



CALOUSTE
GULBENKIAN
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towards schools where people matter

a study of the
Human Scale Schools project

John Harland and Barbara Mason
LC Research Associates

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John Harland and Barbara Mason

PREFACE

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's interests lie in enriching and connecting the lives of individuals – helping individuals, families and communities to fulfil their potential. We have a special interest in improving the well-being of the most disadvantaged, and find that solutions which assist the disadvantaged tend to work for all.

In our education system some children who progress well at primary school do not maintain that momentum at secondary schools. Alongside the development of larger secondary schools we have seen a proportion of pupils, many from disadvantaged backgrounds and particularly in deprived urban areas, fail to achieve the improvement in GCSE (and other exam) scores that their peers have been achieving over the last 15 years. Arrangements in the first year of secondary school that enable young people to bridge the transition between primary and secondary have proved popular, though it is too early to tell if they are effective. There is much in the adage that you can't teach a young person whom you don't know and re-organising learning environments into smaller units is one way of ensuring a more personalised approach to teaching – one in which teachers know their students and young people themselves are able to bond more effectively and learn more about the essential social skills they need and often lack.

The personalisation agenda – in health and social care – continues apace with the coalition government and we should extend these principles to education, focusing on the needs of individual young people. But we have a localisation agenda too, not to mention public sector cuts. The Building Schools for the Future programme has been cancelled meaning schools will need to be more inventive in delivering this personalised approach – moving beyond large scale rebuilding to more intelligent configurations of the learning environment and the curriculum. Localisation and the freedom for parents and others to establish new schools provides an opportunity for precisely the rethinking that the Human Scale Schools project has been putting into practice.

The Foundation launched the Human Scale Schools (HSS) project in 2006, in partnership with the educational charity Human Scale Education (HSE). The purpose of HSS, which ran for three years, was to encourage secondary schools to develop their own schemes for creating more human scale schools in ethos and practice. These included the setting up of small-scale learning communities, cross-disciplinary curriculum projects, more holistic pastoral structures and greater student participation in learning. Grants of up to £15,000 were offered to 39 schools across the country. This work in schools was the core of the initiative and was supported by a number of other activities – the publication of books and Occasional Papers on the theme of human scale education, the commissioning of Teachers TV to make a series of programmes on the subject, as well as visits by teachers to schools in the US to experience good practice.

At an early stage in the project, LC Research Associates – an independent research consultancy – was commissioned to evaluate it by looking at a sample of the schools involved in the project. Additional funding was provided by the Paul Hamlyn and Esmée Fairbairn Foundations. The object of this research was to provide an analysis of the changes and effects of the developments supported by HSS in six schools from February 2007 to December 2009. This report presents that analysis.

The researchers were evaluating projects that ran for a relatively short period of time, and had received modest grant aid to implement often ambitious developments. The majority of the initiatives were designed to benefit younger students, so the evaluation focuses mainly on changes at Key Stage 3. The six schools faced many challenges, as did the other schools in the project that were not part of the study, and their courage and commitment shine through the pages of this report. Their struggle to introduce change and innovation against the 'grain' of the system is an implicit rather than explicit theme.

There is much here to inform the future policies and practices of HSE as, with the help of a major grant from the Foundation, it scales up its operation and begins to implement a series of ambitious initiatives. The experiences of the schools, and the views of the teachers themselves and of the young people, whose voices are also heard, have added to HSE's belief that school communities fare better when organised along human scale lines.

HSE's plans for the future include the setting up of an exemplar school which will provide the evidence

base for further reports and publications. This evaluation should be seen as an important marker on the long journey towards a more human scale approach to education in this country's schools: it conveys the enormous challenges that schools are confronted with when they commit to change; and it helps HSE to shape its future.

Andrew Barnett
Director
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation UK Branch

1 THE HUMAN SCALE SCHOOLS PROJECT AND ITS EVALUATION

1.1 THE HUMAN SCALE SCHOOLS PROJECT

Launched in 2006, the Human Scale Schools (HSS) project set out 'to build a solid core of human scale schools that can stand up as effective examples of human scale principles in practice' (Human Scale Education website at the outset of the project: <http://www.hse.org.uk>). To further this endeavour, between 2006 and 2009 the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF) provided grants to 39 secondary schools to enable them to design and implement human scale education innovations.¹ Although all the schools receiving grants were located in England, the funding was offered to all secondary schools in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales for projects which would:

- implement organisational and structural change to create small learning communities or mini schools;
- implement developments based on human scale education in areas of learning, student participation or local communities;
- create a human scale school as part of the government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative.

(Background paper from HSE/CGF sent out with 2006/07 application pack.)

In 2008, four schools were designated as 'lead schools' and typically received grants of more than twice the amount awarded to other schools. It is important to stress that, relative to many other change programmes, the size of the grants awarded to schools was modest: most schools received a total for the three years of around £15,000. In view of this, the fact that so many schools applied to be part of the HSS project, and that the successful ones demonstrated a willingness to sustain their HSS developments for a three-year period after the grant, may well indicate a widespread interest in innovations imbued with HSS principles. The modest sums involved also suggest that expectations about the scale and scope of a school's development should be proportionate and restrained.

The project was co-ordinated by Human Scale Education (HSE), which was founded in 1985, and received funding from CGF, the Esmée Fairbairn

Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to provide a framework of support for this initiative. The support has included advice, advocacy, group visits to schools in the USA and elsewhere, and conferences for teachers advancing the innovations. CGF was the lead funder and the main provider of support. Further financial support was provided by The Tudor Trust at a later stage.

According to Mary Tasker (2008), the chair of HSE, this education reform movement took its early inspiration from Schumacher's classic *Small is Beautiful* (1973) and adopted its philosophy to critique the UK's burgeoning trend of building large comprehensive schools. Looking to the US, it drew on the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, which 'aimed to create schools that were personalised, equitable and intellectually challenging' (Tasker 2008). Tasker presents HSE's vision of education as grounded in three core values: the primacy of human relationships; respect for the individual; and the importance of community. Accordingly, a leaflet previewing the HSS project asserts HSE's guiding principle: 'young people thrive in small-scale learning environments where they feel part of a community and where their learning needs are met'. It is this proposition that underpins the initiatives that HSS sought to promote in UK secondary schools.

To offer an empirically based analysis of the changes and effects of the developments implemented by HSS schools participating in the HSS project, the funding foundations and HSE commissioned LC Research Associates to conduct an independent evaluation. This report sets out the findings of this evaluation, the design of which is summarised below.

1.2 THE EVALUATION

The research is not an evaluation of the initiative as a whole, but a detailed inquiry into six of the schools that have been involved in the project since its earliest stages. The evaluation has four main objectives:

1 to identify and examine changes in school policies,

¹ This includes one local authority's artist-in-school team rather than a school.

- practices and structures that are associated with developments supported by grants from CGF in a sample of HSS project schools;
- 2 to understand the value positions underpinning the proposed changes as identified above;
 - 3 to illuminate and illustrate the impact and effects of these changes in each of the schools; and
 - 4 to identify and explore the various factors that might account for the impact and effects brought about by each school's involvement in the HSS initiative.

The evaluation adopts a largely qualitative case study methodology, which permits the research to be responsive to schools' contrasting contexts and initiatives, while simultaneously addressing a common core of questions and issues. The main techniques of data collection have been individual interviews with staff and students, paired discussions, the compilation of annual data on school-level indicators and the collection of key documents.

These data collection methods were used during two-day visits to the case study schools, conducted annually over four years. To establish a baseline, Stage 1 visits to five secondary schools took place in February and March 2007. Stage 2 and 3 visits were conducted in the same months of 2008 and 2009 in four of the five schools, as one school had discontinued its participation. A further school became involved in the research and final visits were carried out in November and December of 2009, though, owing to other pressures and commitments, one of the schools was unable to accommodate the researchers at this stage.

Interviews were conducted with headteachers, programme leaders, teachers and students. In addition to gathering accounts and experiences of the HSS-related developments in the schools, the interviews also explored participants' perceptions of school life and the possible effects of the initiatives in the following areas:

- staff-student and student-student relationships
- relationships between school/teacher and parent/carer
- quality of learning experience
- student participation in school decision making/life of the school/culture
- attitudes/motivation/disaffection towards school
- teacher/student satisfaction
- parental involvement/satisfaction
- local community involvement
- frame of values of participants, particularly teachers and adult staff.

1.3 THE CASE STUDY SAMPLE

Initially, the case study sample consisted of five schools that were involved in the early phases of the project. The steering group – a small team of HSE

members and a representative of CGF who led and oversaw the day-to-day running of the HSS project – selected these five schools for the evaluation in December 2006. It should be stressed that it was not the intention of the steering group to select a sample of schools that could claim to be representative of, or even illustrative of the 39 schools participating in the HSS project. Instead, the group prioritised schools that were mounting initiatives of some substance. It would be true to say that the case studies chosen were the schools with the strongest HSS-related change agenda – at least, as viewed in the early stages of the project. Later, when the notion of 'lead schools' was introduced, only one of the case study schools was designated as such. At the outset, however, the steering group described its criteria for selecting the case study schools in the following terms:

- 1 The schools, as far as possible, should be engaged in a project which is part of a systemic change within the whole institution and will therefore offer both a thriving context for the change and enough substance from which the evaluators can gather information.
- 2 That the schools should (again, as far as possible) offer a spread in types of school, e.g. urban, rural and so on, and also some geographical spread.
- 3 Conversely, and it would seem almost contradictorily, if there were any links that might be made among the selected schools it would be interesting to see how the schools' approaches differed. For example by having two schools within one local authority and/or two 'new-build' schools to compare.
- 4 That the schools should be a mix of new-build schools and schools which are not new-build, but working within the constraints of their current physical setting or partial re-build.

Overall, the school sample offered several important advantages. It provided five co-operative schools which were supportive of the research. The schools were pursuing HSS policies with sufficient substance to afford many interesting lines of enquiry, including the prospect of meaningful impacts on the learners' experience. Taken as a whole, they covered a range of different human scale-related change initiatives and strategies, as well as offering sufficient commonalities to allow valid comparisons across the schools. The sample also offered a good geographical spread and provided two schools within one local authority.

However, it may be noted that the sample did not include a school with average or above average proportions of ethnic minority children, nor did it offer a genuinely rural or isolated school. Additionally, although the project as a whole contained smaller secondary schools (with say 500–750 students on roll), the initial five – all co-educational – schools tended towards the larger end of the spectrum, with four having more than 1,400 students and one over

1,000. Furthermore, while the sample met a strict interpretation of the fourth criterion listed above, it is pertinent to register that the human scale developments in four of the initial five schools have benefited directly or will benefit soon from full or partial new buildings – only one school has had to work within the constraints of older premises.

During the period between the 2007 baseline and Stage 2 (2008) fieldwork visits, the main thrust of the HSS-related innovations in one of the case study schools was abolished. Although the Stage 2 visit by the researcher went ahead as planned – partly to garner accounts of the reasons behind the demise of the initiative – it was agreed by all parties that there was little point in carrying out further fieldwork in this school, but the experiences of this case should remain part of the dataset to be examined in the final report. In the wake of these decisions, a replacement HSS school was selected in time for the Stage 3 and 4 data collection visits. Thus, the case study sample was increased from the initial five to six.

Unfortunately, while the sixth school was very supportive of the project and its evaluation, its characteristics did little to offset the biases that limit the breadth of the sample. The school had a low percentage of students from the ethnic minorities, was located in an urban setting and was preparing for a new build. However, its student roll (around 825) was lower than the original five schools.

In response to an invitation to all HSS schools to apply for ‘lead status’, one of the six case study schools submitted a bid that was successful; another two had their bids turned down.

1.4 THE COLLECTED DATA

All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. This provided a total dataset of 234 transcripts of 215 individual interviews and 19 paired or group discussions.

Reflecting the importance of the ‘student voice’ in HSE values, the student perspective formed a substantial part of the data available for analysis. A little over a half (54 per cent, $N = 126$) of the complete set of interviews were with students (65 female, 56 male and five interviews involving mixed gender pairs). Allowing for the changes in the case study sample (as described above), the numbers of student interviews were spread fairly evenly across the six schools: between 25 and 29 interviews in the three schools that participated in all four data collection stages; 11 and 12 interviews in the two schools that were involved in two fieldwork stages each; and 20 in the school that withdrew from the final stage. The distribution across year groups was much more uneven. As table 1.1 shows, 71 per cent of the student interviews were conducted with students in Years 7 or 8. In contrast, relatively few students

Table 1.1 Distribution of student interviews across year groups

<i>Year Group</i>	<i>N =</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Year 7	53	(42)
Year 8	36	(29)
Year 9	18	(14)
Year 10	7	(5)
Year 11	6	(5)
Mixed year groups	6	(5)
TOTAL	126	(100%)

(10 per cent) were interviewed at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11).

The reason for this imbalance is found in the nature of the HSS-related changes implemented by the schools. The vast majority of the changes centred on Years 7 and 8. The Key Stage 4 years were rarely considered appropriate ground for experimenting with the human scale seeds of change. The consequential bias in the interview sample towards the earlier years of secondary schooling is worth bearing in mind when the report refers to the general perceptions of young people.

The 108 interviews with school managers and teachers – non-teaching staff were not interviewed – were also distributed proportionately across the six case studies. Fifteen of these interviews were conducted with headteachers, many of whom were interviewed during each visit, though one school had three different headteachers in as many years over the course of the initiative. The HSS project leaders, usually members of the senior leadership team (SLT), were also interviewed at each data collection stage – as were the managers with overall responsibility for school data and performance indicators. The rest of the interviewees comprised a mixture of teachers with close involvement in the HSS projects (e.g. project teachers, heads of communities), along with those not directly associated with the HSS-related developments.

At Stages 2 and 3 the researchers used diagrams based on logic models (LMs) as visual tools to aid discussions with programme and school leaders. These diagrams, which were drawn up in the light of the baseline and Stage 1 data, included the main aspects of the changes implemented, their perceived outputs, facilitating factors, obstacles and desired outcomes. The LM method has been used in evaluations for over twenty years, but Patton’s (1997) version of the approach was considered to be particularly pertinent to the objectives of this evaluation. The LM presents a plausible descriptive account of how a programme or change process works under certain conditions to solve identified problems or bring about improvements (Bickman,

1987). Central to the LM approach is the articulation of what these evaluators call a 'program theory'. Hence, Patton (1997) refers to a description of a programme or initiative such as the HSS project as an 'espoused theory of action'. It describes stakeholder perceptions of how the programme, project or change initiative will work or has/has not worked.

When conducting the Stage 2 and 3 interviews with headteachers and programme leaders (separately), the interviewees were given a copy of the LM diagrams and were invited to comment on any changes to the descriptors in the LMs since the researchers' last visit. They were also asked to add any new items in each of the diagram's boxes. The diagrammatic LMs proved to be useful aids for the interviews and served to validate (with some minor amendments) the results of the initial analysis of teachers' accounts. They also proved useful in drafting certain chapters of the report (e.g. chapters 5 and 6 on the facilitating and inhibiting factors that aided or constrained the developments and their impacts respectively). For this reason, they are reproduced in appendix 1.²

In comparison to the interview data, the collection of schools' statistical and performance indicators was less fruitful. Collecting this type of data was largely driven by the need to explore links between students' experience of human scale practices and their academic attainment. In essence, this related to their performance in the end of Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tests, given that most of the HSS-related developments focused on the early years of secondary schooling. The discontinuation of these tests half way through the project (due to the government's decision to terminate them in 2008) scuppered all prospects of such analyses. In addition, one of the six case study schools did not provide us with more general annual statistical information on the school (e.g. on attendance, exclusions, value-added scores) in a consistent format; another school's participation in the project was limited to two years, which meant that data trends could not be established.

1.5 ANALYSING THE DATA

The interview transcripts have been examined with a software programme called Maxqda, which analyses qualitative data. This involved coding interview transcripts into emerging categories, which in turn informed the findings presented in the report. This analytical method has been especially useful in interpreting the student interview data. For example,

the method has made a substantial contribution to the results offered in chapters 7 and 8 on the effects of the developments, as well as chapter 10 on the priorities and concerns of students.

1.6 REPORT STRUCTURE

Chapter 1 has sketched the background to the HSS project and described the aims and methods of the evaluation reported here.

Chapter 2 documents the various changes proposed by the case study schools.

Chapter 3 explores the extent to which the six schools translated their proposals into practice and discusses which aspects of HSS principles are more likely to be implemented and which features of HSS practices are prioritised and shared in common.

Chapter 4 describes headteachers' and programme leaders' accounts of the values and beliefs that underpinned the human scale-related changes they were introducing or planning.

Chapter 5 describes staff perceptions of the factors which were deemed to be enabling the implementation of the HSS changes in their schools.

Following a similar approach, **chapter 6** describes staff perceptions of the factors which were considered to be inhibiting the implementation of the HSS changes in their schools.

Taking each case in turn, **chapter 7** analyses the effects of the themed programmes mounted in five of the six case study schools.

In a similar vein and format, **chapter 8** examines the effects of the small learning community structures introduced in three of the six case study schools.

Chapter 9 offers an overview of the detailed findings presented in the previous two chapters and compares the effects attributed to different approaches, as well as searching for factors that appear to be connected with specific outcomes.

Chapter 10 outlines the main priorities and concerns of student interviewees and explores whether the student voice should play a more central role in fashioning further HSS developments.

Chapter 11 concludes the report with a short summary.

² Owing to the limited and late fieldwork visits to the replacement school, LM diagrams were not drawn for this – the sixth – case study.

2

HSS DEVELOPMENTS PROPOSED BY THE CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to be considered for a CGF grant, schools were asked to submit a description of their aspirations and plans for human scale education developments. These submissions provided the source material for us to address the first of our research questions: what changes were proposed by the project schools?

Firstly, all six case study schools proposed the development of small learning communities (SLCs), including some that were associated with new buildings and some that were not. The definitions and selection criteria for these communities varied considerably: grouping policies for proposed SLCs included year groups, key stages, different curriculum offers, attainment and ability, and whole school mixed-ability vertical groupings. Often, the schools also proposed highlighting one particular community (e.g. Year 7) for their HSS initiative.

A second characteristic of human scale education was proposed by five of the six case study schools. These five schools planned to pilot various forms of teaching and curriculum approaches (often themed cross-curricular projects) that would allow a selected group of students (e.g. Year 7) to be taught a collection of subjects by a single teacher or by fewer teachers than would normally be the case. Some of the initiatives involved core subjects like English and mathematics, while others targeted areas such as the humanities.

The proposals for each case study are summarised in turn below. Pseudonyms have been randomly allocated to the schools to ensure their anonymity.

2.2 WHAT THE SIX SCHOOLS PROPOSED

The Turquoise school

Without a rebuilding programme in the near future, one large 11–18 school (with about 1,600 students) focused its human scale developments on Years 7 and 8 which, following recent reorganisations, were housed together on one of the school's three sites. Year 9 students were located on a different site

with Years 10 and 11. Calling Years 7 and 8 the 'foundation stage', the creation of a school-within-a-school was proposed where 'just over 500 students will enjoy learning in a cohesive small school environment'. Key developments included: the adoption of a themed and competency-based curriculum (RSA Opening Minds) at Years 7 and 8 in non-core subjects – the core subjects would continue to be taught by specialists; a reduction in the number of staff teaching the children; a major contribution from the arts; presentations of work to parents; a more flexible school day; a vertically organised house system; and a consultation about the building work with an architect, to allow students to design areas which reflected their house identities.

The Topaz school

Re-housed in a new building from the early stages of the project, the second case study school, which has approximately 1,100 11–18-year-old students, concentrated its proposals for developing human scale education on Years 7 and 8. For 80 per cent of their time, these students would be taught by a reduced number of staff in a single location within the new school. According to their submission, this would comprise one of three 'small academies'. The other two academies, to which students in Years 9 to 13 would be attached, would comprise one for core subjects and another for option subjects. The Years 7 and 8 students would be taught through a themed curriculum, which would include the core subjects, though students would also have dedicated literacy and numeracy time. In addition, the project would offer an intervention package to improve emotional literacy.

The Opal school

Another 11–18 school with about 1,100 students, proposed to use the two years before it relocated to a completely new building to target its developments in human scale education on the entry year, Year 7. Although the new school building was designed to house a number of SLCs, Year 7 would be established 'as a self-contained SLC' in September 2006 – two academic years ahead of the move to the new

building. This SLC would have a specialist team of about ten teachers and ‘a completely project and competency-based curriculum’, which would use the RSA’s Opening Minds programme. This themed curriculum would have a strong focus on the core subjects, but it would not be limited to those areas. From the perspective of individual students, the themed curriculum would be delivered by a maximum of four teachers, one of whom would be his/her personal tutor. A fully flexible timetable (‘allowing for any length of session, from 20 minutes to 2 hours or more’) would be introduced and the SLC would pilot the use of a virtual learning environment ‘to assist curriculum access, assessment and communication between teachers, pupils and families’.

The curriculum in Years 8 and 9 would also be redesigned so that students could continue ‘to experience a pupil-centred approach to learning’. The school’s submission made it clear that the precise nature of the SLCs in the new building was still under discussion: ‘one of the questions we need to answer is whether one of our SLCs should be a dedicated, transitional Year 7 SLC set apart from the other, vertically organised SLCs.’

The Sapphire school

With approximately 840 11–18-year-olds on roll, our fourth school was part of a wider reorganisation that would necessitate an increase to 1,200 students and a BSF rebuild. Keen to maintain its reputation for providing a caring environment in the context of projected rising numbers, the school submitted proposals that emphasised the preparatory work needed to create a human scale school with four SLCs, including one for Year 7s, referred to as the ‘transition school’; others would be key stage based. These students would be taught by ‘a team of dedicated class teachers, delivering cross-curricular themes based around Secondary SEAL’ (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning). Other features in the proposals included flexible timetabling, learning conversations and real-life community projects.

The Garnet school

Another case study school proposed SLCs and themed cross-curricular projects from generalist class teachers. Rejecting the ‘one-size-fits-all’ curriculum model in Key Stage 3, the fifth school (with about 1,400 11–18-year-old students) sought support to continue its development of four ‘smaller learning communities’ that it called ‘learning pathways’ (i.e. ‘each year group is therefore made up of four smaller scale cohorts of students’). At the time of

submission, students in Years 8 and 9 were assigned to one of these pathways and the school proposed extending this structure annually to eventually cover Years 8–11. Specific emphasis was placed on one particular pathway, which was intended to act as a pilot for the development of the other three.

This pathway comprised 48 ‘middle-to-higher-ability students who underachieved in a standard large context’ for each annual cohort – 96 Year 8 and 9 students were located within this pathway at the time of the submission. In each year the overall group of 48 was divided into two classes of around 24. Developments for these groups included: a more personalised educational experience; a reduced number of teachers; a new reward system; a themed curriculum; closer involvement of parents, including student presentations of their work to parents and possibly a parents’ council; new posts to support students at a personal, social and emotional level; and a dedicated suite of new rooms (designed with the advice of HSE) specifically for students in this pathway.

The Pearl school

In common with the other case studies, this school proposed SLCs, but it was the only case study school not to include cross-curricular theme-based teaching from a class teacher or a reduced number of teachers. In line with this, the proposal from the sixth case study school had less to say about curriculum and pedagogic changes than the previous cases. It did, however, address the need for change across all year groups (with the exception of the sixth form, which lay outside the school’s plan for HSS innovations, at that time). It was proposed that this large school (with approximately 1,600 students on roll) would be divided into three SLCs, each led by a principal (one of the existing deputy heads) supported by a vice-principal, learning leaders and a student support manager. It was stressed that ‘this will not be a physical division’. Key elements of the proposals included: changes in the line management structure; vertical tutor groups; closer monitoring of each student’s academic performance; increased accountability of students and teachers; enhanced student care; ‘a smaller and more readily available team of adults to whom [pupils] may turn’; and a team of core subject teachers for each community.

2.3 SUMMARY

As summarised in table 2.1 opposite, this chapter has outlined the key proposals of the six case study schools.

Table 2.1 The HSS proposals of the case study schools

<i>School</i>	<i>New build?</i>	<i>SLCs?</i>	<i>Generalist class teaching?</i>	<i>Other HSS developments</i>
Turquoise School	Not in the near future.	SLC based on separate site for Y7&8 students.	Themed & competency-based cross-curriculum for all Y7&8 students in some non-core areas with fewer teachers.	Vertical house system; more flexible timetable; house spaces; presentation of work to parents.
Topaz School	In newly built school from early stages of the HSS project.	SLCs based on Y7&8 and two others for 9-13	Themed cross-curriculum for all Y7&8 students including core subjects but specialist literacy and numeracy lessons as well.	Intervention package to improve emotional literacy.
Opal School	Moving into newly built school during project.	SLC for Y7 to be piloted before move; wider SLC structure under discussion.	All Y7s to have project and competency-based curriculum, with emphasis on core areas.	Flexible timetable; virtual learning environment.
Sapphire School	Planning for new build school.	SLC for Y7 + others for KS3 (Y8&9); KS4 and post-16.	Cross-curricular and project-based with SEAL programme for Y7 SLC, as well as the KS3 SLC.	Flexible timetable; real-life community projects; learning conservations.
Garnet School	New purpose-built suite for project group.	SLCs based on different curriculum pathways for different students; Y8 onwards; not physical except for underachievers.	Cross-curriculum, fewer teachers and personalised teaching & learning including core areas for underachievers (project) group at Y8 & Y9.	Presentations to parents; rewards system; new posts to support personal, social and emotional needs of project group.
Pearl School	No complete re-build but some refurbishment and new sports hall.	SLCs based on vertical groups though not physical division.	No.	Vertical tutor groups; closer monitoring of student progress; team of core subject teachers for each SLC.

3

PUTTING HSS PROPOSALS INTO PRACTICE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the extent to which the six schools were translating their proposals into practice. Taking each case study in turn, we summarise the ways in which each case study site was implementing its HSS developments at the time of the various fieldwork visits. Following these summaries, we consider overarching questions such as what features of HSS practices do the schools prioritise and share in common?

The LMs for five of the following schools present a diagrammatic overview of the early adjustments that the schools made to their HSS proposals. These can be viewed in appendix 1. It should be noted that in order to preserve the anonymity of schools, we have replaced the nomenclature used by schools to describe their programmes or communities with generic terms.

3.2 WHAT THE SIX SCHOOLS IMPLEMENTED

The Turquoise school

At the time of the baseline and second rounds of fieldwork, Year 7 and 8 students were housed on a separate site (about two miles away from the other sites) and a number of staff were teaching exclusively at this 'Foundation Stage' (apart from when they were pulled away to cover gaps at Key Stage 4). However, older year groups on the other sites were not organised into SLCs and many of the hallmarks of 'small learning communities' (e.g. autonomy and freedom to diversify, inter-community activities) were not associated with the Year 7 and 8 site. Indeed, measures to avoid the site being seen as a 'separate' mini-school had been taken: for example, a school-wide and vertically structured house system had been introduced, though Year 7 and 8 tutor groups met separately from Year 9, 10 and 11 tutor groups in the same house. However, this house system, along with its vertical tutor groups, was generally considered to be artificial and ineffective and, in the final year of the project, was abandoned and replaced by year-based tutor groups. Following a change of headteachers, with an interim period in

which the school had an external acting head, measures were taken to strengthen the position of the 'foundation stage' within the school as a whole. Furthermore, it would be true to say that none of the three headteachers espoused HSE's ideology of SLCs as befitting their school as a whole, perhaps, and rather ironically, because of its physical division into three separate sites.

All three headteachers supported the themed curricular dimension to the school's HSS changes. Informed initially by the competencies promoted in the RSA's 'Opening Minds' project (<http://www.thersa.org/projects/education/opening-minds>), the themed curriculum in half-term projects was operational at the baseline stage of our data collection. Taught by one or more generalist class teachers, it covered history, geography, RE, PSHE, citizenship and learning to learn (and ICT in some cases), as well as having links to technology and the arts. In the latter two subjects, teachers – who were mainly specialists – attempted to link to the topics adopted by the projects in the base humanities part of the curriculum (e.g. Africa, a nearby stately home, futures). Thus, in the first year of operation, through the base-themed programme, the school succeeded in reducing the number of teachers encountered by students in Years 7 and 8. They saw as much of their base themed programme teacher as, say, their English teacher. At Year 7, five periods per week (24 total periods) were allocated to the base-themed programme; four periods at Year 8.

Unfortunately, the school's HSS aspirations took a serious blow in the second year of the project. The initial intention was for each of the themed programme classes to be taught by a single teacher, but in reality most classes had more than one teacher in the second year, and some had four. It was explained that, owing to a deficit school budget and loss of delegated powers, adverse staffing policies were implemented that had led to supply teachers and SEN teachers having to teach on the themed programme. The programme leader made several references to these problems:

'Well, the deficit budget problem has been the major problem, because it's led to the removal of delegated powers which has led to us not being able to do many of the things that we would like to have done. Because the local authority have obviously taken over control and also it caused ... problems for us in terms of a number of staff taken out of [the themed programme] because they have had to fill gaps in other areas and we have been given supply teachers or we've been given bits of people, "they have got two periods left over so they can come and do [the themed programme]". That's been awful and difficult.

And we have got supply teachers. I have got people on temporary contracts. I've got a whole ... 26 teachers working within [the themed programme], which was not at all how we had envisaged it. Plus we have multiple teachers teaching groups ... Now, the projects are integrated projects which are very difficult to deliver with that kind of lack of continuity, because people can't just ... when you're delivering a project, you can't just pick up ... you can't say right you do that bit, you that bit, because it's supposed to be something that is holistic.'

These problems also affected the way that the themed programme could be taught. The programme was designed to include more group work, discussion, enquiry-based learning and hands-on activities. Though CPD would have been helpful in the use of these methods, it was deemed inappropriate because of the uncertainties surrounding staffing.

Over the latter years of the project, the themed curriculum became more organised and refined. A designated programme leader, free of wider management responsibilities, was appointed and the staffing situation improved somewhat (e.g. a themed programme 'department' or team of teachers was established). However, basic problems emanating from financial difficulties, their implications for staffing and the prioritisation of staffing at Key Stage 4 (e.g. split teaching of the themed programme, difficulties in recruiting programme teachers) continued to disrupt the programme as an HSS initiative. At the final stage of data collection, students still reported having more than one programme teacher and staff regretted the demise of the staffing policies for the programme that had applied in the first year.

On a more positive note, each half-termly topic was assessed through a personal extended project. Presentations of the students' work to parents had been organised and staff described higher-than-normal levels of involvement from parents, especially in connection with the integrated project assignments.

Turning to other aspects that featured in the Turquoise school's initial proposal, the collaborative partnership with the architect had come to an end and the arts, while still forming an important part of the programme, were not afforded the prominence that they were given in the original proposal, partly due to funding issues and the end of the additional resources from Creative Partnerships. There were also few signs of the 'more flexible school day' apart from the occasional departure from the normal timetable to accommodate trips and special events.

Overall, the Turquoise case offers a partial implementation of its HSS proposals. Without accomplishing a fully signed-up model of SLCs, the school provided a separate learning community for its Year 7 and 8 students with its own ethos and staffing. It also mounted a themed cross-curriculum programme in a range of non-core areas, though it struggled to achieve its HSS goal of reducing the number of teachers that the students encountered by allocating a single generalist teacher to the cross-curricular programme for all Year 7 and 8 students.

The concentration of the proposals for the development of an SLC for the early years of KS3, coupled with a themed curriculum and teachers who would spend most of their time at this site, displays many of the hallmarks of a middle school organisation and culture. To reflect this, we suggest that the developments at Turquoise could be seen as a 'middle school model with a non-core themed curriculum' or the 'middle school non-core' (MSNC) model.

The Topaz school

Essentially, most of the proposed facets of the HSS developments at this school were in place at the time of the Stage 2 fieldwork, and remained in place at Stage 3 (the final phase of data collection for this school). However, the implementation of the development was not as complete for Year 8 as that for Year 7. The three academies or SLCs had been established in the new building and Years 7 and 8 formed one of these communities. The two academies for Years 9–11 comprised one for the highest and lowest achievers and a second for students with average attainment, including possible underachievers. The staff were largely assigned to these communities according to whether they tended to teach core or foundation subjects.

However, some staff noted that while the SLC structure worked well for Year 7 students, it was less satisfactory for the Year 8 group. The latter were in their SLC pastorally but then moved into other communities for several areas of their curriculum, mainly because the themed curriculum was not covering the core curriculum at Year 8 (see below). This situation was seen as causing a degree of uncertainty regarding the SLC identity for the Year 8 teachers.

In addition to the community structure, Year 7 students followed a themed curriculum and were taught by a smaller number of teachers, including the base tutor for the themed programme. This system had developed from an integrated English and Humanities programme, which the school had been running since 2002. At the baseline visit, each of the eight Year 7 classes was taught the themed programme by their tutor or 'learning adviser'. The programme, which was allocated to 12 of the 20 periods a week, included English, science, geography, PHSE, citizenship and some ICT. At the baseline stage, mathematics was not integrated into the projects, but it was taught by the eight tutors. In subsequent years, mathematics was integrated into some cross-curricular topics. Other subjects were taught by curriculum specialists.

One slight deviation from the original proposal centred on the teaching of the themed programme to Year 8 students. The core subjects remained outside the themed curriculum at Year 8, as explained by the headteacher during the Stage 2 visit:

'In Year 7 it [the themed curriculum] is 60 per cent of the curriculum time, in Year 8 it's 40 per cent of the curriculum time. So the things which we take out are the core subjects – English, mathematics and science are taken out in Year 8. I've kind of – yeah, I'm still not sure that is the right thing to do, but I feel that a lot of it is based on the expertise and the competence of the staff. And I think that they do not yet feel ready to take the core subjects into that second year. So we're still keeping them as separate in Year 8. I still feel it's a long-term ambition to have the core subjects integrated into [the themed curriculum] in Year 8, but at the moment we're still in that stage of – it's a fairly major curriculum departure from what we used to do. And I think we still need to evaluate the impact of having the core subjects integrated in Year 7 before moving it across into Year 8 and you won't really know the true impact of what you do until they get into GCSE, into KS4: is the necessary rigour there that staff higher up the school, you know, are expecting to see there? There are lots of question-marks still, and I think particularly with the literacy and the numeracy aspects you've got to be really confident that what you're doing is not seriously disadvantaging those kids.'

At the time of the final visit to the school, Year 8 continued to be taught the core areas outside of the themed curriculum. From an HSS perspective, this programme brought about a reduced number of teachers, for both Year 7 and 8 students, though less so for the latter. Similarly, the SLC structure offered a smaller sense of place and identity for Year 7 students, but again less so for Year 8 students. It may also be noted that, when compared to Turquoise, where the boundaries of the Year 7 and 8 community were strong (e.g. students never went on to other

sites and they were taught largely by designated Year 7 and staff), the boundaries of the Year 7 and 8 community at Topaz were weak (e.g. staff and students, especially the Year 8 group, spent a considerable amount of their time in other communities).

