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The Role of the Learning Mentor in the

Socialisation of the Child

A Research Report

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

Doctor of Education

University of Huddersfield

Christine Farmery

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Abstract

The introduction of learning mentors into the secondary schools in 1999, as part of the Excellence in Cities initiative, was viewed within two years as a successful strategy for aiding pupils in inner city schools to develop positive attitudes towards school. As a result, the provision of learning mentors was extended to the primary sector. Although guidance on this new workforce was provided to schools it was expected that schools develop learning mentorship responsive to their own needs.

This thesis begins with an overview of the introduction of learning mentors into the primary school and leads onto a consideration of one school's interpretation of the role in practice. An evaluation of this interpretation led to a case study, carried out over one academic year, into the evolution of the role, leading to improved practice in the primary school at the heart of the research.

The case study explored how the school's provision of learning mentorship evolved over one academic year, from the introduction of a team approach based on the ideals of a nurture group, through an interim review and onto a final evaluation of practice and effectiveness. The case study was carried out with respect to the feminist approach to research, resulting in the collection and consideration of a wide range of data, including contextual data, to tell the story of the setting; indeed this notion of telling the story led to the research being reported as a narrative. Due regard was given to the researcher also being the acting headteacher of the school; the report acknowledges how the potential impact of this familiarity was addressed within the research.

Due to the changing nature of the school as a society, the socialisation of children became the focus for the development of effective learning mentorship. Through this, conclusions were drawn that considered how staff, particularly senior

staff, influenced the school society and how children may need the specialist support of trained learning mentors to adapt to the new society. The delivery of this specialist support was then outlined, with suggestions made for how the results of this case study could be used within other primary schools.

A final consideration was given to the timing of learning mentorship for the individual child and the process needed to withdraw this specialist support from the child.

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Acronyms

BBC   British Broadcasting Corporation

BEP   Behaviour Education Plan

DfEE   Department for Education and Employment

DfES   Department for Education and Skills

DT   Design and Technology

EAL   English as an Additional Language

ECM   Every Child Matters

EiC   Excellence in Cities

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

IEP   Individual Education Plan

INSET   Inservice Training

LA   Local Authority

LEA   Local Education Authority

LM   Learning Mentor

NMN   National Mentoring Network

P.E.   Physical Education

PFI   Private Finance Initiative

SATs   Standard Attainment Tests

SEAL   Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

SEN   Special Educational Needs

TA   Teaching Assistant

TDA   Training and Development Agency

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process he has provided me with the perfect balance of challenge and support; it is this that has enabled me to complete this thesis. Thank you.

The names of the children and all adults other than myself involved in the research have been changed to protect anonymity.

Overview

Chapter one begins with an overview of the introduction of learning mentors into the primary school. It acknowledges that there are many misconceptions about the role, from why it was introduced into schools to what the role encompasses, from understanding what defines mentorship to how the role works in practice. This overview establishes the rationale for learning mentorship, within one primary school, to be the focus for research and begins to consider the research methodology to be used. Following a brief description of the institution in which the research took place the stages of the research are presented.

Chapter two sets the research in the context of both the background to the learning mentor initiative and to the school in which the research was to be carried out. It therefore builds on the overviews given in chapter one and, consequently, sets out the framework in which the study was carried out. The chapter looks at learning mentorship and, indeed, *mentoring* as a process in much more detail and considers the context of the school in terms of both its environment and the circumstances in which it operates.

Chapter three expands further on the context of the school, focusing specifically on one key event that led to the research into the development of learning mentorship within the school. The key event, the sudden departure of the headteacher at the school, had a profound effect on the staff, pupils and parents and was fundamental to the identification of the parameters of the research. The initial analysis stage of the research is described within this chapter. The adult participants in the research are identified, together with a discussion of how the school used learning mentors at that time, and a consideration of the next steps to be taken. Through this the research problem, and then the research plan, were identified. At this stage the research centred

on the development of a more effective provision of learning mentorship through the use of the nurture group ethos within a team approach.

Chapter four considers how the approach identified in chapter three would be put into practice. The chapter explores further the nurture group ideals and how the learning mentor provision within the school could be based upon them. It is within this chapter that the pupil participants in the research are introduced and data collection methods considered. Special consideration is given here to the collection of data from children.

Chapter five begins with the research aims, leading on to a discussion of the theoretical perspective and how this both influenced the theory and the practice of the research. The feminist perspective is discussed before the research is categorised as a case study *telling the story* of a setting. Data collection methods are then explored, together with the instruments to be used, followed by a consideration of the analysis of the resulting data.

Chapter six reports two of the three periods of data collection carried out within the research period. It explores how the informal and formal reviews of the learning mentor provision, together with the contextual data, forms the initial period of data collection. This was followed by changes to the provision and then the collection, and analysis, of interim data collected from all the participants in the research.

Chapter seven centres on a discussion about the school as a society. This was indicated by both the data collected, and its analysis, and by the reference to published sources. A consideration of the school as a community or society in its own right led onto an exploration of socialisation.

Chapter eight uses the exploration of school as a society and relates it to the research. It justifies that socialisation is a fundamental characteristic of learning

mentorship and considers a re-focusing of the research to continue *telling the story* of the development of learning mentorship through an investigation into the role of the learning mentor in the socialisation of the child. The chapter presents the final data collected from all participants in the research and analyses it with respect to the effects of the learning mentorship provision on the socialisation of the child.

Chapter nine both evaluates the results of the research and draws a range of conclusions from it. A reflection of the research process itself is also carried out, in order to establish the validity and generalisability of the research. Recommendations are then made, both to the school in which the research was carried out and to other primary schools, for developing an effective approach to learning mentorship. Finally, a consideration of further research indicated by the findings is carried out.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Learning mentors were first introduced as a new workforce into schools in 1999 through the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative (DfES, undated a) by the then Education Secretary David Blunkett, who stated that he wanted to address the culture of low expectations in England's inner-city comprehensive schools (BBC, 1999a). Blunkett announced a package of measures totalling £350m, with the introduction of learning mentors as one of three main strands of the Excellence in Cities programme. By 2001 the School Standards Minister, Estelle Morris, was acknowledging the success of the initiative, stating that '…mentors are helping to change inner city pupils' attitudes to schooling.' (BBC, 2001) and announcing an extension to the initiative – that 900 learning mentors would be recruited to work in primary schools. In view of the success of the strand, and the intention to introduce it into the primary sector, it could be expected that the role of the learning mentor was one that was both easily definable and easy to implement and yet in the same year (2001) the DfES accepted that the role in practice was not clearly understood and that this lack of understanding of the role of the learning mentor was one of the key barriers to its successful implementation in schools (Hayward, 2001). This would appear contradictory to Morris' views above and questions the decision to extend the provision into primary schools at this time.

A lack of understanding of the role may also be considered surprising in view of the amount of money dedicated to developing learning mentorship in schools - £100m in 2003/2004 (BBC, 2001) – and indeed the long tradition of *mentoring* as a technique for developing skills and knowledge (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2001). It is reported that mentoring has its origins in Greek mythology (National Mentoring Network, undated), arising from Homer's classic *The Odyssey*, when Odysseus chose Mentor to

protect and advise his son. From these origins the dictionary definition has become '…. experienced and trusted advisor.' (Sykes, 1982). There is a seemingly endless supply of published material regarding mentorship in practice in various fields, from business (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 1999) and health care (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 1999) to youth programmes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005) and the restaurant business (Parsa & Kwansa, 2002), together with the reported established practice of the use of mentoring within education (MacIntyre, 1996; Miller, 2002). Indeed it is used most successfully in Initial Teacher Training (Hobson, 2002; Tomlinson, 1995; Brooks & Sikes, 1997) and yet, despite the myriad of information available, Roberts (2000, p162) asserts that there is generally a '…lack of consensus as to what constitutes mentoring…' and concludes that it is best described as a process. It may therefore not be so surprising that the specific role of a learning mentor is also not either easily definable or plainly understood, but merely reflects the general lack of understanding regarding the role of the mentor. It is therefore interesting that Malderez (2001, p57), when considering the role of the mentor in initial teacher training, suggests a description of the mentoring process rather than a definition of it, by stating that mentoring is

> …the support given by one person for the growth and learning of another…and the…. integration into and acceptance by a specific community

Indeed it is Malderez' description of mentoring that is key to this piece of research, as it reflects clearly my own classification of mentoring in practice within the primary school; the addition of *learning* to the title of mentor merely emphasises for me the importance of facilitating learning through the mentorship.

The research described here is an exploration of the learning mentor role in theory and in practice, prompted by the statement from Hayward (2001) noted earlier, that a lack of understanding of the role is a key barrier to its successful implementation, and a later statement from Morris (2003, p1) that the impact of learning mentors in schools '…has exceeded all our expectations.' and is a '…key element…' in providing both inclusive schools and enabling all children to achieve their full potential. These published comments represent well the confusion surrounding the role that was evident in the school in which the research was carried out, as illustrated in the teacher questionnaires used in the research. It was this confusion that first prompted an exploration of the role in theory and practice, involving the development of further understanding of the role; an evaluation of the role within the school in which the research would be carried out and, ultimately, to the development of the practice of the Learning Mentors within the school through an informed approach. Bassey (1995, p6) defines such research as an enquiry to be '…carried out, in order to understand, evaluate and change.' thus describing the exploration indicated at this early stage of the research process. Using Bassey's model, the *change* stage was considered to be the establishing of a system of learning mentorship that reflects Morris' views above; learning mentorship that would support the inclusion agenda, by enabling children to engage in school life and, in turn, to contribute to children reaching their potential.

The research proposed was therefore school-specific, it would explore fully how learning mentorship was delivered in one school and if, and consequently how, it could be improved. Bryman (2001, p48) would classify the research as a *case study,* as the methodology of case study enables a researcher to conduct an '…intensive examination…' of a setting, indeed much is written about the use of case study within

educational settings (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1988; Hammersley, Foster & Gomm, 2000) indicating the appropriateness of the approach to the research proposed. Bassey (1999) builds on the research model described earlier, by detailing three categories of case study, one related to testing or seeking theories, one related to telling the story of a social setting and one that evaluates a setting. The research proposed here was not concerned with testing or seeking theories; it was aimed at evaluating and developing practice. It was therefore to be an open-ended piece of research whereby the natural evolution of the role in practice would be documented rather than a system imposed that would then be tested to ascertain its worth. As it was to be concerned with much more than an evaluation of what was already in place, indeed such an evaluation formed only a small part of the research in its initial stages, the research certainly falls into the second category, that of telling the story of a setting, in that it tells the story of how the learning mentorship approach was developed in the school, how it is evolving and how it works in practice.

The *telling of the story* of the setting indicated clearly the need to collect data from various sources, with background and contextual data being as important to building up a picture of the role as data to be collected from the participants in the research. Therefore, the collection of specific data, using specific data collection methods, was not easily identifiable. However, this lack of clarity regarding data collection is recognised as a feature of case study (Bryman, 2001; Hithcock & Hughes, 1995), thus reinforcing the fact that case study was appropriate to the research. It was also at this early stage that the use of the feminist perspective to carry out and analyse the research was considered, due to my own inherent beliefs regarding research and my relationships with the participants in the research (Beasley, 1999; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Robson, 1993). In turn, this perspective would

influence the choice of data collection methods. Raghuram, Madge & Skelton (1998) and Dam and Volman (1995) suggest that the major advantage of the feminist perspective is that the researcher is not bound by a conventional, traditional methodology and is not only *allowed* but also indeed *expected* to push back the boundaries of data collection and analysis, in order to fully explore the setting, thus allowing for the research to use a range of data from which to draw conclusions. The use of case study, together with the feminist perspective, would consequently ensure an in-depth look at both the context of the research and the effects of the learning mentor approach in practice (Greig & Taylor, 1999), thus meeting the aims of the research.

The data collection would hence centre on two sets of related data, one involving a range of contextual data regarding the role of the learning mentor in theory, both locally and nationally, and one regarding the role in practice within the school. As noted above, the data would be used to tell the story of this particular social setting (Bassey 1999) and so, in order to provide as full a picture as possible, an extensive range of data collection methods was considered, involving the use of documents and data collected from both adults and children. Indeed much guidance is given regarding data collection (Bryman, 2001; Yin, 2003; Burns, 2000) however; specific guidance for researching with children was also needed. Greig & Taylor (1999), West, Hailes & Sammons (1997) and Watts & Ebbutt (1987) provided direction here in order to devise data collection instruments that would yield data useful to the story being told. Alongside these considerations regarding the data collection methods and instruments, the timing of the collection and the data analyses to be carried out were also considered, indeed it is recognised that the analysis of data is an essential part of the research process (Crotty 1998; Bryman & Cramer, 1999)

and that the form of the analyses should be addressed at this stage of the research design. However, in keeping with the feminist perspective, the data analysis was not bound by conventions and was carried out when relevant to the story being told.

The institution in which the research was carried out is a large primary school in an area of high social deprivation in the north of England. Due to its location and size it was funded, through the Excellence in Cities initiative, for the equivalent of two full-time learning mentors, although this allocation was later supplemented by the school's budget and resulted in the employment in 2002 of four part-time learning mentors, each working within specific year groups. At the end of the academic year 2002-2003 I carried out a review of the learning mentor practice, in the position of acting head at the school, as I believed that the role in practice could be more effective in the school at the heart of the research than it had been. This was an almost instinctive belief as, at this time, my knowledge of the role of the learning mentor was not based in theory, but solely on the previous head's interpretation of the role. I found it quite difficult at this stage to articulate all my concerns and it was this disquiet that prompted a review with the learning mentors and the Local Education Authority (LEA) Link Learning Mentor and, in turn, to the identification of the research focus. It was this review that enabled me to verbalise and clarify my thoughts.

Although I recognised the need to develop my knowledge of learning mentorship in theory and in practice, my uneasiness at this time centred on the allocation of individual learning mentors to specific year groups. My main concerns were two-fold; firstly the present system did not allow for equal access for children who may develop a need for mentorship but who may not be in the targeted year

groups, and secondly a belief that the role could be carried out more effectively if there was further cooperation and sharing between the learning mentors themselves. During the review, the LEA Link Learning Mentor aided me in identifying a different approach to learning mentorship - based on the team approach used in many secondary schools but much less common in primary schools – that would address my main concerns. The identification of this approach was the critical incident that led to the recognition that research into the role of the learning mentor within the school was both indicated and necessary to the development of the role in practice.

At the time of the identification of the research there was little published information about the role of the learning mentor, which added to the lack of clarity about the role. However, this is being addressed by the collation of case studies on the DfES standards web site (DfES, undated b); dedicated mentoring websites (the National Mentoring Network (undated) and the publication of new books (Cruddas, 2005; Roberts & Constable, 2003). What is now established are professional standards for the role; a recognised training programme and an acceptance that many skills and attributes are needed for carrying out this predominantly pastoral role in school (DfES, undated c). There are lists of responsibilities of the learning mentor provided within the guidance, together with notes regarding which responsibilities are not part of the role. Again this is not an aid to clarifying the role of the learning mentor but, what is helpful, the identification of two overriding areas of responsibility: to raise standards by overcoming barriers to learning and by improving attendance. Without providing the reader with a copy of the extensive list of responsibilities that learning mentors may carry out, it can be appreciated that these two overriding areas encompass a great deal including the need to work with teaching and support staff to identify, assess and interact with pupils who need help to

overcome their specific *barriers to learning* or improve attendance. The barriers to learning may include behavioural problems, difficulties at home or problems within school; the expected results of the barriers to learning, without intervention, may include the failure to become engaged in school life as a whole and a failure to meet expected attainment levels within the curriculum. These failures relate well to the expected outcomes of poor attendance and so the dual areas of responsibility of the learning mentor do indeed sit well together. Additionally, Webb & Vulliamy (2002, p165) believe that the remit of the learning mentor to deal with barriers to learning and issues around attendance consequently removes much of the '…social work dimension of the primary teacher's role'. In other words, the responsibilities of the learning mentors enable the teacher to concentrate on their core purpose of teaching and learning, although it must be noted that what constitutes teaching is itself the subject of much debate (Day, 2000; Cullingford, 1989). It can thus be appreciated how the role of the learning mentor could be interpreted and, as a result, begins to bring some clarity to the role. Although it must be acknowledged that the role will inevitably vary from both child to child and from school to school, the information provided above begins to indicate how wide the role is in practice. For that reason, in order to make this research manageable, one area of the learning mentor role needed to be identified for study.

When carrying out the review of learning mentorship within the school, one particular barrier to learning being displayed by a significant minority of pupils at the time was that of *difficulty in engaging in school life*. The reasons for this shared barrier to learning were considered, both at the review stage and throughout the research period, and will be discussed later in the research report. At this stage, it influenced the decision to introduce the use of the nurture group ethos (Bennathan &

Boxall, 2000) within the team approach to learning mentorship as it was considered to be an appropriate approach to support targeted children to engage more fully in school life and, in turn, to engage in their learning. Through the reflections carried out throughout the research period, Malderez' description of mentoring (2001, p57) as the '…integration into and acceptance by a specific community**.'** became key to the research and to its development. Malderez' description not only reinforces what the role of the mentor involves but also began to point towards the notion of *socialisation* within the school community; that the identified barrier to learning of *engaging in school life* is actually that of socialisation of the child. This discovery is supported by the dictionary definition of socialisation as '….the adoption of the behaviour patterns of the surrounding culture;' (The People's Dictionary, undated). The fundamental theme of the case study therefore developed throughout the research period, moving from considering the effects of the use of the nurture group ethos within the team approach to learning mentorship to exploring the wider role of the learning mentor in the socialisation of the child, whilst centring throughout on developing the engagement in school life of the mentored pupils.

This piece of research therefore arose following a critical incident, the review of the delivery of learning mentorship within one primary school. In turn, this prompted an enquiry – as described by Bassey (1995) - that would increase understanding of learning mentorship, evaluate the learning mentor approach developing within the school setting and lead to further change, if indicated by the research findings. It is stated (Hayward, 2001) that the learning mentor role is intended to be flexible so that it can be adapted to the needs of individual schools and individual pupils; the research was thus well-founded at this time, as it was intended to examine closely the school's

adaptation of the role and to further develop practice within the school. The case study, using Bassey's definition (1999), would hence *tell the story* of developing the team approach to learning mentorship in a primary school - how the approach was introduced, how it worked in practice and what the effects on the children were. In turn, the research would consequently aid the school in continuing to develop its commitment to effective learning mentorship.

The taking of Bassey's definition of case study (1999) as the telling of the story of a social setting also provided the basis for the organisation of the research report. The report is written as a narrative, with each event in *the story* reported in chronological order, the order in which it occurred during the carrying out of the research. Table 1.1 (overleaf) sets out clearly the stages of the research as they were carried out and how they will be discussed within this report.

Table 1:1 – Stages of Research

Stage 1	Collection of background information
Stage 2	Initial analysis Defining the research problem Writing the research plan
Stage 3	Clarifying the scope of the research Outlining the provision of Learning Mentorship within the school
Stage 4	Identifying the data collection methodology
Stage 5	Carrying out the research – initial period of data collection
Stage 6	Carrying out the research – the second and third periods of data collection
Stage 7	Analysing the data Evaluating the results
Stage 8	Drawing conclusions Making recommendations

Chapter 2 – The Context

It is important to the story of the research setting (Bassey 1999) that a range of contextual data regarding the role of the learning mentor in theory, both locally and nationally, is used to set out the framework in which the study was to be carried out. This context was consequently two-fold; the background to the learning mentor initiative and to the school in which the research was to be carried out. Indeed it is through the consideration of the background information that it will be appreciated how the learning mentor initiative, albeit a national initiative that is monitored by the DfES, is a flexible role that is to be tailored to each individual school's needs (Hayward, 2001) and that the initiative *cannot* be considered in practice without an in-depth exploration of the school at the heart of the research. The background to the initiative is itself multi-faceted, from identifying why the initiative was introduced to where the term *learning mentor* originated, from the decision to use education monies on training and developing the practitioners to determining the parameters of the role in practice. The exploration of the school setting will focus on both the physical environment, which I believe to be relevant to the research due to its limited space and facilities, and on the circumstances under which the school is operating.

The Learning Mentor Initiative

It was noted in chapter one that the national learning mentor initiative began in secondary schools initially, in 1999, and was expanded to include specific primary schools in 2001. When introducing the initiative in 1999 (BBC, 1999a) Blunkett, the then education secretary, merely stated that mentoring '…in which an adult offers individual pupils advice and guidance…' would be used more widely '…to encourage young people to stay in education.' My starting point for the context of the research

was therefore to seek out documentation regarding the background to the initiative, as I considered it central to the success of the project to consider the reasoning and the research base behind the introduction of the learning mentor role into the primary school. I believe it to be essential to know the rationale behind the introduction and the criteria for success, in order to lead to an informed interpretation of the role in practice. In addition, my initial feeling about the funding of the learning mentors in the school at the heart of the research was that the impact of the role should reflect the financial investment being put into it. Indeed Smith (2000) reported that the Excellence in Cities initial three-year plan for introducing learning mentors into selected schools would involve spending approximately seventeen million pounds; this level of funding was extended at the end of the three-year plan and continues beyond 2008. However, I have not yet found documentary evidence setting out the background to the initiative or readily available information about the advice on which the level of funding was based. At this stage I could only speculate on the reasons for this lack of information, that it may not be written about; that it may not be available or that it may not even exist. Following an extended period of reading and trying to locate the information needed I contacted the DfES to request the information that I considered to be essential at this time, that regarding the introduction of the learning mentor strand of the Excellence in Cities initiative and specifically the research base or the thinking behind the role, but even this direct approach has proved to be fruitless. I was informed that such information was not available within the DfES and was directed to consult my Local Education Authority and my own leaning mentors. Unfortunately these two sources also could not provide me with the information I required and so I could only continue my search for the relevant background information whilst exploring for myself the general concept of

mentoring, in order to reflect on why the approach may have been considered appropriate to pupils in the primary school, and to speculate why the title learning mentor was deemed fitting to this new workforce. Colley (2003, p523) shares my disquiet about the lack of evidence of the successful use of mentoring, albeit with disaffected young people when preparing for the world of work, by reporting that '…there is an irony…' that a government so '…overtly committed to evidence-based practice…' should devote so much funding to a scheme that had not been proven to be effective. Colley (2003, p523) then refers to Skinner & Fleming (1999) by stating overtly that there is '…little evidence to support the use of mentoring…' on a wide scale; thus mirroring my concerns about the lack of information regarding the reasoning behind the introduction of the learning mentor role into the primary school. It can therefore be appreciated that an exploration of mentoring, although clearly indicated as being necessary to the study, is not as simple as it may first appear – as noted in chapter one.

As noted earlier, there is an accepted confusion about the definition of mentoring (Roberts, 2000), although much is written about mentoring in practice (Wilkin, 1992; Zachary & Daloz, 2000; Fletcher, 2000). The confusion regarding an accepted definition of mentoring is most clearly explained by the National Mentoring Network (undated), which states that the lack of a universally accepted definition is due to the range of activities that mentoring may encompass, that it is responsive to need and is thus dependant on *why* mentoring is being used, *where* it is being used and *with whom* it is being used. This explanation may appear to suggest that a definition of mentoring and, in turn, learning mentoring, may never be arrived at, but it actually aids in defining the role in individual schools. If it is accepted that the definition is based on why, where and with whom it is being used, it can begin to be

appreciated why the term learning mentor was used, in that the initiative was introduced to enable all pupils to access the curriculum, in other words, to learn. The function of the learning mentor would thus be to support identified children to engage in their learning, yet this may be considered to be the role of teaching assistants; thus how the role of the learning mentor differs from that of a teaching assistant needed to be explored.

The role of the teaching assistant was also not clearly defined at this stage of the research, although this was addressed though the Workforce Reform Agenda (TDA, undated a) with the introduction of different grades of teaching assistant. What was accepted at the time of the introduction into schools of the learning mentor initiative was that teaching assistants work alongside teachers, supporting both teachers and pupils (Lee, 2002; O'Brien & Garner, 2001; Motion, 2002). Further guidance was considered at this time - Birkett (2001), Watkinson (2003) and O'Brien & Garner (2001), each providing direction for distinguishing between the roles of the teaching assistant and the learning mentor. Birkett (2001) suggested that the role of the teaching assistant was a formal role often associated with special educational needs; Watkinson (2003) considered that her observations of teaching assistants at work revealed them to be increasingly involved in supporting the curriculum through contributing to the planning, delivery and feedback of the curriculum, whereas O'Brien & Garner (2001) describe the role as that of educator, instructor or teacher. The learning mentor role is further described by the DfES (undated d) as providing support for children, listening to them, encouraging them and facilitating cooperation between the pupil and the school.

The references support the interpretation of the teaching assistant role as one that is concerned with the curriculum itself, whereas previous references point to the

learning mentor being concerned with enabling the learner to learn. The roles of the support staff are thus simply indicated by their title, that a teaching assistant is concerned with teaching and a learning mentor is concerned with the learning process. Although simply stated, it can be appreciated that the work encompassed by each role continues to be the subject of much debate, looking at what actions are supportive of *teaching* and what actions are supportive of *learning*. Smith (2005, p2) is mindful of this debate and so stresses that the learning mentor provides a '…complementary service to other professionals in school and beyond.' thus indicating that the role is to be carried out alongside that of others, including teachers and teaching assistants.

Smith (2000, p2) also describes a fundamental responsibility of the learning mentor is to aid learning by working to '…remove barriers to individual learning, in school and beyond.' It is therefore important to the context of the study to explore the term *barrier to learning*, in order to later explore how such barriers can be addressed and, ultimately, removed (chapters four and seven). The DfES (undated d) provides the definition that barriers to learning are problems that a pupil faces, that may be due to difficulties at home, bullying issues or general disaffection. Such problems could be considered to be pastoral issues, issues relating to the '… mental and physical welfare of pupils...' (Teachernet, undated), indeed this is the interpretation that the school in which the study was carried out used to determine which pupils would have the targeted support of the learning mentors; again this will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven. The views of Goleman (1995) must be noted here, that the effects on learning of such barriers to learning are undeniable, that pupils who display feelings such as anxiety, depression or anger are unable to learn as they are powerless to concentrate or take in new information and so a workforce that specifically

concentrates on removing such barriers will inevitably improve the conditions for learning.

The exploration into the role thus far indicates clearly *what* the expected outcome of learning mentor intervention is to be without dictating exactly *how* the outcome is to be achieved. This then enables schools to use the initiative in response to individual needs, rather than it being a restrictive, prescriptive approach. Smith again (2000 p2) describes this as the *specifics* of the role, and that this is '…a matter for individual schools.' to determine, although it is clear that there is a requirement for each mentor to '…devote the majority of their time to those needing extra support to realise their full potential,' This reference to *realising full potential* is important to the school being studied, as this is cited as one of the aims of the school within the School Improvement Plan, and is thus a validation for the work of the learning mentors within the school. The requirement to ensure that the learning mentor role in practice was a complementary role within the school was also a major concern in the school in which the study was carried out. I believed strongly that the opportunities presented to the school by this new, fully funded, role could be exciting and beneficial to the whole school community and, in order to fulfil this potential, needed to be established as a separate and unique role whilst complimenting the work already being carried out within the school; indeed this belief formed a major part of the discussion during the initial review (chapter three).

This exploration of the role of the learning mentor, with reference to the limited published material, has considered how the DfES may have developed the initiative and how it can be interpreted in practice in different settings. Although it has not yet been possible to identify the full, official background to the initiative, various

references have been used to investigate the concept of mentoring and how this can be applied to learners in the primary school, specifically to learners who are experiencing difficulties in accessing the school curriculum. The lack of background information has therefore not unduly restricted the exploration of the identified first part of the context of the research and has set the scene for how the school is expected to individualise the initiative. Although the discussion may make the initiative appear difficult to put into practice, conversely it does allow each school to interpret it within the specific context of the individual school. A description of the school at the heart of this research is hence necessary, in order to set out the specific environment in which the initiative is to be put into practice and the needs of the school and its pupils.

The Primary School

The institution in which the research was carried out is a large primary school in the North of England, in an area designated by the Local Education Authority as one of high social deprivation. As noted earlier, the Excellence in Cities initiative funded the equivalent of two full-time learning mentors, later supplemented by the school's budget to employ four part-time learning mentors, each working within specific year groups. The initial allocation, made through the Local Education Authority, was based on the school's location, the school's size (noted overleaf as being double the size of an average primary school) and on its allocation of free school meals, which hovers around 35%. It was on this basis that it was expected that a significant number of pupils would require specific help to both access the school and its curriculum and achieve their true potential.

The Local Education Authority assists the school in interpreting its end of key stage assessment data, using the outcomes from the teacher assessments made at the

end of the Foundation Stage and teacher assessments and formal testing at the end of key stages one and two. The interpretation of the data includes a comparison to other data, both national and local, and considering similar schools and all schools. Such a comparison is deemed necessary as the Authority state that pupil background factors such as gender, entitlement to free school meals and ethnicity can influence educational achievement. The most recent data at the time the research was carried out concluded that:

- The school is much larger than the Authority average, having over 100% more children throughout school – 420 from age five to eleven.

- Eligibility for free school meals at 34.1% (as noted earlier) is also greater than the Authority average of 20.2% and the National average of 17.3%.

- The percentage of EAL pupils, 9.7%, is more than double that of the Authority average but slightly below the National average of 11%.

The chart overleaf (Table 2.1 – End of Key Stage Attainment Data) summarises the attainment data for the end of each key stage, thus providing more contextual information about the school; it can be appreciated from the figures above why the school's average attainment is lower than the national average.

Table 2:1 – End of Key Stage Attainment Data

Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
*Attainment in the Foundation Stage is below the Authority average in all areas, from a difference of 1.3 in *Physical Development*, to a small difference of 0.2 in *Numbers as Labels for Counting*. *A large percentage of the cohort continue to progress towards the early learning goals, rather than having achieved the required standard. *Using the school ranking within the Local Education Authority, the school actually outperforms what is expected of it. * The girls outperformed the boys in almost all areas of the Profile, although this mirrored the Authority average, where girls also outperformed boys in all areas.	*Attainment again is below the Authority average. *A comparison of the different ethnic groups indicates that a greater percentage of white British children achieve L2+ than all other ethnic groups. *Mobility of pupils had a marked effect on the attainment of the cohort, with 11% achieving below the national average in reading and 12.5% achieving below the national average in both writing and maths. * The boys out-performed the girls in school by an average of 17%. This is a different trend to the Authority, where the girls outperform the boys in all areas and at all levels, although the differences tend to be less than the school differences. *The gap between the boys' attainment in school and the Authority average is much smaller than that of the girls. * 50% of the cohort made above average or well above average progress from Baseline to the end of Key Stage 1.	*There is a significant gap between the attainments of the pupils, at levels 4 and 5, compared with attainment locally and nationally. * A comparison of average point scores for the school cohort and the Authority average indicates only slight differences – 2.7 in English, 3.5 in maths and 2.0 in science. *Pupil mobility data shows that 13% of the cohort joined the school throughout the key stage, with half of these pupils achieving below the National Average (L4). *The cohort made average and above average improvement in English throughout the Key Stage. *There is little difference in attainment between the boys and the girls. The differences between the cohort were broadly in line with both the Authority and Nationally. *Pupils within the school cohort registered on the SEN register achieved lower than the LEA average in all areas. *The under-performance of the cohort compared to the Authority average was broadly mirrored in the ethnicity breakdown.

The school building is a large, rambling Victorian building with many small teaching areas and classrooms; many of the teaching areas are open-plan, with all staff supporting each other in their teaching and management of the children. There are sixteen classes in total, each with less than thirty children but with almost full-time teaching assistant support. The curriculum is delivered within a topic-based approach and there is an emphasis within the whole curriculum on pastoral issues, including building self-esteem. (This aspect of the school will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.)

The internal environment is enhanced by attractive displays but there is an awareness by the Local Education Authority, and the school staff, that the building is inadequate for education in the twenty first century; in view of this the school was to be rebuilt in 2006 as part of the PFI (Private Finance Initiative). Externally the school is also inadequate in that there is no school field and only two small, uneven playgrounds for outdoor play to take place. The relevance of the building to the context of the school is that the restricted space inside and outside the school can lead to inappropriate behaviours in a small but significant minority of pupils. The effects on the pupils displaying a reluctance to engage in the curriculum could only be speculative, indeed the impact of this on pupils displaying barriers to learning will be considered in more detail in chapter six.

The school's intake is mainly from local authority-owned housing, although there is some private housing in the area. The make up of each family is also considered to be a vital part of the context of the school, as many of the families have an above-average number of siblings within either non-nuclear families or single parent families. There are often low aspirations for the children; this may be due to the area experiencing third generation unemployment or the lack of education of the

parents - it is recorded by the Authority that 43.4% of the adult population in the school's traditional catchment area have no formal qualifications. Although the school operates an open-door policy for parents, many are reluctant to engage in their child's school life; this is an area that is currently being addressed by both the school and the Local Authority who is promoting family learning within its schools. The designation of the area that the school serves as socially deprived reflects well the impoverished nature of many of our pupils and their home lives; the current school building unfortunately reinforces some of the pupils' (and their parents') low aspirations and expectations for behaviour. It can thus be accepted that the data regarding the locality of the school and the analysis of the end of key stage assessment data together reinforce the notion of the school as one where an emphasis on raising standards and raising aspirations is appropriate. The introduction of the learning mentor initiative into the school was therefore also appropriate, as it supports Morris' view (2003) that the initiative will ensure that schools are both inclusive and enable all pupils to achieve their true potential; indeed it was noted earlier in the chapter how important this is to this piece of research. Morris (2003) also states that the work of the learning mentor is to be embedded into the on-going work of the school, thus ensuring that practice is responsive to the context of school.

This section has therefore considered the context of the school in terms of its environment and the circumstances in which it operates and has begun to set the scene for the research to be carried out, and thus forms Stage 1 of the research (Table 1.1, chapter one). Together with the broader analysis of the learning mentor initiative set out at the beginning of the chapter, it has outlined why the learning mentor initiative was considered to be an appropriate strategy for the school in question. Chapter three

will now consider in more detail how the strategy in practice was to be the focus of a piece of research.

Chapter 3 – Defining the Research

Chapters one and two have begun to identify the research to be carried out, considering the parameters of learning mentorship and why it is a suitable area for study. Chapter two in particular began to explore the context of the school in which the study would take place; this context will be expanded upon in later chapters as the research data is considered. However, in keeping with the narrative style of this report, a further event that prompted the identification of the research focus must now be introduced.

My acting headship, under which the review of learning mentorship in the school at the heart of this study was carried out, arose through the unexpected suspension and subsequent resignation of the headteacher of the school. The effects of this suspension and resignation were immediate, with staff, parents and children becoming unsettled and uncertain about the future. Behaviour across the school began to decline and it was quickly realised the effect the headteacher had had on behaviour management. It was clear that he had shouldered almost full responsibility for behaviour management across the school, thus disempowering and deskilling many of the staff and, perhaps more importantly, the children. For the overwhelming majority of the pupils this was not an issue that could not be resolved, but for a significant minority (around 5%) it proved to be a very de-stabilising event in their lives.

It was following the resignation of the headteacher that many members of the school staff believed that the learning mentors should be used primarily to manage the behaviour of the pupils. This belief continued well into the research period, as evidenced by a later questionnaire for teachers into the role of the learning mentor. One teacher recorded that:

> I spend a lot of time in my classroom refereeing behaviour
> instead of teaching and I have never had any support from the
> learning mentor team.

