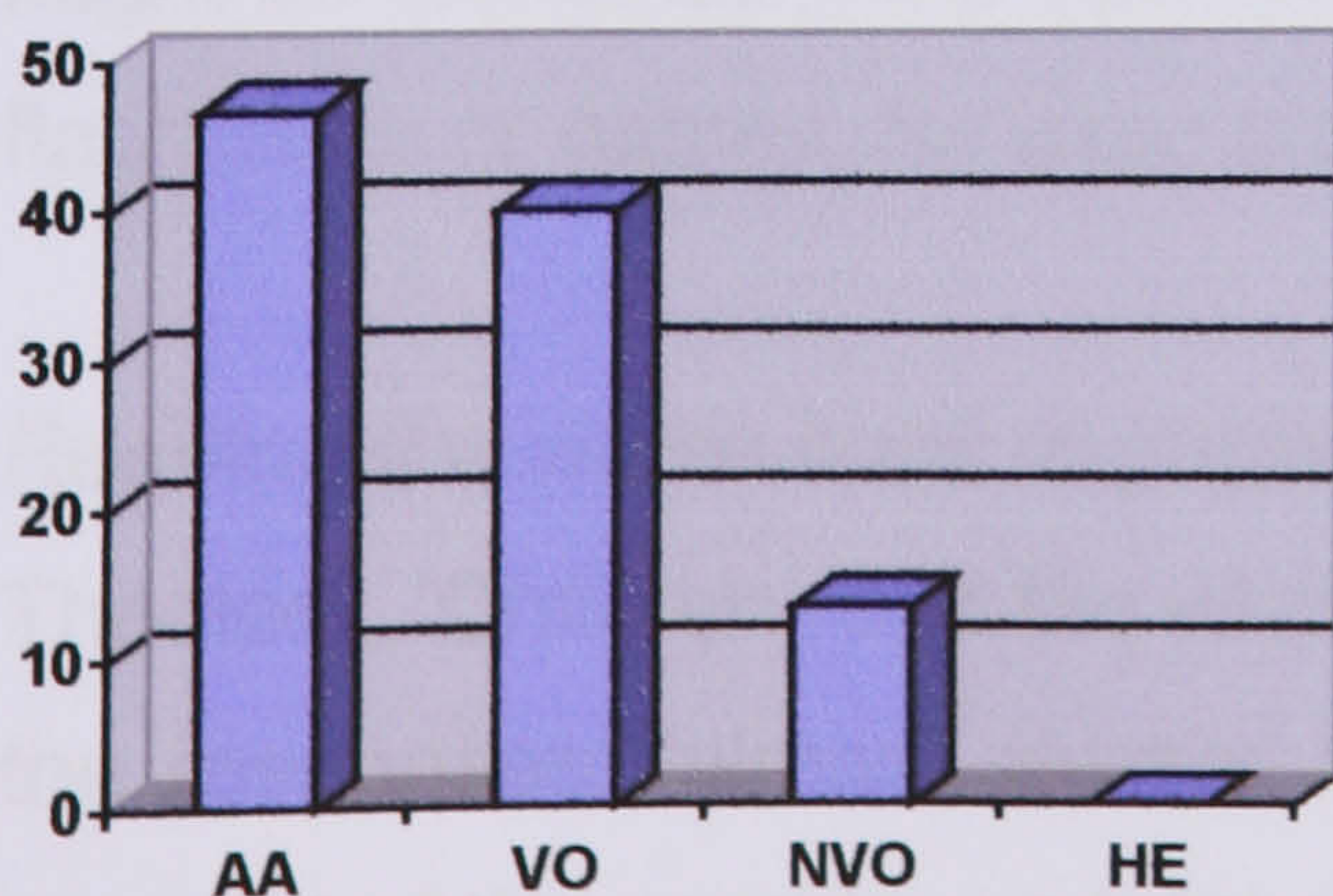


The wording of this item reflects the discourse in the focus groups which contributed to the design of the questionnaire. However, the question remains as to which particular strategies are rehearsed and for what purposes. For example, to what extent is it used, RR-style, to promote contextual guessing – the exploitation of mainly top-down information to support word reading? The case studies will allow these questions to be investigated in more detail.

Focus questions about the content and general preparation for guided reading

The item, 'I set children off with one or two questions about the content of the book' drew the responses: 'almost always' from 46.7 per cent and 'very often' from 40 per cent of the sample - a combined total of 86.7 per cent (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I set children off with one or two questions about the content of the book'

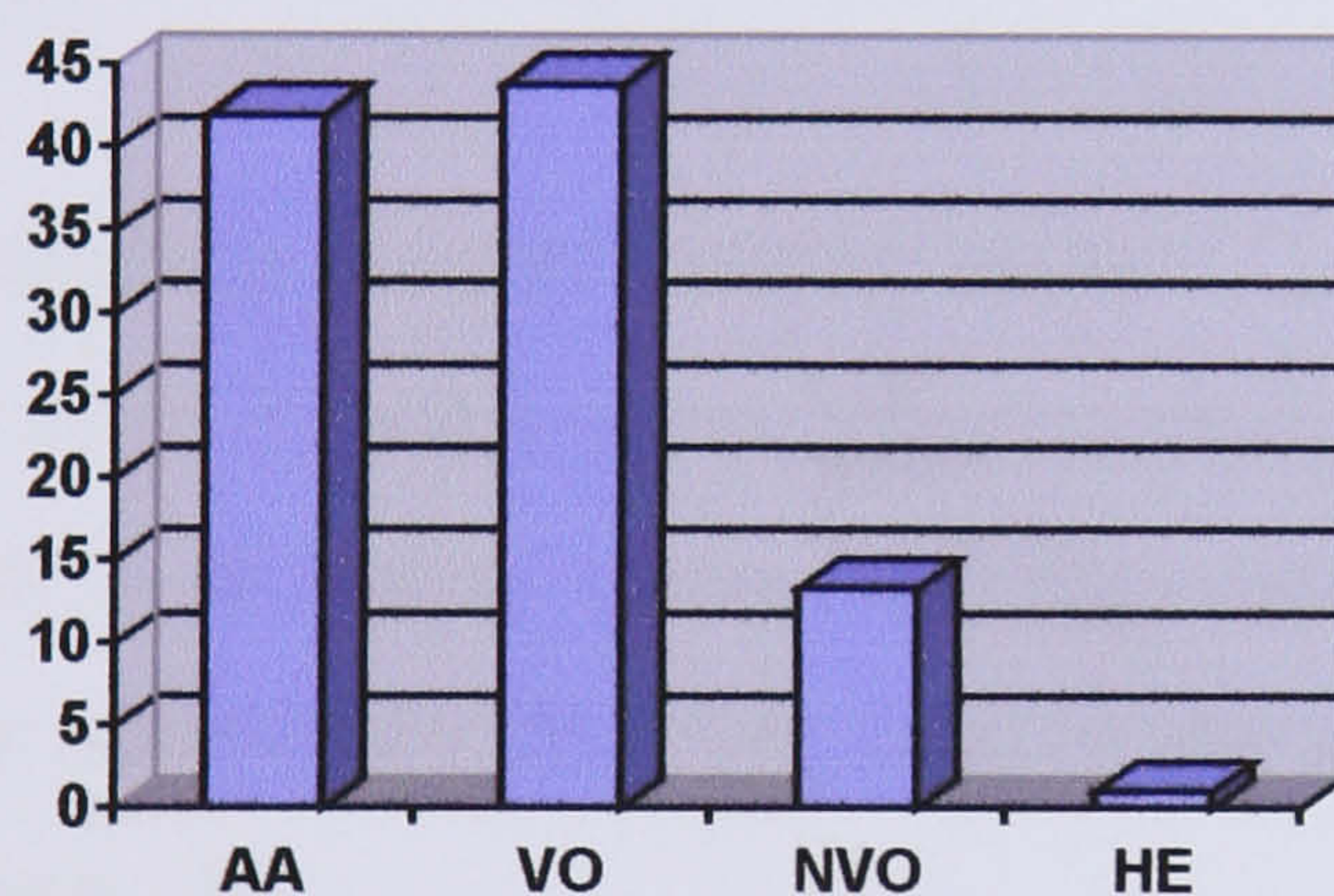


The above teaching technique relates to the way teachers prime children's prior knowledge before they read independently. Such questions act as advance organisers and serve to 'scaffold' new understandings. They also give symmetry and therefore purpose to the sessions in that the questions can be re-visited during the 'return to the text': when children's responses to and interpretations of the text can be discussed.

Planning for guided reading

The item, 'My preparation for guided reading sessions is thorough' drew the responses: 'almost always' from 41.9 per cent and 'very often' from 43.8 per cent of the sample – total of 85.7 per cent (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'My preparation for guided reading sessions is thorough'

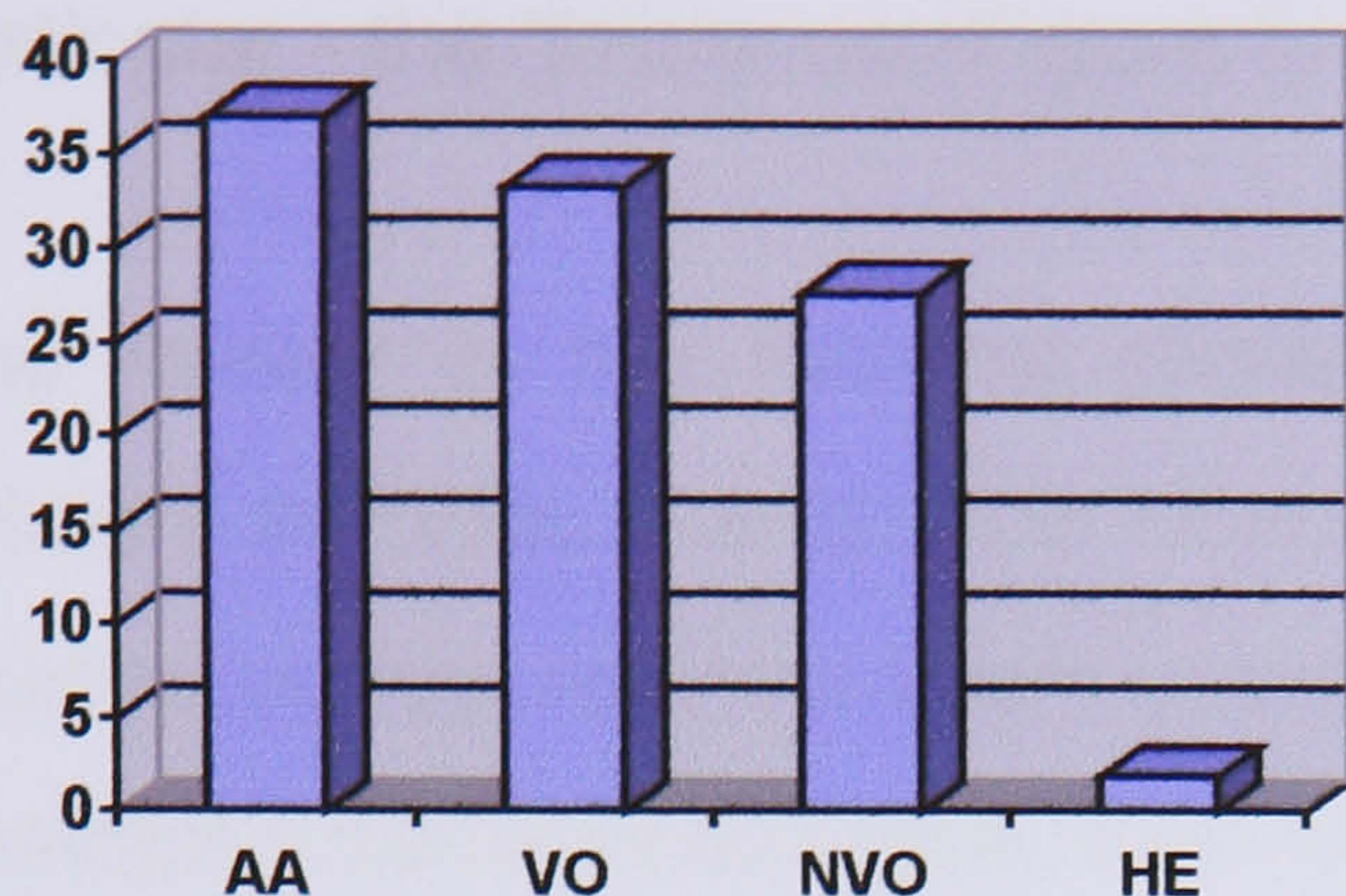


This suggests that teachers dedicate time and thought to planning because they are engaged in teaching rather than merely listening to children reading or pointing to errors. There was evidence that the teachers who reported pre-teaching new words in guided reading were more likely to report planning thoroughly. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.002$). This might be explained if the such planning involved the preparation of resources – flashcards or games, for example.

Reading the whole book in guided reading

The item, 'Children read the whole book during a guided reading session' drew the responses: 'almost always' from 37.1 per cent and 'very often' from 33.3 per cent of the sample – a total of 70.4 per cent (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'Children read the whole book during a guided reading session'

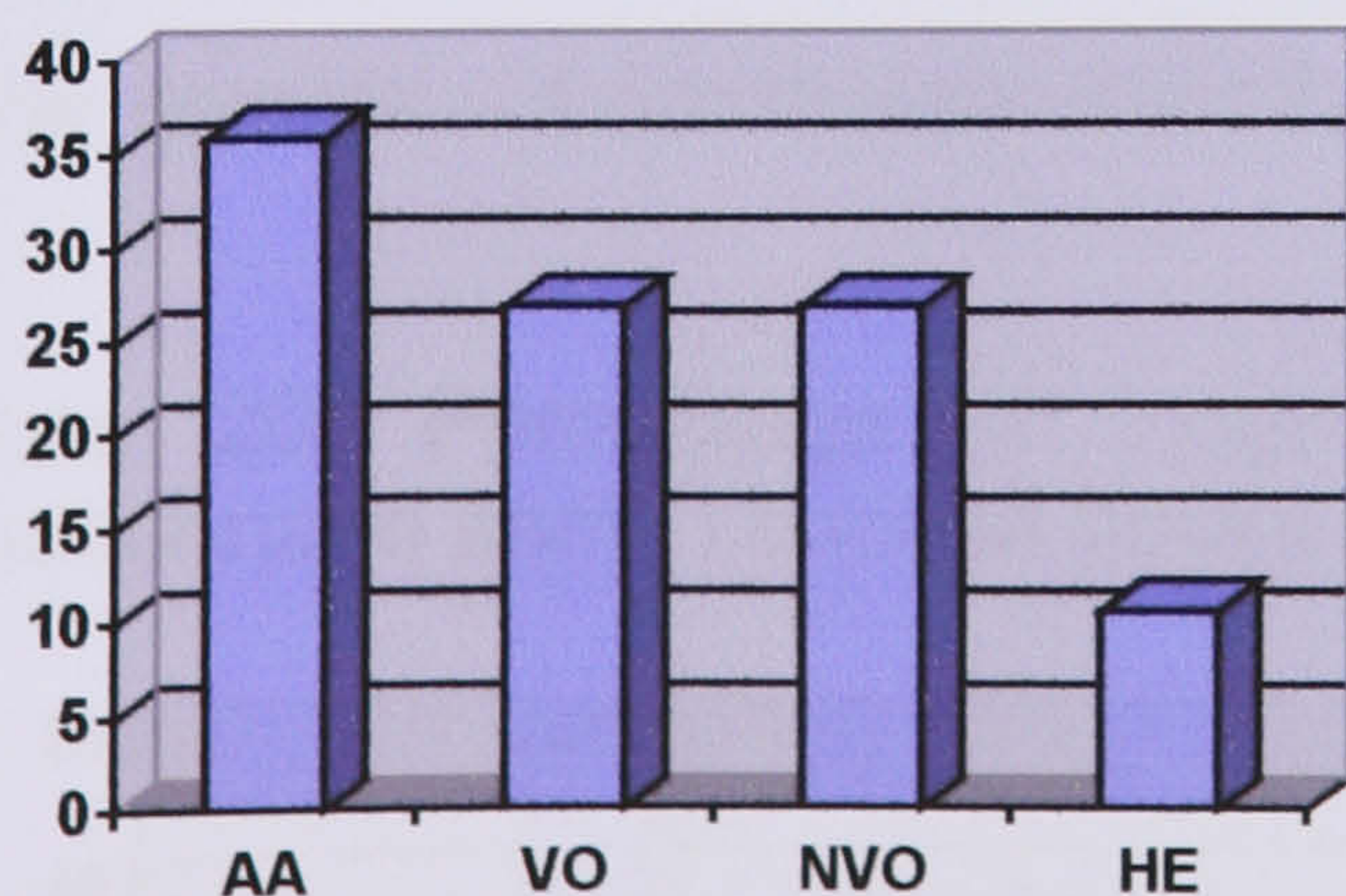


This suggests that teachers take the view that there are many gains for reading acquisition when children read not merely words or pages but whole texts. In line with NLS guidelines, there was clear evidence that teachers in Reception and Y1 classes reported enabling the children to read the whole text more often than teachers in Y2 and Y2/3 classes. Moreover, the difference reached a high level of statistical significance ($p = 0.000$).

Re-reading guided reading texts

The item 'I make sure children have further opportunities to read the book in class or at home' drew the responses 'almost always' from 35.6 per cent and 'very often' from 26.9 per cent of the sample - a total of 62.5 per cent of the total (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I make sure children have further opportunities to read the book in class or at home'



This suggests that some teachers acknowledge that guided reading and individual, independent reading, are inter-dependent in the NLS reading

programme. However, the 26.9 per cent of teachers who responded 'not very often' coupled with the 10.6 per cent who responded 'hardly ever' - a total of 37.5 per cent, are tending to omit this key element of, not only guided reading in particular - the 'follow-up'(Figure 5) – but also of the programme in general.

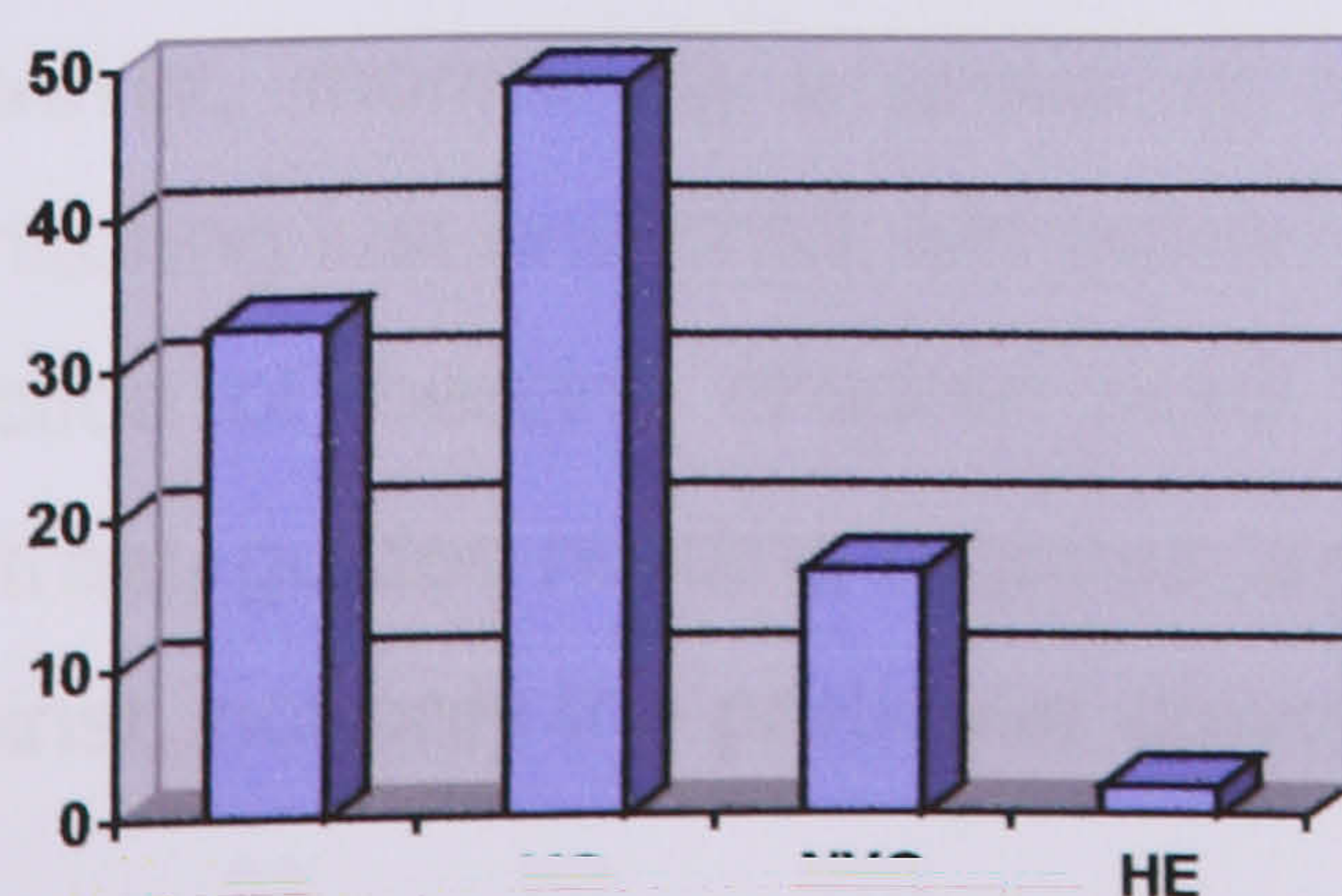
In the review of the reading process debate, reference was made to the significant benefits that accrue when beginning readers have opportunities to re-read what has recently been a new and challenging text. Their word-reading connections become stronger, their reading fluency improves and they achieve greater understanding of both the new vocabulary in the text, and the text as a whole. If this component is omitted, children are denied this learning opportunity. Moreover, the omission is likely to compromise the effectiveness of guided reading sessions themselves, and also the programme as a whole.

Perhaps prevailing practice in the 1990s, which was marked by its eclecticism, has prevented teachers from recognising that the components of the NLS are designed to be essentially inter-dependent. The NLS is *not* a 'mixed methods' approach. Instead, it represents inter-dependent methods: shared reading; systematic phonics; guided reading; and individual independent reading - all must be routine and regular in order to function inter-dependently. If the components in the programme fragment, failing to combine or connect, the programme is likely to be far less effective.

Repetition of new words in books for guided reading

The item, 'I choose books that provide repetition of any new words' drew the responses: 'almost always' from 32.7 per cent and 'very often' from 49 per cent of the sample – a combined total of 81.7 per cent (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I choose books that provide repetition of any new words'



This item relates to NLS advice that books for guided reading should have a ‘cumulative vocabulary’. There was evidence that teachers who reported choosing books that provide repetition of new words were more likely to report using graded scheme books in guided reading. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.003$). In addition, there was evidence that teachers who reported pre-teaching new words in guided reading were more likely to report choosing books that provide repetition of new words. This difference also reached statistical significance ($p = 0.032$). Moreover, there was evidence that teachers in Reception and Y1 classes reported choosing books that provide repetition of new words more often than teachers in Y2 and Y2/3 classes. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.012$). This set of findings appears to suggest that certain practices are connected: the choice of books which repeat new words; the use of scheme books; and the teaching of the youngest and therefore least skilled readers.

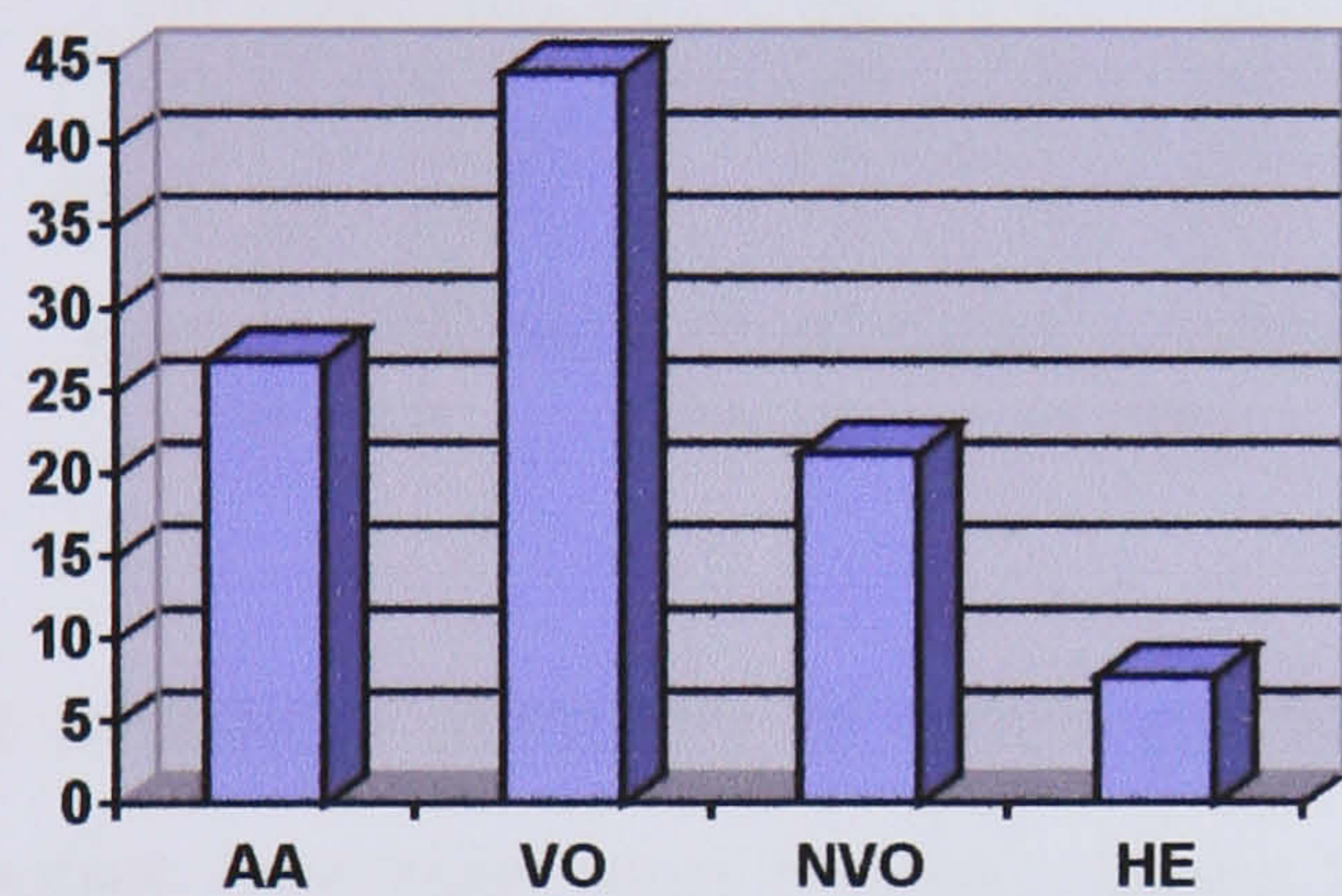
However, as discussed earlier, there are different kinds of ‘words’ in instructional texts. Moreover, NLS advice is somewhat ambiguous. It tends to use the term ‘vocabulary’ when referring to the words in texts for guided reading – perhaps echoing the traditional term ‘sight vocabulary’. It does not distinguish between high-frequency words, or words containing particular phonological or spelling patterns, or unique content words (unique to one particular story). The question remains, therefore, as to which types of words are repeated in the texts teachers select for guided reading.

Individual monitoring during guided reading

The item, ‘Guided reading sessions give me the chance to monitor each child in the group’, drew the responses: ‘almost always’ from 26.9 per cent and ‘very often’ from 44.2 per cent of the sample – a combined total of 71.1 per cent (Figure 21). This suggests that 30 per cent of the respondents tend not to ‘have the chance’ to monitor each child. Monitoring is integral to guided reading. However, monitoring a group of children is clearly more demanding than monitoring just one child. Moreover, monitoring in what has been the prevailing practice of ‘hearing children read’ tended to be somewhat unstructured. In contrast, guided reading requires teachers to monitor each child’s performance against, not only the particular objective set for the session but also against the

reading strategies children are expected to demonstrate. The question remains, therefore, as to whether there is, perhaps, limited scope in guided reading for teachers to monitor closely all the children in the group. If teachers are unable to monitor each child's performance it follows that they will be less able to offer the kind of support which is contingent on such monitoring. It also seems to follow that the level of challenge posed by guided reading texts determines to a great extent teacher's capacity both to monitor and to support in guided reading.