Nevertheless, with the emphasis on the separate SLC for Years 7 and 8, the middle school analogy evident at the Turquoise school also seems applicable at Topaz. However, the latter differed from the former in that the core curriculum was targeted more directly at Topaz. Hence, we would suggest that this approach could be surmised as 'middle school model with a core themed curriculum' or the 'middle school core' (MSC) model.

The Opal school

This school moved into new buildings in September 2008, a watershed in terms of the implementation of its HSS proposals. Prior to that date, most of the innovations proposed in the school's submission had not been implemented. For example, there was nothing to indicate that Year 7 had been established as a 'self-contained SLC' and a 'fully flexible timetable' had not been introduced. 'Redesigning much of the Year 8 and 9 curriculum' had yet to happen.

Moreover, the proposal set out a commitment to launch a 'completely' project based Year 7 curriculum, which would have a strong focus on core subjects and would be delivered by no more than four teachers. According to the interviewees at the Stage 2 visit, approximately half (26 out of 50 periods on a two-week timetable) of the curriculum could be said to be taught through two clusters of projects – one integrating science and technology and another combining such areas as citizenship, learning to learn and the humanities. However, this fell well short of being fully project-based. Moreover, science was the only core subject that featured significantly and the curriculum was delivered by more teachers than the intended four, as acknowledged by an SMT member:

Interviewer: You said you were hoping that each student would have only four teachers?

SMT member: We haven't achieved that this year. Again it's small steps. We went to some organisations where they just went full pelt at it. But when we talked to staff, we didn't feel they were engaged but were paying lip service to what was happening within their organisation. So we've taken the step that we will gradually incorporate ideas like that.'

Clearly, another factor was that staff had been 'working intensely' on the 'standards agenda'. Also, it was deemed inappropriate to push ahead with too many innovations the year before the staff and students made the move to the new school buildings.

It should also be noted that interviewees relayed how the involvement of teachers in planning project-based curricular materials had prepared more staff for the impending move.

When the implementation of SLCs did come, it was applied across the whole school and not just for Year 7. Seven SLCs were launched in September 2008, when the school took up residence in the new buildings: 2 x Years 7 and 8; 2 x Years 9–11; post-16; a physically disabled learning community; and an autistic learning community. The Year 7 and 8 communities were parallel groups – both included, for example, a small class of academically accelerated students. The Year 9–11 SLCs were based on curriculum pathways and Key Stage 4 option choices (e.g. vocational, traditional GCSEs), though both Communities offered core subjects. Checks and balances were also put in place to avoid a ‘grammar’ versus ‘secondary modern’ division. The school adopted ‘a stage not age’ curriculum offer, through which some Year 9 students could start accredited courses earlier than normal. In order to reduce the number of Year 9 students having to swap communities in line with their option choices, pathway and option choices were introduced in Year 8. On average, students would spend 60 per cent of their working week within their community. Within each SLC, students were assigned to ‘learning families’, which were led by ‘learning guides’ (staffed by most adult workers within the school) who met their groups of about 10 students on four days a week.

Staff, including the senior leadership team, also became members of a particular SLC. Usually, between 16 and 18 adults were attached to each community, which were led by a director and deputy director of community supported by a director and deputy director of experience. Each SLC also had a SENCO, a learning mentor and an administrative support person. The teaching teams typically consisted of two teachers for each of the following subjects: mathematics, English, humanities, science and PE, plus learning support assistants.

Building on the programme developed before the move to the new school, a skills-based themed curriculum was provided for all Year 7 students. Using a different theme each term, this programme included history, geography, RE, citizenship, learning skills, PLTS and some ICT. The programme was allocated 20 per cent of the timetable and shared many features (including the same proportion of time) with the competencies and humanities-based themed curriculum at Turquoise. The science and technology areas were also integrated into a project-based approach, and made up 20 per cent of the Year 7 timetable.

Overall, in terms of its SLC structure at KS3 and its curriculum focus for the themed programme, Opal shared several key affinities with the MSNC model

exhibited by Turquoise: the SLCs in the early stages of secondary schooling were based on Years 7 and 8 and the themed programme centred on non-core curricular elements. To reflect the fact that Opal, in contrast to Turquoise, included two SLCs for Years 7 and 8, it could be viewed as the Parallel ‘Middle School’ with Non-core programme (PMSNC) model.

The Sapphire school

For various reasons – not least the uncertainties that had surfaced regarding the prospects for a BSF new build – this school, to which only Stage 3 and 4 fieldwork visits were made, had been unable to progress towards its aim of establishing SLCs. In the absence of these communities, two initiatives formed the main thrust of its HSS developments: a themed Year 7 and 8 curriculum programme, through dedicated ‘base’ teachers and the introduction of whole school vertical tutor groups in a four house structure. All staff and students were attached to one of the houses, and staff responsibilities included the monitoring of student progress and achievement.

In September 2008, the school started a pilot with two Year 7 classes, who were called the ‘project’ groups. These groups had their English, geography, history, RE, PSE, drama and ICT classes taught through cross-curricular projects from single teachers, with whom they spent 11 out of their 25 hours a week (44 per cent). The students were drawn from average to below-average groups and the teachers were recruited as primary trained practitioners. In September 2009, the ‘project’ approach was expanded to include half of the Year 7 intake; four of the eight groups. Again, high achievers were not included in the project groups. The number of project hours was reduced to 10, due to PSE being moved to a carousel format (classes take a rotating cycle of subjects or areas of study). At the same time, a Year 8 group was maintained for those students who it was thought would benefit from another year of project-based teaching and learning. From an HSS perspective, the introduction of this themed curriculum programme led to a reduction in the number of teachers encountered by some students.

Lacking a SLC structure, the approach taken by Sapphire was largely restricted to its themed programme. To reflect the fact that the ‘project’ base embraced English but not mathematics, it could be seen as a semi-core (SC) model.

The Garnet school

At the time of the Stage 2 visit, very little of what was proposed was still being implemented at this school. It should be stressed that many of the proposed developments had been implemented before the HSS initiative commenced (and were witnessed at the time of the baseline fieldwork), but they had subsequently been closed or wound down.

Dispensing with a ‘one-size-fits-all’ curriculum at

Key Stage 3, Garnet had introduced four learning pathways (i.e. academic, more applied or enterprise, underachievers and special needs) that may be seen as SLCs. However, with the exception of the underachievers group, the pathways were not identified with particular physical spaces. From Year 8 onwards, students joined one of the pathway groups. In September 2004, a pilot pathway for 48 high ability but under-achieving Year 8 students was launched. At the time of the baseline visit (Spring 2007) there were three similarly sized pilot groups in each of Years 8, 9 and 10. These groups, especially the former two years, were mainly located in a purpose-built suite, only going elsewhere in the school for subjects like PE or IT. Their teachers spent more time with the groups than normal, integrating subjects like history, geography and RE. Similarly, teachers tended to teach more than one subject (e.g. mathematics and science). Drawing on primary practitioner models, the adoption of more generalist class teaching reduced the number of teachers the students encountered from the normal 15–20 to around nine. Garnet's programme offered a themed curriculum (e.g. 'Lord of the Rings' and 'Under the Sea', though in the later stages of the pilot there was a drift back to themes that focused on specific subjects). The programme also involved parents much more closely and was aided by new posts that supported students on a personal, social and emotional level.

However, by the time of the Stage 2 visit (Spring 2008), the pilot of an SLC for underachievers had been terminated and the specially designed suite was taken over by the humanities department. The students who had been in this pathway were now in sets for the core subjects, but were still together for humanities, DT and some other subjects. Interviewees reported that other pathways had not received the same developmental energy or attention. Some members of staff were frustrated by the wasted efforts in producing the themed curriculum for the pilot groups of underachievers, but other key staff were optimistic that the purportedly effective aspects of the pilot (e.g. closer involvement of parents, presentations, themed curriculum, reduced number of teachers) could be rolled out to the rest of the school.

Several reasons for the demise of the pilot were put forward, but it seemed that three difficulties came to the fore in teachers' accounts:

- the pilot was resented by some staff, students and parents because it gave preferential treatment to certain (in the eyes of some, undeserving) students more than others and the failure to develop other pathways to similar degrees left the pilot more vulnerable to this accusation;
- due to selection issues, and perhaps also pedagogic issues, some of the pilot students presented challenging behaviour and many

teachers disliked teaching these groups – this problem was said to have been aggravated by giving the students 'ownership' of the suite so that teachers coming to the students' 'territory' felt threatened by the power this bestowed on the students; and

- in spite of several impressive narratives from individual students who were re-engaging with learning at school, there was an apparent lack of success in making a significant positive impact on the school's value-added Key Stage 2 to 3 scores.

Nevertheless, the pilot operated for long enough to provide some – albeit incomplete – evidence of its impacts, strengths and weaknesses. Managers at the school hoped that some of the lessons learnt might transfer over to a new pathways structure.

The use of curriculum pathways (allied with measures of ability in relation to attainment) to select students for membership of SLCs, is a distinctive and defining characteristic of Garnet's HSS initiative. The project focused heavily on piloting the provision for underachievers in Years 8 and 9, for whom a broad curriculum programme, including core areas, would be offered through themed projects taught by fewer class teachers. Consequently, we suggest that the model offered by Garnet could be seen as a 'pathways programme for underachievers' (PPU).

The Pearl school

This school had implemented the majority of its proposed developments at the time of the Stage 2 fieldwork, and they were well established by the time of the final visit in December 2009. The school had been re-organised into three mini-schools or SLCs based on a mixed ability, vertical division of Years 7–11. Although the SLCs were mixed ability in so far as each community contained students of different abilities, students were streamed within each community. Each of the three communities had been divided into two, with a learning leader taking responsibility for each half. Each of the three SLCs was overseen by a deputy head. Within these new structures, leaders' roles clearly embraced an enhanced brief for student care through tutor teams and for the monitoring of each student's academic performance in vertical tutor groups.

There were, however, two interconnected features of the proposed HSS developments that had not been put into practice: increased accountability of teachers and the assignment of core subject teachers to each community. Although staff had been allocated to communities as tutors, the demands for different areas of expertise (and the lack of staff in certain areas) had not permitted the assignment of teachers to communities as core specialists. These problems were readily acknowledged by a member of the SLT:

'There's not that aspect of accountability in the

team that we perhaps originally set out to achieve, so teachers do teach across the communities. Clearly, if I've got an issue with the learning of a child or a group, I could go to that teacher and get more involved with it. For example, later on this morning on community support I'll go round and speak to the teachers that are working with my community but those teachers later on today will be working with a different community as well. But you do sort of get a sense of, at that particular time they're working in a community, so right now, for example, there'll be the [community A] teachers teaching English and the [community A] teachers teaching mathematics, so I can go and speak about those issues with them if I so choose. So it's sort of there and not there sort of thing, but it's hard with the school that we've got. We haven't moved towards that model.'

In short, this meant that although students, especially those at Key Stage 3, only attended lessons with peers from the same community, their teachers (in their capacity as tutors) could be members of different communities. At Key Stage 4, several option choices were only viable by mixing students from different SLCs. It should also be stressed that there was no physical division of the communities. It is also noteworthy that, unlike the other five case study schools, this school did not mount a curriculum programme aimed at reducing the number of teachers encountered by students. The SLC structure did not decrease the degree of student exposure to the quantity of teachers – though the introduction of SLCs and 'learning conversations' as part of the vertical tutor system was directed at providing more personalised care and monitoring of achievement. Overall, this school had progressed most of its initial proposals, probably, in the views of some, as far as the existing physical and human resource infrastructures would allow.

In many respects, the developments at Pearl expanded the role of the traditional vertical house system by attaching it to a line management structure that prioritised the monitoring and nurturing of students' learning. This aspect of the SLCs was complemented by the adoption of vertical tutor groups. In an attempt to signpost these features, this approach could be described as the 'extended vertical houses' model (EVH).

3.3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHANGES IMPLEMENTED

Looking across the innovations mounted by the different schools, the different approaches or models adopted by the six schools are summarised in table 3.1.

Were the proposals implemented?

Across the six schools, the degree of implementation relative to the proposals was partial. In two schools (Topaz, Pearl) most of the proposed developments

Table 3.1 The different models offered by the case study schools

<i>School</i>	<i>Summary of model</i>	<i>Model label</i>
Turquoise school	Middle school model with a non-core themed curriculum or the middle school non-core	MSNC
Topaz school	Middle school model with a core themed curriculum or the middle school core	MSC
Opal school	Parallel middle school model with non-core themed programme	PMSNC
Sapphire school	With English but not mathematics in the themed programme, it could be seen as a semi-core model	SC
Garnet school	Pathways programme for underachievers	PPU
Pearl school	The extended vertical houses model	EVH

had been implemented, but both had experienced problems in achieving full implementation (namely, issues with Year 8 core subjects at Topaz and staff SLC membership at Pearl). At Garnet, the chief HSS developments had been dismantled but the school had provided the pilot it planned, along with its own evaluation of its progress. At Sapphire, doubts about the projected new build and personnel changes at the management level had limited the prospects for the SLC aspirations, but it had set up pilots in themed curricular teaching at Year 7 and 8. In the fifth school (Turquoise) key aspects of the planned innovations were operating, but these were being undermined by a structural inability to implement the intended staffing. Substantial HSS developments had been put in place at Opal, but the Year 7 curriculum was still some way short of the stated vision of 'a completely project and competency based curriculum'. Consequently, the overall picture resembled a case of the glass half-full or half-empty, depending on one's point-of-view. It would, however, be difficult to argue against the view that if the modest size of the initial grants received by schools was taken into consideration, the half-full perception would seem to be justified.

Generally, the experiences of the case study schools indicate that there are serious implementation challenges associated with HSS aspirations and developments. According to this evidence, secondary schools face a range of structural, financial, ideological, staff recruitment and training difficulties in putting proposed human scale initiatives into practice. By way of offering further elaboration on these difficulties, chapter 6 documents the various obstacles that were confronted by the case study schools.

Which HSS areas of development get implemented?

An overarching view of the HSS changes can be gained by addressing the question, which of the five areas of development highlighted in the invitation to apply for CGF grants were more likely to be proposed and put into practice?

The five highlighted areas were (with our numbering):

- (i) implement organisational and structural change to create SLCs or mini schools;
- implement developments based on human scale education in areas of (ii) learning, (iii) student participation or (iv) local communities;
- (v) create a human scale school as part of the government's BSF initiative

The two areas most likely to be implemented in the case study schools were the first two: SLC and learning. The former was present to varying degrees in five of the six schools. Although constraints of an architectural (e.g. some schools could not offer physically separate SLCs) and philosophical (e.g. some leaders were wary of creating 'separate' or 'independent' units) nature often set boundaries to their development, SLCs constituted one of the main theories of action within the HSS projects.

Introducing SLCs was widely held to be a key method of providing a more personalised and secure environment for learning.³ Different variants were apparent, but essentially the theory postulated that splitting up large numbers of students into smaller entities would permit teachers to know students as individuals. This would provide enhanced care and learning, as well as giving students a better sense of belonging, security and well-being. All of the case study schools cited the SLC practice in their proposals (albeit to differing extents) and five attempted to implement it.

The second most frequently adopted area from the invitation-to-apply list was learning, especially in the form of a themed curriculum, but also in competency or skills-based curricula. All the schools had effected changes that had an impact on some students' learning. Although Pearl focused on pastoral and managerial dimensions, it had gone on to introduce a 'curriculum for tutor periods', 'learning concern alerts' and 'learning conversations' as a result of its enhanced monitoring through the SLC structure. Overall, the most frequent facet of the changes to the learning agenda was the introduction of a themed curriculum, particularly for students in the early years of Key Stage 3. To varying degrees, five of the six schools had adopted this approach (Garnet, Topaz, Turquoise, Opal and Sapphire). Two underlying theories of action are relevant here: firstly, themed approaches call for generalist class teachers who cover more than one subject area, which reduces the number of teachers presented to students; and secondly, integrated cross-curricular projects are

seen as more relevant by students, which in turn increases their motivation towards learning and school. Another common feature of the developments in the learning area was the emphasis on competency or skills-based learning, which was evident in virtually all of the five schools mentioned above. The theory of action seems to follow similar lines as those suggested for themed curricula: a skills-based curriculum is more relevant to the real world, employers' needs and the twenty-first century, which should in turn increase students' motivation. The adoption by OCA of a similar emphasis in the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum gave schools an added justification for taking up this approach.

The two areas least likely to be implemented by schools as an integral part of the HSS project were the third and fourth: student participation and local communities. Few schools proposed anything in these fields and, in keeping with this, any extensions to these areas within a specifically human scale context tended to be ancillary to the main developments, rather than dominant in their own right. Similarly, related 'theories of action' were rarely espoused.

General developments were reported in the areas of student voice (e.g. student councils or student parliaments) and at Opal students had been involved in discussions about the use of the new building. Interviewees often conceded that these areas required further development and attention. Student participation, for example, needed to become proactive rather than reactive and student councils were often restricted to small numbers of students. Some teachers in one school (Garnet) thought that the student voice had been promoted to such an extent that it had become more powerful than the teachers' voice.

Apart from closer involvement and contact with parents and initiatives like extended school provision, developing human scale education through greater participation in the local community was hardly mentioned at all. In two schools (Turquoise and Topaz) parental involvement in the cross-curricular projects had increased appreciably, and efforts were being made to extend this further still. In another school (Garnet) more frequent and closer contact with parents was used as a strategy for supporting students' learning and increasing their motivation at school; presentations of the students' work to parents were another key part of this approach. Community development (e.g. in the form of involving adults other than teachers in the learning process) was often depicted as under-developed and deserving of much greater attention, but it seldom became a reality.

Strictly speaking, Opal was the only school to implement changes in the fifth area: the school moved into new buildings as part of the BSF

³ As explained in chapter 1, 'theories of action' (Patton, 1997) are allied to LMs and denote stakeholder perceptions of how a project or change initiative like the HSS developments will work and why they believe that the measures implemented will bring about the desired outcomes.

initiative, and the new site was designed to house SLCs. However, under a pre-BSF private finance initiative scheme, Topaz was able to adjust the design of its new build to accommodate SLCs. Garnet was able to secure the funding to build a new block, in which the upper floor provided a suite of rooms for its under-achieving pilot pathway. Pearl had also seen a succession of building projects over the last ten years. In the cases of Opal, Topaz and Garnet, the new buildings allowed the schools to implement SLCs within physical boundaries. In this respect, the new buildings facilitate the 'theories of action' associated with SLCs (as described above). Over and above this, the new builds, along with their new furnishings and resources, were seen as offering students pleasant and effective learning environments.

In summary, in terms of the five areas highlighted in the invitation to apply, the main ones implemented were SLCs and learning, particularly themed curriculum with generalist teachers. New building projects were also prevalent. Student participation and local communities were the initiatives least likely to have been implemented, though closer involvement of parents was often sought in some schools.

What were the main focuses of the HSS developments?

If we consider the possible synergies between different aspects of the projects in schools, the lines of development pursued by the schools often follow a common pattern. The combined changes often consist of organisational adjustments plus new physical structures plus curriculum reforms. The reconfiguration of students and staff into SLCs (organisational adjustments) is combined with new buildings or old buildings on a separate site in one case (new physical structures) and the development of a theme-based, often competency-based, curriculum (curriculum reforms). With the exception of Pearl, which did not include curriculum reforms or new physical structures, this pattern was evident in the other case study sites. However, at Sapphire new physical structures remained aspirational. Clearly, in prioritising these areas, most of the case study schools have adopted organisational adjustments plus new physical structures plus curriculum reforms as their prime strategy for making their schools more human scale.

Changes in pedagogy were also evident in some schools, but they generally received less attention than curriculum innovations. Examples of new directions in pedagogy included teaching with a stronger emphasis on closer, informed relations with students, generalist class teaching (drawing on the primary practitioner model), independent learning, team work, deep learning, active involvement by students and kinaesthetic learning (a teaching and learning style in which learning is achieved by the student engaging in physical activities, also see

Gardner, 1983). However, it was often the case that very small numbers of teachers who were operating as generalist class teachers applied these approaches successfully. Indeed, one of the most common and consistent findings to emerge from the evaluation was that all five of the schools with themed programmes encountered serious difficulties in rolling these approaches out beyond two or three highly competent initial exponents of this form of teaching. Almost invariably, the schools faced major problems in finding more teachers who were already familiar and comfortable with these methods. As a general trend, schools seemed more willing to take on curriculum changes across the board, than mount full-scale programmes to bring about comprehensive shifts in pedagogy. Prioritising the curriculum over pedagogic change may help to explain the limited investment in CPD and other strategies to forge value shifts, cultural change and the development of teachers' pedagogic skills.

Although the HSS central programme offered organised visits to other schools and conferences, schools themselves allocated relatively few resources to CPD in human scale principles and practices; at least relative to the usual level of investment in the type of innovations noted above (i.e. organisational changes, new physical structures and curriculum reforms). This may be a significant omission, particularly in view of the frequency with which staff attitudes, teaching difficulties and a limited number of volunteering teachers with the requisite teaching skills appeared as nominated obstacles to HSS change (see chapter 6). It should also be noted that during the final visits to schools, there were signs of increased activity around the observation and development of teachers' classroom practices, but these seemed to be driven less by any explicit pursuit of HSS aims than by the more general concern of satisfying Ofsted's observations and criteria of effective teaching and learning.

In addition to the bias towards curriculum rather than pedagogic developments, the HSS developments were also tilted towards certain students and certain areas of the curriculum.

With regard to students, Year 7 and Year 8 were the groups most likely to be targeted as the main focus for human scale innovations. In terms of HSS-related curriculum development, Opal had worked chiefly with Years 7 and Year 8. Topaz, Turquoise and Sapphire offered their themed curricula to Years 7 and 8. Although Garnet had supported its under-achieving pilot groups into Key Stage 4, the bulk of their innovative work had centred on Year 8 and 9 students. The emphasis on Year 7 and 8 may be due to schools taking the opportunity to explore alternative practices with groups that are not subject to external examination pressures. It can also be seen as a strategy for easing students' entry into secondary schooling by perpetuating many of the

traditional characteristics of primary practice: teachers who spend more time with a specific class, more personable relationships and themed project-based curricula. Hence, it was not surprising that some schools were recruiting teachers with primary experience. Unfortunately, one downside of this preoccupation with Year 7 and 8 is that the projects in these schools failed to supply any substantial examples of human scale innovations in teaching and learning at Key Stage 4, and even in Year 9. Although Opal, Topaz and Pearl had SLCs at Key Stage 4, there was nothing commensurate with a themed programme at this level, and there were virtually no accounts of developments in teaching and learning that portrayed a contribution to the HSS agenda.

Given HSE's foremost aim to nurture a stock of schools that apply human scale principles and practices the limited work in Years 9, 10 and 11 represents an important omission. In the absence of significant applications of HSS principles and practices to the teaching and learning for these upper years, there is a real danger of the perception of human scale education as being solely concerned with the easing of students into secondary schools. Such a limited view of human scale education is contrary to HSE's vision and indeed the theories of HSS action professed by schools. Unfortunately, the reality as demonstrated by the practices implemented thus far, belies these suppositions.

As well as demonstrating a bias in the year groups targeted, the projects were also skewed towards particular aspects of the curriculum. In particular, HSS developments were less likely to be found in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Instead, the humanities were often targeted. The themed curricula at Turquoise and Opal focused on the humanities, along with generic skills and areas such as citizenship and learning to learn. Sapphire adopted a similar humanities focus but added English (though not for its above-average achievers). The core subjects were embraced by the themed curriculum at Topaz in Year 7, but, as explained earlier, the school was reluctant to include them at Year 8. Although the themed curriculum at Garnet did involve the core subjects, this was provided for under-achieving students, not for average or above-average achievers as at Turquoise, Topaz and Opal. Overall, this tendency for human scale approaches to be more likely to reside in the non-core curriculum may convey the message that human scale principles and practices are not robust enough to be entrusted with the demands of the core and heavily assessed parts of the curriculum. To avoid being consigned to the box labelled 'okay for non-core areas', human scale approaches should, arguably, be applied to and demonstrate their efficacy in the full compass of the curriculum. The evidence to date suggests that schools have some way to go before being confident enough to take up this challenge.

Whether or not the schools go on to broaden their developments in human scale education beyond the life of the HSS project, – into areas like pedagogy and greater democratic decision-making, other year groups apart from early Key Stage 3 and all areas of the curriculum – partly depends on the place that human scale principles inhabit within the values and priorities of school leaders. For this reason alone, it would seem important to understand these leaders' views on human scale education, and the degree of credence they afford it, so we will examine this further in the next chapter.

3.4 SUMMARY

Having summarised the main HSS practices implemented in each of the case study schools, we suggest that – given the modest grants they received – most of the schools have put many of their proposals into practice. As a collective, the case study schools have implemented:

- an interesting range of themed programmes that include cross-curricular projects, active learning, competency and skills-based curricula, extended project assignments and presentations to parents, along with generalist and 'base' teaching models;
- a variety of measures that reduced the number of teachers that students encountered and created opportunities for personalised teaching and learning initiatives;
- an imaginative array of approaches to providing SLCs, including models that incorporate both student and staff membership;
- innovative tutor group systems.

Most of these schools have persisted with their HSS developments and shown great commitment to their human scale endeavours, often in the face of considerable challenges and obstacles.

Regardless of the successes, and largely because of the obstacles presented, there remain several reasons why the six schools have not yet provided the examples of full human scale schools in practice that the HSS project aspires to foster. These reasons include:

- limits to the implementation of the initial proposals were evident in all schools;
- the invitation to introduce initiatives that extended student participation and local community involvement as part of HSS-related changes was rarely taken up;
- HSS initiatives targeting developments in teaching and learning in Years 9, 10 and 11 were hard to find;
- and several areas of the curriculum, including core areas, especially for above-average students, were frequently left outside the reach of HSS innovations.

4

VALUES UNDERPINNING THE HSS DEVELOPMENTS

4.1 VALUES FRAMEWORK OF HUMAN SCALE EDUCATION

In order to examine the values of the case study school staff it is useful to set them against those espoused by HSE. Taking a lead from the ten principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools (codified fromSizer, 1984), the HSE, at the time of launching the HSS project, conveyed its values in the form of six key principles (numbered here for ease of reference):

- 1 Small scale learning communities enable children and young people to be known and valued as individuals.
- 2 Each learner's particular needs are met and all aspects of development – creative, emotional, moral, spiritual as well as intellectual and physical – are encouraged.
- 3 The learning process is active, participative and relates to the child's own experience.
- 4 The learning community is underpinned by environmentally sustainable values and practices.
- 5 Parents and the local community are seen as vital partners in the life of the school or learning community.
- 6 Schools are democratic communities in which all those involved share in decision making.

Web reference: <http://www.hse.org.uk/about/principles.html>

Later in the project, HSE published a paper that described its values and history (Tasker, 2008). However, this exposition appeared too late to affect the genesis and development of HSS developments in schools. The paper summarised its values thus:

'[The HSE] vision of education ... is grounded in a coherent framework of values which informs its particular view of how children and young people grow and develop as responsible human beings. These values are interconnected and when translated into practice make up the experience of educating on a human scale. They are:

- primacy of human relationships
- respect for the individual
- the importance of community.'

Exponents of human scale education believe that it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the values

listed above in large schools where students are not known as individuals.

To what extent did the leaders of the case study schools espouse and adopt similar values in relation to their HSS developments?

As part of the evaluation, headteachers and programme leaders were specifically asked about the values and beliefs which underpinned the human scale-related changes they were introducing or planning. Interviewees were also asked about the extent to which they thought that colleagues shared these educational values and principles. These questions were asked at the beginning of the research, as part of the baseline interviews held during visits to the schools in spring 2007. The outcome of these discussions is reported below, in Section 4.2.

In the interviews conducted during the second and third visits, the senior staff were asked to comment on the appropriateness of the descriptors used by the researchers in the LMs (see appendix 1) drawn up on the basis of the 2007 interviews. Then, during the final interviews at the end of 2009, specific questions were asked again, to see if the values and beliefs had changed over the three year period. Any changes are reported in Section 4.3.

4.2 THE EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND VALUE SYSTEMS INFORMING THE DEVELOPMENTS

The circumstances in which the six schools were operating were quite diverse. Heads and senior leaders identified a number of factors that had led to the development of new approaches that took human scale principles into account. In each case, the impetus for change had come about through a combination of the factors below:

- **practical issues** arising from their particular circumstances, such as local schools' reorganisation, the opportunity for a new building, falling rolls, key stage results which were lower than desirable, underachievement of identified

groups, perceptions by potential parents and students that the school was too big and impersonal;

- **local, national and international trends** in school organisation and curricula, such as the focus on skills-based learning, the 'personalisation' agenda, research-led innovations, concerns about KS2 to KS3 transition;
- **senior leaders' own principles and values.**

In the baseline interviews held with these headteachers and programme leaders, many described how their views on the ethos and structure of the school had developed out of their own personal experience both as students and as teachers in a range of schools. Once they became aware of the HSE philosophy, they could see how these ideas were, to varying degrees, compatible with their own. So the focus on human relationships advocated by HSE was already a key component of their own views.

Relationships

All the headteachers emphasised the importance of the development of strong(er) relationships between staff and students (and student-student, staff-parent relationships). This was perceived as a critical factor in improving the short- and long-term prospects for the young people in their schools.

One head explained his values as follows:

'And [it's] to do with relationships, the purpose of learning, what we want from our young people, our aspirations from them, what we want from our staff, what we're prepared to give.'

Another, from a different school gave his views :

'Within the school it's pretty easy, it's about emotional intelligence, that's a key part of what we're about in behaviour management. It's about [being] in step with our young people. It's about recognising the importance of those young people being confident to mature; about those young people being confident in themselves. It's about the environment being safe and happy. Much more so than academic achievement ... it's about people, it's about relationships, it's about support. It's about involving the young people, trying to bring the parents closer in which I think is a key part of human scale values.'

Interviewees in these senior roles subscribed to the view put forward by Sizer (cited in Tasker, 2008) 'You cannot teach a child well unless you know that child well' (p.8). The initiatives they proposed and subsequently developed were designed to increase the mutual knowledge and understanding of staff and students, and to reduce the number of relationships that teachers and students had to negotiate. See chapters 2 and 3 for details.

Safety

A second value that was championed by the headteachers that were interviewed related to pupil (and staff) safety. Leadership teams stressed the importance of ensuring that students were safe and that they felt safe, thereby enabling them to concentrate on their learning. This is, of course, in line with the Every Child Matters agenda⁴ (Children Act, 2004) and the Labour government's focus on safeguarding, but the case study schools were particularly focused on this issue, as a human scale value – especially in the context of large schools.

Headteachers felt that school provided a structured environment, which was not always available elsewhere in the lives of some of their students. Most of the case study schools were large and some parents of potential students feared that their child would not be well cared for or well known. But the schools were keen to counter this impression, so the organisational and physical structures that were put in place were designed to improve student safety (see chapters 2 and 3 for details).

In one school, the headteacher described the difficulty in maintaining safety and good relationships in a school that was growing in size and, as a result, decided to reduce its intake for the following school year.

As described in chapter 2, some schools were able to design their new buildings with human scale values and practices in mind. Safety was of key significance: for example, in the layout of buildings, the breadth of corridors and the positioning and design of toilets. However, as one programme manager pointed out:

'You can have a building which is run down but can have the most incredible ethos and pride in what you do. And that's the important thing to us. The build is incidental, which is why we've done a lot of work in terms of raising aspirations in young people, making them feel safe and secure. So that's been our main focus.'

Student achievement

The aspiration to improve relationships between all the people in the school, and develop mutual respect, was seen as a key aim in itself. Alongside this aspiration was the strong belief expressed by senior (and other) staff that human scale approaches would also lead to improved achievements for the students in their school. Schools are under considerable pressure to attain higher results in external tests and examinations and are judged on these results; the case study schools were no exception. Most were struggling to increase the percentages of students reaching specified government benchmarks, despite improvements in recent years.

In one school, the headteacher explained that the

⁴ The aim of the Every Child Matters programme is to give all children the support they need to: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; achieve economic well-being.

'standards agenda' and the 'change agenda' were equally important, and that the changes introduced were designed to lead to significantly higher standards. Another felt that his school had a history of embracing change and introducing innovations, in order to improve the learning and achievement of their students. He indicated that this mindset was the reason the school had become involved with HSS. Two other schools were committed to the view that the changes they were making would enhance the achievements of individuals and thereby raise the overall performance levels of the school.

However, as the initiatives progressed, there were increasing signs in one school that senior managers felt it necessary to focus heavily on improving their KS3 scores, to the possible detriment of the human scale education developments (see Section 4.3).

Longer-term benefits for students

As they articulated their values it became clear that headteachers and other staff were committed to a wider and longer-term aim of improving the life chances of the young people for whom they had responsibility. Some of the schools were set in communities that did not always value education or had low aspirations for their young people. School leaders were determined to raise the expectations of the students, their parents and the wider community by supporting and demonstrating the achievements of the students.

One headteacher pointed out that:

'What you find is that there is not the experience in the families of going through the education system and succeeding in terms of formal qualifications, and there is very little experience of further and higher education. So, I don't think there is an issue around aspiration as such but I think there is an issue around supporting the families to realise that aspiration because they haven't the experience themselves of actually getting the full benefit out of the education system.'

Another head spoke strongly about this longer term aim as being the 'moral purpose' of the education they provided. On a later research visit he explained that:

'We're an organisation that delivers to the learning needs of young people and young people have to achieve more than they first thought possible, and we have to enable them to achieve the potential that is inherent. That's why, as we move into this next phase, I'm consistently talking to staff about raising the bar, closing the gap. Again it comes back to ... moral purpose. The moral purpose of this organisation is to close that achievement gap.'

Meeting learners' needs

The leaders of change within the schools had chosen a range of measures to try and meet their learners'

needs, drawn up to reflect the value systems they expressed. As discussed in earlier chapters, these tended to centre on SLCs and in three schools (at this point in the research the sixth school was not involved), and curriculum developments that included elements of:

- a focus on competency-based, cross-curricular programmes in the early years of secondary school;
- the introduction of learning to learn programmes throughout the school;
- close tracking and monitoring of individual students in order to identify and support underachievement;
- a focus on teaching and learning styles that engaged students and encouraged them to become confident, independent learners.