Another teacher also alluded to behaviour management as a role of the learning mentor, stating:

> In my class and year group there are many issues of
> behaviour. It isn't possible for one learning mentor to cover
> all of them regularly.

It was however pleasing that a third teacher recorded that the learning mentors' responsibility towards behaviour management was limiting the support she had for other children in her class:

> The children who exhibit barriers to learning due to
> behaviour are well supported by the team. However, I have
> other children who are identified for other reasons and are not
> supported adequately.

It is clearly recorded that learning mentors should not be used merely to deal with misbehaviour across the school (Hayward, 2001) and yet this was difficult to convey to the staff when the needs of the school, with respect to behaviour management, were being highlighted at this time. Although I understood the concerns of the teaching staff, that they wanted additional adult support with behaviour issues, I believed that there was much more than this to the learning mentor role and that, by developing the role, it would impact positively on behaviour across the school. Indeed, one of my major concerns was that the allocation of a learning mentor to a specific year group, thus denying access to learning mentorship for vulnerable children in other year groups, was reducing their influence across school and so my aims for learning mentorship was the same as those of the staff. Where they differed

was in how the aims could be achieved. The teaching staff believed that the year group allocation of learning mentors was appropriate and requested that further learning mentors were employed, as they stated that one per year group was not sufficient to manage all the behaviour problems being presented. Although I was both mindful and understanding of the staff's views, the employment of more learning mentors could not be funded and I retained the view that their role could not be limited to that of responding to incidences of misbehaviour as they occurred. For this reason, I continued to question the school's interpretation of the role in practice and believed that it could be improved, and indeed could more effectively address the range of behaviour issues being presented through establishing a more structured, proactive approach to learning mentorship, which included work on behaviour management but was not used exclusively for this.

I had been involved with the learning mentor initiative prior to my appointment as acting headteacher and believed I had developed a very good understanding of the role, although with hindsight this was an instinctive understanding rather than one grounded in theory. The headteacher had directed the learning mentors to work exclusively in four specific year groups and, as noted above, it was this allocation that disconcerted me the most. It was clear to me that the initiative was not being used to meet the needs of all the pupils as children not in the identified year groups were being denied access to learning mentorship. The added pressures that had arisen within the school following the headteacher's sudden resignation heightened this concern. I wanted this relatively new workforce to provide the complementary service noted in chapter two, to improve access to the curriculum for the pupils who were displaying barriers to learning rather than be used to support teaching and learning in specified year groups or, as the staff were expecting, to deal with all behaviour

problems through school. Although it may be argued here that all pupils who display poor behaviour must accordingly hold a barrier to learning, and thus need to access the expertise of a learning mentor, a further consideration at this point for me was that the learning mentors would be more effective in aiding the children to regain responsibility for their own behaviour through the targeted use of their expertise in a proactive way rather than in the reactive way in which the teachers were asking for. This reactive nature of the role was emphasised by one teacher in the later questionnaire who reported that the learning mentor team:

> …will discuss issues arising in the classroom, e.g. acts of
> aggression

and

> Children who are 'at risk' [of misbehaving] are regularly
> targeted within the classroom or removed.

It can be appreciated that this part of the chapter has added to the first stage of the research, the collection of background information, as the school context at this time was particularly relevant to the identification of the research problem. Indeed the context required action to reverse the decline in behaviour and I, in my role as acting headteacher, needed to provide the action. I firmly believed that the learning mentors could be used more effectively in school and that, in turn, their role could impact favourably on behaviour across school whilst meeting the needs of more children exhibiting barriers to learning. By undertaking a piece of formal research, the success (or otherwise) of changes to learning mentorship within the school would be determined.

It was at this point in the development of the research that I contacted the Local Authority Link Learning Mentor, thus beginning the second stage of the research

(Table 1.1); the Link Learning Mentor was contacted as it is his (or her) responsibility to '…play a key role in monitoring, evaluating and sharing good practice…' (Hayward 2001, p10). I therefore wanted his support in evaluating the school's current interpretation of the learning mentor initiative and to discuss my growing unease regarding the effectiveness of this interpretation. As noted earlier, it was this decision to carry out a formal review of the school's interpretation of the learning mentor initiative, and the results of the review, that led directly to the identification of learning mentorship as a focus for research. In view of this, and for the purposes of the research report, the review was acknowledged as the initial analysis stage of the research.

Initial Analysis

The review of the school's approach to learning mentorship, the initial analysis stage of the research, took place during the summer term of the academic year 2002-2003. The review involved myself, in the role of acting headteacher, the four learning mentors employed within the school and the Authority Link Learning Mentor. The current use of the learning mentors was discussed at length.

Firstly it was acknowledged that the specified year groups in which the learning mentors were based were those that had the larger-sized classes with the learning mentors used in a variety of ways, most noticeably in supporting teaching by assisting pupils in completing their work, thereby carrying out the role of the teaching assistant (as outlined in chapter two). This use of the learning mentors fulfilling the role of a teaching assistant was also evidenced in the teacher questionnaire with comments relating to how the learning mentors worked with pupils:

> …working to develop reading skills. Developing academic
> skills

and

> The learning mentors work on a regular basis with identified
> children and support the class teacher when in class.

The teacher questionnaire was issued following the changes to the provision of learning mentorship, to be outlined in chapter four, and demonstrate the misconceptions about the role held by the teaching staff. Although the reporting of some of the comments here are out of sequence with the chronology of this report, they are relevant as they record the lack of understanding of the learning mentor role by many of the teaching staff. Although some staff were beginning to develop an understanding of the learning mentors' responsibility for removing barriers to learning, as evidenced by the response:

> To support children who have problems in classroom
> situations.

others were slower to accept what the role could encompass. Perhaps the most disconcerting response, following staff input into the developing role of the learning mentor, was:

> I do not know what their role is supposed to be….

My disquiet at the review was hence manifold; I was concerned about the lack of understanding of the learning mentor role by many of the teaching staff and that the expertise of the learning mentors was not being used to its fullest extent because of this lack of understanding and because of the previous headteacher's interpretation of the role. As noted earlier, I believed that the allocation of learning mentors to specific

year groups had resulted in a significant number of children being denied the expertise they needed to aid them in accessing school life. I also firmly believed that the learning mentor role could be strengthened by being used proactively rather than reactively. In simple terms, I was of the opinion that the role in practice could be much more effective in the school at the heart of the research than it had been, and yet at this point I continued to have difficulty in articulating these beliefs and, in turn, in formulating a way forward. Discussions with the learning mentors indicated that they themselves shared my concerns about their role and that they were eager to develop the response to learning mentorship I was trying to arrive at. It was then the Link Learning Mentor who identified for me the way forward I was trying to determine, that the learning mentors could successfully operate as a team across school rather than as individuals assigned to individual year groups, to facilitate the support targeted where and when it was needed, rather than blanket support for four specified year groups in school. He also agreed that, working as a team, programmes within school could be set up to address a range of behaviour issues, which would ensure the proactive action I considered essential to the development of behaviour management in school.

Also at this time I was developing my knowledge about the learning mentor initiative through reading the limited published resources available and was influenced here by St James-Roberts & Singh (2001) who considered the use of learning mentors to support pupils displaying behaviour problems in the primary school to be an innovative approach, and accepts that behaviour that is related to external issues may be designated as a barrier to learning and would therefore indicate the involvement of a learning mentor. This reference justifies the expectation of the staff that the learning mentors address behaviour problems and yet also reflects my

thoughts that the behaviour issues that arose at this time due to extrinsic factors, either home-related issues or related to the resignation of the previous headteacher, required more from the learning mentors than merely aiding the children to complete their work. I believed it was essential that the learning mentors worked with the children to develop strategies both to control their behaviour and to access the curriculum themselves. St James-Roberts & Singh (2001) therefore were key to identifying the next steps in learning mentorship provision within the school to more effectively meet targeted children's needs and, in turn, the school's needs by focusing on aiding individual children to address the issues affecting their ability to learn.

The review discussed here therefore addressed how the learning mentors could better support the children in managing their barriers to learning and, more importantly at this stage, how the learning mentors could work more effectively through a team approach, as suggested by the Authority Link Learning Mentor. In turn, how this approach would support the teaching staff in behaviour management was also discussed. It was noted that such an approach to learning mentorship was already in use in many secondary schools (DfES, undated e) but was much less common in primary schools. However, once identified and outlined by the Link Learning Mentor, the introduction of a team approach was accepted at the review as the natural next step in the evolution of learning mentorship at the school. It was this decision to introduce the team approach to learning mentorship in the school that fully identified research into the development of the approach within the school was needed. Although Hayward (2001) states clearly that the learning mentor role is intended to be flexible and adaptable to the needs of the individual school and the individual pupil, it was acknowledged that this new approach might not prove to be worthwhile within the primary school at the heart of the research, particularly in view

of the current context of the school and the growing behaviour management issues which needed to be addressed. Therefore, by carrying out a small-scale piece of research into this approach to learning mentorship, its relevance to the primary school would be formally documented and evaluated. The research would thus be used to establish the effects of the approach and draw conclusions regarding its effectiveness with regards to the individual pupils, the school and the needs of the teaching staff.

The Research Problem

It must be re-stated here that this report is a narrative of the research as it was conducted. A narrative style is being used as it allows the story of the research to unfold and enables the reader to fully understand the changes and choices made throughout the research, at what point they were made and in response to which event or piece of data. The research problem at this stage thus centred on the effectiveness of the team approach to learning mentorship within the school; the relevance of the approach to the primary school would thus be formally documented and evaluated, leading to establishing the effects of the approach and drawing conclusions regarding its effectiveness. The research problem hence could be identified with reference to Bassey's (1999) first category of case study, the testing of a theory, with the theory being tested as:

The Team Approach to Learning Mentorship Within the

Primary School is More Effective than the Individual Approach.

However, the parameters of the learning mentor role (Smith 2000) are such that the research needed to be more focused, although Anderson & Arsenault (1998) warn that reducing a general research area to a focused-problem may lead to a study

without *significance.* It was being mindful of this warning that the focus began to be identified; this began to be addressed through a discussion about the practicalities of the team approach. It was quickly agreed that a central area for a new learning mentor team to be based was needed. A room within the school was easily identified as being suitable; it was how the room would be presented and used that defined the focus of the research at this juncture.

It was at this point in the discussion that I recalled an earlier visit to a nurture group within a small primary school. I had been profoundly influenced by the work of the group, identifying the ethos being promoted and the apparent benefits to the small number of children within the group. At this particular school children were catered for within the nurture group because they displayed profound difficulties in accessing a mainstream classroom; the nurture group environment itself was used to promote sharing and learning from each other. Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001) describe this environment as not only a pleasant setting in which the children work, but a holistic approach of ethos that is both important and effective. It was this holistic approach to children's needs that had influenced my thinking at the time and was recalled now. I believed that an adapted use of the ethos would be of benefit to children with similar difficulties in accessing the classroom within my own institution, although I had not been in a position at the time of the visit to put this in place. However, during the review being documented here, I could now visualise how the nurture group ethos could be incorporated into the learning mentor base being established as part of the team approach to learning mentorship within the school. Such an adaptation would be acceptable to the principles of a nurture group, indeed Bennathan & Boxall (2000) report that such groups are being established in many schools throughout England in many forms. In response to the many forms being used Bennathan & Boxall (2000)

provide a checklist of criteria for the effective nurture group; it will be explored in chapter four how this checklist of criteria was used when the learning mentor base was being established.

I therefore outlined my understanding of the ethos to the learning mentors and the Link Learning Mentor and explained how I thought it could support the team approach being developed, by providing a basis for the new pro-active and inclusive work. I believed that the use of the ethos would emphasise their commitment to promoting accessibility to the school and to the curriculum for all pupils. It was accepted at the review that this could be an appropriate starting point for establishing the team approach to learning mentorship but was also acknowledged that this would entail quite a radical change to the school's current approach to learning mentorship, particularly in view of the current context of the school and the thoughts of the teaching staff on how learning mentorship needed to be used at this time. It was therefore anticipated that the approach being developed may not be welcomed and embraced by the teaching staff and pupils and, more importantly, although exciting to the reviewers in theory the changes may not necessarily lead to improvements in the effectiveness of the learning mentors in practice. Again this confirmed the need for a formal piece of research and the focus would be:

The use of the Nurture Group ethos within the Team Approach

to Learning Mentorship within one Primary School.

The Research Plan

The review (as outlined above) thus evaluated the school's approach to learning mentorship at this time and proposed changes that would be formally evaluated through being the focus for a piece of research. However, it must be noted that I was

not concerned with proving that a team approach was better than the previous approach to learning mentorship; rather the research would be carried out to ensure that the developing approach was effective in meeting the needs of staff and children whilst establishing the team as a complementary workforce in the school. The research plan thus needed to allow for the approach to evolve and respond to need rather than be a rigid, scientific study, hence indicating that the research would lead the development of the approach. A case study that simply tested a theory was therefore not appropriate to the research aims. I was mindful here of previous reading around the use of the feminist perspective within research where Beasley (1999) states that the characteristics of feminist research provide a cautious, open-ended and wide-ranging approach to research problems and Robson (1993, p.289) cites the emphasising of commitment '…against detachment.' by researchers using a feminist perspective. These references reflected my thoughts on the research I was proposing, that the testing of a theory was not relevant to my needs by it being too restrictive, and indeed may not yield the information I required regarding the effectiveness of learning mentorship within the school. The research I required would need to be open-ended, documenting and evaluating what was evolving in practice rather than that of a system to be imposed and then tested to ascertain its worth. Mies (1993) would agree with my growing assertion that this piece of research would be carried out with respect to the feminist perspective as I accepted from the outset that the changes proposed may not improve the effectiveness of learning mentorship within the school and so I would be approaching the research from a value-free, non-judgemental standpoint.

It is important to note here that my interpretation of the feminist perspective is not limited to research carried out by women on women, but reflects the definition of

Stanley and Wise (1993, p.31) who describe it as being concerned with '…all aspects of social reality and all participants in it.' Lofland and Lofland (1995) add to my interpretation by stating that the perspective pays due regard to both the objectives of the research and the needs of the researched, both of which I clearly considered and have outlined within the report. I thus believed that a case study that tested a theory could not respond to the needs of the researched whereas a study that told the story of the development of an initiative could indeed respond to the needs of the researched by documenting changes made, why they were made and the effects of the changes. Crotty (1998) describes this as the researcher's standpoint, that the researcher accepts their responsibility towards the researched. Mies (1993) develops this notion of responsibility to the researched by describing the use of feminist methodology to promote an equal power relationship between the researcher and the researched; indeed Beasley (1999) regards an essential feature of the feminist perspective to be the collection of a wide variety of data, gathering open-ended rather than fixed data, the use of a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach and an open-minded response to data interpretation. This mirrors exactly my proposed methodology (chapter five). Oliver (1997, p.186) describes the use of such methodology as an interpretive approach that places considerable emphases…upon the views and perceptions…' of the researched and is concerned with the attitudes and experiences of the researched and how they change over time. Searle (1999) describes the interpretative researcher as one that uses data collected to provide an open-ended, narrative of the research, exactly as this report is providing. The data would therefore need to both investigate the attitudes and experiences of the researched in order to provide a basis for the narrative; it would, for that reason, need to take many forms and be collected using a variety of strategies, including questionnaire, interview,

observations and other communications. This states precisely the methodology considered at this stage of the research plan.

The research thus became a case study that would tell the story of how a team approach to learning mentorship was developed in one primary school, taking the nurture group ethos as a basis for building the approach and exploring how it works in practice and the effects on individual children – on their behaviour and their access to the school and its curriculum. This style of case study closely reflects Bassey's (1995) enquiry model of research rather than the theory testing model (Bassey, 1999). The enquiry model includes a formal evaluation stage and so criteria for the success (or otherwise) of the new approach to learning mentorship needed to be identified at this point in the research planning.

The aims of learning mentorship, as noted by Smith (2000), were again considered as a reference for the criteria for success; the aims are to raise standards and reduce both truancy and exclusions. The criteria for success for this piece of research centred on the pupils' increased access to the curriculum and, in turn, increased attainment, in addition to a more positive attitude to school and a reduction in the behaviours that would warrant a fixed term or permanent exclusion from school. In view of this, it was thought appropriate to involve a range of adults in the research, those associated with both the pupils and the learning mentor initiative – the learning mentors themselves; the Link Learning Mentor; myself as both researcher and acting headteacher of the school and, to a lesser degree, the teaching staff. The decision to involve the teaching staff to a lesser degree than the reviewers was as a response to their slighter understanding of the learning mentor role, which warranted further training, and to make the data to be collected manageable as a large amount of data was expected to be collected, as outlined in chapter five. The involvement of the

pupils was essential, to ascertain their attitudes towards the learning mentor provision - and indeed attitudes to school itself - and to reflect on their own learning and behaviour. This requirement added to the wide range of data and data collection methods alluded to earlier and now included the use of attitude and behaviour scales for the pupils, together with a comparison of attainment at the beginning of the newly identified provision to the attainment following one full academic year of the provision.

It must again be noted here that the research would not only be concerned with such data collection and analysis as considered above, but that background and contextual data would be as important to building up a picture of the role of the learning mentor as data to be collected from the participants in the research, the research plan was therefore now acknowledged as having four consecutive parts:

Part 1 – identifying the research.

Part 2 – developing the researcher's knowledge of the learning mentor initiative.

Part 3 – establishing, describing and then evaluating the school's developing provision of learning mentorship.

Part 4 – drawing conclusions and further developing the provision.

These four parts were further broken down into the ten distinct stages summarised in Table 1.1 (chapter one). This chapter has therefore taken the reader from Stage 1 of Table 1.1, the collection of background data, through to Stage 2 – the initial analysis and the definition of the research problem. The final part of this stage, writing the research plan and beginning to identify the data to be collected, could now be addressed. Table 3.1 (overleaf) presents this final part of the stage, outlining three

linked phases of data collection to be used to map the impact of the change in the provision of learning mentorship.

Table 3:1 - Part 3 of the Research Plan

Phase 1 **Autumn Term** **Academic Year** **2003/2004**	Interview key staff regarding first thoughts of new Learning Mentor provision - Learning Mentors, Link Learning Mentor, class teachers Set up Learning Mentor base, using Nurture Group ethos Set up Learning Mentor records of intervention Identify group of children to be involved in research Seek permission for children's involvement in the research Prepare background information on children Interview children regarding first thoughts of new Learning Mentor provision Identified children complete attitudes and behaviour scales
Phase 2 **Mid - Year**	Review provision Interview key staff (as Phase 1) Interview identified children Review Learning Mentor records of intervention Review attainment of the child Review data collected/collated
Phase 3 **End of Year** **Review**	Interview key staff – as Phase 1 Interview identified children Identified children complete attitudes and behaviour scales Review attainment of the children Review Learning Mentor records of intervention Amend Learning Mentor provision if indicated – for second year of operation

Chapter 4 – Clarifying the Scope of the Research

Following the review of learning mentorship, and the identification of the use of the team approach for learning mentorship within the primary school based on the nurture group ethos, how the approach would be put into practice was considered and actioned. The way in which this stage progressed will be explored within the first part of this chapter, indeed it is here that it will be demonstrated that although all the adults involved in the review of practice agreed that a team approach was indicated, determining how this would operate in practice presented a huge challenge to the reviewers, including both myself as the instigator of the new approach and the Link Learning Mentor who first suggested it. However, it was this challenge in identifying the practicalities of the approach that led directly to the plan to base the approach on the nurture group ideals; this was discussed and readily accepted and pointed the way to how the approach would be introduced in the school. Therefore, following the initial consideration of putting the approach into practice, the chapter goes on to explore further these ideals and how they were to be adopted by the newly-formed learning mentor team.

As described in the earlier chapters of this report, the establishment of the team approach to learning mentorship was identified as the focus for a piece of research but it was here that the scope of the research was further clarified as investigating the effect of the nurture group ethos within learning mentorship. It must be noted here that it was only following the first phase of data collection and analysis under this working title of the research that the focus changed to that of the title of the report, to the role of the learning mentor in the socialisation of the child; in keeping with the narrative style of reporting the research, this change of focus will be explored later in the report. It is therefore at this point that it was considered how the effects of the

team approach could be identified, measured and used to aid the school in continuing to develop its commitment to effective learning mentorship. This chapter will therefore end with a consideration of the range of data that would contribute to the identification and measurement of the effects of the newly-introduced approach, thus establishing the participants in the data collection and specifically to the cohort of pupils that would be integral to the research process.

The Team Approach to Learning Mentorship

It has been stated earlier how the school's learning mentors were deployed within four specific year groups, the year groups were identified by the previous headteacher at the beginning of an academic year; the criteria for this identification of the year groups was the number of pupils in the year group displaying behaviour problems. As noted in previous chapters, it was this interpretation of learning mentorship in practice that led me to request a review of the provision within the school as I held an inherent belief that the potential of the role was not being fully exploited through this restricted provision. However, I was also mindful that the year groups targeted through the school's approach at the time of the review were also the ones where a significant number of the children were identified as pupils who were not expected to achieve the expected National Average in the core subjects of English, maths and science, or to meet their own potential if this would be higher than the expected National Average, *due to behavioural and/or emotional problems* (School Policy, 2001). Indeed the Policy statement reflects well the stated aims of the learning mentor initiative, that pupils having *pastoral issues* that relate to their '… mental and physical welfare…' are target pupils for learning mentorship (Teachernet, undated) and so it could be argued that the school's interpretation at this time was relevant and

appropriate to both the national guidance and to school needs; and yet I continued to question whether this interpretation was suitably far-reaching.

Further guidance to be found within the school's policy on the role of the learning mentor at this time included the need for the learning mentor to:

- Check on children giving concern, then become involved in the classes assigned to.

- If children are settled then work in classes with a group of children.

- If a child is unsettled, work with the child in the class. Only if the child is very unsettled or disruptive should they be removed from class.

- Children should be removed with a small group of other children, not individually.

- Continue to check throughout the day that all the children are settled and working on class activities.

- Ensure the majority of the learning mentor's time is spent with children in the classroom environment, this is the essence of *inclusion*.

- Be concerned with prevention rather than cure, to work regularly with groups of children to prevent incidences of off-task behaviour.

The school guidance was thus clear, laudable and, through the last bullet point, touched on being proactive in the role. This related purely to spending time with a child ensuring they complete the work set rather than on the proactive work I was interested in that would aid the child in developing strategies for dealing with the cause of their own barrier to learning, with the result being that the child would be able to remain on task without direct assistance.

It can also be appreciated here how this school guidance shaped very clearly the teachers' interpretation of the role of the learning mentor as one that centred on in-class support for children with known behaviour problems, in order to ensure access to class activities. The view held by class teachers that learning mentors were employed solely to deal with behaviour issues was reinforced by the guidance given in bullet point three, that very unsettled or disruptive children should be removed from class. The review carried out by the learning mentors, the Link Learning Mentor and myself acknowledged that the staff presently worked with this guidance and that the move to a proactive approach based on equal access for all pupils may inevitably be viewed as a radical change in interpretation; indeed, although the reviewers considered this to be a most exciting prospect, it was recognised that it might not either be accepted so readily by the staff as an improvement in the provision of learning mentorship nor might bring about improvements in practice. As noted earlier, it was this recognition by the reviewers that firmly identified the provision of learning mentorship as a focus for research.

The identification also clearly indicated that the reviewers needed to spend time on the practical interpretation of this new, predominantly proactive approach to learning mentorship within the school. This required establishing systems to support the approach, before presenting the package to the staff; how it would be presented to staff and pupils also needed to be explored in order to convey why the changes to learning mentorship were being made at this time. Unfortunately, as noted in the chapter introduction, it was here that it was realised the identification of the practicalities of the approach was not a simple task, despite the agreement by all the reviewers that this was the way forward for the school. This difficulty was evidenced

in the learning mentors' responses to the question posed at a later stage, "What did you understand by the team approach to your role?".

> 'Well I understood it to literally mean that, to work as a team. Whatever systems we put into place we would …work alongside one another across the school incorporating all year groups…'

This response sums up what I believed was the collective understanding of *what* we were trying to achieve through making the changes, but does not begin to address *how* we would achieve it. The following response relates much more to the perceived advantages of the approach to the mentors themselves rather than to developing the effectiveness of learning mentorship for the school and its pupils:

> I thought it would be easier…as some of these children are quite difficult and it's quite straining that you're working with the same children day in, day out.

The third response was even more disappointing as the mentor apparently could not begin to consider the role in practice:

> I didn't actually understand how it was going to work …what we would actually do. I understood that we would all work together, but until it all started I didn't have a clue if it would work or how it would work.

It was thus not surprising that after the discussions we had had regarding the move to a proactive approach that there was a real difficulty in identifying what the change to the team approach would involve. Nevertheless, it was clear that the learning mentors believed that the new approach would provide mutual support for themselves; would facilitate the sharing of ideas for working with the children and, from the children's point of view, would ensure that different areas of expertise would

be available throughout the school and not solely within identified year groups. It was hence these beliefs that were the starting point for shaping the approach in practice.

The Link Learning Mentor continued to be an important factor in the interpretation of the new approach in practice; indeed, it was predominantly his ideas that informed the practicalities of the approach and yet even he acknowledged later he found identifying the components of the approach quite difficult:

> I was very excited by it, very excited by it. I must admit…
> I've got a bit of a clearer picture today than where originally I
> had it in my own head….

In practice, the approach developed over a period of two months in the summer term following the review of learning mentorship at the school. During this time the learning mentor team, as they now became known, the Link Learning Mentor and myself shared ideas and agreed that the approach would provide:

- A central area for the learning mentor team to work out of;

- A commitment to working predominantly out of this central area with in-class support for mentored pupils as needed;

- A team timetable supported by individual, focused timetables;

- Shared learning mentor records;

- An initial cohort of pupils requiring learning mentorship;

- A programme of one-to-one mentoring sessions, group mentoring sessions, focused activities within the learning mentor base supported by in-class mentoring;

- The establishment of drop-in sessions for parents and for pupils, in order to promote self-referral;

- A system for informing staff, parents and pupils of the updated service provided by the mentor team.

Central Area

This provision was arrived at with reference to the learning mentor training materials (Liverpool Excellence Partnership, 2003) and our own thoughts on how learning mentorship should be delivered in the school. At this development stage, the establishment of the dedicated, central learning mentor room was deemed most important to the new approach, as it was here that the learning mentors would be *seen* to work as a team and would carry out the proactive work we now believed was vital to effective learning mentorship within the school.

In-class support

Learning mentorship in the central base would be supplemented by in-class support as needed; to aid children in transferring the strategies for learning provided in the learning mentor base. This aspect of the developing provision was described well by one of the learning mentors as:

> I like the idea of going to the class, watching, sitting in with
> the children, and looking at targeted children and pulling
> children out and talking to them [about how they're coping].

We believed that such in-class support would also enable the teacher to gain a greater understanding of the work of the learning mentors and would provide the presence of a second adult in the classroom that the class teachers considered important to their behaviour management, although St James-Roberts & Singh (2001), in their research, did not find this aspect of learning mentorship significantly

improved behaviour. The research carried out by St James-Roberts & Singh (2001) was a three year study into mentors and primary school children with behaviour problems, the CHANCE project, which provided trained mentors to work one-to-one with primary-aged children exhibiting behaviour problems (and what they termed *other risk* factors). What they found was that, although the mentored children improved their behaviour, a comparison group of children with similar behaviour problems but without mentors, exhibited equivalent improvements in their behaviour. Thus the presence of a learning mentor in the classroom was intended to support the child to transfer their skills into the classroom rather than to improve behaviour by their presence.

Timetables

A consideration here of the role in practice, though not explored in depth within the research, was the need for the learning mentors to retain individual responsibilities where they had particular expertise. These centred on the responsibility for attendance matters and attending Case Conferences and Children in Need meetings, in school and externally. Consequently a team timetable was deemed necessary together with individual, timetables indicating such focused activities. A copy of the timetables is contained within appendix one, to show the team and individual learning mentor commitments at this stage in the research.

Shared records

At this planning stage, the individual learning mentor records that had been held by the learning mentors would now become shared documents, although it will be

noted later that this aspect of the new approach was not achieved within the research period.

Initial cohort/referrals

It was considered important that referrals to the learning mentor team could be made by children themselves, parents, teachers or other adults in school. Each referral would be considered and catered for; indeed this was the justification given for taking the learning mentors out of the classroom and into a base, in order for learning mentorship to be available for all children requiring this specialist support. Accordingly, an initial cohort of pupils requiring learning mentorship would be identified by myself as acting headteacher, the teachers and the learning mentors, to be added to as needs arose and referrals were made by others. At this stage we expected that teachers and adults within school would refer at anytime whereas parents and pupils would refer during the timetabled drop-in sessions however, in practice, parents and pupils also referred at the time when concerns arose.

Programme of learning mentor activities

Although the teachers wanted the learning mentors to merely help the children complete their work by working one-to-one to manage the child's behaviour, it was in the range of activities provided by the learning mentors that I wanted to see the most changes. The expectation by the teaching staff that the learning mentors would be sent for to deal with misbehaviour as it happened was what I wanted to address as soon as possible, to remove the belief that this was the primary role of a learning mentor. I wanted to explore how the introduction of focused, proactive work with children on their barrier to learning could prevent outbursts of behaviour that would lead to a

teacher feeling that sending for another adult for support was the necessary course of action to be taken. During the review it was clear that the learning mentors wanted to concentrate on this. Indeed, comments made by the learning mentors during a later conversation demonstrated how important they regarded this aspect of their work and how frustrated they were at the teaching staff's continuing misunderstanding of the process of learning mentorship:

> You know in September when you [the Link Learning Mentor], came in and told everybody the roles, the presentation that you did, still then you'd got certain members of staff sending for us as. 'Bebe, Bebe, we're here.'
> It's still happening now.

> And children are sent to you as well, or sent to the learning mentor room, because they've misbehaved.

> And it's called the naughty room now. I don't like that.

Even though these comments came at a later stage in the research, and so will be returned to later, they demonstrate clearly how the changes were viewed by the teaching staff at the initial period of data collection. They make obvious that, whilst the reviewers were encouraged by the change in approach, the staff were reluctant to embrace the move to a more proactive, preventative team approach; indeed my comment at the time indicated that the staff saw the approach as a failure and that a return to the previous model of provision was preferred:

> I think that just the fact that the staff are saying, the teachers are saying 'Are they going to be in year groups next year?'
> 'Are we going to have them in the classroom full-time?'
> shows that there is no understanding.

The Learning Mentor Role in Practice

To return to the consideration of the practicalities of the role, we (the reviewers) wanted the learning mentors to address the children's *barriers to learning*, to enable the child to explore why they were experiencing problems in school, how the barrier to learning was affecting their own learning and developing strategies to overcome the barrier. These requirements were classified as a programme of mentoring sessions, to include both one-to-one and group sessions. We recognised that other, focused activities would also be identified in time. These included small group assemblies for children who found being in the hall with their key stage too difficult to engage in, and circle of friends groups to develop social skills for children who experienced difficulties in making and keeping friendships. An after-school craft club was started to encourage targeted children to access the range of activities the school provided, within and beyond the school day, and out of school visits would be timetabled to reward children who were accessing school appropriately. A system of lunchtime invitations, for targeted and non-targeted children to eat lunch in the learning mentor room, were also timetabled, to again reward the targeted children for appropriate behaviour or attitude; these invitations were later extended to staff, to provide further access to appropriate role models. Appendix two contains a breakdown of the agreed programme of activities, alongside the learning mentor team timetable and individual timetables.

It was noted earlier that the establishment of the dedicated learning mentor room was deemed most important to the new approach, as it would here that the learning mentors would carry out most of their work. The resourcing of the room, the layout and the specific function was therefore discussed in detail and it was here that my earlier interest in nurture groups proved invaluable. Through outlining my

understanding of the use of a nurture group and the ethos promoted we considered that the principles of a nurture group could be used as the basis for the establishment of our learning mentor room. Bennathan & Boxall (2000) provide the principles in the form of a checklist and the reviewers were able to match each of the stated principles to the suggestions we were making for the development of learning mentorship within the school, as summarised in Table 4.1 overleaf. We believed that the adoption of the principles would lead to the learning mentor base providing an environment that was structured, predictable and would emphasise the key aspects of accessing school life, learning together and playing together.

Table 4:1- Nurture Group Characteristics used in Setting up the

Learning Mentor Room

Nurture Group Characteristic Nurture Groups should:	How Adopted by the School
a) Be located clearly within the structure of a school's response to special educational needs (SEN) provision.	a) The work of the learning mentors would be specifically targeted under the umbrella of SEN provision. This would involve a change to the present system where the learning mentors were considered alongside the general teaching assistant provision.
b) Ensure that children attending the nurture group register daily and attend selected activities within their mainstream class.	b) Pupils would work in the learning mentor room for short periods of time only.
c) Provide pupils with a regular pattern of attendance.	c) Addressed through the provision of team learning mentor and individual mentor timetables.
d) Ensure that the National Curriculum is taught.	d) Class teachers to provide copies of planning when appropriate to focus of learning mentor work.
f) Provide short or medium term intervention, usually between two and four terms, depending on child's specific needs.	f) Targeted children to be assessed regularly to determine length of intervention period.
g) Convey a setting and modelled relationships for children missing essential early learning experiences.	g) The learning mentors would provide a model for appropriate peer relationships and focus on developing attitudes to learning.
h) Be staffed by two adults working together modelling good adult relationships.	h) The two adult staff, modelling good adult relationships, would be two learning mentors, rather than the appointment of a teacher.

Table 4:1 - Continued (Nurture Group Characteristics used in the

Learning Mentor Room)

Nurture Group Characteristic Nurture Groups should:	How Adopted by the School
i) Support children's positive emotional and social growth and cognitive development.	i) One of the main aims of the proactive work to be delivered by the learning mentors.
j) Place an emphasis on speech and language development.	j) Considered essential by the reviewers for children to interact appropriately with their peers and with adults. Also to be a focus of the learning mentors' planned activities.
k) Ensure opportunities for social learning, co-operation and play.	k) As j. (above).
l) Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of the provision in promoting social, emotional and educational development of each child.	l) Learning mentor review timetable established. Reviews to be made in consultation with class teachers, pupils (as appropriate) and parents.
m) Involve mainstream staff in the life of the nurture group.	m) To be addressed through information sharing, formal observations of the work of the learning mentors and informal observations through the lunchtime invitations.
n) Involve adults who are committed to promoting a positive attitude towards the parents or carers of all children.	n) An integral part of the learning mentor remit is to work with the parents and carers of targeted pupils.