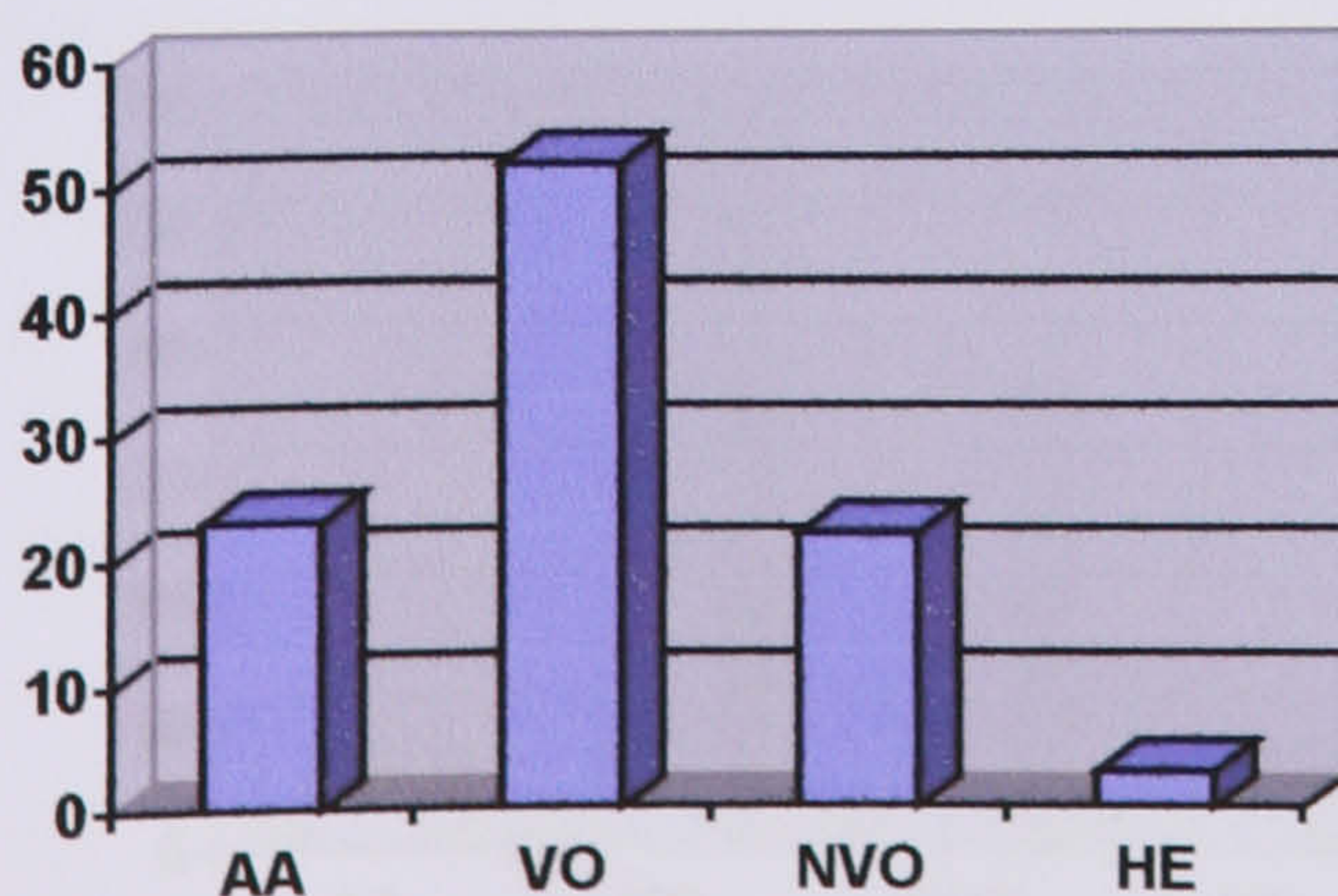
Figure 21: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'Guided reading sessions give me the chance to monitor each child in the group'



Use of the NLS guidelines for guided reading

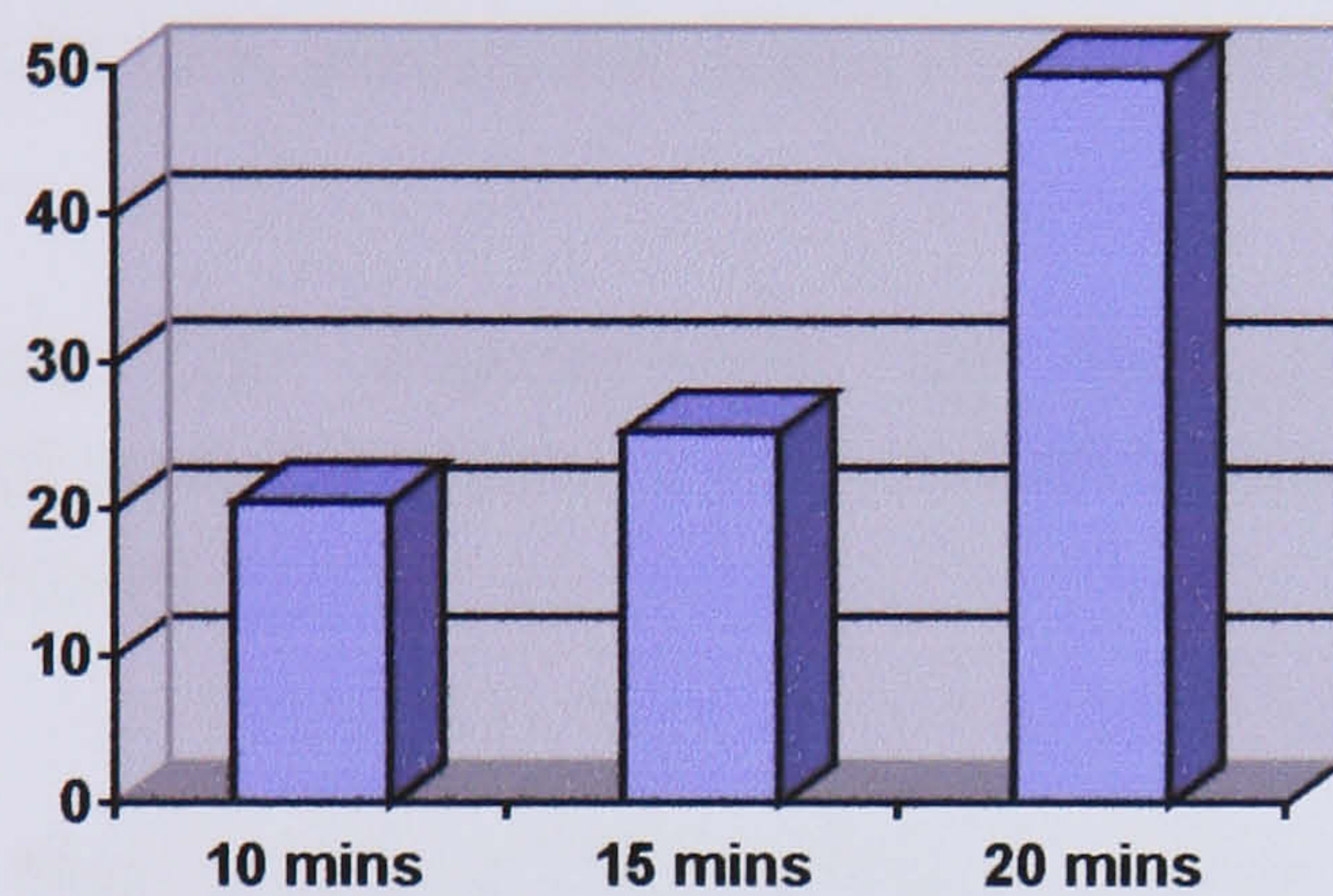
The item, 'I tend to stick to the NLS guidelines for guided reading', drew the responses: 'almost always' from 23.1 per cent and 'very often' from 51.9 per cent of the sample – a total of 75 per cent (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I tend to stick to the NLS guidelines for guided reading'



This figure seems to match the general level of adherence with NLS guidelines reflected in the pattern of teachers' responses to the other survey items. Where teachers tend not to adhere, the issues are related to time factors. For example, from teachers' reports of the typical duration of their guided reading sessions, it appears that few follow the recommended 10 minutes per session (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Percentage of respondents indicating duration of typical guided reading session with one group

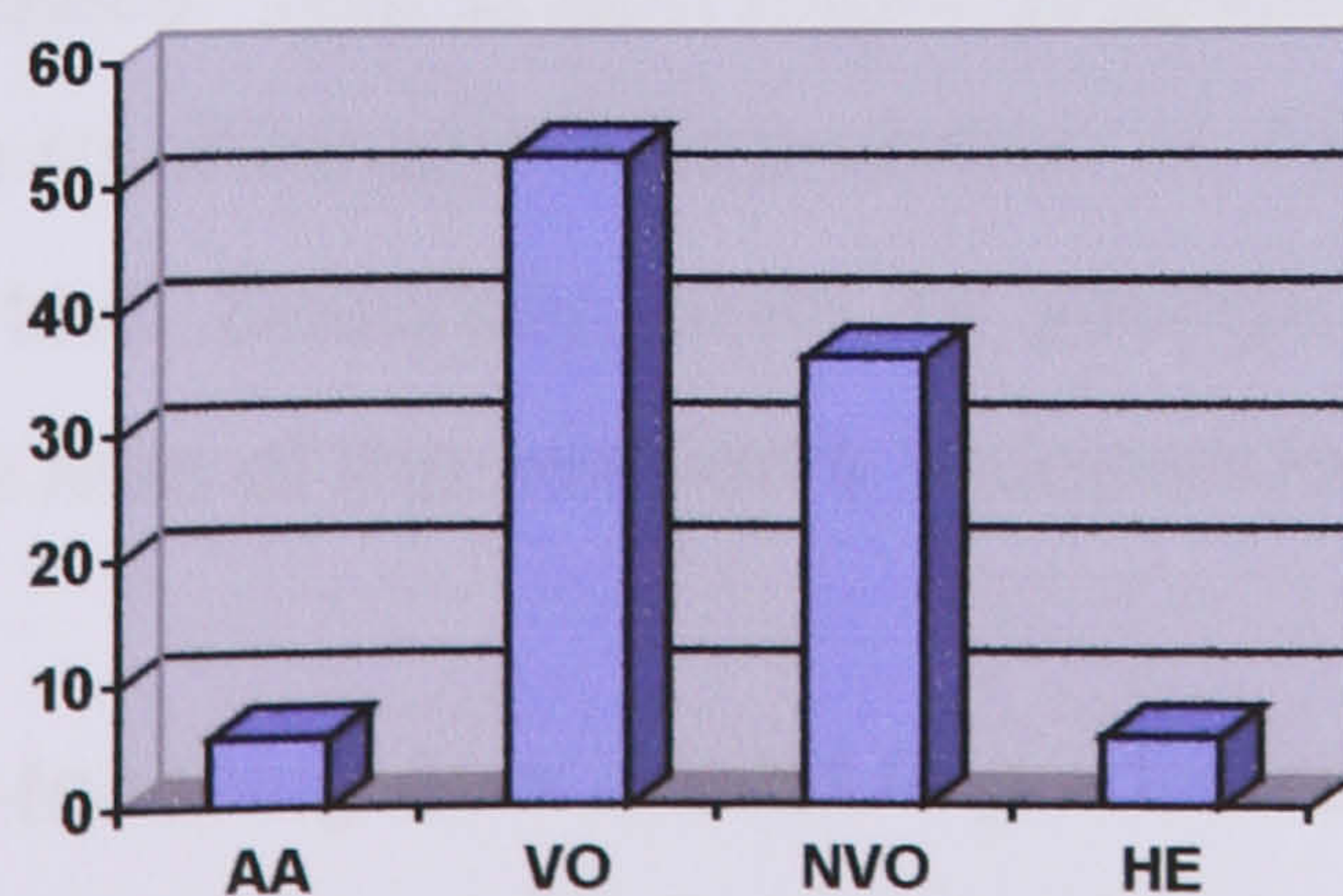


The average duration of each guided reading session was reported to be 20 minutes (median and mode). More specifically, 20 per cent teachers reported 10 minutes typical duration, 22 per cent reported 15 minutes typical duration and 50 per cent reported 20 minute typical duration.

Fiction and Non-fiction Texts for Guided Reading

There was no predominant pattern of responses to the three of the survey items. The first was 'I use non-fiction books in guided reading' (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I use non-fiction books in guided reading'

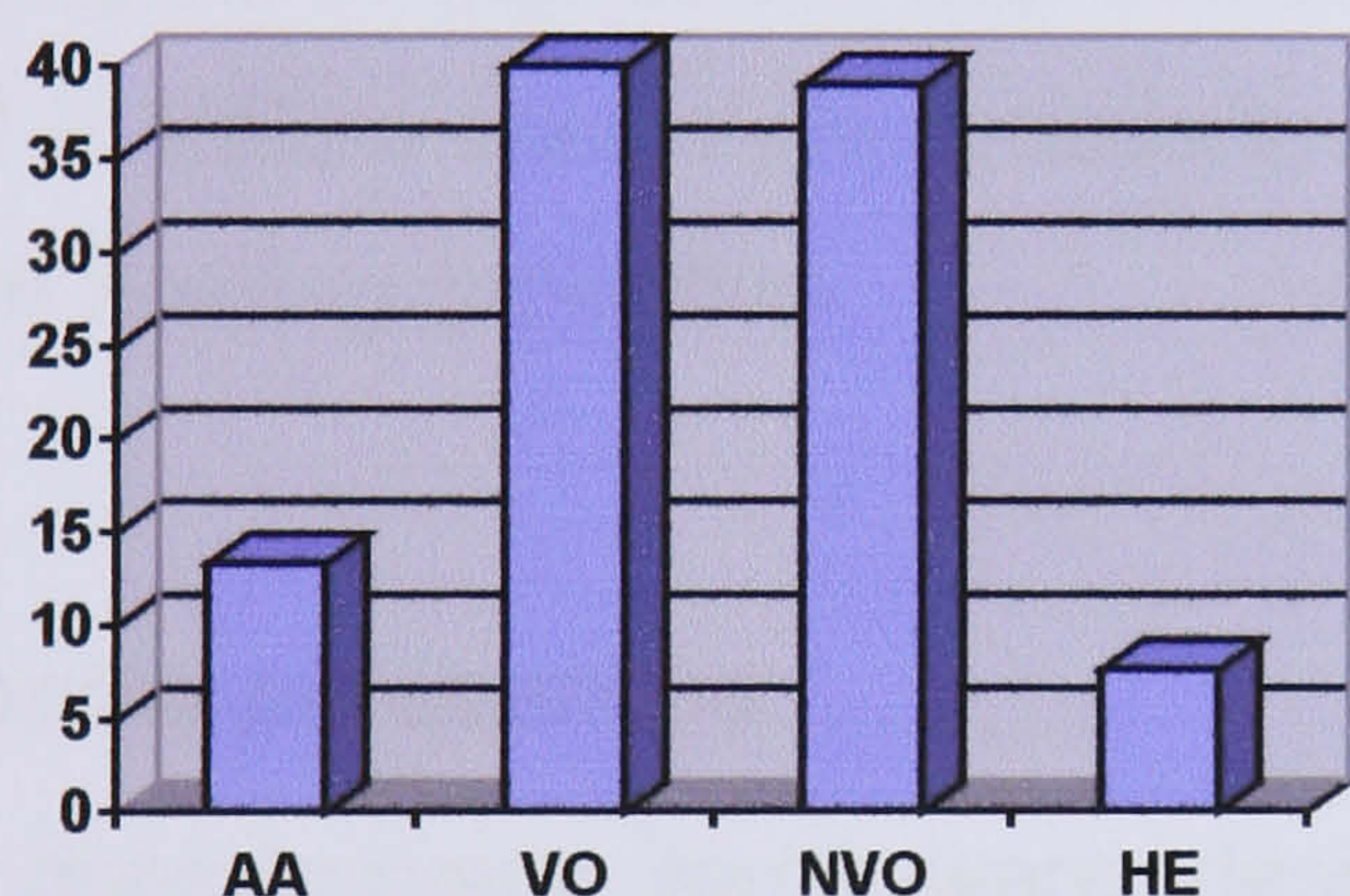


However, there was evidence that teachers in Y2 and Y2/3 classes were more likely to report using non-fiction books in guided reading than Reception and Y1 teachers. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.017$). This can be explained by the tendency to introduce beginning readers to narrative because of its familiar temporal structure. Moreover, narrative tends to be closely associated with the early years curriculum.

Time to talk for guided reading

The second item with no predominant pattern of responses was: 'I run out of time to talk about the book in the kind of detail I'd like to' (Figure 25).

Figure 25: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I run out of time to talk about the book in the kind of detail I'd like to'

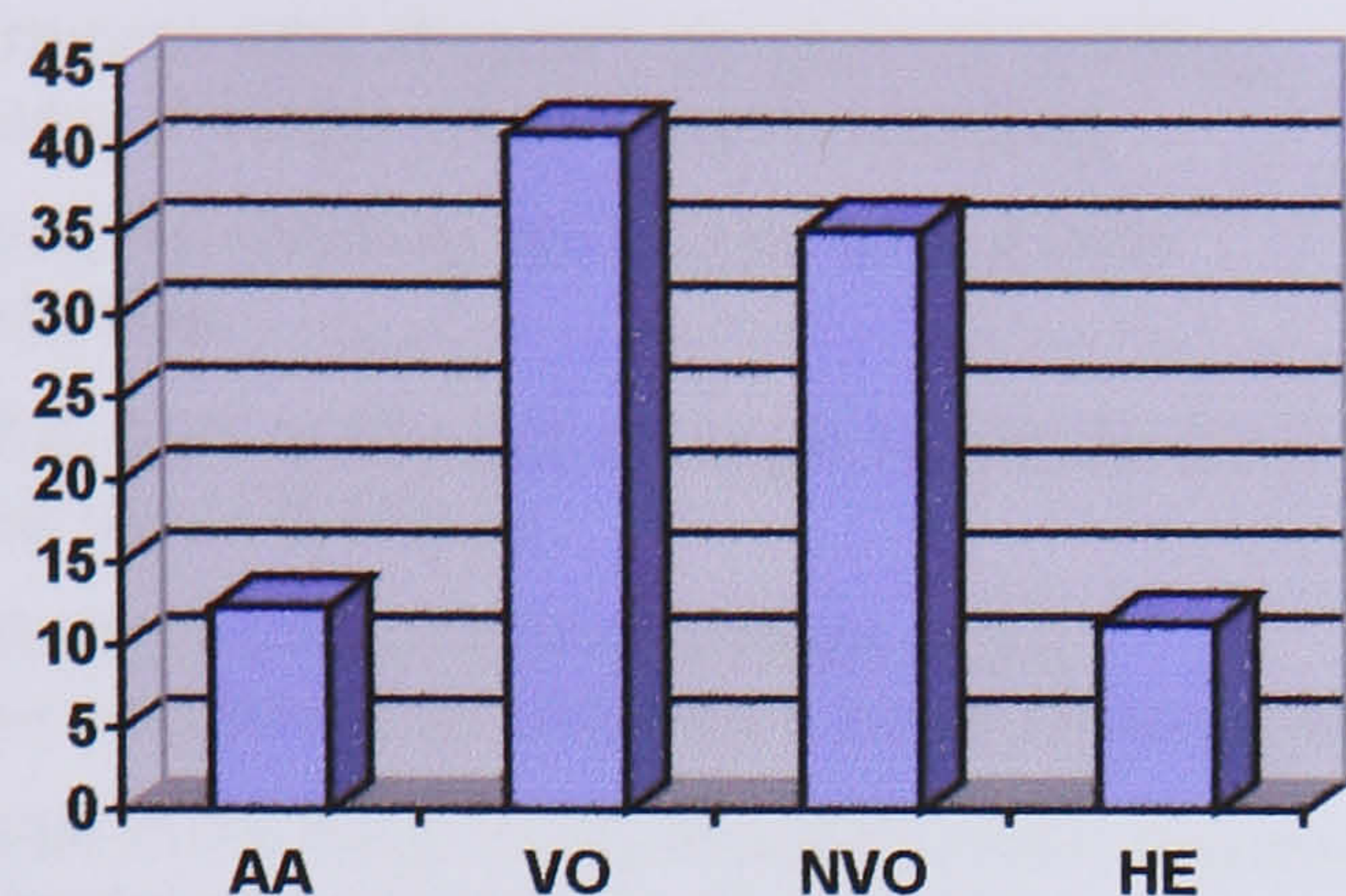


However, there was evidence that teachers in Y2 and Y2/3 classes were more likely to report running out of time for talking about the book in detail, than teachers in Reception and Y1 classes. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.029$). Again, this might be explained in a number of ways. First of all, data suggests that Reception and Y1 teachers promote and monitor children's independent reading accuracy more so than do Y2 and Y2/3 teachers. This in turn might suggest that the latter dedicate more attention and time to children's interpretation of, responses to and general comprehension of the text. Secondly, texts for younger readers tend to be shorter and therefore take less of the session's 'independent reading' time.

Pre-teaching new Words in guided reading

The third item with no predominant pattern of responses was 'I pre-teach new words at the start of each guided reading session' (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I pre-teach new words at the start of each guided reading session'.



However, there was evidence that teachers in Reception and Y1 classes were more likely to report pre-teaching new words than teachers in Y2 and Y2/3 classes. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.017$). Again, the finding fits in with others that demonstrate a tendency for teachers of younger and therefore less skilled readers, to emphasise the promotion of children's word reading capacities.

Teacher perceptions

21 questionnaire items were designed to answer the following research questions regarding teachers' perceptions of guided reading:

- How do teachers view the purpose and organisation of guided reading?
- What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of guided reading?
- To what extent are teachers confident about implementing guided reading?

A computer analysis was carried out to provide simple descriptive statistics showing the frequency distribution of responses to each item in the section relating to 'viewpoints on guided reading at KS1'. The wording of the questionnaire items and the distribution of responses to each of them, are shown in Table 3. The items invited responses in the categories: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Table 3: Percentage of respondents making each response to each questionnaire item related to perceptions in guided reading.

Item	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I don't really understand what I'm meant to be doing in guided reading	1.9	13.5	30.4	45.2
Anyone who doesn't do guided reading doesn't know what they're missing	6.9	48.5	34.7	9.9
Guided reading isn't easy to put into practice	13.5	44.2	35.6	6.7
I haven't really got enough books to do it the way I'd like to	17.3	21.2	42.3	19.2
I find guided reading makes a big improvement to children's comprehension	21.6	60.8	14.7	2.9
I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher	71.2	19.2	8.7	1.0
I couldn't do guided reading quite so well if I didn't have extra help in the classroom	64.6	24.2	9.1	2.0
Parents don't like guided reading	5.8	36.0	50.0	8.1
I am not yet certain how to select books for guided reading	3.0	12.0	51.0	34.0
The children love guided reading	30.4	57.8	10.8	1.0
I just wish we'd been given more training to do guided reading	16.7	44.1	32.4	6.9
There isn't really the time to check each child's performance during guided reading sessions	19.2	29.8	41.3	9.6
Guided reading is just another fad	6.1	20.2	46.5	27.3
Guided reading is by far the best way to promote reading for meaning KS1	12.2	45.9	33.7	8.2
I don't believe in changing the groups around too often because it disturbs the relationship that children form	4.0	37.0	48.0	11.0
It just isn't possible to do a worthwhile guided reading session in only 10 minutes	31.4	44.1	22.5	2.0
I am confident that guided reading has improved the reading standards in my class	7.1	63.3	26.5	3.1
Guided reading is the only part of the literacy hour I don't like	5.9	12.7	51.0	30.4
Just <u>one</u> guided reading session per group, per week isn't enough to make a difference to children's reading at KS1	24.7	47.4	27.8	–
I wish I was more confident in my understanding of teaching reading in general	4.0	14.0	53.0	29.0
Guided reading is a marvellous context for actually fostering the habit of independent reading	11.1	62.6	21.2	5.1

There was a greater range in responses to the 'perception' items than to the 'practice' items. It could be argued that, with guided reading in its infancy in most classrooms, perceptions might have been rather tentative. In other words,

teachers might not yet have been in a position to make informed judgements about its benefits or otherwise because they just didn't have sufficient information. There were, however, a number of items that did draw either strong agreement or strong disagreement from teachers. This would suggest that within the sample surveyed, some perceptions of guided reading did predominate. Items were therefore ranked according to the strength of agreement/disagreement reported and they are outlined below.

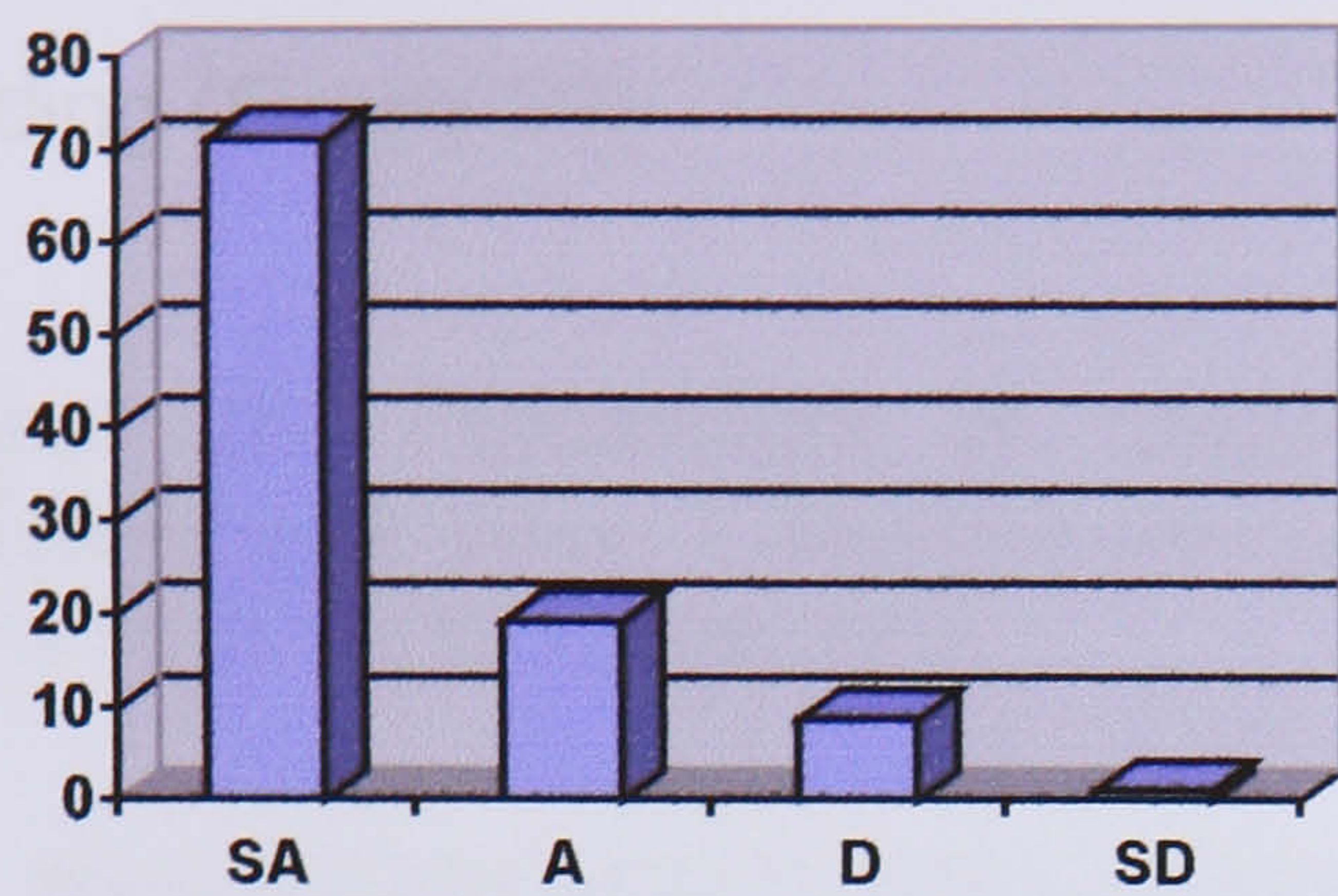
The following abbreviations are used in the figures below: **SA**: Strongly Agree; **A**: Agree; **D**: Disagree; **SD**: Strongly Disagree.

Guided reading and/or 'hearing children read' one-to-one

The item, 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher' drew the responses: 'strongly agree' from 71.2 per cent and 'tend to agree' from 19.2 per cent of the sample - a combined total of 90.4 per cent (Figure 27). More people strongly agreed with this item than with any other on the questionnaire. This might suggest that teachers regard guided reading not so much as a substitute for the more traditional, individualised 'hearing children read', but as an additional context for the teaching of reading. It is interesting to note that many of the practices associated with guided reading have been appropriated from *Reading Recovery* (RR) – which itself is a *one-to-one* intervention programme. In other words, the efficacy of guided reading has not yet been demonstrated. More specifically, integral to RR is the kind of contingent teaching that can only follow from close monitoring and regular assessment of individual children's reading performance and preferences. Guided reading with a group, on the other hand, cannot offer teachers the same opportunities for such individualised and personalised attention. It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that teachers take such a view.