However, one school had opted for a different approach as the headteacher and a leading innovator in the school strongly believed that a common 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum was not appropriate for students and that, in order to personalise learning, there should be different curriculum pathways through KS3 and KS4, according to the needs and abilities of the students. As described in chapter 2, students were selected for different pathways according to their academic ability level, something which contrasts with the approach in three of the other schools, where the same curriculum was available to all (at least in the early years of secondary school). Nevertheless, senior staff felt that the pathways approach conformed to human scale values, as the headteacher explained:

'... pathways which I would place within the human scale context of creating different learning experiences for smaller cohorts of students and even within those pathways, you're looking at smaller groups as well. I think that is consistent with the human scale values.'

However, it could be argued that the emphasis on and extra resources provided to one particular pathway – defined by ability – does not match the values of fairness and equality promoted by HSE.

Attitudes to staff

The focus on improving school life for the students had led to a new emphasis on the roles and perceived positions of staff. Headteachers and senior staff in three schools noted the importance of providing support and development opportunities for staff, so that they too could take on new challenges and contribute to the continuous push for improvements, rather than being mere recipients of the new arrangements. At the same time, in one school, senior staff made it plain that the needs of the students came before the needs of the staff, as the headteacher stated: '[we are] not an adult employment agency. We're an organisation that delivers to the learning needs of young people.' In another school a rather different view prevailed:

baseline interviews revealed that the headteacher thought it was crucial that staff should be kept happy, as they are the most valuable resource that a school has. The head and senior staff maintained that if staff were happy they would make life happy for the students. Changes to the organisational structure of the school had been introduced to meet this aim.

Relationships with parents and the wider community

The sixth HSE principle refers to parents and the local community as 'vital partners in the life of the school or learning community', yet there was little evidence that staff supported this view. Although headteachers responded positively when asked about the value they placed on good relationships with parents and the wider community, and indicated that they hoped to develop this area, most did not appear to see it as a priority. Ironically, the only headteacher who expressed strong support for the importance of links between the community and the school, and who had established a thriving adult education facility, was the one who also believed in separate pathways for groups of students.

Value congruence, value divergence

We have seen that, in respect of HSE's first principle (SLCs enable young people to be known and valued as individuals) and Tasker's first two fundamental values (i.e. primacy of human relationships and respect for the individual), a high degree of value congruence existed between school leaders and the project's co-ordinating body, HSE. The enhancement of human relations within schools was universally endorsed by school leaders, as was the value of personalised learning through greater knowledge of individual students. The schools espoused a parallel commitment to providing a caring environment and to raising attainment in order to bolster young people's life chances.

Headteachers' accounts and the changes implemented by the schools both suggest that the second principle (i.e. 'each learner's particular needs are met ...') could be seen as a progression from the first principle: namely, that each learner's particular needs are identified and met because SLCs with teachers who spend more time with their classes allow individual students to be known better. This was, for example, a key facet of the students' 'base' teachers' roles at Garnet and Topaz. The enhanced identification and monitoring of learners' needs are also major tenets of the innovations introduced at Pearl (e.g. increased surveillance of performance, learning conversations, learning concern alerts). While teachers and tutors working on the various innovations in most of the schools were in a position to use their increased knowledge of their students to consider whether individuals were progressing in all aspects of development (i.e. 'creative, emotional, moral, spiritual, as well as intellectual and physical'), it is worth noting that direct measures to provide a

better balance across these domains were seldom articulated or implemented by the schools as part of their HSS agenda.

Beyond the first two of the six principles and Tasker's core values, we can see greater value divergence, and at times disagreement between the values championed by school leaders and HSE. The latter's third principle relates to pedagogy and, as we argue in chapter 3, pedagogy received less explicit attention than curriculum developments in the changes advocated and implemented by project schools. Although schools' innovations around themed curricula required teachers to adopt active and participative teaching and learning techniques, there were few signs of any direct programmes to develop and enhance teachers' skills in these pedagogies. However, the use of cross-curricular projects like 'Finding Nemo', 'Lord of the Rings' or local towns and heritage sites are illustrations of the schools relating learning to the children's own experiences.

The underpinning of learning communities 'by environmentally sustainable values and practices' (HSE's fourth principle) was neither mentioned nor clearly apparent in any of the schools. This does not necessarily mean that schools were not taking steps to be environmentally sustainable (e.g. in the energy demands of their buildings, using local food supplies, in their school travel policies) – but that these concerns were not part of the schools' HSS discourse (e.g. in response to our open invitation for them to describe their HSS-related changes and values).

All six schools were, to varying degrees, active in encouraging a greater involvement of parents as vital partners in effective schooling (HSE fifth principle). On the other hand, very few tangible HSS developments could be cited to substantiate any claims that the wider local community was also seen as a vital partner.

With regard to the final principle on democratic decision-making, general extensions to student participation were espoused and apparent in some schools, albeit not necessarily with a specific connection to the HSS developments; although one head made such a link: 'so the human scale notion is one that I certainly embrace, the greater democratisation of students I embrace'. However, greater democracy and more democratic decision-making were neither construed nor valued as integral parts of the human scale thinking. The lexicon of 'democracy' was very rarely called upon. Moreover, as already alluded to, in one school some teachers felt that their voice and professional judgement was marginalised relative to that of the students. In another school, the headteacher rejected an out-and-out democratic model:

'It's way, way from the authoritarian, but it's not a

democratic model. I don't believe in every decision being taken within an organisation on a democratic path. There are clearly times when I will come back over to quite a strong end of the continuum, I will make a decision because I believe it's the right decision for whatever the issue is we're dealing with.'

Perhaps sensing that the latter comment reflects reality and the position of most school managers, a teacher in another school was less than optimistic about the application of wider democratic processes in schools:

'I think certainly, in the decision-making process, I think that can go a long way, if you involve all the children in that and not just an elite group of very able children who volunteer to be on the school council. I think the system can still alienate most children in the school where you've got able children speaking for others without their consent, if you like. It's a bit like the government, isn't it. Perhaps we should have a more popular vote – I'm a great believer in ... of democracy. But it will never happen.'

Another area that demonstrated the distance between the values of HSE and the current values of some schools concerned the extent to which schools perceived SLCs as 'schools within a school' (SWAS). As explained in chapter 6, a succession of headteachers at Turquoise balked at the idea of their SLC being conceived as an SWAS in any sense of the term. To pre-empt this, they endeavoured to effect policies that consolidated the separate site as part of the institution as a whole. Similar concerns arose at Garnet, where the school leadership had already become highly sceptical of the notion of SWAS at the baseline visit:

'[The underachieving pilot pathway] has created a very clear sense of a school within a school. Now the students' perceptions of that in the broader school, I think, are of a bit of concern, I think they feel that it's one of the best bits of the school. So that it's a privileged environment for some of our [under-achieving pathway] students. I think that there is also a worry that as that separate area of the school operates, is everything that it is doing consistent with the ethos and processes of the school generally? And the curriculum and pathways group ... were constantly talking about that in our fortnightly meetings. So I would say that we have become concerned that creating a physical geographically separate area, a discrete area is not helpful and can create a sense of separateness which maybe... may develop perceptions amongst the students or staff that worry us. And can also at times ... develop a sense of separateness of ... a sense of a corporate identity of challenge and wanting to be better taught which is fine, but a sense at times, that they were a bit ...

had some sense of, without them perhaps even realising it, of impunity from the normal sanctions and processes within the school.'

These issues were not unique to Garnet. With other schools wrestling with the vexed question of how much to devolve to SLCs and how much to insist on whole institution integration, there was certainly a hesitancy to fully adopt the SWAS philosophy advanced by HSE.

A final area of contention regarding value positions also surfaced at Garnet during the baseline visit (though it was also apparent, in less extreme guises, at other schools). Leaders at Garnet made a strong and impassioned case that a commitment to personalised learning required the acceptance that a uniform common curriculum at Key Stage 3 was not meeting the needs of all children. Moreover, in order to better meet the needs of individual children of this age, students could be selected for different curricula on the basis of their ability or on the basis of their differentiated learning style needs. For many in the HSE movement, this stance was fundamentally opposed to the human scale values of equity and inclusivity. By way of illustration, in the latter phases of the project, HSS started offering teachers the opportunity to view schools in Denmark. One of the attractions of the Danish system that is described by Wetz (2009, p.47), a proponent of HSE values and practices, is the Folkeskole Act 1994, which abolished setting by ability. A significant clash in value positions clearly surrounds the issue of student grouping and curriculum selection.

Overall, the values articulated and the initiatives implemented in the case study schools concurred with several of HSE's principles and values: SLCs, curriculum developments, attention to individual needs, greater involvement of parents and (to a lesser extent) pedagogy. However, apparent disparities in values were evident in regard to environmental sustainability, local community (over and above parental) involvement, democratic decision-making, 'schools-within a school' as distinct from mere 'SLCs' and student selection for different curricula at Key Stage 3.

4.3 CHANGES IN IDEOLOGIES OVER TIME AS THE INITIATIVES UNFOLD

During the Stage 2 visit to case study schools, senior staff were invited to comment on the accuracy and appropriateness of the terms used in the LMs drawn up by the researchers, rather than being asked specific questions about their values and beliefs.

At this point in the research, there had been little change in the value systems in the five schools then participating. In other words, senior staff continued to believe in the need for strong relationships, a safe environment, and the provision of a curriculum and

skills which would enable young people to achieve highly at school and in their life after school.

Although some practical aspects had been developed in different directions, (at Garnet in particular, as reported below) heads and senior staff felt that the drivers of the changes were still the same. Most talked of the consolidation of the recent changes and how they were not planning any significant innovations in the immediate future. In Pearl, longer term plans for a new building were being considered, with discussions taking place on the philosophies which should underpin the construction, bearing in mind the uncertainty of future directions in education and society, in general.

At Turquoise, the emphasis on improving results at KS3, had led to some re-working of their developments, as they considered how to maintain their human scale values, while also providing evidence of higher value-added scores.

At Garnet, the leadership was still committed to the view that personalised learning meant that different curricula were appropriate for different children, according to their needs, but the original pilot programme had been abandoned and staff were exploring how to move forward.

Further developments in ideologies

In the fourth and final visit during November and December 2009, senior staff were once again asked specific questions about the values underpinning the changes, and were asked to reflect on how those values had evolved or how the manifestations of the values had developed. One school declined to participate in this phase of interviews, indicating that there had been little change in the human scale developments since our previous visit and there would be little to gain from a further visit. Of the four remaining schools, we can see the values expressed (and the linked initiatives) as fitting along a continuum.

In one school, a change of headteacher had led to a change in many of the structures set up by the previous headteacher to incorporate human scale values. The focus on human relationships and smaller units enabling staff and students to build stronger relationships was no longer at the forefront, despite some senior staff still supporting those values. In the context of budget problems, the new headteacher was focusing on raising the results to meet external benchmarks and was introducing different approaches to achieve this.

In another school, being led by an acting headteacher, the focus on providing a caring environment, the importance of staff and students knowing each other well and having good relationships, and monitoring to make sure that 'children don't fall through the gap', was being

maintained, as were the strong links with the surrounding community. Governors and the local authority were supportive of these aims, but staff were uncertain about the future prospects under a new, as yet unknown, headteacher.

In the third school, senior staff were beginning to feel confident that all the changes brought about had fulfilled the aims and values identified at the beginning of the process. A sense of safety and security had been engendered in students since the move to the new building, as well as a sense of belonging and identity with the community in which they were based. Staff were also beginning to feel a sense of identity and of belonging to a community, rather than their subject departments.

School leaders in the third school were now highlighting the need for staff to focus on the individual child in terms of attainment, not just on personal knowledge, and to pursue academic rigour throughout the school. This view was supported by the evidence of success demonstrated in the schools visited as part of the HSS study tours, as the headteacher explained:

'Boston Arts College talks about academic rigour, excitement, enrichment through specialism and student well-being. Those are the three core principles that are there. And we've tried to model that.'

In the final school, the human scale values espoused at the beginning of the project work were perceived as completely embedded in the school, and taken for granted in the structures that had been implemented and which were now seen as everyday by staff and students. Senior leaders were confident that students had a feeling of belonging and a sense of identity – both with their own community and with the whole school – though the head was still exploring the exact balance between community independence and integration:

'The best approach, I think, is to have differences within the communities, but full integration of the pupil body around the school site. And what that does is actually teaches children to celebrate difference, diversity and actually is very beneficial in preparing kids to enter into a multicultural and diverse world. So, on one hand I want to make sure the children have got distinctiveness and identity, yet at the same time I want them to be integrated into a larger community. So it's – you've got the tutor group as the small unit. You've got the community as the next stage up. And then you've got the school as the whole.'

Senior leaders felt that staff-student relationships had improved significantly through the community structure and vertical tutor groups. However, the focus was seen to be shifting even more strongly

than before towards ways of improving academic results.

Devolution of responsibility

A new element that was beginning to emerge at this final stage of the research was the attitude of the leadership in two schools (Opal, Pearl) towards the heads of the SLCs within their schools. At Pearl, the headteacher explained that he was beginning to think that each community leader should be able to develop their own community in ways that suited them, resulting in more distinctive identities. However, the scope for communities to act autonomously was limited, as the distinctions between them did not extend to the curriculum or to teaching and learning approaches.

Similarly, at Opal, the headteacher had come to a stage where he felt it was appropriate for community leaders to devise some of their own strategies and forge their own identities.

However, the devolution of some responsibility to a small number of senior staff falls far short of the HSS principle of schools being 'democratic communities in which all those involved share in decision-making'.

4.4 CONSENSUS SURROUNDING THE UNDERPINNING VALUES IN EACH SCHOOL

During the earlier visits to case study schools, several senior leaders explained that they had emphasised the values and ethos of the school when talking to existing staff about the proposed changes and always did so when recruiting new staff. At interview, potential staff were often asked about their own values and beliefs and their responses to the school's stated principles.

Overall, it could be expected that there would be a reasonable level of consensus about the values, though not necessarily about the methods of implementing them. Interviews conducted by the research team during the first two visits were mainly with staff involved in the development of new initiatives, so at that point there was little direct evidence of the range of values held across the staff. However, from the data available, there were probably three groups ranged along a continuum of views.

Continuum of views

The first group included staff involved in researching, developing and implementing the new approaches, particularly through cross-curricular project work. These members of staff had taken the principles underlying the changes on board and were fully committed to them. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment of the teaching and learning processes involved had often spread to other staff who were not engaged in the specific initiatives. However, despite this

positive attitude, several of these staff had found the new ways of working stressful and tiring at times.

The second group of staff included those who supported the underpinning beliefs but were uncertain about the appropriateness of the practices being implemented. For example, at Pearl, some staff felt that the vertical division of the school had been successful in many ways, but it had created other issues, such as reducing the possibility of fine ability setting for teaching groups, and a requirement for form tutors to teach a specified programme in tutor time.

The third category of staff consisted of those who were doubtful about both the principles and the practices being introduced. For example, at Garnet, some staff were critical of the notion of selection, the criteria used to determine the different groups of students and the special attention given to the under-achieving students, as discussed earlier.

Changed staff attitudes

By the time of the Stage 3 and 4 research visits, the picture had changed somewhat. In three of the original schools, both the senior staff and teaching colleagues who were interviewed during these later visits believed that the majority of staff were supportive of the values promoted and accepting of the changes which had been implemented. Naturally, individuals could identify aspects of the changes which they felt were unsatisfactory or needed further development, but on the whole, a critical mass were 'on board'.

Members of the leadership team in one school were pleased when Ofsted stated in their inspection report that 'the majority of staff share the vision and values of the senior leadership team'.⁵ They explained that:

'... [Ofsted] could only have got that from staff. So obviously – from where we lost some staff before we moved in, I think what's happened is that staff are – the staff that we have at the moment – are on board and do see the vision and the values very clearly of what we're trying to achieve here.'

In this school, staff had been grouped into communities for the majority of their teaching, and had been physically separated from their subject colleagues. Although some had been apprehensive or negative about this approach, according to the reports of those interviewed, by the following school year the majority had not only accepted the change but formed a new sense of allegiance to and identity with their community. This is not to say that there were no disadvantages to the system for teachers (as discussed in chapter 6).

At another school, as the HSS developments were becoming more established, senior staff reported that a striking change had been brought about in the

⁵ Reference not given, in order to preserve anonymity.

school ethos, in terms of staff attitudes. Formerly, staff had been quite resistant to change within the school and the leadership team had struggled to implement new approaches, but the influence of the new headteacher and his commitment to enabling staff to contribute their own ideas and suggestions, had encouraged staff to engage with the developments. As a senior member of staff explained:

‘Last year there just seemed to be such a shift in the way that people ... didn’t resist change as much as they had done in the past. And they started to almost accept it. Things like the time of the school day we tried to change that a couple of years ago and faced massive resistance from the staff, whereas now, it’s happened, we’re doing it.’

However, in that school, other issues were taking the attention of teachers as their Ofsted inspection had indicated that some of the teaching was ‘inadequate’, leaving many staff feeling demoralised.

In another school, a new headteacher had made changes to structures and staffing, leading some staff to worry that the underpinning values of developing good relationships within small-scale settings might be lost or watered down. Here, the changes implemented in the 2009–10 school year were perceived as making the organisation less human scale than before.

Other issues which arose across five of the schools in the earlier stages of the developments related to teachers’ willingness (or lack of it) to embrace new teaching methods, and the impact of the cross-curricular approaches on students and staff. This is discussed further in chapters 5 and 6.

4.5 COMPARISON OF SCHOOLS’ VALUE POSITIONS

In the five initial case study schools, two overarching aims had been put forward:

- the development of well-being, safety and security for students;
- the raising of academic achievement for students.

Though the two aims were seen to be closely entwined, there is no doubt that the early emphasis of the changes being implemented was very much on the first of these aims. A more determined focus on the second aim, was introduced into schools at a later stage, though not always in the same fashion.

In three of the schools, it was fairly clear that phase 1 of the changes was directed primarily at organisational arrangements and structures, the use of buildings, and so on, as described elsewhere. At what might be called phase 2 in these three schools, the focus had definitely shifted, with the acknowledgment that once the physical arrangements had been established, the emphasis

had to be placed on improving the quality of teaching and learning (see Section 4.3). This would support fulfillment of the second aim, that is, to improve student achievement for the benefit of the individuals themselves, and for the overall benefit of the school.

This two-stage process in relation to aims could also be seen in the sixth school, though the plans and implementation were further behind the other schools. This school had been pleased with its Ofsted report of having a ‘tangible culture of caring in the school’ and wanted to maintain that strength, but at the same time they were focusing on the longer term needs of the students, as one senior leader stated:

‘It’s about teaching and learning and the academic rigour that goes into it. Because there’s no point being this nice place that welcomes students unless you actually have high aspirations for them. So teaching and learning is an absolutely ... essential ingredient.’

She went on to explain that, in her opinion, though the caring environment was hugely important, it should be accompanied by an emphasis on high achievement for the students. She felt that staff were beginning to accept the need for this change but were finding it difficult at the same time. The culture of caring had extended to staff and there had been a lack of challenge about teachers’ practice and professionalism. This was now being tackled, especially as some teachers had been deemed ‘inadequate’ by Ofsted. However, the human scale changes were perceived by senior staff as supportive to the further development of teaching staff.

In contrast, at the remaining two schools, this gradual evolution of focus from ‘caring’ to ‘achievement’ was not the prevailing pattern. At one school, which had a well-established ‘caring’ environment, with human scale values expressed through SLCs, cross-curricular approaches and limited numbers of staff, there was also an increased focus on achievement. Moreover, at the final researcher visit, it was revealed that a new headteacher had altered some of the organisational features set up to facilitate good human relationships (though the cross-curricular projects remained), as he felt that more traditional structures would lead to higher levels of achievement. In this school, although the headteacher did not reject the overall value of improving students’ well-being, he appeared to view it as subordinate to the aim of improving achievement, and certainly not as a prerequisite, as perceived by the first three schools discussed above.

At the final school (to which visits were only made over the course of two years), senior leaders had abandoned the pilot scheme of pathways and were re-evaluating their next steps. There had been a feeling among staff that the selection of able but

under-achieving pupils for the pilot was not in tune with the values of an inclusive, comprehensive school. In addition, it was felt that the privileged approaches and resources provided to the pilot teaching group had led to over-confidence in some of the students (to the detriment of their behaviour towards staff). In this school, there appeared to be a mismatch between the values expressed and their actualisation.

4.6 SUMMARY

The values underpinning the school developments reflect to some extent those spelled out in HSE publications. Where the match is greatest is in relation to the following areas:

- the establishment of good relationships between all members of the school community;
- a safe and secure environment for students and staff to work in;
- the hope and expectation that students will achieve highly in terms of their personal education and external assessments.

Further values expressed refer to the needs of staff, and their importance with regard to the needs of students and, in some schools, a desire to be involved with the wider community.

However, there were signs of some divergence of values in certain schools. These ranged from a lack of

explicit commitment to the espousal of conflicting views, in respect to environmental sustainability, the local community (over and above parental involvement), democratic decision-making, SWAS as distinct from SLCs and student selection for different curricula at Key Stage 3.

As the human scale approaches became established in the schools, there was a gradual change of focus in four of the schools: the initial aim of developing improved interpersonal relationships and a safer environment was being superseded by an increased emphasis on student achievement. It was also becoming apparent in those schools that the senior staff who had introduced the changes were beginning to devolve responsibility for further developments to their colleagues. At the same time, initial staff resistance to some of the changes and the values underpinning them, had been overcome, and staff were beginning to engage with the new approaches to the extent where the majority were supportive.

In two schools, however, the human scale aims and approaches had not evolved in the same way. In one, there was disappointment with the results of the route they had chosen, and staff were re-evaluating their aims. In the other, newly introduced structures appeared to run counter to HSS values and practices, and staff were concerned about the effects.

5

FACTORS ENABLING CHANGE TO BE IMPLEMENTED

5.1 FACTORS ENABLING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE HSE CHANGES

At each stage of the research, interviewees were asked to comment on their perceptions of the factors which were enabling the implementation of the changes in their school. After each of the first two visits, researchers drew up LMs to try and encapsulate what was happening in each school. Looking across the diagrams (reproduced in appendix 1) it might appear that the range of factors enabling the changes was both varied and specific to the particular activities and context of each individual school. However, when the tables are collated it can be seen that there are some factors which are common to all five schools.

The enabling factors which are referred to in all or most of the schools are as follows:

- the role of the headteacher and senior leadership team (SLT);
- the support provided by different stakeholders;
- the support provided to the staff, particularly those directly involved in the innovations;
- other strengths within the school which are supportive to the HSE-related developments.

Other enabling factors referred to tended to be more specific to the particular changes, and will be discussed in the context of those changes.

First though, let us look in more detail at the factors found in more than one school.

The role of the headteacher and senior leadership team

On the baseline visit to schools, interviews with headteachers, senior staff involved with the developments, and other teaching staff, found that the vision and values of the headteacher were critical to the development and implementation of the changes. Headteachers and project leaders themselves explained their value positions and reasons for embarking on change (see chapter 4 for more details). Other members of staff interviewed were well aware of these underpinning beliefs, even if they were not in agreement with them, or with the

proposed changes. The strength of the conviction of the headteacher and SLT had enabled them to provide clear leadership to their colleagues, as well as support and resources to implement the changes.

The creativity and flexibility of the leadership team was also an important factor in the development of the innovations. The needs of each case study school were different but across the schools it was apparent that the SLT had attempted to devise organisational and curricular changes which would respond to those needs in the most appropriate way. On the whole, the SLT were willing to modify their plans, as their own research and thinking continued to evolve, and as a response to a changing external context.

This commitment to research and an appetite (and reputation) for innovation by headteachers and senior staff were also perceived as enabling factors. In one school, all senior staff had been involved in studying for further degrees in recent years, and in another, staff were encouraged to use the project work being undertaken as the basis for further study and qualifications.

In one school (Sapphire), it was also noted that the headteacher was not only able to inspire colleagues but had the ability to get them engaged in the process:

'I think [he] is very good at introducing new ideas and ... seeing it as a kind of process that will take place over time and its, kind of, something that people were up in arms against at first. Now ... on our latest training day people were coming up with ideas that they thought were their own but were actually ideas that have come out of, kind of the work that [the headteacher] has done, so ... I think he's very good at giving people time to take on board, giving people responsibility, like the appreciative enquiry groups, a lot of people thinking and researching and that's all fed into the process.'

In all the schools, headteachers and others had identified problems and areas that needed to be

addressed. Their drive to find solutions for these issues was another factor supporting the initiatives.

Support from stakeholders

After the first two visits, at least two of the schools had explicitly identified the support of the teaching staff as an enabling factor. In these schools, there was a view that the majority of staff were in favour of the changes. In another school, the perception was that enough staff were supportive to enable the initiative to go ahead. In fact, in all the schools, except Pearl (where all staff were involved in the organisational changes), a number of teachers had volunteered or were happy to be involved in the development of the new cross-curricular approaches and materials. Staff in these teams found the experience of collegiate working very positive and several teachers described an atmosphere in which they felt able to learn from and share with their colleagues, in ways which had not happened before. Across four schools, this core group of people – who were committed and enthusiastic – had provided a focus for the benefits of change, and had willingly acted as ambassadors to the rest of the staff. In Garnet, however, difficulties arising from the innovations had led even the core teachers to have doubts about the project's effectiveness (see chapter 6).

Support from other groups was also available: parents appeared to be generally in favour of the changes, especially where they were receiving more frequent information and feedback from the school; in one school it was noted that there was sufficient governor support for the changes; members of the local community were perceived as positively disposed to the changes, where they had knowledge of what was involved.

External validation was also important in enabling senior staff to feel that the innovations were acceptable more widely. Several schools had Ofsted inspections during the period of the research, the results of which were favourable to the changes. One school was involved in piloting their new courses in conjunction with QCA, and another cited the support of the local authority for their new approaches. The involvement of HSE and the research team was also seen as giving status to the developments, and the funding provided by CGF and other bodies had also provided support for the schools to investigate the innovations being made by other institutions, as well as providing time for staff to plan and prepare for the new situation.

Support for staff to take changes on board

Senior staff in the case study schools felt that they had been able to provide support for staff within the school, to enable them to move forward. This included direct support for individuals, in terms of time and opportunities to carry out research – particularly for those teachers developing new course materials. In one school, it was pointed out that some

staff had gained career advancement and salary rises to take account of their new roles and responsibilities, and this was certainly the case in other schools too.

More broadly, staff meetings and professional development days included opportunities for dissemination and discussion of changes, and their impact on staff and students.

Other factors perceived as enabling the changes to be introduced successfully included:

- a data-rich environment and laptops for teachers;
- additional support for subject areas in which staff were struggling;
- and strong project leadership.

Other human scale related strengths within the school

Given the core principles underlying HSE-related approaches to school organisation, curriculum and pedagogy, it is interesting to note the enabling factors that were already in place or developing further as part of the innovations. Interviews from the first two research visits indicate that:

- some good staff-student relationships were already established;
- the student voice was 'strong' or 'developing' in three schools;
- student choice in terms of the curriculum was strong in at least two schools;
- flexibility within the curriculum and on timing for taking exams were enabling students' individual needs to be met;
- strengths in particular areas, such as 'the arts', and 'ICT and e-learning', were relevant to the changes being introduced;
- support for students, teachers and senior leaders was provided by newly appointed pastoral staff, able to respond rapidly to issues as they arose;
- a record of successful school improvement was in place (one school);
- a strong pastoral record and experience was in place (one school);
- new buildings were planned or about to be opened in some schools.

5.2 ENABLING FACTORS IN RELATION TO THE SPECIFIC INNOVATIONS

As described in chapter 3, the innovations can be divided into two main groups:

- A themed curriculum, often involving fewer teachers, and innovative approaches to pedagogy, assessment and monitoring progress;
- Small learning communities (SLCs), involving houses, pathways, age-related separation, vertical tutor groups, and in some cases, new buildings.

Taking each of these in turn, it can be seen that after the first two visits, a number of enabling factors were in place or in development.

Themed curriculum

In the schools in which a themed curriculum was being developed and implemented, several strengths were identified, as detailed below:

Many of the cross-curricular programmes being developed were the responsibility of staff within the humanities area, sometimes with the addition of colleagues from other areas. In Topaz, for example, an earlier version of a humanities-related project had been developed, providing a useful starting point and relevant experience for the new thematic approaches. In another school, teachers of geography, history, RE, and other subjects had previous experience of working within a 'humanities' group, when the curriculum had been organised in that way.

As reported above, staff working in small teams to develop new courses found that this approach had engendered an atmosphere of cooperation and sharing and a 'learning culture' within the team. This had facilitated the development of the materials and approaches, and also enabled staff, where appropriate, to embark confidently upon shared delivery or teaching other people's classes.

At Sapphire, a teacher who had been involved in such work, described the importance of the relationship with other members of the team: not only had she and a colleague provided support to each other in terms of the preparation and teaching, but it had also enabled them to work out mutually beneficial practical solutions to dealing with difficult students.

In the schools where staff were teaching subjects outside their own specialism (e.g. Topaz), there was some anxiety about their competence to do so (on their own part and on the part of others) and there were clearly issues of professional development to be addressed (see chapter 6 for more discussion of the problems). However, by the second (and subsequent) visit, liaison between those teachers and the relevant subject departments appeared to have improved, and support was being provided to non-specialists, leading to positive interactions between individuals with different areas of expertise.

Small Learning Communities (SLCs)

The development of SLCs is at the heart of the human scale developments being implemented in the case study schools. At the time of the first two research visits, schools were at different stages of realising this aim, as discussed in chapter 3. However, some facilitating factors were identified in the schools where a form of SLC had been put in place.

Strong relationships between staff and students and among students themselves were key to the developments and staff felt that the quality of those

relationships was already good in the younger year groups, especially Year 7. Since these year groups were the target of many of the innovations, (such as SLCs dedicated to Year 7 or Years 7 and 8, and cross-curricular projects), this provided a good basis for expecting that the new arrangements would lead to the development of even better relationships.

New buildings or dedicated areas of the school were also seen as facilitating the development of good relationships, and providing a safe, secure environment in which students and staff could flourish. Here too, we can see a continuum in terms of the impact of buildings on enabling the aims to be achieved. For example, in Pearl, the SLCs were not located in completely separate areas of the school, though students, particularly in the lower years were taught for a proportion of time in their home area. This physical separation or integration did not appear to be relevant to the success or failure of the communities. At Opal, measures were being put in place to separate younger pupils from the older ones, such as separate lunch times, but until the planned move to a new building in September 2008, it was not possible to provide exclusive geographical areas. At Garnet, a separate suite of rooms had been built for the project group, with the aim of giving them their own area, and reducing the number of teachers interacting with the target group students. However, there was an unforeseen impact of enabling the students to feel ownership, as described in chapter 8.

In two other schools, (Turquoise and Topaz) Years 7 and 8 pupils were located in distinct areas of the school and this was thought to be an important factor in enabling them to make a successful transition from primary school. The separate geographical space was also associated with a limited number of teachers, some of whom were teaching on the cross-curricular projects which took up a significant part of the timetable, and it was hoped that this would provide the scope for strong interpersonal relationships to be developed. In addition, the separation from the older students, gave the younger ones a feeling of ownership over their part of the school and a sense of safety and security.

5.3 ENABLING FACTORS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNOVATIONS

During the third visit to schools, senior staff were asked to comment on the revised version of the LM. This included their views on the enabling factors listed by the researchers.

At Opal, Topaz and Pearl, staff agreed that most of the factors identified earlier were still in place, though amendments to some of the structures or innovations meant that new enabling factors had been introduced. For example, at Topaz, the SLC dedicated to Years 7 and 8 students was provided

with a dedicated SENCO, so that sufficient support was available, especially to the Year 7 students, who were seen as a 'challenging' year group. At Pearl, the structures were becoming well established so it was decided that the deputy heads would no longer lead the SLCs, but would return to their whole school responsibilities full-time.

At Opal, the supporting factors identified in previous years were still in place, but the most significant change had been brought about by the move into the new building, which had enabled the establishment of the SLCs. Staff interviewed were very clear about the benefits this had brought in terms of the overarching aims (of strengthening interpersonal relationships, providing a sense of safety and security, and supporting learning and long-term achievements). The building had enabled the students and staff to be grouped in dedicated areas of the school, with smaller numbers of staff and students in each SLC, and staff were confident that this had engendered feelings of belonging and of safety, and that the smaller number of teachers had provided the opportunity for the quality of teaching and learning to be improved.

As one of the SLT explained:

'I think the physical structures have been an enabling factor, OK. Because I don't believe the building is the be-all and end-all. But we were just in a very fortunate place at the right – you know, right place at the right time. Changing our practice at the same time as being able to have a building which reflected that change in practice. So the two are actually entwined – they go hand-in-hand.'

Other enabling factors at Opal identified by interviewees at this stage included: flexible curriculum and pathways at KS4 and longer lesson lengths, with more flexible break times.

By the time of the fourth visit, there was increasing staff support for the changes (though some issues of concern to teachers had arisen, which are discussed further in chapter 6).

Two further enabling factors were identified by one of the leadership team. The first related to the relevance of their school 'specialism' of 'enterprise', which they interpreted as:

'... allowing students to take risks ... And moving, and using that specialism to enable our students to achieve what they want to achieve as well, and saying everything is possible.'

This could also be applied to the leadership team (and governors and other staff) who had taken the risk of introducing some radical innovations into the school. The second element concerned the breakdown of the distinctions between pastoral and

academic matters, which had been facilitated by the SLC structure:

'... because you're working in community teams, so your community meetings now – it's quite interesting that you can set one agenda, whereas before we had to have a pastoral agenda and an academic agenda because of the breakdown of the pastoral and academic divide – when you're talking about students' progress and the curriculum pathways that they're on, you can have the same conversation.'

Other enabling factors identified included: the headteacher's view that the organisation had 'a mindset ... that says it's about the individual child'; the flexible lesson times which enabled more innovative teaching and learning; CPD to provide support for teachers to respond to these longer lessons; the early visits to Boston and New York which had provided both inspiration and practical information which led to the school innovations; the length of time taken to introduce the changes, with early discussions taking place before the move to the new building, thereby allowing staff to be as prepared as possible.

At Turquoise, by the third and fourth research visits, a number of problems and a change of leadership had led to a range of organisational and structural changes. Some of these may not have been supportive to the HSE-related approaches, but in terms of the themed curriculum programme, some positive developments were reported. A separate faculty had been set up to bring together staff teaching on the thematic project, as a designated team, which had been seen as desirable for some time. The programme leader explained some of the benefits of this:

'... then for the [thematic teaching], more often than not they just have the one teacher now. I have got a team which is base [the themed programme], plus the link with the arts. So when we have meetings I know who's going to be there. I don't have to fight with other departments, wanting their ... because you know I had just bits of different people.'

Having a distinct team was supportive to planning and preparation, as well as reducing the number of teachers meeting the students:

'... it's the planning side of things because within each topic, even though it's an integrated curriculum, in some aspects you're going to have geography-based lessons, history-based lessons, RE-based lessons. And the teacher can really forward plan and make and plan for things within those lessons a bit better than somebody who's maybe picking up one lesson a week.'