It is clear from the detail given in Table 4.1 that the nurture group principles sit well with the proposed changes to the learning mentorship provision and, in turn, promote the proactive, holistic approach to catering for the pupils' academic and

social skill development that I wanted to develop and that Cooper et al (2001) describe well. The environment to be created would promote a culture of sharing and of learning from each other and from the adults working within the environment, with an emphasis on modelled relationships for the children to adopt. In view of this, the use of the nurture group principles would only be successful if the learning mentors appreciated how important the demonstration and development of how individuals relate to each other is to the approach. The learning mentors accepted this without question and were committed to fulfilling the principles of:

- Modelling good relationships;

- Developing relationships whereby children trust adults

- Providing support for the children's social, emotional and educational development; by carrying out activities designed to raise self-esteem, to provide strategies for maintaining own behaviour, to develop an awareness of the rules and routines of the school and develop a positive attitude to learning

- Using follow-up classroom support to enable the child to put into practice the strategies developed

It can be appreciated that the layout of the learning mentor base was an important consideration, as it was here that effective relationships would be demonstrated, developed and encouraged. Different areas were indicated as sharing food at a dining table obviously requires different skills than working together in a working space or relaxing in a quiet area and yet each set of skills are valuable for developing appropriate relationships between peers and between children and adults. The reviewers thus agreed that the layout of the learning mentor base needed to incorporate five designated areas – a work space furnished with classroom tables; a

quiet area with informal seating; a dining area furnished with a dining table and chairs; a play area resourced with age-appropriate games, activities, television and video and an office area for the learning mentors.

It was believed that this interpretation of the nurture group principles, within the measures to develop the provision of learning mentorship at the school, would aid in continuing to fulfil the aims of the national learning mentorship programme and support the proactive approach I had deemed necessary within the school, as noted throughout this chapter. The use of the dedicated learning mentor base would thus provide a systematic process of mentorship delivered within a quiet yet purposeful environment that would be perceived as *safe* by the pupils, would promote accessibility to school and, in turn, to the classroom for the pupils currently withdrawing themselves from the curriculum. Smith (2002, p4) would support this interpretation as he describes the role of the primary school to provide a

> …learning atmosphere where every child succeeds in some
> way and where every adult works towards helping every child
> to achieve his or her potential.

The reviewers did not consider that using the principles in this way would classify the school provision as a nurture group and yet Bennathan & Boxall (2000) report that their checklist of criteria, as used here, provides the guidance necessary for the development of an effective nurture group. It is also accepted (Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Littlewood, 2004) that there are many interpretations of the nurture group. Cooper & Lovey (1999) report that the principles are being used successfully with children aged from four or five, providing the children with pre-school experiences they have missed out on, and Littlewood (2004) details the use with High School pupils, where the group meets for one morning each week only, thus ensuring that

curriculum time is protected. However, Soames (undated) describes such adaptations as the specific use of the nurture group principles for promoting inclusion, stating that this is accepted as an effective strategy; it is therefore in keeping with Soames (undated) that the school provision is based on the principles but is not deemed to be a nurture group.

The chapter so far has thus outlined the thinking behind the practicalities of the change in learning mentorship and how this shaped the setting up of the learning mentor base. It has noted how the team approach to learning mentorship began to be understood by the reviewers at this early stage in the research and how a range of activities to be carried out were identified. At all times during this process the requirement to *remove pupils' barriers to learning* (DfES, undated) was uppermost and all strategies identified for use by the team related to this one requirement. What will now be explored is the informing of staff, parents and pupils about the changes to the provision of learning mentorship within the school.

Informing staff, parents and pupils

Staff were made aware of the new arrangements through a presentation by the learning mentor team, aided by the Link Learning Mentor, at the beginning of the next academic year. It was interesting at this time that the teaching staff accepted the changes with little comment; it was only when the approach was put into practice that negative comments were made, as evidenced through informal discussion and in the teacher questionnaire used later in the research. One teacher recorded that working outside the classroom was a negative experience for some children:

> Most children enjoy the … attention, although a minority feel
> they are being labelled and singled out.

Another teacher considered that the team approach reduced the effectiveness of learning mentorship as it reduced the number of children accessing learning mentorship rather than increasing it. This was a surprise as increasing access was one of the main aims of the new approach. The teacher responded thus:

> Some [children] are working with the team…I feel I have
> some children who could do with learning mentor support
> and are not currently receiving support from them.

In later discussions with teaching staff it was evident that they wanted the support provided by the learning mentors to take place within the classroom rather than the learning mentor room. The teachers regarded that, by being available in the classroom, the learning mentors were accessible to all children whereas I believed that this diluted the provision. How these perceptions were dealt with will be outlined at the appropriate stage in the research report.

Following the presentation to staff teachers were invited to refer pupils requiring intervention by the mentors – it was from these referrals and my suggestions that the research group of pupils were selected, as described later in this chapter. This again was a change to the previous system, as the previous system was based on the headteacher identifying a target group of children who the learning mentors worked with alongside other children in the classroom. Once again, this request for teacher referrals led to concerns by the teachers, as the number of referrals was so great the learning mentor team needed to prioritise the neediest cases with others either classified as low intervention or assigned to a waiting list system. The concerns this raised in the teachers is evidenced in the words of the second teacher above and in this response:

> The other two children do not generally work with a learning
> mentor. [They do] not always work with identified children,
> more often with other children

Parents and pupils were introduced to the new service through meetings, assemblies, letters and leaflets. In turn, parents and pupils were encouraged to self-refer to the service. At each introduction to the new team approach the change in focus for learning mentorship within the school was explained as necessary to promote equal access to learning mentorship for *all* children and to facilitate cooperation and sharing between the mentors themselves. Interestingly, what could have been used as a justification for this change was not known at the time, that Morris, when introducing the pilot phase of the learning mentor initiative, remembered that as a teacher she often found herself fulfilling the roles of '…a first-aider, a counsellor, a financial adviser.' and that having another adult available to help sort out these problems would have enabled her to carry out her teaching role (BBC, 1999b). Indeed it may be considered that this was the origin of the learning mentor initiative, that it was based on a teacher's perception of how the role of the classroom teacher needed to be supported. This may have aided the staff, parents and pupils in embracing the approach proposed by the school at the heart of this piece of research.

One further point to note here is that when the learning mentor strand of the EiC initiative was introduced, in its pilot phase, the mentors were to be '…specialist teaching staff…', to be classed as '…social-worker teachers…' with the remit to address pupils' problems at home that prevent pupils accessing the curriculum in school (BBC, 1999b). It is unclear why the requirement for a learning mentor to be a qualified teacher was removed; it could however be speculated that whereas the product of learning mentorship was an increase in access to the curriculum (and thus to learning) the process did not centre on teaching but on a different set of

competencies. These competencies are set out in the National Standards for Learning Mentors (Liverpool Excellence Partnership, 2003) and form the basis for the learning mentor qualification.

The Bakers Dozen

Following the identification of the focus of the research, and the importance of the establishment of a dedicated learning mentor base, it was clear that data from children accessing learning mentorship would need to be collected. At this point in the research the focus was firmly on the *effectiveness of the nurture group ethos within learning mentorship,* with attainment being a measure of its success. Therefore, the research would consider attainment before and after intervention, with the data taking the form of objective data collected through statutory and optional SATs tests. However, in addition to this focus, the views of the children were deemed important to determine their thoughts on the effects of the changing style of learning mentorship; indeed Mayall (2002, p26) would agree that using the children's understandings and '…experiential knowledge…' is an essential feature of the research. I also believed that data collected from the children was important in order to further explore the intervention planned and to determine if any differences in attainment or behaviour could be attributed to other influences or changes in a pupil's life.

Greig and Taylor (1999) advocate the use of questionnaire, observation and interview as relevant data collection methods for use with children; each of these data collection methods was considered for this piece of research. The use of questionnaire was rejected due to the age of the children, with consideration given to the ability of the children to respond independently to a questionnaire. However, much is written about the measurement of children's attitudes through the use of attitudes and

behaviour scales (Proctor, 1993; Babbie, 1995; Greig and Taylor, 1999; Burns, 2000) and so these were adopted as an alternative to questionnaire. Consequently relevant attitude and behaviour scales were devised, based on scales used by Cherian (2002), with statements written to explore pupil views regarding their attitudes to school, to learning mentorship, to the learning mentor room and their own thoughts on their behaviour.

Observation, using an observation schedule, was considered but rejected at this point as it was not thought relevant to the nature of the data to be collected. However, it will be demonstrated that observation was used by the learning mentors and referred to in their interviews and observation by me was crucial to the conclusions to be drawn from the research. Indeed it is my observations of the children, and the interpretation of my observations, which led to one of the key recommendations from the research, that learning mentorship is to be time-limited. It was interview that was considered here to be the main method for the collection of data from the children, as supported by Hodkinson & Bloomer (2000) and Ginsburg (1997). Hodkinson & Bloomer (2000) report the successful use of semi-structured interviews for researching dispositions to learning of pupils and Ginsburg (1997, p115) who states, when considering clinical interviews, that interview is a technique invaluable for helping '…us to enter the child's mind in a sensitive manner.'

This initial identification of data collection methods led directly to the consideration of the cohort of pupils to be involved in the research. There was an obvious dilemma here between making the cohort size manageable for such a small piece of research yet large enough to ensure that the data they would provide would be adequate for the research findings to be judged significant (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). Reading other research reports indicated clearly that meaningful research had

been reported that centred on both data collected from very small numbers of respondents and from questionnaire data with very large numbers of respondents. Taking into consideration the range of data to be collected and interpreted here, both contextual data and that from adults and children, it was decided that a group of twelve children would be manageable yet fruitful.

One of the initial thoughts on the use of the nurture group ethos was that relationships between siblings, particularly siblings who may not reside in the same home, could be promoted. This would further strengthen the modelling of appropriate attitudes and behaviours, believed to be a most powerful strategy particularly where one sibling could present as a positive role model. One of the criteria for the identification of the cohort of children thus became having a sibling in school. Further considerations included:

- Age – a mix of ages but with the ability to give considered responses to questions posed;

- Gender – to reflect the school gender mix;

- Ethnicity – the school is a multi-cultural school and so the cohort needed to reflect this;

- Ability – as with all schools there is a marked range of ability across all year groups;

- Degree of engagement in school and the curriculum – to reflect different needs across the school population.

With respect to these considerations, I identified a group of children that I believed represented the overall pupil population at the school. During this identification process, a pair of twins was considered but it was difficult to justify the

involvement of one of the twins but not the other as they shared a common difficulty in accessing the classroom and so both were included in the research. It is for this reason that the cohort of children became known as the Baker's Dozen.

Within appendix three are descriptions of each child in the Baker's Dozen. The descriptions include details of age, gender, ethnicity, ability and the main *barrier to learning* the pupil presents. To recap, DfES (undated c) consider barriers to learning as problems faced by pupils that may include difficulties with home life, bullying issues or general disaffection. The school designated the needs of such pupils as needing support for their mental and physical welfare (Teachernet, undated); indeed this is the basis on which pupils are identified as needing the targeted support of the learning mentors. The following provides a summary of the make up of the Bakers' Dozen cohort:

- *Age*: All children were in key stage two, to ensure the pupils could understand questions posed and could give meaningful answers.

- *Gender*: The school population has slightly more boys than girls yet the number of children displaying either overt rejection of the school's rules and routines or signs of being unsettled within the school society were predominantly boys. The research group reflected this imbalance of gender by including two girls and eleven boys, rather than reflecting the school population as a whole.

- *Ethnicity:* The school population includes a ten percent ethnic minority group, to reflect this one child of ethnic origin was included.

- *Ability*: Four of the research group were considered to be of less than average ability and three of above average ability.

- *Home life*: many of the group were known to have unsettled or non-conventional home backgrounds - five children in total – which reflected the number of known fragmented families across the school as a whole.

In addition to the above breakdown of the group characteristics, all children in the cohort displayed signs of being unsettled within the school environment; these signs included increasing misbehaviour, disrespect towards adults and a reluctance to engage in classroom activities. As the research progressed, three pupils increasingly displayed overt rejection of the school's rules and routines; indeed within the research period they spent an extended time away from the classroom environment in order to meet both their own needs and the needs of the class. Following a period of teaching and mentoring within a small group made up of similarly disaffected pupils they did return to the classroom. This rejection of school rules and routines, whether overt or developing, became very important to the research and, following the first period of data collection, led to a modification of the focus for research. The resulting modification will begin to be outlined in chapter six. What is needed here, at this point in the story being told of this piece of research into the effectiveness of the learning mentor approach being established, is a further consideration of the data to be collected and the methodology to be used; this is to be addressed in the next chapter, chapter five.

Chapter 5 -The Methodology

Referring back to Table 1.1 – Stages of Research – it can be appreciated that chapter four fulfilled Stage 3 of the research, by clarifying the scope of the research and outlining the changes to the provision of learning mentorship within the school. The clarification of the scope can be summarised as four research aims; the research would hence be used to:

- Establish the main features of the nurture group ethos within the work of the learning mentor team;

- Evaluate the effects of the nurture group ethos on the attainment of targeted children in one large primary school;

- Evaluate the effects of the nurture group ethos on behaviour as a secondary focus;

- Make recommendations for the continuing provision of learning mentorship within the school.

These identified aims sit particularly well with the ideas of Bassey (1999) and Black (2002) who describe educational research as a critical and systematic enquiry that expands both knowledge and understanding and that is then used to inform educational judgements and decisions. What needed now to be thought out was what data would be collected to ensure that the enquiry fulfilled these aims. Greig & Taylor (1999) explain well how the application of the theoretical perspective to the research determines the data collection methods to be used and, in due course, how an analysis of the resulting data will be carried out; the chapter will therefore begin with a further consideration of the feminist perspective, paying particular attention to how my

understanding of this theoretical perspective influenced both the theory and practice of the piece of research carried out.

Through the documenting of my thinking around the feminist approach the categorisation of the research as a case study will be explored, in order to match the classification to the aims of the research and the theoretical perspective, in order to both identify and justify my use of a range of data collection methods. It will be noted in the chapter that I could have reduced the range of data collection methods identified, indeed that I briefly considered this, but rejected the notion and attributed my decision to my understanding of the feminist perspective of research. This decision reinforces Greig & Taylor's view (1999) stated earlier, that it is the theoretical perspective of the research that influences the identification of the data collection methods to be used. The chapter will therefore demonstrate how the piece of research became classified as a case study. Indeed Crotty (1998) describes data collection methods as merely *techniques* or *procedures* related to the methodology and so the chapter will include a discussion of the relationship between data collection methods and the labelling of the research methodology. Finally, the chapter will explore the instruments devised and used, matching the data to be collected through the instruments to the aims of the research.

Feminist Perspective

Having become interested in the feminist perspective of research before beginning this piece of research, I had already accepted that the feminist approach to research is not merely a framework to consider and then adopt or reject, but that it is a set of beliefs inherent in the researcher. This is explained well by Sapsford, Wetherell & Stevens (1998, p75) who, when defining epistemology, refer to the '…form which

any understanding or knowledge takes, the assumptions which underlie it and the methods used to establish it.' as the basis upon which a theoretical perspective is grounded. This reflects my own understanding and is supported by Crotty (1998, p.161) who states overtly that feminist researchers bring their own '…standpoints, qualities and ways of knowing…' to the research. It can hence be appreciated why I readily accepted that the research would be carried out with respect to the feminist perspective due to my own, already-held beliefs however, further reading was used to establish that the perspective was valid and was directing the research appropriately.

An investigation into the validity of the perspective was indicated by Crotty (1998) who states that there is not one distinct feminist methodology to be adhered to but that it is the standpoints, qualities and ways of knowing (cited above) that are brought to already existing methodologies that provide the category of *feminist research;* whereas further reading into how the perspective was directing the research was indicated by Bennett, Glatter & Levacic (1994) and Beasley (1999). Bennett et al (1994) state that the theoretical perspective informs the methodology of the research, and thus the research design that sets out the organisation of the research, to achieve the aims of the research; Beasley (1999) reports that the characteristics of feminism indicate a cautious, open-ended and wide-ranging approach to thought., leading to the collection of a wide range of data that is focused but open-ended. Further reading was therefore essential to establish how the feminist perspective would influence the choices made through the course of the research, the collection of data and its interpretation.

Roberts (1981) reports that initially feminist research was concentrated primarily on the experience and existence of women but Stanley and Wise (1993) state their difficulty with this notion and cite that it is much broader than this, that

feminist research must be concerned with aspects of social reality and the participants in it; it will be further established how this piece of research investigated a *social reality* in later chapters, adding to the justification of the use of the feminist perspective to be made in this chapter. Stanley & Wise (1993, p.44) however, go on to further describe feminist research as being characterised by the '…relationship between the researcher and the researched…' and the researcher's own '…. feminist consciousness'. It can be appreciated that within this piece of research I fulfil both the characteristics as I necessarily had a strong relationship with the *researched,* the participants in the research and the provision of learning mentorship within the school, due to my role in school and that my understanding of the perspective demonstrates my possession of a *feminist consciousness*. Robson (1993, p.289) reinforces this interpretation by citing the benefits of using the perspective in terms of emphasising the *emotional aspects* of the research and involving *commitment* rather than *detachment*; thus reflecting my commitment to the institution, the research focus, the participants in the research and the conclusions of the research, which would directly influence my recommendations for the deployment of the learning mentors in the school. Indeed Lofland and Lofland (1995, p.289) sum this up succinctly when defining feminist research as that which is '…at the services of the objectives and needs of the researched population.' I feel that it can therefore be concluded at this point that feminist research encompasses research by researchers who hold feminist values and beliefs and involves a close relationship between all participants in the research process.

It is Crotty (1998) again who considers the research methodology used by feminist researchers by suggesting that, as feminism has progressed, a range of research methods have become accepted by the researchers, stating that acceptance

has enabled the feminist research perspective to further define its purpose rather than to mask it. Brunskill (1998) reports that feminist researchers now use the full range of research methods that are available to all researchers; Mies (1993) agrees with this and adds that what is important in feminist methodology is that it is value-free, non-judgemental and promotes an equal power relationship between the researcher and the researched. It must therefore be accepted that it is not solely the *choice* of data collection method that is important to the feminist perspective, it is the *justification* given for that choice, as indicated by Jayaratne (1993) who states that feminist researchers have the choice accepting of rejecting a methodology, valuing its benefits or working to change or adapt those parts of it that are adverse to feminist ideals. These references thus indicate that what is important to the use of the perspective is the need to bring the feminist standpoint to the methodology, as noted earlier and accepted as an inherent quality of the feminist researcher. By accepting this interpretation, it must be acknowledged that not all feminist research must be carried out in the same way.

There are numerous recorded studies using the feminist perspective, including many of the sources quoted in this part of the chapter, but specifically including Raghuram et al (1998) and Dam and Volman (1995), who use the perspective within education. Such recorded studies indicate clearly that the research perspective is applicable to a wide range of contexts with no apparent limitation to its use, indeed Babbie (1995) cites a significance of feminist research is that it has come to represent an important theoretical paradigm that has successfully challenged the accepted views of society and the generalisations made through earlier research. As described above, the identification of a methodology relevant to the feminist perspective is not the limiting factor, it is the bringing to it of the feminist standpoint and that it is this that

distinguishes feminist methodology from other methodologies. Thus a major advantage of the perspective is that the researcher is not bound by a conventional, traditional methodology and is not only *allowed* but also indeed is *expected* to push back the boundaries of data collection and analysis, in order to fully explore the female perception of the setting.

Having accepted, rather than *chosen*, that the theoretical perspective driving the research was the feminist perspective, how my inherent beliefs would influence the decisions made in the research needed next to be explored. Greig & Taylor (1999) explain this application of the theoretical perspective to the research as that which determines the data collection methods to be used and, in due course, how an analysis of the resulting data to be carried out. This view is compatible with that of the sources above and so it was here that the range of data collection methods needed to be explored.

Data Collection

Hakim (2000) suggests that the data collection methods are to be identified and used with respect to the nature and issues of the research; Bell (1993) describes this as using methods to obtain key answers to questions related to the research focus. Instruments used (as outlined further in the chapter) are thus merely tools for gathering such data. Both of the views cited indicate the need to consider first the issues and questions to be answered through the research, leading onto identifying the data needed and then onto the precise methodology to be used. This was the order that this particular piece of research followed. Holdaway (2000) expands on this order of data identification followed by methodology classification by suggesting that the choice of methods is defined not only by the nature of the subject of the research but

also by the inherent beliefs of the researcher; consequently another indication of how the beliefs of the researcher, in this case feminist beliefs, influence the direction of a piece of research.

As has already been documented, the research would begin with a change in practice which would be analysed in terms of why the change was indicated and how it was put into practice. The research would not concentrate solely on measuring the impact of the change but would evaluate the process of change and be used to make recommendations about how learning mentorship should be used within the setting. I could have used the interpretivist model to centre on the changing attitudes of the children towards learning mentorship in order to explore the experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of the children, with the data being used to build up a theory of *how* the children's attitudes were developed. This was rejected as it would involve the generation of theory, and could thus be classified as grounded theory research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), whereas my focus was not the creation of theory. I wanted to determine if the team approach to learning mentorship, using the ideals of the nurture group ethos, would improve the provision of learning mentorship in the school in which the research was taking place; in what way it would improve learning mentorship and *why* the approach was effective. Throughout I would be mindful that the research findings may result in the change in practice judged not to be as effective as the previous model, thus indicating a return to the earlier system. The findings of the research (following analyses) would therefore be used to influence further developments in learning mentorship within the school. I accepted that the approach may need to be abandoned or adapted during the research period as it was of over-riding importance that the needs of the children were met as appropriately and effectively as possible and so the research plan needed to reflect that this may take

place. What was hence undoubtedly indicated was a case study, described by Stake (1995, pxi) as the study of the complexity of a '…single case…'.

There are many definitions of case study that reflect the aims of this piece of research, some of which have been referred to in earlier chapters. Bryman (2001) and Greig & Taylor (1999) describe case study as providing an intensive examination of a setting, a context, a situation or an intervention, whilst Stake (2000) explains how case study not only describes the situation but can be used effectively to provide insights into the issues involved. It can thus be appreciated why case study was considered at this stage, as the aims of the research were to look more deeply into the issues arising through the proposed change in practice, indeed it was the definition of case study given by Bassey (1999) that was used to establish this study as a valid piece of research, as cited throughout earlier chapters. To recap, Bassey (1999) set out three distinct categories of case study: the first related to testing or seeking theories; the second related to telling the story of a social setting and a third that evaluates a setting. The first category was rejected as the research proposed did not set out to *test* a theory but would track the impact of a change in practice. The third category was also rejected on the grounds that the change in practice may or may not be adapted during the research period, dependant upon the research findings, and so would make an evaluative case study difficult to complete. Consequently it was the second category that was identified as being most appropriate. The *telling the story* of the changing social setting was appealing as the story could begin with the review of learning mentorship and continue by narrating the changes and their effects; indeed Searle (1999) states that the interpretative researcher would use case study methods to provide open-ended, narrative data. The categorisation of Bassey (1999) and the

comments of Searle (1999) therefore not only justified this piece of research as a valid case study but also provided the framework for its reporting.

Using the exploration above, I then considered the data to be collected to *tell the story,* building on the first thoughts recorded in Table 3.1. The data would build up a picture of what led to the change in learning mentorship within the school; the context of the school; how the change was effected and the impact of the use of the nurture group ideals within learning mentorship. The data would therefore take many forms, as described by Coffey & Atkinson (1996), and would include contextual data, participant data and reflective data, with contextual data being as important as empirical data.

The contextual data would include a physical description of the setting, to include the nature of the school and its population, the constraints of the building itself, the locality and how learning mentorship was provided in the school. This data would take the form of personal descriptions and published reports. Also forming part of this contextual data would be published information regarding the theory and practice of learning mentorship in primary schools and, of course, an overview of the nurture group ethos. Background information, using school, local and national records, was considered with respect to the school, the pupils and the learning mentor initiative – nationally, locally and within the school context. Further information was collected through the interpretation of learning mentor records and updates on attainment of the child through a review of class records. Thus, the contextual data included details of the school and its pupils, the socio-economic details of the catchment area and the attainment over time of the pupils.

The contextual data would be used to begin the *story of the setting*; indeed this data has already begun to be reported in the earlier chapters of this report, and would

build up a picture of the learning mentor initiative in theory and practice, both locally and nationally. It can be appreciated that such data needed to be considered carefully as it could become in itself unwieldy and thus the data to be collected needed careful thought regarding its importance to *the story being told*. What was indicated was the collection of information regarding both the workings of the primary school and the cohort of children attending the school. Alongside this was a wealth of nationally-produced information, relevant to the study, being made available to schools and to which schools needed to respond - restructuring the workforce and reviewing the staffing structure within individual schools (TDA, undated b); the requirements of the Primary Strategy (DfES, undated f); the introduction of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (DfES, 2007) and, what was then the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003). It can thus be appreciated that, in order to make this category of data manageable, only that considered invaluable to the telling of the story has been acknowledged in the report.

It must be noted here that background reading to set the scene of the research started before the beginning of the research period and then it was planned that data to *continue the story* would be provided by the participants and so it was here that I identified a range of data to be collected using a variety of methods. However, background reading continued throughout the research period, including the lengthy writing of the report stage; it is for that reason that such reading is presented when it is relevant to the story rather than forming a separate chapter within the research report. Such information hence continued to be accessed and inevitably impacted on the interpretation of the data and the conclusions drawn; the choices made regarding the writing of the research report will be returned to in chapter nine.

As stated earlier, the issues and questions to be answered through the research were detailed. The data needed to address these were considered before the most appropriate data collection methods were considered. The issues and questions raised during the informal (personal) and formal reviews of learning mentorship within the school have been detailed throughout the earlier part of the research report. Thus the data required was considered next. I could simply have collected data from the learning mentors to elicit their views, collected through questionnaire or interview, and then supplement their views with my own thoughts, observations and an overview of the change in attainment of a focus group of children. This simple model would have provided the triangulation necessary to validate the data (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995), by collecting the data from three different sources engaged in the research. However, I wanted to gain a greater insight into the effects of the change in learning mentor provision and believed that a wider range of data would provide the richness I required, again reinforcing my adherence to the ideals of the feminist approach to research. I also considered it necessary to ensure that any conclusions drawn from the research could not be judged as *subjective*, but would be judged as being derived through an open-minded yet measured approach to the research. I therefore identified that data would be collected from the learning mentors; the children accessing learning mentorship; the teachers upon whose work the learning mentorship provision would impact upon and myself as a participant in the management of the provision. In order to make the collection of such a quantity of data manageable, and to ensure that the range of methods to be used did not become unwieldy with so much data collected that drawing conclusions from it would prove fruitless and thus not address the issues and questions raised, the most appropriate data collection methods were considered under three main headings. The three headings, in addition to background and

contextual data, were questionnaire, interview and attitude and behaviour scales. A further category was added later, that of incidental data. This category was added following the recording of professional discussions which yielded rich, relevant data and the receipt of various communications from staff that also proved pertinent to the story being told through the research, although the category was added at a later stage it is pertinent to discuss it within this chapter.   Each of these categories of data collection methods will be outlined further later in the chapter through a consideration of the instruments to be used that they led onto, Table 5.1 overleaf summarises how, and at what point, each method will be used within the research period.

Table 5:1 - Data Collection

Stage of Research	Data Collection Methods
Phase 1 Beginning of research/data collection period – September 2003.	Complete background information collection - using school, local and national records: • The school • The learning mentor initiative • The children The views of different stakeholders through interview and questionnaire: • Key staff • Children Perceptions of attitudes and behaviours of children using Attitude and Behaviour scales.
Phase 2 Mid-point of research – February 2004.	Mid-point review of learning mentorship provision through: • interpretation of learning mentor records Current views of stakeholders through interview: • Key staff • Children Update on attainment of the child through review of class records.
Phase 3 End of research period/End of year review - July 2004.	As Phase 2. Also changing views of learning mentorship, through interview. Changes to attitudes and behaviours of children, through the completion of Attitudes and Behaviour scales.

It must be noted here that this was the *intended* programme of data collection but as the research progressed, and the focus amended, this programme was not fully adhered to. Again this will be considered later in the report, beginning in chapter six.

It can be appreciated here that the use of the feminist theoretical perspective within a case study *telling the story of the setting*, and with the identification of a range of data collection methods, indicated that a qualitative framework was to be used. Although not exclusive to interpretivism, qualitative data is most readily associated with this interpretivism; indeed Searle (1999) and Henwood & Pidgeon (1993) describe well how a dependence on qualitative data points to an interpretive approach to the research. This is described (Oliver 1997, p186) as an approach in which '…considerable emphasis is placed by the researcher upon the views and perceptions of the respondents taking part in the research.'; this description closely matches my stance for the carrying out of the research and relates well to the discussion earlier regarding the importance of the feminist perspective to this piece of research. The earlier discussion cited the views of Stanley & Wise (1993) regarding the importance of the researcher's relationship with the researched to the ideals of feminist research, the placing of *considerable emphasis* upon the views and interpretations of the researched – the respondents – thus agreeing with Oliver (1997) above. Also, as will be expanded upon later in the chapter, the analysis of the data was considered here alongside the data collection methods to be used. This was in response to my adherence to the views of Crotty (1998) and Bryman & Cramer (1999) who state that the quality of the data analyses is an important feature of research and is related to both the theoretical perspective and the methods of data collection and to Henwood & Pidgeon (1993) and Stake (1995) who agree that within interpretivist research it is the researcher that draws conclusions from the data collected, with data collection and analysis occurring in a cyclical manner. In this way the interpretivist model allows the theory to evolve, with the researcher responding to the perceptions of the researched; the participants therefore inform the direction of the research. This

was exactly the model I wanted to adopt as it would allow me to adapt the provision of learning mentorship to the needs of the school in response to the views of the participants without compromising the research and its findings. Indeed, it will become clear in later chapters how it was this model of data collection followed by a period of data analysis that led to the change in focus for the research and to the change in title from '*The use of the Nurture Group ethos within the Team Approach to Learning Mentorship within one Primary School.* ' to '*The Role of the Learning Mentor in the Socialisation of the Child.*'

The Instruments

As noted earlier in the chapter, the data collection methods used were categorised into four main areas (in addition to contextual data) - questionnaire, interview, attitude and behaviour scales and incidental data - and will be considered here, alongside the instruments that they led onto. The exploration of each category will necessarily be limited, due to the constraints of the research report, and so it must be noted here that the decisions made regarding the use of each method (and resulting instrument) were made solely on whether the method identified was the better way of collecting the information required (Bell, 1993). Much guidance was sought here regarding data collection from many sources including Bryman (2001), Yin (2003) and Burns (2000). Specific guidance for researching with children was also needed and so Greig & Taylor (1999), West et al (1997) and Watts & Ebbutt (1987) were consulted and provided direction in devising appropriate data collection instruments that would yield data useful to the story being told.

<u>Questionnaire</u>

It is reported widely how extensive the use of questionnaire is within both qualitative and quantitative research (Crotty, 1998; Searle, 1998; Silverman, 1993) and is regarded as a technique that can yield reliable and valid data (Bell, 1993; Black, 1999; Mason, 2002). One of the main benefits of using questionnaire is that it enables the researcher to collect the views and suggestions of a number of respondents without the need to converse directly with each one individually. A further benefit is the completed questionnaires may be used to identify a smaller number of interviewees for the researcher to probe in more detail into answers given, although this use was not explored within this piece of research, indeed questionnaire was used solely with the teaching staff to elicit their views – fourteen teachers in total. This was clearly not a large number of respondents but individual interviews would have been time consuming for myself as researcher. It will be noted in later chapters that questionnaire was only used with teaching staff during the early stage of the research; the reason for this will be discussed in greater detail but was in response to the changing focus of the research following the first set of data analysis.

Much is written about questionnaire design for use within research in education (Bell & Opie, 2002; Robson, 1993; Crotty, 1998), thus providing guidance on the wording of questions in the questionnaire, the order of questions, the provision of information for the respondent in terms of the aims of the research, the handing in date of the questionnaire and how the data will be used. Of particular use was the advice of Bell (1993) and Bryman (2001), who regard it essential that the wording of the questions are precise in order to maximise the validity of the research data generated. I was thus mindful of the issues surrounding ambiguity, imprecise questions, leading or presumptuous questions, offensive questions and those that deal

with particularly sensitive issues. This need for appropriately-worded questions was considered alongside the data that was required, in order to determine the nature and order of the questions.

It was considered important to pilot the questionnaires before use (Bell & Opie, 2002) and so the learning mentor team was used to perform an informed pilot. The pilot judged the questionnaires to be acceptable to the research and so no changes were needed to the instruments, each question was answered and conclusions were drawn from the data; indeed the data has already begun to be presented within this report. A copy of the resulting questionnaire used with teaching staff is contained within appendix four.

Interview

Interview was the most extensively used method of data collection within the research. It was indicated as such by the need to explore '…rich insights…' into '…experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings.' (May 2001, p120). Indeed McKernan (1996, p128) reports that interview has the advantage over questionnaire in allowing the researcher to '…probe areas of interest as they arise…' This was of particular relevance to this piece of research as it was developing ideas, understandings and viewpoints that were being documented and then used to shape the provision of learning mentorship in the school. Interview would thus be used with both adults – the learning mentor team and the Link Learning Mentor – and children. The adult interviews would explore thoughts, attitudes and views of the work of the learning mentor and document how the change in practice was impacting on this work. At this stage in the research, specific questions were identified to investigate how their work has been inspired by the nurture group ethos being introduced and

how they perceive it impacted on the focus group of children; later in the research, after the change in focus identified after the first period of data analysis, the questions expanded to cover the learning mentors' perceptions of their wider role in school and their impact on the socialisation of the children.

Interviews with a focus group of children were identified as necessary to explore the thoughts and attitudes of the children, and to plot the changes (if any) in the attainment and behaviour of the children over time. I was mindful here that the interviewing of children required specific consideration in order to devise data collection instruments that would yield data useful to the story being told; Greig & Taylor (1999), West et al (1997) and Watts & Ebbutt (1987) all provided direction here regarding the wording of the interview questions and how to carry out the interviews. At this stage I intended to follow the guidance of Watts and Ebbutt (1987) to carry out the children's interviews as group interviews. This would provide the opportunity for the children to exchange their views with each other with myself in the role of facilitator. Watts and Ebbutt (1987, p26) describe the advantage of this style of interview as the '…interaction between participants…'being as important as that between the interviewer and the interviewees. However, it will be noted that during data analysis it became clear that the use of group interview was inhibiting the responses of the children and so the last set of pupil interviews were carried out in the same way that the adult interviews were carried out.

As with a questionnaire, there is much written about the use and design of the interview (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; May, 2001; Clegg, Tan & Saeidi, 2002) indeed similar considerations apply to both the methodologies, principally with respect to the questions to be asked. However, how the questions are posed was a particular consideration within this piece of research due to interview being used with

adults and children and the need to collect data that I, as acting headteacher, did not influence through my role in school. I was mindful that I could sway the responses of the interviewees by both the wording of the questions and the way in which I asked them (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2000). Three main types of interview are accepted (Gilbert, 1993; Arksey & Knight, 1999) – structured, semi-structured or unstructured. For an interview to be classified as *structured* all questions are written before the interview and then strictly adhered to; *semi-structured* interviews have prompt questions written in advance that are then added to, or qualified with, supplementary questions as the researcher probes points of interest; *unstructured* interviews are carried out with no questions written in advance of the interview. There are many references to the strengths and weaknesses of the style of an interview that may be consulted including Gilbert (1993), Arksey & Knight (1999) and Clegg et al (2002) however, it was decided to use semi-structured interviews within this piece of research for precisely the description given (above) that they allow for the probing of answers given. Northern (1995, p39) also justifies the use of semi-structured interview within the research by stating it is in keeping with case study methodology as they are '…more loosely structured…' than other types of interview. This style of interview is also in keeping with the earlier claim that feminist research involves a unique relationship between the researcher and the researched as they promote a two-way dialogue and ensure that the respondents influence the direction of the research. Sidell (1993) reinforces that this style of interview is in keeping with feminist research by stating that the introduction of dialogue into interview situations is important to the inclusion of the feminist standpoint as it redresses the power relationship between the researcher and the interviewee, providing a more balanced relationship, and thereby creating an environment more conducive to allowing the

interviewee's voice to be heard. In other words, it gives the interviewee more control over the data being collected.