A further explanation might be the fact that guided reading was designed to 'replace' (DfEE, 1998b, video 2) the long-established tradition of individualised reading. Moreover, individualised teaching was central to Waterland's influential 'apprenticeship approach'. Perhaps such a rapid switch from a familiar classroom routine to one which was both novel and unfamiliar

Figure 27: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher'



deserved not just more time dedicated to its 'initiation' but also more focused training to support its eventual 'implementation' (OISE/UT, 2003). Also, teachers are perhaps in the early stages of implementing this new practice which has not 'bedded in' sufficiently for them to be confident about its particular benefits. HMI commented in its evaluation of the third year of the National Literacy Strategy:

[A] tiny minority of teachers continue to be unsure of the nature and purposes of guided reading. In the unsatisfactory lessons it amounts to little more than a time to hear individual pupils read with some general questions at the end of the session. (OfSTED, 2001, para. 48)

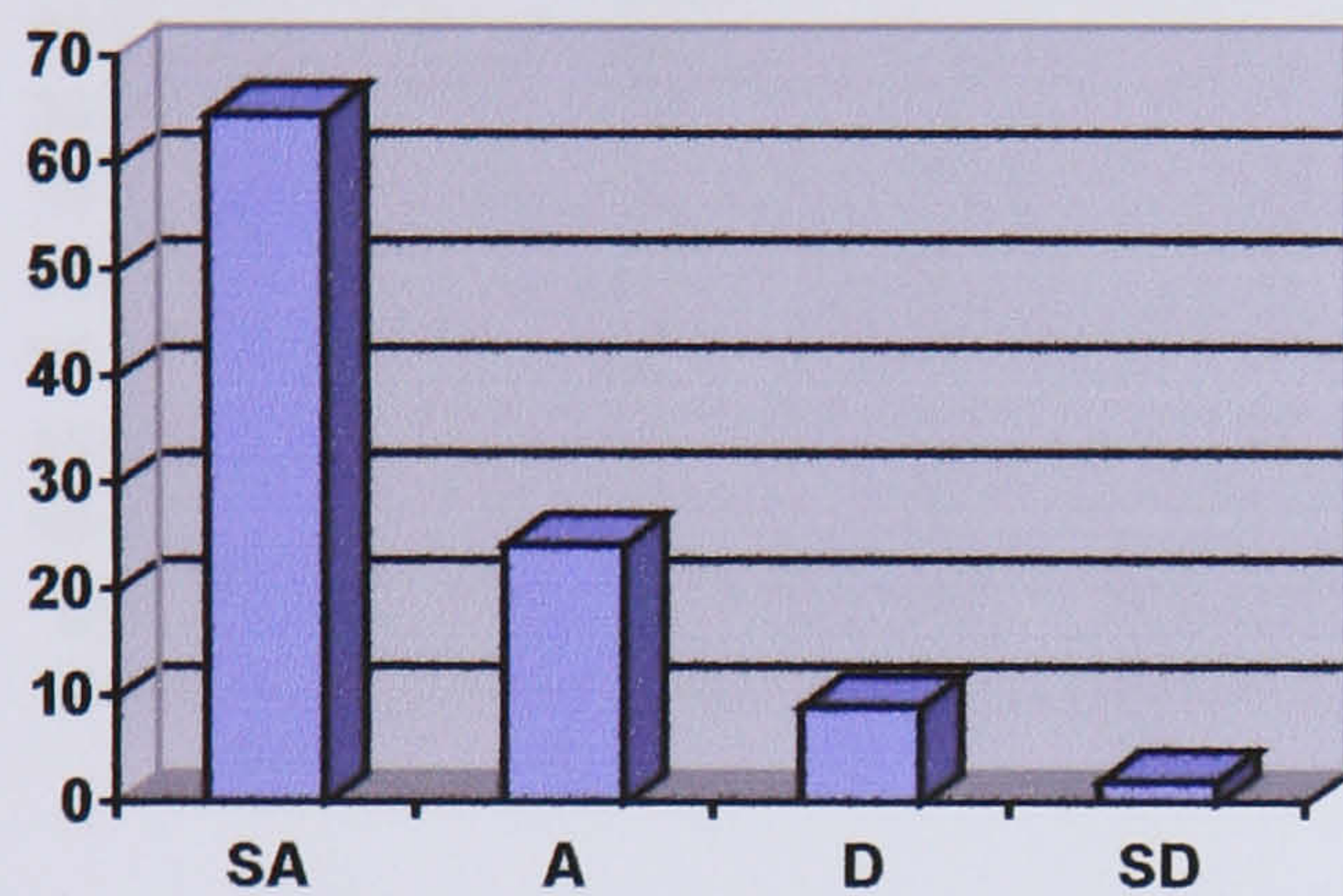
It is interesting to note that teachers who tended to agree with the item, 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher' were also more likely to agree with the item: 'Guided reading is the only part of the literacy hour I don't like'. Moreover, the difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.001$). The question remains as to how teachers perceive guided reading with beginning readers. Case studies were selected so as to investigate contrasting views and practices with regard to guided reading vis-a-vis reading one-to-one.

Additional help in the classroom to support guided reading

Many respondents also reported strong agreement with the statement, 'I couldn't do guided reading quite so well if I didn't have extra help in the classroom': 64.6 per cent 'strongly agreed' and 24.2 per cent 'tended to agree'

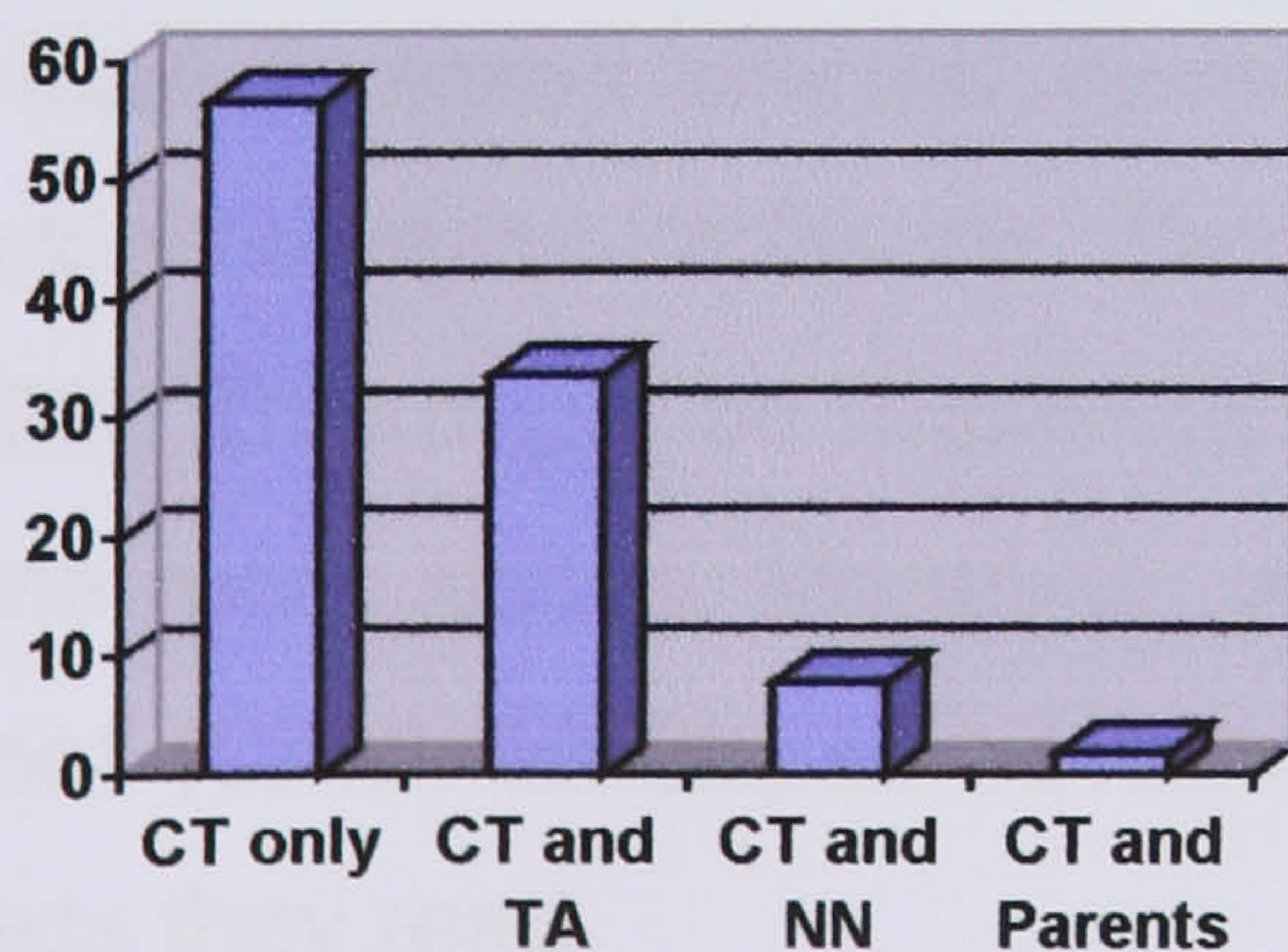
making a total of 88.8% (Figure 28). This matches the finding that whilst 56.7 per cent teachers (CT) reported teaching the guided reading sessions themselves, 41.4 per cent reported that they also deployed classroom assistants (TA) and nursery nurses (NN) to assist in carrying out guided reading (Figure 29).

Figure 28: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I couldn't do guided reading quite so well if I didn't have extra help in the classroom'



The latter statistic suggests that the prevailing practice of deploying additional adults in the teaching of reading continues and that time constraints related to the teaching of reading persist.

Figure 29: Percentage of respondents indicating personnel carrying out guided reading in the class



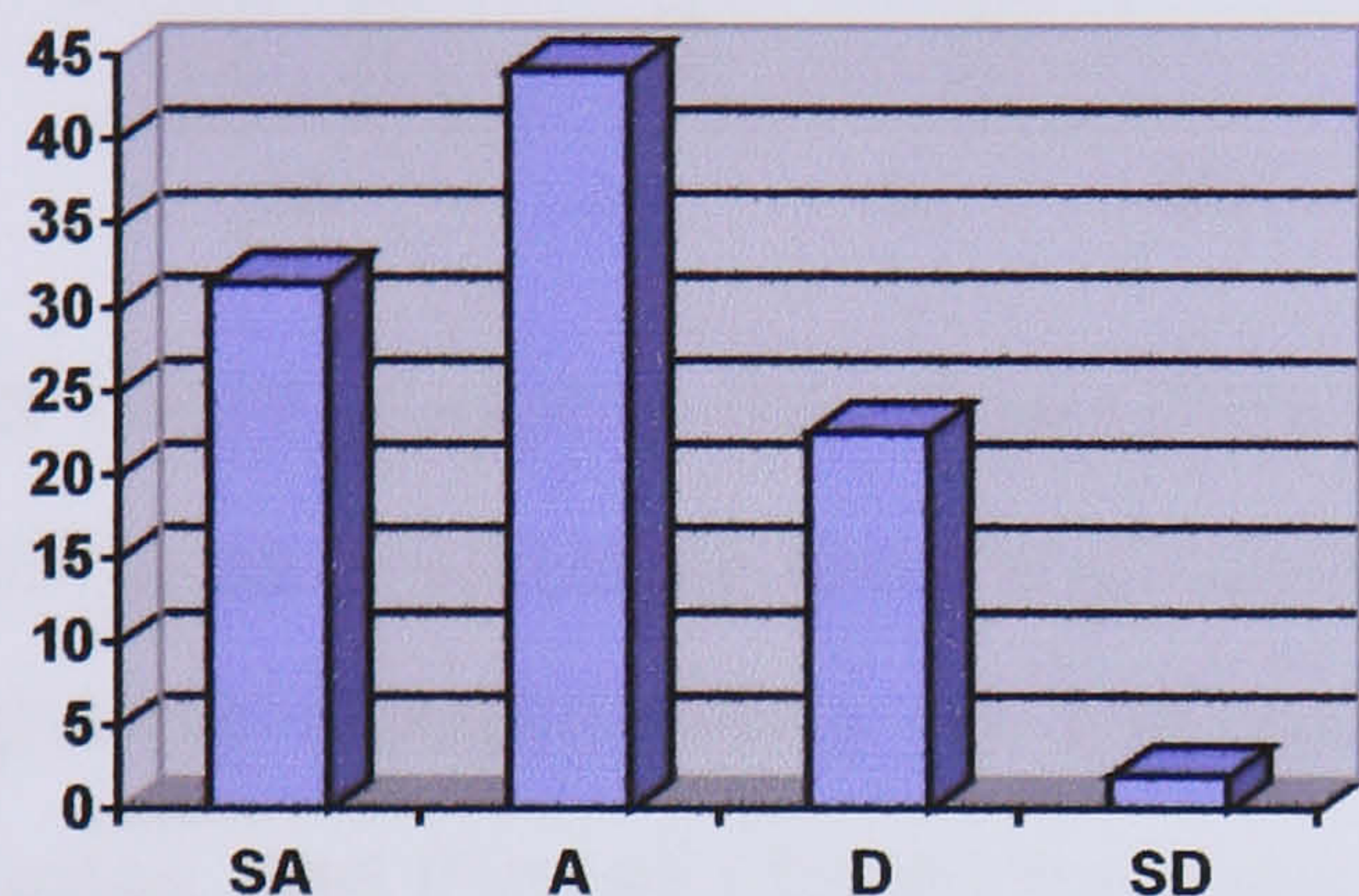
Guided reading sessions- duration and frequency

The challenge of time management carried through into responses to other questionnaire items. Moreover, they drew similar levels of agreement from respondents. In relation to session duration, there was quite strong agreement with the statement, 'It just isn't possible to do a worthwhile guided reading

session in only 10 minutes': 31.4 percent 'strongly agreed' and 44.1 per cent 'tended to agree' – a total of 75.5 per cent (Figure 30).

This ties in with what teachers reported was the typical duration of their guided reading sessions.

Figure 30: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'It just isn't possible to do a worthwhile guided reading session in only 10 minutes'

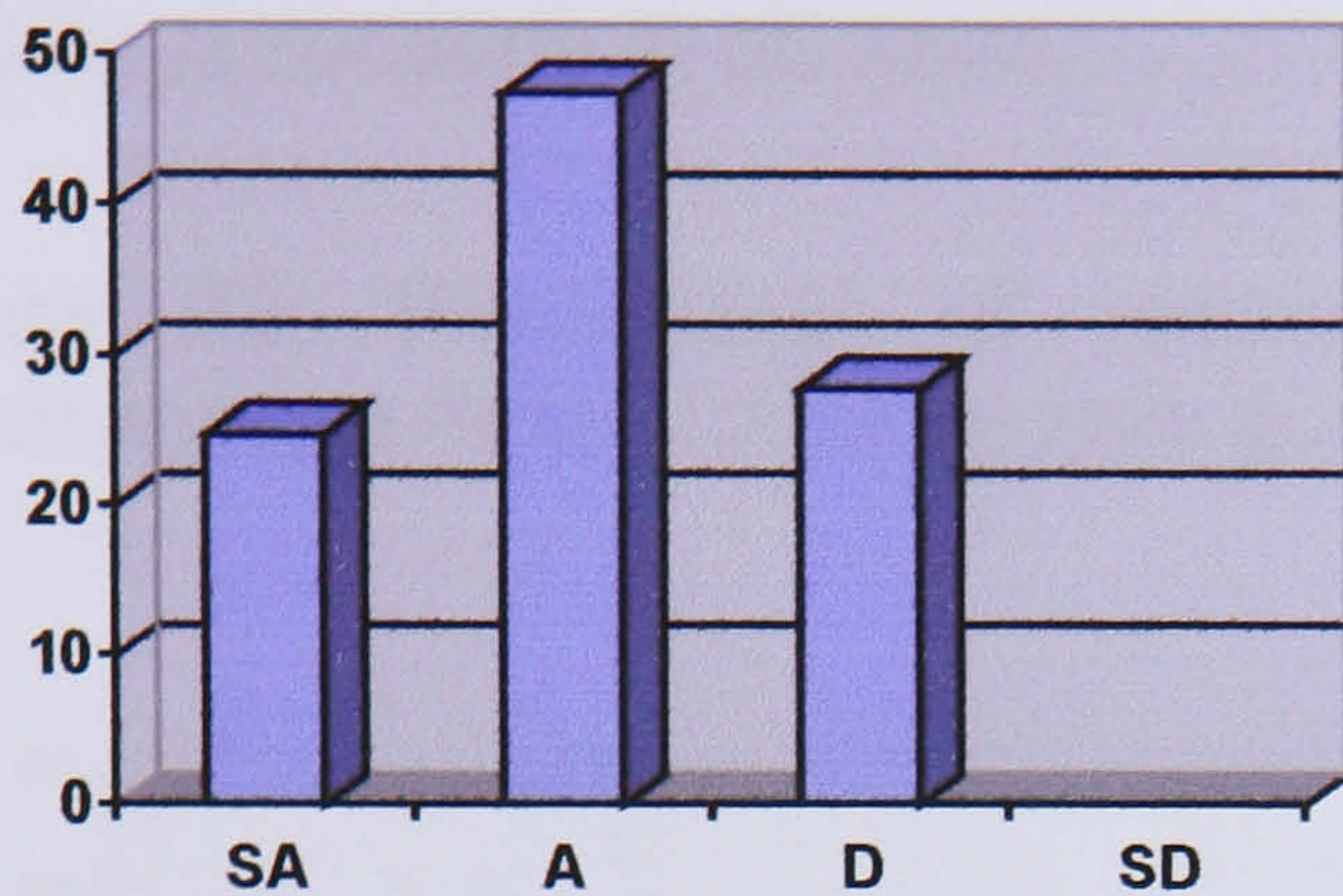


Few reported complying with the recommended 10 minutes per session. The average reported duration of each guided reading session was 20 minutes (median and mode). Only 20 per cent of teachers reported that typical session duration was 10 minutes, while 22 per cent reported 15 minutes typical duration (Figure 23).

There is evidence to suggest that the constraints of time on session duration appear to be more pressing for teachers at the top end of KS1. They were more likely to agree with the statement, 'I run out of time to talk about the book in the kind of detail I'd like to'. The difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.029$). This might be explained by the fact that texts get longer as children become more skilled. Moreover, more skilled readers might be less 'glued to the print' (Chall, 1983b) so have increased capacity to attend to the meaning in the texts they read.

A further tension relating to time was session frequency. The statement, 'Just one guided reading session per group, per week isn't enough to make a difference to children's reading at KS1' drew the following responses: 24.7 per cent 'strongly agreed' and 47.4 per cent 'tended to agree' – a combined total of 72.1 per cent (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'Just one guided reading session per group, per week isn't enough to make a difference to children's reading at KS1'



This might suggest that even though the majority of teachers regard guided reading as a valuable teaching context they also take the view that its potential might be compromised by the constraints of time within the literacy hour. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) for example, recommend that teachers dedicate an hour per day to guided reading groups. Moreover, they recommend that session duration should be flexible and vary between 10 to 30 minutes. What is more, they advise that beginning readers have 10-minute sessions between 3 to 5 times per week. In its 1999 evaluation of the first year of the National Literacy Strategy, HMI commented:

The NLS advises that during group work the teacher should work with 'at least two ability groups each day on guided work (reading or writing)' at Key Stage 1. However, many teachers found it impracticable to take two or more groups for guided reading or writing: only one in three lessons at Key Stage 1 included guided work with two groups of pupils.
(OfSTED, 1999, para. 80)

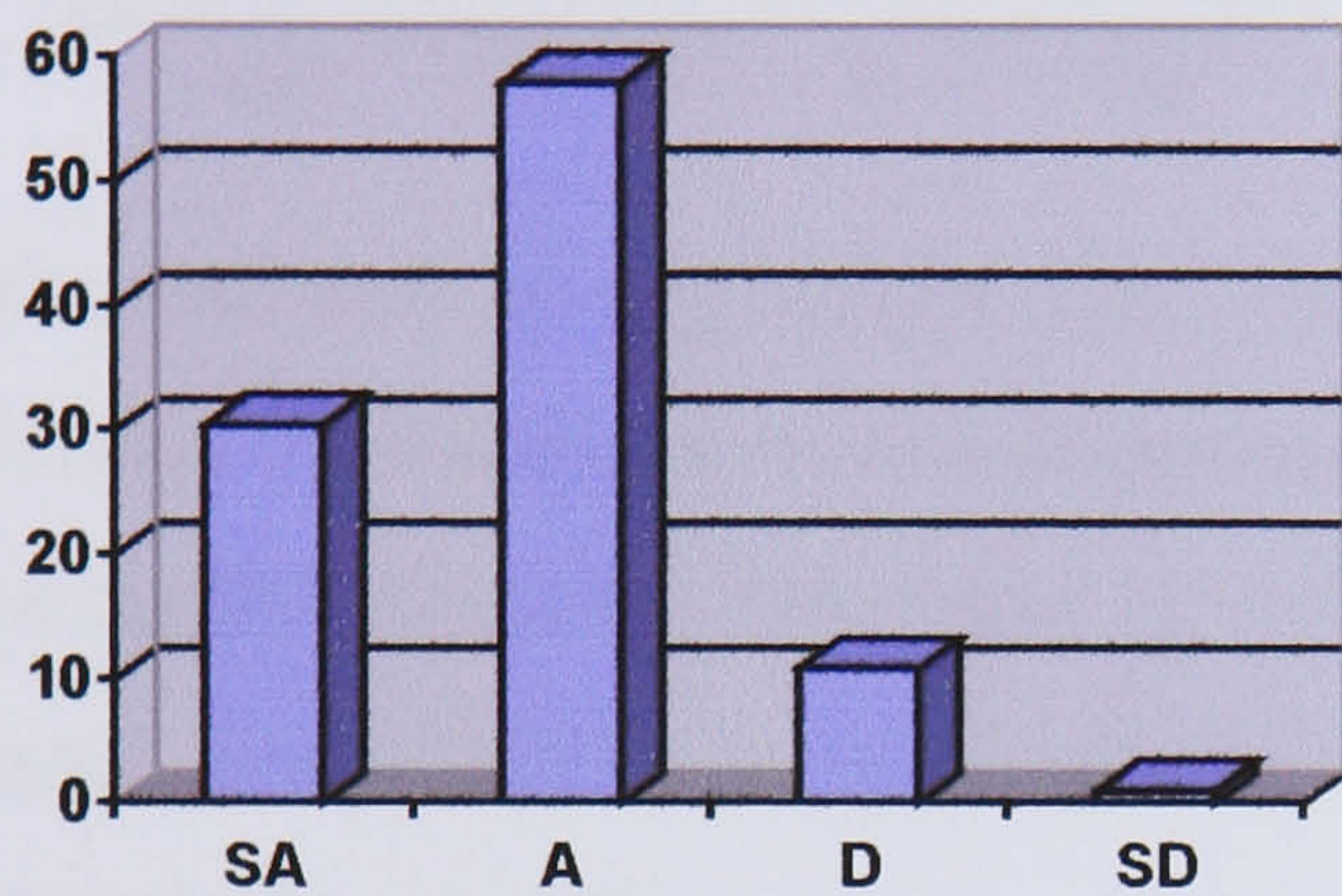
Comparing the time allocated to guided reading in Fountas and Pinnell's programme with the corresponding times recommended in the NLS, it is not surprising that teachers perceive time to be a significant challenge to the implementation of guided reading.

Guided reading – do teachers think it is worthwhile?

There was a tendency to agree with the statement, 'The children love guided reading': 30.4 per cent of the sample 'strongly agreed' and 57.8 per cent 'tended to agree' – a total of 88.2 per cent (Figure 32). The teachers'

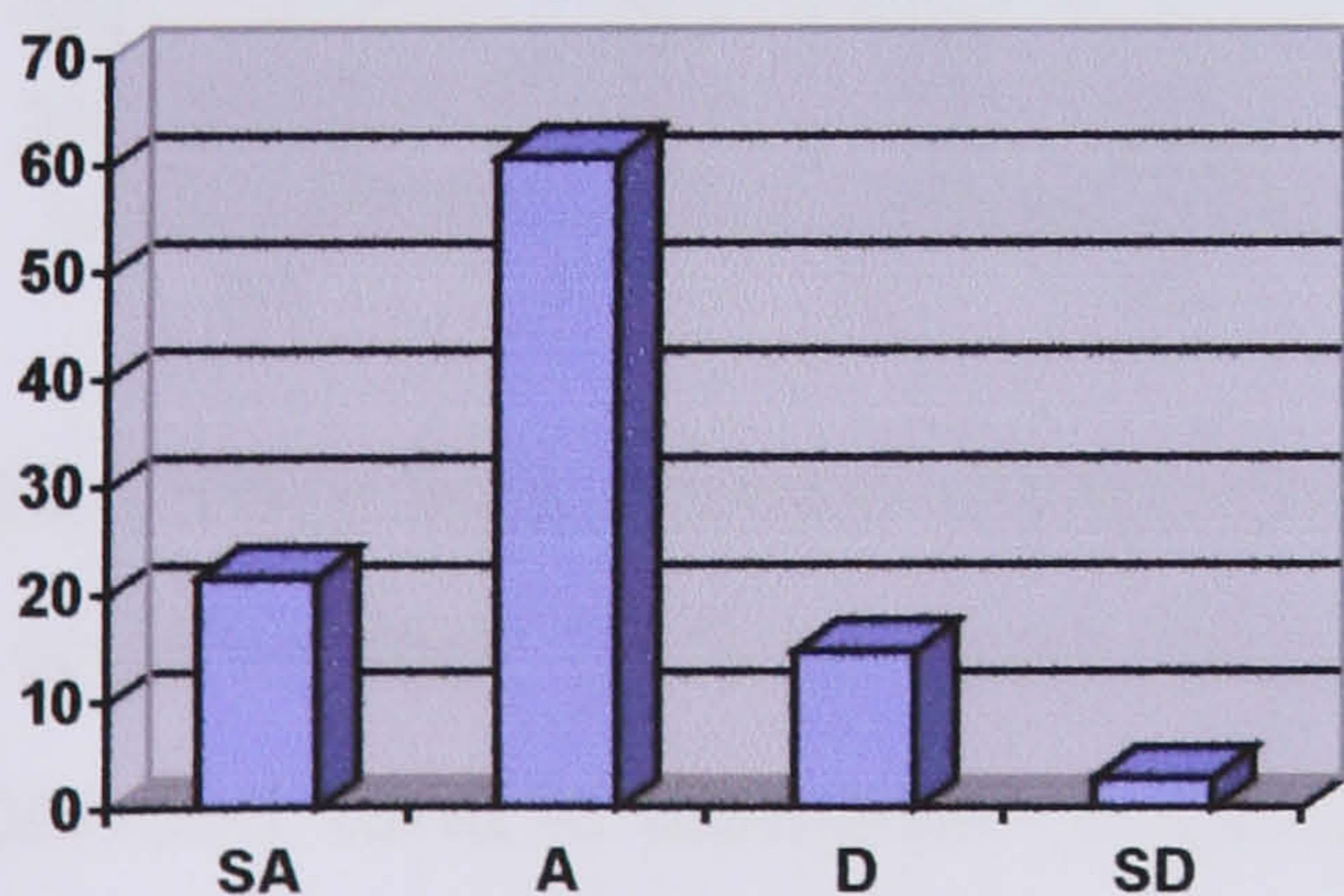
perceptions of their children's attitude to guided reading seems to correspond to their own perceptions and attitudes as the responses to the following cluster of items demonstrates: all the following statements drew favourable responses from a large proportion of respondents. What exactly the appeal of guided reading is remains to be seen.