However, it was still not meeting the aspiration of having a small number of teachers seeing students for a significant proportion of the week, as staffing problems across the school had led to the need for supply staff to be used, and some topics to be shared between a number of staff. This pattern was replicated in the following academic year, with the dissipation of the separate team (see chapter 6 for further discussion).

The main enabling factor for the thematic curriculum – which appeared to be continuing, despite other changes – was the support of the SLT and the staff in general. As the programme leader commented:

‘So there is that support and ... I know from the head and the senior leadership they’re very impressed with what we do. Lots of the things that we’re currently implementing into school, like the personal learning and thinking skills, all subjects are just starting to do that while we’re already ahead of the game in regards to all of that. So no, I feel very supported.’

This seemed to stem from the belief in the appropriateness of the approach, the perceived skills and strengths manifested by the students, noted by teachers as the students moved into Year 9 and beyond, and the fact that many staff within the school had taught on the programme at some time, and were therefore aware of its benefits.

The final visit to Sapphire revealed that most of the same factors were enabling the school to move forward with HSE-related changes. The biggest development was in relation to staff support: in the early stages of the initiatives, the majority of staff had been opposed to or sceptical of the changes. Nevertheless, they were supportive of their colleagues who were directly involved, as one project teacher explained:

‘I know a lot of the other staff ... or some of the other staff were against it. But they were all very supportive, so even though they didn’t necessarily agree with us in principle they were very supportive of us professionally and personally ... I think that helped massively – you need that support from your colleagues.’

By the time of the final research visit, senior staff had noted a significant improvement in the attitudes of most staff. It was pointed out that, regardless of their own views, some staff were, ‘very focused on what is best for the pupils, and so they are willing to think of an idea if it’s best for the pupils’.

Participation in the BSF programme had also proved beneficial by providing the opportunity for senior leaders to reflect on their vision and aims for the

school. It had also led to the involvement with HSE and the staff visit to America. This had enabled them to see different approaches in practice and to envisage how their own school might be organised, especially in terms of small schools within a larger school. At the time of the research visit, a third set of plans, with a SWAS structure had been submitted to the local authority.

In terms of the actual initiatives, the one with the highest profile in HSE terms, was the cross-curricular project work, and interviewees identified several factors which had underpinned the success of the work, to that point. The most significant of these had been the formation of a team of staff to deliver the project work, under a single line manager, giving a sense of identity and coherence which supported both the teachers and the curriculum. In addition, three of the newly appointed staff had either experience of teaching in primary schools or had focused their teacher training on primary education. The benefits of this were described thus:

‘... they have those skills to be able to transfer across different curriculum areas and they have the skills to keep them engaged for long periods of time. So I think that’s interesting as well, because it is a different way of teaching.’

As referred to in another school, staff mostly found the longer blocks of time (of two to three hours) useful for working within the project curriculum, though other teachers sometimes found this challenging.

5.4 SUMMARY

Two main factors enabled the innovations to be introduced into the case study schools:

- the vision and leadership of the headteacher and senior colleagues;
- the support of enough staff willing to become involved in the initiatives by taking responsibility for the development of curriculum materials or new roles within SLCs.

After the introductory phase, key factors enabling the initiatives to become established included:

- continued leadership by senior staff;
- growing support across the whole school staff;
- new buildings;
- the formation of designated teams of staff working on cross-curricular programmes.

This chapter has focused on factors that have enabled the initiatives to become reality, while largely ignoring the difficulties. Inhibiting factors will be discussed in the next chapter and an attempt will be made to acknowledge the tensions between the two sets of factors.

6

FACTORS INHIBITING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE

6.1 FACTORS INHIBITING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE HSE CHANGES

As described in chapter 5, interviewees were asked to comment on their perceptions of the factors which were enabling the implementation of the changes in their school. They were also asked to identify any factors which might be hindering the implementation. These factors were also incorporated into the LMs reproduced in appendix 1.

Interestingly, there was less similarity between schools with respect to the hindering elements than in terms of enabling factors. Many of the difficulties were related to individual school contexts or to the operation of the innovations themselves. However, some common threads can be identified, as shown below.

Background whole school issues

The kinds of changes which leadership teams wanted to introduce (i.e. SLCs, fewer teachers for each student to meet, especially for those in Years 7 and 8, and/or a form of cross-curricular teaching and learning), required suitable buildings, or would be greatly enhanced by having appropriate buildings. However, as described elsewhere, by the time of the second visit, only one school (Topaz) had moved into new buildings which had been designed to accommodate the changes in organisation, and another (Garnet) had been operating in a separate, newly built suite of rooms for two years.

Even with new buildings, issues had arisen: at Topaz, a lack of space had been noticeable from the time of the transfer, and some creative re-organisation of timetables had been put in place, to make optimum use of the building. Attempts were also being made to improve arrangements at lunchtime, as overcrowding in eating areas had become a problem. At Garnet, the provision of a new building for the pilot group alone had contributed to the perception by other students and some staff that the pilot students were being given special treatment. When the decision was made to cancel the pilot programme, the new building was re-allocated to a subject department, rather than a designated group of students on a particular pathway.

In two other schools (Opal, Pearl), the existing buildings were not wholly conducive to the structures being planned. This led the SLT at Pearl to modify the model of organisation: staff and students would not be allocated to completely distinct geographical areas of the school, as per the original proposal. At Opal, the leadership team had to postpone some of the innovations until the move into new, purpose-built accommodation. The fifth school (Turquoise) had significant issues concerning the buildings: firstly, the state of repair of some sections was poor; and secondly, the whole school was divided into three sites, each at some distance from the others. In one sense, this could be seen as positive in human scale terms, as each site housed a limited number of students, becoming in effect a series of SLCs. However, there were concerns among the staff about the negative aspects of having SWAS. At Sapphire, reference was made to the poor state of the building where the project students were housed. This leadership team was still considering the design of a new building, originally proposed to cater for a likely increase in their Year 7 intake. These staff found the design process beneficial as a tool for focusing on their aims and aspirations, but the delays in getting the plans approved were seen as frustrating the development of other aspects of school life.

In two schools, a deficit budget had restricted some of the changes which the SLT wanted to introduce. For example, in Turquoise, the loss of the delegated budget had led to an increase in class sizes, and staffing problems, such as the loss of some management posts and an increase in temporary or supply staff. This latter difficulty restricted the capacity of the school to limit the number of teachers delivering the themed programme in Years 7 and 8, despite this being one of the human scale aims at start of the project.

Another factor which senior leaders felt was inhibiting their ability to introduce change, was the context in which they were operating. For example, at Opal, this included the school's previous negative reputation for its large size, poor staff-student

relations and lack of respect for teachers, falling rolls and an increase in the intake of disadvantaged students. The headteacher, SLT and many other teachers were determined to improve the experience of the students in their school – both in terms of their well-being and their achievements – but they sometimes felt discouraged by the lack of support from parents and the wider community. Other schools also cited a lack of parental involvement in the school, or low aspirations for their children, as inhibiting factors in their pursuit of improved human relationships between the students and all the adults with whom they were involved.

Other inhibiting factors related to the context of each school can be seen in summary form in the LMs.

6.2 INHIBITING FACTORS IN RELATION TO SPECIFIC INNOVATIONS

In terms of the specific innovations, many of the factors identified as challenging were related to the attitudes and behaviour of the staff involved in the changes or to their views of the changes.

Cross-curricular approaches

Five of the six case study schools had introduced some form of cross-curricular themed programme for students in the first one or two years of secondary school. In two of these schools (Garnet and Sapphire), the programme was delivered to a selection of students only, whereas in the other three it was directed at all students in Years 7 and 8 (see chapter 3 for details). The factors which inhibited the developments of the cross-curricular programmes at these three schools will be discussed first.

In all three schools, the themed programme had been developed by a small team of staff, predominantly from humanities departments, with input from other interested individuals. Staff working within these teams to develop new materials and teaching and learning strategies enjoyed the experience. They were mostly enthusiastic about the idea of cross-curricular projects, combined with fewer teaching staff, in order to give students a more interpersonal learning experience. However, as the projects were formally introduced and other teaching staff were necessarily involved in their teaching, a number of issues arose. Staff can be divided into three groups:

- the ‘early adopters’ who played a key role in introducing the innovation;
- staff who joined them subsequently in delivering the new curriculum, who displayed a range of attitudes;
- those not involved in delivering the project in Years 7 and 8 but who were critical of the concept of cross-curricular teaching, and wary of non-specialists delivering their subject.

Within the key group of ‘early adopters’ the pressure to develop new materials, to teach outside their own

areas of expertise, and to lead some of their colleagues from other areas of expertise, was found to be extremely stressful at times, despite their basic support for the underlying concepts of the innovation:

‘... it’s very tough. I’ve found it very, very tough, and at one point it was too overwhelming [and] I almost wished that I could go back to how I used to teach where I was in a lovely comfort zone, I knew what I was teaching, I even knew it in the back of my head. And I knew how to pace my time, manage my time, whereas [the themed programme] got too much for me, it was just constantly assessing, making sure that we’re delivering.’

In the second group, some staff were willing or keen to be involved, but lacked confidence or expertise in delivering topics which contained elements outside their own specialist areas. Others were not sure that the approach was appropriate but were attempting to take the requirements on board. The introduction of new teaching and learning strategies (and modes of assessment) was integral to the cross-curricular work, allowing more active and independent learning for students, but some staff were not comfortable with this. Although some leadership teams had initiated professional development activities for relevant staff in order to support the changing pedagogy, they felt that not all staff had been willing or able to embrace it.

Staff falling into the third group tended to be less involved in the innovations, and sceptical of the benefits, especially if they worried that their subject would be taught inappropriately, leaving them to compensate when students moved into separate subject classes at a later stage.

For staff involved in delivering the themed programmes at the three schools, there was also an issue about time: insufficient time was available for all the meetings with colleagues, planning, preparation and CPD opportunities that the teachers thought they needed. This contributed to the feelings of uncertainty and stress experienced by some teachers.

On a more personal level, many of the teachers were concerned about the effect on their own career. In particular, newly qualified teachers, or less experienced teachers felt that any dilution of their subject expertise might limit their promotion prospects in other schools. Senior staff were aware of and sympathetic to these worries, and were attempting to ensure that these colleagues had sufficient opportunities to maintain and develop their subject expertise.

In addition to the issues raised by staff at Turquoise, some parents also expressed concern and would

have preferred their children to be taught separate subjects. It seems that some students would also have preferred separate subjects. Chapter 7 documents how students in other schools expressed similar views.

All these factors could be perceived as potentially or actually undermining the success of the initiatives, as the cross-curricular programmes required high levels of skill and commitment by teachers to ensure that students were engaged and able to achieve.

In the two remaining schools where themed programmes were introduced, other factors were at play. At Garnet, some of the staff concerns about the approaches reflected those reported above for the other schools, but these were combined with their main anxieties which were about the concept and/or the practicalities of the pilot group pathway approach, rather than the cross-curricular aspects of the whole programme being provided for that group of students. Issues relating to Sapphire are reported in Section 6.3.

Small learning communities (SLCs)

As reported in chapter 3, SLCs had been introduced or were planned in all the case study schools. Those which had wholeheartedly embraced the concept by the time of the second research visit were Pearl and Topaz. At the latter school, at that stage, the inhibiting factors identified were mostly related to the teaching of the themed programmes, as described above. However, one further issue emerged at Topaz: students in Years 7 and 8 were accommodated in one area of the new building, and the number of teachers working with them was deliberately limited by means of the cross-curricular teaching, most of which was carried out by staff who also had pastoral responsibility for the students. So this team of teachers worked together to develop the new approaches, and benefited from this collaborative approach. However, at the same time, staff felt that they had lost the contact they previously had with their subject colleagues, which appeared to represent both a professional and a personal loss. Topaz was not alone in this respect.

At Pearl, the whole school had been affected by the division of the staff and students into three SLCs, each of which had been further split into two halves. At the same time, vertical tutor groups had been introduced, accompanied by a programme of activities to be carried out in tutor periods, and a new timetable whereby lessons started straight after registration, with tutor periods later in the day. The lead-in time to the introduction of the changes had been quite short and some staff were sceptical of the benefits of the changes or were reluctant to take them on board.

One of the main areas of difficulty was the lack of clarity about responsibility for students' lack of

progress or poor behaviour. Within the new system, senior staff from the SLCs had explicit responsibilities for pupil achievement (and the behaviour affecting that achievement). They were beginning to know the students well on a personal level. At the same time, subject staff continued to have responsibility for teaching and learning within their classes, and were not sure who to contact in the event of any issues arising.

Within the new structure, individual teachers were also uncertain about their ability to deal with the range of students who would be present in their tutor groups, and the added pressure of having to teach a pastoral curriculum within the tutor period time. Although the programme and activities were prepared by a senior member of staff, tutors needed to carry out some preparation themselves and some were unfamiliar with or critical of the implicit pedagogy, which was aimed at encouraging students to become more active and independent learners.

At Garnet, the SLC concept had been implemented by splitting a year group into different pathways, and setting up one of these pathways as a pilot scheme. The aim was to reduce the number of teachers involved with the class and thereby improve the personal relations, leading to enhanced achievement for the students. At the time of the first visit, inhibiting factors fell into two groups – those related to the cross-curricular teaching, which reflected those reported above, and problems associated with the pathway itself, as a separate community. The attitudes of staff and students not associated with the pilot pathway were largely negative, either because they did not agree with the notion of pathways or because they perceived the pilot community as receiving special treatment (see chapter 3 for details). Although other pathways had been nominally established, they were not allocated separate accommodation and were seldom brought together as separate communities, thereby leaving their particular identities vague.

By the time of the Stage 2 research visit, these inhibiting factors, combined with the school's poor Key Stage 2 to 3 value-added scores, had led to the closure of the programme, and the students were redistributed among other classes. Without the support of staff, and the opportunity for other pathways to be developed to the same extent, the innovation could not continue. Most staff appeared to be pleased with the closure of the programme, though some students and parents had mixed responses.

The method of selection of students, and the particular students who were allocated to the pilot pathway, may also have contributed to the demise of the scheme, as those chosen tended to be under-achieving but challenging students, particularly in the pilot's first year of operation.

The development of separate schools or SWAS is one of the key approaches proposed by the advocates of human scale education, and one school, Turquoise, had a ready-made SWAS situation, as it was split into three geographically separate sites. However, none of the headteachers in post during the research was particularly in favour of the idea; they perceived the separation as a problem to be addressed. Their interest in human scale approaches was directed at the cross-curricular programme developed to facilitate the transition of Year 7 and 8 students into secondary school, and the fact that they were housed on a site separate from the other years was seen as largely irrelevant.

6.3 INHIBITING FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CHANGES

By the time of the Stage 3 and 4 research visits, Garnet was no longer operating its scheme and made no further contribution to the research. In the other schools, the innovations had continued with some of the same inhibiting factors remaining, some disappearing, and some new ones arising.

Background whole school issues

Several schools identified issues concerning their buildings. At Topaz, the lack of space at lunchtime continued to have a negative effect on students' behaviour, and the management team had to formulate plans to use the space differently. At Sapphire, the delays in getting approval for their BSF design were affecting the SLT's aspirations of developing SLCs, and their desire to engage staff in the changes:

'I think if we don't move quickly enough on that and get a situation where we can actually put what we are talking about into practice, in a building that is suitable to do that ... that will be the biggest stumbling block really.'

At Pearl, the provision of a new building through the BSF programme was still moving slowly, but senior managers were resigned to this, and continued to develop the curriculum and the SLC system, regardless of the limitations of existing buildings.

At Opal, however, a physical transformation had taken place by the third visit and the new school building was fully operational. Staff and students were enthusiastic about their new environment, as is reported elsewhere, and were becoming accustomed to the new divisions into SLCs. By the fourth visit, one or two minor issues had arisen: for example, one interviewee thought that it would have been useful for each of the SLCs to have its own specialist rooms, such as laboratories, rather than these being placed in only one SLC; another interviewee pointed out that staff who taught in more than one community, had to

move rooms quite frequently (as students mostly stayed in their own areas), taking with them all their materials and equipment, which some staff had found difficult.

Issues relating to the provision and maintenance of IT equipment were referred to in several schools: in Topaz a new firm had the contract for maintenance and this was not wholly successful; at Sapphire and Turquoise, staff felt that the IT provision for the younger students following themed programmes was not as good as they would have liked, given that they wanted to provide exciting and stimulating experiences for their students.

Schools operate in a competitive context and in several of the case study schools there was a perception that the type of students recently joining the school could have a negative effect on the success of some of the initiatives and the levels of achievement. At the same time, schools which had experienced falling rolls in the past were beginning to see an increase in first choice preferences, by the time of the fourth research visit.

The attitudes of teachers towards the innovations changed gradually over the period of the research, but by the Stage 4 visit, there appeared to have been acceptance by most that the changes were positive. However, in each school, particular aspects of the changes, or external pressures had negatively affected the morale of teachers.

In one school, the death of the headteacher had, not surprisingly, had a major inhibiting effect on future progress. An acting head was in place but staff were uncertain as to how things would develop in the future. As a senior member of staff explained:

'We're in a state of turmoil at the school in terms of vision, we have an executive head who's not a permanent member of the staff, who's trying to get us strategically through the year, and obviously we have got Ofsted looming as well.... So in terms of vision, governors and leadership have said that it would be nice to continue it, but obviously everything is up in the air at the moment.'

Leadership issues had also arisen in another school. Here, the headteacher had left suddenly, and was replaced by an acting headteacher, followed by a permanent appointment later that year. This change of leadership had led to significant restructuring of management posts and other systems within the school. Redundancies had also taken place, and though GCSE results had improved, there was still pressure to increase them further to meet external targets. All this was set in the context of a deficit budget, with inevitable restrictions on resources. Staff had been re-allocated to different classes and areas of the school, and the numbers of support staff available

to Years 7 and 8 had been reduced. The effects of this were summarised by a senior member of staff: 'there was a heavy cost ... in morale, and teachers teaching things they didn't know they were going to teach'.

The pressure to raise achievement at KS4 was experienced by Opal, too, which had been given National Challenge status. This had led to a requirement to meet certain criteria, involving significant work to provide evidence of the strategies in place to improve achievements. It had also included stricter application of the criteria used to judge teaching quality, leaving some teachers feeling anxious and demoralised. Senior staff were also concerned that these activities would only lead to short-term gains, rather than contributing to the overall target of producing sustainable, longer-term gains for the students.

At Sapphire, a renewed emphasis on raising standards of teaching and learning, with the application of stricter quality criteria, had been perceived as threatening by some staff, leading to some resistance to further changes in the school.

The budgetary restrictions at Turquoise had an effect on staffing allocations and class sizes. The protection of staffing for KS4 classes had led to split groups for teaching and tutoring in Years 7 and 8, thereby increasing the numbers of teachers involved with those students. At the same time, larger class sizes in the lower years were having an impact on behaviour and learning.

At Opal, another issue emerged in relation to staff attitudes: some individuals were reluctant to engage with the new approaches, having become insecure and demoralised by a change in their status and responsibilities brought about by the new structures of SLCs and areas of experience. Other staff raised some doubts about the 100-minute lessons, finding it difficult to adapt their teaching style to accommodate the longer periods.

Cross-curricular approaches

By the time of the third and fourth research visits, the cross-curricular programmes had been in place in Topaz and Turquoise for some years, and staff teaching the programmes, as well as those not directly involved, were mainly positive. However, some further difficulties had emerged as time went by. At Topaz, the amount of time teachers spent on the preparation and revision of materials, especially in subjects outside their own specialisms, was leading them to feel stressed and overwhelmed at times. They feared that this would diminish the quality of teaching and learning, and thereby impact negatively on the students. This was combined with a feeling that senior management and colleagues did not appreciate the extra workload and demands placed upon them.

Underpinning the themed programmes is the notion that staff and students will develop better relationships with each other by spending more time together (see chapter 7 for a detailed discussion of this effect). However, there was also a reverse effect, as teachers who had challenging classes found that being with them for long periods of time, or indeed, for the whole day, could be very demanding on the teacher, and did not necessarily lead to improved relationships with all the students. For less experienced teachers, or those teaching beyond their own specialism, this could be particularly significant.

At Turquoise, the aim of improving staff-student relationships through reduced numbers of teachers had not been entirely realised. Although a designated team of mainly humanities specialists had been set up, some classes were still being split between two or more teachers, leading to a lack of consistency in class delivery. Not all members of the team were wholly enthusiastic either, having been allocated to it as part of the restructuring, and were 'out of their comfort zone'.

The success of the themed programmes in two schools was also being affected by the approaches to assessment. At Sapphire, teachers delivering the cross-curricular projects had limited autonomy, as they were obliged to cover the same content as colleagues teaching separate subject lessons, and had to carry out the same assessments. One project teacher felt that a skills-based curriculum would be more appropriate for the project groups than a topic-based one – with the materials developed by project staff as opposed to subject staff.

At Turquoise, the headteacher was keen that the assessment of the themed programme would be able to reflect what happened in other subjects. In other words, there was a need for levels of achievement in separate subject areas to be produced for students, in order to demonstrate their progression. However, staff teaching the course were concerned that this would limit the innovative and creative cross-curricular approaches being developed, and would be difficult to integrate into their approach, as one explained:

'... going back to this assessing pupils' progress – we can't consistently take one pupil and they might be a 4A in geography, a 5C in RE – how do you move that student so by the end of the year they've moved up two sub-levels which is our requirement if you are always assessing different strands within the combined curriculum?'

However, one interviewee thought that if clear achievement and progression levels could be produced, some students might be more motivated, and parents would find it easier to understand their child's level of achievement.

Small learning communities (SLCs)

By the time of the Stage 3 and 4 research visits, the system of SLCs in the three schools had become well established. Staff based in SLCs with Year 7 and 8 students identified benefits in terms of improved relationships (see chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of this impact) but some were still concerned about the reduced links with their own subject departments or the implications for their career of only teaching younger students. The schools were trying to counter these negative factors by introducing subject-based meetings and, for those who wanted it, timetabling some classes with older students.

At Opal, support staff had also been redistributed to separate SLCs and initially felt isolated and insecure. In addition, they had been given new roles as learning guides, requiring them to be provided with significant support.

At Pearl, the lack of clarity concerning areas of responsibility between SLCs and subject departments had been reduced and communications improved.

At Turquoise, a house system had been in existence for some years but was perceived as ineffective by senior staff. Although it was designed to bring the staff and students based on different sites together, it had not been successful in this respect and the new headteacher was keen to have more of a whole school ethos and structure. Some staff could see benefits in making each site into a semi-autonomous SLC, with 'human scale' related gains to staff and students, but it appeared unlikely that this would be introduced.

6.4 SUMMARY

The factors which were inhibiting progress with the initiatives were both internal and external. Some of the case study schools were obliged to respond to external pressures (such as a deficit budget or National Challenge status), thereby affecting the developments, in terms of staffing or the resources available. Inappropriate school buildings were also perceived as inhibiting some aspects of the innovations, particularly in the early stages of the project.

The attitudes of staff towards the changes were also crucial. As reported in chapter 5, staff support was essential for the innovations to be implemented and, on the whole, support was present. However, as this chapter has illustrated, there were several issues arising on a day-to-day level, which caused staff some difficulties and added to their workload or stress.

Teaching cross-curricular programmes can be demanding for teachers, especially when covering topics outside their own specialisms, and can lead to concerns that their future career prospects might be restricted. Similarly, teachers working in SLCs had some anxieties about the maintenance of links with their colleagues who were in other departments or teaching other age groups.

Senior managers were attempting to respond to the challenges posed by external pressures and issues raised by classroom teachers, but were only too aware of the fragility of some of the innovations and the need to put measures in place to support long-term sustainability.

7

THE EFFECTS AND IMPACTS OF HSS PRACTICES: THEMED PROGRAMMES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3 we saw how the case study schools had alighted upon the first two of the five HSS developmental areas selected by HSE for grant aid, through the changes they had applied to their practice: namely SLCs and students' learning. The former was evident in the organisational changes implemented in five schools (Turquoise, Topaz, Opal, Garnet and Pearl), while the latter was addressed in the curriculum and staffing reforms of another set of five schools (Turquoise, Topaz, Opal, Garnet and Sapphire). In this chapter, we examine the evidence on the effects associated with the latter, the themed curriculum and learning programmes; after which, the impacts perceived to be attributable to SLCs are examined in chapter 8.

The evaluation methodology offered three means of gathering and analysing data on the effects of the changes implemented by the case study schools:

- the plotting of trends in school-level annual performance data;
- the analysis of annually collected interview accounts from students and teachers concerning broad areas of possible effects that were garnered indirectly (see chapter 1 for details). All of these areas were explored in such ways as to provide a normally unsolicited opportunity for interviewees to allude to contributions from HSS developments (e.g. whether student-student relations have been aided by the school's SLC structure; whether a themed programme has been beneficial);
- the analysis of teachers' and students' direct descriptions of the effects of the HSS developments. Whereas most teachers were asked for this at every fieldwork stage, students were normally asked at Stages 2 and 3 if HSS developments had been helpful or unhelpful and at Stage 4 what the effects, if any, of the HSS developments had been.

Unfortunately, for a range of reasons beyond the researchers' control, the statistical data cannot inform a reliable assessment of the effects of the HSS developments implemented by the case study schools. Firstly, performance in 16+ examinations –

along with value-added measures from Key Stage 2 through to the end of Key Stage 4 – cannot be applied since there were no substantial innovations at that stage. The earliest date that the selected groups of students that had experienced programmes in the early years of Key Stage 3 would take 16+ examinations would be 2010–11. Secondly, even if scores from Key Stage 3 standard assessment tasks (SATs) had been available for the duration of the project, Key Stage 2 to 3 value-added measures would only have been available for one project group (i.e. 2006–7 to 2008–9). This would have been insufficient to offer reliable indications of a trend in the results. As it was, scores from Key Stage 3 SATs were not available because they were terminated in 2008. Furthermore, whereas the SATs measured progress in the core areas of English, mathematics and science, several of the HSS programmes encouraged learning in areas like history, geography and citizenship that were not assessed externally.

A further reason for the inability to use some of the other quantitative data centred on the lack of consistency in annual statistical indicators, which arose as a result of changes to their definitions and calculations (e.g. on attendance and exclusions): the introduction of different ways of presenting these figures made it impossible to examine annual trends. Finally, but arguably most significantly, attributing causality to shifts in annual indicators (e.g. a decline in behavioural incidences) is fraught with problems when the HSS-themed curriculum programme may only amount to 20 per cent or less of the curriculum or when the establishment of SLCs is only one of a whole raft of other changes.

Consequently, on these grounds, the depictions of the effects of the HSS developments presented in this chapter rely almost exclusively on the qualitative data. Moreover, given that teachers were by and large the 'providers' of the HSS-related provision and were generally more likely to put the best possible shine on their impacts, data on effects and reactions from students have been highlighted in the following sections.

7.2 THE TOPAZ SCHOOL

This school was not able to participate in the final fieldwork visits (when direct questions on effects were included in the student interview schedules); neither did it make its annual statistical data available. This is significant, in that staff claimed that by 2008 their themed curricular programme had contributed to an improvement in Key Stage 3 standard assessment task tests for mathematics and science. At this school, students took these tests in Year 8 and, although abandoned nationally in 2008, the school administered the tests internally for its own purposes. Unfortunately, the results were not provided and it should be noted that the improvement may also have been due to the specialist subject teaching that Year 8 students received in these subjects.

Apart from this, the main forms of impact claimed by teachers comprised:

- a higher standard of work produced by Year 7 students;
- improved levels of motivation and behaviour (fewer exclusions and use of the 'isolation room' was down dramatically in the first term);
- better attendance;
- students were more socially aware;
- stronger independent learning skills;
- more reflective learning;
- an increase in teachers' knowledge of students, along with improved teacher-student relations.

None of the student interviewees (23, all Years 7--9) said that they preferred their primary to secondary school and most of those asked were sure that they enjoyed Topaz more and had learnt more here than at their primary school. Three volunteered aspects of the themed programme as reasons for preferring the secondary school: a Year 7 girl and boy were impressed by their programme tutors and the range of projects they did, while another Year 7 boy ventured that the programme's learning activities (e.g. dissecting a rat) were more engaging and 'fun' than anything he had experienced at primary school.

Generally speaking, most of the Year 7 interviewees were quite positive about the Topaz themed programme and having a single teacher for multiple subjects. Without prompting, they pointed to various aspects that they felt were effective and enjoyable: the quality of the help from the teacher, the social relations, the close bonding with the teacher, the teacher's awareness of student's strengths and weaknesses, engaging activities, group work and parental appreciation of the skills covered. However, even at Year 7, there were some students who, while still appreciating the themed programme, looked forward to wider exposure to more teachers and peers:

'I quite like having to change round classrooms. When we first started it was quite good because

we didn't know where to go, it was quite a hard thing to do. I've never really had such a school as big as this and I quite like it because I can come here and I could start over again with my friends and things like that and make new friends.'

These Year 7 students were more equivocal about the themed programme, and thought that 60 per cent of their time was a lot to spend with one teacher, that the chosen project themes were of a variable quality and that greater diversity of subjects and teachers was beneficial. Some were unsure of the value of 'rolling lots of subjects into one':

Interviewer: Would you prefer doing, say, I don't know 10 different subjects, sort of, mathematics for an hour and then English and then science and then languages and then history?

Year 7 girl: I think sometimes I think that, but then I think that if I've got homework for each of them subjects I'd be like up to my neck. Sometimes I think that, but sometimes I think it's all right like this. Yes, sometimes.'

A noticeable factor here was the response to different programme teachers: a small number of teachers were often associated with an increased likelihood of approbation; others were deemed more mediocre.

Moving on to Year 8 and Year 9 students, a consensus emerged that the themed programme was less relevant to the latter years of Key Stage 3 and that its main function at Year 7 was to ease students into a larger school. Something of this was captured in this conversation (without an adult present) between a Year 8 and a Year 7 student:

Year 8 girl: (reading from schedule) 'What do you think about your lessons and your learning at this school, how would you rate them?' There could be more variety ...

Year 7 girl: Project ...

Year 8 girl: Yeah ... of lessons, because we've just got like English, mathematics, science ...

Year 7 girl: Yeah.

Year 8 girl: [themed curriculum] and all that lot.

There could be like a history lesson, instead of having it in [themed curriculum].

Year 7 girl: Yeah.

Year 8 girl: But [themed curriculum] is quite good for Year 7's I guess, to get them used to the school.

Year 7 girl: Yeah.'

Among the Year 8 and 9 students, greater social contact, increased variety and deeper integration into the school as a community were often put forward as the reasons for preferring separate subjects and teachers – though again a fair proportion still felt that the themed programme should be available for Year 7 as a gradual entry mechanism. Hence, the overall picture of Topaz is one where there are many Year 7 students who warm

to and appear to get a lot from the themed programme, particularly when it is taught by highly proficient practitioners. On the other hand, there are question marks over whether it is appropriate for all Year 7 students and clear evidence to suggest that students in later years find the model less engaging or suitable for their perceived needs.

It may be noted that, in terms of the effect areas prescribed at the outset, the testimonies of students suggest that the following areas were enhanced through the themed programme.

- **Staff-student relations** – most Year 7 students enjoyed valued and trusting relations with the programme teachers, personalised help and support, relaxed yet respectful rapport with approachable teachers; though some Year 7 students thought that they spent too much time with their programme teacher; variable teacher quality was perceived to be a factor; Year 8 and 9 students preferred a wider range of teachers, predominantly eschewing the close relationship with a single teacher; for them, the programme's main justification was as an entry mechanism to the secondary school.
- **Student-student relations** – good mutual support and peer-to-peer relations within the themed programme, but several interviewees, particularly from Year 8, wanted greater opportunities for friendship-building outside the themed class, which could become restrictive.
- **School-parent/carer relations** – good parental relations with programme teachers; parents appreciated skills emphasis.
- **Quality of learning** – self-reported effective learning, group work fostered, independent project completion and much appreciated study guide, well organised, some tablets and ICT resources, helpful peer assessment; though students beyond Year 7 were more likely to want more variety and prefer subject specialist teaching; variable quality of project themes and teaching within the programme was noted; and some were unsure of the value of cross-curricular themes.
- **Student participation in school decision-making** – scope for negotiating group work and tasks; security in base room.
- **Student motivation and attitudes** – for many Year 7 students, increased engagement in learning, Year 7 satisfaction with programme structure, sense of being looked after; though this had a diminishing impact on later years.
- **Local community involvement** – nothing reported.

7.3 THE TURQUOISE SCHOOL

Taking up around 20 per cent of the Year 7 timetable, coupled with a focus on non-core subjects, the themed curriculum at Turquoise (supposedly taught by a single teacher) was less significant in the

student experience than at Topaz, which covered 60 per cent of the timetable for the same year group. This fact, combined with the school's problems in averting the split-teaching of this group, may account for differences in the claimed effects of Turquoise compared to Topaz.

The main types of impact identified by staff were:

- improved commitment to and quality of homework, especially as demonstrated through students' extended projects and related portfolios – this was by far the most frequently cited claim by teacher interviewees;
- higher levels of engagement, motivation and, in particular, enthusiasm for projects;
- stronger independent learning and research skills – this included an observation by an upper school teacher that such skills were more evident in humanities courses post-Year 8;
- increased parental involvement in activities, presentations and projects;
- better teamwork skills and engagement in group work; and
- greater awareness of world events (following the 'Africa' project).

Significantly, enrichments to the teachers' knowledge of individual pupils and improvements in student-teacher relations were not registered as effects of the programme.

In 29 interviews or paired discussions with 33 Year 7–9 students, only one thought that he had learnt more at primary school and none felt that they had enjoyed primary school more. However, only one student volunteered the themed programme as a positive factor (making an artefact out of natural materials) and this was rather offset by two negative comments. A Year 8 girl was frustrated by the amount of disruptive behaviour in some of the themed programme's lessons and a Year 8 boy in a conversation with another student (no adult was present) valued being taught by subject specialists rather than generalist teachers covering several subjects, as in the themed programme:

'You've got teachers that know what they're doing [at secondary school] and the thing is that when you're at primary you've got teachers, yeah they do know what they're doing, but they have to get themselves over ... you know over different subjects, over all the subjects. But now you've got teachers that are made ... that have been taught just to do that one subject alone and are really good at that one subject. It really helps, so it gets your ability better and that's probably why at primary a lot of people struggle to learn.'

About a third of the student interviewees – predominantly from Year 7, like Topaz – were generally positive and appreciative of the themed programme. They saw it as 'important', stimulating,

effective and enjoyable – group work, ‘learning something new every day’ and ‘unpredictable’ were mentioned. One saw it as a source of pride in the school. A Year 8 girl said: ‘it’s really great’.