The instruments devised here, and contained within the annexe five, follow a common format. I would reaffirm my role in the research, distinguishing it from my role as acting headteacher within the school, in order to reassure the interviewee that I was genuinely interested in their views and for them not to be influenced by what they thought I wanted them to say. This was a particular concern when interviewing the children as it was more difficult for them to accept that within the interview situation there was an equal power relationship between us, as described earlier by Mies (1993). This was a consideration I worked on with the children and believe that this was achieved during the research period.

Following the affirmation of my role, the interviewees were informed about all aspects of the research and requested to give their *informed consent* to the interview. This was considered essential to the interview process, in order to reassure the interviewee that they would know precisely what he or she was agreeing to, thereby authorising the researcher to collect only that information that the interviewee is willing to give; indeed the notion of *informed consent* is a fundamental ethical issue (Burton, 2000). The interviewees were then informed that they would be given a copy of the interview transcript to approve; Shakespeare, Atkinson & French (1993) suggest that this practice allows the interviewee to retain their right of ownership, and so are more at ease and prepared to answer questions posed and ensures that the informed consent given continues during the interview; Lunn & Bishop (2002, p67) cite this practice as '…eliciting respondent validation.', the extent to which the data reflects reality. Bornat (1993) states that informing the interviewee that the transcript of the interview may be altered and/or amended as necessary, ensures that the

responses given are the responses the interviewees wish to be recorded. Lastly, before the questioning began, I invited each interviewee to operate the tape-recorder, to give further control over the pace and content of the interview and to maintain consent.

The discussion earlier regarding unambiguous questions in the questionnaire was also relevant here, although within an interview situation questions (and answers) can be clarified during the interview, thus aiding the interviewee to accurately record their views. What was important was to identify a set of core questions to generate descriptive data about the interviewees' feelings and attitudes, thus yielding qualitative data. The interview schedules were hence devised to set out the range and order of the broad questions and areas to be covered during the interviews, in order to structure the interviews and to be used as aide memoirs for interviewer (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

As with the questionnaires used within the research, the interview schedules were also piloted. It was at the pilot stage that the invitation to individual interviewees to operate the tape recorder was added to the interview schedule. Also, attention was given to how each interview would end without being curt or abrupt, but again this was missing from the pre-pilot schedule. The post-pilot schedule was therefore amended to include instructions (for the interviewer) for ending the interview.

Attitude and Behaviour Scales

Attitude and behaviour scales were considered here as an alternative to questionnaire for the children, as introduced in chapter four. Much is written about the measurement of children's attitudes through the use of attitudes and behaviour scales (Proctor, 1993; Babbie, 1995; Greig and Taylor, 1999; Burns, 2000) and so, although interview was considered to be the most effective method for eliciting data from the

children (Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2000; Ginsburg, 1997), the data from attitudes and behaviour scales would support that gained through interview and thus provide triangulation of data relating to the children (Cohen et al, 2000). Also as noted earlier, the instruments to be used here were based on scales used by Cherian (2002), with statements written to explore pupil views regarding their attitudes to school, to learning mentorship, to the learning mentor room and their own thoughts on their behaviour. Again the scales were piloted by the learning mentor team themselves. As noted above, it was anticipated that the data yielded by the scales would support that collected by interview; although this result was achieved, the scales themselves provided rich data that was important to the development of learning mentorship in the school and that was, at times, surprising and not what was expected; this will be further considered in chapter six. I was particularly mindful here of the advice given by Proctor (1993) who describes the measurement of attitudes as requiring great care and close attention to detail in order to draw meaningful conclusions. The resulting instruments, copies of which are in appendix six, were therefore devised to present statements relevant to the research issues and questions, with the same issue or question being addressed by more than one statement. By repeating the statement in different forms, responses could be compared for consistency, again as addressed in chapter six. The use of the scales also provided data related to any changes to the children's' attitudes and behaviours to school and to learning mentorship over the research period.

Incidental data

Incidental data was not considered when outlining the data to be collected and identifying the data collection methods, but unstructured conversations and comments

yielded valuable information, as discussed in chapters six and eight, and so this category of data collection method was added at a later stage. Johnson (2001) explains well how such data can be an important feature of research, specifically within research into teaching. With respect to the influence of the feminist perspective on this piece of research, the use of incidental data relates well to Beasley's (1999) belief that the characteristics of feminism leads to the collection of a wide range of data that is focused but open-ended. The incidental data cited within this piece of research is both focused and open-ended in that it centred purely on the case being studied but was not structured, nor indeed instigated, by myself as researcher.

Data Analysis

The preceding section of this chapter has explored how the research would be carried out - that it would be a case study using a wide range of qualitative data. The reliance on the feminist approach to research has been explained, stressing the importance of the researcher's relationship with the researched and the interest in the views and interpretations of the researched. It was then considered how these beliefs would influence the actual data collection methods used, the resulting instruments, and reflect on how the methods used would emphasise the importance of what the participants in the research had to say. It can therefore be appreciated that the data collected centred on the views and responses of the researched, supported by contextual data, and that the interpretation of the views and responses would be critical to the findings of the research. Honan, Knobel, Baker & Davis (2000) demonstrate well how different analyses of qualitative data can produce quite different conclusions, by investigating how different conclusions may be drawn from the same data. They attribute each conclusion drawn to the theoretical approach taken

to the analysis stage and conclude that it is the quality and style of data analysis that is of importance to the research. It is therefore pertinent to consider the analysis of the expected data at this point in the *story being told*; indeed Black (1999) supports this by listing his set of procedures to be carried out in the planning stage of a piece of research. Black (1999, p27) suggests that there are five procedures to the planning stage of a piece of research with the fifth procedure relating to the analysis of data and states that studies that have not addressed all the stages at the design stage '…fail to produce defensible results…'. This clearly supports my view of the importance of data analysis and the need to consider the association between expected data and its analysis at the first stages of a piece of research.

Loftland & Loftland (1995) describe how the analysis of the type of data I would be collecting is dependant on the researcher using their own understandings of the perceptions of the respondents as the principal means of understanding the setting being studied, thus acknowledging why the contextual data was considered so important to this piece of research, in that it provided a basis for the meanings of the respondents' experiences. Burns (2000) supports this view by stressing that an essential part of data analysis is to justify the interpretations made, and suggests using the context of the research accordingly. In practice, I would be analysing a range of qualitative data, described by Bryman (1988) as less straightforward to handle than quantitative data and by Marshall & Rossman (1999, p150) as analysis to bring '…order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data.' Unfortunately Stroh (2000) reports that there are few guidelines for the researcher with regard to qualitative data analysis and so it was necessary for me to seek out advice regarding how *order, structure and interpret* the qualitative data to be collected here. Such analysis would be employed to allow for patterns or trends in the data to be identified.

Gahan & Hannibal (1998) aided in this by noting the need for the qualitative researcher to organise the data collected and to balance the requirement to reduce the volume of data whilst retaining the richness of the data being interpreted. Although the use of a computer package to organise the data was considered at this stage it was rejected in favour of a manual system whereby I could look at the data as a whole rather than in strands. Stroh (2000) would support this decision as he reports that although one of the major benefits of such a package replaces the need for a physical filing system to be developed, it merely supports the researcher in working with data, by providing a more systematic way of working, and that the thinking and analytic structure continues to be supplied by the researcher. Indeed Burns (2000) reinforces that the overriding part of the analysis stage when researching attitudes and feelings is the justification of the interpretations made, thus stressing the importance of what Crotty (1998, p.161) describes as the researcher's '…standpoints, qualities and ways of knowing…' when referring to the qualities of feminist researchers. This also indicates that further reference to published work throughout the analyses, and thus to the following sections of this report, would aid in justifying the quality of the analyses and the explanations of judgements made.

An important consideration to be revisited here is that the provision of learning mentorship within the school would continue to evolve throughout the research period, with changes made in response to school (and pupil) need and where indicated by the research findings. Data analysis would therefore be carried out alongside data collection and theory development and so, as the research progressed, the testing of emergent ideas and searching for alternative explanations (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) became particularly significant to the interpretation of the data.

It is pertinent here to consider the notion of ethics within the research as, although the issue of informed consent has already been addressed within the exploration of how and why interviews were carried out, it is a fundamental ethical issue that the researched knows precisely what he or she is agreeing to when giving their approval to be involved in a piece of research (Burton, 2000). Although a researcher may have identified the data to be collected, it is essential that the participants in the research are reassured that only the information that the researched is willing to give is to be collected. Therefore, verbal permission was sought from both the adults and the children involved in the research, together with written parental permission for the children, to be involved in the research. Due to the nature of the research, in that it was very personal to each child, it was imperative that this permission was *informed permission*; this required me to explain in detail, to each adult and child, the scope of the research being carried out. The institution within which the research took place has the policy of all records being available for parents to read, thus ensuring that anything recorded is recorded in a sensitive manner, and so this policy was adhered to throughout the research period. Once again, this is reflective of the ideals of feminist research, in that it aided in developing the relationship between the researcher and the researched that is considered to be essential to the validity of the research. Accordingly, not only was the research data available for parental viewing, at times the data was *presented* to parents for comment.

It is interesting that whereas I have referred to *ethical issues*, Williams, Prestage & Bedward (2000), within their research, consider the *trustworthiness* of their research rather than the ethics of the research. They use the term with reference to Lincoln & Guba (1985) who use it as an alternative to reliability and validity,

suggesting that these terms are inconsistent with qualitative data. Lunn & Bishop (2002, p67) however do use the terms and refer to strengthening the reliability and validity of their findings by '…eliciting respondent validation.' as was to be carried out within this piece of research. Bell (1993, p65) however refers to reliability as '…the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions.' and to validity as '…whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe.' Reliability within the enquiry was considered throughout with common procedures carried out, for example all interviews were taped in the same way, the interviews all began with a summary of the research and prompt questions were adhered to. Validity was addressed through triangulation, the use of more than one data collection method at each stage of the research and the following crosschecking of the data. Two methods of triangulation were employed – firstly data from different participants was collected using the same method, the use of interview, and secondly the collection of data from one source using different data collection methods; this was achieved through the use of interview and attitude and behaviour scales with the children. A further consideration here, and noted earlier, was the need to justify the interpretations made from the data. I was therefore mindful of the responsibility to transcribe data accurately and not lose the meaning the researched would want attributing to it, or that the behaviour of the researched would indicate.

This chapter has concentrated on Stage 4 of the research stages presented in Table 1.1, that of identifying the data collection methodology. The next stage is thus the carrying out of the initial period of data collection, to be reported overleaf in chapter six.

Chapter 6 – Initial and Interim Periods of Data Collection

Chapter six moves the research report to stage 5 in the stages of research, as recorded on table 1:1 in chapter 1 and re-presented later in this chapter. The focus of the research here continues to be concerned with the effects of the nurture group ethos on the provision of learning mentorship within one primary school, as outlined in chapter four and in reference to stage 3 of the research (table 1:1), where the intended changes to the provision of learning mentorship within the school were explored and summarised as four research aims:

- To establish the main features of the nurture group ethos within the work of the learning mentor team;

- To evaluate the effects of the nurture group ethos on the attainment of targeted children in one large primary school;

- To evaluate the effects of the nurture group ethos on behaviour as a secondary focus;

- To make recommendations for the continuing provision of learning mentorship within the school.

Data was to be collected and analysed with reference to these aims, as considered within chapter five. Three periods of data collection had been identified – an initial period, an interim period and a concluding period; taking place over one academic year, from September 2003 to July 2004. I considered that three periods of data collection would provide meaningful yet manageable data in order to fully tell the story of the setting at the heart of the research (Bassey, 1999). It is pertinent to note here that the work of Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) regarding action research influenced the identification of the three periods of data collection; with the research

adhering to the case study model of Bassey (1999), based on three distinct cycles of research planning, implementation and reflection. Accordingly, at this stage of the research, it was my intention to adhere to the programme of data collection as set out in chapter five, with data analysis running alongside data collection, thus providing an evaluation and review element to each period of the research; indeed it has already been detailed how the research was initiated following an initial review of learning mentorship within the school.

It has already been documented throughout the earlier chapters of this report how this initial review began with my personal thoughts and was thus an informal review. This was followed by a formal review carried out by myself, the Local Education Authority Link Learning Mentor and the school learning mentors, demonstrating how my feelings of discontent with the school's interpretation of learning mentorship provision led to the identification of this aspect of school as a focus for research. Although this part of the research was not documented fully the informal and formal reviews yielded data essential to the research being carried out. The formal review particularly enabled the learning mentors themselves to reflect on their work and to commit to both a different arrangement for learning mentorship and to be the participants in a piece of research into the changes to learning mentorship. At the time the reviews were considered to be essential precursors to the research, as the reviewers of the provision may not have shared my views and may already judge the school's interpretation of learning mentorship as *effective,* thus concluding that changes were not necessary and that the case study being carried out would not be needed. However, as the research continued, it was realised that the reviews formed the first period of data collection and so the intended programme needed to be

reconsidered. It was here that the Kemmis and McTaggart model (1982) was revisited.

The intended programme of data collection, as set out in table 5:1, is represented in the time line below.

Figure 6:1 – Intended Timeline of Data Collection

Initial period of data collection

Interim period of data collection
(Mid-point of research)

Concluding period of data collection
(End of year review)

September 2003   February 2004   July 2004
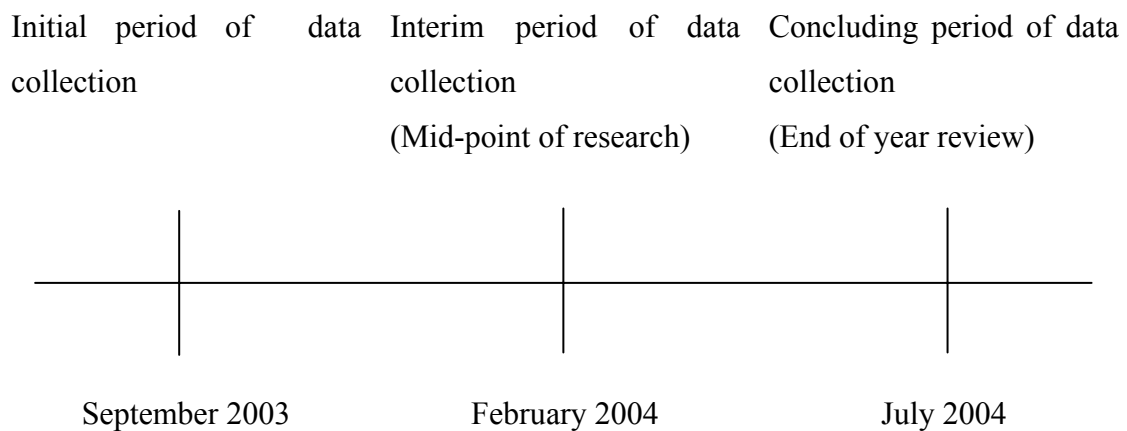
However, as already detailed at length within the research report so far, the case study continued with changes to the provision being put in place, alongside which contextual and background information was collected, with staff, pupils and parents informed of the changes to the learning mentor provision. The intended initial period of data collection was thus delayed beyond September and, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, yielded data that began to review the changes to the learning mentorship provision already made rather than elicit the views of different stakeholders of the previous interpretation of learning mentorship. The timeline of the research thus needed to be amended, to recognise the importance of the informal and formal reviews, the collection of background and contextual data and the extended

time over which the 'initial period' of data was collected. The amended timeline is presented below, in Figure 6:2.

Figure 6:2 – Amended Timeline of Data Collection

Initial period of data collection (reviews, contextual and background data)	Interim period of data collection (First thoughts of research participants)	Concluding period of data collection (End of year review)

June to September 2003	October to December 2003	May to July 2004
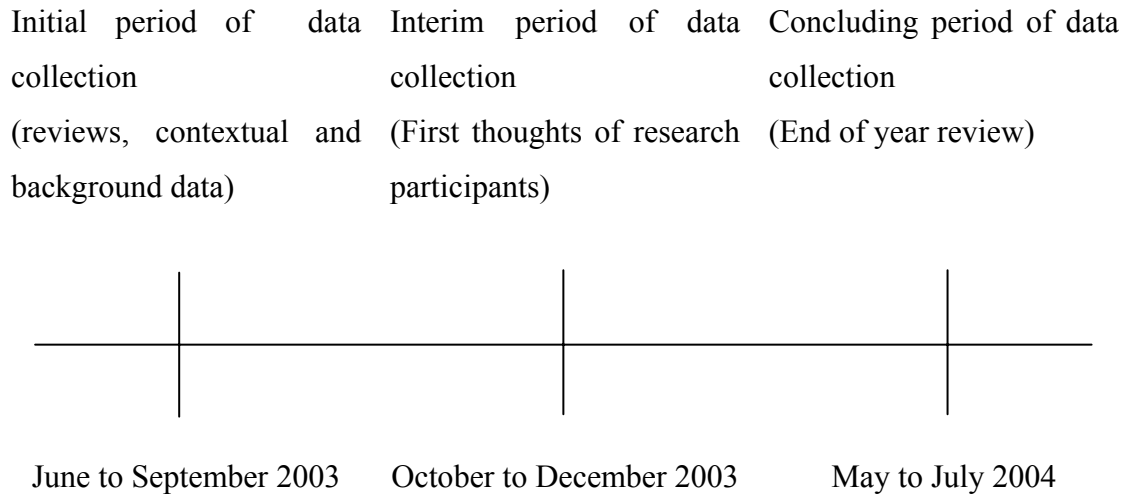
The amended timeline now recognises that the initial period of data collection covered the reviews and the collection of background and contextual data, much of which has already been presented in the earlier stages of this report. The interim period of research now includes the first thoughts of the participants and demonstrates the time taken to collect and analyse the data. It was during the amendment of the timeline that it was thought inappropriate to collect data in February as there would have been little of any value to the research *story*. Also, in recognition of the time taken to collect what now became the interim data, the concluding data collection period was brought forward to May 2004 and was expected to take two months to complete.

By returning to the research model of Kemmis and McTaggart (1982, p18), presented in Figure 6:3 overleaf, it can be appreciated that this amendment to the data collection timeline was needed.

Figure 6:3 - Research Model

Based on the Kemmis and McTaggart Model (1982, p18)

Plan

Observe → Reflect

Act

Revised Plan

Observe → Reflect

Act
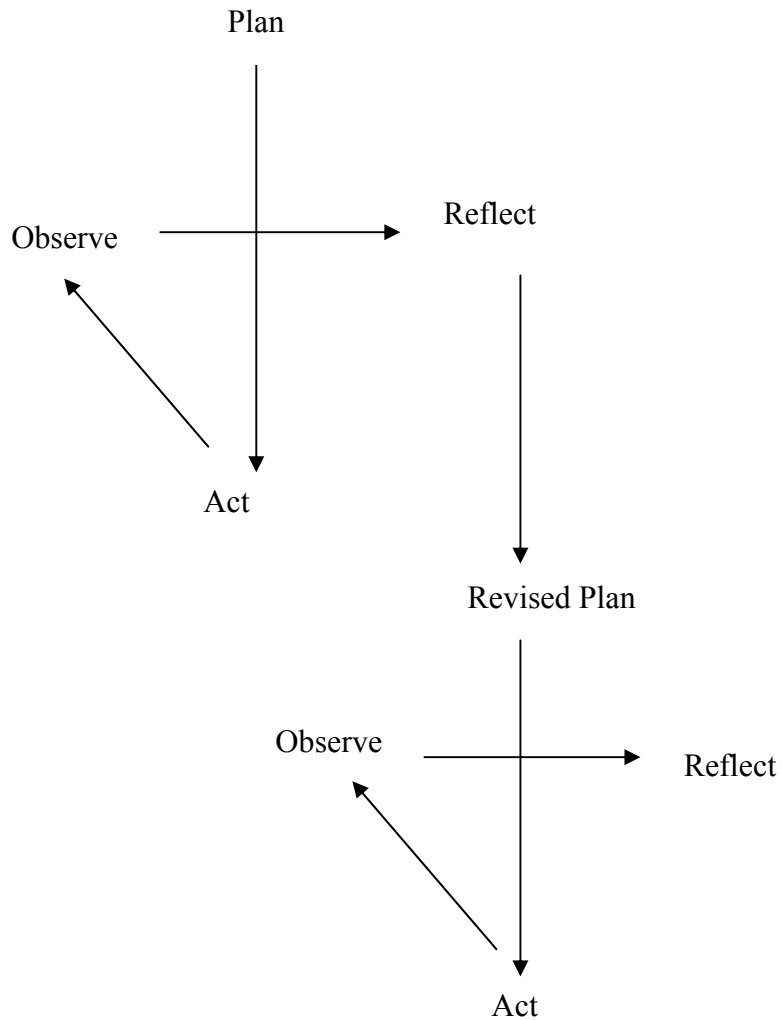
Figure 6:3 shows the first cycle of the model and how this leads to a reviewed research plan, as happened in this piece of research, and onto the second cycle of research and data collection. Table 6:1 overleaf sets out how the amended data collection timeline fits with the research model presented above.

Table 6:1 – Comparison of Models

Research Model	Data Collection
Plan	Identify the provision of learning mentorship within one school as the focus of a piece of research
	Identify how research problem may be addressed
Act	Arrange review meetings
Observe	Gather data:
	- Data from reviews of current provision of learning mentorship
	- Background and contextual data
Reflect	Analyse data
	Redefine focus of research
Revise Plan	Identify the use of the nurture group ethos within the team approach to learning mentorship as the focus of the research
Act	Introduce changes to the learning mentor provision
Observe	Gather data
Reflect	Analysis of data leads to interim conclusions and to a further revision of the research focus
Revise Plan	Identify research focus as concerned with the school as a society
Act	Further develop learning mentorship provision across school
Observe	Gather data
Reflect	Analyse data and present conclusions

It has been noted earlier in the research report that the data collected would be used to *illustrate* the case study in order to tell the story of the research with the data taking many forms, as described by Coffey & Atkinson (1996). It was also reported that the contextual data would be as important to the research as empirical data; the

amended plan ensures this importance. It must be remembered that the contextual data would include:

- A physical description of the setting, including the locality

- The nature of the school and its population

- The constraints of the building

- Details of the learning mentor initiative

- How learning mentorship was delivered within the school

Thus the acknowledgement of what had been considered as a precursor to the research was in fact part of the research itself that was necessary to the *telling of the story of the setting*. It was also in keeping with the feminist perspective of the research, as it is the justifications given for data collection that are important to the feminist perspective and not merely the choice of a particular data collection method (Jayaratne, 1993).

Data collection thus began at the end of the 2002/2003 academic year and continued into the autumn term of 2003. In addition to the review data, contextual and background data, further data was collected by questionnaire, interview and the completion of attitude and behaviour scales; some of this data has already been used in the research report and will also be looked at in more detail in this chapter. The data collected was analysed (also as explored later in this chapter) and the provision of learning mentorship was reviewed; it was at this juncture that the research focus was re-visited and amended. Thus the data collected prior to the change in the focus of the research and to the change in title of the research report, and its analysis, is to be considered within this chapter of the research report, in addition to its presentation in the earlier chapters of the report. This chapter will then be followed by a chapter

separating it from the final period of research detailing how and why the focus of the research changed to that of the title of the research, *the role of the learning mentor in the socialisation of the child.*

I believe that reporting the research in this way will aid the reader in following the changes made throughout the research, hence ensuring that the report is in keeping with the narrative of the research, and yet it is not the accepted reporting style of a piece of doctoral research (University of Newcastle, undated). My preferred style of reporting was identified to provide a report that will flow as a story flows whilst allowing for recapping and stressing links between parts of the story, thus building up a rounded picture of the research that demonstrates the evolution of the provision of learning mentorship. Table 6:2 overleaf compares the accepted format for reporting a doctoral piece of research (University of Newcastle, undated) with the format used to report this research. The comparison demonstrates that both formats begin with the same introductory and closing pages and that it is the main body of the text where the differences occur. The main difference in the formats being compared is that my preferred format provides the background reading where it is pertinent to the story being told; each event in the story is reported in chronological order, the order in which it occurred during the carrying out of the research, with background reading and information presented to the reader to ensure the reader understands how the provision of learning mentorship evolved in the school.

Table 6:2 – Comparison of Research Report Formats

University of Newcastle (Undated)	Preferred Research Report Format (used to present this research)
Introductory pages - title page; abstract; contents; list of tables, diagrams and illustrations; acknowledgements	Introductory pages - title page; abstract; contents; list of tables, diagrams and illustrations; acknowledgements
Introduction	Introduction
Background reading – reviewing published work related to the research area	The context of the research – including background reading into the learning mentor initiative
	Defining the Research – initial thoughts leading to the identification of the research problem and plan
	Clarifying the Scope of the Research – including background reading into the nurture group ethos; detailing the team approach to learning mentorship and the cohort of children (the Bakers' Dozen)
Methodology	Methodology
Research results	First Period of Data Collection
	Further background reading into societies and socialization
	Second Period of Data Collection
	Evaluating the Results
Concluding chapter - to summarise the main findings of the research; including statements about the main contributions of the research and recommendations for future work	Concluding chapter - to summarise the main findings of the research; including statements about the main contributions of the research and recommendations for future work
Closing pages – references; appendices	Closing pages – references; appendices

Nott (1984) summarises well the early stages of the research, that it begins with a review that *describes* an issue to be researched. In this piece of research the issue being described is an effective and fair system of learning mentorship. The review is followed by a *judgment*, a judgment about the provision, leading onto a *decision* to effect change to the area being researched. This chapter in the research report will therefore present a summary of the *description* of the issue to be researched, followed by a consideration of the *judgements* made and how the *decision* to put changes into place was effected. This will lead onto the presentation of data collected during the end of the 2002/2003 academic year and continuing into the autumn term of 2003 alongside its analysis. Finally, how the analysis resulted in the change in focus of the research will begin to be explored; this will continue in chapter seven.

As has been noted throughout the research report it was my informal personal review that first *described* the issue to be researched. The findings of my review have already been considered within the research report. What is needed here is a summary of my thoughts, to set the research and the data collection in context. The issues, as I perceived them, and identified in no particular order, were:

- That the learning mentor initiative provided a unique opportunity for the school to embed a new role in school;

- The funding involved in the initiative indicated that the DfES expected the new role to be accountable, to improve each school's pastoral commitment to its pupils;

- The current interpretation of the role in school resulted in learning mentorship provision that I considered was less effective than it could be,

including the allocation of individual learning mentors to specific year groups leading to inconsistency of access;

- The teaching staff did not understand the role and expected learning mentors to carry out an enhanced teaching assistant role that included maintaining positive behaviour inside and outside the classroom;

- The current interpretation of the role resulted in a purely reactive workforce;

- The development of the role was being impeded by the needs of the school undergoing a general decline in behaviour following the headteacher's suspension and the staff's belief that more learning mentors should be employed to manage this behaviour.

Also, as has already been detailed, it was my feeling of disquiet about the provision and the subsequent identification of the issues providing the disquiet that led to me requesting a more formal review with the Local Authority. The formal review involved myself as acting headteacher, the Authority Link Learning Mentor and the school learning mentors; the review findings have been described earlier in the report and are therefore summarised only in this chapter – in table 6:3 overleaf - alongside the problems I had identified in my informal review. The table clearly demonstrates the common concerns held by the reviewers at this early stage in the research that led directly to the change in the provision of learning mentorship in the school.

Table 6:3 – Summary of the Formal Review of School's Provision of Learning Mentorship

Informal Review Findings	Formal Review Comments
Learning mentor initiative an opportunity to embed a new role into school.	Agreed at review
	Learning mentors frustrated at school's interpretation of role.
The funding involved indicated an accountable role.	Confirmed by Link Learning Mentor.
Current interpretation in school not as effective as it could be.	Agreed at review.
Allocation of learning mentors to specific year groups not providing equity.	Allocated to groups with most challenging behaviours and/or larger-sized classes.
	Belief that significant minority of children were denied access to the learning mentorship expertise they needed.
Role not fully understood by teaching staff.	Lack of understanding resulted in expertise of learning mentors not being used to its fullest extent.
Learning mentors used as teaching assistants.	Learning mentors agreed they were used mostly to support teaching, assisting pupils to stay on task and complete their work.
Learning mentors used to maintain positive behaviour inside and outside the classroom.	Agreed that teachers expected learning mentors to deal with incidences of misbehaviour.
	Team programmes to be set up to address a range of behaviour issues.
Response to general decline in behaviour.	Proactive work to develop pupil-managed behaviour.
Current role reactive.	Move to promote proactive nature of role, to aid child in developing strategies for dealing with the cause of their own barrier to learning, thus accessing the curriculum without direct adult assistance.

Following the informal and formal reviews of the provision of learning mentorship within the school, the research plan was devised and implemented, beginning with the changes to the provision (as outlined in chapter four), to be in place for the autumn term of the academic year 2003/2004. Work during the latter part of the summer term of the academic year 2002/2003 thus centred on setting up the learning mentor base in a central room of the school, basing the layout and contents on the nurture group ethos, and establishing team systems including shared records and timetables. Alongside this work, background reading was used to set the learning mentor provision of the school within the national picture of learning mentorship - this data has already been considered within chapters one and two of the report. The context for the research in terms of information about the school in which the research took place was also collated and considered; this too has been detailed earlier in the report.

The autumn term then began with an INSET day where the changes were explained to the school staff, with a recap on the role of the learning mentor, to ensure all staff were clear about not only the practicalities of the approach but the theory behind the changes. The impact of this presentation was evaluated using data collected during the autumn term using questionnaire; the data collected has been touched upon in earlier chapters and will be re-visited within this chapter under the heading *first thoughts of the teaching staff.*

The next consideration was the cohort of children to be involved in the research, as discussed in chapter four. This identification actually took much longer than anticipated and, for this reason, longer than indicated within the discussion in chapter four. Once identified, permission needed to be sought from the parents for the children's involvement in the research and then background information on children

was prepared. It can be appreciated how time consuming this action was and that it needed to be completed before data could be collected to elicit their first thoughts of the learning mentor provision. Most of the children had experienced learning mentorship in the previous academic year, either as an identified child or by virtue of being in a year group that had a named learning mentor assigned to the year group, and so they were questioned about the initial changes to the learning mentor provision in school through semi-structured group interviews. Attitude and behaviour scales were also used to elicit personal information from the children regarding their thoughts on their own behaviour and attitude to school, to be used to track any changes in their behaviour and attitude towards school. This data, under the heading *first thoughts of the bakers' dozen,* will be considered following that of the teachers.

Also collected during this phase of the research, and to be considered here, were the first thoughts of the learning mentors and the Local Education Authority Link Learning Mentor regarding the changed learning mentor provision, together with incidental data in the form of an unscheduled conversation between myself, the learning mentors and the Authority Link Learning Mentor. This data was vital to the research as the formal review carried out earlier had not been minuted and is thus referred to as anecdotal evidence and so the thoughts of the reviewers, in addition to those of the other participants in the research, would provide the benchmark for the further development of the learning mentor provision in the school and would shape the subsequent data collection and analysis. The unscheduled conversation, with myself in the role of acting headteacher rather than researcher, demonstrated our views at a point in the research before the focus of the research was redefined but after I had carried out the first set of interviews. Having a tape recorder to hand and, after seeking permission from the reviewers present, I taped most of the conversation

which yielded valuable data for evaluating where we were at that point in the research; this will be reported following the first thoughts of the baker's dozen. Incidentally, as the conversation yielded such quality data at this point in the research, a second conversation was scheduled for the concluding period of data collection, as presented in chapter eight.

Data Handling and Analysis

It can already be appreciated that that the research generated a wealth of data to be collated and analysed. Indeed much of it has already been used within the report to ensure that the story of the research has been built up appropriately. Due to the amount of data collected its handling and analysis was considered further at this point in the research. The data generated is qualitative and, although a statistical analysis using a computer package was considered I rejected its use. I have not found computer packages easy to access and do not consider the use essential to the research process. The data collected centred on what Hakim (2000, p34) describes as an individual's own account of their '…attitudes, motivations and behaviour.' and, although it is necessary to bring '…order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data.' (Marshall & Rossman 1999, p150), to show patterns or trends in the data, I agree with Stroh (2000) that a computer package merely supports the researcher in working with the data. It does not analyse the data; the thinking and analytic structure is supplied by the researcher. Stroh (2000) suggests that one of the major benefits of a computer package is that the researcher is able to store, search and retrieve documents and work with pieces of data without worrying about the organisation of the rest of the data, thus replacing a physical filing system in which to organise the data collected. In view of this, I simply used the computer to store the

data I had collected, including the transcripts of taped interviews, described by Searle (1998, p207) as necessary to develop '…a much closer appreciation of the meanings in the data,'. I therefore combined manual and computer methods of data organisation to manage the data whilst ensuring I adhered to Gahan & Hannibal's (1998) advice that the volume of the data is to be reduced whilst retaining the richness of the data.

I was further influenced here by Marshall & Rossman (1999) who set out five stages for data analysis - organisation, categorisation, coding, testing emergent ideas and searching for alternative explanations; thus ensuring that order, structure and interpretation is brought to the data collected. Accordingly I *organised* the data into folders on the computer, I *categorised* the data using Marshall & Rossman (1999, p154) explanation of '…noting patterns evident in the setting and expressed by participants. Coding was carried out in line with Gahan & Hannibal (1998, p65) whereby the patterns identified from the data are linked '…*with* data through coding.' *Emergent ideas* were tested by gathering further data; this will be particularly noted towards the end of the research where individual interviews were carried out with the children following the scheduled group interviews, and by making changes to the learning mentor provision, as noted towards the end of this chapter. This stage led directly onto the final stage, that of *searching for alternative explanations*, before drawing final conclusions to the research. All these stages will be discernable throughout the following sections and chapters of the research report and ensure that the analyses fulfil the requirement considered by Burns (2000) to be essential, that the researcher justifies the interpretations they make of qualitative data and the meanings the researched would want attributing to it, or that the behaviour of the researched indicated, are retained. In practice, this involved reading the responses given (after transcription in the case of interview data) and beginning to look beyond the words

for interpretation - and thus for categorisation – and then attributing a heading to the meaning; other responses that could be included under this heading were then added. Through this a picture of the effectiveness of the learning mentor provision could be built up from the data provided by all the participants, Gahan & Hannibal (1998) describe this as using the data to compare and contrast each idea, event, and incident recorded. In turn, this would thus aid the school in continuing to develop its commitment to learning mentorship relevant to pupil needs; analyses leading to such development thus needed to be trustworthy (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

First Thoughts

The participants' first thoughts, views and comments on the changes to the learning mentorship provision were thus collected with a view to using any trends or patterns to review and evaluate the changes made at this early stage. To return to the definition of case study being used within this piece of research, that of Bassey (1995) categorising the research as an *enquiry* of a setting, the process of *evaluation* is integral to the research plan and so criteria for the success (or otherwise) of the new approach to learning mentorship needed to be identified. The criteria for success was outlined in Chapter three and summarised here as the pupils' achieving:

- Increased access to the curriculum

- Increased attainment

- A more positive attitude to school

- A reduction in the behaviours that, if unchecked, may lead to a fixed term or permanent exclusion from school

Each criterion was to be evaluated in terms of the use of a modified nurture group ethos, delivered within the team approach to learning mentorship. However, these were identified as the criteria for success at the end of the research period and were considered at this stage to be too broad to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the provision of learning mentorship at this early stage in its implementation. Therefore, in order to carry out a review and evaluation that was meaningful to this particular stage of the research, it was necessary to consider a second set of criteria. As the research was concerned with the changes made to the provision of learning mentorship, the criteria here came from the perceived ineffectiveness of the previous model of learning mentorship identified during the informal and formal reviews carried out prior to the research beginning and presented in table 6.3. The criteria to be used at the end of the research period will be returned to in chapter eight; the second set of criteria for this interim review of learning mentorship is summarised in table 6:4 overleaf.