Figure 32: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'Children love guided reading'



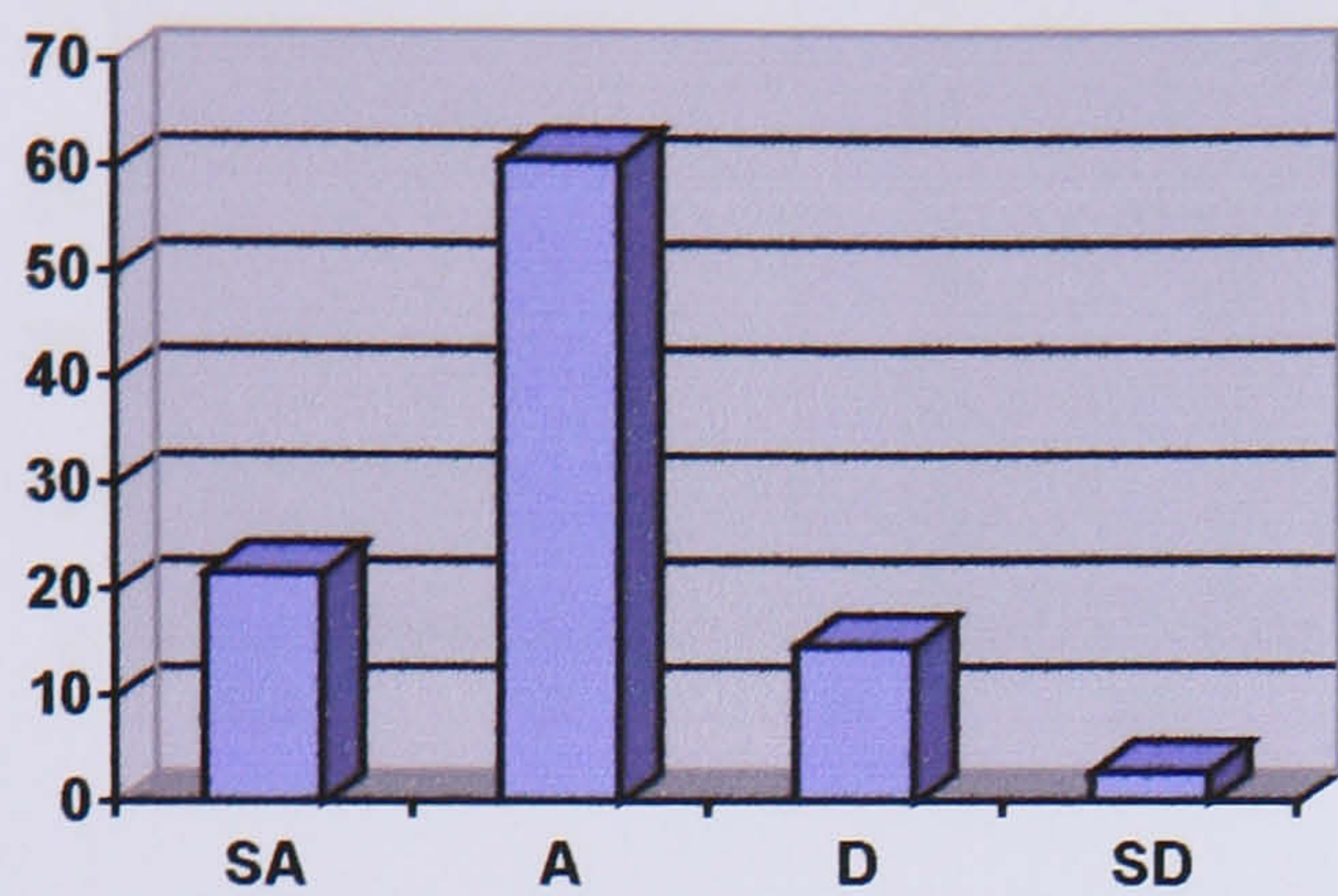
There was a general tendency for teachers to agree with the statement, 'I find guided reading makes a big difference to children's reading comprehension'. 21.6 per cent 'strongly agreed' and 60.8 per cent 'tended to agree' with this statement - a combined total of 82.4 per cent (Figure 33).

Figure 33: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I find guided reading makes a big difference to children's reading comprehension'.



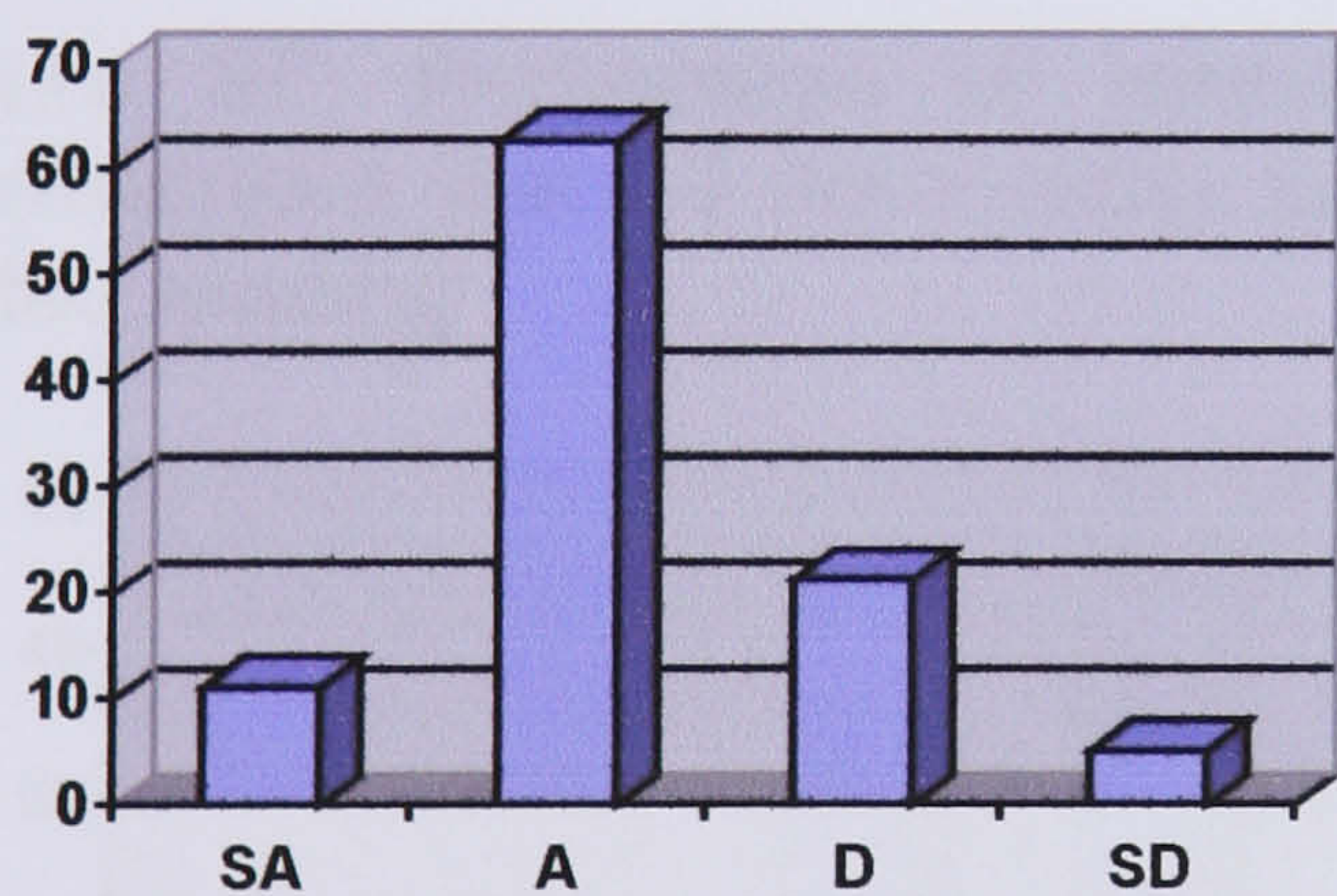
Perhaps more teachers merely 'tended to agree' than 'agreed strongly' because they did not have precise assessment data on which to base a informed judgement. Likewise, in response to the statement: 'I'm confident that guided reading has improved the reading standards in my class', 7.1 per cent of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 63.3 per cent 'tended to agree' a combined total of 70.3 per cent (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I'm confident that guided reading has improved the reading standards in my class'



Again, without strong evidence, judgements might tend to be rather tentative. Similarly, in response to the statement: 'Guided reading is a marvellous context for actually fostering the habit of independent reading', 11.1 per cent 'strongly agreed' and 62.65 per cent 'tended to agree' making a combined total of 73.7 per cent (Figure 35).

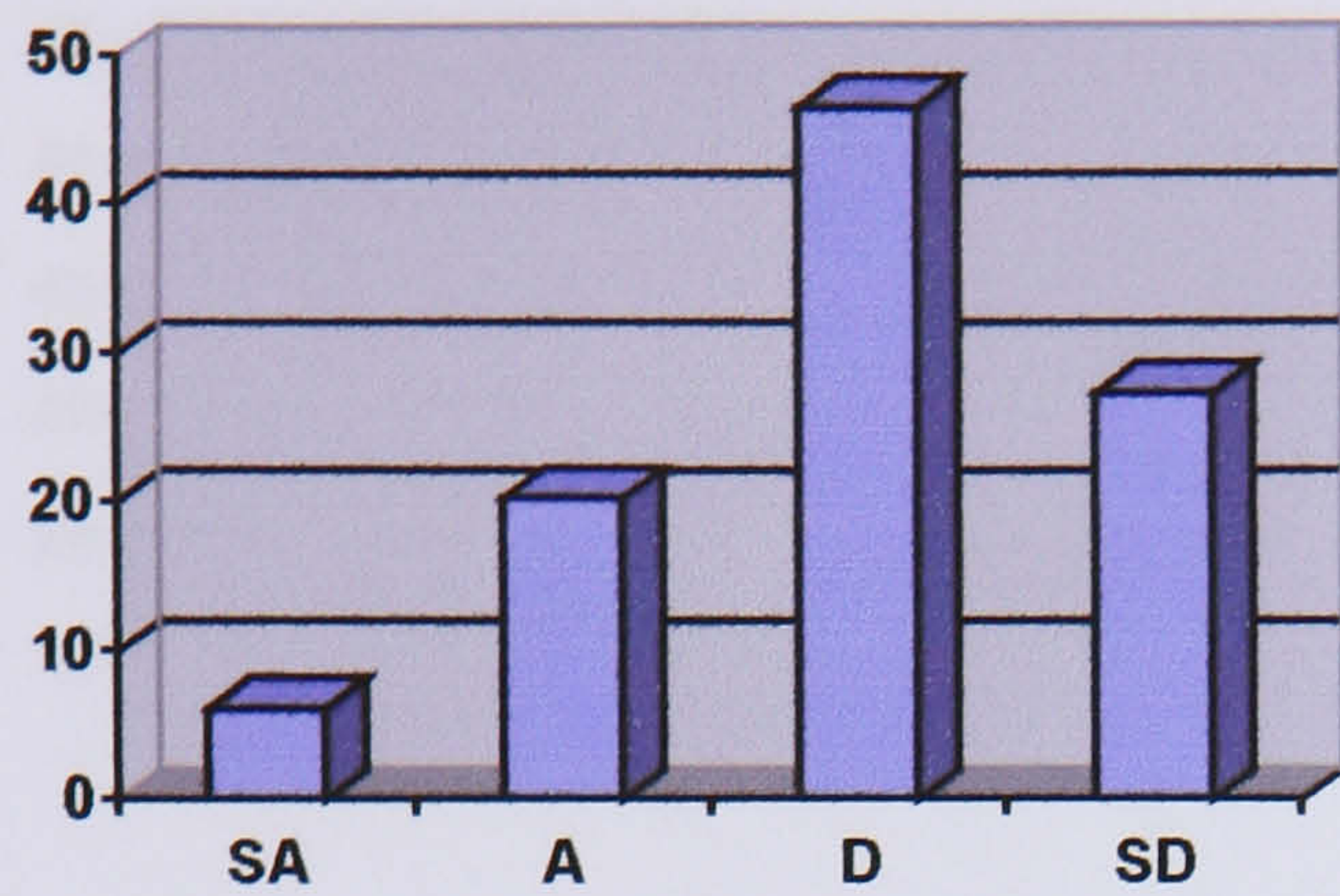
Figure 35: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'Guided reading is a marvellous context for actually fostering the habit of independent reading'



Finally, there was general disagreement with the statement, 'Guided reading is just another fad': 27.3 per cent responded 'strongly disagree' and 46.5 per cent responded 'tend to disagree' - a combined total of 73.8 per cent (Figure 36).

In summary, responses to the above evaluative statements show that teachers take a generally positive view of this new teaching context. However, teachers' judgements about the effectiveness of guided reading in raising attainments remains more tentative.

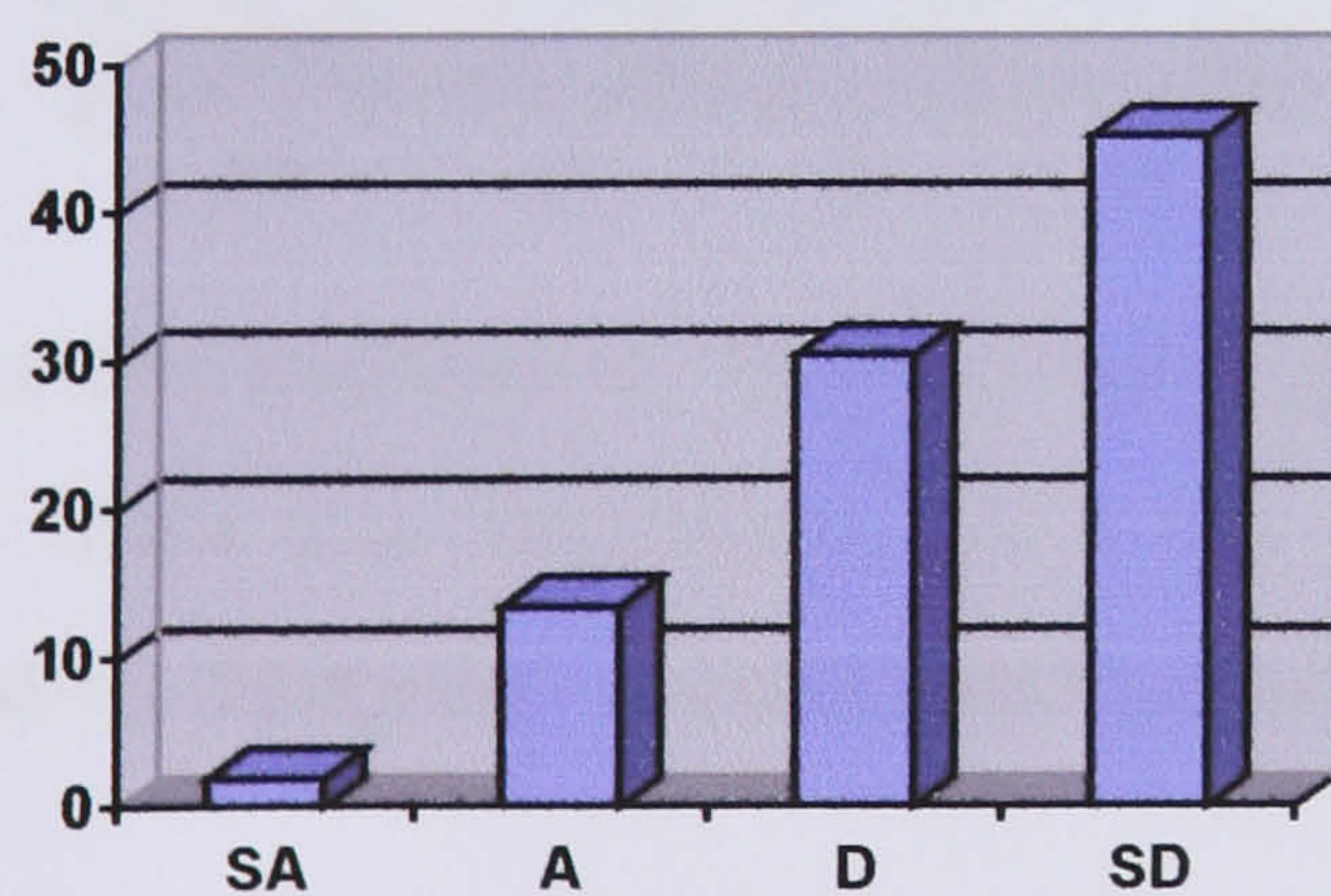
Figure 36: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'Guided reading is just another fad'



Teacher confidence

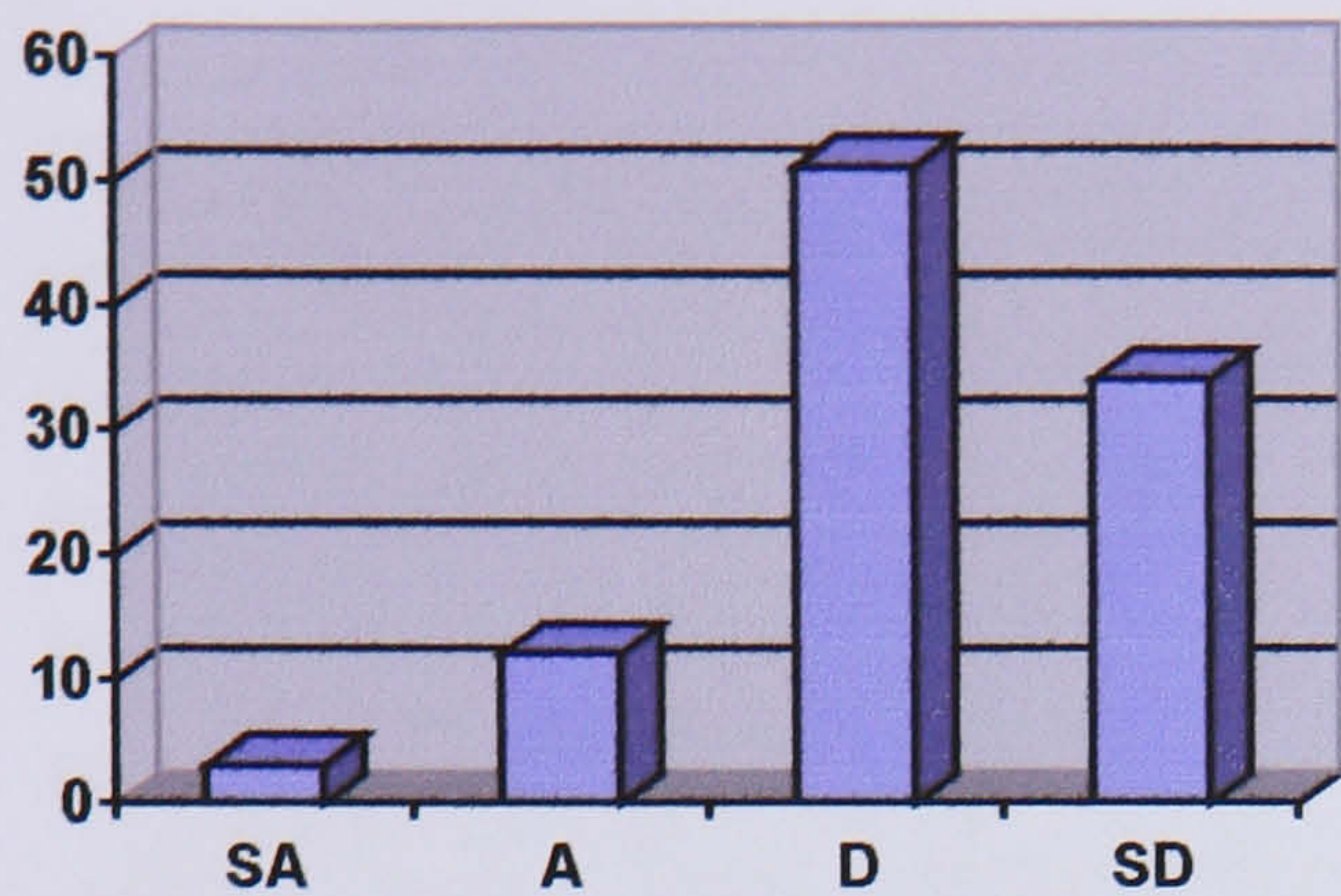
The generally positive perception of guided reading that teachers expressed was further underlined by their responses to a cluster of statements which expressed negative viewpoints: most teachers tended to disagree with such statements. There was strong disagreement with the statement, 'I don't really understand what I'm meant to be doing in guided reading': 45.2 per cent 'strongly disagreed' and 39.4 per cent 'tended to disagree' - a combined total of 84.6 per cent (Figure 37).

Figure 37: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I don't really understand what I'm meant to be doing in guided reading'



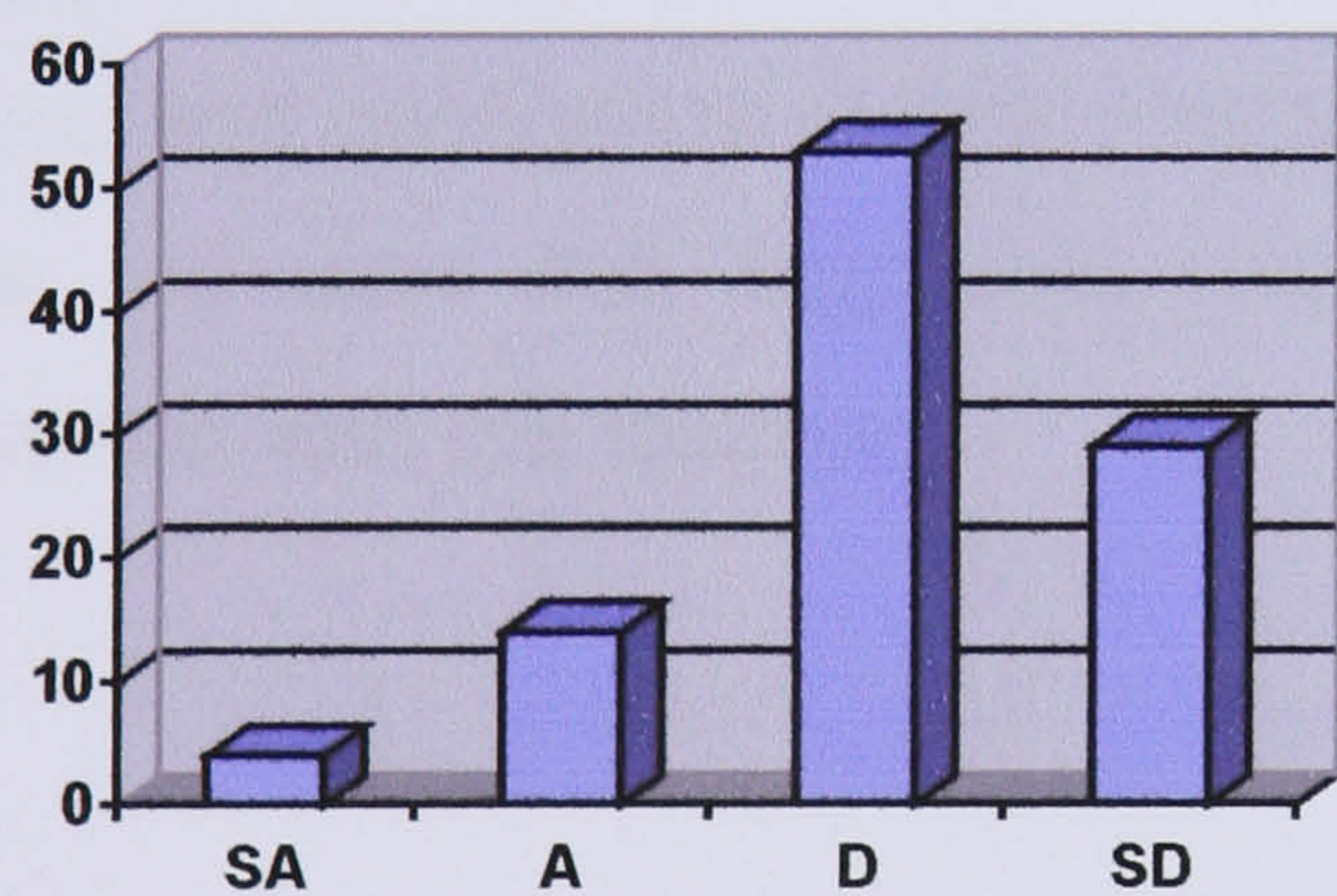
A similar response was made to the statement, 'I'm not yet certain how to select books for guided reading': 34 per cent 'strongly disagreed' and 51 per cent 'tended to disagree' - a combined total of 85 per cent (Figure 38).

Figure 38: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I'm not yet certain how to select books for guided reading'



Likewise the statement, 'I wish I was more confident in my understanding of teaching reading in general' drew the response 'strongly disagree' from 29 per cent and the response 'tend to disagree' from 53 per cent - a combined total of 82 per cent (Figure 39).

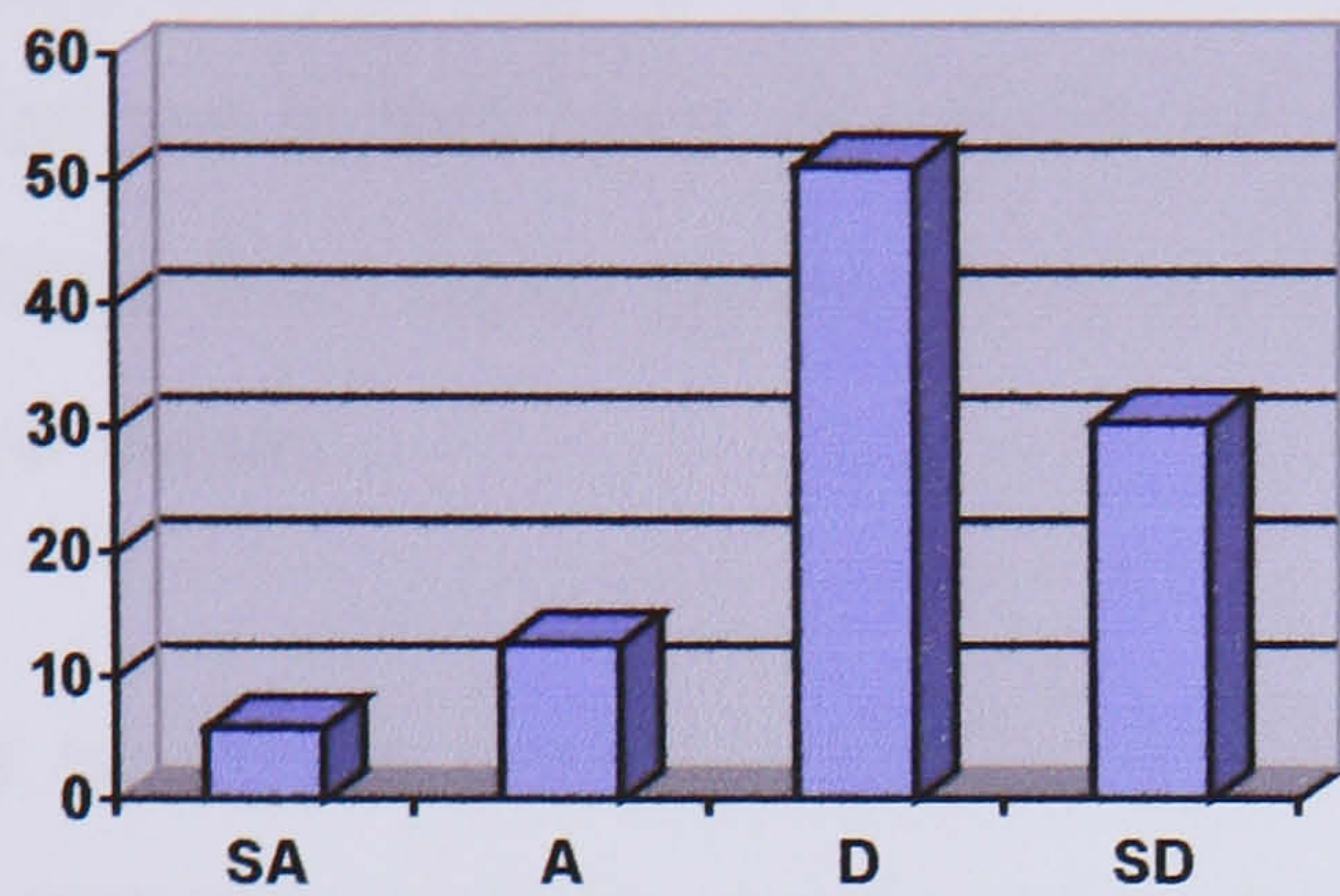
Table 39: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'I wish I was more confident in my understanding of teaching reading in general'



Also, the statement, 'Guided reading is the only part of the literacy hour I don't like' drew the responses: 30.4 per cent 'strongly disagree' and 51 per cent 'tend to disagree'- a combined total of 80.4 per cent (Figure 40).

All these findings suggest that most teachers are generally confident about guided reading and moreover, they appear to welcome its implementation in their classrooms.

Figure 40: Percentage of respondents making each response to the questionnaire item: 'Guided reading is the only part of the literacy hour I don't like'



In summary, the teachers' reported practice was generally in line with NLS guidelines. Some reported practices were, however, at variance with those guidelines. They were practices related to: timing; contextual guessing; independent re-reading; monitoring all the children in the group; and the use of graded schemes.

Teachers' perceptions of guided reading were generally very positive and they expressed confidence in their practice. However, more teachers than expected took the view that beginning readers were still in need of individualised sessions with the teacher.

SECTION 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDIES

The previous section revealed a high degree of adherence by teachers to the guidelines set out for guided reading in the NLS. There were, however, some variations in teachers' practices and their perceptions. This section sets out the findings from case studies that were designed to investigate those variations in more detail.

The literature review, concluded with an outline of some tensions that were considered likely to accompany the implementation of guided reading in the NLS. The tensions were connected to teachers' practice in, and perceptions of, guided reading. Briefly, the tensions were characterised by:

- contrasting models of the reading process
- contrasting roles for reading teachers
- contrasting features of instructional texts
- contrasting teaching contexts

These suggested tensions led to the construction of the research questions set on pages 42 and 43.