Activity-based lessons and assignments were often cited as rewarding characteristics of the themed programme. The making of products from natural materials as part of an environmental project was described by more than one student with excitement and fulfilment. One Year 7 boy linked these practical tasks to his learning of history: ‘Yeah, I’ve learnt quite a bit of history. I’ve learnt ... because of [the themed programme’s] project on the environment I made a wooden car to do with Victorians, how they did things ... It’s helped me understand history and things like that more.’ Others reported learning through producing a magazine and through going on school trips. One Year 7 girl alluded to the general pedagogic skills of her programme’s teacher: Miss [X] ‘is good because she teaches you in a way that you learn more.’

A number of Year 7 students also welcomed the integrated cross-curricular approach used in the themed programme. A Year 7 boy, for example, described how the adoption of a single theme like ‘Africa’ across several subjects such as art, technology and dance, as well as the humanities, aided his learning by making the curriculum more coherent. Others endorsed this point and set forth the value of the cross-curricular assignments at the end of each project:

‘I like the fact that we do projects at the end, like a round-up of all the information that we have learnt. And we do subjects that we didn’t do in primary school because we haven’t done Africa in primary school, but we are doing it now. And like ... I like that they’ve mixed history and geography together so it’s not just two separate lessons.’ (Year 7 girl)

Students in both years were also able to illustrate what they had learnt through the programme. In the main, this centred on historical and geographical content knowledge, but the development of skills and insights was also narrated: improved personal organisation skills, realisation of the need to start extended project assignments early and group work skills. One Year 8 boy stated that the programme had: ‘had an impact on the way that I learn’.

There was also strong evidence from the students to corroborate teachers’ reports of the themed programme engendering a greater involvement of parents in helping their children carry out their projects, in attending presentations and in accompanying students on school trips. One account involved a mother sharing the learning of how to weave with her daughter.

With one Year 7 girl referring to her programme’s

teachers as ‘sisters and then some of them are like godmothers or something’, a small number of interviewees nominated their programme teachers as staff who knew them as individuals.

These positive comments notwithstanding, about two-thirds of the student interviewees were more critical of the programme, or less sure of its benefits. Many of the criticisms, which were more likely to be lodged by Year 8 students, were founded on a frustration that they were not being offered separate subjects. Students generally thought that it would be less confusing if they were taught by specialist teachers in separate subjects, with one Year 8 girl conveying the views of several of her peers that the themed programme ‘was all over the place’. There was a slight indication in the data that students who were not ‘huge fans’ of history and geography were more comfortable with the integrated approach, whereas those who were more attracted to the subjects resented the themed model more. These criticisms were occasionally accompanied by a perception that their themed programme did not provide enough of some subjects, while offering too much of other subjects (depending on the subject expertise of the teacher). Furthermore, some of those students who had two or more teachers for the themed programme, and where the focus of each teacher was divided along subject lines, could not see the point of maintaining the façade of ‘integration’ and ‘themed projects’.

All four of the Year 9 students interviewed at the final stage preferred learning the subjects separately at Year 9 and would have opted for doing the same in earlier years if that had been possible: ‘it’s easier to grasp’, ‘it’s good having subject books’, ‘I’m learning more now, it’s not so confused’ and ‘it gets into your mind better’. One Year 9 student felt that separate subjects had improved learning, though the themed programme was good for forming friendships. One Year 9 girl said that she had learnt ‘some things different that would not have been learnt in separate subjects’, but the separate subject method would still have been favoured in previous years.

Another problem identified by Year 8 interviewees was the variable quality of teaching in the programme. One boy, for example, asserted that it was ‘boring’ and he had not learnt much. A girl portrayed her teacher as shouting a lot and a boy in discussion with another student said: ‘Mr [X] is really boring. And we all just mess around, so we don’t really learn much.’ In these and similar cases, the programme did not seem to enhance motivation. Others explained how motivation fluctuated depending on the degree of interest in the theme of the project.

Other problematic reactions included:

- too many onerous lengthy projects, which were hard for students less interested in the theme;

- teaching and learning not different from other lessons, lacking in stimulation, too much writing and insufficient active learning;
- time-tabling issues leading to double periods of the themed programme.

To sum up, the evidence indicated that some students, especially those in Year 7, appreciated the themed programme and described how their learning had progressed through it. Many others, including some Year 7 students, were sceptical of the approach taken and favoured separate subjects taught by specialist teachers. Interviewees' testimonies also indicated that the staffing of the programme meant that the HSS objective of reducing the number of teachers met by students was often not achieved. Similarly, it was noticeable that, in response to the question, 'Do you feel that most of your teachers know you as an individual?', few interviewees nominated their themed programme teachers.

In these ways, it appeared that, although the programme had achieved some significant curriculum and assessment advances, which some Year 7 students in particular found effective, the status of the HSS aspirations (e.g. to make learning a more personalised experience by reducing the number of teachers faced by students) appeared to become more tangential and peripheral as the initiative unfolded. This was largely determined by adverse staffing changes, but it may also reflect the lack of a whole-school uptake of human scale thinking at the senior leadership level.

Overall, the impacts of the themed programme in the effect areas may be summarised as follows:

- **Staff-student relations** – some students enjoyed close and trusting relations with the programme teachers, but many did not (e.g. one Year 7 girl alluded to the problems of getting stuck with teachers that students neither liked nor respected); variable quality of teaching was reported by students.
- **Student-student relations** – the programme helped develop close friendships within the themed programme group, but some students thought that the programme could militate against wider friendship formation.
- **School-parent/carer relations** – closer involvement of parents with school, coupled with the encouragement of parental support for their child's learning, was a clear success of the programme.
- **Quality of learning** – self-reported effective learning, though variable quality of teaching and learning diminished this for some; many would have preferred separate subjects taught by specialists; extended project completion developed independent learning and research skills and attitudes, though some students found these onerous for themes they had little interest in.

- **Student participation in school decision-making** – pupils welcomed negotiation around topics and tasks for their extended projects.
- **Student motivation and attitudes** – some, especially Year 7 students were very stimulated by the programme; others were not and motivation varied according to the nature of the project's theme and the teachers allocated; some looked forward to Year 9's separate subjects.
- **Local community involvement** – a little involvement in local environmental issues.

7.4 THE OPAL SCHOOL

At this school, two project-based programmes were offered to Year 7 students: a humanities-based cluster and a science/technology one. Since the former entailed more HSS-related features and curriculum development (e.g. a smaller number of teachers, wider cross-curricular and skills-based teaching), we have concentrated on this course and used the term 'the themed programme' to denote this humanities, citizenship, learning to learn and PLTS skills programme. With a timetable allocation of 20 per cent (at Stages 3 and 4), the programme matches the 20 per cent of the similar programme at Turquoise, but is much less than the 60 per cent programme at Topaz.

Staff delineated the programme's main impacts as follows:

- more motivated and engaged students, with higher levels of satisfaction with school;
- students face fewer teachers, who therefore know individual students better, which in turn leads to enhanced teacher-student relations and closer bonding: '... keeping the number of teachers that a Year 7 student will see down to the minimum, meaning that they can build up a really quality relationship with the students and vice versa, know their strengths and weaknesses better' and 'I think it helps because I think they know that you know them better';
- improved collaboration and group work;
- improved behaviour, including reduction in behavioural incidences;
- better independent thinking and research skills;
- easier adjustment to secondary schooling: 'it's definitely had an impact on how they view coming up into the big school and how they enjoy themselves and how they settle';
- more questioning;
- increased confidence; and
- fewer exclusions.

Compared to Turquoise, the emphasis afforded to the improvement in staff-student relations through the themed programme is noteworthy and is reminiscent of the staff claims at Topaz.

Staff claims that students' transitions from primary to secondary are eased so that initial overall enjoyment

levels are high at the new school do not receive outright corroboration from students' comparisons of their primary and secondary experiences. In 29 interviews or paired discussions with 33 Year 7–10 students, six indicated that they enjoyed their primary schools more than Opal and three were unsure. In Topaz and Turquoise, the corresponding numbers were none and one unsure. Furthermore, at Opal, half of those who expressed a preference for their primary schools or who were unsure did so after the move to the new building (i.e. during the Stage 3 and 4 fieldwork visits). Explaining why she also felt that she had learnt more at her primary, a Year 8 student described her learning at Opal as: 'the teacher is a bit distant and they go like to the whole class, not individually' (Stage 3 visit). Only one student (a Year 7 girl at Stage 1) volunteered her themed programme as a reason for favouring their secondary school experience: 'because instead of just writing things down we actually do stuff. In project lessons we get given stuff to do and then like you can see how you managed it and everything. So it's more fun really.'

In attempting to gauge the overall reaction of the student interviewees to the themed programme, it was noticeable that in the interviews conducted before the move to the new buildings, about two-thirds mentioned aspects of effective learning from the programme. Most of those responding positively were Year 7 students. However, after the move, only two or three of the 19 student interviewees associated the programme with any particularly effective or engaging elements. To some extent, the fact that the Stage 4 interviews involved more Year 9–10 students may have depressed the level of explicit support for the themed programme, but the Stage 3 and 4 interviews still included 12 Year 7 and 8 students. It is also possible that exposure to so many other initiatives and the new experiences that accompanied the move to the new buildings may have reduced the importance of the themed programme in the students' eyes.

At Stages 3 and 4, developments in human scale education were more likely to be viewed and discussed through descriptions of SLCs, the new school building and small tutor groups than through allusions to the school's two themed programmes. However, another possible explanation is that the lower levels of support for the programme in the latter two years of the project may have been influenced by changes in its staffing, teaching and timetabling (e.g. it received less time after the move than before it). Whatever the reasons, it was very clear from the data that endorsement of the programme rarely went beyond Year 7 and that for learning in Year 8 and upwards the vast majority of students welcomed and preferred the separate subject specialist teaching of the programme's key subjects (e.g. history, geography, RE).

The Year 7 programme, especially in its earlier

version, was often appreciated by students for allowing their teacher to get to know them as individuals and for encouraging close and constructive staff-student relations (e.g. a Year 8 student recounted how, when in Year 7, students showed their programme teacher more respect than other teachers). Some students rated it as one of the key motivating features of Year 7. It was seen as an area of the curriculum that encouraged independent thinking and its tendency to use group work was valued: 'in the [the themed programme] lesson you all work as a group and we're meant to work as a team and everyone gets on OK. But then most of the classes you have to work individually.' A number also recorded their enthusiasm for the enquiry-based learning methods deployed in the programme:

'I find them really, really good, like with the projects because sometimes they're really fun projects. So you like go on the internet, you have got to search things or they give you a project to like play on one of the games or something on a website and then give a description or something about it. So yeah sometimes it's really fun.'

Other students pointed to the learning outcomes they had gained through the programme: 'we've been learning how to listen politely to people' and 'we're always learning how to do stuff visually, kinaesthetically'. It was conspicuous that none of the students criticised the themed programme, though it is important to repeat that all but one voiced a preference for specialist subject teaching after Year 8, in spite of the consequential increase in the number of teachers.

Overall, the impacts of the themed programme in the effect areas at Opal may be summarised as follows:

- **Staff-student relations** – some Year 7 students benefited from close and trusting relations with the programme teachers, finding them easy to talk to; students in older years preferred a variety of subject specialists.
- **Student-student relations** – no explicit citation of this outcome was offered, though group work, with its implicit strengthening of peer relationships, was alluded to.
- **School-parent/carer relations** – this was not linked to the themed programme.
- **Quality of learning** – self-reported effective learning, with references to active learning, use of a variety of learning styles, group work and enquiry-based projects; though Years 7 and 8 welcomed the move to subject specialist lessons in preference to cross-curricular themes.
- **Student participation in school decision-making** – there were no accounts relating this to the themed programme.
- **Student motivation and attitudes** – most Year 7 students were stimulated by the programme, but there was insufficient evidence to substantiate claims that this had contributed to easing the

transition from primary to secondary or led to improved behaviour, overall attendance or motivation.

- **Local community involvement** – nothing emerged on this theme.

7.5 THE SAPPHIRE SCHOOL

This model was adopted by the school that only participated in Stages 3 and 4 of the fieldwork visits. The themed programme here differed from the previous three schools in one important respect: not all the students in the year groups concerned were selected for the programme. In September 2008, the school piloted the themed programme in two Year 7 classes. These groups were taught English, geography, history, RE, PSE, drama and ICT through cross-curricular projects by single teachers, with whom the students spent 11 out of 25 hours a week (44 per cent), in their base, working on projects. The students were drawn from average to below-average groups and the teachers recruited were primary-trained practitioners.

In September 2009, the themed programme was expanded to include half of the Year 7 intake; four of the eight groups. Again, high achievers were not included in the project groups. The number of hours was reduced to 10, owing to PSE being withdrawn from the themed programme and moved to a separate carousel course for all students. At the same time, a single Year 8 group was maintained for students who it was thought would benefit from another year of project-based teaching and learning. Nevertheless, as with the previous school (Opal), the themed programme was primarily a Year 7 innovation, though with 40–44 per cent timetable allocation, it represented twice the amount of time for the similar programmes at Opal and Turquoise. From an HSS perspective, the introduction of the programme led to a reduction in the number of teachers encountered by the selected pupils, though in the second year of operation, some programme groups had more than one programme teacher.

Teachers' accounts of the impact of the programme are summarised below.

- There were descriptions of a much closer teacher-student relationship in which the teachers were knowledgeable about members of their classes, so that they could provide individual learners with a more personalised and differentiated learning experience.
- Some major improvements in behaviour were recounted, particularly for students with a history of presenting challenging behaviour patterns. Narratives of individual cases were offered that chronicled the progress made in addressing these behaviour problems, from within the themed programme to the lessons in other subjects, as the programme teachers assumed responsibility for coaching the young people through issues that

arose in a wide range of contexts.

- Teachers of other curriculum areas observed how the programme students had developed collaborative learning skills (e.g. in groups and team work) much faster than students not in the programme.
- Enhanced motivation, engagement and enjoyment were also claimed by staff, along with accounts of the growth of programme students as keen, question-raising and effective learners.
- Commensurate with this last point, staff described several areas of learning that the programme had impacted upon. Not least among these was the assertion that moderated teacher assessments had shown that programme students exhibited higher levels of progress in English than their non-programme peers. Furthermore, teachers reported considerable gains in 'learning to learn' process skills, as well as in the ability to make connections between the different curriculum areas that made up the themed programme.
- Finally, there were some signs of the themed programme forging closer links with parents through programme-specific presentation evenings and contacts regarding individual children if issues arose. It was noted that this was a feature that required further development.

Of the 11 student interviewees – all of whom were in programme groups – only one indicated that he enjoyed his primary school more than Sapphire, because he did not get detentions at the former. None considered that they learnt more at their primary schools. However, in their answers to questions about why they enjoyed Sapphire more and why they felt they learned more here, the themed programme did not receive a single mention. According to the HSS orthodoxy, a distinct benefit of themed programmes is that they offer children fewer teachers and subjects. However, one key reason for the students' affirmations about how they learnt more at Sapphire actually focused on the greater number and variety of teachers and subjects experienced at the secondary school, as one student explained:

'... because in my primary in [X], we did a lot of recapping and we learnt quite a bit. But here, because we've got different classes for each subject, we've precisely an hour in each subject and so we learn ... like in primary, because you just did most of the morning on one subject. But here, you have a morning of three subjects, I think that teaches you a bit more.'

Likewise, the following exchange would also seem to place a question mark against a principal part of the rationale behind themed programmes:

Interviewer: And which school did you enjoy most [X] Primary or this one?

Year 7 boy: This one.

Interviewer: Why do you say that?

Year 7 boy: Because there, it's like smaller and you're just in one class all the time.
Interviewer: This is smaller?
Year 7 boy: No in [the primary] it's small, because you just stay in one room.
Interviewer: So you like this because it's a bit bigger?
Year 7 boy: Yeah.
Interviewer: A lot bigger?
Year 7 boy: [Laughs] Yeah.
Interviewer: And you like it, because you move around ...?
Year 7 boy: A lot more.
Interviewer: You like that do you?
Year 7 boy: Yeah.
Interviewer: Why do you like it?
Year 7 boy: Because you get to see different teachers and you get to know what they want and just be good in the lessons and do good for them.'

All but one of the students volunteered at least one positive comment on the themed programme – most offered more than that. Occasionally, these supportive observations were tempered by critical remarks, which were more frequently applied to the school's second year of operation (2009–10), when the teaching of the Year 7 programme was rolled out to include more than the original two teachers.

Seven of the 11 student interviewees nominated their programme teacher as a teacher who knew them well as an individual, and with whom they could relate very easily. A conversation with one student conveyed the openly trusting, honest and knowing relationships that other students also pointed to with their programme teachers:

'Interviewer: And which teacher knows you best do you think?
Year 7 boy: [X] because we have her a lot of time and she knows stuff like when you're lying and stuff like that. She knows how you behave.
Interviewer: She can spot if you're telling a fib?
Year 7 boy: Yeah ... You just don't lie. So that's good.'

A Year 7 girl alluded to the other side of the equation: rather than seeing this rapport solely as a consequence of teachers knowing the students more, it may also be dependent on the students knowing more about the teachers: 'I find it easy to talk to [X] because I've got him on a Monday. I've got him most, loads of the lessons. So I know more stuff about Mr [X].'

Endorsing many of the teachers' claims about the high degrees of collegiality and cooperation in the programme groups, students described the various ways they supported each other in their tasks and learning (e.g. strong readers working through texts with weaker readers, working in pairs or small groups). Others had formed closer friendships as a result of the amount of time they spent together.

With some explicit references to the high quality of the themed programme's teachers, it was clear that the students held their teachers in high regard. Their skills in relationship-building, their capacity to personalise learning to suit individuals and their monitoring to ensure learning was accomplished were all commented on. Other students attested to their teachers' clear sense of caring for the members of each class: 'she always wants to see us altogether in one piece and stuff like that. She always says 'stay safe'. And that means she wants us to be there.' Another theme in students' accounts was the active and engaging learning strategies deployed by teachers (e.g. using drama, computer-based enquiries, 'making it fun'). One of the teachers was depicted as providing many opportunities for students to have a voice:

'... do you know we all have our opinion and that, and if [X] brings something up, we all get our own opinion and we all get to say something that we don't like or like about it.'

In this context, most students thought they were learning and making good progress in the themed programme and some were able to articulate key learning outcomes:

'... before half term we did SEAL, which is about dealing with your emotions and not getting angry ... I think that was good, because a lot of people in our class did get very angry quickly. So it just taught you how to deal with your anger.'

One student mentioned significant gains in English, as well as in 'learning to learn' skills:

'I think that it's helped me like get my literacy better and get my learning thinking that has helped me in all my subjects. And they've helped me learn and get better as well.'

They also portrayed their parents as valuing their children's participation in the themed programme and indicated that the relationships between their parents and programme teachers were very good.

Although the overall tone of the comments was appreciative, there were critical observations, which were more likely to be associated with the second year of operation. Some students, for example, saw the themed programme as restricting their circle of friends due to the large percentage of time they spent together as a group: 'we'd like to know more people from different classes, because we only know some people.' This was deemed to be especially frustrating for those selected for the single programme group at Year 8. In addition, some students objected to having four consecutive one-hour programme lessons: 'I like it, but we could do with some more lessons, you know, with different teachers', said a Year 7 student. Others complained

about having three or even two consecutive lessons: 'I like having the project teacher, it's just sometimes we have her twice and I'd like to have her like once and see what different teachers there are.' According to the students, loss of concentration and limited motivation could emerge as a result. Three of the 11 Year 7 students volunteered accounts of bad behaviour and resistance to doing the required work in their programme lessons. In addition, one Year 7 boy found several of the programme's lessons 'boring' and he looked forward to more challenging lessons when the subject would be taught separately in Year 8.

The example above begins to touch on the most frequently mentioned drawback of the programme: the curriculum coverage of certain subjects was perceived to be less reliable for programme students than their non-programme counterparts and most students looked forward to having specialist subject-based lessons in Year 8. In accord with these points of view, it was hard to find a single student who would have chosen to stay with the themed programme in Year 8. As indicated by the Year 7 boy quoted above, who expressed the common preference for meeting lots of different teachers rather than the single primary teacher model, it was not only that they wanted the secondary school experience of a diverse range of subject teachers, but that they felt that they learnt more through it. Overall, while most students enjoyed and benefited from the programme, the majority were eager for a wider diversity of specialist teachers and, at best, construed the programme as a stepping stone that bridged the gap between the primary and secondary models. This perceptive remark from a Year 7 girl captured the viewpoint intimated by many:

'... it's a bit easier to come to high school because you've got a few teachers for different subjects and you've got one teacher [i.e. the programme teacher] for quite a few subjects. So it's a mixture of like it was in primary and like it is in high school. And so it helps me prepare for Year 8... it helps me from going to primary to secondary.'

Overall, the impacts of Sapphire's themed programme in the effect areas may be summarised as follows:

- **Staff-student relations** – most students enjoyed and benefited from close and trusting relationships with the programme teachers; though variable quality of teaching reduced this for some students.
- **Student-student relations** – the programme helped develop teamwork skills, as well as close friendships within the themed programme group, but some students thought that the programme could militate against wider friendship formation.
- **School-parent/carer relations** – some signs of closer involvement of parents with school were evident, but staff identified this as an area for further development.

- **Quality of learning** – self-reported effective learning, though the variable quality of teaching and learning reduced this for some; many students were appreciative of the active learning methods and most recognised the value of the personalised learning made possible by the close teacher-student relations; however, virtually all students looked forward to separate subjects taught by specialists in Year 8.
- **Student participation in school decision-making** – some pupils spoke in complimentary terms about the many opportunities they had in programme lessons to express their opinions and preferences, though only with certain teachers.
- **Student motivation and attitudes** – many students were stimulated and engaged by the programme; some significant improvements in behaviour and turn-arounds in attitudes had been achieved; a few students were less engaged and motivation was diminished, with descriptions of too many writing tasks and disruptive behaviour in the class – this seemed to vary according to the teacher allocated.
- **Local community involvement** – no mention was made of this area.

7.6 THE GARNET SCHOOL

Our final case of a themed programme differs from the previous four in several important respects. Whereas the four earlier programmes all involved Year 7 students, Garnet did not start working with students until they were in Year 8. Moreover, it was the only case to operate a programme in Year 9 and into Key Stage 4.

Unlike the first three cases, the whole year group was not embraced by the Garnet piloted theme programme, which took selection one step further than Sapphire (which involved half the year group) by focusing on a well-defined smaller group of students (48): all under-achieving learners. These students were then divided into two classes of 24. While the orbits of other themed programmes were limited to varying percentages of curricular time (i.e. 20–60 per cent), Garnet got closer to incorporating the whole of the targeted students' learning and curricular experiences within its sphere of influence. It did this by locating the programme groups in a purpose-built base, by reducing the number of teachers met by students to around eight or nine (achieved through teachers teaching more than one subject e.g. mathematics and science, or the humanities), by designing the curriculum so that individual subjects fed into half-termly themes (e.g. 'The Americas', 'natural disasters') and by having dedicated support staff that attended to students' personal and social issues, attached to the base. It had also been running the pilot for three years before the researcher's first visit.

Finally, whereas all of the previous four cases were

still operating at the close of the research, Garnet's project was terminated two years before the final data collection. Consequently, our dataset for Garnet is smaller and truncated, lacking, for example the final interviews which prioritised impact questions.

Both teachers and students attested to many highly positive outcomes from Garnet. In fact, it would be true to say that this approach achieved, for some students, more radical changes in attitudes, motivation and behaviour than any other themed programme. Conversely, however, it also triggered more problems and negative reactions than any other case study considered here. Factors that may have contributed to the higher than normal commentaries on the programme include the production of a series of self-evaluation reports on the pilot (Sapphire also carried out its own evaluation of their programme) and the intensity of the debate that the pilot sparked among staff and students within the school. It may also be relevant to point out that the justifications for terminating the pilot were much more likely to refer to the severity of the problems it created rather than question the quality of the effect it had on the learning and the life chances of some individual students. A useful question to bring to the ensuing discussion is how could the potency of the programme's effects on some students be achieved without the substantial collateral damage that it gave rise to?

The main forms of impact reported by teachers were as follows:

- Staff were adamant that the programme had led to closer and stronger teacher-pupil relations. With a more detailed knowledge of a students' personality, needs and family background, teachers felt that they were better able to provide personalised learning and guidance to the young people in the programme.
- Garnet took the development of close and mutually supportive relations with parents to new levels. Making good use of their participation in the HSS visit to schools in Boston USA, the programme mounted a number of presentations of students' work to parents and engendered parental involvement in learning, as well as the fostering of positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Garnet was seen as providing a more enjoyable and stimulating learning experience, which, according to non-programme staff, led to some happier students.
- As a consequence of the above developments, staff recounted several cases of individual students whose motivation and engagement in learning had made dramatic improvements. The emergence of these positive results had brought about better attendance patterns.
- Staff also relayed how some students' behaviour had improved through the programme, occasionally quite remarkably. Given that the early programme groups contained several students

with disruptive tendencies, transforming students' behaviour patterns received much more attention from programme staff.

- Staff produced test results to show that the first group of programme students achieved good or higher levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (bearing in mind that this group started before corresponding programmes in other schools). However, as this programme teacher explains, interpreting the status of these results is open to debate:

'... if you look at academic achievement and again there are different views of this ... about 55–60 per cent of the first 48 students in their KS3 assessments performed in line or above expectations. That means there was still 40 per cent who hadn't done so. After 18 months is that an acceptable success rate or isn't it? ... If you started off with all of the students who we agreed were under achieving ... and 55–60 per cent of them are now in line with where we want them to be, within 18 months, is that quick enough? And some will say yes and some will say no.'

- Attaching as much importance to them as academic and cognitive outcomes, developments in the personal, social and emotional domains were also portrayed by programme staff. They were confident that the programme had instilled in students an awareness of being wanted, valued and cared for.
- Staff also pointed to the growth in self-confidence, particularly by students who at first were reluctant participants.
- The themed programme was seen as an important arena for the formation of friendships. It was also depicted as encouraging students to help each other with their activities.
- Independent learning skills were suggested as another impact.
- Garnet was alone among the case studies of themed programmes in citing enriched teaching elsewhere in the school as an outcome of working on the programme. That programme teachers saw their involvement in the pilot as a transformative CPD experience was largely due to them developing and transferring kinaesthetic learning strategies, classroom cultures and behaviour management roles.
- Finally, by way of registering an unintended consequence – and again one that was not nominated in other cases – some staff pointed out that as a result of the programme's selection policy, many other teachers did not have to cope with those programme students who presented challenging behaviours in classroom settings.

At Garnet, a total of 13 programme students were interviewed (one-on-one or in paired discussion groups). In addition, a larger discussion group with non-programme students was held. In order to capture any enduring effects of the programme, a high proportion of the student interviewees were

from Years 9–11. As such, the questions seeking comparative perspectives on primary and secondary schools were not put to most of these students.

Analysing the effects of Garnet's programme on students is an elusive undertaking. As one member of the school staff put it, 'it's a mixed bag.' That bag contains some very impressive narratives of individuals who made substantial progress, as well as some persistent and at times acute problems.

There can be little doubt, though, that the vast majority of students at Garnet stated that many of the programme staff, particularly the programme leader ('because [s/he] works so hard for us'), knew them very well on a personal level, as one explained:

'... they end up picking up little things about you, nice things, like they learn about your life and your hobbies and that's a good thing. A teacher comes up to me and asks how my dad is and I think that's nice to know that they know that about you in a way.'

Moreover, many interviewees testified to the ease with which they could talk to these staff, to whom they were happy to turn and broach almost any subject. Bullying was one such shared issue, according to this recorded discussion with no researcher present: 'It did work in [the themed programme] ... I just knew them better ... and they actually did something about it.'

One Year 11 girl looked back on her relations with her programme teachers as a 'bonding' experience. In the best cases, these relationships were invested with considerable degrees of mutual respect, though, as we describe later, this certainly did not mean that every programme lesson was free of disruptive behaviour.

There were ample student testaments to the manner in which the programme re-engaged them in the learning process. By extending the students' powers of attention and their motivation towards school-based learning, the themed programme turned things round for many individuals: 'It made me stay on task and it got me more better and you know when I moved into GCSE, it helped me a lot.' And: 'It encouraged me to come to school more'.

Accompanying these accounts of heightened engagement were references to raised attainment levels. A Year 10 boy explained this effect: 'It's pushed my grades up, in Year 8 I got two marks above what I was supposed to be getting in Year 9.' Similarly, a Year 9 girl described the transformation that she attributed to the themed programme:

'... in my results it's changed a lot and at the end of Year 7 I was working at Level 3, which is ridiculous and now I'm seven A's and stuff, which

in a year and a half is really good. And I don't think I would have got this far without [the themed programme].'

As the staff had claimed, developments in the personal, social and emotional areas were also frequently cited by the student interviewees. Some couched these gains in terms of greater maturity, both for individuals and a class:

'I think you feel as if you're more important, because they feel you're more mature and especially in Year 10. Especially because I have gone through [the themed programme] and the class has matured a lot. ... And I think it makes you a lot more mature.'

Others gave similar accounts, reporting effects on confidence. When asked to explain what they meant by increased 'confidence', one student replied: 'talking to people more, because if I was in my last school and I would be like talking to you I'd be really, really shy and everything.' For some students, this increased confidence went beyond the school walls: 'I think it's got me to be more like open about things, like I can talk to my mum about things and stuff.' Others framed it as 'personal' developments, with one girl perhaps giving the ultimate accolade to any human scale provision: 'well obviously it's changed me academically and as a person, but it's made me a nicer person.' Given these outcomes, it is not surprising that several students felt valued, safe, secure and well cared for within the programme: [programme staff] 'have always tried to make everyone feel like they cared for them, given up a lot of their own time to look after us.' That caring role was achieved by addressing social and personal needs as an integral part of the teaching and learning programme, not as a separate pastoral or community support system.

Compared to the comments above, other descriptions of how the themed programme had an effect were more tempered. The quality of learning, for example, received mixed reviews. Some students undoubtedly rated the curriculum framework for the programme (e.g. one appreciated the project themes which he felt helped to maintain concentration and give a clear understanding of the substantive focus) and others admired the explanations, practical activities, off-site trips and group work offered by teachers. However, some students believed that the programme classes were rather spoon-fed and there was the suggestion that they emphasised group work at the expense of promoting independent learning. More damagingly, several students were very critical of the programme for being too soft on disruptive behaviour. They often said that learning was difficult because there was too much 'messing around' and they felt that they did much better after their return to the mainstream. The capacity of teachers to control and 'discipline' the programme classes was judged to be variable.

Years 8 and 9 appeared to be the difficult years: 'there was a lot of messing around in Year 8 and 9. So it kind of was a thing between the teachers shouting and us shouting and in a constant battle.' On the other hand, there were students who argued that various behaviour management systems (e.g. programme detentions, lesson monitoring records) were helpful, but clearly the challenges that bad behaviour presented for learning continued. In corroboration with a programme teacher's account, one student interviewee explained that a stamp rewards system did not survive for very long.

Peer-to-peer relations within the themed programme were described as strong and supportive. There were numerous testimonies to the willingness of students to help other students with their learning and, in one case, this extended to helping a fellow programme member sort out a bullying issue. Group work was common in the programme and the co-operation worked effectively across, as well as within, genders. Staff were reported to be active in helping students to deal with relationships, both internal and external to the programme, that were not conducive to improving motivation and achievement. Deep friendships were often formed within the programme, with students adding that these had developed with people that they initially felt they would not speak to, let alone become friends with. When asked why she had enjoyed the programme, one girl replied: 'Just [being] part of the bond with the students and the teachers.' While there was undoubtedly a high degree of bonding within the groups ('students in [the themed programme] were really close'), some interviewees perceived a lot of 'unpleasantness' between individuals, an element of bullying, clashes of personalities and an ever-present risk of 'friction' that could erupt at any time: 'there was quite a few fall outs actually.'

Most importantly, some students explained how the programme made it very difficult to initiate or maintain friendships in the rest of the school and, in this regard, one boy used the word 'segregation' to describe the programme's social reality: [the themed programme] 'was just segregated on this top floor. And I think everyone would have liked it more if there was more circulation for us round the school, so we could socialise with people.' His assertion that this applied to 'everyone' is telling. For several students, this problem intensified when the programme was abandoned and students had to cope with the reality of integrating with the rest of the school: '... but it was difficult, because we'd been in such a controlled environment knowing exactly who each other are and then just put in with loads of strangers is just difficult.'

Several students attested to the significant increases in the involvement of parents in the programme, the behaviour management of their children and their learning. This was perceived to be one of the

distinguishing features of the programme, relative to other pathways in the school. Through regular presentations to parents, along with meetings and telephone conversations between the programme leader and parents, the mothers, fathers and carers of many students became supporters of the programme: 'my dad loves the fact I'm in [the themed programme].' However, a number of students drew attention to the fact that the connections were nearly always between the programme leader and parents. There was reported to be little interaction between normal programme teachers and parents and this was seen as a drawback for some parents. So much so that these parents were often said to be sceptical of the programme's modus operandi: 'I don't think my dad liked the idea of us all being in a group for like more than a year.'

Finally, it must be noted that one of the most undermining effects of the programme was the manner in which the pilot pathway stimulated a backlash among students on other pathways. Non-programme student interviewees were resentful of what they perceived as badly behaved peers being rewarded with special provisions and benefits. The following exchanges in a group discussion were typical of the reported reactions of many non-programme students:

'Yeah that's one thing that I don't like is [the themed programme] ... They get to go on trips because they under-achieve ... which I don't think is right, I think the people who achieve to their standard should get to go on the trips ... it seemed like they're being naughty and they're getting all the attention, they've got a whole upstairs of a block ... yeah, that's like encouraging them to be naughty ... to be good ... in [the themed programme] it's like mainly all the naughty people, I'm not saying that all of them are, but some of them are and they're like getting rewarded for stuff ... they've got lockers. They've got everything haven't they? ... Like with the orange pathway they're just like one group and they all hang around with each other, but like I think they do get more attention than we do. And I think we should get more attention ... well the same amount of attention ... I think the school concentrates on more of the ... negatives ... than they do on the positives.'

No doubt fuelled by these critical perceptions, non-programme students were said to have created disparaging labels for the programme students, which they allegedly used to taunt those in the pilot pathway. Some programme interviewees mentioned bullying by their non-programme peers: 'and there's been a lot of, I think throughout Year 9 and 10 there was a lot of bullying towards the people who were in [the themed programme] because of why they were in there and people calling people 'retards' and things because they were in there.' Nullifying any

gains the programme may have had in increasing his motivation, this student went on to say that he did not want to come to school because of the verbal abuse from his peers in other pathways. Although many students alluded to or confirmed this phase of negative labelling, most added that they got through it – and apparently over it. Indeed, it is conceivable that the external name-calling engendered an even greater bond within the programme groups.