Table 6:4 – Criteria for Success of Interim Review of Learning Mentorship

Informal Review Findings	Criteria for Success
Opportunity to embed a new role into school not achieved	Role of learning mentor distinct from other roles in school
Role to be *accountable* due to being externally-funded	Interpretation of role to be acceptable to Local Authority Link Learning Mentor
Current interpretation in school not as effective as it could be	Participants in research to indicate increase in effectiveness of provision
Allocation of learning mentors to specific year groups not providing equity	Participants in research to indicate increase in equity of provision
Role of the learning mentor not fully understood by teaching staff	Teaching staff to demonstrate increased understanding of the role
Learning mentors used as teaching assistants	Participants in research to indicate move away from using learning mentors primarily to support teaching
Learning mentors used to respond to general decline in behaviour	Participants in research to indicate move away from using learning mentors to respond to decline in behaviour across the school
Learning mentors used to address behaviour issues as they occur	Learning mentor role to promote prevention of escalating behaviour issues in the classroom
Current role reactive	Establishment of proactive strategies – to aid children in managing their own barrier to learning

First Thoughts of the Teaching Staff

The first thoughts of the teaching staff were elicited solely by the use of a questionnaire, although anecdotal evidence was referred to in the unscheduled conversation to be considered later in the chapter. Fourteen questionnaires were given out with nine responses. This was a return of 64.3% which was a disappointing return as all respondents are teachers in one school.

The first two questions were designed to put the respondents at ease (Burton, 2000) and centred on their years teaching experience, as below:

Q1.In which year did you start work as a teacher at this school?	1993 x 1, 1997 x 2, 1998 x 1, 2000 x 1, 2003 x 4
Q2. How many full years have you worked with learning mentors? (Learning mentor strand of Excellence in Cities began in 1999)	None x 3, 1 x 0, 2 x 2, 3 x 1, 4 x 1, 5 x 2

The next question asked the teacher to describe the role of the learning mentor. The questionnaire was used after the INSET Day input to staff on the role and the responses indicated that there was a good understanding developing, with many references made to the accepted roles and responsibilities of the learning mentor. The responses were as follows:

- To work with/remove barriers to learning

- Pastoral care

- Understanding additional needs of some children

- Work on relationships

- Working closely [with children] over a sustained period

- Offering children a sanctuary and a listening ear

- Support children who have problems in classroom situations

- Raises pupils' self-esteem

- Liaise with teachers and parents/ provide a support network through school

- Provide opportunities for parents to develop their skills/ home visits for targeted children

- Provide lunchtime supervision

- Adhering to the children's IEPs (Individual Education Plans) and BEPs (Behaviour Education Plans)

- Monitor attendance

Disappointingly, one respondent again reported that they still did not know what the role involved and the responses above, although appearing to be positive, did not indicate an understanding of the proactive strategies being put into place. In addition, a later question revealed that the teachers were still more concerned with the learning mentors responding to behaviour, and that their new role was preventing them from being effective in this area. The responses given were as follows:

- No support given by the learning mentor team for behaviour issues

- Learning mentors asked to do other things [than support with behaviour]

- Lot of time spent in class [by class teacher] referring behaviour

These responses followed a question asking the teachers if they believed that the learning mentor team were being successful in supporting the identified children and in carrying out the '...social work dimension of the primary teacher's role.' (Webb &

Vulliamy 2002, p165.), thereby freeing up the teacher to teach, Again it was disappointing that only four of the respondents thought the learning mentors were successful. The reasons given, in addition to the responses above, included references to the current circumstances in school and to the learning mentor team trying hard to cover pastoral/social work dimension. The respondents then returned to behaviour as a role for the learning mentors when asked to comment on the effectiveness of the learning mentors in working with children, in the respondent's class, who were exhibiting a barrier to learning. The teachers commented that children exhibiting barriers to learning due to behaviour are well supported by the team but that children identified for other reasons (other than behaviour) are not supported adequately. These responses were interesting as they appear to contradict the responses above that the learning mentors did not provide enough support for behaviour issues as they arose. However, the response that there are *many issues of behaviour in the year group* and *it is not possible for one learning mentor to cover them all* clearly indicated that the teachers believed that the solution was to employ more learning mentors to respond to both the need for more children to access learning mentorship and to respond adequately to the number of behaviour issues. This is in contrast to the learning mentors addressing the issues proactively instead of reactively, as at present.

In response to the question about learning mentors talking through concerns with the child that are impacting on his or her learning, and how the children react, the comments included:

- Most children enjoy one to one attention and group attention

- A minority [of the children] feel they are being labelled/singled out

- The judgement [of being labelled/singled out] is fed from parents

It was thus clear from the teachers' responses that, at this stage, there remained misconceptions about the role of the learning mentor but some understanding was developing. I believed that as the proactive strategies became more embedded into the role of the learning mentor, and if the outcomes led to an improvement in behaviour, the teachers' understanding of the updated provision would develop. This developing understanding, or otherwise, will be returned to later in the report.

First Thoughts of the Bakers' Dozen

It is necessary here to recap briefly on the composition of the cohort of children, before considering the data they yielded, in order to set their interview and attitude and behaviour scale responses in context.

The cohort of pupils identified for data collection during the research has been described within chapter four, with further information presented in appendix three. The cohort was chosen to reflect the make up of the children in the school identified with barriers to learning that indicated the involvement of a learning mentor. However, within the cohort identified, three out of the thirteen children had begun to display an overt rejection of the school's rules and routines. This was not reflective of the school as a whole as throughout school the total number of children displaying extreme behaviours due to their rejection of the school's rules and routines was around ten children out of over four hundred. Due to this behaviour, during the course of the research, ten children - including the three from the research cohort - were withdrawn from the classroom environment for an extended time in order to meet both their own needs and the needs of the class. The children received teaching and mentoring within a small group before returning to the classroom; this too will be

explored within the research report at the point in the *story* at which it was considered necessary to remove the children from the classroom.

The rest of the research cohort, ten pupils in key stage two, were included as they were demonstrating:

- an increasing number of incidences of misbehaviour

- disrespect towards adults

- an obvious reluctance to engage in classroom activities

At the identification of the cohort it was unclear what the source of each pupils' barrier to learning was, although many of the cohort were known to have unsettled or non-conventional home backgrounds, whilst others had been clearly affected by the previous headteachers' sudden departure from school. Attitude and behaviour scales were indicated for use to further explore the pupils' views regarding their attitudes to school; to learning mentorship; to the learning mentor room and their own thoughts on their behaviour, in addition to the data gained through interview, which will be considered first.

 Interview Data

The children's interviews were carried out as group interviews (as noted earlier) to enable the children to use each other to provide support and confidence and to allow for discourse between themselves (Watts and Ebbutt, 1987). As with the adult questionnaire and interviews, the first four questions were used to put the children at ease and centred on themselves and general thoughts about school, as summarised overleaf.

Q1. Can you tell me your name and which year group you're in please?

All children responded with their own name and year group:

- Two children in year 4, interviewed with two year 6 children;

- Five children in year 5, interviewed as one group;

- Six children in year 6, two interviewed with the year 4 children and four interviewed as one group.

Q2. Tell me one thing about yourself I don't already know.

Responses, including multiple answers:

- Not wanting to say anything – four children

- Playing football – four children

- Playing basketball – two children

- Singing and dancing – one child

- Football supporter – one child

- Enjoying maths – one child

- Enjoys school – one child

Q3. Tell me one thing about school. [Anything at all.]

Responses centred on likes and dislikes of the curriculum:

- Not liking writing – one child.

- Enjoying art – three children

- Playing football – one child

- Five children indicated they enjoyed school – *it's good* (two references), *fine, you can learn* and *you have good fun.*

Q4. What is your favourite subject and why?

Responses:

- Art – four children

- Maths – two children

- Literacy – two children

- Handwriting – two children.

- Design and technology – one child

- ICT – one child

- P.E. – one child

These simple, introductory questions were interesting as the children here commented on the learning mentor role without being specifically asked. One child, when questioned about his favourite subject responded

> I like doing art 'cos you can draw buildings and come into
> learning mentor room to finish it.

Also, they indicated that a number of the children were happy to report their enjoyment of school in general and their favourite subjects or areas of learning. This was surprising as, without stating this overtly, I had made the assumption that the children identified did not enjoy school and that this displeasure impacted on their behaviour. This assumption will be further considered alongside the analysis of the attitude and behaviour scales.

The next question asked the children to describe their own behaviour, followed by specific questions about the learning mentor room. Many of the children reported that they were both *naughty* and *good,* relating naughty to being violent towards

others. When prompted further they indicated that they were *naughty* in response to other influences including:

- When something's happened at home.

- When something winds me up.

- When someone starts on me.

Two children responded that when they were in a *bad mood* they didn't *do any work*. Only one child believed that he was *good* all the time, although as acting headteacher I can add that this child's behaviour could be quite extreme and he was one of the ten children later removed from the classroom to be taught in a small focused group. The two year four children both commented that their behaviour was improving and also linked misbehaviour to not completing their work. What was interesting about the responses was the way in which the children were able to discuss their behaviour quite maturely and critically, with almost all descriptions mirroring those of their teachers, the learning mentors and myself as acting head teacher.

The next set of questions were used to explore the children's responses to the learning mentor room; the layout of the room; the types of activities carried out and their feelings about working in the room, as it was this that was the focus of the research at this stage.

Children's responses to the learning mentor room:
- I think it's brilliant.

- You can chill out in it.

- It's cool.

- It's good fun.

- It's right good. You can play playstation.

- I think it's good because if you're in a bad mood they'll calm you down.

- It's good because you're allowed to do anything except from messing about.

Children's responses to the layout of the room:

- The sofas and the dining table are in a good place.

- I like the sofas best. You can look out of the window and you can think.

- It's good for reading and it's comfy.

- It's quite good and I like sitting down and doing my work.

- Very neat.

- I like this area and having my dinner in here.

It is interesting to note here that the reference to the learning mentors *calming you down* made above is repeated throughout the children's responses and hence indicates that this is considered by the children to be an important function of the learning mentors. Although not recognised at this stage, these references were later considered vital to changing the focus of the research. Again this is to be further explored later in the research report.

The responses cited above represent the responses given by all the children interviewed. It can be appreciated here that the children were positive about the room and enjoyed working within it and it could therefore be concluded at this point that the use of the nurture group ethos was effective in terms of engaging the children in school life. This conclusion is reinforced by the data summarised overleaf, although it must be noted here that when asked why the children had worked in the learning mentor room, most reported that they had both been sent for **and** had asked to work

there but four children stated that they had only gone to the learning mentor room when sent for, thus indicating that they either did not feel the need to access the room or did not wish to access it.

The types of activities carried out:

- Circle time

- Art/drawing

- Watching TV/videos

- Reading

- Making posters

- Having lunch

- Better stuff than writing and doing work

Children's feelings about working in the room:

- You've got to be good

- You're expected to be good. Silent

- You've got to sit down

- You have to do your work

- You're expected to behave in here

- Good. When you're in a bad mood they calm you down

- Good, because they're, like they're good to you and they help you do stuff

- It's good and you've got to behave

- You have to be good but you can also talk

These responses demonstrate that the children were clear about the *rules* of the learning mentor room and accepted that they had to behave in a certain way. In practice they were no different to the expectations of the classroom but were obviously perceived as different by the children. This therefore needed further exploration and so I asked if the children liked the rules of the learning mentor room, if they liked sitting calmly and quietly. Their responses were again surprising as the children referred to how the room influenced their behaviour:

> It calms you down from hitting people.

> If you might fight in the class but you can just ask whether you can come down to the learning mentor room just to cool off.

I also asked the children to describe the difference between working in the learning mentor room and their classroom and how they feel when you've they return to class; the responses are summarised below and overleaf.

How is the learning mentor room different to your classroom?

- It's different because you can do other work.

- We get to do good stuff.

- We listen to music.

- It's busy and you don't have to do as much other work as they do.

- You can read any time you want.

- You can come in and when you've finished you've got time to watch videos and play games.

- It's more spacious.

- The learning mentor room is bigger and tidier and more spaced out so you can have a few more children in than you can have in a normal class.

- It's relaxing and there's not many people in shouting.

- If someone's bothering you you can move to a different table.

- It's nice.

- It's got lots of flowers and it's neat and tidy.

It is interesting to note the children's responses that the learning mentor base is *more spacious*, that it *is bigger and tidier and more spaced out* as I commented in the background to the research that I considered the restricted space inside (and outside the school), due to the building housing many small teaching areas and classrooms, could lead to inappropriate behaviours and contribute to pupils' reluctance to engage in the curriculum. The responses above therefore reinforced my concerns regarding the impact of the building on a small but significant minority of pupils; together with the responses below, they indicate how the children perceive the learning mentor base to be quieter, calmer and more effective in providing an appropriate working atmosphere:

How do you feel when you return to class?

- I don't want to go back into class.

- I want to stop in here all day because it's so much fun.

- I'm sad because its fun in here and it's not that fun in classroom.

- It's fun in here. I just don't want to go in the classroom.

- I just don't want to go because it's better in here.

- When I walk out of here I feel calm, relaxed. But when I get back to class and everyone's shouting and giving me a headache.

- Quite sad because people are always shouting in the classroom.

- I feel relaxed and calm.

It was considered at this point in the data analysis if the nurture group ethos should be adopted through school and so the children were questioned whether they thought there was a difference in their behaviour when they had been in the learning mentor room and then returned to class, to determine if the effects of being in the learning mentor room impacted on classroom behaviour. The responses represented below indicate that the effects do indeed impact on the classroom:

- If I come in in a bad mood, I go back to class in a happy mood.

- If I'm mad when I come in, they [the learning mentors] calm me down and when I went back to class I'd be more happier and get on with my work.

- I can get on better with my work.

- It makes you calm down better.

- Mine is back to better than normal.

- I feel like I'm doing what I want to do in my classroom, I feel I'm respecting my teacher.

- My behaviour is the same.

The responses thus do not necessarily support the notion of extending the use of the nurture group ethos to the classroom but did need to be explored further. The next questions were hence used to investigate the effect the learning mentor room as a working environment and the children's thoughts on the current provision of learning

mentorship, to determine the effects of the team approach to mentorship. The children's responses are presented below.

Is there anything else you'd like to say about the learning mentor room?

- Where was it, last year? We didn't really use it like we're using it this time. It's all different.

- They just used it for working in didn't they?

- They didn't use it at dinner times.

- I think this one's better. It's got space.

- There are different areas for circle time, games. For two groups to work not squashed up.

- It's better and it's bigger.

- It's better because you don't have as much noise as you have in class. It's better when you don't have much noise.

- It's good and it's fab.

- I'd like it to be decorated/colourful.

- I'd like it to be a lot warmer. A lot warmer.

What do you think to how the learning mentors are working this year?

- Last year was rubbish. This year is better.

- It's better because, you can do more and there are more [learning mentors] to help you.

- It's more fun.

- It's better...because they don't have to rush in and out. Going into classes and that.

- It's a bit better because they don't need to help all other children.

These responses indicate that the children enjoyed working in the learning mentor base but did not refer explicitly to the nurture group ethos. Without stating it overtly, it was clear that the children saw a clear distinction between the learning mentor base and the classroom, but did not make any reference to changing the classroom ethos or layout to that of the learning mentor room. Consequently, I didn't feel that the research thus far promoted the nurture group ethos to be adopted through school.

One notable response given during a group interview was particularly pleasing as it fully validated the changes made to learning mentorship; this response is presented below as it occurred within the interview. However, the discourse was not recognised at this point as being more significant to the research than other responses and yet when the focus of the research was later reconsidered it became very important to my realisation that the learning mentors had a role to play in socialising the children, as explored towards the end of this chapter and in chapter seven.

> Is there anything else you want to say about either school, or
> the learning mentors or the learning mentor room?
>
> School's better, getting better, all the time.
>
> Why do you say that? What's changing?
>
> Because everything's changing. All people in school are
> getting better behaved.

Do you think so? Why do you think that? That's really nice to hear.

Because it's calming people down a little bit more.

Why do you think that is? Do you think it's because of the changes?

Yes.

What sort of changes do you mean?

Like this Mentor room. People can come in and relax and everything.

Their behaviour gets better.

The interviews also explored the children's thoughts on working with their siblings. The responses were to be used to explore the nurture group ethos with respect to working as a family but the data collected was limited as many of the children had not yet worked with a sibling and was not really relevant when the focus of the research was reconsidered. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that once again the notion of being calmed down was commented on as one of the children who had worked with his brother reported that:

When he's been naughty and I just sit with him [my brother] and calm him down.

Other comments included:

I think it was good because I talk [to my sister], see what she's doing and… I could sit with her.

It's more fun because your brother and sister help you and that. Better than the teachers.

It's good because you can improve and sit with them.

Attitude and Behaviour Scales

It can now be appreciated by the reader that the data collected from the children through the group interviews thus proved to be rich data (Gahan & Hannibal, 1998). It yielded much to be considered with respect to the evolution of the learning mentor role within the school at this stage, and yet I did not expect this amount of empirical evidence would be collected through this particular instrument. For this reason I had also planned to use attitude and behaviour scales with the children to reinforce the interview data and to provide personal data about individual attitudes to school and to learning mentorship and own thoughts about behaviour. In order to manage this data most effectively the responses of the children are presented next in the research report in graphical form followed by a short commentary after each set of questions.

Attitude 1 Questions 1 to 10
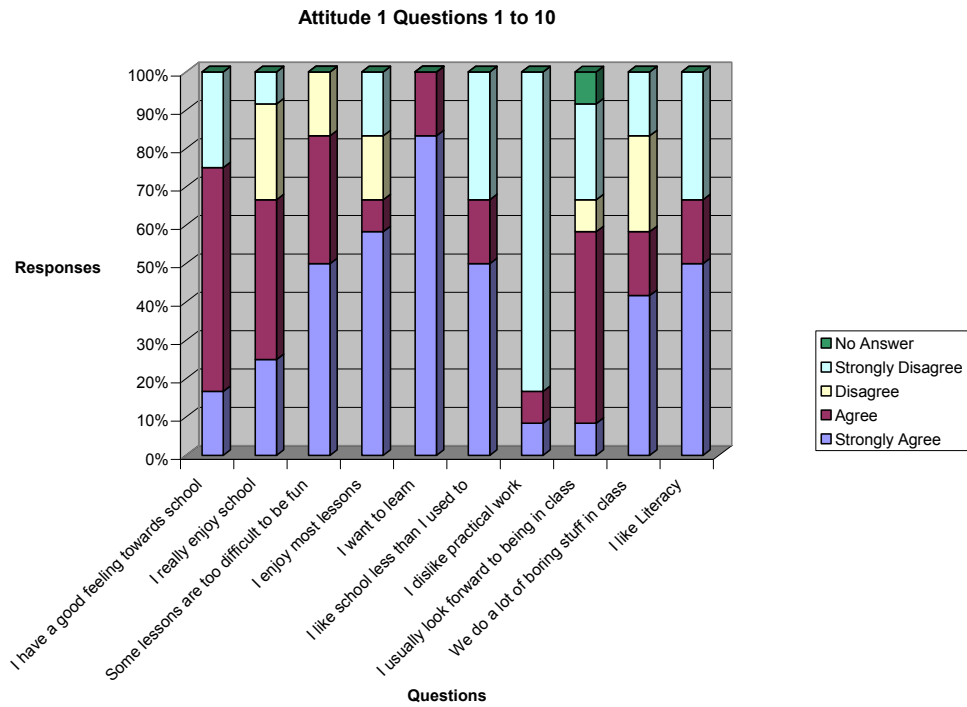
At this stage over two thirds of the children reported that they had a good feeling about school and enjoyed school although eighty percent found lessons difficult and all the children would prefer practical lessons. Although Literacy was popular, working in the classroom was less inviting. The most interesting response was that all the children reported that they did want to learn; this was unexpected due to some of the children's behaviour, which indicated otherwise to the adults, but reinforced the interpretation of the interview data presented earlier in the chapter.

Attitude 1 Questions 11-20
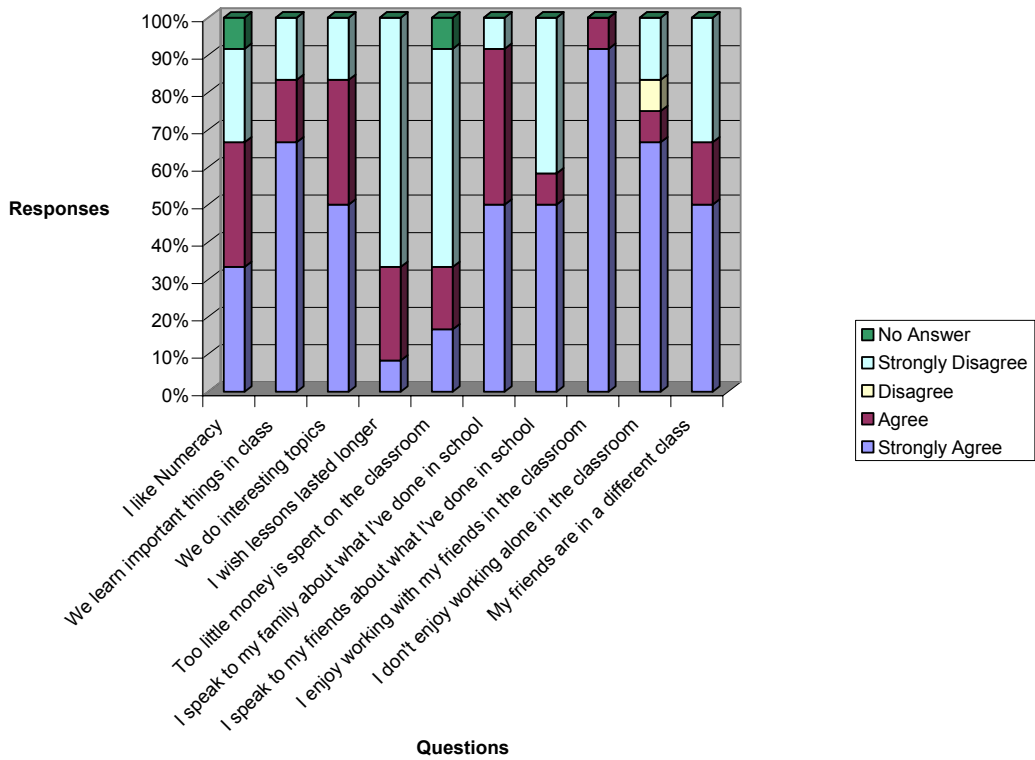
Questions eleven to twenty support both the information yielded by the first set of questions and the interpretation of the interview data.

In support of the children reporting that they wanted to learn, they also believe that they learn important things in the classroom and that the topics studied are interesting whereas, in support of their reluctance to engage in the classroom, seventy percent of the children report that they do not like working alone in the classroom. In addition, two thirds of the children state that their friends are in another class.

Attitude 1 Questions 21-30
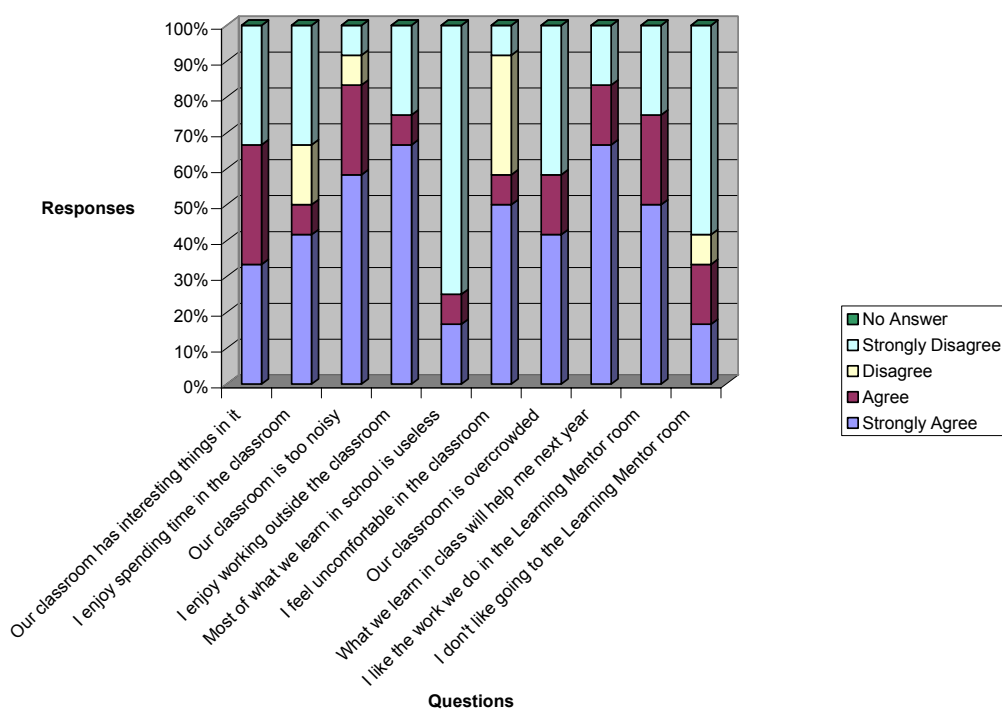
The final set of questions on the attitude scale again reinforces the information from the earlier questions and data analysis. What is clear is that the children want to learn and understand how they learn best – with the support of others, when it is quiet, where there are smaller groups of children and where the work is practical. Although the children enjoy the work on offer it is the classroom environment that they have negative attitudes towards whereas they enjoy working outside the classroom and in the learning mentor room. These responses support the consideration of the school and its routines and question how the classroom could be made more appealing to the identified children.

Behaviour 1 Questions 1-10
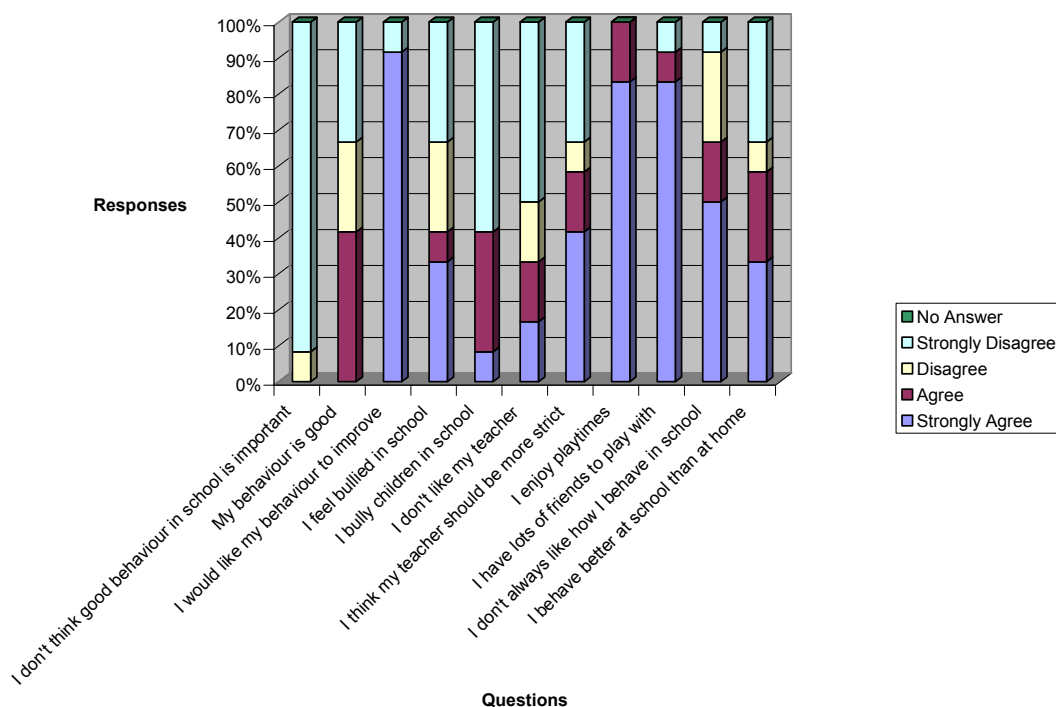
The responses to the behaviour scale demonstrate clearly the children's concerns about their own behaviour, that they do not like their own behaviour and that they appreciate how important *good* behaviour is. These responses show that the children have an awareness of the issues but appear not to know how to improve their own behaviour. The children also report that they have friends in school, enjoy playtime but that forty percent both feel bullied and admit to bullying others.

Behaviour 1 Questions 11-20
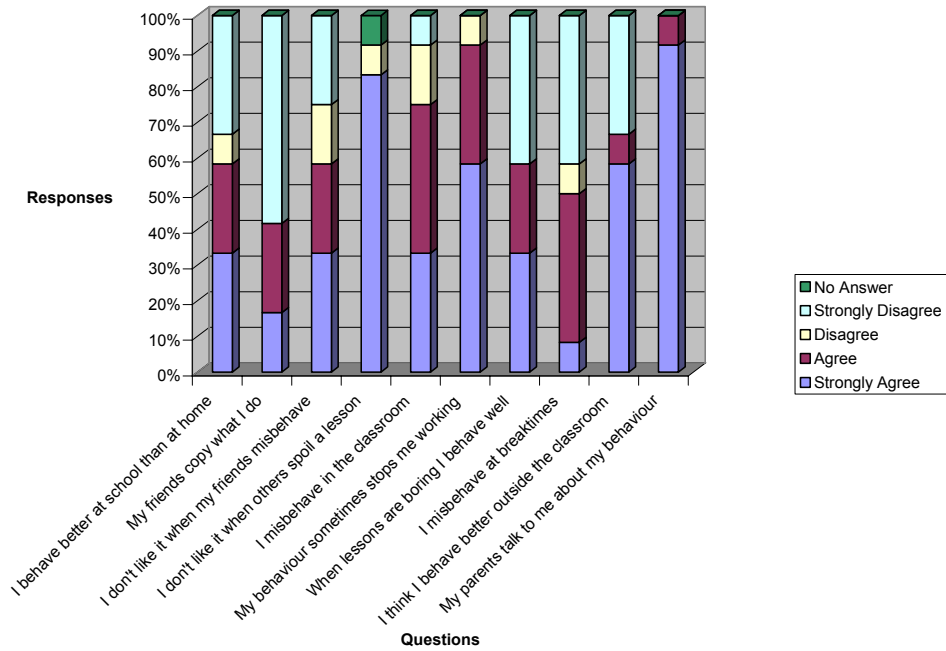
The responses to the second set of questions also demonstrate the children's understanding of the effects of their own behaviour, by admitting that they misbehave in class and that their behaviour sometimes stops them working, and yet half the children report that they dislike it when others misbehave. It is interesting, and pleasing, to note that the children are able to talk to their parents about their behaviour. The final set of questions (overleaf) demonstrates how the children believe that both their parents and the learning mentors impact positively on their behaviour.

Behaviour 1 Questions 21-26
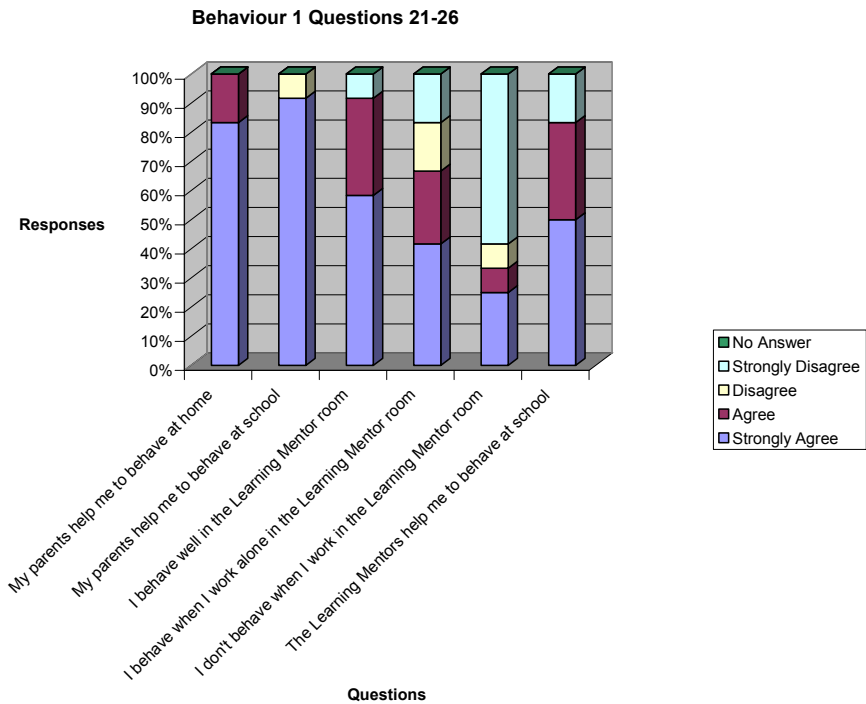
The attitude and behaviour scales thus reinforce the information given in the pupil interviews and give a resounding message that the children are aware of their own behaviours and both want to improve their behaviour and learn in the school if not the classroom, where they feel less comfortable than in other areas of the school, including the learning mentor room.

First Thoughts of the Learning Mentors

The first thoughts of the learning mentors and the Authority Link Learning Mentor were also elicited through semi-structured interviews. At this stage in the research, specific questions were used to investigate how the work of the learning

mentors in school was inspired by the nurture group ethos being introduced and the perceived impact on the focus group of children.

The first question, to put the learning mentors at ease was simply *how long have you been a learning mentor?* The experience of the learning mentors ranged from just two months to five years, from the beginning of the Excellence in Cities initiative, with all the learning mentors having previously worked in education as teaching assistants. From this first question the notion of a learning mentor as a new workforce was expressed, through such comments as:

> ….its something rather we actually fell into because we found the school has grown and has increased the need for something a little more than just learning support.

> A learning mentor is a person in school that we hope children will seek out to help them with their work, their problems, not over and above the class teacher, but to work alongside with.

> I really think that the role of the Learning Mentor is a way forward in school, particularly when we're talking about inclusion, because it's a holistic approach to children. It's not seeing learning in isolation from the rest of their lives.

The learning mentors were obviously clear about the role, that it was established to remove a child's barrier to learning and they were able to expand on this by explaining how the barrier to learning may impact on a child's behaviour and ability to access the curriculum:

> …sometimes children find it difficult to work with peers in the classroom…[the learning mentor]… systems help

children to discover a way of learning how to work within the classroom environment.