The sample

Cases were selected so that guided reading could be investigated in a number of contexts. To aid the selection of cases, questionnaire items were placed so that two particular tensions could be investigated in more detail. The first was a practice-related item: 'In guided reading I use graded books from a commercial reading scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*'. The second was a perception-related item: 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher'. Teachers selected for this part of the study represented contrasting practice and perceptions connected to the two questionnaire items outlined above. The following matrix illustrates the status of each of the four cases (Table 4).

Table 4: Case matrix showing position of Ms W, Ms X, Ms Y and Ms Z

practice perception	Scheme book used in guided reading	Non-scheme book used in guided reading
Beginning readers need one-to-one reading with the teacher	Ms Z <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ORT</i> • follows <i>ORT</i> book stages • 1:1 and pairs with the teacher • guided reading books don't go home 	Ms Y <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sunshine Books</i> – a short repeating-sequence story • an 'easy' read in guided reading • 1:1 with 'Better Reading' tutor for 10 mins, twice per week
Beginning readers don't need one-to-one reading with the teacher	Ms X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ORT</i> • 70%-80% accuracy target in guided reading • 1:1 with TA • guided reading books go home 	Ms W <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Oxford Literacy Web</i> – a lengthy traditional-type story • 75% accuracy target in guided reading • 1:1 with parent helper • guided reading books go home

The data

Audio-recordings of the four taught sessions and teacher interviews were transcribed in full. Next, the transcripts were augmented and annotated using field notes made during the sessions. Coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of the transcripts was carried out 'on screen' using a system of colour-coding against the research questions (Appendix 8). Teachers' planning and recording documents were also annotated and similarly coded.

Analysis

There were two steps to the analysis (Yin, 1989). The aim of the first step was to understand each case as a whole – a 'within-case analysis'. Transcriptions of the guided reading sessions made it possible to compare each taught session with NLS guidelines regarding teaching sequence and teaching techniques. This was a systematic analysis because the NLS guidelines are clearly set out (Figure 5). The framework indicates both timings, teaching sequence and recommended teaching techniques. In addition, field notes enabled teachers' choice of texts to be compared with NLS advice regarding text selection for beginning readers. Moreover, field notes added to the overall picture.

The second step in the analysis was that of comparing the cases against the research questions – ‘cross-case analysis’ - in order to investigate the tensions proposed in the first part of the study. Hence, each case was analysed around a common framework in order to generate patterns and perhaps arrive at some generalisations (ibid.).

Both analyses extended the investigation in two ways. First, they provided precise details of the degree to which guided reading in practice adhered to NLS guidelines. Second, they revealed patterns in teachers’ practices in, and perceptions of, guided reading in the NLS.

The guided reading sessions: ‘within-case analysis’

This section begins with accounts of each of the four observed sessions supplemented by information about the schools, classes and class routines drawn from both interview and documentary evidence.

Case W

Context of the guided reading session

The matrix in Table 5 shows the status of Ms W in the case study sample.

Table 5: Ms W in the case study matrix

practice \ perception	Scheme book used in guided reading	Non-scheme book used in guided reading
Beginning readers need one-to-one reading with the teacher		
Beginning readers don’t need one-to-one reading with the teacher		Ms W <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Oxford Literacy Web</i> – a lengthy traditional-type story • 75% accuracy target in guided reading • 1:1 with parent helper • guided reading books go home

W Primary School is located in an urban setting. At the time of the case study, Ms W had been teaching for 4 years in total – all 4 in KS1. She combined her

role of class teacher with that of KS1 English coordinator. Ms W took sole responsibility for the guided reading in her Reception class. The class book stock was arranged in levels and included a variety of schemes, sets and series such as *Oxford Reading Tree* (OUP, 1986) and the *Sunshine Books* (Heinemann, 1987). Ms W's response to the questionnaire item 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher' was to 'tend to disagree'. This reported viewpoint was reflected in her practice: Ms W did not work with children one-to-one. However, she routinely deployed a 'parent helper' who 'knows all the strategies' to hear children read individually. In addition, the children frequently took 'comfortable' books home for reading 'practice' with parents. Ms W's response to the questionnaire item 'In guided reading I use books from a commercial scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*' was coded as 'hardly ever' because Ms W wrote the word 'never' in the margin of the questionnaire adjacent to this item. Her reported practice was reflected in the session observed: Ms W used a book from the *Oxford Literacy Web* (Oxford University Press, 1999) (stage 5, 'Traditional Tales', *The Genie in the Bottle*).

The guided reading session

Ms W's guided reading session with five children at 'upper level 1' was carried out in the 'shared library area' outside the classroom. Ms W had a detailed plan. A chart showing the timings and teaching sequence of Ms W's guided reading session is set out in Table 6. The guided reading session lasted for a total of 38 minutes – a duration far longer than the 15 minutes the teacher had reported was typical. However, the teacher explained that the text she had chosen had proved to be more challenging because it was a lot 'longer' than she had expected. Ms W reported choosing texts for guided reading that children would read with around 75 per cent accuracy, so she had anticipated it would be a considerable challenge.

The 'book introduction' lasted for 9 minutes and began with a discussion about the cover: the title, the picture. This was followed by a strategy check that lasted 2 minutes. Ms W's plan included details of her strategy check:

EXTRACT 1

Discuss strategies for reading unknown words.

- picture cue
- first letter cue
- segmenting and blending into phonemes/syllables (pressing sound buttons)
- leave out word and read on to establish meaning
- take a guess, then check word makes sense within the context of the story

Table 6: Ms W's guided reading session - timing, teaching sequence and teaching techniques

Session Sequence and Timings in minutes [NLS timings]	Ms W's Teaching Techniques
Part 1 Book Introduction 9 mins [2/3 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing the picture on the cover of the book but concealing the title so children can predict from the picture what the book might be about. Discussing the title <i>The Genie in the Bottle</i> and drawing attention to the spelling of the word <u>genie</u> (2 mins) • Reinforcing/rehearsing the 'recipe for self-help'/strategy check (2 mins) • Identifying new words in the text – <u>Abdulla</u> <u>threw</u> <u>sailed</u> (4 mins) • Re-rehearsing the 'recipe for self-help'/strategy check (1 min)
Part 2 Independent Reading 22 mins [5 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children reading aloud at their own pace. Teacher monitoring and supporting (but failing to maintain the pace, accuracy and sense of the children's reading) (7 mins) • Halting the children's reading. Working through the book page by page: looking at pictures, the sequence of events, setting, characters actions and motives (5 mins) • Children returning to reading aloud independently (from page 7 up to page 12). Directing Ray (most successful in reading the text) to help May (least successful) (6 mins) • Teacher reading the final part of the story while the children follow 'with their fingers' joining in (4 mins)
Part 3 Return to the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing the story ending (1 min) • Finding sentences in the text. Discussing the key features of sentences (6 mins)
Part 4 Follow-up	<i>[no follow-up]</i>
Total duration of session = 38 minutes	

This was followed by a 4-minute episode of word study: the teacher pointed to some of the content words (Extract 2) unique to the story. The teacher's plan outlined this teaching technique – italics have been added:

EXTRACT 2

Talk through pictures and pick out any difficult words *using strategies to read them*.

p. 2 Abdulla

p. 3 threw

p. 6 sailed

p.7 whistled

Although the teacher followed her plan pointing out the 'difficult' words, she omitted to 'talk through [the] pictures'. Moreover, her plan to use 'strategies to read' the difficult words seems somewhat inappropriate given that the children were not at that point reading connected text – merely individual words in the text. The first part of the session ended with a further 'strategy check'.

Next, each child read aloud at his or her own pace while the teacher monitored and supported. However, the text posed a considerable challenge for all but one of the children. Ms W found maintaining the accuracy and pace of the children's reading a demanding task. The children needed a great deal of support for word reading and Ms W became increasingly uneasy as the children 'struggled' (Ms W's term) to read independently. At that point, Ms W halted the 'independent reading' so she could do the 'picture walk' that she had 'forgotten to do' during the 'book introduction'. So, Ms W spent the next 5 minutes previewing the pictures in detail – mainly by posing questions. For a further 7 minutes the children returned to reading aloud at their own pace. However, the teacher's unease did not diminish as she again attempted to monitor and maintain the 'accuracy, pace and sense' of the children's independent reading. Yet again, Ms W had little alternative but to halt the 'independent reading' a second time. During the final 4 minutes of this part of the session, Ms W finished reading the story herself while the children listened and followed the text in their own books. Responding to an interview question about the book's challenge, Ms W commented that it was only the length of the

book that had overwhelmed the children. Ms W did not direct the children to re-read the book either in the classroom or at home.

In the final part of the session Ms W briefly addressed the story ending then dedicated the final 6 minutes to a discussion of the key features of a sentence. This had been in her plan. Ms W asked the children to identify sentences in their copies of *The Genie in the Bottle*.

In summary, the session carried out by Ms W adhered to the NLS guidelines for guided reading with beginning readers in some respects but also differed in many others. Although Ms W had anticipated the session duration to be approximately 20 minutes, it ran for 38 minutes, largely because Ms W had misjudged the degree of challenge the book posed: 'I hadn't realised it was so long'. Although the teaching sequence included a 'book introduction', 'independent reading' and a 'return to the text', there were, in effect, two 'book introductions' and two episodes of 'independent reading'. Also, within parts of the session there were some variations to the recommended teaching techniques. One technique was repeated - the strategy check, while another was first omitted and replaced later in the session - the 'picture walk'. The 'book introduction' included some word level work, as per NLS advice, but this became confused with the 'strategy check': when the teacher pointed to some individual words in the text, asking the children to read them, the children struggled. One child suggested the 'leave it out and read on' strategy, to which the teacher replied, '...just at this moment I don't want you to use that one [strategy]. I just want you to have a look at the word because it's a difficult word on its own' (Extract 8).

When the teacher finally halted the second episode of 'independent reading', she completed the story by reading it herself. Then, Ms W introduced another variation to the session with a lengthy episode dedicated to sentence identification. Does this represent a misinterpretation of the NLS guidelines which suggest that 'teaching approaches link[ed] to objectives from the NLS Framework' (DfEE, 1998a, p.20).

With regard to text choice, it is more difficult to compare with NLS guidelines because they are brief and somewhat ambiguous. This teacher eschewed reading scheme books because she perceived they were not ‘interesting’ (Extract 20). Her perception of the appropriate degree of text challenge in guided reading was an accuracy target of 75 per cent. It is interesting to note that in response to the questionnaire item: ‘I am not yet certain how to select books for guided reading’ Ms W responded ‘tend to agree’. Moreover, in response to the item, ‘I just wish I’d been given more training to do guided reading’ she also responded ‘tend to agree’.

Case X

Context of the session

The matrix in Table 7 shows the status of Ms X in the case study sample. X Primary School is school located in a semi-rural setting. At the time of the case study, Ms X had been teaching for six years in total – all six in KS1. She combined her role of Reception class teacher with that of both English and RE coordinator. Ms X took sole responsibility for the guided reading in her class which she carried out during the morning session while a nursery nurse and a teaching assistant took responsibility for the rest of the class. Ms X carried out guided reading inside her large open-plan classroom. The class book stock was ‘colour coded’ against criteria devised by Cliff Moon. The school had very recently purchased the *Oxford Reading Tree* scheme (Oxford University Press, 1986) which had become a ‘core’ instructional resource for its beginning readers. The children had reading ‘diaries’, which were kept in ‘book bags’, and both parents and teacher inserted weekly comments about the children’s reading behaviour. It was also routine for children to take their ‘guided reading book’ home to re-read. Ms X’s response to the questionnaire item ‘I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher’ was to ‘tend to disagree’. This reported viewpoint was reflected in her practice: although Ms X herself did not routinely ‘listen to children read’ individually, the additional classroom adults did. Ms X’s response to the questionnaire item ‘In guided reading I use books from a commercial scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*’ was ‘almost always’. Her reported practice was

reflected in the session observed: Ms X used a book from the *Oxford Reading Tree* scheme (Stage 2, 'More Wrens', *Shopping*).

The guided reading session

Ms X's guided reading session with six children who she termed her 'second most able group' was carried out inside the classroom. A chart showing the timings and teaching sequence of Ms X's guided reading is set out below (Table 8). The guided reading session lasted for a total of 11 minutes. However, Ms X set aside an additional 5 minutes before the session to allow the children in the group to exchange their home reading books.

Table 7: Ms X in the case study matrix

practice \ perception	Scheme book used in guided reading	Non-scheme book used in guided reading
Beginning readers need one-to-one reading with the teacher		
Beginning readers don't need one-to-one reading with the teacher	Ms X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ORT</i> • 70%-80% accuracy target in guided reading • 1:1 with TA • guided reading books go home 	

Meanwhile, Ms X updated each child's reading 'diary' and prepared her record sheet for the upcoming session.

A large proportion of the 'book introduction' was dedicated to instruction related to high-frequency word recognition. This was followed by a look at the 'blurb' which appeared on the back cover of the *ORT* books – this seemed to be of great interest and motivating to the children. Next, and in contrast to the NLS guidelines, the children read in 'round robin' style rather than 'by themselves, for themselves'. The text appeared to pose a considerable challenge to the children's independent reading because the teacher supported many of the group members as they read aloud. Word recognition received the most

support - mainly the recognition of the 'content' nouns in each of the sentences e.g. 'sugar', 'supermarket'. High-frequency word recognition also required some teacher support. Throughout this 5-minute part of the session the teacher reiterated the plot. Finally, the teacher took half a minute to direct the children to re-read the book at home. At the end of the session, the teacher made the following comment on her record-keeping sheet: '[Children] confused 'wanted' and 'went', rest of key words – very good'. This was an interesting assessment because the children read 'round robin' so an individualised assessment had not been possible.

In summary, Ms X adhered with NLS guidelines for guided reading in some respects and diverged in others. The duration of the session was in line with NLS guidelines. However, the teaching sequence was different: following the 'book introduction' Ms X combined the next two parts in an episode of 'round robin' reading and talking about the story.

Table 8: Ms X's guided reading session - timing, teaching sequence and teaching techniques

Session Sequence and Timings in minutes [NLS timings]	Ms X's Teaching Techniques
Part 1 'Book Introduction' 5.5 mins [2/3 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing the title <i>Shopping</i> and connecting the spelling pattern <u>ing</u> to recent class work on -ing words. Identifying high frequency words using flashcards for <u>went</u> <u>was</u> <u>want</u> <u>some</u> pointing to the irregular patterns of letters and phonemes. (5 mins) Discussing the blurb at the back of the book to establish which of the ORT characters are in the story.(0.5 min)
Part 2 and 3 combined 5 mins [5 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for volunteers to read the first page of the story but having to nominate children to read one page each, 'round robin' style. Monitoring and supporting each child as s/he reads, identifying the unique nouns in each of the sentences – <u>sugar</u> <u>supermarket</u> <u>market</u> <u>crisps</u> etc. and discussing the meaning of each word. Re-iterating the events in the story, the character's motives and actions.
Part 3	[Part 3 combined with part 2 above]
Part 4 Follow-up 0.5 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting follow-up re-reading – books to go in reading 'bags' to be taken home. (0.5 min)
Duration of guided reading session = 11 minutes	

Therefore, the children were not 'reading by themselves, for themselves'. Ms X included a 'follow-up' in which she directed the guided reading book to be taken home. Ms X's teaching techniques included word level work with a focus on high-frequency words. However, other teaching techniques she used seemed to have more in common with shared reading practice. Ms X's choice of text was from a graded scheme – *ORT*, and was short enough to be read in the session. Hence, it complied with NLS guidelines. However, it appeared to pose a challenge for the children in terms of the 'content' words in each sentence so acted to inhibit independent reading. Moreover, the children appeared to rely on the picture and first letter to aid contextual guessing.

Case Y

Context of the session

The matrix in Table 9 shows the status of Ms Y in the case study sample. Y Primary School is a large school located in an urban setting. The teacher commented that 'lots of the children have social problems'. At the time of the case study, Ms Y had been teaching for 22 years in total and for 10 years in KS1. Both Ms Y and her nursery nurse carried out guided reading simultaneously in their Y1 class – not during the literacy hour but during a 15-minute period at the end of the morning session (11.45 to 12). At that time the

Table 9 : Ms Y in the case study matrix

practice perception	Scheme book used in guided reading	Non-scheme book used in guided reading
Beginning readers need one-to-one reading with the teacher		Ms Y <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sunshine Books</i> – a short repeating-sequence story • an 'easy' read in guided reading • 1:1 with 'Better Reading' tutor for 10 mins, twice per week
Beginning readers don't need one-to-one reading with the teacher		

other class members were preparing to have lunch (washing hands, lining up etc.), accompanied by lunchtime supervisors. The sessions took place in the classroom. Although Ms Y herself did not routinely 'listen to children read' individually, the school had invested in an LEA initiative 'Better Reading' (BR). Each week all the children in Ms Y's class had two 10-minute sessions with a BR tutor. Each session included re-reading a familiar text; introducing a new text; and a 'running record'. The school book stock had recently been levelled as per the *Book Bands for Reading* (Reading Recovery National Network, 1998). The school had also recently invested in the *Literacy Links* selection (Shortland Publications, 1999). Ms Y claimed to choose texts for guided reading that posed only a moderate challenge 'slightly easier than what they would be reading in BR one-to-one reading'. Ms Y's response to the questionnaire item 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher' was to 'strongly agree'. This reported viewpoint was reflected in her practice. However, since completing the questionnaire, individualised reading had ceased to be the responsibility of the class-teacher and had become the responsibility of the BR tutor. As a consequence, the children in Ms Y's class engaged in both routine and regular guided reading alongside routine and regular individualised reading. Ms Y's response to the questionnaire item 'In guided reading I use books from a commercial scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*' was 'very often' (but not always). Moreover, since completing the questionnaire, the school had not only invested in new texts for reading but had also arranged its complete book stock as per the *Book Bands for Reading* (Reading Recovery National Network, 1998). Therefore, Ms Y's reported practice was reflected in the session observed: Ms Y used a book from the *Sunshine Books* (Heinemann, 1987) which is not a graded scheme in terms of its having a controlled vocabulary but is one which offers books that contain 'patterned and predictable language'. Ms Y used *Speak Up!* a text from 'book band 4'.

The guided reading session

Ms Y's guided reading session was with four children (two members of the group were absent). A chart showing the timings and teaching sequence of Ms Y's observed guided reading is set out in Table 10.

The session lasted for a total of 13 minutes. In the questionnaire, Ms Y indicated that a typical session lasted 20 minutes. So, this session duration appears untypical. However, the teacher commented that the text she selected posed only a very moderate challenge and was read with ease and alacrity by the group.

The 'book introduction' followed closely the teacher's detailed plan. The session began with a discussion about the cover of the book – title, illustration. This was followed by a 6-minute preview of the book guided mainly by teacher questions about the content. The teacher drew the group's attention to only one word, 'climb', that she anticipated might be challenging.

In the next 3 minutes all the children read aloud at their own pace with what can only be described as great gusto: the teacher had to intervene to request softer reading voices. As the teacher monitored, little support was required. However, Ms Y's plan for the session contained details of the kinds of intervention she anticipated having to make during the 'independent reading'.

Part three of the session was given to a brief period of detailed, positive feedback to each group member in turn. Finally, Ms Y followed her plan to discuss the setting of the story: 'Ask where the story took place. Say which is the most important part of the story'. The children were not directed to re-read the text. At the end of the session, the teacher made notes on her record-keeping proforma. Her notes referred to the children's successes: in predicting the story; in reading accurately, fluently and with expression; in responding to and enjoying the text's special graphic, design and humorous features.

Table 10: Ms Y's guided reading session - timing, teaching sequence and teaching techniques

Session Sequence and Timings in minutes [NLS timings]	Ms Y's Teaching Techniques
Part 1 Book Introduction 7 mins [2/3 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing the title, the cover picture to predict what the story might be about (1 min) • Working through the book page by page discussing the pictures, the sequence of events, the actions and motives of the characters and the way the author had varied the size of the print in line with events in the story. Discussing the particular picture that marked a turning point in the story. Identifying the word <u>climb</u> in the text. (6 mins)
Part 2 Independent Reading 3 mins [5 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and <i>giving positive feedback</i> as children read aloud confidently and competently, needing no support from the teacher.
Part 3 Return to the Text [3 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Giving positive feedback</i> to each child inturn using specific examples of each child's reading behaviour. (1.5 mins) • Discussing the turning point in the story. Discussing the humorous events in the story. Discussing the setting of the story. (1.5 mins)
Part 4 Follow-up	<i>[no follow-up]</i>
Total duration of session = 13 minutes	

In summary, this guided reading session seemed to have adhered most closely to the NLS guidelines. The timing was close to the recommended 10 minutes and the session was conducted at a 'brisk pace'. The teaching followed the recommended sequence, although the 'book introduction' was proportionally longer than recommended. The text appeared to match the children's bottom-up reading strategies, while challenging them to recognise the various literary devices used by the author and illustrator, and to respond to the humour – a top-down challenge. The children read independently for a sustained period of 3 minutes with confidence and obvious engagement. The teacher monitored closely but unobtrusively, using her observations to give contingent feedback to each child at the end of the session. Where the session differed from NLS guidelines was in respect of feedback. There is little mention of feedback in the *Literacy Training Pack's* chart outlining the teaching techniques for guided

reading with beginning readers (DfEE, 1998b, p. 21). This might mark a significant omission in the NLS.

Case Z

Context of the session

The matrix in Table 11 shows the status of Ms Z in the case study sample.

Z Primary School is located in a sub-urban setting. At the time of the case study, Ms Z had been teaching for 15 years in total – all 15 in KS1. She combined her role of Reception class teacher with that of Key Stage co-ordinator. Ms Z, shared the responsibility for guided reading with her long-serving teaching assistant (who had TA qualifications) and her nursery nurse. It took place between morning play and lunchtime in either the classroom or in a ‘shared area’ outside the classroom.

Table 11: Ms Z in the case study matrix

practice perception	Scheme book used in guided reading	Non-scheme book used in guided reading
Beginning readers need one-to-one reading with the teacher	Ms Z <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ORT</i> • follows <i>ORT</i> book stages • 1:1 and pairs with the teacher • guided reading books don't go home 	
Beginning readers don't need one-to-one reading with the teacher		

The class book stock had at its ‘core’ *Oxford Reading Tree* scheme (Oxford University Press, 1986) while other books were graded as per the *Book Bands for Reading* (Reading Recovery National Network, 1998). Ms Z made a clear distinction between her non-scheme books – which she referred to as ‘real books’ and which the children took home, and her ‘core’ scheme books which remained in school. This arrangement avoided what Ms Z regarded as parents’ tendency to see reading progress as a kind of competition. Each child had a ‘literacy log’ to which the teacher, other classroom personnel and parents

routinely contributed comments. Ms Z 's response to the questionnaire item 'I still think beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher' was to 'tend to agree'. This reported viewpoint was reflected in her practice. Ms Z and her teaching assistant also tended to teach children in pairs or individually. Ms Z's response to the questionnaire item 'In guided reading I use books from a commercial scheme(s) like *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Ginn 360* or *All Aboard*' was 'very often'. Her reported practice was reflected in the session observed: Ms Z used a book from the *Oxford Reading Tree* scheme (stage 3, 'More Wrens', *The band*).

The guided reading session

Ms Z's guided reading session with six children was carried out in the 'shared area' outside the classroom. A chart showing the timings and teaching sequence of Ms Z's guided reading session is set out below (Table 12).

The guided reading session lasted for a total of 15 minutes. The teacher's usual practice was to work with two guided reading groups between 'playtime and lunchtime', giving some flexibility of timing – the teacher referred to timing as a 'moveable feast'. The 'book introduction' lasted for 11 minutes, 2 minutes of which were dedicated to the study of two high-frequency words. Then, one child turned spontaneously to the blurb on the back cover and exclaimed with excitement, 'It's got dad and Floppy in it! Dad and Floppy's in it!' - at which point the group turned the book over. The rest of the 'book introduction' was taken up with an extremely detailed preview of the book during which the teacher posed many questions.

The questions related mainly to the sequence of events conveyed in the pictures but there were other questions posed connected to particular features of the pictures themselves – not all of which were directly relevant to the story in the text. Some children could be heard reading the text aloud during the 'book introduction' but the teacher discouraged this on at least two occasions. Next, each child read the text aloud, most completing the 'independent reading' with ease and in less than a minute: little support from the teacher was needed. Any prompts given were in support of the content nouns in each of the sentences, e.g. 'house', 'shed'.

Table 12: Ms Z's guided reading session - timing, teaching sequence and teaching techniques

Session Sequence and Timings in minutes [NLS timings]	Ms Z's Teaching Techniques
Part 1 Book Introduction 11 mins [2/3 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing the title <i>The band</i> and identifying the flashcard and connecting it to the word band in the title. Identifying the flashcard play and relating it to the playing of instruments in a band. (1.5 mins) • Looking at the blurb on the back cover (0.5 min) • Working through the book, page by page, looking at the pictures, discussing the sequence of events, the actions and the motives of the characters and particular items shown in the pictures – the instruments, the dogs, the conductor etc. in some detail. Directing children <i>not</i> to read the text at this point. (9 minutes)
Part 2 Independent Reading 3 mins [5 mins]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and supporting as children read aloud at their own pace
Part 3 Return to the Text [1 min]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning to the flashcard play and the word played in the story. Beginning to return to the word couldn't but stopping because the children are 'tired'. (1 min)
Part 4 Follow-up	<i>[no follow-up]</i>
Total duration of session = 15 minutes	

Finally, the teacher spent a minute revisiting the high-frequency words that had been studied during the 'book introduction'. The teacher did not direct the children to re-read the book at home. At the end of the session, the teacher made notes on her record-keeping proforma.

In summary, the session adhered to NLS guidelines in some respects: the session duration; the three part teaching sequence; the teaching techniques that focussed on word recognition; the independent reading. Where the session differed from NLS guidelines was in the timing of the teaching sequence. The 'book introduction' included a 9-minute talk through the pictures and, what is more, the teaching techniques seemed more akin to those used in shared reading than guided reading. Moreover, the text appeared to present very little challenge. It was interesting that the teacher had frequently to direct the children's attention away from the text towards the pictures in order to carry out

the book preview. The boys in particular were eager to get on with the reading and they could be heard reading the text fluently and accurately throughout the 'book introduction'. At the end of the session, the teacher acknowledged their eagerness to 'get back into the sand'.

Analysis of the case study data against the research questions

The second analysis of the case study data involved a search of the session transcripts, the interview transcripts and the documentary data, for evidence against the research questions. In addition, it allowed a more detailed examination of the tensions caused by the demands of implementing this new approach to the teaching of reading.

How do teachers manage time for guided reading, time within guided reading and time to follow-up guided reading?

Time for guided reading

All four case study teachers succeeded in managing time for guided reading: it was carried out on a regular basis, not, however, as part of a literacy hour. Three of the sample were Reception teachers who tended to exercise greater flexibility in timetabling their literacy teaching in recognition of the fact that for very young children, a 'literacy hour' is not appropriate provision. The fourth, a Y1 teacher, carried out guided reading in the period just prior to the lunch break because there were no distractions and not 'too much background noise' which HMI commented was one of the weaknesses of guided reading (OfSTED, 2002, para. 27).

The duration of the teachers' guided reading sessions is shown in Table 13. The teachers' reported 'typical' session lengths, were closer to NLS recommendations than the observed timings for a variety of reasons. For example, Ms W explained that the reason her observed session lasted three times longer than the usual 15 minutes was because: 'I hadn't realised it [the book] was so long'.

Table 13: Table comparing the duration of reported and observed guided reading sessions with NLS recommended duration

Session	Session duration	Reported 'typical'	NLS 'typical'
W	38	15	10-15
X	11	20*	10-15
Y	13	20	10-15
Z	15	35*	10-15

*This includes time for record-keeping.

With regard to the frequency of guided reading sessions, the NLS recommends two 10-minute sessions per week. Three of the teachers reported meeting this recommendation with regard to overall provision but often they provided one longer session of guided reading rather than two shorter ones. Hence, with regard to time management, all teachers adhered generally to NLS guidelines.

Table 14: Table comparing the reported frequency of guided reading sessions (per group, per week), with NLS recommendation

Teacher	Number of sessions per group per week	NLS recommended
W	1	2
X	2	2
Y	1	2
Z	1 or 2	2

Two teachers in the sample combined guided reading with record-keeping routines. Ms X dedicated 5 minutes prior to the session to updating the group's individual 'reading diaries', during which time the children in the group swapped their home reading books: 'I used to do guided reading in the morning and then I'd spend all lunchtime writing in everybody's diary'.

Ms Z also dedicated time in her reported 35-minute session to record-keeping and reviewing the children's 'reading logs'. However, for the observed session, Ms Z omitted her record-keeping routine in order to demonstrate just the guided reading.

Timing within guided reading – teaching sequence

Most of the observed guided reading sessions were, in general, organised to reflect the ‘typical’ model sequence set out in the NLS. Moreover, transitions from one part of the sessions to another were clearly demarcated and, in general, made explicit to the children in the group. However, the relative duration of each part of the sessions did not tend to adhere to NLS recommendations.