Overall, the impacts of the Garnet themed programme in the effect areas may be summarised as follows:

- **Staff-student relations** – most students had close and trusting relationships with some programme teachers and nearly all the students referred to the ease with which they could talk to the programme leader in particular, but students' respect for teachers did not extend to all the programme staff – variable quality of teaching was reported by students, with disruptive behaviour being a feature of some.
- **Student-student relations** – the programme helped bond close friendships within the themed programme groups and the students recounted how they supported each other, but some students thought that the programme could militate against wider friendship formation and that they were isolated; others described ongoing frictions within the groups and name-calling from outside of them.
- **School-parent/carer relations** – closer involvement of parents in the programme and giving assistance to their children's learning were key outcomes of the innovations in this area, though

some parents were said to be frustrated at not being able to interact with programme teachers.

- **Quality of learning** – self-reported effective learning in both academic areas, as well as in personal, social and emotional growth, though variable quality of teaching and behaviour management reduced this for some; some would have preferred to have been in mainstream pathways.
- **Student participation in school decision-making** – some students did not feel that they participated in the 'school' as a whole, and whether or not students got a voice within the programme was mixed and inconclusive.
- **Student motivation and attitudes** – some substantial and very impressive cases of radical changes in attitudes and engagement were garnered; most felt valued and cared for in the pilot programme; moreover, these changes continued into Key Stage 4; however, both staff and students recognised that it did not work with all students and some felt deterred from attending school because of the name-calling from non-programme students.
- **Local community involvement** – nothing significant was mentioned.

Having examined the evidence on the effects of the themed programmes in five schools, the next chapter analyses the impacts of the SLCs. A summary of the effects of the five themed programmes considered here is offered in chapter 9.

8

THE EFFECTS AND IMPACTS OF HSS PRACTICES: SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

All the case study schools but one (Sapphire) had some form of small learning community (SLC). However, only three (Pearl, Topaz and Opal) had used the SLC framework to re-structure their entire institutions in a way that established clearly identifiable and multiple SLCs. Garnet had assigned children to different curriculum pathways, but was awaiting the results of its evaluation of its pilot pathway – its single SLC – before deciding how to develop its other pathways as communities. By housing its Years 8 and 9 students on a separate site, Turquoise effectively created a single SLC, but the philosophy of SLCs was never applied to the remainder of the school.

In considering the effects of SLCs, we have focused upon the experiences of the three schools that had applied the SLC framework and had instituted multiple communities with their own identities. We have adopted this approach for two main reasons. Firstly, in the absence of teachers and students being able to observe and compare different communities at work, it is difficult for them and the researchers to discern the effects of SLCs per se. Secondly, because single SLCs at Garnet and Turquoise were so closely fused with the themed programmes in these sites, extricating outcomes from the teaching programmes from those of the more social and community dimensions proved highly problematic, not least with an eye to avoiding repetition. For these reasons, the following discussion of the effects of SLCs is based on data from Pearl, Topaz and Opal. Each school is considered in turn.

8.2 THE PEARL SCHOOL

This school had introduced a system of SLCs which affected all students (in Years 7 to 11) and all staff. Three SLCs had been established, based on a mixed ability vertical division. Each of the three communities had been divided into two, with a learning leader taking responsibility for each half. Each of the three SLCs was overseen by a deputy head. Within these new structures, leaders' roles clearly embraced an enhanced brief for pupil care

through tutor teams and for the monitoring of each pupil's academic performance in vertical tutor groups. At the time of the final visit to the school, a fourth main SLC had been created to cater for the post-16 students. The SLCs were not in separate buildings but were 'zoned', so that students were located near to the others in their SLC.

The effects of the SLCs, as noted by teachers and senior managers are listed below:

- Individual students were well known by the staff in their SLC, especially the learning leaders and pastoral support managers.
- Community staff took significant responsibility for students' learning and achievement, alongside subject teachers, and continuously emphasised this to students, both formally and informally.
- Pastoral support managers responded quickly to issues that arose and dealt with students' concerns, such as bullying.
- Since the introduction of communities, the annual survey showed an increase in students' self-reported levels of happiness, which they attributed to the changes.
- Students felt that staff in their community not only knew them but cared about them and wanted to support them.
- Staff felt that the improvement in GCSE results seen every year could in part be attributed to the creation of the SLCs.
- Students had a sense of belonging to their community and identified with it, particularly in relation to inter-community competitions.

Many of these effects were summarised by a senior member of staff:

'And the reason for putting communities in was obviously trying to improve attainment, but to make sure that pupils felt safer, felt better looked after, they've got an adult they can talk to in school, and every single question that refers to those areas in the pupil survey came back as a huge plus. So that was good information. Everything we set out to do was ratified by the pupil survey which was really, really pleasing.'

The positive effect of communities on students' personal development was also noted by Ofsted in their report on the school:⁶

'Staff in each community know their pupils very well and are able to keep track of their progress and needs more effectively. This has improved pupils' behaviour, their relationships with staff and with one another, generating an improved atmosphere for learning. Behaviour in lessons around the school is good.'

The views of the 25 students who participated in the interviews were largely positive about the impact of the SLCs (called 'communities' at this school).

The younger students (Years 7–8) had all their lessons within their own community and seemed to feel a strong allegiance to their community, though most mentioned one or two friends who were in other communities. Having to split up from their primary school friends when they joined the school was disappointing for two students, but both realised that it also gave them the opportunity to make new friends. Two boys saw this separation as a benefit: one had seen 'a really bad enemy' removed from his environment because the other boy was in a different community; another was seeking transfer to a different community because of bullying issues he was experiencing.

All the younger students referred to the inter-community competitions which took place both in the sporting arena and in other aspects of school life. They clearly pervaded daily school life, as one girl explained:

'... then say if we was in the sports hall doing some sports you can like give them a competition and win community points for your team, so your community. And like we do tutor group activities and that is like a competition if you get points for your team, your community. And it's really good like that.'

On the whole, they felt that the competition was at a healthy level, with people hugely supportive of their own community but not in a detrimental way, as one explained: 'it's all in good spirit, and some people might take it competitive but it's mostly in good spirit'.

Three students (two in Year 7 and one in Year 8) felt that the SLCs were a good way of dividing students up across the school, reducing the impression of it being a big school. They found it reassuring that their assemblies were only for students in their community (or half community, sometimes), rather than including the whole school.

The other benefit of the SLCs, according to the younger pupils, was the care they received from their learning leader and other senior staff in the

community. One student explained that the pastoral support manager 'helps us with our problems'. Another described how he had been unable to talk to teachers at first but that this had changed and he could now speak easily to his learning leader: 'Mr X, yes, I would say anything to him.' Yet another described how helpful her learning leader was: 'if you have any problems you go to him, and he does really, really help, and I, I appreciate him for that because it does really help.'

As they got older, the students seemed more relaxed about the loss of their friends to other communities, either because they saw them at break times anyway (several boys referred to playing football with students from other SLCs) or because their classes were now mixed. For example, by the time of the Stage 3 researcher visit, a system had been introduced whereby students in Year 9 had some choice as to the subjects studied, and those in Years 10 and 11 were in classes according to their GCSE and other course options. This meant that, when studying these optional subjects, students in Years 9 to 11 had the opportunity to meet students from other communities.

Most of the older students liked having mixed community classes, and six felt that the main or only advantage of the community system was the focus it provided for competitions, as one question and answer illustrates:

Interviewer: And do you think the communities are a good idea?

Student: Yes, because I like the inter-community challenges and that.'

The care provided by learning leaders was also referred to by two Year 10 students. One boy had been helped by his learning leader to resolve issues arising from his 'bad behaviour' and he felt that teachers helped with students' learning. Another student also thought the learning leaders were good at dealing with problems:

'Some of the learning leaders are helpful because if there's a problem about another teacher or another pupil, it usually gets sorted right away.

It gets sorted quicker than it did before the communities, because before that we had heads of year and if there was people in a different year then you'd have to go to different years and ... it would take a while.'

A Year 11 student also spoke highly of the role of the pastoral support managers as being very approachable and easy for students to talk to.

For the Year 11 students, the impact of the change to communities had been most noticeable, as they had spent the rest of their secondary school career in a

⁶ Reference not given, in order to preserve anonymity.

conventional year group system. Initially, reactions were not positive, as one student explained:

‘Well, first I thought it was pretty annoying because it was sort of like, it suddenly changed like a great deal and everything and everybody was saying “oh since you’re in this community, you’re stupid or you’re dumber” and stuff like that. ... but then it was – actually – actually it’s a good system to work with because it’s – with tutor group you can meet new people in different years and you can also help the new Year 7s that come along when they need to find their lessons ...’

The perception that students had been allocated to communities according to their ability level appeared to have been dispersed quickly, and students settled into their new groupings.

One Year 10 girl echoed many of the comments made by the younger pupils, seeing advantages in the school being divided into smaller sections, and liking the sense of belonging, both to the school and the community, that was engendered. She also explained how the community identity extended beyond the school gates:

Student: Some people in each of the other communities don’t like you because you’re like you’re [in a particular community] and stuff like that and because you don’t hang around with them and like because in lunch and everything communities hang around with each other. There’s not many mix like things.

Interviewer: What about outside school? Do you mix then with people in other communities?

Student: No, not many. I dunno really, but most of them, because most of your friends like – say I’m [in a particular community], most of my friends are [in the same one].’

This student also thought that the community she was in was the best, and had the best teachers.

The effects of the SLC system on different aspects of school life, according to the students, are summarised below.

- **Staff-student relations** were mostly viewed positively, especially where learning leaders and pastoral support staff were concerned. Students felt that there was always someone within the community to whom they could talk.
- **Student-student relations** were generally good within each community with students expressing strong loyalty to and support for their own community. Inter-community competitions were welcomed but some less positive conflicts did occasionally arise between students in different communities.
- **School-parent/carers relations** were mainly positive, though not significantly affected by the change to SLCs, from a student’s perspective.

- **Quality of learning** was not perceived by students as related to the community system, though most seemed to like the activities which took place in their tutor group periods.
- **Student participation in school decision-making** again did not appear to be affected by the community system.
- **Student motivation and attitudes** were not affected by the community system except in the ways described above, namely, in terms of their friendship groups and a feeling of identification with their own community, and competition against other communities.
- **Local community involvement** – nothing reported.
- **Overall primary and secondary comparisons** made no relevant references to SLCs.

8.3 THE TOPAZ SCHOOL

At the time of the first research visit, SLCs were not in place as the existing building was not appropriate for that form of organisation. However, a new school building was nearly complete and by the second visit, had become fully operational. The building had enabled the establishment of three SLCs or ‘academies’: one for students in Years 7 and 8, and two for those in Years 9 to 11. Each academy was situated in its own suite of rooms, though students moved to specialist rooms when necessary. Student classes were allocated to tutors or ‘advisors’ within the community and, ideally, were taught by that tutor for some time. In the academy for Years 7 and 8, a themed programme enabled staff to act as tutor and teacher to their class for much of the week (as discussed in the previous chapter).

The effects of SLCs noted by staff (during the second and third visits) are summarised below:

- Staff came to know their students very well, particularly in the Year 7–8 academy, where a small group of core staff was located for most of their time.
- Students saw limited numbers of teachers, even in Years 9–11 because of the way options were organised and teachers were allocated, thereby enabling good relationships to develop.
- Students in Years 9–11 were divided into academies according to their abilities and learning needs, so that teaching and support could be targeted most effectively.
- Parents (and prospective parents) liked the idea of their child being taught mainly by one teacher, who knew their child well and who acted as a contact point between the school and parents.
- The new building had enabled students to be grouped geographically, and had helped them to identify with their academy, though Year 8 students also had some lessons in other academies.
- The small number of staff based in the Year 7–8 academy enabled them to deal with incidents more quickly and from a more informed perspective, as they knew the students well.

Altogether, 23 students participated in interviews or structured conversations. Their views on SLCs are reported below.

Allegiance to their academy did not figure highly in the students' comments on their school experience, but when prompted, some opinions were provided. One student in Year 7 liked being in a separate academy because of friendships: 'I reckon that's good because Year 7 and 8s are really your friends, you don't really know the Year 9s and 10s.' Another Year 7 student identified with her academy, but also with the whole school, as some subjects were studied in other areas of the building.

In contrast, other students felt their main sense of identity was with their advisory group or their year group, but as one explained:

'I have a feeling that they are really trying to focus on being in the academy, rather than the year group, because you have a year group and an academy, which is basically split up like that.'

Two students (one Year 8 and one Year 9) who mostly identified with their advisory group, nevertheless liked the competitive side of the academy system, as one explained:

Interviewer: What about the academy, being in a particular academy?

Student: I think it's cool. I think competition is good.

Interviewer: What sort of competitions do you have?

Student: Like who can get the best attendance record and there's a prize for that, who can get most green flags and stuff like that.'

Of those students who liked the academy system, one Year 7 student felt that it enabled staff and students to develop good relationships, as he explained:

'Everyone gets on really well – well in [my] academy – everyone gets on really well because you're with your adviser quite a lot so you get on with them and get to know them and everything.'

In contrast, a Year 9 student thought the academy system made little difference to how well teachers knew him:

Interviewer: Do you think most of the teachers know you as an individual?

Student: Some, yeah, quite a few.

I: Do you think that being in the academy makes any difference to how well people know you?

S: Not a huge difference no.

I: So who would you say was the person that knows you the best?

S: In school?

I: Mmm.

S: Probably my friends, but ...'

Another student had benefited from the system, as she had been able to change academies after a bullying incident.

Although most students were in favour of the system or were indifferent to it, one student pointed out a disadvantage of spending most of the time with the same class in Year 7. She felt that, although the majority of her classmates were keen to learn, a small group of students were disruptive:

'They just don't let you get your work done sometimes. It's just they're so loud. And like we miss our break because they've been naughty and it's not really fair when I've worked my hardest and I've missed my break because some idiot's thrown something across the classroom. That's what I don't like.'

The effects of the SLC system on different aspects of school life are summarised below:

- **Staff-student relations** were mostly viewed positively, especially by Year 7 pupils, who felt that the staff in their SLC knew them particularly well, since they spent a lot of time together. However, both younger and older students felt that there were some students who behaved badly towards teachers and disrupted the learning of others.
- **Student-student relations** were generally good, especially amongst the younger pupils, because they spent a lot of time together and therefore got to know each other well, within their academy. Some also welcomed the separation from the older, bigger students. The students interviewed resented the disruptive or aggressive pupils in their classes, as this affected their own learning.
- **School-parent/carer relations** seemed very positive, but pupils did not perceive this as being related to the SLC structure.
- **Quality of learning** was perceived as good by the younger students in the Year 7–8 academy and many described the active learning strategies used within their classes, but it was not clear whether this was because of the themed programme or an effect of the SLC system. Older students were also generally positive, but this was not affected by which academy they belonged to.
- **Student participation in school decision-making** did not appear to be affected by the academy system.
- **Student motivation and attitudes** were not affected by the academy system apart from in the ways already described.
- **Local community involvement** – nothing was reported.
- **Overall primary and secondary comparisons** made no relevant references to SLCs.

8.4 THE OPAL SCHOOL

During the first two research visits, plans for SLCs were evolving, as was the design and subsequent construction of a new building. When the school took up residence in the new buildings in September 2008, seven SLCs were launched. Four main communities were established: two which accommodated students in Years 7 and 8; two which housed students in Years 9 to 11. Post-16 students were also considered to be a separate community and two further communities were being developed: one for students with physical disabilities and another for pupils with autism.

The aim was for students to spend 60 per cent of the week within their own community, with most staff also spending a similar amount of time within their own community.

At the Stage 3 and 4 research visits, the SLCs had been operating for about six months and 14 months, respectively. This section of the report is based on interviews conducted with staff and students during those two visits.

Staff felt that the community system had provided a number of benefits for students, as the summary below indicates:

- Having the Year 7–8 community helped to smooth the transition between primary and secondary school, by providing a designated area of the school and exposing the students to limited numbers of staff.
- The majority of staff taught mainly in one community, leading to better relationships between staff and students, as they all knew each other well.
- Students also got to know each other better, as they spent most of their time in the same class in Years 7 and 8, within a single community. Once they transferred to a community for older students, they mainly stayed in that community too.
- Students had a sense of belonging to their community, which was mostly positive, though minor conflicts had arisen between those in different communities.
- Students with difficulties of behaviour or learning were easily identified, and strategies could be put in place quickly, through the collaboration of community and subject staff. The focus was on the pupil as an individual, and the system removed any tension between curricular and pastoral areas of responsibility.
- Having two communities at each age level provided the possibility for students who were having difficulties to transfer into another community if necessary.
- Student behaviour improved because they were constantly monitored and known so well by the staff, as a result of their dual responsibilities for teaching and pastoral care.
- Because they were in separate areas of the

building, and each community had breaks at different times, students spent little time with older/younger students, making the latter feel safer.

Nineteen students participated in interviews or structured conversations during these visits.

The younger students were mainly positive about the community system, feeling that they got to know the other students and staff well, and could therefore develop good relationships with other students, and approach staff if they needed support. One student explained that the teachers who were most respected tended to be the ones that he and his friends knew well, i.e. those in his community.

The separate geographical areas of the building which were allocated to communities (and the differently timed breaks) helped to make some of the younger students feel safe, as students from other communities were not allowed in unless it was for lessons. It also helped these students to find their way around, as most of their lessons took place within the community area. One Year 8 student commented: 'it's easier to find. Because most of our lessons are in our community. Like the only lessons that are outside of our community is science, cooking, DT and PE.'

However, two boys in Year 7 and one in Year 8 were unhappy with the separation from others, feeling it deprived them of the opportunity to meet up with friends or make new ones. One of these boys suggested that one community for all the Year 7s would be preferable to the existing system.

A feeling of belonging to their community was expressed by the younger pupils, though some were not sure if their first loyalty was to the community or the whole school, as one student explained:

Student: Yeah I like the way that we have communities, because then it makes you feel that you're a part of something.

Interviewer: And do you feel that you belong to your community or do you feel that you belong to [Opal]?

Student: Well I feel like I'm partly belong to [name of community], so like my community, and partly for the whole school.'

At the same time, three students suggested that the sense of belonging was having a negative effect on a few pupils, as it engendered feelings of rivalry which went beyond healthy competitiveness. As one girl summarised it: 'because people say that one community is better than another and it starts like a war'.

The older students, who had spent time in the old building, within the old systems, were also generally positive about the SLCs, though less enthusiastic

than the younger ones. Two students seemed pleased to find themselves in communities which they perceived as catering for higher ability students, though they were in two different communities.

One Year 10 student reflected comments made by younger students in explaining that those with a problem tended to talk to a teacher within their own community, as these were the staff they knew best. However, she thought that getting to know a wider range of teachers would be helpful:

Student: You only really get to know the teachers in your community better than ones that aren't in your community. Like you might have the odd lesson. I think if they had more time where you interacted with all the teachers it would help a bit better.

Interviewer: Why do you think that would be better?

Student: Because then, ... you could talk to anybody, you wouldn't necessarily have to go to your own community.'

The effects of the SLC system on different aspects of school life are summarised below:

- **Staff-student relations** were mostly viewed positively. Conflicts tended to be related to individual students or teachers, rather than the SLCs. Relationships between staff and students within the community were perceived as good, due to the level of mutual knowledge and the support provided by staff when students needed help.
- **Student-student relations** were generally good, and older students felt that bullying had been reduced since the move into the new building and the establishment of the communities. As described above, there were some conflicts between students in different communities, but these appeared to be minor.
- **School-parent/carer relations** seemed mainly positive, and communications between community staff and home were frequent, though some minor issues were noted. Students did not attribute the good relations to the SLC system as such, though an enhanced role for tutors with regard to parents had been introduced alongside SLCs.
- **Quality of learning** was perceived positively by almost all the students, though this was not related to the SLCs. The longer lessons that had also been introduced since the move to the community system, were generally liked for providing more time for students to immerse themselves in the subject.
- **Student participation in school decision-making** appeared to be working well, especially for those students who represented their community on the school Council and/or the Senate. Some changes had been brought about as a result of student views. Most thought that teachers were approachable and listened to students' views.
- **Student motivation and attitudes** had either improved or stayed the same since the changes had been introduced. Most felt that discipline had improved, and agreed that teachers cared for them. Although this was not directly attributed to the community system, it can be inferred from other comments about relationships within the communities.
- **Local community involvement** seemed minimal, as far as students were aware, but students felt that the reputation of the school overall had improved because of the new building and that the school was now viewed positively within the local community.

SUMMARY

A summary of the effects of the three SLC systems considered here is offered in chapter 9.

9

A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF EFFECTS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Having set out the findings on the effects of the two main lines of development in HSS – what we have called ‘themed programmes’ (chapter 7) and SLCs (chapter 8) – in this chapter we offer:

- an overarching summary of these effects;
- some points of comparison between the different approaches;
- observations on factors and specific features of the developments that appear to be associated with certain outcomes; and
- a brief description of tutorial systems that attracted positive reactions and effects.

9.2 THEMED PROGRAMMES

By way of aiding comparison, table 9.1 in appendix 2 summarises the overall impacts for each of the five themed programmes, under the seven prescribed effect areas.

Local community involvement

The table clearly shows that none of the five programmes impacted significantly on local community involvement – over and above that of parental engagement. This is not surprising, given the very low profile of this area in the schools’ proposals – only one school (Sapphire) identified ‘real-life community projects’ (see chapter 2), yet it did not appear to have been a strong feature of the programmes as implemented. The explanatory factor underpinning the absence of this outcome would seem to be a lack of ambition. Greater community involvement was not seen as a crucial part of schools’ theories of how HSS practices, and themed programmes in particular, could help them achieve their desired outcomes (e.g. enhanced attainment, improved motivation, increased sense of being cared for or maintaining pupil enrolment – see logic models in appendix 1). Given that broadening community involvement is a pivotal principle for human scale education (e.g. Tasker 2008 sees it as one of HSE’s three core values), a clearer exposition of the contribution it could make to the efficacy of themed programmes may be needed if it is to have a broader uptake.

Student participation in school decision-making

Turning to another important priority for HSE, the themed programmes did not produce significant and consistent effects in regard to students’ involvement in decision making. Although students at Topaz and Turquoise welcomed the opportunity to choose and negotiate group work and their project assignments, and students in one particular class at Sapphire described the many chances they got to express their opinions, there was very little evidence to indicate that the programmes had made appreciable strides in developing student voice processes as an integral part of the programmes’ modus operandi.

This is not to overlook that several of the schools as a whole operated systems like school councils and student feedback surveys, but to recognise that student participation in the programme-related decision making about curricula and pedagogy was limited. It is telling, for example, that only one interviewee in one school (Opal) cited developments associated with ‘pupils as co-constructors’ of the curriculum and their own learning. Even in this instance, the comment was in connection with broader initiatives in the school (e.g. students conducting Ofsted-type inspections) rather than anything intrinsic to programme teaching. Once again, the critical factor would seem to be a perceived lack of relevance to the theories of action underpinning the programmes. Evidence from Sapphire would suggest that a teacher’s personal values and ideologies were another key factor in determining the level of student voice within programme classes.

School-parent/carer relations

As shown in table 9.1 in appendix 2, the themed programmes in most schools improved school-parent relations. The positive effects reported at Topaz, Turquoise and Garnet were of particular note – though in the latter’s case it was suggested that the relations could have been further advanced by divesting more responsibility to individual programme teachers. Some salient factors in generating these improvements appeared to be programme parents’ evenings where the curriculum and skills taught within the programme were

explained; presentation evenings exhibiting students' work and achievements; and curriculum and learning activities (e.g. trips, projects, assignments) that actively encouraged parental participation.

Student-student relations

Virtually all of the programmes fostered the making and bonding of friendships within the groups, as well as the promotion of a culture of mutual support and collegiate working. Each teachers' propensity to deploy teamwork methods was clearly a determining factor in this respect. However, on the downside, nearly all of the programmes attracted the criticism that they tended to stifle the formation of friendships and good working rapports with peers across the school as a whole. This was especially noticeable within programmes which took up high percentages of the timetable (e.g. Topaz, Garnet and Sapphire).

Staff-student relations

In each school, albeit to varying degrees, many Year 7 students testified to the trusting, open and close rapport they enjoyed with their programme teachers. They also valued the personalised support for learning that was facilitated by the strength of these relationships. However, beyond Year 7 most students preferred exposure to a wider range of teachers with subject specialisms. Moreover, the programmes tended to be construed as helpful bridges between primary and secondary schools and as such, only relevant to the entry year. Indeed within Year 7, there were significant numbers who would have welcomed a more normal, diverse teacher experience from the start – especially in programmes with high timetable percentages and universal inclusion. In addition, most schools also revealed signs of variations in the capacity of teachers to achieve the high quality of relations was achieved by the programmes' best exponents of this form of teaching.

Isolating the factors that can optimise these benefits, while minimising the risks is difficult and complex. Hence, the following points are offered as tentative interpretations of the data. Giving teachers and students enough time to develop these high quality relationships, along with the learning benefits that can flow from them, is a fundamental factor, but avoiding the increased risks of over-exposure associated with too much time spent together has to be avoided. Around a third of the total time or the 40 per cent mark at Sapphire may be seen as the optimum amount. Perhaps the most influential single factor was the fact that most schools had a small number of outstanding practitioners who were highly skilled in building a rapport with young teenagers. Problems generally surfaced when schools tried to extend this form of provision, without securing sufficient staff with the same high standards. A third factor might be found in the fact that, from Year 8 onwards, most students wanted to experience more time with a wider diversity of teachers. Another crucial factor relates to the individual differences and

predilections of students. Young people are not a homogenous group and to treat them as if they are – by insisting that all Year 7 students must join a themed programme – may be riding roughshod over the need to provide a differentiated provision according to divergent individual needs. Indeed, from an HSS perspective, asking all Year 7 students to have the same form and mode of personalised learning, particularly when implemented with no reference to student voice or choice, is something of a paradox. Hence, if this argument is accepted, the programme models (like Garnet and Sapphire) that entail partial involvement of the year group have much to commend them. However, the experiences of Garnet, and Sapphire to a lesser extent, would counsel against using ability or ability relative to achievement as the selection criteria. Faced with these difficulties, it would have been illuminating to have studied a case that afforded students and their parents a choice of programme or non-programme routes at Year 7. Differentiated provision based on such choices would seem consistent with HSE principles and perhaps in any extension to the HSS project, consideration could be given to encouraging pilots that afforded these opportunities.

Student motivation and attitudes

Many students, especially at Year 7, reported increased engagement and motivation within their programmes. In one case (Garnet), some recounted how these effects had been sustained into Key Stage 4. In addition, at Topaz, Sapphire and Garnet, there was clear evidence that many students felt valued and cared for at school, largely because of the themed programmes. However, some students were not stimulated by the programmes and engagement could decline in the years beyond Year 7.

Five factors appeared to play particularly important parts in determining the extent to which the themed programmes increased engagement.

- 1 Students were more likely to be 'turned on' in groups that were taught by high quality teachers who were especially effective in bonding with students. In such cases, a mutual respect existed and students reacted by working hard for the teacher (e.g. 'because he works very hard for us'). Where these high standards of rapport and mutual respect were lacking, student motivation decreased. Accordingly, variable teaching quality was once more seen to be a critical issue.
- 2 We called the programmes 'themed' because all five emphasised that the curriculum for the programmes would be organised around cross-curricular themes or projects. The theory of action behind them postulated that cross-curricular projects generate students' interest and engagement. Although there were testimonies to indicate that some students did find programme themes and projects motivating (e.g. at Turquoise

students were enthused by certain projects and invested heavily in some of their extended project-based assignments), there was also data which suggested that cross-curriculum projects were not as universally motivating as claimed (e.g. certain themes left students cold and others were sceptical of the general approach of 'lumping lots of subjects together'. (Chapter 10 will present further evidence that suggests that student support for cross-curricular themes was relatively low.) Furthermore, within the programmes, there were other aspects to which students attributed greater motivating value than 'projects'. Of particular note were students' appreciation of active learning strategies, practical tasks, group work and kinaesthetic learning. These powerful qualities seemed to be more influential on students' motivation levels than projects or themes. Hence, it may be advisable to play down the themed or project-based dimensions to the programmes and bolster the status of active and collegiate learning styles as causal factors.

- 3 Staff providing individual guidance to students on their friendship patterns (e.g. at Garnet) may well have been an important factor in helping some students position themselves within supportive peer networks and cultures that accept and endorse positive attitudes to school work.
- 4 Enlisting parental involvement in the task of raising motivation levels appears to have been an instrumental factor in a number of programmes (e.g. Topaz, Turquoise and Garnet).
- 5 The perceived identity of programme groups can be an extremely important factor. Negative labelling of programme groups as at Garnet (and possibly emerging at Sapphire) can have a strong de-motivating effect on students.

The quality of learning

Finally, to varying degrees, all the programmes were credited with providing effective learning processes and with significant learning outcomes. The latter typically included 'learning to learn' process skills, independent enquiry skills, team-working strategies, enhanced attainment in academic areas and growth in personal, social and emotional domains. As for determining factors, the five elements reported for the previous effect area could all be applicable here, especially: personalised learning facilitated by close teacher-student relations, variable teaching quality, active and group learning methods, and conducting independent enquiries. At Topaz, a programme study guide was seen to be effective and influential. However, several students, even at Year 7, deemed that the coverage of the curriculum would have been more secure and the quality of learning superior in a more subject-based and specialist teaching framework. Additionally, most students looked forward to learning in a subject-based structure after Year 7.

Overview on effects of themed programmes

Looking across the seven effect areas, it can be seen that the themed programmes impacted on five of the areas to a significant degree. Of these, the effects noted in staff-student relations, student motivation and attitudes and quality of learning were especially pronounced. Factors that appeared to have considerable bearing on the impacts in these three effect areas were, the varying quality of the teachers assigned to the groups, personalised learning facilitated by closer teacher-student relations, more time for teachers and students to bond, active learning methods (more so than themed project-based curricula) and enlisting greater parental involvement. Throughout the analyses of the themed programme it was found that they were heavily associated with Year 7, though not all Year 7 students would have chosen this approach had they been given a choice. Older students tended to favour a wider diversity of teachers and subject specialist teaching, rather than cross-curriculum themed models.

9.3 SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

For comparative purposes, table 9.2 in appendix 2 summarises the overall impacts under the seven prescribed effect areas for each of the three case study schools that had introduced a SLC structure: Topaz, Opal and Pearl.

Local community involvement

As for the themed programmes, the SLC approaches had no perceived impact in this area. It can only be speculated that extending community involvement was not seen as a tool for bringing about the outcomes sought by schools, though ostensibly desired outcomes did include goals (e.g. skills for work at Topaz and Opal; lifelong learning at Topaz) that would appear to have lent themselves to closer partnerships in the community.

Student participation in school decision making

There was little to indicate that the student voice had been strengthened because of the introduction of SLCs, though some schools had introduced new structures whereby community councils fed into whole school councils (e.g. Opal). As argued in chapter 3, a crucial factor here may be the limited explicit endorsement or adoption of HSE's sixth principle in the four sites: schools are democratic communities in which all those involved share in decision making. In spite of the visits by some project teachers to the Boston Arts Academy, with its strong democratic processes, there was very little take-up of these ideas.

School-parent/carers relations

While relations between the schools and parents can be described as positive, there were few signs that the SLCs in themselves had contributed to an

improvement in these relations or that the relations were any better in one community rather than another (as shown in table 9.2). Perhaps sufficient time has not yet elapsed to allow any community differences in school-parent interface policies to have a differential impact on relations.

Student motivation and attitudes

Table 9.2 indicates that SLCs per se were not seen to play a major role in improving students' motivation. Accordingly, although many students articulated a sense of belonging to their communities, especially at Pearl, there was little to substantiate any claims that this sense of community identification directly precipitated any increases in engagement and motivation towards the school or learning.

The quality of learning

Again, it proved difficult to attribute any gains in learning outcomes or positive accounts of the learning process to the communities or the community framework. Where the SLCs were closely aligned with themed programmes – for example, in Years 7 and 8 at Topaz – there were clear gains in learning and an awareness of the learning skills imparted. However, it would seem likely that these were a product of the themed programmes, as opposed to socially-oriented SLCs.

Student-student relations

If the impacts of SLCs in the previous five effect areas looked weak, difficult to discern and, at best, somewhat nascent, they were more visible for student-student relations and particularly staff-student relations. For the former, the SLCs often seemed to have helped students find deeper friendships. The large amount of time they spent in one another's company, along with schools' efforts to boost SLC cohesion, were likely to have been key factors. Interestingly, older students at Opal linked a decrease in bullying to the move to the new building and its SLC structure. At Pearl, which had been operating SLCs for a longer period than Opal, a culture of loyalty and support for their communities had emerged. In keeping with this effect, opportunities for inter-community competitions were enjoyed by the majority of pupils. On the downside, some frictions between student members of different communities had surfaced, though these seemed relatively minor. Also some negative effects perceived by students tended to relate to the loss of particular friends, when they were placed in separate SLCs.

Staff-student relations

The closer bonding between teachers and students, notably at Year 7, was probably the most frequently identified impact of SLCs. Key factors appeared to relate to the reductions in numbers of teachers encountered by students and the attachment of staff to SLCs, so that teachers and students could get to know each other better. At Opal, for example,

relationships between staff and students within their communities were perceived to be good due to the level of mutual knowledge of one another. Similarly, at Topaz Year 7 students felt that their teachers knew them as individuals because they spent a lot of time together. However, whereas the SLCs appear to have contributed to enhanced teacher-student relations, this in itself did not necessarily ensure that classes were free from disruption, since students also reported that lessons were marred by bad behaviour. Variable teaching quality may have been a factor here. At Pearl, rather than teacher-student relations being earmarked as enriched through the SLCs, it tended to be the relations between students and each community's learning leaders and support staff that were judged to be especially open, close and trusting. This may well be a product of the school's inability to arrange for students to be taught by their own community teachers, in contrast to the definite allocation of learning leaders and pastoral support staff to specific communities. Staff claimed that improved behaviour and learning had been stimulated by these closer relations, because students were closely monitored and supported by staff who knew them well.

Overview on effects of SLCs

Overall, it may be concluded that across the seven effect areas, SLCs impacted on two of these to an appreciable degree: staff-student relations and student-student relations. Key factors for the former appeared to be fewer teachers met by students and the assignment of staff to SLCs, so that teachers and students could extend their mutual knowledge of one another. The increased amount of time students spent in one another's company, along with schools' efforts to boost SLC cohesion, was probably a key factor in boosting the quality of peer relations.