... we are there to try and remove barriers that the children have to learning, whatever that might be. Whether social problems, self-esteem problems, anger management problems, a multitude of different areas that we might work in

Before moving on to consider the use of the nurture group ethos I asked questions about the learning mentors' understanding of the team approach we had introduced. These responses have already been considered and demonstrated that the learning mentors had an idea of why the approach was beneficial but not how it would work in practice:

I understood it to literally mean that, to work as a team. Whatever systems we put into place we would, as there are four of us, we would all be able to work alongside one another across the school incorporating all year groups… we would be able to work with any of the groups we had put around a timetable because we would be informed…

…we thought if we could actually do the whole school, rather than just do one particular class or year group, it would off-load, not only on the children but also on team members.

…from my point of view, we would probably be able to support each other better, and that we could also use each other's ideas to work with children and, and from the children's point of view, I would say that different areas of expertise are available throughout the school, we aren't just targeting certain years.

It was interesting to note that none of the learning mentors had heard of nurture groups or the nurture group ethos before I had introduced it and yet all the learning mentors agreed to its introduction; this was an area that I explored with the next set of questions. The learning mentors wanted to introduce sessions where our fragmented families could work together, believing that this would enhance the provision and enable siblings to spend time together in a supportive environment:

> …within our school we've got a lot of family groups and some of them never get to work together, even at home they don't actually get the chance because of split families…

> …others probably never ever play together, they never sit down together, they never do anything together, and you can see how different they react…

> …we realise some of the children have [problems] in their families and home life, and the siblings etc in school, it gives us opportunities to tackle those problems, problems that perhaps we weren't aware of before we looked at groups of children in this way.

In response to the question *how would you describe the nurture group ethos of your room the* learning mentors gave expanded answers that centred on both the layout of the room and how this impacted on the children's behaviour and attitude towards the school and their learning. The comments are summarised overleaf, in table 6:5.

Table 6:5 - Effects of the Nurture Group Ethos

The layout of the Learning Mentor Room	Impact on Behaviour and Attitude
• there's background music which the children like	• the children describe it [the room] as cool
• they just generally like the atmosphere within the classroom that we like to promote	• they see the room as calmer and quiet, even the most noisiest of children can appreciate that because they do realise that if that's not what they are, they don't get to stay
• if they want to sit together they make sure there is a space next to each other	• they understand that if they can't hear the music then obviously they're being too noisy, so they are quiet
• when they're sat their they are all nice and cosy	
• if they sit at the big table they work together	• we've been able to get groups of children to be able to come in and work together
• we've got tables where we can work within groups, we've also got a dining table that you can eat at at lunchtimes, often these children don't eat at a table at home and therefore it's nice for them to actually get together at these times.	• to work, share things, and to do things that they normally wouldn't do at home
• we have different areas from quiet, calm areas that are very much like a home environment to work areas with lots of resources and I think it gives the children a sense of being careful, that we're interested, calm for them	

The responses include many references to *calming* the children, thus reinforcing the comments of the children and strongly indicating how important a calm and purposeful atmosphere is.

The next set of questions continued to explore the perceived initial impact of the nurture group ethos on the children. A theme here was the emphasis on developing relationships, between children and adults and children, and referring to the relationships as *family values*:

> …the way we approach the children, it gives them the confidence to approach us and to perhaps share things that they haven't felt able to share with us before.

> It's knowing how to be with each other. It's actual bonding of relationships within school, whether it be family members or to work as a team.

> …the idea of it is to promote family values… family values are important to work with one another and to care for one another.

Indeed one of the learning mentors wanted to introduce what she described as *home skills* as she believed they would:

> …improve their self-confidence…give them more independence for when they're older, having to think about how are they going to buy food, what are they going to cook, why are they cooking that, what's a good meal, what's going to keep them healthy and fit and well, which all helps towards them having the right frame of mind and, so that they're in the right frame of mind to learn.

Once again the notion of calmness was returned to:

> …we can approach problems that children may have in a
> calm, and quiet way, that we don't feel we're being intrusive.

Finally, the learning mentors were asked to consider if there were any immediate changes they would like to make to the nurture group ethos of the learning mentor room and what further support was needed at this time. The learning mentors agreed that few changes, if any, were needed at this time:

> I wouldn't say there's anything that's not working at all,

> … if there are problems its been with the group work, but we
> are actually slowly overcoming them. The other areas… I
> think have fallen into place very nicely

The learning mentor responses to the question of further support needed centred on developing the understanding of the teachers, thus reinforcing the conclusions drawn from the teacher questionnaire, that there remained pockets of confusion about the learning mentor role:

> …it might be a good idea to liaise somewhat with the class
> teachers…to get feedback from the class teachers, if they've
> noticed anything different about the children

> …the staff are still trying to understand the role

> I think we still need to go some way to making sure that all
> members of staff do understand the role of the learning
> mentor in school… purely because it is such a new role.

First Thoughts of the Local Authority Link Learning Mentor

Again the initial questions were posed to simply put the Link Learning Mentor at ease and are summarised below.

How long have you been a learning mentor?	Three years
Did you work in school before that time?	No.
How long have you been the Link Learning Mentor?	Fifteen to eighteen months

The response here to why he had become a learning mentor was noteworthy as he stated that he had worked voluntarily with the Samaritans for fifteen years, being responsible for training adults to become Samaritans and then mentoring them for six months. He then:

> … just thought I could utilize those skills and transfer them to children. It's my belief that children are just young adults and that the skills could just transfer across.

It was interesting in that he had previous knowledge of mentoring and quite readily accepted that the skills were transferable and yet it was a definition of *learning mentorship* that continued to elude me. The next question was framed to explore his thoughts on this, on the role of the learning mentor. As I have outlined throughout the earlier sections of the research report, the role can be interpreted in many ways and the Link Learning Mentor may be able to clarify my ideas and provide validation for the interpretation of the role we were developing through his previous experience. It can therefore be appreciated that his response was surprising in that he gave a list of reasons for developing this workforce rather than a brief explanation, as I had

expected from him, and yet this list reinforced the notion first cited in chapter one of this report, that learning mentorship cannot be *defined* but can only be *described*. To quote Roberts' conclusion again (2000, p162), he states that there is a '…lack of consensus as to what constitutes mentoring' and that it is best described as a *process*. The list of reasons given by the Link Learning Mentor for having learning mentors in schools, and thus the reasons in favour of learning mentorship, are:

- To have a child focus, that's the first thing

- A pivotal role within school

- You're not a teacher

- You're different from a classroom support assistant

- It's a sort of cross over

- I think it's an essential role within school

- It's my belief that we've got the nicer side of what teacher's used to have…the pastoral side with children

- They (teachers) can't seem to devote that time like they used to do to children and the problems children and families have. I think that's where the learning mentors can come into their own really because there they have got the time

The response does acknowledge one of the reasons for learning mentorship cited earlier in the report, that it takes away *the social work dimension* away from the teacher (Webb & Vulliamy, 2002) thus freeing up the teacher to concentrate on their teaching and learning. This was one of the fundamental reasons for developing the provision of learning mentorship in the school, to allow the teachers to concentrate on teaching and the learning mentors to concentrate on the children's needs in relation to accessing the curriculum.

Next I asked for the Link Learning Mentor's thoughts on the team approach to learning mentorship that we were developing. His responses mirrored those of the school learning mentors, in that he thought it would be beneficial but did not have a clear understanding of how it would work in practice, and yet it was the Link Learning Mentor who had aided me in articulating my thoughts and made me realise that the team approach was what I felt was the way forward in school. He also informed me that what I was proposing had been discussed at Authority level, that his line manager has described the approach as his *vision*:

> …for schools that had got more than one learning mentor in,
> to sort of focus as a team rather than working in individual
> year groups,

Our interpretation was therefore considered as innovative and had the full support of the Authority. It did occur to me that the Link Learning Mentor may have steered my thoughts towards the team approach because of the views of his line manager, but I hadn't thought this at the review stage as the approach matched my thoughts exactly on how I believed learning mentorship should be developed. The Link Learning Mentor commented at this point, without being asked directly, that the school's adoption of the team approach was a first for the Authority but was as a result of my vision, rather than an Authority-led initiative.

With respect to how the approach would work in practice, he too acknowledged that he had not had a clear picture by stating that:

> …obviously from today, listening and talking to the mentors
> today I can see where it's going, I can say that I've got a bit
> of a clearer picture today than where originally I had it in my
> own head.

and yet his support and ideas had been invaluable in setting up both the room and the approach. With respect to the part he played at the early stages, he commented that he was

> …very excited to be asked to be involved at the beginning
> with it really, and for what little part I've had to do with it,
> you know, I fully believe in it.

These responses provided the validation I was seeking at this point in the research. It must be remembered that I had stated overtly from the beginning of the changes to the provision of learning mentorship that if there were any indications that the new approach was less effective than the previous approach then it would be halted immediately. The impact of learning mentorship on the children and their access to learning was of paramount importance and so any changes had to at least equal the effects of the previous approach. The responses so far from the Link Learning Mentor indicated the early success of the provision and supported those of the learning mentors and the children; they will be further strengthened by the data collected during an unscheduled conversation and reported later in the chapter.

The next questions centred on the learning mentor room, to elicit the thoughts of the Link Learning Mentor on the setting up of the base using the nurture group ethos. He commented here on the layout of the room and how he thought the layout would impact on children; again his response is summarised as a list:

- I think the room is very child-friendly. It's very bright, it's colourful, it's airy, and it's open.
- It's got a really nice feel to it
- There are lots of areas to it

- What struck me when I first came in was the sort of the nice chill out settees in the corner with the fireplace

- I've tried to look round at all the things that's actually happening within this room and there is a lot to take in and I think that's been reflected within the pictures the children have done today, and their explanation of it

The Link Learning Mentor talked at length about how the children had talked to him that day about the room. Their comments once again brought up the notion of *calmness* and the need for the children to be allowed to think and reflect on their issues.

> I know talking to the children today they really enjoy being in here, all for different reasons. One said it was a nice chill out area that they can come in; one just wants to come in to get his mind together and to think, he says it enables him to think. Quite a few of them said they enjoy the relaxing music, and that was evident today when all the children sat there, you still could hear that music above everything that was going on, it was not on very loud but you still can hear it. They said that. They said can you hear the music and I said yes, and said do you always have this kind of music and they said yes, it's for relaxing, so the children are very aware, of why it's there and what it helps them do.

In contrast to the school learning mentors, the Link Learning Mentor had some knowledge of nurture groups as he had already visited two within the Authority. He was reticent in sharing his thoughts but indicated that he was less than supportive of nurture groups, stating that his main concern was that a full nurture group would be difficult to maintain in the long term. However, when I asked if he could identify the

aspects of the nurture group we had adopted, he responded positively and immediately identified the ethos, describing it as the *feel* of the room:

> The ethos that is in this school and in this building, then that's got to have a positive, a knock-on effect to a child's development. They feel good about themselves. I mean self-esteem and…if a child's got low self-esteem and they're not learning, then we have to actually address that first before they can learn. You know, make them feel good about themselves and I think certainly that's what this room does, that's what this room does to children

He was particularly impressed by the lunchtime invitations from the mentors to staff and children, relating the initiative to the core purpose of learning mentorship, that of removing barriers.

> All the staff are invited which is really good because it's not just teaching between children and teachers in this room, there are no barriers really, and that's what learning mentors are about, I think it's good. I think it's struck a cord with everybody.

At this point in the interview I was asked if I had observed a difference in the pupils accessing the learning mentor room. The conversation that followed is summarised below.

> I'd like to ask you, have you seen a difference?

> Yes I have, particularly in the children who choose to come down. I've seen children who've got problems, where they've said "Can I come in and can I sit down."… they can come, they can be quiet, they can think about what's happening and they're very respectful, that it's not for children who've been naughty. It is only for children who would benefit from quiet

time and relaxing time and they're respecting that, very much so.

I think that's what's said. I was talking to the Learning Mentors earlier and they said not one child has called this the naughty room.

And there is access for all the children. And that, although I'm really keen on nurture groups from what I've read and what I've seen, my only concern would be how many children it would impact when we've got 400 children…so that's why I really wanted to take the best of the nurture group ethos but see how many children we could impact on.

You're probably right. I don't know what impact it would have. But like you say, you're taking some parts of it…it's all about trying different strategies really

The conversation demonstrates clearly both my positive thoughts and those of the children on adopting the ethos, and strengthened the reservations the Link Learning Mentor had about the use of a full nurture group (rather than the use of the ethos) he expressed earlier. Indeed the conversation appears to demonstrate that he had reservations about the aspects of the nurture group strategy we had adopted but this was later refuted when he was asked about any immediate changes to the learning mentorship provision that he thought were need at this time. He commented that *they've got a fantastic room, it is fantastic* and that further changes were not needed.

The remaining few comments made by the Link Learning Mentor express well his thoughts on how innovative the changes were, how positive he was about the

changes we had made to our learning mentorship provision and his thoughts that the team aspect of the provision would strengthen in time.

>…they (the learning mentors) have said they've had to re-learn how to work with each other, which is good because I didn't think for one minute that it was going to be easy.

>I always saw them as very much a strongish team anyway, but I think it's strengthened it. I think it's strengthened them,

>… it's always been positive, upbeat, even though they've said today that they've had problems along the way. But it's always been upbeat and it's been positive…that's why I think it will work.

>I think they've got the drive to do it, and I think it just wanted someone to say 'Now come on, grab it, let's go with it.'

>I think more mentors, when they've got three mentors in school, would benefit from working in this way.

>And it's a sharing of, of ideas. I mean EIC's all about sharing best practice. Well you can start; you can share best practice with each other in a school.

>…they've (the learning mentors) grown very quickly, in a short space of time. I think I've seen more, spirit, shall I say, in these last three months with them than I have all the time

I've known them. They feel more comfortable with things
now

Incidental Data

Although this data arose after all the interviews, questionnaire and attitude and behaviour scales had been carried out, and was recorded in an unscheduled conversation, it again demonstrates how the changes were viewed by the adult stakeholders towards the end of the autumn term 2003. It reinforces the data collected from the children and the data from individual interviews with the learning mentors and the Link Learning Mentor that indicated that change to learning mentorship within the school had been necessary. It also reinforced the conclusion drawn from the data at this stage, that the changes made were already being viewed as providing more effective learning mentorship than the previous model.

This incidental data does however provide comments about the staff continuing to be reluctant to fully embrace the move to a more proactive, preventative team approach; indeed my observations at the time were that the staff almost saw the approach as a failure and that a return to the previous model of provision was preferred.

The conversation was very long and detailed and yielded a significant amount of rich data. In order to manage and present to the reader this amount of data the full transcript is included in appendix seven with a summary presented here providing some of the more important comments that moved the research forward. The first comments made (presented overleaf) are pleasing in that they begin to outline the positive features of the new provision, that it provides more flexibility within the team and allows for the reactive work that is needed but also promotes the proactive

strategies now being employed. The learning mentors talked with confidence about the approach and its impact on learning mentorship.

> So it's obvious, or evident to the staff, that you've worked individually through school, and you're now working as a team, but obviously you've got flexibility within that team.

> We've still got flexibility. It's a bit like being the SAS if you like. You've got the core things that you do on your timetable, but you're still available to mentor a child that's having a difficult day, to come out of class to deal with any situation. We've got that flexibility that you can't have as a class teacher because their responsibility is to their whole class whereas, because we now work in a team, one person can leave the mentor room. It doesn't affect the rest of the work.

> Its given us a chance to work holistically with children. Its not just the Literacy or the numeracy, everything can be brought in for that child. We're looking at the whole child. Social skills, peer mentoring, all sorts of things we can use to get them to get on together.

> Its not good practice I don't think for them to be reliant on one person. We're not here to be a prop. And that's how it was last year.

The Link Learning Mentor summed up this new-found confidence thus:

> I actually think, from listening to what you say, its made you more sort of a reflective practitioner. That you're actually thinking about what works, what doesn't work.

The conversation then moved on to consider the approach in practice. At this point the innovativeness of the changes became even more apparent to me. It must be noted that I had not considered the approach to be a radical interpretation when we held the formal review that led to its implementation; indeed it was only through the Link Learning Mentor's interview that I began to appreciate how sweeping and far-reaching the changes had been. It was therefore only at this juncture that I was prepared to consider why the approach may not have been so readily accepted by the staff but still believed strongly myself that the provision of learning mentorship had been improved. I commented:

> It was quite a radical idea wasn't it? I think we all came up against some, not opposition, but surprise at what we were doing. I think its really being vindicated now that we were right to do it.

The learning mentors believed that there was less misunderstanding now than before:

> There's still a little bit of hostility here and there about it, about the system. Not as much as there was.

> The children obviously have a good idea what the room's all about, but it would be nice for staff to come and have an idea of what we do. To sit and observe.

Again the conversation highlighted a common theme that had emerged from the earlier data, that of the children desiring a calm environment where they could relax and think.

But the older boys tend to use us for calm down, chill out, even if they don't come themselves. You've only got to suggest it and they're happy.

One particular child had spoken with the Link Learning Mentor about the room and highlighted what the revised learning mentor provision was intended to achieve.

I was chatting to him and …he said 'I really like it 'cos I can come in here and I can just think.

That's very perceptive of, of a child isn't it?

That's very much what we're trying to do, get children to take responsibility for their own behaviour. And we're seeing it aren't we? There's little chinks all the time and they're coming out with comments like that.

The conversation thus provided triangulation in the data collected (Cohen et al, 2000) in that it reinforced the data collected from both adult and child participants in the research. The data, and therefore the common themes that emerged, will now be considered and the conclusions at this stage presented.

Common Themes

There were many common themes to come out of the data analysis which were considered and used to influence the direction of the research. The themes centred on the respondents' understanding of:

- The role of the learning mentor

- The need to work with, and remove barriers to learning, and provide support to children who have problems in school and classroom situations

- The training and expertise of the learning mentor team

- The effectiveness of the learning mentor team

- The provision of a *sanctuary*, a calm environment for children to work in and think through their problems

- The importance of the learning mentor room for the children

- The link between behaviour and learning

- The need to raise pupils' self-esteem

- Promoting family values, including working with teachers and parents to provide a support network through school

- Provision of pastoral care

- The importance of relationships

- How the children enjoy school, want to learn and want to improve their behaviour

- The impact of the classroom environment on learning and behaviour

The data collected demonstrates that the learning mentors and the Link Learning Mentor understandably had a good understanding of learning mentorship in practice and how the provision had both been improved and what activities could be added to improve the provision further. It was most pleasing that at this stage the children had a good understanding of the role and appreciated how the learning mentors supported them in school. This understanding not only influenced the direction of the research but was most important in drawing final conclusions from research, as will be noted later in the research report. As the researcher I believed that the teaching staff continued to hold a limited understanding of the role, although the learning mentors thought this was developing over time. The teachers reported that they understood the

learning mentor role involved working with children exhibiting barriers to learning, providing the support needed for children who have problems in school and classroom situations. However, I believed that the teachers' understanding was not developing appropriately because they continued to consider the over-riding responsibility of the learning mentor to be the provision of support for all incidences of misbehaviour in the classroom and the school environment. Further work with the teachers on developing their understanding of the role and on the resulting provision was therefore clearly indicated through the research, in order for the teachers to appreciate that the learning mentors were working proactively on behaviour issues rather than supporting school through reactive measures when incidences of misbehaviour occurred.

One particular theme that was noted repeatedly by the children, the learning mentors and the Link Learning Mentor was how important the learning mentors and the room were in providing a calming atmosphere, calming the children down and allowing them time to think and work through their problems. Although one teacher responded that the learning mentor room provided a sanctuary for the children, the teachers were seemingly unaware of the children's positive responses to the learning mentor room. The calming atmosphere and way of working is inherent in the nurture group ethos (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000) and so it was pleasing to note that the children had discerned this feature of learning mentorship. The children very clearly linked their negative behaviour to a reduction in their learning and emphasised that they wanted to improve their behaviour so that they could learn more, and that *calming down* was a major feature in improving their behaviour. The children stated that when they calmed down they felt better about themselves; this was related to

raising self-esteem which all the adult respondents cited as key to effective learning mentorship.

There were many strategies to improve self-esteem employed by the learning mentors but the main approaches to be raised during the data collection were the provision of a support network through school and strategies that developed family values. The adult respondents demonstrated an understanding that this involved the learning mentors in providing pastoral care for children when needed and that the development of positive, caring and mutually respectful relationships was crucial to this aspect of the role. The children also showed that they understood this theme.

As noted earlier, I was most surprised that almost all the cohort of children focused upon in the research stated that they enjoyed school, wanted to learn and wanted to improve their behaviour, as on the whole their behaviour was unacceptable and appeared to show a disregard for what was being offered to them in terms of the curriculum and school life. This view was shared by the teaching staff but was not so readily acceptable to the learning mentors. I believed that we needed to develop the children's enthusiasm for school and for learning but the children indicated that they already held these attitudes but needed help to access school and school life. They were very positive about working in the learning mentor room and were clear about the rules that they had to respect in order to be able to access the room. The learning mentors were consistent in ensuring that the children behaved in the way expected although, as noted earlier, the rules were no different to the expectations of the classroom but were obviously perceived as different by the children. The data indicated that they thought the learning mentor base was quieter, calmer and more effective in providing an appropriate working atmosphere and that the effects of being in the learning mentor room impacted positively on classroom behaviour.

The identification of these common themes aided in evaluating learning mentorship at this stage in the research and in providing an interim conclusion to the effects of the use of the nurture group ethos. A further aid was to evaluate the provision with respect to the criteria set out in table 6:4; presented in table 6:6 overleaf. This evaluation demonstrated that the present provision was successful in all areas, with a number of criteria already met at this stage of the research.

Table 6:6 - Evaluation of Learning Mentorship

Criteria for Success	Successes	Areas to Develop
Role of learning mentor distinct from other roles in school	Reviewers all clear on difference of role to others in school	Staff understanding to be further developed
Interpretation of role to be acceptable to LA Link Learning Mentor	School's updated interpretation accepted by Link Learning Mentor	None
Increase in effectiveness of provision	Reported by reviewers and children	None
Increase in equity of provision	Increasing but more development needed.	Not yet fully achieved
Teaching staff to demonstrate increased understanding of the role	Understanding being developed.	Not yet fully achieved
Move away from using learning mentors primarily to support teaching	Achieved by reviewers	Further understanding by teachers needed
Move away from learning mentors used to respond to decline in behaviour across the school	Some success achieved	Further development needed.
Learning mentor role to promote prevention of escalating behaviour issues in the classroom	Some success achieved	Further development needed.
Establishment of proactive strategies – to aid children in managing their own barrier to learning	Achieved	Strategies to become embedded into school practice.

Conclusions from Analysis of First Period of Data

Through the analysis of this first set of data it became clear that;

- the cohort of children presented with a set of negative behaviours, of varying intensity;

- the children, in addition to the adults, were aware of the inappropriateness of the behaviours;

- the negative behaviours impacted on learning;

- the children, in addition to the adults, wished to improve the behaviours;

- learning mentors were providing appropriate support to aid the children in addressing their behaviours.

In addition to these conclusions, there was a realisation that the effects of the learning mentor team were not limited to the learning mentor base but were far-reaching across the school and the school day. Although the use of the nurture group ethos was invaluable in setting up the learning mentor base, and the base was integral to the work of the learning mentors, the nurture group ideals permeated the work of the learning mentors whether based in their room or elsewhere. The evidence for this conclusion came from a number of sources. Firstly, the cohort of children commented that after a visit to the learning mentor base they returned to the classroom *in a happy mood* and are able to *get on with my work*. The comment that they return with a positive attitude to learning and feel *I'm respecting my teacher* fully demonstrates the impact of learning mentorship and the children's desire to improve their behaviour.

A further piece of evidence came from a discourse with one of the children presented in full earlier in the chapter and recognised as particularly significant to the change in focus of the research to be discussed in due course. The discourse indicated

that the influence of the learning mentors went beyond the work in their base and brought in the notion of socialisation. The child, when asked if they wanted to add any comments at the end of one of the group interviews, stated that *school's better, getting better, all the time* and that *everything's changing. All people in school are getting better behaved.* The child went on to acknowledge the influence of the learning mentors, stating that being in the learning mentor base helps children to *relax and everything. Their behaviour gets better*. Furthermore, responses to the behaviour scale stated that 80% of the children agreed or strongly agreed that the learning mentors *help me to behave.*

The learning mentors support the children by stating that learning mentor systems *help children to discover a way of learning how to work within the classroom environment* and aid in developing positive relationships - *knowing how to be with each other… the … bonding of relationships within school.*

This realisation that the effects of the learning mentors were more far-reaching than initially thought led to a belief that the research focus was too narrow in concentrating on the use of the nurture group ethos within the team approach to learning mentorship, that the research needed to consider not only the use of the ideals within learning mentorship across school, wherever learning mentorship was being delivered, but also how the learning mentors helped the children to behave and access class activities. It was thus appreciated that the data and its analysis indicated that learning mentorship had already become more effective in meeting the needs of the children but it was believed that further developments in mentorship could be made through the understanding of their practice. This belief fully justified the use of Bassey's *telling the story of a social setting* category of case study (1999) as it has already been stated clearly within the research report that the research plan would

allow the approach to evolve and respond to need, that the research would lead the development of the approach. The data analysis thus led to a review of the research focus and of the situation in school itself; this review will be presented in detail in the next chapter and is thus reported at the stage in the research in which it occurred, thereby maintaining the narrative form of the research report.

Chapter 7 – Societies and Socialisation

The research so far has concentrated on telling the story of the development in learning mentorship provision in one primary school. This development began with a move from the learning mentors working individually in four specific year groups to the use of a team approach providing learning mentorship across the whole school. The change in provision also included the introduction of proactive strategies for working with the children, in order to aid them in managing their own barriers to learning. The introduction of such strategies was expected to both improve the provision and reduce the mentor time spent on reactive measures.

The main feature of the introduction of the team approach was the adoption of a nurture group ethos within the learning mentor base; indeed the four research aims identified earlier in the research plan centred on the nurture group ethos thus:

- To establish the main features of the nurture group ethos within the work of the learning mentor team;

- To evaluate the effects of the nurture group ethos on the attainment of targeted children in one large primary school;

- To evaluate the effects of the nurture group ethos on behaviour as a secondary focus;

- To make recommendations for the continuing provision of learning mentorship within the school.

The research instruments were therefore designed to elicit data that would fulfil these four aims. However, although the aims stated that an evaluation of the effects of the nurture group ethos on behaviour would be carried out as a secondary focus, the data analysis indicated that it was the positive effects on behaviour that were

impacting on the children's ability to access the curriculum and thus on their attainment. Although an evaluation of the effects of the nurture group ethos on the attainment of the targeted children could not be isolated from the effects of other factors, for example the effects of the teaching programme provided by the class teacher or the support given by a teaching assistant, a consideration of progress was made mid-year and at the end of the research. To report the interim (mid-year) progress here requires a deviation to the order in which events happened in the research but it is pertinent to the review being presented.

In order to measure the attainment of the targeted group of children, their attainment in the optional SATs (Standard Attainment Tests) taken the summer before the research began was used as a benchmark, with an expectation that good teaching and learning would result in two sub-levels of the National Curriculum (DfEE, 1995) progress at the end of the current academic year. Table 7:1 below compares the end of year SAT levels with the mid-year teacher assessments in English and maths.

Table 7:1 – Comparison of the End of Year SAT Levels with the Mid-Year Teacher Assessments in English and Maths

	End of Year Optional SAT Levels			Mid-Year Teacher Assessments		
Pupil	**English**	**Maths**	**Science**	**English**	**Maths**	**Science**
JM	2c	2c	2a	2b	2a	3b
AJ	2c	2b	2a	2c	2c	2c
EM	3c	3b	4c	3b	3a	3b
RK	3b	3b	3b	3b	3a	3a
PK	3c	3c	3b	3c	3b	3b
AP	2c	3b	3b	3c	2a	3c
BS	3b	3b	3a	3b	3b	3a
MF	3c	3c	3a	3a	3b	3a
BH	3a	3a	4c	3a	3a	4b
JW	3b	3c	3a	3b	3b	3a
IS	4c	3a	4c	4c	4c	4c
JE	3c	3b	3a	3a	3b	3b
DH	2a	3c	3a	3c	4c	3a

The table shows a mixed picture of attainment. Some progress had been made in some areas by all but two of the targeted cohort, with one child making no progress at all and one child attaining less at this point in the research than he had at the end of the previous year. However, to be on target for two sub-levels of progress at the end of the year, one sub-level progress in each area needed to be recorded - one child achieved this milestone. Although this limited progress by the cohort could be attributed to each individual barrier to learning, this cannot proved. Other factors which may have contributed to this lack of progress could be the comparison of SAT scores to teacher assessment and the children under or over performing in formal tests. In addition, attainment was only recorded in the core areas of English, maths and science and yet progress may have been made in other areas of the curriculum. Therefore, although attainment and progress were considered as measures of the success – or otherwise – of the learning mentorship approach introduced, limited use could be made of the interim data for drawing conclusions of the effectiveness of the provision, and so the four research aims were being addressed thus:

- Features of the nurture group ethos were now well-established in the work of the learning mentor team;

- The effects of the ethos (through a consideration of the work of the learning mentors) on the attainment of targeted children were being considered;

- The effects of the nurture group ethos on behaviour was being considered, although this was now being considered a primary focus rather than a secondary focus;

- Although an aim for the end of the research period, recommendations for the continuing provision of learning mentorship within the school were being considered throughout the research period.

It can therefore be appreciated that the data analysis from the first stages of the research were leading to yet another re-focusing of the research, with behaviour and behaviour management becoming a central theme. The research focus thus far had been the use of the nurture group ethos on the team approach to learning mentorship, with the effects of the ethos within the learning mentor base being considered. However, the data clearly indicated that the learning mentors did not impact on the children solely when they accessed the learning mentor room, and the ethos itself permeated the work of the learning mentors wherever they were working. This conclusion supports the work of Cooper & Lovey (1999) who also report that it is believed that nurture groups impact across the school, on whole school learning and behaviour. It may have been concluded therefore at this point that the nurture group ethos was successful and that the research was complete as the ethos was well-established and considered by the research participants (with the exception of the teaching staff) to be effective and yet I began to have feelings of disquiet again. I considered that I was still not getting to the heart of learning mentorship and had still not achieved the model of provision that I believed would be the most effective within the school. I now wanted to explore further the effects of the provision on behaviour and thus concluded that the current research focus was too narrow. In looking to extend the research focus I was influenced by Anderson and Arsenault (1998) who report that a tight research focus leads to research of little value, and thus assumed that a wider focus would make the research both more meaningful and would lead to an even more improved delivery of learning mentorship. The expansion of the focus would also sit well alongside the feminist research principles within which the research is being carried out, as detailed in chapter five.

Chapter five presented the thoughts of Crotty (1998, p.161) who believes that feminist researchers bring their own '…standpoints, qualities and ways of knowing…' to the research; this supports my widening the research in response to my disquiet, as it was my inherent way of knowing that led directly to my feelings of unrest about the tight research focus. Also quoted in chapter five is Beasley (1999) who stresses that the characteristics of feminism include a cautious, open-ended and wide-ranging approach to thought; I would consider that my response to the data analysis so far reflects this characteristic. Stanley & Wise (1993) state that feminist research is that which is concerned with aspects of social reality and the participants in it, the broadening of the research focus is a direct response to the findings so far regarding the reality of the social setting being investigated.

A change in research focus would also be acceptable to the already stated requirement (chapter three) that the development of the learning mentor role would be responsive to school needs. Indeed Robson (1993) would also support this with reference to the feminist research principles as he cites the benefits of the perspective include emphasising the *emotional aspects* of the research and involving *commitment* rather than *detachment*. My determination to improve the provision of learning mentorship ably demonstrates my *commitment* to the school, the children and to the learning mentors themselves.

The consideration to widening the focus of the research hence recognised the main themes of behaviour being an over-riding concern of both the adults and the children in school and the effect of learning mentorship on calming the children down. It was therefore necessary to explore either the cause or causes of the incidents of misbehaviour and how the learning mentors aided the children in managing their behaviour.

Although the school is situated in an area of social deprivation and many children – including the targeted cohort - held barriers to learning that were related to their home life, the incidences of misbehaviour occurring indicated that there was more involved than these personally-held barriers to learning. Again it was an intuitive belief at this stage in the research but I began to accept that the incidences of misbehaviour were occurring due to a significant minority of children in the school rejecting or beginning to reject the school and its rules and routines. In order to investigate this belief, and then to consider how the learning mentors were impacting on the children who were displaying such behaviour, I needed to re-assess the nature of the school at this time.

It is important to remember here that that the research arose when I became acting headteacher at the school at the heart of the research following the unexpected suspension and subsequent resignation of the headteacher of the school. The effects of this suspension and resignation are reported in chapter three, where it was stated that the reaction by children, staff and parents was immediate. There were feelings of shock and uncertainty and behaviour across the school began to decline. It was realised at that early stage that the previous headteacher had shouldered the full responsibility for behaviour management across the school, thereby disempowering and deskilling both the majority of the staff in dealing with incidences of misbehaviour and the children in managing their own behaviour. For this reason it can be accepted why the teachers wanted other adults to take responsibility for all behaviour issues within school.

In my role as acting headteacher I had requested help from the Local Education Authority to update the teaching staff in positive behaviour management strategies, which was subsequently provided with in-school support. This action led to the re-

writing of the school rules and a coherent system of rewards and sanctions, all shared with staff, children and parents; this took place alongside the research data collection and analysis reported in chapter six. It was only at the mid-point of the research that I began to accept how much I had influenced changes in the school, particularly through the introduction of proactive and positive behaviour management strategies for all adults and an insistence that children be provided with strategies for managing their own behaviour. I was also able to acknowledge that these changes could have added to the children's uneasiness and anxiety about the future and that these feelings had continued for a small minority of children. Indeed, following the interim period of data collection ten children, including the three from the research cohort, were withdrawn from the classroom environment for an extended time in order to meet both their own needs and the needs of their classes. The children then received teaching and mentoring within a small group before returning to the classroom. The work of Goleman (1995), who states that pupils who display feelings such as anxiety or anger are unable to learn as they are incapable of concentrating, reinforced the decision taken to remove these children from the classroom in order to address their reluctance to engage appropriately with the teaching on offer in the classroom.

Following the sudden departure of the headteacher, as part of the Local Education Authority's management of the developing situation, I was instructed what to say to staff, children and parents. The Link Learning Mentor later stated that through this I had been *put into a really no win situation because of how things were handled* with a small number of children describing me as a *liar* because *my mum's read it in the paper* or *saw it on the news*. The children had obviously been confused by the conflicting versions of events they were receiving. The media were reporting not only the information they were receiving from the Local Education Authority

press release but also their interpretation and comments from parents of children at the school, whereas I was presenting a much more limited version of events. The result of this was that some of the children became increasingly confused and angry at the situation and began not to trust me. The safe, secure relationship they had had with the previous headteacher did not now exist and they clearly had little faith in my leadership as they believed that I wasn't being truthful with them. In addition, I was introducing new, therefore unknown, rules and routines into the school whilst they were continuing to grieve for the previous head. This recognition of the uneasiness the changes were bringing about led me to understand more why a significant minority of the children were displaying inappropriate behaviours whilst the vast majority of children had clearly adapted to the ethos I was establishing as they were behaving and responding appropriately. As Burr (1995, p95) notes, I had not appreciated before this point how significantly I had changed '…the face of the society…' through the changes I was bringing about. I therefore needed to consider how learning mentorship could support the small number of children who were not accepting the school changes. Consequently, it was here that I was reminded of the *description* of the mentoring process provided by Malderez (2001, p57) quoted earlier; that it is:

> …the support given by one person for the growth and learning of another… and the…. integration into and acceptance by a specific community

Indeed, throughout the research report a common theme of society and community had been referred to at intervals, in both the responses of the researched and in published sources. This therefore led me to consider the school as a community or society in its own right; further reading then led me to the concept of socialisation, defined in the dictionary (The People's Dictionary, undated) as '….the adoption of the

behaviour patterns of the surrounding culture…' The dictionary definition of socialisation aided me in moving the research forward as I now believed that the children were socialised into the society led by the previous headteacher, as they had adopted the behaviour patterns required, but that not all children had been able to adapt to the society I was developing.