‘Book introduction’: All sessions began with a ‘book introduction’. The NLS recommends 2/3 minutes (20%-30% of the session) for this part. Overall, the observed ‘book introductions’ were considerably longer in duration than the recommended 20 to 30 per cent of total session time. Two types of activity tended to dominate time-wise.

Table 15: Table comparing the duration of ‘book introductions’ in observed sessions with NLS guidelines, showing the duration as a percentage of the total session time and in minutes

session	Duration of ‘book introduction’ per cent of session (mins)	NLS recommended duration of ‘book introduction’ per cent of session (mins)
W	29% (15 mins)	20%-30% (2-3mins)
X	50% (5.5 mins)	20%-30% (2-3mins)
Y	54% (7 mins)	20%-30% (2-3mins)
Z	73% (11 mins)	20%-30% (2-3mins)

One was the book preview or ‘picture walk’ during which the content of the book was discussed using mainly information in the pictures. Ms Z (Extract 3) explained this routine stressing its contribution to comprehension of the text as a whole. She also pointed to the ways that the pictures prime word recognition.

EXTRACT 3

Ms Z: We go through the book so that they know what is coming...the [ORT] books have got words in them that are actually in the picture... We go through the pictures first because we want them to see what’s implied in the story...the *Oxford Reading Tree* is the story method.

However, many of the book preview episodes included techniques more akin to shared reading. Moreover, the discussion of the books' content did not always connect with the written text, but more with the elaborate detail in the pictures. Although the children appeared to be engaged by the pictures, it could be argued that these protracted previews did not in any direct sense support the children's independent reading.

The second common activity in the 'book introduction' was word study – both word recognition and vocabulary: two teachers dedicated a large proportion of this part of the session to promoting the recognition of high frequency words.

'Independent reading': Not all sessions included 'independent reading' time in which the children read 'for themselves, by themselves'. In a typical 10-minute session the NLS recommends 5 minutes of independent reading (50% of the total session duration). Table 16 shows that, on the whole, the proportion of session time dedicated to 'independent reading' fell short of NLS recommendations.

Table 16: Table comparing the duration of 'independent reading' in observed sessions with NLS guidelines, showing the duration as a percentage of the total session time and in minutes

session	Duration of 'independent reading' Per cent of session (mins)	NLS recommended duration of 'independent reading' Per cent of session (mins)
W	29% (13 mins)	50% (5mins)
X	[round robin' and talking about the story] 45% (5 mins)	50% (5mins)
Y	23% (3 mins)	50% (5mins)
Z	20% (3 mins)	50% (5mins)

In addition to the variation in time for 'independent reading', teacher interpretations of 'independent reading' contrasted with the NLS version. Ms X's group read 'round robin' style for 5 minutes (45% of the session): she combined this with a detailed discussion of the story and the pictures. Both Ms Y and Ms Z directed their children to read aloud at their own pace. However, the reading lasted for only 20 per cent of the session – less than the 50 per cent recommended in the NLS. Hence, it seemed that the limited periods of

'independent reading' were, in those two cases, determined more by the fact that the texts were brief, than by any decisions on the part of the teachers: there just wasn't enough text for more than a couple of minutes sustained, independent reading. This raises questions about the short texts now composed for beginning readers. In addition, children appeared to spend as much time turning over the pages as reading what was on them. Do such short books provide children with quantities of connected text sufficient to extend their reading capacities?

Ms W's group, on the other hand, experienced the highest proportion of 'independent reading' time but this was divided into two separate episodes. However, the term 'independent' doesn't easily apply to the manner in which the children handled the text. The text proved to be such an overwhelming challenge that the teacher had to interrupt in order to alleviate the children's, and her own, frustration. It is interesting to note that Ms W expressed uncertainty about selecting texts for guided reading in the questionnaire. Two years on, her uncertainty remained. She was adamant about the benefits of 'real books' but appeared not to be able to reconcile those views with the needs of her beginning readers. This, for Ms W, appeared to be a tension but it wasn't one she was inclined to address.

'Return to the text': None of the observed sessions complied with the NLS suggested duration for this part of the session. Whereas the duration of the 'book introduction' tended to be much longer than the NLS recommendation, the duration of 'returning to the text' tended to be much shorter. Ms W dedicated most of this part of the session to meeting one of her objectives for the session: identifying sentences and discussing key features of sentences. Ms X wove a discussion about the story and teaching points about the vocabulary into the 'round robin' reading she had adopted instead of 'independent reading'. Ms Z drew the session to an ('unusually') abrupt close because she judged that the children were 'restless' and wanted to return to other activities. In fact, the text had been so easy, there was little to add to what had already been discussed at some length in the 'book introduction'.

Table 17: Table comparing the duration of 'returning to the text' in observed sessions with NLS guidelines, showing the duration as a percentage of the total session time and in minutes

session	Duration of 'returning to the text' Per cent of session (mins)	NLS recommended Per cent of session (mins)
W	18% (7 mins)	30%-40% (3-4 mins)
X	[round robin' and talking about the story] 45% (5mins)	30%-40% (3-4 mins)
Y	23% (3 mins)	30%-40% (3-4 mins)
Z	6% (1 min)	30%-40% (3-4 mins)

Only Ms Y adhered to the NLS guidelines for this part of the session. Moreover, she did three different things in her 'return to the text': offered detailed feedback; invited responses to the story; and discussed some of the text level features that had been her objective for the session. The following extract demonstrates how closely Ms Y had been monitoring the children's independent reading and how her feedback was clearly contingent upon that monitoring. The extract also illustrates, in the context of these cases, the importance of selecting texts for guided reading that children can read 'independently', for a sustained period, without too much support.

EXTRACT 4

[The group had finished reading *Speak Up!* and Ms Y was waiting for Joe to finish reading. She noticed he was smiling as he came to the end of the story.]

[4.1] Ms Y	Why did you smile then, Joe?
[4.2] Child:	Because the spider couldn't hear the giraffe.
[4.3] Ms Y:	It went the other way round[meaning the pattern in the plot had reversed]. Do you [to the group] think that's a funny ending?
[4.4] Children:	Yes.
[4.5] Ms Y:	What helped you all to read that so well, because all of you just kept reading without ...
[4.6] Child:	... some of the words kept copying [repeating].
[4.7] Ms Y:	You're right. It was repeating wasn't it? So you read it really well because you noticed the pattern and you could get into the pattern.[to Jim] I liked how you corrected yourself because you said It's <i>windy</i> - didn't you? [referring to the homograph] And then you went back and said it was <i>windy</i> . That was really good. And I liked how you did those 'Oh! No!'s, Joe, because what did you notice about those 'Oh! No!'s?

[4.8] Jim:	[interrupting] 'Oh! Ho!'s
[4.9] Ms Y:	'Oh! Ho!'s sorry. What's happened to the writing?
[4.10] Jim:	It's getting smaller and bigger, smaller, bigger, smaller, bigger, smaller, bigger
[4.11] Ms Y:	[to Jim] And you did that with your voice didn't you? Well done. And Pip, I noticed when you were reading here [pointing to the small print in the book] you were using that smaller voice for that little spider weren't you? And I liked how you did that...how you used that writing to help you. And Joe, ...I saw you keep looking over here and having a smile when you saw what was happening.

Only Ms Y's session was structured and sequenced such that all the parts cohered. Her session was both brisk and focused. She had a brief plan indicating that she was very familiar with the text she was using. Moreover, her confidence in teaching guided reading (she had undertaken the NLS Early Literacy Support training) led her to improve on the NLS model by introducing a strong element of feedback in the final part of the session. It is interesting to note that the NLS guidelines do not address this aspect of guided reading – surely an omission. Feedback might be regarded as serving two purposes. First it underscores the distinctive nature of guided reading – it is more than merely 'hearing children read'. Instead, it follows from a model of learning which stresses the importance of 'assisted performance' (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988), which in turn requires that learners are kept informed as to 'how they are doing'. Second, it enables teachers to make teaching points that are contingent upon the children's needs, thus giving symmetry to the session sequence. All observed sessions except that of Ms Y appeared to lack a clear and purposeful structure. Furthermore, the techniques that teachers used often appeared more procedural than purposeful.

'Follow-up': Only one teacher included a 'follow-up'. Ms X directed the children to place the guided reading book in their 'book bags' for home reading. None of the teachers referred to regular and routine re-reading of guided reading texts in the classroom. This raises the question of the inter-dependence of components in the NLS reading programme.

What teaching techniques do teachers use to promote 'interactive' reading strategies?

During the interviews teacher discourse about reading teaching and learning included many references to reading 'strategies'. However, Ms X's perception of guided reading was that its main purpose was to teach children to 'use the strategies' (Extract 5), which hints at a degree of 'literalism' in her interpretation.

EXTRACT 5

Ms X: Guided reading is about using different strategies, encouraging them to use different strategies to work out words - including phonics, pictures, grammar, you know - I used to know the correct phrases - syntactic isn't it...and semantic? ...I think that the problem with guided reading is that you almost have to teach children how to use the strategies...but...am I actually teaching them to read or am I actually teaching them how to do guided reading?

There seems to be some uncertainty in Ms X 's perception of guided reading. She seems unsure not only of the 'correct phrases' but also of their essential meanings.

Teaching techniques to promote bottom-up reading strategies

In the observed guided reading sessions, teachers addressed word recognition using a variety of different techniques throughout the sessions. One teaching technique involved the use of flashcards. During the 'book introduction' flashcards were presented so that challenging words could be studied out of context: Ms X (Extract 6) and Ms Z did this. However, both focused only on high-frequency words e.g. 'went', 'want', 'some', 'was', 'and', 'play'.

EXTRACT 6

[Ms X had prepared four flashcards: **want** **went** **was** **some**]

Ms X: Now, we've got some tricky words that we need to try and start remembering what they look like. And, the thing is, we can't sound them out like we normally do. [holds up **was**] It says 'was'. But when we sound it out it says /wuh/a/suh/. But we know it doesn't say 'wass'. It says 'was' and we've just got to remember that.

[This episode continued as the teacher introduced the flashcards for the words: **want** **wanted** and **some** . The whole episode lasted for 5 minutes.]

An additional feature common to both Ms X and Ms Z's sessions was the use of 'scheme' books for guided reading – more specifically the *Oxford Reading Tree (ORT)*. The technique both teachers were using – that of teaching high-frequency word-recognition – follows closely the *ORT* rationale and 'story method', children were being taught to recognise on sight, high-frequency words – which form the majority of the scheme's 'key words'. In the original version of the *ORT*, a sight vocabulary comprising mainly high-frequency words was placed at the core of the early books and was regarded as a fundamental element in support of beginning reading acquisition. The NLS also places high-frequency word-recognition at the core of its beginning reading programme. In this respect, the *ORT* and the NLS appear compatible. In contrast, however, the *ORT*'s 'content' words are given a somewhat different status. Books were designed with the expectation that contextual guessing would be the key reading strategy for approaching the 'content' words, many of which tend to be unique to each individual book. In other words, they would not generally be repeated *between* books in the scheme (e.g. 'sugar', 'supermarket', 'crisps', 'trumpet' and 'garage' in the book Ms Z used). Moreover, the unique content words were not normally repeated *within* the early books either. In this respect the *ORT* seems less likely to promote more productive and reliable bottom-up reading strategies. Therefore, its value as an instructional resource for beginning readers might be questioned. The NLS aims to promote 'interactive' reading strategies, whereas the *ORT* seems to address bottom-up strategies only in respect of high-frequency word recognition.

As discussed earlier, the NLS advice relating to instructional reading texts is not very explicit. Teachers are advised to select texts that contain a 'cumulative vocabulary' but it is not clear whether the term 'vocabulary' applies to high-frequency words, content words, decodable words or all three. In this respect the NLS is under-conceptualised. It would seem that teachers using *ORT* with beginning readers, have little option but to promote contextual guessing. Moreover, the *ORT* rationale eschewed (until very recently) the control of spelling patterns in its vocabulary. This seems to represent a further element of incompatibility between this popular resource and the NLS. It should be noted, therefore, that teachers who rely on *ORT* books, for example, offer few opportunities for beginning readers to forge necessary and fundamental

phonological ‘connections’ as they read. Beginners appear to have little choice but to rely on information from initial letters plus context – a strategy neither reliable nor generative (see Extract 7). Ms X had recently acquired the *ORT* scheme and her views chime with the scheme’s rationale regarding word recognition.

EXTRACT 7

[Ms X’s children didn’t read the text individually ‘by themselves, for themselves’ but read ‘round robin’ style during the guided reading session.]

[7.1]Researcher:	I notice you used flashcards to start with.
[7.2] Ms X:	Well, to my mind, the main objectives are to do with key [<i>ORT</i> high-frequency words] word recognition.
[7.3]Researcher:	I also noticed that each child read a page in turn.
[7.4] Ms X:	I’m aware that, you know, reading around the group isn’t the thing [to do in guided reading]. I knew that this group were going to find this book difficult so there’s no point in me saying to them: ‘Go and read it aloud’.
[7.5]Researcher:	You knew it would be difficult?
[7.6] Ms X:	I knew this group would have been stuck by the word ‘sugar’ [pointing], that word ‘supermarket’, that word ‘market’, and maybe that word ‘comic’. I knew that, so I wanted to go through it first together.
[7.7]Researcher:	You knew it would be a challenge?
[7.8] Ms X:	A challenge definitely. Yes. But they’ll read it at home a couple of times and I feel this session will support them with that.
[7.9]Researcher:	At home, how will the children read words like ‘sugar’, ‘supermarket’ etc?
[7.10] Ms X:	Picture and length. I mean, I think it’s quite mean [pointing] - that word ‘sugar’ on the first page - because there’s really not a very good picture clue. A couple of them did get it but, if I’d thought about it, one of my questions in the session could have been: ‘What else do we need to make biscuits?’

This feature of the rationale and design of the early stages of *ORT* contrasts with the more recent views of reading and reading acquisition outlined in the first part of the thesis. It therefore raises questions about whether such texts as these promote the most profitable reading strategies. Not only do some commonly used guided reading texts seem to promote contextual guessing but they appear also to inhibit the application of through-the-word decoding. This raises the possibility that tensions might arise as teachers implement the NLS, with its emphasis on the promotion of reliable and generative reading

strategies, while at the same time they rely on instructional texts that promote different and less productive reading strategies.

A second observed technique for teaching word recognition in guided reading was that of pointing to new words in context either before or during the book preview. Ms W and Ms Y did this. When Ms W used this technique she combined it with some instruction in decoding (Extract 8). However, the content words, 'genie', 'Abdulla', and 'threw' did not offer opportunities to foster the most productive word reading strategies: 'genie' contains a 'soft' G, while the main character's name, 'Abdulla', differs from what the children's prior knowledge about Aladdin had led them to anticipate. One child said, pointing to the picture: 'The boy...that man...that's his name' (Extract 8.14). Finally, the word 'threw' was clearly not a word that the children, except Ray, could manage to decode readily.

EXTRACT 8

[The name of the main character, 'Abdulla', was the focus of this exchange. Ray again, demonstrated his more advanced reading attainments.]

[8.1] Ms W	Let's just have a look at this word here. [pointing to 'Abdulla'] I think that's probably a word that you've not seen before.
[8.2] Meg:	Ah! I know!
[8.3] Ms W:	OK. Meg thinks she knows what it says.
[8.4] Meg:	Anchor [prompted by the underwater scene in the picture – but there's no anchor in it]
[8.5] Ms W:	Anchor. You think that word says anchor. Have a really good look at it. Does anyone else think that word says anchor? It's a good guess cause she's used the picture, hasn't she? She's seen the boat. She's seen that the word begins with /a/. But do you think it says anchor? Does anyone think it says anchor?
[8.6] Chrissy:	No.
[8.7] Ms W:	Why not, Chrissy?
[8.8] Chrissy:	It hasn't got a /cuh/ in it.
[8.9] Ms W:	There's no /cuh/ in it.
[8.10] Child:	And no /nuh/.
[8.11] Ms W:	And no /nuh/ in it. Does anyone else think they can have a go at reading it? What else could you do to read that word? Ray?
[8.12] Ray:	You could leave it out and read on.
[8.12] Ms W:	You could leave it out and read on but just at this moment I

	don't want you to use that one. I just want you to have a look at that word because it is a difficult word on its own and really I can....
[8.13] Child:	The boy... [pointing to the picture of the main character]... that man... that's his name.
[8.14] Ms W:	It is. That's right. It's a name. So really, leaving it out and reading on won't help us will it?
[8.15] Child:	The fisherman.
[8.16] Ms W:	That's right. So who's going to have a go at reading it? Ray, have a go.
[8.17] Ray:	[adding an extra syllable] /Ab/.../a/.../du/.../la/
[8.18] Ms W:	Well done. What did he do then? You were right. It's 'Abdulla'. But what did he do to read that word?
[8.19] Child:	Read it slowly.
[8.20] Ms W:	He read it slowly. He broke it down - /ab/.../dul/.../a/. He broke it into syllables, didn't he? Well done. That's one of our strategies already.

Ray's word reading skills, which seem to function at an unconscious level (Adams, 1996) enabled him to decode with some automaticity. However, it could be argued that children might feel some pressure to articulate their 'strategies'. This raises questions about the value of the 'strategy check'.

A third observed teaching technique in support of bottom-up strategies was that of pointing to words with similar spelling patterns. This teaching technique was not used very often in the sessions observed, perhaps because so few of the words in the texts represented familiar or manageable spelling patterns. Ms X and Ms Z used this technique just once in their sessions. Ms Z pointed to the spelling pattern shared by the words 'and' and 'band' (in *ORT*, stage 3, *The band*). While Ms X pointed to the spelling pattern (and morpheme) '-ing' (*ORT*, stage 2, *Shopping*).

In summary, the teaching techniques observed suggest that high frequency word-recognition had great salience in the context of guided reading. Decoding 'through the word' seemed to have less salience - perhaps because so few words in the selected texts were decodable. Finally, contextual guessing also had salience because the pictures were often the only available source of information to help with the unique words in books. It is suggested that this

apparent imbalance might inhibit the acquisition of productive, 'interactive' reading strategies.

Teaching techniques to promote top-down reading strategies

There are two aspects of reading comprehension, or 'reading for meaning', that benefit from teaching techniques that promote top-down reading strategies. The first is connected to vocabulary – word meanings. The second is connected to comprehension of the text as a whole.

In the case study sessions, teachers promoted children's understanding of word meanings in the text in a variety of ways. First, teachers tended to introduce content-related vocabulary into the 'book introduction'. Ms W explained (Extract 9) the rationale behind her 'picture walk'. Ms W aimed to prime the children to expect particular vocabulary by including it in the discussion of the pictures. Such priming serves to either, activate the children's prior knowledge of the words' meanings, or to provide it. In either case, Ms W's aim was that the children gained an expectation that the vocabulary 'whistling' and cloud' would be part of the story. She explained this in Extract 9.

EXTRACT 9

[Ms W had chosen what she described as a 'real book' - the traditional-type story *The Genie in the Bottle*. The characters and setting are similar, but not the same as the story of Aladdin]

Ms W: I would look through and find words that they were going to struggle with...I would be using the words as we were discussing the pictures in the picture walk. I'd say: 'Oh! Look at the wind whistling round the bottle'. And they'd think: 'Why is she's saying that?' And then later, as they were reading, it would come back to them and 'whistling' would be a bit easier for them to read then.

In the above extract Ms W is demonstrating the teaching technique that promotes comprehension of word meanings. But, for Ms W, this teaching technique had another purpose: she also intended it to promote contextual guessing. She did not expect the children to be able to read the words with anything more than an anticipation about what the word meant coupled with some information from the letters in the word – perhaps the initial letter. This is clear from the following extract - a continuation of the previous one.

EXTRACT 10 [Ms W continues]

Ms W: ...and the difficult thing when you're doing a guided read, as opposed to a shared read, is that, because they're all reading at different speeds, you can't stop on a certain word and tell everybody what it is. In a shared read I would say, 'Let's all together find out what the word is.' But you can't do that in the guided [reading] so it tends to become a bit bitty in that sense.

In describing guided reading as 'bitty' (Extract 10), Ms W was perhaps commenting on the situation that arose as a result of the challenging text she chose for the session. Many demands were made on her for support as the children 'struggled' (Ms W's term) to read independently: there were just too few manageable words for the children to read with the bottom-up strategies they controlled. Despite two 'strategy checks', the teacher was drawn to offer a great deal of support for word reading during the 'independent reading'.

Another teaching technique that promotes children's understanding of word meanings was demonstrated by Ms Z as she pointed out that the word 'play' had more than one meaning – it is a homonym.

EXTRACT 11

[Ms Z held up the flashcard **play** which, in the context of the story they were about to read, meant 'playing' in a band rather than playing with toys.]

[11.1] Children:	<i>Play</i>
[11.2] Ms Z:	Play. Do you think we might see this word in the book?
[11.3] Children:	Yes
[11.4] Ms Z:	What do people do who are in a band?
[11.5] Child:	They play an instrument.
[11.6] Ms Z:	They play instruments, don't they? So I think we might find this word.

Extracts 9 and 11 demonstrate teaching techniques designed to promote the understanding of word meanings in order to support comprehension. However, not all the discussion in the 'book introductions' observed, served this purpose efficiently. Too often, the teachers dedicated large proportions of the 'book introduction' to discussions of vocabulary that had no direct relevance to the text the children were about to read. Moreover, some of the vocabulary discussed proved to be more of a hindrance than a help to children's

independent reading (Extract 12): it primed them to expect words that were not there at all.

EXTRACT 12

[The group was looking at a picture in the text showing members of a band with their instruments: none of the vocabulary discussed appeared in the text to be read.]

[12.1] Ms Z:	What other instruments can you see on here?
[12.2] Child:	A horn.
[12.3] Ms Z:	There's a horn, yes. Anything else?
[12.4] Child:	Trombone.
[12.5] Ms Z:	Trombone, yes.
[12.6]Child:	And a drum
[12.7] Ms Z:	Yes and a drum.
[12.8] Child:	A big base drum.

[There were 20 further exchanges about musical instruments and the episode lasted 2 minutes]

Protracted discussions such as this in guided reading sessions might have two disadvantageous effects. First, they might result in less time for 'independent reading' and 'returning to the text'. Secondly, they might cause some children to exploit contextual guessing – unsuccessfully. The lengthy exchange in the above extract included a discussion about the 'band' and its 'conductor'. The teacher pointed to the conductor and asked: 'What do we call this person in a band?' The children suggested 'constructor' and 'instructor' so Ms Z finally provided the name 'conductor'. However, the word 'conductor' itself did not appear in the text but the episode nonetheless led Bill to mis-read 'couldn't' as 'conductor'.

These long exchanges also raise questions about the decisions teachers make when planning the 'book introduction'. Its purpose is to facilitate the comprehension of the text to be read, rather than to broaden children's vocabulary per se. Teachers whose 'book introductions' are as protracted as the ones in this sample, are perhaps not making a sufficient distinction between shared and guided reading. An additional explanation for the protracted 'book introduction' lies in the fact that they are less demanding of teachers in terms of

preparation: they serve as a framework for a great deal of talk about the book. This might also explain why some 'book introductions' lacked a clear focus.

In addition to teaching techniques that promote the comprehension of word meanings, were others that teachers used to promote comprehension of the text as a whole. Top-down reading strategies draw on knowledge, understanding and experience of characters, settings, plots and the various issues raised in stories. Three observed teaching techniques served to promote children's comprehension of the text as a whole. The first and most obvious was that for all but one of the sessions, teachers chose short stories: the children could read the whole text. Second, all four teachers dedicated a large proportion of the 'book introduction' to detailed previews of the stories. Thirdly, on two occasions, groups were seen to attend to the blurb at the back of the book and both times, the children appeared to be highly motivated by this familiar feature (Extracts 13 and 18).

EXTRACT 13

[Without prompting, some of the children turned to the blurb on the back of their *ORT* story.]

[13.1] Children:	It's dad and Floppy! Dad and Floppy's in it!
[13.2] Ms Z:	Has it got Floppy in this story?
[13.3] Children:	Look!
[13.4] Ms Z:	Floppy. Yes, you can see him on the back cover.
[13.5] Child:	Ha! Ha! Ha! [laughing]

The 'recipe for self-help' or strategy check and teacher prompting

The final teaching technique to be addressed here is connected to the meta-cognitive dimension of the reading process. It is a key element of RR and follows from Clay's concept of learners' assuming control of their own reading behaviour. This concept is also central to Fountas and Pinnell's model of guided reading (1996). But, strategy check prompts can vary, particularly with regard to how children are prompted to use top-down, contextual information. Furthermore, Adams (1996) queries the value of prompts to bottom-up information which, she argues, should be accessed automatically rather than consciously. Ms W, in fact, included two 'strategy checks' (Extract 14).

EXTRACT 14

During the 'book introduction'. Ray was always the first to bid in response to Ms W's questions

[14.1] Ms W:	What can we do if we get to a word that we can't read? What can we do Ray?
[14.2] Child:	Look at all the pictures and...
[14.3] Ms W:	[interrupting] Wait a minute. Let's let someone else have a turn. Joy?
[14.4] Child:	Break the word up.
[14.5] Ms W:	We can break the word up, either into phonemes or syllables, smaller words, can't we? We can do it like that.
[14.6] Child:	We can do it into the letters.
[14.7] Ms W:	Yes, into the letters, that's right. What else Pat?
[14.8] Child:	Don't read the word and just go on.
[14.9] Ms W:	That's right, we could leave the word out and read on.
[14.10] Child:	See what makes sense.
[14.11] Ms W:	See what we think the word might be. Well done. Well done. Anything else we can do if we come to a word that we don't know? Joy?
[14.12] Child:	Press the sound buttons.
[14.13] Ms W:	We can press the sound buttons. Something else... What's the first thing you look at?
[14.14] Child:	Put it in your head.
[14.15] Ms W:	No! You're in numeracy now!
[14.16] Children:	You're doing numbers.
[14.17] Ms W:	What's the first thing you look at in a word to give you a clue to the word?
[14.18] Child:	The first phoneme.
[14.19] Ms W:	That's right. Look at the first phoneme and see what that is.

In Extract 14 the children rehearse the 'strategy check' readily. However, one child introduces a strategy for mathematical mental calculation! (Extract 14.15) Also, the terminology used in the 'recipe' is challenging. In addition, part of the exchange is inaccurate: the phrase 'look at the first phoneme' (Extract 14.19) is perhaps not helpful. This raises the question of whether the 'strategy check' demonstrated above serves any useful purpose. Is it valuable scaffolding or more 'literalism'? Ms W reasoned its inclusion in her sessions (Extract 15).

EXTRACT 15

Ms W: The more you do that [the strategy check], as the year goes on, means eventually they can just put their hands up and say them all.

The nature and purpose of the 'strategy check' in the NLS needs to be fully explained in two respects: first in the context of the reading process; second in the context of the learning process. Ms W demonstrated a further problem with the 'strategy check' in that it has relevance only when reading connected text. Her group had rehearsed two 'strategy checks' during the 'book introduction' when she then isolated some words from within the text. In so doing she found that the application of the 'strategy check' was not so straightforward (Extract 8.12). This too raises the question of whether the 'strategy check' has any value. Ms W's children were typically biddable – they were eager to follow her directions. But, are these rehearsals of value? What is more, 'looking at the picture' seemed to be the children's preferred option (e.g. Extract 14.2): clearly, information from pictures is easy to access. In contrast, print is less engaging and far harder to process: print processing requires relatively more effort. So, how exactly do children perceive these 'strategy checks'? Ms W, for example, appeared to give her children mixed messages because as she monitored the children's independent reading, she did not always acknowledge when the 'rehearsed' strategies had been applied.

An additional mixed message might have been conveyed by Ms W's tendency to prompt mainly decoding strategies during 'independent reading' (Extract 16). Unfortunately, her Reception class children did not control the phonological knowledge or skill in blending that enabled them to follow her prompts to decode 'through' many of the problem words in their text.

EXTRACT 16

[In this next extract Ms W tended again to prompt with phonological information. When that didn't help the reader, she prompted with contextual information. The child is attempting *'He found some plants. He found lots of mud.'*]

[16.1] Child:	He.../fuh/...
[16.2] Ms W:	Good girl. Can you remember what sound that /o/ and /u/ make when they're together? What sound do they make? [no reply from the child] They make the /ou/ sound. /ou/.../n/.../d/ /ou/.../nd/.