Despite the positive outcomes in these two areas, it has to be noted that SLCs generally registered fewer and less tangible impacts across the seven effect areas than the themed programmes. This may have implications for how HSE may want to prioritise its resources and further developmental work. In particular, impacts in five of the effect areas received few testimonies. Reasons for the limited evidence of impact in these areas may include:

- 1 The research methods may not have been sufficiently extensive and penetrating to observe outcomes from complex but less concrete social processes – observational data and more in-depth ethnographic techniques were probably required;
- 2 For similar reasons, participants probably found it harder to perceive and attribute behavioural and cultural changes to wider scale social phenomena;
- 3 In several sites, insufficient time had elapsed to allow the SLCs to 'bed in' to the institutions and produce the effects claimed for them (e.g. the

communities at Opal had only been in place for four terms);

- 4 In some cases, the SLCs that were implemented may be seen as only partial versions of the complete vision of small learning 'communities' (e.g. the Pearl model did not embrace the crucially important curriculum or teaching and learning facet of school life); and
- 5 Most importantly, the SLCs did not yet constitute or even approximate SWAS, since efforts to devolve decision-making to the sub-units were, at the very best, in their infancy.

Until these issues are addressed, the full effects of SLCs will not become evident.

9.4 TWO TUTORIAL SYSTEMS

Two tutorial systems that ran in conjunction with the SLC structures at Pearl and Opal were deemed to have generated some beneficial outcomes. Before concluding this overview of effects, we outline the drift of the perceived benefits and consequential gains of these two approaches to providing tutorial support.

It has been noted on various occasions in the report that each Pearl student was a member of a vertical tutor group. Interviewees portrayed relations within them as very friendly and supportive. They were widely perceived to be valuable by younger students. Those in Years 7 and 8 often described making friends with older students. For many, this clearly helped to dissipate perceptions of older teenagers as threatening strangers:

'I didn't really want it to [change to vertical tutor groups] because I was like worried about the Year 11s because like they're bigger than me. But now it's like you've made friends with the Year 11s so you don't really get "oh I don't want to go to tutor today in case of the big Year 11s". But they're not really that scary.'

It also carried more immediate practical benefits: 'you can go to them if you're stuck on homework or anything and they can help you'. Getting help with bullying was mentioned by another younger student: 'I think it is actually helpful with bullying because say if you're getting bullied you can ask like older people who are already like Year 10s or Year 11s who may already have been bullied in Year 7 and Year 8, ask them what you can do.' Older students were also seen as facilitating leisure activities that perhaps demanded a more experienced peer to organise: 'we're going to do the Race for Life with each other and we're going to like do like other stuff to raise money for it.' Furthermore, the vertical nature of the tutor groups allowed the younger ones to hear about aspects of the educational system that they would

have to engage with in the near future. Asked what he thought of the tutor groups, this Year 8 boy replied:

'I think – yes, it's good. Yes, it is good because then you get to know stuff like what you're going to do when you're in your GCSE you get to know stuff from other people. But then again it feels a bit weird because like they talk about higher stuff and we're like 'what's going on?'. But it is fun because you get to bond with other people and you know what's going on and stuff.'

A Year 10 girl, who occasionally found the younger ones immature and tiresome, nevertheless confirmed the willingness of the older ones to assist the younger ones with their work:

'... you like get to know people in different years and there are some things that you do help them with, like their homework when they're like "oh I don't know this". So you do sit there and say "I know that, do you want me to explain it." And you do do that. You do help out and that.'

There were also signs that the older students were beginning to act as important role models for the younger learners.

Students also indicated that they were able to approach either their tutor or their community learning leader with any problems and that their tutors, who were often depicted as knowing them well, were keeping a watchful eye on them. The learning conversation, as part of the tutorial package, was also cited as a useful aid to students' learning and sense of progress. Overall, the levels of support for the vertical tutor system at Pearl were compelling.

Opal operated a 'learning families' approach to tutor groups, which involved a wide range of staff (e.g. administrators and support staff, as well as teachers) acting as learning family guides and meeting a small group of students on most days. The groups were made up of between 8–12 students and, because they were organised within their communities, they were mixed years (e.g. Years 7 and 8 students were to be found in the same learning families, as were Years 9, 10 and 11). Students at Opal often appreciated the small size of the groups, which allowed them to express their points more freely and in a more personal way: 'you can have more individual time. So the teacher like focuses on one person.' Like their counterparts at Pearl, they also thought that meeting students from older years was beneficial: 'it's really good, because you think Year 10s and 11s or whatever years are above you, are like completely different. But when you're in the room with them, everyone is the same.' Similarly, the process of sharing insights across the year groups was often held to be useful: 'you can help them by what they have gone through already with having

being a year above you and you can help them, because they're one or two years below you. Tell them what to expect.'

Several mentioned how they worked together well and cooperated more than in the previous tutor groups which were larger.

However, while most appreciated the system, some students felt that their learning guides were not helpful. Some guides were criticised for not being fully apprised of situations. One student remarked that her learning guide was 'away with the fairies'. Others considered that there was a degree of buck-passing between teachers and learning guides: 'and whenever you ask a teacher about a problem, they always say 'go to your learning guide' and when you ask your learning guide they say, 'did you ask your teacher?' These criticisms may indicate teething problems, as the system was still only in its second

year, and most students did appear to have positive views on the learning family system, with the following comment summing up the common perception well:

'I prefer having like more like mixed age but less people, because if you have less people then you get more individual time with your tutor, so then you can like discuss more things like your grades and levels. And then with the mixed age it means you get to know more people and you get to socialise a bit more. So that's good as well.'

Consequently, the benefits arising from such tutor group systems should be seen alongside the positive effects summarised above for the themed programmes and SLCs. Taken together, they point to the HSS project's successes in encouraging innovations that help students benefit from a more human scale experience in their secondary schools.

10

A STUDENT VOICE AGENDA FOR HUMAN SCALE EDUCATION?

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In the course of answering questions about HSS developments and school life in general, most students also volunteered remarks that conveyed their sense of the school-related issues that were particularly important to them. As part of our analyses of the interviews (including the paired discussions), we searched through the 126 transcripts and identified all those comments that signalled – explicitly or implicitly – their personal priorities and concerns in relation to school. By trawling through this collection of comments, we developed a coding frame consisting of 33 different types of issues and concerns. Each comment was then assigned to one or more of these 33 categories.

Before concluding the report, we set out the results from this particular investigation into students' own school-related priorities and concerns. We believe the results offer insights into the things about school that really matter to students. Additionally, they illuminate and highlight those aspects of schools that students feel warrant further consideration and development. Given that they were voiced in the context of conversations about human scale education, these perceptions can be taken to represent a student perspective on what the agenda for HSE should incorporate and prioritise. In that respect, the findings offer an opportunity to compare and contrast the HSS agenda, as selected and defined by HSE, with one that is articulated by students. Would they embrace areas for development such as SLCs, themed programmes, student voice/participation and greater local community involvement? Or would they spotlight different issues that matter more to them?

In maintaining that this data and analysis can shed light on student issues, it is readily conceded that the sample from which the results are drawn is not representative of the larger population of secondary school students, nor is it even representative of the students in the six case study schools. For example, as we explained in chapter 1, the sample is heavily biased towards Year 7 and 8 students. It is likely that a sample that was representative of all the year

groups would have presented a different picture to the one sketched here. It should also be acknowledged that while the questions we asked in the interviews left ample scope for interviewees to choose the issues they wanted to focus on, the responses volunteered by students should be seen in the context of a conversation that was structured around themes that were selected in advance by the researchers. However, in spite of these drawbacks, we believe the results offer a frequently overlooked perspective from a reasonably broad collection of individual students.

10.2 THE BROAD PICTURE OF STUDENTS' PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS

Table 10.1 shows the 33 categories of students' school-related priorities and concerns, alongside the number of comments assigned to each category. Obviously, each student could give expression to the issue more than once.

Two specific types of priority/concern dominated the agenda. These were that school was a vitally important arena in which students made and sustained friendships and that disruptive behaviour made it difficult for teachers to teach and students to learn in many lessons. Bullying was the third most frequently cited issue or concern. In purely numerical terms, therefore, an HSS project that addressed the issues that matter to most students would focus heavily on school as an arena for friendship-making, disruptive behaviour and bullying.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were only three comments indicating that a themed curriculum was considered preferable and important. There was only one more for those who believed that a level of unpredictability in the curriculum was stimulating. Similarly, schools that recognise achievement and offer rewards also attracted little support as an important area of concern. Again, in simple numerical terms, it is striking that five of the six case study schools prioritised cross-curricular projects in themed programmes as one of their main HSS innovations, yet only three comments from students

endorsed cross-curricular approaches as a preference or priority. In contrast, 26 of the comments highlighted a preference for a subject-based curriculum. This suggests that if students had been consulted about HSS developments, cross-curricular themes would not have got onto the change agenda.

While there were 29 contributions that referred to preferences for small communities and environment (including student base classrooms), there were 51 stressing a desire to meet a wide variety of teachers and subjects and 50 comments welcoming bigger environments and schools that afford opportunities to meet more people and access a wider array of amenities. These results prompt the question, who has a problem with large schools? If the data is to be believed, some students may well be fazed by big schools, but more do not think they are and indeed would positively seek out the larger environments.

Before looking further at the broad trends in the results, it would seem appropriate to look in a little more detail at the leading priorities and concerns.

10.3 SCHOOL AS AN ARENA FOR MAKING AND SUSTAINING FRIENDSHIPS

Comments attesting to the importance of friendship roles at school were proportionately distributed across the sites, gender and year groups. Most students underlined the importance of having plenty of friends at school, as well as having the opportunity to make new friends. When asked if they looked forward to coming to school, a large number answered affirmatively because they could see their friends: 'I only really come to this school just to see friends.' Whereas teachers and educators predominantly see learning as the main motive for attending schools, the vast majority of students have two main motives for attending: to meet friends and to learn, though not necessarily in that order. For many young people, identifying with a circle of friends constitutes their first steps towards creating an alternative and independent social unit to their families – school seems to be the main arena in which that relationship building takes place. Although SLCs aim to foster students' identification with school-defined communities, students themselves are already actively forging identities with their own 'community' of friends. How the school-based communities interact with students' own communities is a crucial issue for young people.

The data offered numerous illustrations of the need for those who initiate, plan and deliver innovations in schools to be mindful of the utmost importance that many students attach to their social lives in schools. Students' comments indicated that:

- selection for new groups and SLCs could detach young people from their valued friendship networks, causing disappointment and distress,

Table 10.1 Number of volunteered references to issues that were important to student interviewees in 6 HSS case studies

School as a key arena for friendship-making	252
Lessons/learning spoilt by disruptive behaviour in classes	214
Important to deal with bullying/it's a concern	101
More active curriculum is needed, welcomed & effective	83
Provision of laptops/computers/other equipment	72
Kind caring teachers/teachers who respect, talk & listen	72
Pupils not being awful, stop name calling	66
Teachers offer help/differentiation/meet special needs	63
Good toilets/good, pleasant, clean built environment	61
Prefer wide variety/more lessons & teachers	51
Like to move around bigger school/more people & amenities	50
Teachers as fun/humorous	42
Teachers who know you, fewer teachers, base	36
'OK to learn' culture needed/appreciated	32
Preference (including implicit) for small environment/community	29
Avoidance of being pushed around/threatened	27
Teachers as interesting/engaging/challenging	26
Preference for subject-based curriculum	26
Fairness needed, unfair rules, overly strict	24
Good feedback to parents, schools that are open with parents	23
Other things thought important	21
School that engenders sense of belonging	21
School that listens to pupil voice	20
Classes grouped by ability are helpful	19
More help to find way/get around school	17
School that is close to home, less travel	16
Teachers not being picked on/made fun of	14
Teachers not teaching what we have already learnt	14
Teachers that count you more/treat you mature	12
Extend choice of subjects and teachers	9
School that recognises achievement/rewards	5
Preference for unpredictability of curriculum	4
Preference for cross-curriculum topics/themes	3

Note: wherever possible, direct quotes from students have been used to label categories (e.g. Teachers that count you more/treat you mature).

though some added that they quickly made new friends;

- friends were often the main reason posited for choosing a school;
- friendship patterns impinged on attitudes to learning and behaviour, so helping students identify with groups that positively endorse engagement in learning can be a crucial influence – this links with another category in table 10.1, creating an ‘OK to learn’ culture;
- schools are often viewed as one-way learning streets (namely from teachers to students), but the data shows that friends taught each other and learn from one another – how this lateral form of knowledge transfer relates to the former may be an important area to explore: ‘you don’t really find like talk to [teachers] about stuff like. You don’t really tend to ask them questions that much. You mostly ask your mates’.
- our earlier description of vertical tutor groups demonstrated the value of encouraging friendships across year groups to help dispel the worst effects of rigid group networks – Garnet used a school-wide buddying system to achieve something similar;
- making new friends increased self-confidence;
- when asked whether they felt cared for at school, several students nominated their friends as the main people who cared: ‘I think the thing that really helped me and that I really liked is my friend, who has helped me through a lot of times through school, I don’t know where I’d be without him really.’
- according to students, parents also invested much significance in the peer-to-peer social function of schools for their children;
- friends could act as unofficial mentors (or indeed as official ‘buddies’ as at Garnet), helping to improve many of the behavioural challenges posed by some young people:

‘I actually dealt well with one of the boys that was in my old school, he was a dead angry person and if he’d done well in a lesson, he’d got to have a bit of a rest, so he’d go and play dodge ball with someone. And I remember once we were all dead scared and I was dead scared because when I was little I was dead small and I wasn’t growing dead quick, like all the other people was. Now I’ve just shot right up, I was scared when he came up to me once and I was like “please don’t batter me, please, please”. Because I felt like he was a giant and he just put his hand on my shoulder, “if anyone tries to batter you, come and get me”. ... He’s really shown up to me and I was like his role-model and I always used to talk to him and if he got angry I’d just like put my hand on his shoulder and say, “calm down, don’t make it worse on yourself,” because I had been through the same thing as him, I’d got dead angry one time.

Interviewer: And does it work?

Year 7 boy: Yeah he’s calming down a lot now.’

Taking account of all these features, there is little doubt that using school as an arena for friendships is critically important for most students. As a major component of the human relations within schools, the friendship function and its potential for aiding learning would seem to offer much scope for research and development within the HSS framework.’

10.4 DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR THAT SPOILS LEARNING IN LESSONS

To qualify for classification under this category, interviews had to contain an indication that the speaker resented the disruptive behaviour for obstructing teaching and learning. Mere descriptions of disruptive behaviour were not coded. Qualifying accounts were disproportionately high at Pearl, which had 20 per cent of the student interviewees yet 30 per cent of the 214 comments. This may be coincidental, but this case study was the only one without a themed programme or an SLC that penetrated into the curriculum and teaching.

Across all of the schools, most of the comments about disruption were similar to the one below:

‘He can hardly get the class to be quiet. It’s terrible ... We all know that that teacher can’t be strict. Every time he’s strict like when he raises his voice like we all go quiet. Then he goes “OK let’s get on with the job” and we all get noisy again. So it’s a bit hard for the teacher and for the people who want to learn. So we don’t really get much work done.’

And similarly:

Interviewer: What do you think stops you from trying?

Student: I think distractions, like for instance in science, people jumping on top of the tables and I would just wish that they would just let, you know, let other people work to the best of their ability to get the education they want because you’re stopping other people from learning.’

The solutions offered by students tended to focus on better classroom control by teachers, enhanced rapport between teacher and students, teachers extending the use of humour, giving more attention to well behaved learners, reducing the use of supply teachers, and removing the offenders from the classroom, as these two Year 9 students discussed in a recording without an interviewer present:

Boy A: say for instance, a pupil is bad and the teacher will say, “oh well you can’t do a practical in science now, because of this one person ...” I think they should send them out and not let them do it, but it affects the whole class.

Boy B: And the whole class has to be stopped if something bad happens.

Boy A: And then we get told off at the end that we

haven't done enough work.

Boy B: Yeah and it's not our fault.

Boy A: I think the bad pupils should just be moved from the classroom, because then the good people will get noticed and are actually happy with the work.'

Whatever the efficacy of these suggested remedies, there is no doubting that disruptive behaviour was perceived as the number one problem for human relations and effective learning in the classroom – a problem that was mentioned twice as many times as bullying, for example. Although it was almost certainly the case that aspects of the HSS developments offered potential for improvement in this respect, the sheer scale of the problem as relayed by students suggests that it warrants a higher and more targeted profile in the HSS agenda.

In what amounted to another form of disruption to learning, group cultures in some schools imposed minimal work norms and demands on individuals. As a result, students who enthusiastically engaged in the learning processes ran the risk of being taunted and ridiculed as 'boffs', 'swots' or 'keener beaners'. Some interviewees said that they had to restrict their interest and motivation levels in lessons in order to avoid transgressing group work norms and attracting abuse. References to such problems, along with any accounts of classroom cultures that were appreciated for establishing high-level work norms, were coded under the category, 'OK to learn culture needed or appreciated' (32 comments). Clearly, creating 'OK to learn cultures' in classes would seem an essential part of nurturing human relations that permit and encourage young people to be excited about learning. As such, innovations aimed at addressing the disruptive behaviour that suppresses the emergence of positive learning cultures would appear to resonate very closely with HSE's commitment to meeting the individual learner's needs in the context of supportive communities (namely, in this case, the 'class' itself as a community with key norms and values).

10.5 BULLYING

A similar conclusion could be reached for bullying, which received substantially fewer references than the previous two categories, but still amounted to the third most frequently cited concern identified by students. The number of comments was slightly elevated at Pearl. The frequency of the comments did not decline as the SLC developments progressed, since the vast majority of references about bullying were cited in the Stage 3 and 4 research visits, though on both occasions, a 'bullying awareness' week preceded the visits so the issue may have been at the forefront of interviewees' minds.

Generally, the focus of concerns about bullying included stories or fears about being bullied or

accentuated comments on the schools' propensity (or lack of it) to deal with it firmly. Racist bullying was cited.

Closely connected to the bullying comments was a separate category for concerns about fellow students who were verbally aggressive, rude and name-calling peers without it actually amounting to bullying. These remarks were spread fairly proportionately across the schools, year groups and genders. There were 66 such comments, which were ranked in seventh place on the list of students' priorities and concerns. Greater mutual respect and consideration between students was often sought.

A third category (with 22 comments) alluded to concerns about being pushed around and intimidated in an indiscriminate manner. These often cited the discomfort of being pushed and squashed in narrow corridors and doorways, not uncommon during lunchtime and in bus queues:

'... maybe improve the bullying issues, because quite a lot of people in the lines will push in to get first, because usually, if you line up for a Pasta King or something in about ten minutes after the bell rang, it's quite a long line, but it will take about 20 minutes to get to the front of it and get something because people continuously push in the line.'

Interestingly, these types of concern were predominantly expressed at Topaz and Opal, though in the latter's case they virtually disappeared after the move to the new building with its more open spaces and staggered lunch-time arrangements, along with new toilet locations and layouts.

It may be pertinent to note that if these three categories had been combined to form a broader one reflecting 'bullying and anti-social behaviour from peers', it would have approached the frequencies of the two leading concerns, 'school as an arena for friendships' and 'disruptive behaviour that diminishes learning'.

10.6 A MORE ACTIVE CURRICULUM AND LEARNING STYLE

The fourth category in table 10.1 covered statements that indicated that a more active curriculum and learning style were needed, welcomed or deemed especially effective. Such comments often prioritised practical tasks that aid successful learning (e.g. doing experiments in science, making artefacts), alternatives to copy writing, using games or role play, investigations, school trips, more group work, movement and hands-on activities ('more standing up stuff') and 'do stuff visually, kinaesthetically', or as one Year 8 girl summed it up:

'More activities, because if you just have like one lesson completely doing the same thing, although

it's helpful, but if ... some kids in our class have like, get bored easily. So if we have like different activities, helping us with the same subject, it would make us move about more and then making our brain think quicker.'

Students at Sapphire and Turquoise were more likely to express a preference for a more active curriculum, but those at Topaz were less likely to mention a preference.

The high ranking of this category (83 comments), compared to 'preferences for cross-curriculum topics' (3 comments), lends weight to our earlier interpretations that active learning was more of a motivating factor for students than themed project-based curricula. Furthermore, it was perceived to be an effective learning strategy, as well as an enjoyable one. This may suggest that future HSS projects should accentuate active and kinaesthetic learning more than themed curricular approaches.

10.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF RESOURCES AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Another important priority considered to be instrumental in facilitating effective learning was the provision of hardware (72 comments) such as laptops, computer suites, whiteboards, lockers (providing they were big enough), library resources, technical facilities like lighting for drama and dance, language labs, practice rooms for music, science, technology and PE resources and other equipment. Making laptops available to learners was highly regarded, especially for students who had not got access to one at home. They were seen as vital for researching topics independently. However, some students were critical of the reliability and technical capacities of their netbooks and tablets:

'... [netbooks are] not very good and ... they're slow, they're pretty rubbish and the internet's crap on them, and that's the other thing ... in this school near enough every site on the internet is blocked, so I'm trying to do research in music and stuff, about different artists and I can't get onto any site, the only thing that's unblocked is that Wikipedia and it's ... pointless.'

Lockers for storing books, files and specialist kit were also much appreciated. Being in an environment where the resources levels were high and up to date seemed to give students a lift, almost a morale boosting effect that made them feel proud of their school.

Unsurprisingly, positive comments about the contribution of such equipment were much more likely to be located in the two newly built schools, Opal and Topaz. Also, boys were more likely to stress this priority.

A related category, conveying the importance attached to a clean and pleasant architectural environment also scored highly (61 comments). The quality, odour and cleanliness of the toilets were frequently cited concerns. Spacious classrooms, generous windows, colourful décor, rooms at a comfortable temperature, the absence of litter, plants and greenery, multiple outlets for drinks and food and a design that increases visibility, and therefore student safety, were all aspects of school building design that were highly valued. One Year 8 girl graphically traced the causal chain from the design and state of schools to the behaviour of children:

'... because all the Year 6s come from the old school and it was a bit messy and you had rubbish everywhere and everyone was like bullying each other and you could see it happening. And all the teachers were just like not where they should be. They were getting to their own things, so all the children were like animals.'

A relatively large percentage of the comments relating to the environment, especially the positive ones, were voiced by students at Opal. Critical ones were more likely to be found in Turquoise, where there was no prospect of a new build in the foreseeable future.

10.8 PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS ABOUT TEACHERS

Sitting in equal fourth place in table 10.1 is a category that prioritised a certain type of teacher. In all, there were eight categories that related to teachers. The two most frequently registered ones were 'kind and caring teachers who are easy to talk to and who respect and listen to students' (72 comments) and 'teachers who offer help and meet individual needs, including special needs' (63 comments). In short, these two categories represent students' main priorities in the qualities they value and seek in their teachers. Proportionately, the numbers for the first category, 'kind and caring teachers' were slightly down at Topaz and slightly up at Pearl. On the same basis, the second category, 'teachers who offer individual help' was relatively low at Garnet and Turquoise and comparatively high at Topaz and Opal.

The third most frequently cited observation on positive teacher characteristics referred to teachers having a sense of humour and the ability to inject an element of fun in a lesson (42 comments).

Interestingly, the teacher quality championed by the HSE and Sizer (cited in Tasker, 2008) 'that a teacher should know a child well' earned some endorsement from students in the category 'teachers who know you' (36 comments), but overall this was less prominent in students' perceptions of what is important in teachers than the categories mentioned above. Obviously, to some extent, these

differences can be attributed to the different vocabularies that young people choose to use and 'being kind' could easily reveal a teacher's close knowledge of the student. Nonetheless, there may be significant policy implications to be teased out from the fact that more learners highlighted qualities like being kind, caring, respectful, willing to talk and listen, and offering individual help as crucial for teachers, than those who valued teachers having a detailed knowledge of them.

10.9 STUDENT VOICE ON A HUMAN SCALE AGENDA?

So, to what extent does the HSS change agenda coincide with the student priorities outlined here? In chapter 1, we saw how HSS invited bids in five development areas: SLCs, learning, student participation, local communities and human scale new buildings.

Important aspects of the innovations concerned with **learning** certainly correspond with students' priorities and concerns. In particular, many students offered endorsements to the active learning strategies that were applied, particularly in several themed programmes. The cross-curricular themed dimensions received less support, with only three references to a preference for cross-curriculum topics, yet 26 comments expressed a preference for a subject-based curriculum. The student data would suggest that tackling disruptive behaviour and creating 'OK to learn' cultures should be added to the learning change agenda.

Key features of **human scale new buildings** were also reflected in students' testimonies. They often prioritised the availability of computers and other equipment, as well as valuing the open and spacious design of new buildings, which facilitated greater safety and security.

The support for developments in **student participation** (20 comments) and **local community involvement** was more modest. There was some approval of schools that were open and communicative with parents, but nothing relating to wider community participation.

Most significantly, the numbers of students who expressed priorities that signalled a preference for **smaller scale environments** or communities was mediocre at best (29 comments). Furthermore, almost half of these comments were articulated by students at Turquoise, where the kind of apprehensiveness typically associated with primary pupils about to make the transition to secondary schools was expressed by students anticipating the move to the separate Year 9–11 site. In contrast, more students articulated an appreciation of bigger communities in which they could enjoy the opportunity to meet more people and access more amenities (50 comments).

For many, if not most students, site size in itself was not a concern. Similarly, whereas 36 students (mostly in Years 7 and 8) implied a preference for being taught by fewer teachers or in a 'base' with several lessons by the same teacher, 51 indicated that they preferred a wide variety of lessons and teachers. Hence, any preference for small scale groupings in secondary schools, whether in the form of SLCs or generalist teaching models, was voiced by a relatively small number of students. Of course, it is possible that the measures to provide students with smaller scale environments had helped students to feel comfortable with larger schools, and thereby reduced the likelihood of the latter being cited as a concern. Nevertheless, there is very little in the data to suggest that size alone had been a substantial problem for students. For most young people, the primary or middle school model was a thing of the past and they seemed unperturbed by the demands of larger scale schools and a diverse range of teachers.

Other priorities and concerns were deemed more pressing than the size issue. It appeared that uppermost among these was the need for schools to recognise that the making and sustaining of friendships was a key incentive for attendance and that this interpersonal social function had an important role to play in aiding effective learning. Secondly, disruptive behaviour in lessons was widely seen as the major obstacle to successful and efficient teaching and learning in schools. Thirdly, bullying and other forms of anti-social behaviour towards peers continued to be a major concern for students. Fourthly, many students would like to see an investment in policies that could lead to more teachers exhibiting qualities such as kindness, a caring attitude, approachability and the propensity to offer differentiated individual help in learning.

On the basis of this evidence, with all the qualifications of the skewed nature of the sample, a student voice on schools that prioritise both effective learning and effective human relations would probably seek HSS-styled developments in the following areas:

- active learning, with minimal disruptive behaviour, in supportive, 'OK to learn' cultural contexts;
- human scale buildings with good levels of resources and facilities;
- research and development into practices that maximise social networking opportunities at school and optimise these for effective learning;
- strategies for pre-empting and dealing with bullying and other forms of peer-to-peer anti-social behaviour;
- and teacher education policies that provide more teachers with the qualities of kindness, a caring attitude, approachability and the propensity to offer differentiated individual help in learning.

Of course, it may be the case that, for some students,

one means of achieving these outcomes would be smaller scale environments, whether SLCs or curriculum programmes that reduce the number of teachers the students meet. The evidence throughout the report suggests that a considerable number of young people would opt for this, if given the choice. However, the results also indicate that a large proportion of students would not make that

choice. Clearly, to meet their needs, human scale innovations may be required that deliver the priorities as highlighted by students through secondary school provision that allows for a full exploration of what a large school and a diverse range of teachers has to offer, without compromising the primacy of human relations.

11

SUMMARY

HSS PROJECT AND EVALUATION

The HSS project (2006–2009) established a network of 39 English secondary schools that developed initiatives to implement various human scale education practices such as SLCs, personalised learning or new human scale organisational structures as part of the BSF programme. These schools received modest grants, consultancy support and opportunities to attend conferences and visit other schools.

The evaluation explored the innovations implemented by the schools and examined their impacts, especially on students. The researchers conducted 234 interviews with staff and students during annual visits to six case study schools.

HSS DEVELOPMENTS AND UNDERPINNING VALUES

These schools implemented:

- a range of cross-curricular themed programmes that included projects, active learning, a skills-based curriculum, presentations to parents;
- measures which reduced the number of teachers that students met;
- various approaches to providing SLCs;
- and new tutor group systems.

Notwithstanding these successes, there remained several reasons why the six schools fell short of providing the examples of full human scale schools that HSS aspired to foster:

- limits to the implementation of proposals were evident in all schools;
- extending student participation and local community involvement was not usually embraced by the initiatives;
- targeted developments in learning in Years 9–11 were rare;
- certain curriculum areas, especially for high-attaining students, were not incorporated.

The values underpinning the developments reflect to some extent those espoused in HSE publications. Convergence was closest in relation to:

- the establishment of good relationships;
- a safe and secure environment;
- the aspiration for students' achievement in their personal education and examinations.

Some departures from HSE and school values were evident in respect of local community (beyond parental) involvement, democratic decision-making, SWAS as distinct from SLCs and student selection for different curricula at Key Stage 3.

FACILITATING AND INHIBITING FACTORS

Two main factors enabled the innovations to be introduced:

- the vision and leadership of the headteacher and SLT;
- the support of enough staff willing to take responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of developments.

Other key factors allowed the initiatives to progress:

- continued leadership by senior staff;
- growing support across the whole school staff;
- new buildings;
- the formation of designated teams for themed programmes.

The inhibiting factors were both internal (e.g. inappropriate school buildings) and external (e.g. deficit budgets or National Challenge status). There were also issues regarding negative staff attitudes, which caused staff difficulties and added to their workload or stress. Teaching cross-curricular programmes can be demanding for teachers, especially when teaching outside their own specialisms, and can lead to concerns about future career prospects. Similarly, teachers working in SLCs had anxieties about the maintenance of links with colleagues who were in other departments.

EFFECTS OF THEMED PROGRAMMES

Themed programmes impacted on five effect areas to a significant degree: student-student relations; school-parent relations; staff-student relations;

student motivation; and quality of learning. Impacts in the latter three areas were especially pronounced. Factors that had considerable bearing on the level of impacts in these three areas were the varying quality of the teachers assigned to the groups, personalised learning facilitated by closer teacher-student relations, more time for teachers and students to bond, active learning methods (more so than themed curricula) and enlisting greater parental involvement.

Themed programmes were heavily associated with Year 7, though not all Year 7 students would have chosen this approach had they been given a choice. Furthermore, older students often favoured a wider diversity of teachers and subject specialists than cross-curriculum models.

EFFECTS OF SLCs

SLCs impacted on two effect areas to an appreciable degree: staff-student relations and student-student relations. Key factors for the former appeared to be fewer teachers met by students and the assignment of staff to SLCs so that levels of mutual knowledge of one another could be extended. The increased amount of time students spent in one another's company, along with the schools' efforts to boost SLC cohesion, was probably a key factor in driving up the quality of peer relations.

SLCs generally registered fewer and less tangible impacts than the themed programmes. In particular, impacts in five of the effect areas received few testimonies. Reasons for the limited evidence of impact in these areas may include:

- insufficient time had elapsed to allow SLCs to 'bed in' to the institutions;
- in some cases, the implemented SLCs only amounted to partial versions of the full vision (e.g. excluding curriculum elements);
- SLCs did not yet constitute 'schools-within-a-school' since efforts to devolve decision-making to the communities were in their infancy.

Until these issues are addressed, the full effects of SLCs may not become evident.

Two new tutorial systems were also implemented: one based on vertical tutor groups and another on small learning families. Both of these were found to offer several benefits to students. Together with the positive effects of themed programmes and SLCs, they point to the project's successes in encouraging innovations that help many students benefit from a more human scale experience in their secondary schools.

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN SCALE SCHOOLS

In conclusion, it must be noted that for many young people in this study, school size in itself was not a significant problem. On the contrary, many welcomed a bigger school with more people to meet and more facilities to access. For most students, other concerns were more pressing. Uppermost among these was the recognition that friendship formation was a key incentive for attendance and that this interpersonal social function had an important role to play in aiding effective learning. Secondly, disruptive behaviour in lessons was widely seen as the major obstacle to successful teaching. Thirdly, bullying and other anti-social behaviour towards peers continued to be a major concern. Fourthly, many students would like to see more teachers exhibiting such qualities as kindness, approachability and the propensity to offer differentiated individual help in learning.

Relationships with one another and with their teachers are at the centre of students' concerns and if students themselves could contribute to the shape of future HSS initiatives, it is likely that these relationships would be prominent in their requests. In this sense, the students' perspective reinforces the central values that underpin educating on a human scale: the primacy of human relationships, respect for the individual, and the importance of community.