Many published sources were consulted at this juncture (Mayall, 2002; Burr, 1995; Brooker, 2002) but it is Stern (2003, p3 & p4.) that continued my theme of the school as a society in its own right by stating quite simply that school

> '…is about the whole of life…' and is '…expected to be responsible for the whole lives of pupils…' and, as such, must consider the '…family-nature of schooling.'

Stern's view sits well with that of the learning mentor team, who earlier stressed the importance of *family values* to their work, that family values are *important to [be able to] work with one another and to care for one another*. This demonstrates that the learning mentors had already recognised the importance of supporting socialisation for the targeted children and were moving towards the views of Collins, Harkin & Nind (2002). Collins et al (2002, p2) describe their '…alternative vision…' of the school community in which '…people's emotions and whole selves are valued…' This aspect of learning mentorship had already been acknowledged by the Link Learning Mentor who stated that the learning mentor base *makes children feel good about themselves and raises their self-esteem* and that it is important to address low self-esteem *before they can learn*. The learning mentors themselves almost mirror the views of Collins et al (2002) by describing the changes to the provision of learning mentorship as *allowing them to work holistically with children…looking at the whole child.*

It can be thus appreciated by the reader that through the data collection and analysis I concluded that the fundamental workings of the school had changed when the last headteacher had left in such a sudden manner. In addition, the changes I had brought about in learning mentorship, and in other practices in school, had unsettled the children in ways I had not previously acknowledged. Although it was clear, through discourse and observation, that many children were able to accept the school changes, a small minority had not or could not accept them as even at this stage in the research there continued to be a significant minority of pupils displaying an overt rejection of the 'new' school society developing, with a further layer identified as being at risk of becoming unsettled at the on-going changes. It was thus considered here that the children whose behaviours were appropriate had adapted to the changes in school whereas the children displaying inappropriate behaviours had greater difficulty in accepting them and working within them. Such difficulty in acceptance thus indicated a specific barrier to learning; DfES (undated c) would describe this as a problem faced by the pupils due to a *general disaffection* affecting their mental and/or physical welfare and so the use of learning mentorship to address their acceptance was clearly an appropriate measure to take. For that reason, a widening of the research focus to encompass the effects of learning mentorship on socialisation was an appropriate response at this stage.

In order therefore to respond to the needs of the children at this time, learning mentorship would need to centre on developing the children's *social* skills before concentrating on their learning to learn skills, in order for the children to be inducted into the 'new' society. This conclusion was reinforced by the themes running through the analyses reported in chapter six. The themes included the importance of the learning mentor base in terms of providing a safe, calm environment where children

can work and think through their problems; the identified link between behaviour and learning; the importance of the pastoral care provided by the learning mentors through the development of positive, caring and mutually respectful relationships and that the targeted group of children enjoy school, want to learn and want to improve their behaviour. One of the main themes for the children was their appreciation of the learning mentors being able to *calm them down*, and thus to be able to access the school and the learning culture. In view of the conclusions drawn from the data collected thus far, supported by the references to published sources, the research was now refocused to explore the school as a society and the effectiveness of the learning mentor approach in the socialisation of both the pupils showing overt rejection of the school society and those who were unsettled within this changing society. The central theme of the case study thus became the engagement in school life of an identified group of mentored pupils with the research title changing to that of the role of the learning mentor in the socialisation of the child.

Responding to the perceptions of the researched in this way, through the conclusions drawn from the data collected, ensured that the participants in the research were able to inform the direction of the research, as noted by Henwood & Pidgeon (1993) and Stake (1995). The children's rejection of school rules and routines, whether overt or developing, thus became very important to the research and were instrumental in modifying the focus of the research.

What was indicated now was a consideration of the skills needed to access a society; an understanding of how such skills could be developed and the role learning mentorship would take in such development. In turn, the research plan in place may need to be reviewed and amended. The review would centre on the instruments

devised and their relevance to collecting data regarding the work of the learning mentor team beyond the learning mentor base, in terms of supporting the targeted group of children in accessing the current (and developing) school society. Within this consideration the continued use of the nurture group ethos already adopted in the socialisation of the child would be explored. Again using Bassey's view (1995, p56), that the purpose of research, is to '…understand, evaluate and change.', the proposed review of the research plan would lead to the research itself deepening my understanding of the impact of learning mentorship within the school; aid me in evaluating the socialisation aspect of their practice and then lead to any further changes needed to improve the effectiveness of the learning mentor provision. This course of action is presented as a flowchart overleaf, in figure 7:1.

Figure 7:1 - Research Review Flowchart

Identify the skills needed to
access a society

↓

Identify the role of the learning mentor
in developing the skills

↓

Consider and implement any changes to
the learning mentor provision

↓

Review the research plan

↓

Review the instruments devised and their relevance to
collecting data regarding the work of the learning mentor
team
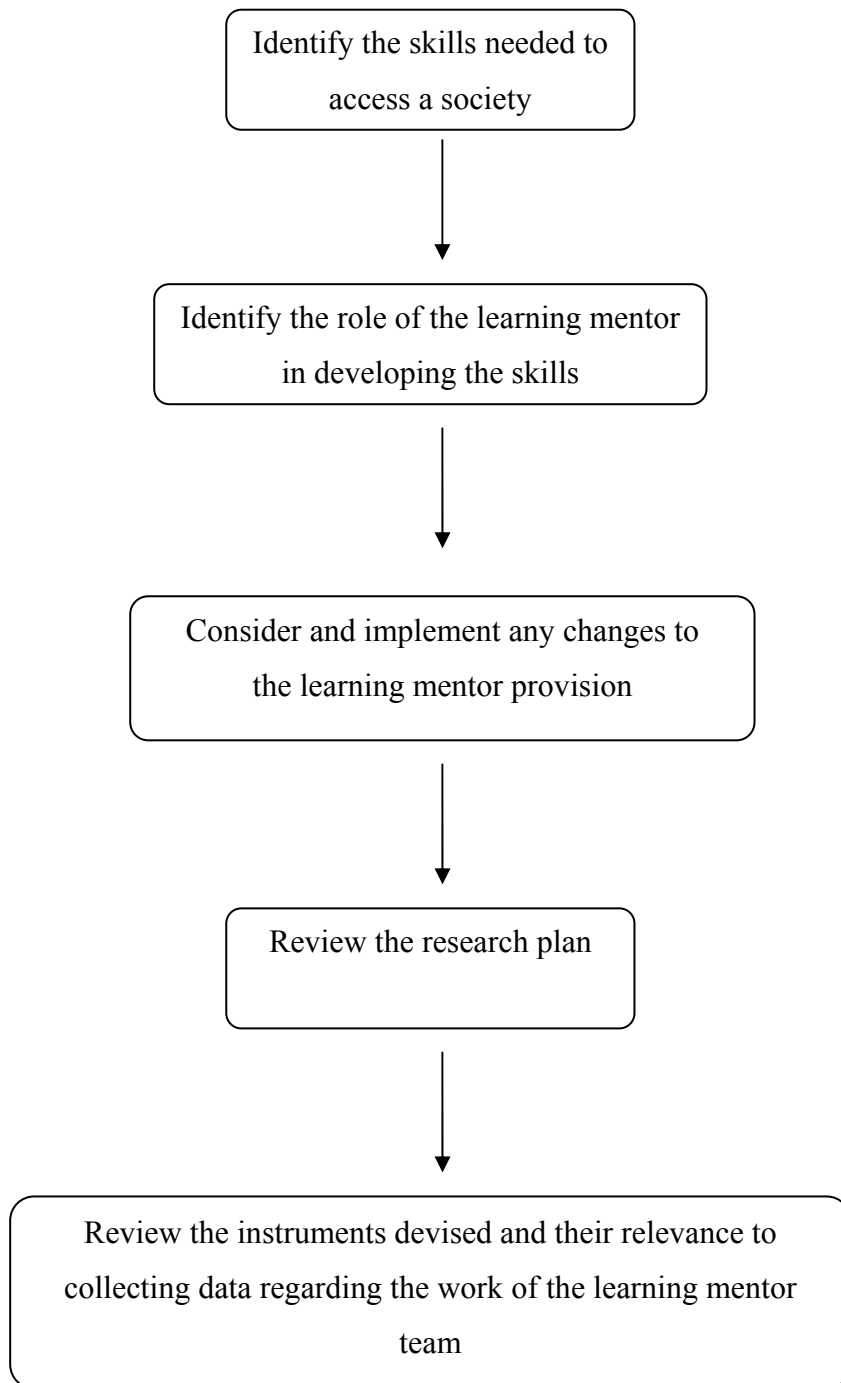
Brooker (2002, p47) suggests that socialisation is merely a

> …matter of learning to do what comes naturally within the
> setting – the rules of the culture…

This is the definition I would have given before the research undertaken here, as children are simply *expected* to engage in school; if they do not engage in a manner that the adults expect then the child is considered to have a problem or barrier to learning. Brooker (2002) however goes on to suggest that socialisation takes place *invisibly* and so some children may indeed need to be taught the skills explicitly. Etzioni (2000, p39) states simply that the skills needed are to be able to '…deal civilly with one another and to resolve conflicts peacefully.' whilst Collins et al (2002) suggest that

> Schooling challenges the life styles, beliefs, ideals and
> consequently the very identities of many learners.

It can thus be appreciated how the children became so unsettled, as the society I was introducing must have challenged the children's identities with a small number of children resisting the changes because they either didn't understand them or did not want to accept them out of a loyalty to the outgoing headteacher. Etzioni (2000) sums up succinctly what was needed with the small group of children identified, that they needed support to know how to relate to others within the developing society. The children themselves had recognised this, as evidenced by their many references to the learning mentors helping them to calm down, including the longer discourse reported earlier where a child had commented that school was getting better all the time because children were behaving better. The child then attributed the improvements to the learning mentors helping children to calm down and particularly noting that the learning mentor room was a place to relax and be calm.

It can thus be appreciated that the learning mentors were already engaged in socialising the children without recognising that this was an integral part of their role. What therefore needed to be considered was how this aspect of their work could be strengthened rather than introduced. Collins et al (2002) suggest that it is through positive relationships that learning is able to take place, with Mayall (2002) stressing that it is through the taking account of how children view their lives and social relationships that socialisation is aided. Indeed, Harris & Bennett (2001) remind us that we create our own meanings for social events and actions and so it is through discourse, with others that we trust, that we truly make sense of the society in which we are placed. What is indicated through these references is a strengthening of the learning mentor role in engaging with children to talk through their thoughts and actions and aiding them to understand themselves and how they could access school more appropriately. This conclusion supports the learning mentorship approach adopted at the beginning of the research, that of being proactive in working with children to support them in removing their barrier to learning and developing strategies to manage their own behaviour. In turn, this would address Etzioni's (2000) need for children to be able to relate civilly to others in order to be socialised within the school society.

In order to research this aspect of the learning mentor role in practice, within this piece of research, the research plan therefore did not need to be amended. It was the focus of the data collection and its analysis that needed to change slightly, to accommodate this facet of the learning mentor role. Earlier it had been questioned whether the use of the nurture group ethos within the classroom was indicated through the research findings so far but this was again rejected here. It must be remembered that the overwhelming majority of children displayed appropriate behaviours and had

thus become socialised into the school society; consequently they did not need the support of the ethos, or indeed the support of the learning mentors. Learning mentorship was therefore being considered in terms of socialisation of a small minority of pupils, and how this could be achieved efficiently and effectively. It must also be remembered that at the beginning of the research I believed that this small number of children did not want to engage in school or learning but the data showed that the children were enthusiastic about school and wanted to learn. The data indicated that the children needed help to access school and school life, and so the research would now consider the role of the learning mentor team beyond the learning mentor base, in terms of supporting the targeted group of children in accessing the current (and developing) school society. This expanding of the focus of the research sits well with Bassey's view (1995, p56), that the purpose of research, is to '…understand, evaluate and change.'. The research would now deepen my understanding, as both researcher and acting headteacher, of the impact of learning mentorship within the school and aid me in evaluating the socialisation aspect of their practice. In turn, this may lead to further changes to improve the effectiveness of the learning mentor provision.

Chapter 8 – Concluding Period of Data Collection

Chapter seven has explored the notion of societies and socialisation, with respect to the specific cause (or contributory factor) to a child's barrier to learning. The discussion established for me, as researcher, that children need to be accepted into a community and, more importantly, *feel* that they are accepted into the community in order to access the community and all that it offers. At the beginning of the research, and the research report, reference was made to Malderez (2001, p57) who described mentoring - albeit within initial teacher training – as

> …the support given by one person for the growth and learning of another… and the…. integration into and acceptance by a specific community

Within this reference, learning is quite clearly linked to the acceptance and integration by the community, in this case the school community. As noted at the first presentation of this reference, the importance of the description was not recognised immediately but was returned to later in the research and acknowledged as a key consideration within the research. The description was consequently used alongside the data analysis from the initial period of data and influenced a review of the research being carried out; in turn, this led onto a consideration of society and socialisation and ultimately onto the re-definition of the focus of the research.

It has been noted throughout the research report that initially the research concentrated on telling the story of the development of learning mentorship within one primary school, from that of four learning mentors working individually within four specific year groups to providing learning mentorship across the school through the use of the team approach, and how their work would be based on the use of the nurture group ethos. Hence the research began under the title:

The Use of the Nurture Group Ethos

Within the Team Approach to Learning Mentorship

It must be reiterated here that the research plan developed under this title was constantly referred to and refined; in order to respond to changes in the school, changes to the learning mentor provision and to the needs of the case study *story*. Such revisions and refinements are identified within the research model of Kemmis & McTaggart (1982) - presented in chapter six – which sets out cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and then revision. This model mirrors exactly the way in which this piece of research was carried out, with equal emphasis given to each aspect of the cycle. The first amendment to the research plan was that of the data collection timeline, presented below and in chapter six.

Figure 8:1 – Amendments made to Data Collection Timeline

Initial period of data collection	Interim period of data collection (Mid-point of research)	Concluding period of data collection (End of year review)
September 2003	February 2004	July 2004

June to September 2003	October to December 2003	May to July 2004
Initial period of data collection (reviews, contextual and background data)	Interim period of data collection (First thoughts of research participants)	Concluding period of data collection (End of year review)

Chapter six also detailed the reflection that led to this amended timeline. The next major refinement is outlined in chapter seven, that of moving the focus from the initial title of the research to the final title:

The Role of the Learning Mentor

in the Socialisation of the Child

This refinement was made following the data analysis carried out on both the initial and interim data collected, which identified behaviour and behaviour management as becoming central themes within learning mentorship and that the learning mentor provision developed up to this point extended beyond the learning mentor base where the nurture group ethos was most evident. Thus, focusing solely on the use of the nurture group ethos within the learning mentorship was narrowing the focus of the research too far. The data analysis therefore contributed to my own view that the research was not yet getting to the heart of learning mentorship, whereas the change in focus would aid in making the research both more meaningful and lead to a further improved delivery of learning mentorship based on the research findings.

Chapter seven has considered the change in focus of the research in more detail, using published sources to justify the rationale behind the change. To summarise, the reflection process highlighted that the school community had changed when I had replaced the previous headteacher and that not all the children in the school were able to adapt to the new, developing community. The data analysis carried out thus far recognised the contribution of the nurture group ethos to effective learning mentorship and indicated the extent to which the learning mentors were helping children to access the new community; the research would therefore now be used to investigate this facet of learning mentorship.

At the time of identification, this change in focus of the research was considered to be a departure from the original intended piece of research, yet the use of the research model of Kemmis & McTaggart (1982) fully justifies the change in focus to be a natural step in the evolution of both the research and the provision of learning mentorship. It has also been stated explicitly within the research report that the case study *telling the story* of the development in learning mentorship would be responsive to the needs of the researched and would focus on the evolution of the learning mentor role over one academic year. The refinement was also indicated by the review, at the data analysis stage, of the research aims which concluded that:

Aim 1   Nurture group ethos well-established

Aim 2   Effects of the ethos on attainment considered positive

Aim 3   Effects of the ethos on behaviour considered positive

Aim 4   Recommendations for learning mentorship provision could be made

The review of the aims demonstrated the success of the changes to the provision of learning mentorship thus far; the change in focus was expected to expand my knowledge, as researcher and acting headteacher, of the effectiveness of learning mentorship across the school. The research would now consider the engagement in school life of an identified group of mentored pupils and the effectiveness of the learning mentor approach in the socialisation of the pupils. However, chapter seven also established that the data analysis and the references to published sources indicated clearly that the learning mentors were already engaged in socialising the children without it being recognised that this was an integral part of their work. Consequently, the research needed to address how this aspect of their work was being carried out. Therefore, a change in focus for the concluding period of data collection

and analysis was needed, in order to accommodate the analysis of how the learning mentors impacted on the socialisation of the targeted group of children. This would, in turn, aid in evaluating learning mentorship and lead to the recommendations to be made in chapter nine. The criteria for success of the research were outlined in chapter three and remained appropriate to the change in focus of the research. The criteria is summarised here and will also be returned to in chapter nine:

- Increased access to the curriculum

- Increased attainment

- A more positive attitude to school

- A reduction in the behaviours that, if unchecked, may lead to a fixed term or permanent exclusion from school.

In order to address these criteria, and to make connections between the three sets of data collected throughout the research period, the reporting of the concluding period of data collection will follow the format of chapter six, although the adult data will precede that collected from the baker's dozen of children involved in the research. The adult data will begin with data collected from the learning mentor team.

Learning Mentor Team

The data collected from the learning mentor team therefore followed the change in focus of the research and was thus analysed to determine the effects of their approach on the socialisation of the children, on aiding the children to feel comfortable within the school community and to feel accepted by the community. The semi-structured interviews again began with questions to put the learning mentors at

ease. The first question explored their current thoughts about the role of the learning mentor; the responses were as expected and included references to;

- providing pastoral support for identified children;

- working as a team;

- helping children to progress;

- raising self-esteem,

- raising attainment in school;

- overcoming the barriers to learning.

The second question asked the learning mentors to draw up a list of the basic activities they provided; these were identified as:

- observing the targeted children and forming an action plan for him or her;

- liaison with the class teacher;

- liaising with the team to get some information from them;

- group work;

- getting the children in that need that little bit extra;

- circle time activities on behaviour management, anger management;

- lunchtime activities…to use social skills;

- involved in attendance;

- working with children on whatever barriers to learning that they have.

One particular response demonstrated a wider understanding of the role:

> I would say that it involves getting to know the children's
> background, getting to know how that child reacts to different
> situations and circumstances, being aware of how they deal

with situations, for example when they become angry, when

they're upset, when they feel that they're not worthwhile and

giving them strategies to help them overcome those barriers.

A supplementary question to further explore a response to the question elicited

the learning mentor's belief that socialisation was embedded in the role of the

learning mentor:

Some children need support with focusing on their social

skills, classroom skills, being able to socialise and mix and

get on with their own peers.

One of the main features of the nurture group ethos is that of modelling

appropriate relationships, in order to enable the children to develop the skills needed

to relate to others. Collins et al (2002, p19) believe that it is through '…good-quality,

positive relationships…that discipline and…rules are established and maintained.'

The next question for the learning mentors was therefore used to determine their

thoughts on the importance of relationships within their work; the responses indicated

how crucial they believed this aspect of their work to be.

You need to be able to build a relationship with a child so that

they've confidence to speak to you and feel that they can trust

you.

It's most important to be able to talk to the children and have

the confidence of the children to be able to ask you questions.

The responses did not simply agree that building '…nurturing relationships…'

(Collins et al 2002, px) was needed but could relate the development to improving

their work with the children:

You can't work with them if you haven't got a relationship with them.

Trust has got a lot to do with it. If you formulate and build some trust with a child, they will speak to you more readily each time you have any kind of one-to-one meeting with them or group meeting. It helps them.

It's getting to know the kids and know exactly what their barriers are.

I think seeing how we deal with difficult situations gives the children a role model…we should be very careful that we present a good role model to the children at all times.

At this point, towards the end of the year, I was concerned if the changes we had made to our learning mentorship provision had provided a better model than the previous model, where the learning mentors had been allocated individually to four out of seven year groups. This was the most fundamental requisite, that the current model of learning mentorship must be at least as effective as the previous model. In order to ensure that I did not lead the learning mentors into stating that the current model was at least as effective as the previous year's model I sought their thoughts through a series of four simple questions:

- How would you describe how the work of the learning mentor team has changed, within this school over the last one, or even two, years?

- What do you think have been the successes this year?

- What do you think have been the major weaknesses this year?

- What do you think are the main lessons to be learned for next year?

The responses of the learning mentors to these questions are summarised below.

Changes to the work of the learning mentor team

The responses to this question were hence particularly pleasing in that the learning mentors referred to the changes as improvements to the provision, whilst acknowledging that we could develop it further.

I think it's changed for the better;

It's changed by means of improvement.

It has changed because it's developing all the time.

We're learning all the time.

The introduction of the team approach was also referred to in a positive manner:

We work more as a team now.

Now we all pitch in together and help each other.

We're working more closely as a team and there's more understanding.

The notion of more understanding was explained thus:

Each person gets to work with different year groups, with different children; you get to know more children.

Finally, one learning mentor believed that the understanding of the role was developing through school:

> It's more accepted by the staff and the school as a whole and therefore you get better support.

Also, that work carried out with children demonstrating inappropriate behaviours continued to be needed.

> I think it's been very important that we do concentrate on those children that show the most difficult behaviour to manage.

Successes this year

I expected the change in provision to have resulted in some successes and weaknesses and, as both researcher and acting headteacher, wished to use the perceived successes and weaknesses to both evaluate and improve the provision further. What was therefore pleasing about the responses to this question was that a reason was given for each response without my prompting. This demonstrated that the learning mentors had reflected on the changes, identifying for themselves the impact of the positive changes; their responses are summarised in Table 8:2 overleaf.

Table 8.1 – Successes within Learning Mentorship

Success	Reason
We have been a leading light if you like. We're a leader for trying out new projects, new strategies.	In this school, with the sort of children that we have to deal with, from socially deprived backgrounds, it's good to be able to try different aspects, different strategies with children.
I would say our circle times.	We got very good feedback from the children. They all seem to enjoy it, the children that did it…
The nurture group for the older children, that was a success.	The children that weren't able to cope in the classroom situation, worked well and they learned how to deal with the problems that they'd got, their barriers to learning.
Being able to get groups of children out into the learning mentor room…	… to develop self-esteem within circle time.
Dinner time.	The children really enjoyed the dinner time.
We've helped some of the children with particularly difficult behavioural problems…	… to come to terms with how they behave and to appreciate that there was a problem and that we have helped them to improve the way they react to difficult situations. And to give them strategies for when they move on to key stage three.

Major weaknesses this year

The weaknesses were equally well - thought out but less in number than the successes – again a pleasing response.

Table 8.2 - Major Weaknesses in Learning Mentorship

Weakness	Reason
…our role is often diluted more than we'd like it to be…diluted into different areas.	Because of the school's needs.
Continuity…	it depends on what was happening in class.
… you'd got personality clashes which were difficult to deal with, within the groups that I was working with.	Some of the children didn't get on well together

It was interesting that one learning mentor suggested that one of the weaknesses arose because of her *lack of experience of dealing with children with difficult behaviour.* This was surprising as they are well trained and respond extremely well to such children; but the response may have been with respect to the demands made on them when staff were sending for learning mentors to deal with all behaviour problems as they arose. Another comment referred to the need to be *really flexible…to deal with whatever needed to deal with,* also indicating that the learning mentors were expected (by the teaching staff) to address any problems that arose. This staff expectation that the learning mentors should deal with all behaviour issues thus needed to be addressed when making recommendations for learning mentorship provision based on the research findings.

Another response here indicated clearly that the learning mentors believed that the understanding of the staff was developing over time.

> I think sometimes a weakness is that still some staff have not
> taken the role on board and haven't fully got to grips with it.
> But that is changing, it's on the change.

It has to be noted that one learning mentor viewed the changes to the provision to be wholly successful by stating simply that:

> I don't think anything's not worked.

Main lessons learned for next year

The fourth question in the series of questions posed to investigate if the changes made had provided a better model than the previous model centred on the lessons learned for the next year. Again the responses were given with reasons, demonstrating that the learning mentors had already begun to identify the next stage in the development of our provision of learning mentorship; the responses are presented overleaf.

Table 8.3 - Main Lessons Learned

Main lessons learned	Reason
…you have to have communication across the board.	In order for the Team to function
I think we should start the year as we mean to go on….	… to start planning, and do the observations and the discussions with class teachers in the summer term, prior to starting the actual academic year.
To carry on being flexible…	…to understand that each child's different and they've all got different needs.
For [children] to realise that they have responsibility for their own actions;	…that they can't - or shouldn't - think that they can blame circumstances or other people for their wrong choices. That they have to learn to take responsibility for their own choices.
Children need to know where the boundaries are,	… before they start, and that what the consequences to them would be if they don't keep within those parameters, and that we are consistent with the children at all times.

One final comment summarised the learning that had taken place over the year and would be built upon the following year.

> That we give them as many chances as they need and we are firm but fair and consistent with them.

At the beginning of the research, the adult participants readily agreed that the way forward to improving learning mentorship was to introduce a team approach and yet translating this into practice proved difficult at the time. I therefore needed to

explore the learning mentors' views of the approach, after having introduced it and developed it for almost one academic year. Again the responses were thoughtful and reflective and also acknowledged that the approach started tentatively and was added to over time.

> … we were the first [primary] school to actually form a learning mentor team and work as a team across the school…it's been a bit of a roller coaster…

> …we've added more into it…some of the roles.

> I think its developing. It's very strong and I think that the team approach is better than working within classrooms as we did when I first started.

> I think the team approach is a really good way of going forward. Because you can never be sure that the children that you've possibly been assigned to are the ones that you develop the best relationship with.

The reasons given for preferring the new approach included:

- variety, for both the learning mentors and for the children to access other learning mentors;

- to bounce ideas off each other…*two heads, or four heads, are better than one*;

- if [a specific learning mentor] isn't available, someone else is there that understands the child, knows what the problems have been, and can continue

with the mentoring of that child. So that that child isn't having to wait for too long a time before their problem is dealt with.

It was pleasing that the reasons given were for the benefit of the child rather than the benefit of the adult, whereas earlier in the research benefits for the learning mentor had been considered. I therefore now wanted to explore this further and so specifically asked how working as a team had impacted on the children they had focused on during the year. All the mentors agreed that they believed that had impacted positively, both through the strategies used and through the team approach:

> I think as a team, the children have enjoyed coming to work;

> They like… the strategies we use, and the way they're
> implemented through work, through the work route…

> We have a differentiated set of activities really. To help
> children to access the work

> I know we've impacted because, even if they're not working
> with us at that minute, they still come up to us.

> I think its developed self-esteem and taught them that they've
> to solve problems between themselves and be able to trust
> and talk to us.

> I think overall every one of the children that we worked with
> came away with positive things from that experience…

I was now interested in how our model compared to that of other schools. This was an important consideration as the research was initiated to evaluate learning mentorship and to improve the effectiveness of our provision. As indicated throughout the research report, if the evolving model was found to be not at least equal to the prior model then it would have to be changed. I had made clear that the needs of the children were paramount at all times and I would have no fear about returning to the original model if it was found to be more effective than the model developing; exploring other schools' practice would therefore be a further aid in the evaluation of our current model.

> …it is very obvious that mentors are used quite differently in different situations, but the basic tenets of the job are always the same.

> …certainly other schools don't follow the system that we follow because we work as a team and they tend to work individually within their own classes or own year groups, but they don't work as a team whereas there is more than one learning mentor in a school

> There are some similarities because at the end of the day we all base our work and strategies on the ideas and information fed on from the Link Learning Mentor's advice.

> I think they mainly work with targeted children, both in and out of class.

It was clear from the responses that there were similarities between schools but the main difference was our use of the team approach, which the learning mentors believed strengthened our provision:

> The other schools haven't got the team approach so therefore there are some schools that have got merely one learning mentor, so they've no-body to actually go back to and talk to, and therefore I think the team approach is a success.

A final response to note here referred to a practicality of the team approach, that of the shared and individual timetables linked to the school timetable, which aided in linking learning mentorship to the children accessing the classroom:

> …I think the liaison is there but they don't actually have a plan on paper based around the whole school timetable, as we have done.

Again, at the beginning of the research the reviewers envisaged that learning mentorship would take place primarily in the learning mentor base; however, the teaching staff stated on many occasions that they wanted the learning mentors to be class-based. This provided an obvious conflict in beliefs but it was recognised by the reviewers that time did need to be spent in the classroom in order for the learning mentors to support the child in putting into place the strategies for accessing the classroom. Therefore, one of the main changes that took place throughout the research period, responding to both school needs and individual pupil needs, involved taking learning mentors out of the classroom initially but then starting to increase their time spent in the classroom as the research progressed. The thoughts of the learning mentors to their balance of work in the classroom and in the learning mentor room thus needed exploration and indicated undoubtedly that we hadn't yet got the balance right. The learning mentors preferred working in the base and believed that they were

working more in the classroom because of the teachers' needs rather than fulfilling the children's needs.

> At the moment I would say it's more classroom-based than learning mentor room. Well I personally don't tend to fetch them out as much…I prefer the learning mentor room. I like to fetch them out…it shows them another environment…

> I think they go back to the school's needs. Children do actually like to work in the learning mentor room but sometimes we have to tell the children that they have to be able to work in the classroom as well.

One learning mentor understood that the balance was improving as the teaching staff increased their knowledge of learning mentorship:

> I think this is a new thing in as much as both staff and the learning mentor team are having to work together and work on…It is improving. There's quite a lot more liaison now between the classroom teachers and the learning mentors.

In response to this question, one learning mentor referred to the group of older children who were removed from class due to their extreme behaviour. They had received learning mentorship regarding managing and improving their behaviour, together with taught elements of the curriculum, within a small group. Strong links with their class and class teacher were retained throughout and the learning mentor supported their re-integration into the class. Although this was considered to be a true reflection of what was now accepted as the socialisation aspect of learning mentorship, the meeting of this group of children's needs followed even more closely the ideals of the nurture group ethos (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000) adopted at the

beginning of the research period. The response - presented almost in full below - sums up succinctly how the provision of learning mentorship had evolved and had improved over the research period, that the provision had:

- responded to the group of children's needs – to their specific barrier to learning;

- ensured the children remained in school whilst not being able to access the classroom;

- used strategies to help the children access the classroom, to socialise the children;

- empowered the children to feel confident enough to request to go back into the classroom.

The response was.

> I think for some of those children it was the only way that they could keep into fulltime education in that they were in a learning mentor room as opposed to being more in the classroom. However, I think it was something that we could measure by the ability of the children to be able to go back into the class for periods of time and to cope within the classroom, and I think the fact that some of the children asked to go back for periods of time was a good sign in that originally all of them were very happy to be out of class, and the fact that some of them were willing to try to go back into class for periods of time was a very encouraging sign.

A re-occurring theme throughout the research was the understanding of learning mentorship by the rest of the staff, particularly the teaching staff. Although the learning mentors stated that understanding was developing and that liaison between

teachers and learning mentors was improving, I asked specifically if we were doing enough to add to this understanding. The responses indicated that we could do more and also, because the role was evolving, regular information sharing was needed. The responses thus provided a consideration of how we would continue to update the teachers (and support staff) regarding the developments in learning mentorship. The responses included:

> …addressing this by way of staff meetings and INSET days (In-service training).

> …because of the ever-improving systems in the learning mentor role, and where it's linked into our personal way of working as a team in our school, I do think that this should be fed on, and probably done at least once a term as an update.

> A few more staff do understand so it has changed in that, but I think that there's still quite a lot that still need to choose to deal with it.

> I think that's still developing. Because some teaching staff and support staff have a good understanding of what we do and some still haven't grasped it.

> I do think it is an on-going learning process, because I would say that we're still learning as a learning mentor team, so if we're still learning obviously the rest of the staff are still learning and it's something that I think we must never become complacent about.

Disappointingly, the learning mentors reported that some members of the teaching staff still regarded them as teaching assistants by another name:

> They still look on us as teaching assistants and maybe sometimes think that we're miracle workers.

> They'll send children, 'can you do me this?' 'can you take me this?' or ' can you go and make me this' or going round saying they're sat in their room and we're obviously not doing anything….or just 'do me that' 'get me that'.

Yet again, one learning mentor summed up the feeling that I had throughout the research period, that the effects of learning mentorship on the children exhibiting barriers to learning would explain both the importance of the role and demonstrate that it is a very different, albeit complementary, role to that of a teaching assistant;

> …hopefully, good results will encourage other members of staff to see the positive aspects of our role.

Finally, the interview questions ended with an overt exploration of socialisation – the learning mentors' understanding of the concept; how they had impacted on the socialisation of the children they had worked with and how we could improve on this identified aspect of the role of the learning mentor. The responses here were some of the more detailed given by the learning mentors, each response being very positive about the team's contribution. I interpreted this to indicate that the learning mentors had a good understanding of the concept; were excited about this aspect of their role; believed it to be important and that they were successful in this area. Indeed the nature of the responses fully justified the research focus expanding to consider this aspect of the evolving provision of learning mentorship. The responses are summarised as a list

of achievements (below), alongside which it is recorded how many times each achievement was noted by the learning mentors.

- Taught the children to listen – 4 references;

- To follow instructions – 1 reference;

- Providing a range of social gatherings – 6 references;

- Taking the skills developed with them and utilise them in class – 2 references;

- Reinforcement of skills – 1 reference;

- Build self-esteem - – 1 reference;

- Communication skills – 4 references;

- Teach the children to talk to each other with a bit more respect – 1 reference;

- Provide strategies for dealing with peer disputes – 3 references;

- Teach the children to recognise the signs within themselves of when they were getting upset and angry – 2 references.

There were few suggestions put forward to improve this aspect of learning mentorship, again indicating that it was already an established part of the role, which was one of the conclusions drawn from the interim period of data collection and analysis. In addition to suggesting that the strategies used should continue and that they should be delivered consistently, the learning mentors added:

> I think we could continue what we're doing, but with more of
> an emphasis on getting the younger children together. Maybe
> the older children to be role models.