[16.3] Child:	[adding the extra phoneme /ruh/] ... <i>frowned</i> ...
[16.4] Ms W:	No, not 'frowned'. You've put a /ruh/ in. Not frowned. [pronouncing each phoneme] /f/.../ou/.../n/.../d/
[16.5] Child:	... <i>frowned</i> ...
[16.6] Ms W:	You've put the /ruh/ back in! /fuh/.../ou/.../nd/
[16.7] Child:	... <i>frowned</i> ...
[16.8] Ms W:	You've still got that /ruh/. Come on. Look again. /fuh/.../ou/.../nd/.
[16.9] Child:	... <i>frowned</i> ...
[16.10] Ms W:	[expressing exasperation] ... found. He found...
[16.11] Child:	... <i>some</i> ...
[16.12] Ms W:	[prompting contextual information] What did he find?
[16.13] Child:	['sounding out'] ... /puh/... /luh/... /a/... <i>plats</i>
[16.14] Ms W:	/puh/... /luh/... /a/... /nuh/... /tuh/... /suh/
[16.15] Child:	... <i>plants</i> ...
[16.16] Ms W:	Yes. That's it! Off you go again.
[16.17] Child:	<i>He</i> ... I've forgotten. [the word 'found']
[16.18] Ms W:	Spell it out. /fuh/.../ou/.../nd/
[16.19] Child:	... <i>found</i> ...
[16.20] Ms W:	That's it.
[16.21] Child:	... <i>lots of plants</i> . [the text reads 'mud' not 'plants']
[16.22] Ms W:	Not plants. How could that [pointing to the word mud] be plants? Come on. He found lots of /muh/.../u/.../duh/
[16.23] Child:	... /muh/... /ou/... /nd/
[16.24] Ms W:	Not 'mound'. You're putting an extra sound in there. He found lots of..., [prompting to contextual information] What does the net look like? [pointing to the picture] What's this on the net? All the brown stuff?
[16.25] Child:	... <i>mud</i> ...

What kinds of books do teachers use for guided reading and how do they choose them?

The kinds of texts used for guided reading

All four teachers in the sample selected narrative texts for the observed guided reading sessions. The sample comprised two teachers who reported in the survey that they tended to use scheme books for guided reading, and two who reported that they tended not to. In the observed sessions all four teachers

made selections for their sessions that corresponded with their survey responses.

The two teachers who used scheme books, used the *ORT*. Ms Z explained why she used the *ORT* scheme (Extract 17) by drawing attention to a number of features that characterise scheme books. Such features tend to be held constant between the books in the scheme (Extract 18).

EXTRACT 17

Ms Z: We find the *ORT* stories quite interesting. They [her children] can relate to them because the children in the story are of a similar age to them... Kipper is the youngest... he starts school at the beginning of the series of books and there's Floppy the dog who does all sorts of naughty things. Children need this continuity of characters.

Ms X (Extract 18) mentions another feature of the *ORT* scheme in particular - the blurb on the back cover. Familiar features such as these are effective in holding 'constant' certain contextual elements of instructional texts. Hence those 'constants' can represent the 'known' or the 'familiar', while other new elements can be introduced to represent the 'challenge'. It is, however, interesting to note that Ms W felt the need to 'justify' her use of scheme books.

EXTRACT 18

Ms X: I mean, ideally you would be trying to introduce them to books from different genres, wouldn't you? You know, real books and all that sort of thing, but I do that within my shared reading. That's how I justify to myself using the *Oxford Reading Tree* scheme for guided reading. They absolutely love the *Oxford Reading Tree* books. They love this [pointing to the blurb on the back of the book]. They know what it's going to be about. They'll look at the blurb on the back and say, 'Oh! It's about Chip.'

But Ms X's perception that the *ORT* books were 'limited at text level' (Extract 19) revealed some of her uncertainties about the nature of the resource: the *ORT* books are extremely rich at 'text level' – too rich it might be argued. Moreover, the session that Ms X demonstrated was also very rich at 'text level': Ms X dedicated 5 minutes to a detailed talk and 'round robin' reading through the book – focusing on the plot, the characters' actions and motives, the detail in the pictures, and the content vocabulary.

EXTRACT 19

Ms X: I find that the early *Oxford Reading Tree* books are quite limited in terms of what you can get out of them at the text level. I mean, that's one of the limitations of using scheme books.

The other two teachers selected non-scheme books in their observed sessions. But, the books they selected were very different in many respects. Ms W chose a traditional-type story from the *Oxford Literacy Web* (Oxford University Press, 1999) *The Genie in the Bottle*, for her group of Reception children. It had some similarities with the story of Aladdin. In contrast, Ms Y chose a repeating-sequence story, *Speak Up!* from the Sunshine Books (Heinemann, 1987) for her group of Y1 children. Comparing the two, the traditional-type story had more pages of text, more words in total, and none of what is termed 'patterned language'. In contrast, the repeating-sequence story had fewer pages of text, fewer words in total and a high proportion of 'patterned' language. The traditional-type story posed a far greater challenge as a result of its structure. Instead, in the repeating-sequence story, the plot was highly 'predictable'. Also, the language was highly 'patterned' so most of its key phrases and sentences were repeated on every page. Having become familiar with how the story 'worked' during the 'book introduction', the children were able to read accurately, fluently and 'for meaning': they read independently.

In contrast, Ms W's traditional-type story posed a far greater challenge because its plot had in fact few similarities to the plot of Aladdin. In other words, the children's prior knowledge of the Aladdin story, did not provide a sufficiently useful contextual background to support their independent reading of Abdulla's story. However, Ms W did not convey any such concerns in the interview that followed the session (Extract 20).

EXTRACT 20

[In the questionnaire Ms W reported that she 'never' used scheme books for guided reading. For the observed session, selected a 'real book' - a traditional-type story *The Genie in the Bottle*.]

Ms W: I chose this one particularly because it is actually - we kept wanting to call him Aladdin didn't we - based on a familiar, traditional story, so that's a good thing. So they can draw on that little bit of story knowledge. I don't use 'scheme' reading books for guided reading. I think that they're not actually that interesting. I think there's a little bit more in real books. They're not the usual reading scheme books where all the words are gauged so that they're at their

level. It was challenging for them but that's how they learn and that's the idea of guided reading. You're there to guide them through those challenges.

For Ms W, the salient features of *The Genie in the Bottle*, were first, its high frequency words, and second, its familiar - or so she thought - content.

In summary, whether the teachers chose scheme books or non-scheme books, they were chosen because they included familiar high frequency words and content which was both appealing and reasonably easy to access. Only one teacher chose a text for its patterned and predictable language. None of the teachers made reference to other word-level features of their chosen texts.

How do teachers choose texts for guided reading

Teachers tended to interpret the concept of 'challenge' with reference to both qualitative and quantitative criteria. Qualitative criteria are employed in a number of publications that list titles that have been categorised and presented in a series of graded 'levels'. RR teachers exploit this method of organising texts as do Fountas and Pinnell (1996). One such publication teachers referred to is the Reading Recovery National Network's *Book Bands for Guided Reading* (RRNN, 1999). This publication is recommended in the NLS Early Literacy Support flier, *Guided Reading* (DFES, 2001). Ms X referred to her colour-coded book stock (Extract 21) and described how she selected texts for guided reading. She also implied that her objective was that the children read accurately when re-reading the text at home.

EXTRACT 21

[21.1] Researcher:	I'm interested in the challenge you think is appropriate in guided reading.
[21.2] Ms X:	Well, we've got a kind of rule of thumb, but it's only a very basic one. We use the Cliff Moon reading levels. This group's reading at blue level and today's book is the level above, and that's what I always sort of aim for. Because, if they were able to read it already...out loud...then you've no teaching points to be made, have you?

A second interpretation of 'challenge' posed by instructional texts is essentially quantitative and tends to be related to reading accuracy. Fountas and Pinnell (1996, p. 6) offer a 'rule of thumb': that following the 'book introduction' and

with some support, children need to be able to read about 90 per cent of the words accurately.

Two teachers referred to the concept of 'challenge' in quantitative terms - Ms W (Extract 22) and Ms X (Extract 23). Moreover, both took the view that in guided reading children should be expected to read between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of the text accurately. Ms W had selected a text for her session that clearly posed this considerable challenge. She explained her rationale (Extract 22).

EXTRACT 22

[22.1] Ms W:	Home reading wouldn't be as challenging as guided reading. It's [home reading] always got to be comfortable. They should be reading about - I would say - reading at least 90% of the text for home reading because it shouldn't be a challenge...
[22.2] Researcher:	What about the in guided reading today?
[22.3] Ms W:	I aim for something like 75% in guided reading.

Ms X also chose books for guided reading that posed a considerable challenge. Her aim was that children should read independently *following*, rather than during, the guided reading session.

EXTRACT 23

[The children were reading the *ORT*, stage 2, *Shopping*]

[23.1] Researcher:	So, what do you aim for in guided reading?
[23.2] Ms X:	Probably 80% or 70% because you want them to read the books at home individually at about 90%, don't you?
[23.3] Researcher:	So in guided reading it's more challenging?
[23.4] Ms X:	Yes. That's right. But then you'd hope that when you've done the session with them they'd go home and read them again [the books] with more accuracy.

In summary, both Ms W and Ms X chose texts for guided reading in order to pose a considerable challenge. Moreover, both teachers described their children as 'struggling' to read independently during the observed sessions: Ms W interrupted the independent reading twice (Table 6) while Ms X's group read 'round robin' style (Table 8). Both teachers saw guided reading as merely a preparation for 'independent reading' *after*, rather than during, the session.

There seems, therefore, to be a tension here in the teachers' interpretation of what guided reading is and is for. Both teachers appeared to be inhibiting rather than enhancing children's independent reading. Such major challenges as were posed effectively *prevent* teachers from monitoring children's independent reading strategies. And, with few opportunities for monitoring, there are few opportunities to provide formative and contingent feedback.

In stark contrast to the considerable challenge posed by Ms W and Ms X, Ms Y deliberately chose texts for guided reading that posed only a moderate challenge. Moreover, she accomplished this in the session observed by choosing a non-scheme book. But, the non-scheme book she chose had quite different features to the one chosen by Ms W and therefore had a quite different pattern of challenge. Whereas Ms W chose a traditional style story '*The Genie in the Bottle*', in which the main character Abdulla, finds a bottle containing a genie (with some similarities to the story of Aladdin), Ms Y chose a repeating-sequence story. Like many other such stories (*The Little Red Hen*, *Chicken Licken* etc.), one particular event is repeated throughout the plot. Moreover, the language – both vocabulary and sentence structure – is also repeated. This provides the children with a great deal of support in terms of both print processing and text comprehension. Also, it enabled Ms Y to draw the children's attention to a number of the text's unique features – her objective for the session. In summary, Ms Y's non-scheme book posed very little challenge in terms of word recognition and text comprehension in general. Instead, the challenge posed was one of understanding that the story contained within it elements of humour conveyed by particular literary devices in the text layout and illustrations.

How do teachers view the purpose and organisation of guided reading?

There were quite stark differences in the ways the four teachers interpreted the purpose and organisation of guided reading. One difference concerned teachers' interpretation of guided reading vis-à-vis individualised teaching.

Although both Ms W and Ms X, had replaced individualised reading with the teacher, with guided reading, they both deployed additional classroom adults to

'hear children read' on a regular and routine basis. Ms W explained her rationale. It hinged on her perception of the distinction between guided reading as an instructional context and 'hearing children read' as offering children the opportunity for 'practice' (Extract 24).

EXTRACT 24

Ms W: The thing is that the teacher teaches the children how to read. They then need to practise their reading and there's a difference and people get a bit confused with that. To practise reading you don't need to be with a teacher. You can be with an assistant, a parent helper, your [the children's] parents. All Reception and Year 1 children do one-to-one with a parent helper, who is a very good helper. She knows all the strategies and everything.

Ms X also shared the perception that guided reading was for teaching and that one-to-one reading was an opportunity for the children to practise (Extract 25). This begs the question why children need to be in the company of an adult, albeit not the teacher, when reading individually 'by themselves, for themselves'. Hurry et al., for example, found the LIFT teachers arranged successfully for children to read independently by means of strategic timetabling, without adult 'supervision'. Perhaps Ms W and Ms X haven't had the opportunity to recognise the programme's underpinning learning theory such that authentic settings are more likely to be conducive to independent performance. Instead, the guided reading in Ms W and Ms X's classes has perhaps been set alongside a prevailing practice that has different pedagogical underpinnings - adults 'hearing children practice reading' rather than reading for 'real'.

EXTRACT 25

Ms X: Individual reading is about practice - children need the practice of reading don't they? ... Guided reading is teaching the strategies of reading rather than practice, isn't it?

Some teachers were, however, starting to recognise that the guided reading context is characterised by its authenticity – enabling reading for 'real'. Both Ms X and Ms Z made this point in Extracts 30 and 31.

Ms Y appeared to have recognised that guided reading should be an authentic context for children to 'read for themselves, by themselves' (Extract 26).

EXTRACT 26

Ms Y: I like them to feel that they've been successful, that they've enjoyed something and I like them to feel that they want to discuss the text with me afterwards.

Similarly, Ms Z was beginning to acknowledge this feature of guided reading.

(Extract 31)

What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of guided reading?

None of the teachers had evaluated guided reading formally, but a variety of views were expressed about its effectiveness. All teachers commented on the economy of 'hearing the group read' simultaneously, as opposed to 'hearing' six children read' consecutively (e.g. Extract 27). This does tend to echo one of the main themes of the NLS rationale.

EXTRACT 27

Ms X: It was often the case that I'd hear them read individually and I'd read the same book with four children consecutively... so the thing is [in guided reading] you're teaching the same objectives.

Others commented of the way in which group teaching made for more focused planning and teaching (Extracts 28, 29 and 30).

EXTRACT 28

Ms Y: I think I'm a lot more focussed. I mean before, I heard readers one-to-one and now I plan and I've got a learning outcome and I know what I'm delivering, you know, that's my book [pointing to her file of guided reading plans]... it's all planned. Whereas when you're just hearing one-to-one, it's whatever's happening, isn't it?

EXTRACT 29

Ms Z: You do a lot more teaching in a guided reading session than you would be when you're hearing children read. You're doing a lot more teaching. I think there's a lot more thought goes into it really. You're more aware of what children are doing and what they need as well. It's raised awareness of that really.

EXTRACT 30

Ms X: Teaching guided reading means that you actually analyse the book. You make better choices about the books you ask children to read.

Also, the teachers saw the group context as less 'pressured' (Extract 31) which connects with its authenticity as a reading context.

EXTRACT 31

Ms Z: I think because we're in a group and it's not pressured - it's not one-to-one one pressure. ... The children are reading for real and thinking about it. I think the children enjoy - not just the stories because they're interesting stories - but they enjoy the atmosphere of being in a group. They're not just 'getting through books' but actually 'reading'.

All teachers referred to the 'sharing' of ideas and learning in a group (Extracts 31 and 32)

EXTRACT 32

Ms X: You get an awful lot out of the group because they bounce off one another and I feel it's a much more effective way of teaching reading.

To what extent are teachers confident about implementing guided reading?

None of the teachers in this small sample expressed any lack of confidence in guided reading except in term of its timing. On the contrary, they stated, that despite the constraints of time, they would retain it (Extract 33). However, Ms X tended to tag many of her statements with: 'Isn't it?' and 'Aren't we?' etc.

EXTRACT 33

Ms W: Even in the fifteen minutes, you've got to get the children out of the classroom if you're going out. You've to get them settled - there are sometimes children who want to go to the toilet in the middle of it. I do think that's what puts teachers off - that is - managing it. But, I wouldn't stop doing it. No. And I wouldn't go back to individual hearing... because I don't think it is teaching, it's hearing, isn't it?

These analyses have provided a wealth of detail concerning a small sample of teachers' practices in, and perceptions of guided reading with beginning readers. The following section draws together the findings from both parts of the study in order to discuss their potential implications.

SECTION 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This part of the thesis begins with a summary of the findings against each of the research questions. This is followed by a consideration of the implications the findings might have for subsequent policy development in relation to the NLS.

The thesis began with a review of two long-standing debates: one focused on government concern about reading standards resulting in calls for more effective teaching in whole class and small groups. The second debate focused on the reading process resulting in calls for a more balanced reading curriculum, the implication of which has been increased attention to the decoding aspects. The nature and purpose of the NLS is embedded in both the debates.

Two models were seen to underpin the reading teaching element of the NLS: one essentially grounded in Vygotskian social cognition; the other an essentially interactive model of the reading process. However, it was suggested that, within NLS documents and guidelines, the concept of assisted learning, as it applies to the reading programme in general and guided reading in particular, is under-conceptualised. Likewise, it was suggested that the strategy's 'searchlights' metaphor fails to convey adequately that the interaction between reading strategies, changes qualitatively, as the reading process matures.

Furthermore, it was suggested that the implementation of guided reading in the NLS might be influenced not only by some lack of clarity in NLS documents and training materials, but also by the orthodoxies that prevailed at the time of the Strategy's introduction in 1998. A number of resulting areas of tension, thought likely to influence teachers' practices in, and perceptions of, guided reading were proposed. Finally, a set of research questions were formulated (pages 42-3). This final part of the thesis discusses the findings from both parts of the study with regard to the research questions.

Discussion against research questions

How do teachers manage time for guided reading, time within guided reading and time to follow-up guided reading?

The teachers who responded to the questionnaire seemed somewhat exercised by time factors with regard to the implementation of guided reading. Although teachers reported that guided reading sessions were generally routine and regular, they also reported a number of time constraints. First, they were not convinced that 10-minute sessions were useful – particularly with older KS1 children: 20 minutes was the reported average session duration. Only 70 per cent of the teachers surveyed, reported being able to monitor all the children in the group during guided reading sessions. Moreover, one session per week was considered inadequate. It is interesting to compare these findings with the time allocations that Fountas and Pinnell (1996) make for guided reading sessions: in their programme guided reading sessions are more frequent and can have a duration of up to 30 minutes. It is possible that the NLS ‘hour’ was an extrapolation from the Dearing review of the mid 1990s. But, having appropriated the guided reading teaching method from overseas, it might be wise to look again at its management. In line with this finding is that which indicated that teachers found it difficult to accommodate guided reading within the literacy hour – particularly teachers of older KS1 children, a finding also reported by HMI (OfSTED, 2002).

A second aspect of time management concerns the within-session teaching sequence. Although the survey revealed a high degree of adherence by teachers to the NLS guidelines for guided reading, the case data suggested that the fine detail relating to the session sequence varied. Firstly, the ‘book introduction’ tended to dominate the session, being proportionally longer than the other taught parts of the session. Secondly, both the ‘independent reading’ time and the time given to a ‘return to the text’ were proportionally shorter than recommended. Reasons for the variations can be suggested with reference to the case studies only, but they raise questions about teachers’ understanding of the nature and purpose of guided reading that merit further investigation.

The variations will be discussed in the section below related to teaching techniques.

The third part of the session was generally the shortest. Although this part of the session provides an opportunity to return to focus questions posed during the 'book introduction', only half the teachers in the case studies posed starter questions, so there was no clear focus for a 'return'. Moreover, comprehension of the text as a whole was addressed in the 'picture walk'. In other words, children's 'independent reading' appeared to be 'with comprehension' rather than 'for comprehension'. In summary, sessions appeared to lack the symmetry they were designed to have, which might suggest that the potential of guided reading has not yet been exploited to the full.

Finally, teachers do not seem to have connected guided reading with individual, independent reading in line with the programme's underpinning progression pathway. This again suggests that guided reading is not perceived to be inter-dependent with other NLS reading programme components. Furthermore, Sylva et al. (1999) calculated that children spent no more time reading with the teacher in LIFT classrooms but that they did spend more time reading individually and to each other. The implications are that any potential gains in reading attainment offered by the literacy hour might be as much attributable to increased opportunities for unassisted independent reading as to guided reading exclusively.

What teaching techniques do teachers use to promote interactive reading strategies?

The data collected during the study suggest that teachers are familiar with the concept of reading strategies and have appropriated its associated terminology within their discourse. They are aware that the teaching of reading calls for techniques that promote children's strategy use. Teachers are also aware that their teaching must promote strategies that enable children to exploit both top-down and bottom-up information related to the text. In this study, only the case data revealed fine detail of these teaching techniques with beginning readers. Teachers, clearly very familiar with teaching techniques associated with shared

Teachers, clearly very familiar with teaching techniques associated with shared reading, tended to extend the 'book introduction' with lengthy discussions of the pictures in the book. The pictures seemed almost to serve as a scaffold for the teachers in determining the shape of the session and the nature of the discourse – mainly teacher questioning. Moreover, this apparent dependence on the pictures that the teachers demonstrated might have been masking gaps in their knowledge of other text features.

For the children, the 'picture walk' seems to serve two purposes: one that is essentially enabling, in that it results in productive strategy development because it primes children's expectations of what words, and the text as a whole might *mean*. The other is essentially compensatory in that it promotes a less productive strategy – contextual guessing - because it primes children's expectations of what unfamiliar words might '*read*'. Moreover, in the rehearsed 'strategy check' with beginning readers, prominence tended to be given, by both teachers and children, to picture clues. However, 'Reliance on context to the exclusion of orthography, is a good strategy neither for reading nor for learning to read' (Adams, 1990, p.153).

A second feature of the 'book introduction' reflected an aspect of bottom-up processing that teachers tended to emphasise – high-frequency word recognition. Teachers appear to afford high-frequency word recognition high status in the reading process. They tended to pre-teach high frequency words: case study teachers used flashcards for this purpose. Teachers seemed less inclined to pre-teach a book's unfamiliar 'content' words in guided reading: children were expected to exploit contextual information to 'solve' such words. The result of this approach to word reading instruction places beginning readers in the position of having to rely on contextual information and initial letter information to 'solve problems'. As Adams points out: 'Whereas the coherence of a text depends strongly on its frequent words...information in a text derives disproportionately from its less frequent words' (1990, p. 414).

As mentioned above, the strategy check is included to scaffold 'independent reading'. However, case study data suggests that when teachers prompt children *during* 'independent reading' they tend to begin with prompts to exploit

that children could decode 'through the word': apart from information from initial letters, the rest of the word was phonologically unmanageable. This partial bottom-up information was then combined with contextual (picture) information. The apparent mismatch, therefore, between the strategy check as rehearsed, and the teachers' contingent support during independent reading raises questions about the nature and efficacy of this meta-cognitive dimension of guided reading. Adams (1996) claims that, to be effective, children's phonological processing should be unconscious and automatic: rehearsing it during connected text reading might instead prove to be counter-productive, to slow the process down. However, she regards meta-cognitive prompts to be crucial in supporting children's comprehension of the whole text as its meaning unfolds through the reading. Furthermore, she is critical of the prompting that encourages children to make the words they are attempting to read, fit the meaning they have established prior to the reading. 'In view of this, the strong emphasis on choosing literature that matches students' prior knowledge and interests in understandable' (Adams, 1996, p. 88). Instead, prompts might be more effective in promoting productive reading strategies if they are formulated to promote what Oakhill and Yuill (1995) refer to as 'inference making' and 'comprehension monitoring' before, during and after independent reading.

In summary, although teachers are gaining a broad range of teaching techniques in guided reading, they might also, unwittingly, be promoting one that is least productive and reliable – contextual guessing. Adams warns against an approach which suggests that '...the reason for understanding the text is to figure out the words' (1996, p.89). Through the 1980s this technique would have been associated with top-down models of reading but it is neither appropriate within the NLS programme nor recommended in the NLS guidelines. However, it may be that the texts teachers choose for guided reading in some respects determine the teaching techniques that they are using and the reading strategies they are promoting.

What kinds of texts do teachers use for guided reading and how do they choose them?

There was no clear pattern to the text choices teachers made for guided reading. At whole-text level books were chosen so that their content was engaging and accessible. At word-level books were chosen to promote two bottom-up strategies: one was high frequency word recognition; the other strategy was first letter information combined with contextual guessing. This pattern might account for the protracted 'book introductions' in guided reading sessions which must have been necessary to ensure the children had considerable 'comprehension' of the text in advance of reading it. 'Book introductions' tended to provide a top-down framework that was to prime unfamiliar word recognition. In Adams' words,

While the child is to depend on the meaning of the passage to infer the meaning of its less familiar words, the meaning of the passage depends disproportionately on its less familiar words.
(Adams, 1991, p. 27)

At the time of the survey, June-July 2000, the texts teachers were using for guided reading tended to be drawn from existing stocks. This perhaps accounts for the proportion of teachers who in the survey reported using schemes like the *ORT*. However, the early *ORT* books share many features with non-scheme book. First, both tend to be lavishly illustrated and lend themselves to elaborate 'book introductions'. Second, both are well supplied with high frequency words which teachers are keen children should recognise readily. Third, both contain a number of unique 'content' words that are often polysyllabic. As a consequence, children are drawn to exploit the reading strategy described above – contextual guessing with first letter information. An additional feature common to both *ORT* and non-scheme books for beginning readers is their brevity. In case study sessions, there was often very little text for children to read during the recommended 5-minutes of 'independent reading'. This factor resulted in very brief periods of sustained reading. Moreover, there was little scope to sustain the reading beyond a sentence or two before the page was turned and attention interrupted – usually by the pictures. This raises the question of whether books of this design are conducive to inference-making, a cognitive process which builds an

understanding of the text as the story unfolds (Perera, 1993). Beginning reading books tend to imitate the features of 'picture books' but the latter were not written to promote beginning readers' independent reading: they merely scaffold children's engagement with the meaning of the text.

Another common feature of guided reading texts appears to be the few opportunities they provide for children to apply phonological knowledge and the skill of blending 'through the word'. Few instructional texts in general have any control of spelling patterns. The books contain not only a variety of unique words, but also a variety of unique spelling patterns. Among the continuing 'weaknesses' HMI found in guided reading was 'insufficient emphasis on teaching word- and sentence-level objectives, especially the application of phonic knowledge and skills' (OfSTED, 2002, para. 27). All the teachers interviewed made reference to the *Book Bands for Guided Reading* (Reading Recovery National Network, 1998) and were beginning to organise their book stocks accordingly. However, in the levelling criteria listed, there are no references to spelling patterns. Following a detailed study of a range of beginning reading books in the US, Menon and Hiebert found that all were 'remarkably similar with regard to decodability of words' (Menon and Hiebert, 1999, p. 19): the words were either very easy or very hard (polysyllabic, for example) to decode. The authors' conclusion might also apply to collections of levelled texts,

Our results imply that anthologies are introducing children to a large number of relatively hard words to decode, and then not providing them with enough opportunities for learning to read them.

(Menon and Hiebert, 1999, p.23)

This raises the question of whether the component parts of the NLS are effectively inter-dependent; do children get only limited opportunities to apply their phonic knowledge and their skill in blending 'through the word'? Interestingly, in interview none of the teachers referred to this aspect of instructional texts – it did not seem to be an issue. Therefore, it must be assumed that teachers do not expect guided reading to connect with their teaching of phonics at this beginning stage of reading acquisition, except at the level of initial letter recognition perhaps. Adams warns: we must not 'lose sight

of the goals beneath our plans such that those initial exercises in connected text reading tend to compete with or even to displace the word recognition skills that we hoped they would develop' (Adams, 1990, p. 288). This is the second instance of NLS reading programme components struggling to connect. These findings might suggest that NLS reading components are seen to act in parallel rather than inter-dependently. Is the NLS perceived as merely an eclectic mix of methods little different from the programmes advocated by Bullock in 1976 and described by HMI in the 1990s? Adams cautions,

It is not just eclecticism that makes a programme of reading instruction effective; it is the way in which its pieces are fitted together to complement and support one another...
(Adams, 1990, p. 423)

An additional aspect of text selection that merits closer attention is the concept of challenge. It is related to the model of learning that is assumed to underpin guided reading in the NLS: challenge and support combine within instructional contexts. Achieving the delicate balance between the two is crucial to the effectiveness of assisted performance. That the guided reading component of the NLS had not been evaluated, prior to its inclusion in the programme, is unfortunate, because the guidelines are not strong in respect of achieving this balance. Furthermore, teachers seem to have received contrasting advice from a variety of sources. Fountas and Pinnell, whose approach is essentially 'whole language' and who promote the strategy of contextual guessing, choose texts that they expect children to read in the session with approximately 90 per cent accuracy. Adams, on the other hand, takes a different view of challenge:

The amount students learn through connected text is tightly bound to the amount of difficulty they have reading it: high error rates are negatively correlated with achievement and vice versa.
(Adams, 1990, p. 289)

Therefore, the dual concepts of challenge and support need to be defined more fully within the context of an interactive model of beginning reading and for the purpose of supporting teachers in implementing guided reading. Adams outlines the complex decision-making involved in achieving this balance.

Readability and text difficulty is not a unary dimension: A text can be more or less difficult at the level of words, syntax or concepts. The aspects of a text that are best pushed beyond or kept within the student's level of mastery depend on the purpose for which the text is intended. If its purpose is to extend word recognition skills, then a larger proportion of new words can occur but its syntactic and conceptual structure should be entirely manageable. Similarly, if the purpose is to extend syntactic sensitivity, then the topic should be familiar and the vocabulary should be controlled. In contrast, if the purpose is to impart new concepts, grade-level control of syntax and vocabulary makes sense.