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APPENDIX 1

LOGIC MODELS

THE GARNET SCHOOL - BASELINE (2007)

(We have replaced the school's name for the pilot pathway with UPC = Underachiever's Pathway Community)

Facilitating factors & values

- 1 Head's leadership & values
- 2 Incentives for staff to teach more
- 3 School improvement track record
- 4 Pastoral strengths
- 5 Sufficient staff support for Pathways
- 6 UPC suite
- 7 Highly skilled and dedicated UPC staff

- 8 Better selection of students
- 9 SLT group's openness & reflexivity
- 10 Enough parental support
- 11 Strong leadership of UPC
- 12 Student support for UPC
- 13 Supportive LA



Resource inputs

- 1 Restructured SLT & Pathways DG
- 2 Visits to other schools
- 3 Building UPC suite
- 4 Review of problems: underachievement, one-sized curriculum, school size
- 5 HSE & CES movement
- 6 Staff learning community



Other contexts

- 1 Oversubscribed, popular, expanding school
- 2 Full service extended
- 3 Former beacon school



Changes

- 1 Y7 achievement-ability related pathways with different curricula
- 2 UPC: SWAS elements, fewer teachers who teach less than one subject, innovative tutor roles, focus on student-staff relations, new learning, independent learning, close working with parents, themed work but later more subject focus, timetable flexibility, exhibition days, portfolio presentations, possible graduation ceremonies
- 3 Possible vertical pastoral groups
- 4 Extending student voice
- 5 Beyond UPC, as pilot intend to develop other pathways, middle years IB, reward systems?
- 6 Possible shorter KS3



Outputs

- Positive**
- 1 Safe and happy students at school
 - 2 School in step with young people
 - 3 More stimulating fun learning
 - 4 Improving motivation towards school
 - 5 Personal & social development
 - 6 Reduced truancy & exclusions
 - 7 Better staff-student relations
 - 8 Pupils achieving success
 - 9 Takes challenging pupils out of other pathways
 - 10 Better student-student relations
- Negative**
- 11 Resentment of UPC privileges



Outcomes

- 1 Improved attainment
- 2 Improved life chances
- 3 People with control & organisational skills
- 4 Self-confident people
- 5 Socially & personally well-adjusted young people
- 6 People with high self-esteem; aware of their potential
- 7 People with a love of learning
- 8 People who value education

Challenging factors & values

- 1 Deficit budget, limited changes
- 2 UPC expensive
- 3 Shortage of related CPD and preparation time
- 4 Pressures to maintain numbers on roll
- 5 Recognised pastoral strengths weaken case for change
- 6 Some students & teachers resent UPC special treatment (divisive?)
- 7 Concerns about UPC as SWAS (e.g. variable standards)
- 8 Too many challenging students
- 9 Difficulties in housing other pathways

- 10 Innovation overload
- 11 Difficulties in parent councils for all
- 12 Some staff critical of pathways, selection criteria of UPC
- 13 Heavy demands on UPC staff, not all up to it and limits on recruiting staff for UPC
- 14 Limits to student voice
- 15 Difficulties for teachers coming to UPC
- 16 Green pathway lacks identity, drive and seen as 'bottom' group
- 17 Some parents unhappy with UPC
- 18 Lack of time, energy to develop other pathways
- 19 Duplicate structures



THE GARNET SCHOOL - STAGE 2 (2008)

(We have replaced the school's name for the pilot pathway with UPC = Underachiever's Pathway Community)

Facilitating factors & values

Past

- 1 Smaller classes
- 2 Few teachers more time with UPC pupils
- 3 UPC suite
- 4 Commitment and skills of few teachers
- 5 Key role of leader and support staff
- 6 Themed curriculum
- 7 UPC leader's belief in small units, close knowledge of pupils and parental contact

Changes

- 8 Developing all pathways at same time
- 9 Belief in under-achievement as grouping criterion
- 10 Opposition to one-sized curriculum & belief in different pathways as personalised learning
- 11 Stronger monitoring & evaluation



Resource inputs

- 1 Decision to close UPC pilot
- 2 Proposals for future pathways
- 3 Lessons from pilot for future pathways
- 4 Visit to school with pathways
- 5 Proposal for each pathway to have leader
- 6 Student consultations on choice for Y7



Other contexts

- 1 Oversubscribed, popular, expanding school
- 2 Full service extended
- 3 Former beacon school



Changes

- 1 **Previously** Few teachers, more contact time with UPC groups, but overall more teachers than intended; smaller classes; themed curriculum; kinaesthetic learning.
- 2 **Current** No Y8 UPC intakes; Y9 UPC settled for core with specialists, together for some subjects; get extra help for SATs which are being prioritised; UPC pupils not in suite/base; student voice developed generally
- 3 **Next** Proposed starting in Y7-5 new non-core pathways for 60 pupils in each: linguistic (middle year IB), sports science, technology, enterprise & creative; aim to include UPC elements: themes, integrated humanities (fewer teachers), learning zone presentations, closer involvement of parents



Outputs

- Positive - past UPC**
- 1 Personal & social development for some
 - 2 Better staff-student relations
 - 3 More stimulating, enjoyable learning
 - 4 Better behaviour by some
 - 5 Better motivation by some
 - 6 Pupil sense of belonging & security
 - 7 Enhanced parental contact
 - 8 Challenging pupils out of other pathways
 - 9 Transfer of better teaching by UPC teachers

Changed circumstances

- 10 Other teachers get difficult pupils
 - 11 Some pupils win, some lose
- Negative**
- 12 Resentment of UPC privileges
 - 13 Insufficient impact on KS2-3 scores
 - 14 Sense of wasted effort by some

Outcomes

- 1 Improved attainment
- 2 Improved life chances
- 3 People with control & organisational skills
- 4 Self-confident people
- 5 Socially & personally well-adjusted young people
- 6 People with high self-esteem, aware of their potential
- 7 People with a love of learning
- 8 People who value education

Challenging factors & values

Past

- 1 UPC too separate
- 2 Little impact on KS3 scores
- 3 Weak management structure
- 4 SWAS rejected
- 5 Bad behaviours
- 6 Not radical enough
- 7 Deficit budget

- 8 Teaching UPC difficult, disliked, hence more teachers than intended

Changes

- 14 No consultation on UPC decision
- 15 Most staff pleased with UPC closure
- 16 Parent & pupil mixed response
- 17 Many obstacles to UPC transferring
- 18 Student voice stronger than teacher voice
- 19 Key UPC teachers regret closure and wastage
- 20 Too many humanities non-specialists
- 21 Base tutor contact gone



THE TURQUOISE SCHOOL - BASELINE (2007)

(We have replaced the school's name for the Y7&8 curriculum programme with TP = Themed Programme)

Facilitating factors & values

- 1 Head's leadership & values
- 2 SMT creativity & commitment
- 3 Enough teachers with drive, support & capacity volunteering
- 4 Supportive local community
- 5 Flexibility on when can take exams
- 6 Need to address problems (eg limited independent learning, some disruptive boys, market situation, weak KS3 scores)
- 7 Collegiate creativity & strong group ethos among foundation teachers
- 8 Most parents supportive
- 9 Most teachers supportive
- 10 Supportive funding
- 11 Strength of the arts
- 12 Quality of behaviour & KS2 transition teams



Resource inputs

- 1 Review of multiple problems (eg split site, learning shortcomings)
- 2 Visits to other schools
- 3 Planning time
- 4 Voluntary leadership of TP
- 5 CP initiatives and architect meetings
- 6 Changed school day to allow teacher discussions



Other contexts

- 1 History of school as two sites
- 2 Falling rolls
- 3 Arts college



Changes

- 1 SWAS at Y7-8 within school house system
- 2 Foundation curriculum with TP (arts, hum & tech) and RSA competencies/skills (OCA co-dev. network)
- 3 Integrated projects
- 4 New learning methods (inc. personalised learning)
- 5 Condensed KS3
- 6 Fewer teachers through TP
- 7 More parental contact
- 8 New leadership structure
- 9 Making the arts central
- 10 Increased student voice



Outputs

- Positive**
- 1 Students enjoy learning, more motivated
 - 2 Improved quality of learning
 - 3 Closer bonding/knowledge of students & colleagues
 - 4 More personalised learning
 - 5 Students more in control of own learning
 - 6 Happier reinvigorated staff
 - 7 Students' sense of belonging
 - 8 Better behaviour
 - 9 Improved quality of homework and creative output from students
 - 10 Parents more involved in students' learning
 - 11 More group activity
 - 12 Improved student voice
 - 13 Friendship patterns



Outcomes

- 1 Lifelong confident independent learners/control own learning
- 2 Adaptable and flexible workers
- 3 People with life skills
- 4 More creative young people
- 5 Group working skills
- 6 People with broader horizons
- 7 Lifelong enjoyment of learning
- 8 Upward mobility
- 9 Successful marketing strategy
- 10 People who appreciate the arts
- 11 Higher self-esteem
- 12 People with better understanding of belonging

Challenging factors & values

- 1 Poor state of buildings
- 2 Deficit budget
- 3 Some teachers critical and getting teachers to teach outside their specialisms, defending subjects and reluctance of staff to volunteer, teachers' concerns that TP not covering subject ground
- 4 Teachers' career concerns over not teaching GCSE & A-Levels
- 5 Some teachers struggling with TP & changing practice
- 6 Some parents critical, want separate subjects
- 7 TP teachers' concerns that they lack the subject knowledge and skills
- 8 Boys' behaviour problems
- 9 Lack of recent innovation
- 10 Concern about creating a separate school
- 11 Split-site and transport problems
- 12 Shortage of time for meetings, planning & CPD
- 13 Some pupils want separate subjects
- 14 Many other initiatives
- 15 Insufficient staff & assistants
- 16 Preparation for Y9?



THE TURQUOISE SCHOOL - STAGE 2 (2008)

(We have replaced the school's name for the Y7&8 curriculum programme with TP = Themed Programme)

<p>Facilitating factors & values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Head's leadership & values 2 SMT creativity & commitment 3 Enough teachers with commitment and strong teamwork 4 Supportive local community 5 Most parents supportive 6 Most teachers supportive 		<p>Resource inputs →</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 OCA: pilot school, courses, documentation, money for planning time 2 Ofsted: pressure for evidence of impact on standards 3 Big inputs on curriculum design and planning by two leading teachers then others (often not resourced) 	<p>Other contexts ↗</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 History of school as two sites 2 Falling rolls 3 Arts college 		<p>Challenging factors & values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Poor state of buildings 2 Deficit budget 3 Loss of delegated powers and adverse staffing 4 Some teachers concerned about 'subjects' 5 Some teachers struggling with generalist teaching & changing practice 6 Some parents remain critical, want separate subjects
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Quality of behaviour & KS2 transition teams 8 OCA status gives credibility 9 Being visited gives innovations status 10 Improving pupil group 11 Ofsted supportive and gave endorsement 		<p>Changes →</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 SWAS-like Y7-8 but not separate, plus houses 2 Pupils have more TP teachers & more specialist arts teachers 3 Foundation curriculum with TP (arts, hum. & tech.) and RSA competencies moving to OCA's 4 Clearer integrated TP projects, working on involving Eng. science (& maths) 5 New learning and assessment (OCA pilot on latter) 6 TP: mixed ability without friendship criteria, setting for core subjects 7 Working on parental contact 8 Working on student voice 9 Possible use of diploma & AQA Bacc. as continuity 10 Tighter TP leadership 	<p>Outputs →</p> <p><i>Positive</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Students enjoy learning more, motivated 2 Improved quality of learning 3 Closer bonding/knowledge of students & colleagues 4 Happier staff (modest evidence) 5 Better behaviour 6 Improved quality of homework 7 Parents more involved in students' learning 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Shortage of time/resources for meetings, planning & CPD 8 Many other initiatives 9 Preparation for Y9, a big issue 10 As is finding evidence of positive impact on standards 11 Larger class sizes
		<p>Outcomes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Lifelong, confident, independent learners/control own learning 2 Adaptable and flexible workers 3 People with life skills 4 More creative young people 5 Group working skills 6 People with broader horizons 7 Lifelong enjoyment of learning 8 Upward mobility 9 Successful marketing strategy 10 People who appreciate the arts 11 Higher self-esteem 12 People with better understanding of belonging to a community 13 Improved exam standards 14 Higher uptake of HE 			

THE TOPAZ SCHOOL - BASELINE (2007)

(We have replaced the school's name for the Y7&8 curriculum programme with TP = Themed Programme)

Facilitating factors & values

- 1 ICT & elearning
- 2 Reputation for innovation
- 3 New building
- 4 Flexibility on when can take exams
- 5 Head's values
- 6 Strong on emotional intelligence

- 7 Some teacher support
- 8 Strong on student voice
- 9 Parental support
- 10 Student support
- 11 Some teachers good at relationships with students

- 12 SMT leadership & vision
- 13 Open sharing & positive learning culture in TP team
- 14 Some teachers paid more
- 15 Prior TP experience



Resource inputs

- 1 New building
- 2 ICT & elearning
- 3 Planning time
- 4 Curriculum development
- 5 Visits to schools
- 6 KS2-3 transition review
- 7 CPD



Other contexts

- 1 School is in a selective catchment area
- 2 Technology college



Changes

- 1 Y7 TP curriculum
- 2 Y7 21st-century skills
- 3 Y7 integrated topics
- 4 Y7 fewer teachers & base teacher
- 5 New learning methods
- 6 New assessment & reporting
- 7 3 academies (SWAS)
- 8 More parental contact
- 9 New leadership structure
- 10 Use of new building
- 11 Student voice development
- 12 Local community links



Outputs

- Positive**
- 1 Student ownership of areas of school/sense of belonging
 - 2 School gives children structure & meaning
 - 3 Small safe environments
 - 4 Pleasant and effective learning environment
 - 5 More meaningful & lasting relationships
 - 6 KS3 curriculum that doesn't de-skill KS2 children
 - 7 More motivated students
 - 8 Fewer students in isolation room
 - 9 Teachers know students more
 - 10 Better differentiation & personalisation
 - 11 Higher teacher satisfaction for some teachers
 - 12 Higher quality of subject teaching
- Negative**
- 13 Lower quality of subject teaching
 - 14 Poor preparation for SATs & GCSEs
 - 15 Extended student dependency
 - 16 Higher dissatisfaction for some teachers



Outcomes

- 1 Confident independent learners
- 2 Life skills
- 3 Skills for employers
- 4 Lifelong enjoyment of learning
- 5 People who are good at relationships
- 6 More human – people matter more
- 7 Successful marketing strategy as innovative school to attract more able children

Challenging factors & values

- 1 Teacher concerns about professional identities & career prospects
- 2 Teacher concerns about generalist teaching not covering specialist subjects well enough
- 3 Teacher scepticism & reluctance to volunteer
- 4 A degree of innovation fatigue
- 5 Some teachers inexperienced in student relationships

- 6 Older teachers set in their ways
- 7 Huge amount of time prepare materials and methods
- 8 Concerns about exam flexibility
- 9 TP curriculum too rushed
- 10 Limits to student voice



THE TOPAZ SCHOOL - STAGE 2 (2008)

(We have replaced the school's name for the Y7&8 curriculum programme with TP = Themed Programme)

<p>Facilitating factors & values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 ICT & elearning 2 New building = geographical identity to academies and good resources 3 Head's values 4 Teacher enjoyment in TP 5 Strong on student choices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Parental support 7 Good teacher-pupil relationships in TP 8 SMT leadership & support 9 Open sharing & positive learning culture in TP team 10 Students know each other very well in TP 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11 Better development of TP materials and liaison with subject specialists <p style="text-align: right;">→ → →</p>
<p>Resource inputs →</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 New building 2 ICT & elearning 3 Curriculum development 4 Visits to schools 	<p>Changes →</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Y7 and Y8 TP curriculum = integrated topics, some separate subjects, fewer teachers 2 21C skills now permeating school 3 Focus on skills and values 4 Some primary-trained staff 5 New learning methods 6 New assessment & reporting 7 3 academies: Y7 & 8/Y9, 10, 11 mixed = geographical areas 8 More parental contact especially by advisers in Y7 9 New leadership structure 10 Use of new building 11 Staggered day for KS5 12 Evaluation and ensuing action 	<p>Outputs →</p> <p>Positive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Student ownership of areas of school/sense of belonging 2 Pleasant and effective learning environment 3 More meaningful & lasting relationships 4 KS3 curriculum that doesn't de-skill KS2 children 5 More motivated students 6 Fewer discipline problems and students excluded 7 Teachers know students more 8 Better differentiation & personalisation 9 Higher teacher satisfaction for some teachers 10 Higher quality of teaching 11 Improved attendance <p>Negative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Transition to Y8 affected by expectations of non-TP staff 13 Some variability in quality of teaching
<p>Other contexts ↗</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 School is in a selective catchment area 2 Technology college 		<p>Outcomes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Confident independent learners 2 Life skills 3 Skills for employers 4 Lifelong enjoyment of learning 5 People who are good at relationships 6 Successful marketing strategy as innovative school to attract more able children
<p>Challenging factors & values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Some teachers still developing skills for cross-curricular teaching 2 Personal stress when teaching outside comfort zones 3 Huge amount of time to prepare materials and method 4 Need to coordinate pace of delivery for TP curriculum 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Limits to student voice 6 Space limitations in new building, especially for lunch 7 Lack of contact with other staff because of academy arrangement 	<p style="text-align: right;">← ← ←</p>

THE PEARL SCHOOL - BASELINE (2007)

Facilitating factors & values

- 1 PSMs as point of contact for pupils and parents
- 2 Communities give staff and pupils feeling of belonging
- 3 Head continually focusing on re-energising the school
- 4 Atmosphere of dynamism and experimentation, sharing experience
- 5 Pupil voice promoted through parliament and panel
- 6 Good choice of courses = more personalised curriculum, improves pupil enjoyment and motivation
- 7 Early and regular contact with parents re progress
- 8 PTA replaced by parents' forum
- 9 Tutor periods include work on study and revision skills



Resource inputs

- 1 Staff development
- 2 New posts = pastoral support managers
- 3 Planning time
- 4 Curriculum development
- 5 Increased time for senior staff to support



Other contexts

- 1 School is in a selective catchment area
- 2 Specialist school for maths and computing
- 3 Good value-added results
- 4 Increasingly academic image



Changes

- 1 Focus on leadership, rather than management
- 2 Change of structure/roles
- 3 Creation of three learning communities
- 4 Vertical tutor groups for all except 6th form
- 5 Learning leaders within each community
- 6 Community support by senior staff
- 7 Behavioural support
- 8 New school day
- 9 Learning concern alerts
- 10 Learning conversations
- 11 Pastoral support managers (PSM)
- 12 Focus on learning rather than behaviour
- 13 Curriculum for tutor periods



Outputs

- Positive**
- 1 Staff and pupils know each other better within communities
 - 2 Vertical tutor groups provide pupils with support from each other
 - 3 Raised expectations by staff and students
 - 4 Calmer atmosphere because of community support and availability of PSMs
 - 5 Greater focus on progress and target
 - 6 Some staff enjoying new tutorial role
 - 7 Improved relations with parents
 - 8 Exclusions higher because of less tolerance of poor behaviour
- Negative**
- 9 Setting less fine, so broader range of ability for teachers to deal with
 - 10 Tutors' expertise with particular year groups dissipated



Outcomes

- 1 Happy pupils who enjoy school
- 2 Good results at GCSE and other levels
- 3 Confident independent learners
- 4 Better involvement and relationships with parents

Challenging factors & values

- 1 Introduction of changes perceived as very/perhaps too rapid
- 2 Tension between community autonomy and whole school identity
- 3 Initial teacher concern about vertical TCs
- 4 Need to clarify some areas of responsibility between subject/community staff
- 5 Pupil sets not differentiated enough for some teachers
- 6 School buildings not wholly conducive to new structure
- 7 Links with parents and wider community hard to develop
- 8 Pupils need more support to become independent learners
- 9 Pupils have low aspirations/expectations
- 10 Changed school day put added pressure on teachers (and some pupils?)
- 11 Some negative impacts of vertical TCs on Y7 and Y11 pupils



Facilitating factors & values	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 PSMs as point of contact for pupils and parents 2 Communities give staff and pupils feeling of belonging 3 Head's energy and vision inspires colleagues 4 Support and training provided for staff taking on new roles, ideas shared 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Pupil voice promoted through Parliament and Panel 6 Good choice of courses = more personalised curriculum, improves pupil enjoyment and motivation 7 Early and regular contact with parents re progress 8 Tutor periods include work on study and revision skills 9 Learning leaders focus on academic progress 10 Time for consolidation of roles and structures

Resource inputs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Staff development 2 Six pastoral support managers in post

Other contexts
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 School is in a selective catchment area. 2 Specialist school for maths and computing 3 Good, value-added results 4 Increasingly academic image 5 Ofsted report 'outstanding' school

Changes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Strong leadership and vision by head and deputies 2 New structure/roles embedded 3 Learning communities, firmer identities 4 Vertical tutor groups for all except 6th form 5 Learning leaders heading up each half community 6/7 Community support by senior staff for learning and behaviour issues 8 Learning conversation central 9 Pastoral support managers actively engaged 10 Focus on learning, rather than behaviour 11 Curriculum for tutor periods 12 Parents' evenings with tutors

Outputs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Within communities, staff and pupils know each other better. 2 Vertical tutor groups provide pupils with support from each other 3 Raised expectations by staff and students 4 Issues dealt with rapidly because of community support and availability of PSMs 5 Focus on learning, esp. through learning conversations where progress and targets reviewed 6 Most staff acknowledge benefits of new system 7 Improved relations with parents 8 Some pupils excluded because of less tolerance of poor behaviour 9 Good balance between whole school consistency and community autonomy 10 Greater pupil participation in school activities

Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Happy pupils who feel safe 2 Good results at GCSE and other levels 3 Confident independent learners 4 Better relationships with parents 5 Young people who have fulfilled their potential

Challenging factors & values	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduction of changes perceived as rapid 2 Lack of time to discuss strategic issues 3 Question of responsibility between subject/community staff ongoing, but becoming clearer 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 School buildings not wholly conducive to new structure 5 Links with parents and wider community hard to develop 6 Pupils need more support to become independent learners 7 Pupils have low aspirations/expectations

THE OPAL SCHOOL - BASELINE (2007)

<p>Facilitating factors & values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Innovative, research-led SLT 2 Well articulated underpinning values 3 Enthusiastic project teachers/tutors 4 Allocated time for project research and development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Data rich environment and laptops for all teachers 6 Pupil enthusiasm for project (especially Y7) 7 Most staff supportive of changes, especially newer ones 8 Developing opportunities for student voice <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9 Support in place for 'weaker' faculties 10 Student-student and student-staff relations good in Y7 11 Core group of supportive governors 	<p>Resource inputs →</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Curriculum development 2 Planning and development time 3 New building 4 Links/visits to primary schools 5 Learning review days 6 Staff discussion time 7 CPD 8 Investment in ICT 	<p>Other contexts ↔</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Rapidly improving school 2 Enterprise college, good business links 	<p>Changes →</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Change agenda 2 Y7 cross-curricular projects 3 'Learning to learn' skills and language across school 4 Projects taught by form tutors/less staff 5 New assessments 6 Learning review days instead of parents' evenings 7 Development of student voice 8 Y7-8 as transition years 9 Better parental involvement 10 New building – 5 pods/SLCs 11 Increasing staff involvement in project work 	<p>Outputs →</p> <p>Positive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Y7 student feelings of safety and security 2 Y7 better behaviour and attitudes 3 Increased consistency across school r.e. language, skills and content 4 Better results, esp. at GCSE 5 Y7 better attendance 6 Increased parental satisfaction/attendance at review days 7 Tutors know Y7 students better 8 Better Y7 student-student relations 9 Teaching and learning in Y8 and Y9 positively influenced by Y7/project work <p>Negative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Some staff unhappy with changes 11 Lack of consistency in staff-student relations across school 	<p>Outcomes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Students who feel safe and that they belong 2 Engaged, independent learners 3 Success at GCSE 4 Skills for work 5 Consistency in staff-student relations 6 Junior school pupils and parents who want to come here 7 Raised aspirations and perceptions in the community 	<p>Challenging factors & values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Lack of support from local authority 2 Falling rolls and increase in children from deprived areas/FSMs 3 Parental and community perceptions of school, esp. r.e. size of school 4 Low parental involvement <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Student lack of respect for staff/school 6 Lack of consistency across staff 7 Some staff reluctance to engage with changes 8 Limitations of current buildings/restrictions on space while new building in progress 9 Staff-student relations not always good <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Reluctance by some staff to teach Y7 projects/try new approaches 11 Whole school spirit under-developed 12 Fears about sustainability
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Facilitating factors & values

- 1 Innovative, research-led SLT
- 2 Well-articulated underpinning values
- 3 Enthusiastic project teachers/tutors
- 4 Allocated time for project research and development

- 5 Delayed introduction of themed programme into Y8
- 6 Most staff supportive of changes, especially newer ones
- 7 Developing opportunities for student voice



Resource inputs

- 1 Curriculum development
- 2 CCF-funded visits
- 3 New building
- 4 Links/visits to primary schools
- 5 Embedded time for CPD and observation of good practice



Other contexts

- 1 Rapidly improving school
- 2 Enterprise college, good business links



Changes

- 1 Change agenda
- 2/3 Y7 cross-curricular projects, focus on skills = themed programme
- 3 Focus on skills, deep learning across school
- 4 Projects taught by form tutors/less staff
- 5 New assessments
- 6 New leadership and TLR structure
- 7 Development of student voice
- 8 Learning guides planned
- 9 Better parental involvement
- 10 New building – 7 SLCs.
- 11 Specialist teaching within communities and more flexible day



Outputs

- Positive**
- 1 Y7 student feelings of safety and security
 - 2 Better behaviour and attitudes in Y7
 - 3 Increased consistency across school r.e. language, skills and content
 - 4 Better results, especially at GCSE
 - 5 Better attendance in Y7
 - 6 Students more motivated and self-confident
 - 7 Tutors know Y7 students better
 - 8 Better Y7 student-student relations
 - 9 Teaching and learning in Y8 and Y9 positively influenced by Y7/project work
- Negative**
- 10 Some staff have not yet adopted new approaches



Outcomes

- 1 Students who feel safe and that they belong
- 2 Engaged, independent learners
- 3 Success at GCSE
- 4 Skills for work
- 5 Consistency in staff-student relations
- 6 Junior school pupils and parents who want to come here
- 7 Raised aspirations and perceptions in the community

Challenging factors & values

- 1 Huge pressure on SLT and staff
- 2 Falling rolls and increase in children from deprived areas/FSMs
- 3 Parental and community perceptions of school, esp. r.e. size of school
- 4 Low parental involvement

- 5 Lack of confidence/consistency across staff
- 6 Some staff anxiety about changes to curriculum and structures
- 7 Limitations of current buildings/restrictions on space while new building in progress
- 8 Staff-student relations not always good

- 9 Whole school spirit under-developed
- 10 Fears about sustainability



APPENDIX 2

TABLES SHOWING SUMMARY OF EFFECTS FOR DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Table 9.1 Comparison of main effect areas for each themed programme approach

	<i>Topaz (MSC)</i>	<i>Turquoise (MSNC)</i>	<i>Opal (PMSNC)</i>	<i>Sapphire (SC)</i>	<i>Garnet (PPU)</i>
Staff-student relations	Most Year 7 students enjoyed and valued trusting relations with the programme teachers, personalised help and support, relaxed yet respectful rapport with approachable teachers; though some Year 7 students thought that they spent too much time with their programme teacher; variable teacher quality was perceived to be a factor; Year 8 and 9 students predominantly eschewed the close relationship with a single teacher in preference for a wider range of teachers; for them, the programme's main justification was as an entry mechanism to the secondary school.	Some students enjoyed close and trusting relations with the programme teachers, but many did not (e.g. one Year 7 girl alluded to the problems of getting stuck with teachers that students neither liked nor respected) –variable quality of teaching was portrayed by students.	Some Year 7 students benefited from close and trusting relationships with the programme teachers, finding them easy to talk to; students in older cohorts preferred a variety of subject specialists.	Most students enjoyed and benefited from close and trusting relations with the programme teachers; though variable quality of teaching reduced this for some students.	Most students had very close and trusting relations with some programme teachers and nearly all the students referred to the ease with which they could talk to the programme leader in particular, but students' respect for teachers did not extend to all the programme staff – variable quality of teaching was portrayed by students, with disruptive behaviour being a feature of some groups.
Student-student relations	Good mutual support and peer-to-peer relations within the themed programme, but several interviewees, particularly from Year 8 desired greater opportunities for friendship-building outside the themed class, which could become restrictive.	The programme helped develop close friendships within the themed programme group, but some students thought that the programme could militate against wider friendship formation.	No explicit citation of this outcome was offered, though group work, with its implicit strengthening of peer relationships, was alluded to.	The programme helped develop team work skills, as well as close friendships within the themed programme group, but some students thought that the programme could militate against wider friendship formation	The programme helped bond close friendships within the themed programme groups and the students recounted how they supported each other, but some students thought that the programme could militate against wider friendship formation and that they were isolated; others described ongoing frictions within the groups and name-calling from outside of them.
School-parent/ carer relations	Good parental relations with programme teachers; parents appreciate skills emphasis.	Closer involvement of parents with school was a clear success of the programme, coupled with the encouragement of parental support for their child's learning.	This was not linked to the themed programme.	Some signs of closer involvement of parents with school were evident, but staff identified this as an area for further development.	Closer involvement of parents in the programme and giving assistance to their children's learning were key outcomes of the innovations in this area, though some parents were said to be frustrated at not being able to interact with programme teachers.

Table 9.1 continued

	<i>Topaz (MSC)</i>	<i>Turquoise (MNSC)</i>	<i>Opal (PMSNC)</i>	<i>Sapphire (SC)</i>	<i>Garnet (PPU)</i>
Quality of learning	Self-reported effective learning, group work fostered, independent project completion and much-appreciated study guide, well organised, some tablets and ICT resources, helpful peer assessment; though students beyond Year 7 were more likely to want more variety and prefer subject specialist teaching; variable quality of project themes and teaching within the programme was noted; and some were unsure of the value of cross-curricular themes.	Self-reported effective learning, though variable quality of teaching and learning diminished this for some; many would have preferred separate subjects taught by specialists; extended project completion developed independent learning and research skills and attitudes, though some students found these onerous for themes they had little interest in.	Self-reported effective learning, with references to active learning, use of a variety of learning styles, group work and enquiry-based projects; though Years 7 and 8 welcomed the move to subject specialist lessons in preference to cross-curricular themes.	Self-reported effective learning, though some variable quality of teaching and learning reduced this for some; many students were appreciative of the active learning methods and most recognised the value of the personalised learning made possible by the close teacher-student relations; however, virtually all students looked forward to separate subjects taught by specialists in Year 8.	Self-reported effective learning in academic areas, as well as in personal, social and emotional growth, though variable quality of teaching and behaviour management reduced this for some; some would have preferred to have been in mainstream pathways.
Student participation in school decision making	Scope for negotiating group work and tasks; security in base room.	Pupils welcomed negotiation around topics and tasks for their extended projects.	There were no accounts relating this to the themed programme.	Some pupils (with certain teachers) spoke in complimentary terms about the many opportunities they had in programme lessons to express their opinions and preferences.	Some students did not feel that they participated in the 'school' as a whole, and whether or not students got a voice within the programme was mixed and inconclusive.
Student motivation and attitudes	For many Year 7 students, increased engagement in learning, Year 7 satisfaction with programme structure, sense of being looked after; though with diminishing impact on later years.	Some students were very stimulated by the programme, especially in Year 7; others were not and motivation varied according to the nature of the project's theme and the teachers allocated; some looked forward to Year 9's separate subjects.	Most Year 7 students were stimulated by the programme, but there was insufficient evidence to substantiate claims that this had contributed to easing the transition from primary to secondary or led to improved behaviour or overall attendance and motivation.	Many students were very stimulated and engaged by the programme; some very significant improvements in behaviour and turn-arounds in attitudes had been achieved; a few were less engaged and motivation was diminished, with descriptions of too many writing tasks and disruptive behaviour in the class – this seem to vary according to the teacher allocated.	Some substantial and very impressive cases of radical changes in attitudes and engagement were garnered; most felt valued and cared for in the pilot programme; moreover, these changes continued into Key Stage 4; however, both staff and students recognised that it did not work with all students and some felt deterred from attending school because of the name-calling from non-programme students.
Local community involvement	Nothing reported.	A little involvement in local environmental issues.	Nothing emerged on this theme.	No mention was made of this area.	Nothing significant was mentioned in this regard.

Table 9.2 Comparison of main effect areas for each SLC approach

	<i>Topaz (MSC)</i>	<i>Opal (PMSNC)</i>	<i>Pearl (EVH)</i>
Staff-student relations	Mostly viewed positively, especially by Year 7 pupils, who felt that the staff in their SLC knew them particularly well, since they spent a lot of time together. However, both younger and older students felt that there were some students who behaved badly towards teachers and disrupted the learning of others.	Mostly viewed positively. Conflicts tended to be related to individual students or teachers, rather than the SLCs. Relationships between staff and students within the community were perceived as good due to the level of mutual knowledge and the support provided by staff when students needed help.	Mostly viewed positively, especially where Learning Leaders and pastoral support staff were concerned. Students felt that there was always someone within the community to whom they could talk.
Student-student relations	Generally good, especially amongst the younger pupils, because they spent a lot of time together and therefore got to know each other well, within their Academy. Some also welcomed the separation from the older, bigger students. The students interviewed resented the disruptive or aggressive pupils in their classes as this affected their own learning.	Generally good, and older students felt that bullying had been reduced since the move into the new building and the establishment of the communities. As described above, there were some conflicts between students in different communities, but these appeared to be minor.	Generally good within each community with students expressing strong loyalty to and support for their own community. Inter-community competitions were welcomed but some less positive conflicts did occasionally arise between students in different communities.
School-parent/carer relations	Very positive, but pupils did not perceive this to be related to the SLC structure.	Mainly positive, and communications between community staff and home were frequent, though some minor issues were noted. Students did not attribute the good relations to the SLC system as such, though an enhanced role for tutors with regard to parents had been introduced alongside SLCs.	Mainly positive though not significantly affected by the change to SLCs, from a student's perspective.
Quality of learning	Perceived as good by the younger students in the Year 7–8 academy and many described the active learning strategies used within their classes, but it was not clear whether this was because of the themed programme or an effect of the SLC system. Older students were also generally positive, but this was not affected by which academy they belonged to.	Perceived very positively by almost all the students, though this was not related to the SLCs. The longer lessons that had also been introduced since the move to the community system, were generally liked for providing more time for students to immerse themselves in the subject.	Not perceived as being related to the community system by students, though most seemed to like the activities that took place in their tutor group periods.
Student participation in school decision making	Did not appear to be affected by the academy system.	Appeared to be working well, especially for those students who represented their community on the school council and/or the senate. Some changes had been brought about as a result of student views. Most thought that teachers were approachable and listened to students' views.	Did not appear to be affected by the community system.
Student motivation and attitudes	Not affected by the academy system apart from in the ways already described.	Had either improved or stayed the same since the changes had been introduced. Most felt that discipline had improved, and agreed that teachers cared for them, and though this was not directly attributed to the community system, it can be inferred from their other comments about relationships within the communities.	Not affected by the community system except in the ways described above, namely, in terms of their friendship groups and a feeling of identification with their own community, and competition against other communities.
Local community involvement	Nothing reported.	Minimal, as far as students were aware, but students felt that the reputation of the school overall had improved because of the new building and that the school was now viewed positively within the local community.	Nothing reported.

Towards schools where people matter

A study of the Human Scale Schools project

John Harland and Barbara Mason
LC Research Associates

The Human Scale Schools project, which ran for three years, set out *'to build a solid core of human scale schools that can stand up as effective examples of human scale principles in practice'*. Launched in 2006 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in partnership with the educational charity Human Scale Education, the project encouraged secondary schools to develop their own schemes for creating more human scale schools in ethos and practice. These included the setting up of small-scale learning communities, cross-disciplinary curriculum projects, more holistic pastoral structures and greater student participation in learning. Grants were offered to 39 schools across the country to enable them to design and implement these innovations. LC Research Associates was commissioned to evaluate the changes and effects of the developments supported by the Human Scale Schools project in six schools from February 2007 to December 2009. This report presents that analysis.

John Harland is a freelance researcher and director of LC Research Associates, an independent research network that conducts policy-oriented studies in the education sector. He has completed and published many research projects, mainly in the areas of teachers' continuing professional development, pupils' experiences of the curriculum and the arts in education. Previously, he worked for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and before that he was a secondary school teacher.

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