(Adams, 1990, p. 154)

Only one of the teachers in the cases studied selected a text that appeared to provide an appropriate balance of familiar to new features. What is more, the teacher had recent training in the NLS Early Literacy Support intervention programme, which might have added to the quality of her judgement. Two teachers selected texts that were too much of a challenge, while one selected a text that posed hardly any challenge at all. Some teachers, therefore, need much more help in interpreting this complex balance of challenge and support when selecting instructional texts. Furthermore, published compilations of levelled texts might be useful, but teachers still need to understand the principles on which the grading criteria are based. Without such insights they might just as well be slavishly following a traditional reading scheme.

How do teachers view the purpose and organisation of guided reading?

There still remains some uncertainty about the purpose of guided reading vis-à-vis 'hearing children read'. Furthermore, the nature of that uncertainty seems to be linked to its pedagogical underpinnings, which, as stated earlier, are somewhat under-conceptualised in the NLS. Although the stated aim of the NLS is to replace individualised teaching with teaching in class and small groups, no distinction is made between the two, except to state that guided reading increases *time* for teaching and learning. The possibility that guided reading and individualised reading, as per 'hearing children read', might be from quite different pedagogical stables, is not addressed. Therefore, the nature of the differences regarding 'instruction' represented by guided reading in the NLS the more familiar 'hearing children read', needs to be examined.

According to a series of HMI evaluation reports (e.g. OfSTED, 2002), and borne out by the teachers interviewed in the study, there is general acceptance that phonics is an important aspect of the NLS reading programme. Furthermore, it is recognised that phonics teaching needs to be systematic and direct. The NLS *Progression in Phonics* (DfEE, 1999) is both detailed in its rationale and its teaching techniques and there is general consensus that, contrived as it is, phonics teaching is an important means to an end: phonological knowledge and the skill of blending are crucial to reading acquisition. The goal of phonics instruction is mastery and over-learning so that word recognition becomes unconscious and automatic. However, the type of 'instruction' underpinning guided reading is different in nature because the process of reading connected text involves more sophisticated conceptual, cognitive processing. The latter type of 'instruction' has origins in social cognition. Guided reading is an example of an authentic context within which 'assisted performance' is the goal. In guided reading learners are faced with some challenge to their current capacities but they are reading for real, 'by themselves, for themselves', while the teacher offers assistance that is contingent upon the learners' needs. Adams refers to the importance of 'real' reading:

In both fluent reading and its acquisition, the readers' knowledge must be aroused interactively and in parallel. Neither understanding nor learning can proceed hierarchically from the bottom-up. Phonological awareness, letter recognition facility, familiarity with spelling patterns, spelling-sound relationships and individual words must be developed in concert with real reading and real writing and with deliberate reflection on the forms, functions and meanings of texts.
(Adams, 1990, p. 422)

Adams' final point neatly demonstrates what the focus of the meta-cognitive 'strategy check' should be – the text's meaning.

Although some teachers in the study described guided reading as less 'pressured', less 'formal' and referred to children 'bouncing off each other' (Extracts 31 and 32), the concept of reading for real in the classroom does not

seem to be fully appreciated. All but one of the observed teachers used teaching techniques common to 'hearing children read': the teachers dominated all the exchanges; the children's contribution was minimal; and sessions were more contrived than authentic. There is perhaps some irony in that there might be plenty of 'real books' in classrooms but not yet a great deal of 'real reading'. Therefore, these pedagogical features of guided reading need to be more formally explained, exemplified and rationalised.

The study findings suggest that teachers have either retained the practice of routinely 'hearing children read' themselves, or have delegated it to additional classroom adults. Either way, running parallel with guided reading, 'hearing children read' might serve only to confuse children about the purpose of reading connected text. That guided reading is an authentic setting for real reading – even with beginning readers - has not yet been fully addressed in the NLS.

What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of guided reading?

Teachers clearly approve of guided reading despite its challenges and the constraints of time. However, at the time of the study, teachers had little objective evidence on which to base firmer judgements about its effectiveness in raising children's reading attainments.

What is more, there have been no studies that have investigated the effectiveness of guided reading. This is surely a pressing need; as Beard and Oakhill (1994, p. 34) point out, 'Teaching methods and programmes should be introduced because there is **evidence**, in terms of children's performance, that they work better than the method currently in use'.

To what extent are teachers confident about implementing guided reading?

Teachers reported general confidence in their teaching of guided reading. However, the preceding paragraphs suggest that there might be some prolonged confusion as to its nature and purpose. The following from Adams seems apposite.

To make the most of a set of materials (or to make the most of a group of students), the teacher must understand why each activity is included. The teacher must understand the needs to which each activity was intended and respond so that its importance can be assessed with respect to the particular needs of her own students. The teacher must understand how the activities fit together in rationale, dependence and independence, and priority. The teacher must be able to separate purpose from materials, necessary achievements from recommended activities, necessary sequence from page numbers, desirable time and detail from number of pages, and so on.

(Adams 1990, p.423)

Adams' views are echoed in the series of evaluation reports, *Watching and Learning*, by the team from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Their final report noted the discrepancy between teachers' self-reported confidence in the quality of their implementation of the NLS, and the judgements of the LEA Literacy Consultants. The final report concluded that there were still a great many gaps in teachers' knowledge and expertise such that teachers 'don't know what they don't know' (OISE/UT, 2003, p. 134). More serious was the warning by Hurry et al. commenting on the dearth of training available in the NLS,

Without a deeper knowledge of the process of learning to read, teachers who follow prescriptions may be inflexible, unenthusiastic and uncreative. There is a danger that their teaching may become a kind of painting by numbers.

(Hurry et al., 1999, p. 648)

In summary, the findings show that teachers who have implemented guided reading in the NLS have succeeded in scheduling regular and routine sessions, often with the support of additional classroom adults, in line with NLS guidelines. Moreover, teachers are generally confident about their teaching and the benefits of guided reading. However, following an examination of some of the finer detail of guided reading in practice, it is suggested that there might still be some uncertainty about its nature and purpose *within the NLS* – as HMI concluded: 'Overall, the quality of guided reading is a cause for concern'

(OfSTED, 2002, para. 28). The uncertainty is likely to have been caused by some of the sharp differences between the teaching techniques for guided reading in the NLS and techniques common to other instructional contexts – for example, ‘hearing children read’ and RR. A further tension concerns the ways in which texts for guided reading seem to determine to some degree the techniques teachers use and the reading strategies they promote. For example, when children have few opportunities to apply phonological knowledge and the skill of blending, the direct teaching of phonics might become ‘diffused’ (ibid., para. 58). Most significantly, however, is the continuing need for capacity building at teacher level. The Ontario team concludes,

Even with the Strategies’ strong focus on building capacity, the magnitude of the task has meant that many teachers have had relatively little opportunity for this sustained professional development and consolidation.
(OISE/UT, 2003, p. 135)

Implications for subsequent policy in the development of the NLS

Most fundamental to the development of the NLS is a more detailed model of the reading process in general and reading acquisition in particular. In other words, the ‘searchlights’ need some refinement. It might be more helpful to regard reading acquisition as staged such that the balance of strategy use can be seen to change as children’s knowledge-bases grow and their skills finesse. Such a model explains why beginning readers’ attention must be made to shift towards print features so that the development of bottom-up strategies can be less protracted.

Connected to this is the question of instructional texts. There seems little knowledge in the field regarding texts for beginning readers in general (Hoffman et al., 2000, 2002). That there might be uncertainty in teachers’ understanding is no wonder. Although the use of graded schemes differs in principle from the use of non-scheme levelled collections, where once teachers might have relied on a graded reading scheme to guide their choice of instructional texts, they might in future be apt to rely on a levelled book collection. Teachers need much more detailed advice about books and learning to read.

Reporting on the first four years of the NLS, HMI conclude,

Guided reading remains probably the most effective and efficient way to teaching reading, provided it is done well.
(OfSTED, 2002, para. 62)

However, there is no evidence that this is the case. There would seem to be an urgent need for detailed study into the effectiveness of guided reading in the NLS. Moreover, teachers need much clearer guidance about how best to support the development of the most productive beginning reading strategies. In addition, further studies need also to investigate the extent to which all the components in the NLS reading programme cohere. For example, is there sufficient connection between phonics teaching and opportunities to apply phonological knowledge and skills when reading connected text in authentic settings? Also, is guided reading sufficiently linked both in principle and in practice with routine and regular re-reading either individually or in small 'book clubs' or some such?

Conclusion

There were a number of things learnt from this investigation. First, it would have been useful to have included an item in the questionnaire related to the issue of selecting texts for guided reading that contain decodable words. This would have added an extra dimension to the discussion about the coherence of the NLS reading components. Second, the timing of the study was compromised by the fact that the study had to be suspended in 2000/1. This resulted in a gap of two years between the collection of survey and case study data.

The strength of the study lies in the fact that it was set within the context of the XXXX Primary Initial Teacher Training Partnership. The need to investigate guided reading was a genuine quest in the cause of course development. School-based teachers and tutors were willing to contribute to its design and progress. Moreover, data collection was greatly facilitated by the sense of purpose that the context provided for both tutors and trainees.

A further strength was connected to the case studies in that the observations were followed closely by interviews with the teachers. The interviews gained in quality because the topics had immediate relevance.

Finally, the study benefited from having an historical perspective on the debates about literacy processes and pedagogy. This contributed to the scope of the investigation and informed the interpretation of some of its findings.

In conclusion, it is clear that the NLS offers considerable opportunities to learn a great deal more about the beginning reading process and the teaching of reading. Moreover, such opportunities are now likely to be accessible to all teachers,

...the crucial next phase of NLS...reform involves: deepening and broadening teacher subject knowledge and pedagogical understanding in literacy...
(OISE/UT, 2003, p. 141).

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ABBREVIATIONS

A	Always
AA	Almost Always
APU	Assessment of Performance Unit
BR	Better Reading
D	Disagree
DES	Department of Education and Science
DFE	Department for Education
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
HE	Hardly Ever
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectors/Inspectorate
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
KS	Key Stage
LEA	Local Education Authority
LIFT	Literacy Initiative from Teachers
NC	National Curriculum
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NLSF	National Literacy Strategy Framework
NN	Nursery Nurse
NVO	Not Very Often
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
ORT	Oxford Reading Tree
OUP	Oxford University Press
RR	Reading Recovery
RRNN	Reading Recovery National Network
SA	Strongly Agree
SD	Strongly Disagree
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TA	Teaching Assistant
VO	Very Often
Y1, Y2	Year 1,2 etc
YR	Reception
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

APPENDICES

1. Research timeline
2. Questionnaire
3. Focus group prompt sheet
4. Letter to head-teachers
5. Article posted on college web-site
6. Observation protocol
7. Interview protocol
8. Sample colour-coded transcript

APPENDIX 1

Timeline

June 1998	Case study interview – Bradford NLP KS1 teacher
1999	Focus group discussions with note-pads
January 2000	Pilot questionnaire
May 2000	Dispatch questionnaire
September 2000 - June 2001 study suspended for 1 year	
Jan 2002	Pilot case study protocols
June 2002	Case study data collected



APPENDIX 2

GUIDED READING AT KEY STAGE 1

Trinity and All Saints College tutors are always looking for ways to improve college-based training in the teaching of reading. In particular, we are keen to ensure that the methods we demonstrate and recommend to students are those which have been found to be effective in your classrooms.

Therefore, we are carrying out an investigation into:

- *guided reading in the National Literacy Strategy*
- *ways KS1 teachers implement guided reading*

We would be very grateful for your help in completing this questionnaire.

We hope to collect the views of a good cross-section of KS1 teachers, so it would be helpful to know:

The position you hold in school (eg. *classteacher, English subject leader etc.*) _____

How many years you have taught children of primary age

How many years you have taught in Key Stage 1

Which of these age groups are in your class this year R Y1 Y2 Y3

Which location category best fits your school urban sub-urban semi-rural rural

THANK YOU

1. Guided reading in practice at KS1

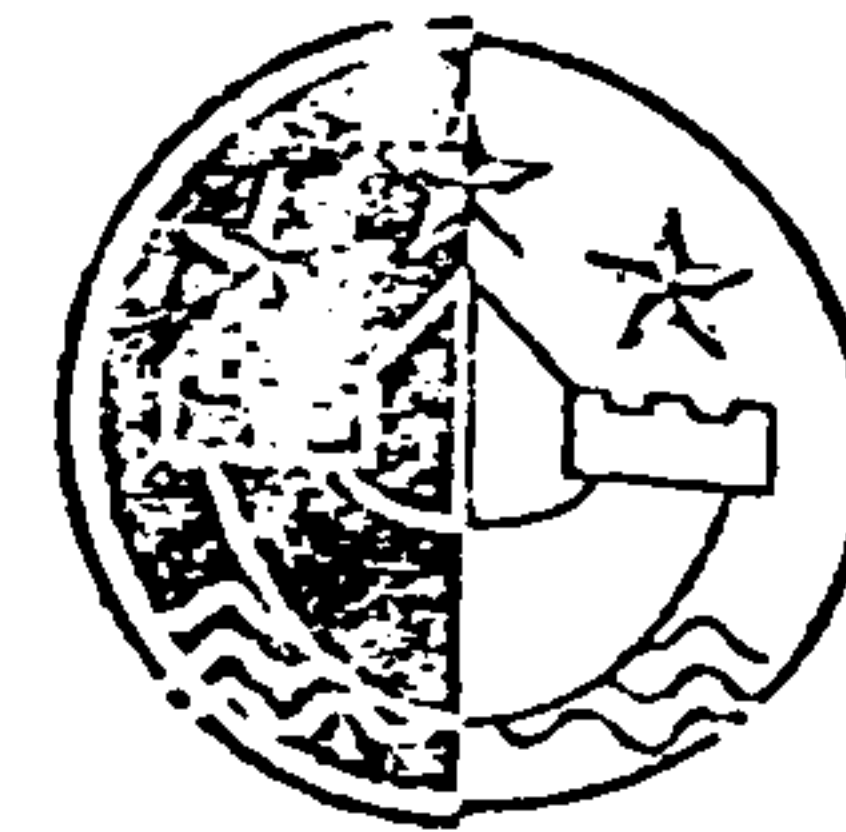
In conversations about guided reading, KS1 teachers described some of their own routine practices. Please show how often each one occurs in your guided reading sessions by ticking the appropriate boxes

	Almost Always	Very Often	Not Very Often	Hardly Ever
I do guided reading <u>during</u> the literacy hour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My preparation for guided reading sessions is thorough	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In guided reading I use graded books from a commercial reading scheme(s) like <i>Oxford Reading Tree, Ginn 360 or All Aboard</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I choose books that provide repetition of any new words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I pre-teach new words at the start of each guided reading session	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I use non-fiction books for guided reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At the beginning of the session we all look together at the book and talk about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We talk about the use of cueing strategies for reading unfamiliar words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I set children off with one or two questions about the content of the book	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When the children are reading independently I spend time checking whether they are reading the words accurately	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I encourage children to guess words using context clues/cues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children read the whole book during a guided reading session	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I make sure children have further opportunities to read the book in class or at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I run out of time to talk about the book in the kind of detail I'd like to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guided reading sessions give me the time to monitor each child in the group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tend to stick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 3

Trinity & All Saints

ACCREDITED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



We want to introduce guided reading into our first-year KS1 reading module. We want trainees to take guided reading groups during SBT1 and SBT2. So, what aspects of guided reading at KS1 do you think we should stress in the module?

What have you found to be the benefits of guided reading at KS1? Is there any part of the NLS guided reading you have changed or you'd like to change?

Are there any training resources related to guided reading at KS1 that you recommend?



3rd April 2000

"Guided Reading" at KS1 in TASC Primary Partnership Schools

Dear Headteacher,

Colleagues in primary English are always looking to improve the college-based training in literacy teaching. In particular, we're keen to ensure that the teaching methods we demonstrate and recommend to students, are those which have been found to be most effective in your classrooms.

We'd like your help! We are carrying out a small survey of "guided reading" at KS1. We are aware that many schools have incorporated it into literacy lessons but that implementation is not uniform in every KS1 classroom.

Therefore, we'd be extremely grateful if your KS1 teachers would be willing to complete a brief questionnaire designed to elicit both opinions about "guided reading" and details of how it can be organised.

When the survey is complete we plan to dispatch our findings to partnership schools so we'd appreciate as wide a range of opinions and responses as possible.

Please return the completed questionnaires in the pre-paid envelope.

Best wishes and very many thanks,

Maureen McKay

In this article Maureen McKay writes about an important aspect of the Literacy Strategy.

Maureen teaches on the English Primary Under Graduate course

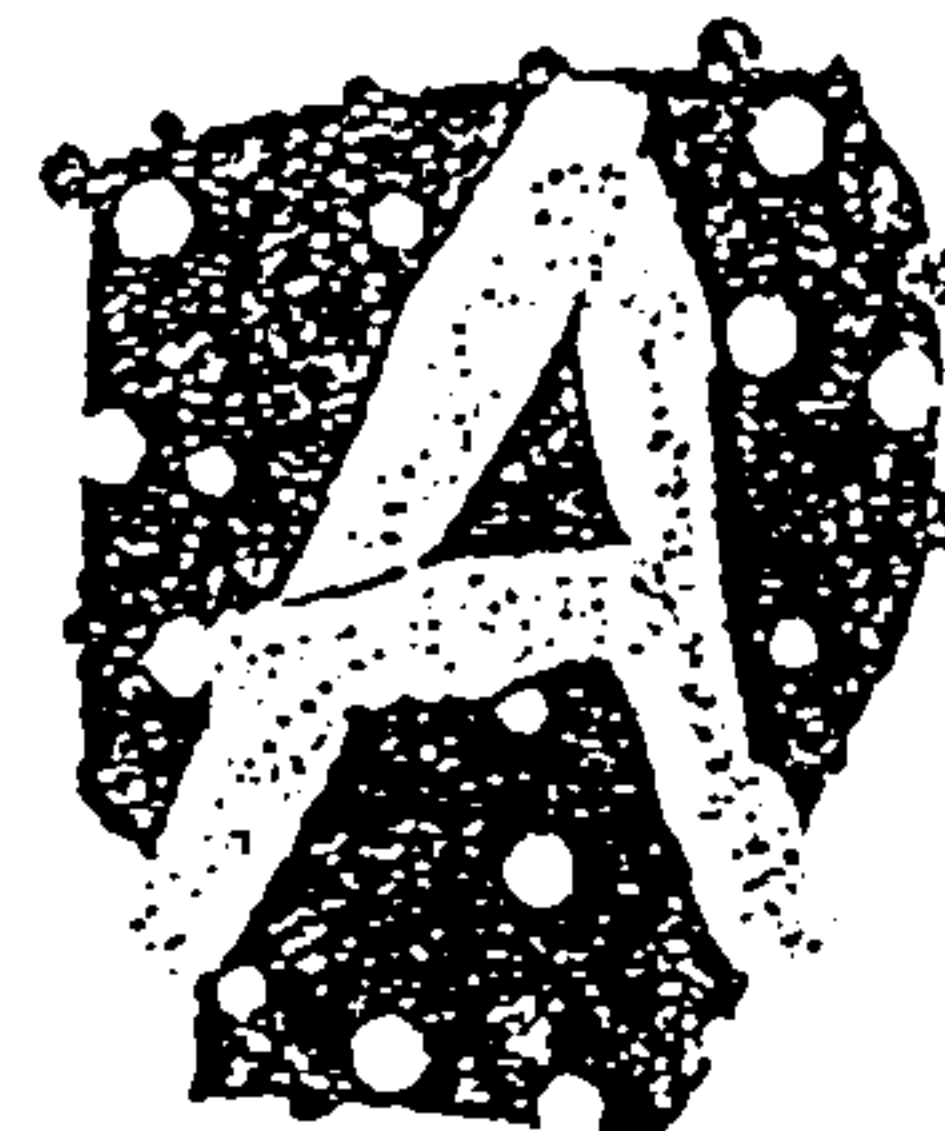
WHAT IS GUIDED READING?

Here at TASC, the National Literacy Strategy has become an extremely valuable framework for trainees in learning how to teach English in the National Curriculum. For example, shared literacy work helps trainees develop a variety of whole-class teaching strategies.

However, we've had less success incorporating guided reading into our course because we're not sure how it can best be organised or, in fact, whether it actually improves KS1 pupils' reading attainments.

Therefore, we'd like your help in establishing clearer guidelines for this particular teaching context (we haven't found the NLS very helpful in this respect).

We'd like to know what your own views are about guided reading at KS1 and about the ways you manage it

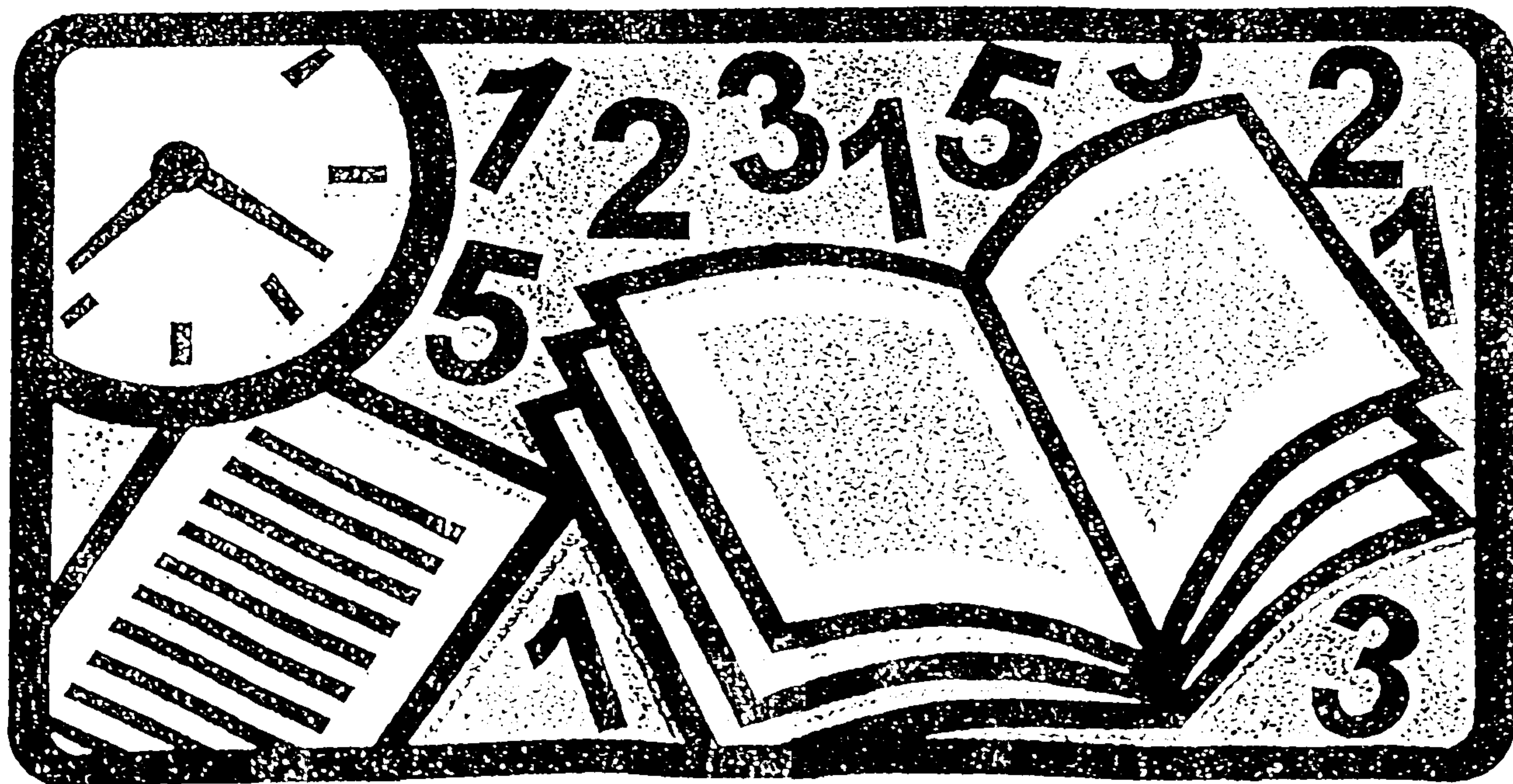


We are aware that guided reading has only been very recently introduced into many classrooms—often because you needed time to increase your stocks of suitable books. We therefore thought this might be a suitable opportunity to take stock.

A questionnaire has already been sent into the Primary schools and if you teach in Key Stage 1 I hope you found the time to complete it and return it in the pre-paid envelopes.

Those responses already returned will have been analysed during August—but it is not too late to send yours into College. We will let you know the findings and hope to use the data to make our courses more effective.

Very many thanks.



APPENDIX 6

Observation Notes School: Teacher: Date:	
Class/Group Details: Age of class _____ No. in class _____ GR teaching space/layout:	
Book title and details:	
Other pupils are:	
Before the session began:	

APPENDIX 7

Case Details:

1. How typical was this session? Do you normally:

-
-
-

2. Points of Interest

A couple of things really interested me about the session:

-
-
-
-

3. The Book: I notice that you were *using/not using* a book from a reading scheme.

What makes this type of book particularly suitable for GR with this group of children?
[refer to questionnaire responses and word/sentence/text features of the book]

- Was there a lot of preparation needed with this book?
- What is it that children get from reading books like this in GR?
- Did the book turn out to be a good match to the children's needs at this point?
- Which features of this book will have been familiar to these children?
- Which features of this book will have been new to these children?
- Are these the same sort of books that these children will read at other times?

4. 'One-to-one Reading to the Teacher'

One of the questionnaire statements said, '*Beginning readers need regular one-to-one reading to the teacher.*'

You responded by _____ . Do you still feel that?

- What do the children and the teacher get from such one-to-one reading sessions that they don't get from GR?
- What is it about GR that has led to you using it instead of regular one-to-one reading sessions?

5. Guided Reading

- Has using guided reading changed you as a teacher or changed the way you think about how reading is taught and learned?

APPENDIX 8

Researcher: Was that a typical session?

SS = STRUCTURE AND SEQUENCE OF SESSION

TT = TEACHING TECHNIQUES

B = BOOKS

GREEN = unexpexted findings of things needing further investigation

Teacher: The picture walk! I forgot to do it. I do it every time before I do the reading . And we'd got half way through and I thought, - why are they struggling so much - and I thought - we haven't even done the picture walk.

And then I had to backtrack. R___ was fine because he was off . Normally, on a picture walk, I would have picked out all the words that I knew they would struggle with. I would have actually told them during the picture walk – words like cloud and whistling. I should have done the picture walk because they were finding it more challenging than I expected.

Researcher: How did you prepare the session?

Teacher: Last night I had a quick flick through and I thought, "Oh, yes, they'll be alright with that". But I hadn't realised it was so long. Normally the session would have been a lot shorter.

Researcher: Do you always include an initial focus on some of the words like?

Teacher: Yes. I would always do that. I would look through and find words that they were going to struggle with. I told them some words – like whistling and cloud. But normally I would be using the words as we were discussing the pictures in the picture walk. I'd say, "Oh. Look at the *wind whistling round the bottle*" or , you know, "*Look at the cloud whistling round.*" And they'd think, "Why is she's saying that?" And then later, as they were reading, it would come back to them and whistling would be a bit easier for them to read then. It's a **challenging word** anyway and the difficult thing when you're doing a guided read, as opposed to a shared read, is that, because they're all reading at different speeds, you can't stop on a certain word and tell everybody what it is. In a shared read I would say, "Let's all together find out what the word is." But you can't do that in the guided so it tends to become a bit bitty in that sense.

Researcher: Do you always talk about things to do for working out words?

Teacher: Yes. We always do that. We start every session with that - shared and guided - just to remind ourselves about what **strategies** we can use. The more you do that, as the year goes on, means eventually they can just put their hand up and say them all. Sometimes they just sort of say them and then they don't realise they're doing them. So you do have to keep coming back to it and saying, "How do we do that?"

Researcher: Does rehearsing all those **strategies** influence the way they use them in their reading?

Teacher: Yes. They do that in the shared reading too. That's another thing that we do every time that we do a shared read. Not right from the beginning of Reception, but as they build up their skills they start using those **strategies**.

Researcher: Why do you choose books like this for guided reading?

Teacher: This one particularly because it is actually - we kept wanting to call him Aladdin didn't we - based on a **traditional story**, a **familiar story**, so that's a good thing. So they can draw on that little bit of **story knowledge**. I don't use scheme reading books for guided reading I think that they're not actually that interesting.

They're [**scheme books**] just there to help the children build up their word building skills and things like that. Whereas if you've got real books like this they're actually reading interesting and exciting stories. I think there's a little bit more in real books.

Researcher: You tend to use real books like this one?

Teacher: Yes. I use non-scheme books. They're not the usual reading scheme books where all the words are gauged so that they're at their level. It was challenging for them but that's how they learn and that's the idea of guided reading. You're there to guide them through those challenges. That's the idea of guided reading - that they're challenged as opposed to home reading, where they're not. They're comfortable with that.