> …possibly we could have made use of role-play…in retrospect I think we could have, perhaps, used a more rounder approach overall…

One response pointed a way forward that included the teaching staff and demonstrated how important this particular learning mentor believed socialisation to be:

> …perhaps there ought to be a time of day when…the strategies are in place in the classroom planning. So that it's done as a whole class. I know that's done in the form of circle time, but sometimes it might be a good idea to use it as a lesson plan, even if it's not every week but maybe every other week or two or three times a half term. Where they can share something as a whole class that integrates them all socially

This ended my questions for the learning mentors, posed as the researcher, but the interviews ended with an opportunity for the learning mentors to add any comments about their role, our approach to learning mentorship or their impact in school. Only two of the learning mentors wished to add anything not covered by my questions, with a third commenting that she enjoyed the role but felt that she couldn't always do what the role intended. The two other comments centred on the model of learning mentorship we had developed, one suggesting that it was an increasingly necessary role and the second reinforcing her belief that we had developed a very effective model.

> …learning mentors are becoming more and more necessary in schools…because parents have so many other pulls on their time, having to work etc, etc, that there are so many skills that normally they would learn at home, that they are not learning at home, and I think this is where the learning mentors are so invaluable.

> I just hope that the learning mentor team in school does
> continue. A lot of time has gone in to putting the strategies
> we've got in place now, plus all the efforts and the activities
> and the resources put into the room that we've got for the
> children to work in and come into and it would be a shame
> for it not to continue.

It is to be noted that this final response was influenced by my decision not to apply for the headship of the school when the previous headteacher resigned his post. The learning mentors were concerned that a new headteacher may not wish to retain the team approach to learning mentorship, although I intended to use the research conclusion to both make recommendations to the new headteacher and to other primary schools through the publishing of the research findings.

Link Learning Mentor

The Link Learning Mentor had supported school throughout the research period. Through his previous responses to the changing nature of learning mentorship he had demonstrated his belief that a team approach was the way forward, indeed many of the systems we now had in place followed the advice he had given the learning mentors over the course of the research period, and yet he had initially been unsure about our use of the nurture group ethos. He plainly had misgivings about the interpretation of the nurture group philosophy that he had observed in other schools, and questioned whether it sat well with the ideals of learning mentorship. However, following its introduction into the practice of the learning mentor team in the school at the heart of the research, he had previously identified its use as a strength within the new approach – as noted in chapter six. His interview at this stage in the research was therefore used to elicit his present thoughts on our provision of learning mentorship, including the continuing impact of the nurture group ethos on the effectiveness of our

provision. The interview would also be used to establish his thoughts on the role of learning mentorship with respect to socialisation and to contrast his views, as an informed yet impartial participant, with those of the learning mentors working within the approach we had developed.

As always, his responses were considered and detailed and so provided the rich data needed to draw conclusions from the case study. For each of his responses I have taken out the main points or summarised his responses into shorter, more succinct, notes and then – where appropriate - compared them to the responses of the learning mentors. This enabled me to make the links necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the current provision.

The first question – regarding his impressions of the learning mentor team at the present time – actually addressed the first few questions asked of the learning mentors:

- current thoughts about the role of the learning mentor;

- a list of the basic activities provided;

- socialisation within the role of the learning mentor;

- how the work of the learning mentor team had changed within the school.

However, the beginning of his response suggested that he had begun to question if the learning mentors were continuing to function as a team:

> I wouldn't say the word *team* at the minute. Because I
> think…they're all doing a job [but] they all seem to be going
> in a different direction as to what was planned.

This was in contrast to the learning mentors who believed that they worked more closely as a team now and that there was more understanding of the approach, between themselves and by the staff. I tried to explore this further with the Link

Learning Mentor by explaining that we had looked in depth at the team approach, although reporting this was now outside the scope of the research, and had decided that an improvement would be to have certain individual roles within the team. This had resulted in each of the learning mentors specialising in one of the responsibilities that did not require working directly with the children. Attendance at multi-agency meetings was shared between two of the learning mentors; one recorded (and followed up) pupil attendance and the fourth learning mentor attended child protection conferences. Their remaining time was spent as a team providing learning mentorship for identified children across the school. The learning mentors and myself, as acting headteacher, believed this development in the approach was needed for the efficient and effective working of the team and were very positive about the outcome. However, once again, the Link Learning Mentor did not share our view as this being a positive, well-thought out development:

> But why the focus has changed... you try to put everything in
> it [the pot] to get something out of it. And it does seem to be,
> from where I see it, it seems as if they're doing a few steps
> forward and so many back, and that's frustrating.

At this point in the interview I recalled that the Link Learning Mentor had been enthusiastic about introducing the team approach at the beginning of the research period and had commented that it was an initiative he had discussed with his line manager prior to our decision to employ the approach. I therefore wanted to explore whether his responses above were given because he had held a different view of how the approach would work in practice. In other words, we were evolving an approach specific to our school and I wanted to explore his views on how our approach matched his expectations. I therefore asked him to what extent what he had seen and heard on the day of the interview had affected his understanding or expectation of the

team approach to primary learning mentorship provision. In his response he did not comment on his own view of the team approach but contradicted his opinion given above regarding the school's team as he stated that:

> I think, overall as a team, I think they do work together. They are very intuitive over each other. They do know what each other is doing.

He also began to acknowledge that the individual roles within the team were effective:

> They have their individual focus, focuses, but they still know what's happening… they feed back in their own dinnertime, to each other, that this has happened, that has happened…and that to me is…they are committed as a team.

> I still believe that they are a good strong team,

I therefore continued to explore the Link Learning Mentor's view on the individual roles within the team, as at first he had appeared to view these as a negative development but now seemed to be acknowledging their worth. I stated that I now thought it had been unrealistic for the team to share all the responsibilities as this had made the role too extensive and sought his opinion on this. On reflection he agreed that the development was needed:

> …what we ought to have done is probably done that in the first instance. I think…you are a team, you are going to be sharing this but perhaps you take that area, you take that area. At the back of my mind I think that's what they would have done anyway.

> …they would have realised that there are four of us, we've got four different areas, we all work as a team but we

specialise in this area and we feed back as a team, but the rest of the stuff we work together and I think, realistically, I expected that anyway.

These responses demonstrate that the Link Learning Mentor had indeed held a particular view about how the team would work but had, albeit reluctantly, had to revise his view of how it would work in practice, hence justifying the development that had led to our present model.

Returning to the question of his impressions of the learning mentor team at the present time, he commented:

…on talking to them I think they feel that, and I think it's more, reactive than proactive… although what they're doing, when you see the achievements they're making with the children, you know for a fact it's the right thing. It's the right thing what they are doing. But I think, I think the focus has probably changed.

This was a very pleasing response; the use of the phrase *you know for a fact it's the right thing* demonstrates how strongly the Link Learning Mentor felt that the learning mentors were fulfilling their role within the school. I agreed that the focus had changed as the learning mentors were spending more time in the classroom than we had originally intended, but this had been a measured response to school and pupil needs and was undoubtedly adding to the effectiveness of learning mentorship within the school. It was this increased effectiveness that was of paramount importance, not that our initial changes had been sustained.

Before moving onto the next question, the Link Learning Mentor commented on the qualities of the learning mentors themselves:

I'm amazed, by their patience. I am amazed by the dedication and the patience that they have to have, with the type of

children they're dealing with. They've got so much
resilience…

I think they've got so many skills as well, I don't think they
realise how skilful they are. In fact sometimes they make it
look so easy, and its not.

Next I asked if there were any changes to the provision of learning mentorship
that he would suggest at this time, in order to improve our effectiveness. The Link
Learning Mentor suggested that improvements could always be made and that it was a
hard question for him as he wasn't in school often enough. His response returned to
his earlier concern that the team approach wasn't now as obvious as it could be.

I know they are a team, but…if anybody were to come in, I
don't think that would be evident. I don't think, they couldn't
see what I've seen;

… when I first used to come in…they worked more in the
mentor room and I think, when mentors aren't in it, that's
when people think 'well where are they?'

He acknowledged that this was due to the learning mentors now spending more
time in the classroom than at the beginning of the year and reflected the views of the
learning mentors. However, I believed that supporting children to put the strategies
they had developed into place in the classroom was an important development in our
provision. The Link Learning Mentor explained his thoughts further by commenting
on the activities that had been reduced to allow for more in-class support, although all
activities were continuing but less often than earlier in the year. He saw this as a
backward step as the clubs and activities allowed all children to access the mentors in

some shape or form. I appreciated this point of view and considered it to be important to the recommendations to be made.

Taking this consideration further, I asked in what direction the Link Learning Mentor thought the learning mentor team should be heading at this time. His answer again demonstrated that he had concerns about the current provision, that it needed development in some way but indicated that he could not pinpoint how the approach needed modifying.

> This again is a difficult one…I think we need to sit down and, as a team, we would need to really look at it and get the thought and feelings of the learning mentor team, and your thoughts on it.

> I think we're very blinkered at the minute and I think we need to be looking a bit further ahead. I think we're probably looking at medium term but I think we should be looking long term.

This reaction explained the mixed responses already given, that the approach in practice was causing the Link Learning Mentor disquiet but his uneasiness could not yet be verbalised. This inability to verbalise his thoughts was surprising but it must be remembered here that immediately following the research period, and the drawing of its conclusions, I would be making recommendations for learning mentor provision to the new headteacher taking over the school. Indeed, following the arrival of the new headteacher, I would be resuming my role of deputy headteacher but no one knew at this time whether I would retain overall responsibility for the learning mentor team, or indeed how the new headteacher would organise the learning mentor role in practice in the school. I believed that this uncertainty was affecting the confidence of the

learning mentors and could explain why the Link Learning Mentor was concerned about our current provision. It was of obvious importance to him that the model of learning mentorship to be presented to the new headteacher would be the most effective for the school at the heart of the research. The interview thus continued with an exploration of what the Link Learning Mentor thought about the imminent change over to the new headteacher. He explained that he would like a meeting with the new headteacher before the summer break to discuss her thoughts on learning mentors, the provision of learning mentorship and our developing team approach. He believed this was necessary to provide stability for the learning mentors themselves.

> I don't know whether it's feasible or whether it's ethical or not…to meet with this person, and see what intentions they may or may not have.

> I think it is very unsettling for them [the learning mentors]. They're going to have a period of six weeks when they're not sure what they're coming back to. Very, very unsettling. And, unfortunately in some schools it's happened where mentors, we've lost excellent mentors, because of an unsettling period.

I commented that I was going to do the groundwork with her. That I was going to tell her my thoughts; what I believed the role to be; and how it should be developed – using the research results and conclusions and asked what support the Link Learning Mentor believed the new headteacher and the learning mentor team needed. The Link Learning Mentor stated that the key here was coordination, to avoid confusing the role of the learning mentors, particularly where outside agencies were also working with a child.

> I think it's the coordination of it. I have seen different people
> working with the same child, and thinking is it being
> channelled? Are they all talking to each other? Do they get a
> chance to talk to each other? Is that person the right person
> for that child? Who coordinates all that? And how does if fit
> in? And how does it work? And how is that fed back to the
> class teacher, to the headteacher and the rest of the team?

Moving on from questions about our provision of learning mentorship, I wanted to explore how we could develop the knowledge of the staff, particularly the teaching staff. I believed that, despite the presentations and the launches, there continued to be a fundamental misunderstanding with the staff and that we still needed to get the message across to them, although the learning mentors themselves believed that the understanding was slowly developing. Again I was surprised at his answer as he believed that this was not merely a school-specific problem but was an Authority-wide consideration.

> I actually feel that that again is something that the LEA could
> help with. I think it's a relatively new role; it's going to take a
> long, long time to get established in any school.

In contrast to my thinking, but reinforcing the views of the learning mentors, the Link Learning Mentor believed that *certain staff have got it*. He then went on to outline what for him was the essence of learning mentorship, supporting earlier references to the social work dimension of teaching, and that a lack of understanding by the staff could almost be attributed to the resentment of this enhanced support staff role.

> I really feel that learning mentors have got the nice job that
> teachers used to have, the pastoral side of what teachers used
> to have…and that sometimes causes resentment, and that's

from teachers. From other staff in school I think it's the
monetary factor; that, it's a role that's paid more money.

His solution to this was to in inform all other staff of the training undertaken by
the learning mentors.

> …when they actually see what training learning mentors do
> have to do, I think it becomes a little bit more apparent.
> Recently I've been in a couple of schools and one said 'I
> didn't realise the amount of things that our learning mentors
> deal with. I honestly didn't realise what they dealt with in the
> day, I'm amazed, I am amazed. They've got to be a social
> worker, everything rolled into one'. And I said 'Yes, you're
> right.' And he said 'It's, it's upped my estimation of them.'

I found this an interesting response that agreed with my opinion that the learning
mentors did not get the respect they deserved from the staff. The Link Learning
Mentor suggested that this was because the learning mentors were still having to
prove themselves. Returning to his response that the lack of staff knowledge was an
Authority problem, the Link Learning Mentor suggested that improving knowledge
would…

> …take a lot of effort, a concerted effort, on lots of people,
> and how do we as an LEA sort that out? Do we have training
> days for line managers? Is it going to be part of the newly
> qualified teachers, be part of the newly qualified teachers
> input?

> …for other teachers that just don't understand it, it might be
> an awareness for them,

One further reason for the lack of respect given to the learning mentors was cited here and certainly mirrored what had been said to myself and to the learning mentors on numerous occasions:

> I do feel sometimes that [learning] mentors can be made a scapegoat in schools because they seem to be doing sometimes nice things, nice things. Others will say 'but you're rewarding naughty behaviour.'

As commented upon earlier in the semi-structured interview the Link Learning Mentor had supported the learning mentors throughout the research period. This support began with ideas and practical help to set up the team approach and followed with monitoring visits. For the latter part of the year he had been based at the school, using an area of the learning mentor room as his office space. I therefore now wanted to consider what support he was giving the learning mentor team; the effects of this support and how, or if, the support had developed our learning mentorship provision. The first of the next set of questions was used to determine in what capacity he had visited the learning mentor team on his last visit and what support he was offering at the moment. He commented that he had a visitor from a neighbouring LEA who he wanted to observe our team approach and that she had been most impressed and that his support was limited to providing a listening ear, that his support is just reassurance for them. This response led into a discussion about the decision by the LEA to base the Link Learning Mentor in the school.

The Link Learning Mentor explained that he had merely been asked to:

> …work in and out of here, and obviously I wanted to get involved with some children

He went on to explain his own frustration at being in the school but without a school-specific role. He had wanted the learning mentors to include him in their work when he was available but had felt *useless* and had constantly questioned why he was based at the school but was not working within the school, that he wanted a feeling of achievement from being in the school. I was concerned at these responses but explained that the LEA had not discussed his placement with me. He continued to describe his frustration at not being given a responsibility related to the school:

> I'm sat here just getting on with what I am, you know, bits of
> work for myself or for other schools, and I'm aware I'm in
> this school and I'm thinking 'somebody's dealing with that,
> and do they need any help.'

The Link Learning Mentor ended his interview by explaining his thoughts on learning mentorship and his role with the Authority.

> I have a passion for mentoring and I think the way I see my
> role is I'm there to support mentors doing their job and
> hopefully, just by that I'm here, they know that that's why
> I'm here. I'm here for them.

> I don't believe that the role is just about supporting mentors, I
> think I should be actively supporting the mentors, the head
> and the school.

> …although sometimes I go into schools and I see things I
> don't like for the benefit of the school, you have to go along
> with it. You have to agree to disagree sometimes and what
> keeps me going is is it best for the child?

Learning Mentors' End of Year Review Report

The next set of data from the adults involved in the research took the form of a formal end of year review report. The Link Learning Mentor has a responsibility to formally review the work of learning mentors in each school in the Local Education Authority; this review took place in the school at the heart of the research immediately before a scheduled conversation took place almost at the end of the research period but following the completion of all the adult interviews already reported.

This piece of data was again not planned, as the conversation that was reported in chapter six had not been planned, but arose due to the learning mentors wishing to prepare a written report for the Link Learning Mentor for this formal, DfES required review. The review was necessary as the majority of the funding for the learning mentors came directly from the DfES, through the Excellence in Cities initiative, and the LEA were accountable for ensuring the funding was used for the purpose intended – the appropriate employment and deployment of learning mentors.

The report itself was a chronological, reflective summary of the work carried out by the learning mentors during the academic year; a copy is included in appendix eight. It is important to the research as it is referred to in the conversation to be analysed next in the research report and also because it details the learning mentors' thoughts on the successes of learning mentorship within the school. The successes of the year were identified as:

- The whole school team approach, which provided a *varied, flexible timetable that allowed for the learning mentors to impact across more of the whole school.*

- Lunchtime invitations.

- Proactive strategies introduced.

- Support systems established – specifically with reference to the Link Learning Mentor

- The withdrawal of a number of year six children from the classroom – referred to as a nurture group for the children - due to the emphasis on the use of the nurture group principles.

- Attendance monitoring.

One less successful area of learning mentorship is noted, that of the initial provision for key stage one. This was an area not addressed by the research but considered by the learning mentors, resulting in a slight change to their response to the key stage one children.

The report also referred to the perceived low staff morale mid-year, recognising that the learning mentors themselves also had suffered, attributing this to feelings of not carrying out their own, specific duties but concludes by recognising that the learning mentors believed that they had had a successful year due to the mutual support provided by the team approach to learning mentorship and stating that they were feeling very positive about the year to come. This was an important comment that supports fully the introduction of the team approach to learning mentorship in the school.

Planned Conversation

As reported in chapter six, an unscheduled conversation between myself, in the dual role of acting headteacher and researcher, the Link Learning Mentor and the learning mentors yielded data important to the research and prompted the scheduling

of a conversation within this data collection period. The conversation took place almost at the end of the research period, after all the interviews had taken place but it is pertinent to report the data here, before that collected from the children in the research. As noted, this planned conversation followed the Link Learning Mentor's review into the work of the learning mentors in school, in response to the accountability of the Local Education Authority for ensuring the EiC funding was used for the purpose intended.

The conversation began with an apology from the Link Learning Mentor for his recent absence from school and, consequently, his reduced in-school support of the mentors. This was due to a re-organisation within the Authority that had occurred following the interviews reported in this chapter. The conversation then moved on to explore current thoughts on the provision of learning mentorship we had developed. The Link Learning Mentor and the school learning mentors commented that when they last met they were *really down*; with hindsight this could be determined from the Link Learning Mentor's interview responses and could explain the disquiet he demonstrated but could not verbalise at the time. I had thought it wasn't a case of the learning mentors feeling down about their work but more that they were worried about the impending Authority review, as reported earlier and taking place immediately before this conversation, and whether it would it validate their work in school. I stated that I believed very strongly that what they were providing, and had provided throughout the year, was *good mentoring* and that the review would confirm that, which it had. This early part of the conversation thus began to address their current thoughts about the role of the learning mentor. In response to my comment about their worries, and then the positive review findings that concluded they were fulfilling the learning mentor role, one mentor stated:

I think it's because the staff didn't realise what we were
doing.

This simple response demonstrated the frustration felt by the learning mentors that their role and, in particular, their contribution to the school during the research period which we were now concluding had been effective learning mentorship, had not been fully understood by the staff. By almost beginning the conversation with this comment about the staff misconceptions, it was demonstrated how their lack of understanding was translated into a lack of worth about the role the learning mentors were fulfilling. Throughout the research period the learning mentors had commented many times upon the misunderstandings that the staff held and also that they believed that an understanding was developing. However this comment underlined how slowly this was happening. It reinforced my belief, also stated throughout the research period, that the staff had little understanding; indeed the Link Learning Mentor had previously remarked that the problem was Authority-wide. What was most disconcerting about the shared view of the lack of understanding of the process of learning mentorship was that the previous teacher questionnaire, and informal comments made throughout the year, demonstrated that the staff could use the term *barriers to learning* and firmly believed they knew what learning mentorship involved. However, their comments merely confirmed that they understood the product but not the process of learning mentorship, whereas the research had focused on developing the process in school. I therefore concluded here that meaningful data, that would move the research forward and contribute further to its findings, would not be elicited from the teaching staff at this point and that the issue of developing their understanding was now outside the scope of this piece of research, although the conversation returned to this later and is reported at the point it was again raised. The

development of understanding was therefore indicated as the next essential step in researching learning mentorship, that of the ensuring the whole school community worked towards a shared definition of the process of learning mentorship. The planned follow up questionnaire with staff was, for that reason, not carried out as part of this piece of research.

My contribution to the conversation here thus summed up the feelings I had held throughout the research period about the understanding of the staff, both the teaching staff and the support staff, and led onto a further exploration of comments made to the learning mentors by the staff.

> I still don't think the staff know what you do and it's a huge concern to me because already staff are coming to me and saying "what are they going to be doing in September? Are we going back to having one in a year group?" And to me that is such a backward step. It wasn't mentioned but they think you're TAs [teaching assistants] by another name. To go back to that is such a backward step.

Two learning mentors added that what upset them were the staff comments that were made in a light-hearted way but were obviously questioning how they carried out their role and implied that the learning mentors should be supporting school in a different way.

> Take attendance for example. I take the responsibility very seriously. It's such a huge school it takes a big chunk out of the day. People don't always appreciate that.

> When I'm sat in the office you get staff coming in at breaktime and you get comments like "Ooh, are you keeping that seat warm?" "Are you sitting there all day?'

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> …as it becomes more successful [could] we show staff the
> results? How attendance **has** improved.

The conversation then moved on to consider how the attendance phone calls often raised other issues to be followed up but that the staff were unaware of the importance of this.

> …the phone calls made to all those parents who tell us about
> their children's problems. That's a knock-on effect isn't it?
> It's not just attendance is it? You deal with attendance and
> then solving problems is the add-on to that.

> But what I'm saying is you can't take things personally.
> Sometimes you ring up just generally thinking that the child's
> not in school, you ring to check if they're at home or not and
> they say they set off to school this morning. That's why we're
> here. People don't see it like that.

There followed a discussion about the number of children requiring mentoring in year six this year; the expected number in year six the following year and how that would affect the work of the learning mentor team in September. It was agreed that the problems, the barrier to learning due to the changing nature of the school society encountered during the research period, would continue. The Link Learning Mentor suggested that it would take a further two years to ensure all children could access school in its present form, to be socialised into the society we had developed, and this estimate did not take into consideration how the society would change again under the new headteacher.

The Link Learning Mentor then referred back to the sudden departure of the previous headteacher and how this had been handled, under guidance from the Local Education Authority.

…you've been put in the most impossible position. I think, as a school, you've done the best you could with the situation. I've said that Christine has been put into a no win situation because of how things were handled.

I'm not saying that's rightly or wrongly so, I'm not here to make comment on how the LEA handled what they did handle, but for them to say one thing and then for the school or Christine, or whoever, to get the backlash of it all, Children say to me, the fact that they weren't told the truth, that Mrs Farmery lies…because my mum's read it in the paper, or saw it on the news, or whatever.

He also referred to the children and how the sudden loss of the headteacher had affected them:

… it was obvious to me that it was just like a bereavement to them.

The learning mentors developed this conclusion:

I don't think it was even like bereavement to them, it's like somebody missing and you don't know if they are alive or dead. You can't have bereavement, you can't have closure.

I think it will have shattered a lot of children's illusions, but…it would have been more honest [to tell the truth about his departure].

It would have been honest and I think that you wouldn't have had the severity of what Christine's had to put up with.

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With respect to this, how the instructions of the LEA had influenced my handling of the headteacher's departure and the subsequent period of uncertainty, the Link Learning Mentor concluded that:

> Whether you think you have or not, you have come through
> the other side.

He then referred to the end of year review report provided by the learning mentors – as summarised earlier – stating that:

> It's a true summary of what you've been doing. I think it's
> because you work so well as a team that you've put this
> together. I don't think a lot of people would have been able to
> do that in such a reflective manner.

Next, the conversation returned to the understanding of the staff and how this could be addressed. The Link Learning Mentor restated that it is hard to understand the role of the learning mentor. Indeed this view is confirmed by the literature review carried out and discussed at the beginning of the research report, that learning mentorship is not easily defined but is best described as a process. The discussion thus centred around how the school-specific process that had been developed could be described for the staff. The Link Learning Mentor suggested a staff survey but this was not considered necessary as the staff were vocal about their attitude towards the learning mentors. They had already begun to ask if the learning mentors would be *in year groups next year* and *are we going to have them in the classroom full-time*, thus clearly indicating their continuing lack of understanding about the process we had developed. The learning mentors then listed the actions of the staff that had continued at the end of the year, demonstrating not only the teachers' misconceptions but also, by implication, their preferred model of learning mentorship:

- Certain members of staff sending for the learning mentors to solve in-class behaviour problems as and when they occurred;

- Children sent to a learning mentor, or the learning mentor room, because they've misbehaved;

- Labelling the learning mentor room *the naughty room*.

It was agreed that these actions must not influence the school's provision of learning mentorship; indeed they do not promote good practice in learning mentorship and must be curtailed from the beginning of the next school year. It was hence agreed that:

- The Link Learning Mentor would lead staff development on the role of the learning mentor;

- An initial staff meeting would identify the *core achievements* of the learning mentorship provision during the research period;

- The Link Learning Mentor would provide a staff handbook setting out the provision;

- The staff needed to be very clear that the way forward for the school was to have a learning mentor team;

- All staff must know what the learning mentor team *do*.

It must be remembered here that a new headteacher had been appointed from the beginning of the next academic year. Although at the time of the Link Learning Mentor interview it was unclear how the new headteacher would organise the learning mentor role in practice in school, and if I would be retaining overall responsibility for the learning mentor team, I had now been instructed by the new headteacher that I

would indeed continue to oversee the work of the learning mentors. The new headteacher hadn't worked with learning mentors before and stated that she valued the support of the Link Learning Mentor and myself; it was therefore of paramount importance that the Link Learning Mentor carry out the staff meeting described above as soon as possible in September, in order to inform the new headteacher and to work towards dispelling the myths the teachers continued to hold. The Link Learning Mentor summed up the dialogue about the misconceptions of the staff thus:

> There's being flexible and then there's being everywhere which…dilutes the actual job that you should be doing. The actual support for the targeted children is then not as it should be...it's the perception of the staff that you've got within the school that don't understand it. 'We need you here' or they send somebody or they fetch you or, you're just all over the place and you just can't do that. You should have time for children; it should be a whole school approach with these types of children. They should understand the role, they should know what you do, it's up to us to inform them what you do. It's up to us to inform them what you don't do. And not feel guilty about saying 'I'm sorry, that's not part of my role.

It was interesting that the Link Learning Mentor later began to discuss learning mentorship as a strand of the Excellence in Cities initiative, as described at the beginning of this report. He informed us that the strand was believed to be the most successful area of the initiative; that it was to be funded by DfES for a further three years and that the Local Authority had been asked to collect evidence to support this belief that the provision of learning mentorship was successful. It was interesting in that the DfES had acknowledged that it would be *anecdotal evidence* that would be

sought. Indeed the Link Learning Mentor almost described this piece of qualitative research by stating that:

> There's no quantitative evidence, there's no hard figures.
> What they've challenged us to do now is to make sure we
> tighten up…to record how we've made a difference.

Next, the conversation explored how initially the learning mentors themselves found it difficult to work in the way that had been identified at the initial review stage of the research. One learning mentor stated how hard she had found it to

> …walk away from certain situations knowing full well that
> it's not something that I should be doing.

She defended her response thus:

> …you can't though can you? You can't. It's difficult because
> you don't want to upset or offend anybody.

The remaining learning mentors agreed with this response, as I (as acting headteacher) did, although I acknowledged here that all staff had worked outside their role on occasions, in order to respond to school needs. Again it was the Link Learning Mentor who was able to put these difficulties into a context, by stating that the provision agreed was to focus on enskilling the children to deal with their own issues, thereby working proactively with the children whilst acknowledging that, in practice, there had been a necessary balance between proactive and reactive work. It was at this point in the conversation that I believed that we were getting to the heart of what effective learning mentorship within the school should be - that there should be a balance between proactive and reactive work, to add to the balance between in-class and out of class support of children already agreed, and the balance between

individual and team timetables and responsibilities. The recommendations from this research would therefore need to acknowledge the need for these balances.

The conversation accordingly now continued to consider the balance between proactive and reactive work by highlighting one example of where both responses were needed, that of bullying. The proactive measures had included speakers being brought into school, awareness weeks, assemblies, posters and circle time activities. Reactive measures were needed when parents or children reported incidences of bullying. It was through this part of the conversation that it was agreed that it was unworkable to start the school year with a full caseload of targeted children. Again the notion of *balance* was explored, balance between a *core caseload* and children who may need learning mentorship at another time in the year. The Link Learning Mentor termed this as having a flexible caseload and explained the practicalities thus:

> …they should be on high, medium or low priority. That is so you can have a rolling programme…when there's one low priority that's ticking over, you're getting them sorted, there's a case then for taking someone else on or moving someone from high priority to medium. It gives you flexibility then when you get a parent coming saying 'my little Johnny's being bullied', you make this your responsibility.

Next, the conversation turned to parental involvement in learning mentorship. A full discussion here is outside the scope of the research focus however, what was concluded, was that parents were beginning to come into school to report concerns about their child:

> They come in when they want to.

Exactly. When there's anything wrong. They come in don't they?

The parental view of the role of the learning mentor was therefore similar to the teaching staff, to be reactive to issues as they arise rather than to be proactive. This was evident as parents only contacted the learning mentors about *problems* but did not access the Open Days or drop in sessions that they were invited to. The conversation continued with an exploration of how the parents could be encouraged to interact with the learning mentors before situations arose that required reactive measures to be used.

Next, the conversation returned to the notion of a flexible caseload. The learning mentors began to discuss this through considering how children could be referred to the learning mentor team, and then how a cohort of targeted children could be identified and prioritised. At the beginning of the year I had met with the learning mentors to address this and we had identified a group of children who had had learning mentorship the previous academic year and a new group of children who we knew had developed barriers to learning - the problems that a pupil faces due to difficulties at home, bullying issues or general disaffection (DfES, undated c). Throughout the year further children had been identified and added to the caseload, including children referred by parents, staff and myself in the role of acting headteacher. At times this had resulted in a caseload that we knew had become too large to be manageable and one casualty of this had been the keeping of learning mentor records. It was therefore more than pertinent to consider how a suitable caseload could be identified and managed well. The Link Learning Mentor suggested that a referral form be given to each class teacher, the response to this was amusing in that one learning mentor stated

> …when we've done that here we've finished up with a class
> set!

The Link Learning Mentor responded that

> Well, on that form they have to put their reason for referral. It
> is up to you to then as a team, it doesn't guarantee them that
> they will get that child referred.

I again stated my belief that, as the staff still held misconceptions about the role; they didn't know who to refer and suggested that we needed to use the proposed September staff meeting to ensure they had recognised criteria for referral. This became another recommendation from the research, that (as the Link Learning Mentor suggested) each teacher would be given a referral pack with clear criteria identified and the instruction that:

> … you've had a referral pack, you know the types of children
> that we're looking to be referred.' You …as a team, make the
> decision on what children you take on. It's not the teacher
> that makes the decision, it's you.

The conversation, as relevant to the research, ended with an exploration of a workable cohort for the learning mentor team within the school. It was suggested that the maximum number of targeted children should be eighty, equating to an average of five children from each class. When working with the cohort there would be a balance of one to one sessions and group sessions; the group sessions would entail activities such as developing anger management strategies and friendship issues. Indeed this way of working was established within the provision of learning mentorship but, although this way of working was considered to be effective, there were concerns that this range of strategies was the cause of the problems with keeping records of learning mentor intervention. This was summed up by one of the learning mentors that:

> … there's some one to one… there's some group work. You
> then have to think about, on your timetables, all the things
> you doing, but then you've got to have time for your admin.
> There's got to be time for your admin; it's part and parcel of
> it.

and by another as:

> Sometimes there's that much coming at you isn't there, that
> we've not got time and things have got to be written down.

The Link Learning Mentor responded to this by repeating the need for the Local Education Authority to collect evidence which demonstrated the success of learning mentorship, and included in his list of *evidence* the need for detailed learning mentor records. Another source of *evidence* suggested was a

> …a book in the staffroom [to record] how many times
> someone said to you 'Do you know, Johnny's marvellous
> since he worked with you.' Just a comment that they've made
> to you

Unfortunately this was greeted with amusement as the teachers almost never gave feedback to the learning mentors in this way; once again underlining the misconceptions held by the teaching staff about the work of the learning mentors. Indeed this staff lack of understanding about the process of learning mentorship was one of the most important themes to come out of the analysis of the data collected from the adults. The major themes can be summarised thus:

- ✓ The team approach to learning mentorship was judged to be a success. This was expressed with respect to the benefits for the children; for the learning mentors themselves and to strengthening the school's provision of learning mentorship.

- ✓ The team approach had been modified throughout the research period; the next stage was to determine what the balance should be between proactive and reactive work, in-class and out of class support and between shared and individual timetables and responsibilities for the learning mentors, linked to the school timetable.

- ✓ The use of the nurture group ethos had become inherent in the delivery of learning mentorship in the school, wherever the delivery took place.

- ✓ Socialisation had become embedded in the work of the learning mentors, aiding the children to feel comfortable within the school community and to feel accepted by the community.

- ✓ The learning mentors held a good understanding of what learning mentorship entailed and were able to be reflective about their role and its impact in school.

- ✓ The lack of understanding by the staff about the process of learning mentorship had been evident throughout the research period and now needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency as it was unhelpful and beginning to hinder the further development of the school's provision of learning mentorship.

- ✓ The current model of learning mentorship was more effective than the previous model used in school, although there were still improvements to be made.

Children's Data

As in chapter six, the data collected from the children at this final stage of the research was to be through group interviews; attitude and behaviour scales and

attainment data. This data will thus be presented and analysed within this section of the chapter. However, as will be discussed at a pertinent point in the story continuing to be told, the group interview data did not yield the richness of data I was expecting and so individual interviews were carried out towards the end of the research period. The children's responses during the group interviews were almost monosyllabic and the children appeared uninterested in the process of the interviews. This in itself was disconcerting with respect to the progress of the research and led me to question whether the emphasis on socialisation within the role of the learning mentor had somehow taken away a part of the children's personality. On advice, I therefore re-interviewed the children individually and the analysis of this data yielded one of the most surprising conclusions to the data, that of the children's need for learning mentorship to be time-limited. The children's data will thus be presented in this order:

- group interviews

- attitude and behaviour scales

- individual interviews

- attainment data

Before reporting the data collected from the focus group of children, who were known as the baker's dozen, it is pertinent here to recap on how the cohort were identified, although this has already been described within chapters four and six, with additional information presented in appendix three. The cohort was chosen to reflect the make up of the children in the school identified as:

- Having barriers to learning that indicated the involvement of a learning mentor – at the time that the research plan began;

- Having barriers to learning due to unsettled or non-conventional home backgrounds;

- Displaying or developing an overt rejection of the school's rules and routines;

- Being involved in an increasing number of incidences of misbehaviour;

- Showing a marked disrespect towards adults;

- Demonstrating an obvious reluctance to engage in classroom activities.

At the mid-point of the research, when the focus was re-defined, it was recognised that the cohort were clearly affected by the sudden departure from school of the previous headteacher, indeed it was accepted that this event accounted for almost all the traits listed above.

Group Interviews

As before, the advice of Watts & Ebbutt (1987) for conducting children's interviews was adhered to. The interviews were carried out as group interviews, with two groups of four children and one group of five children, in order to encourage the children to use each other to provide support and confidence and to allow for discourse between themselves. Once again, the earlier questions in the interview were designed to put the children at ease, and so centred on themselves and their thoughts about school as we neared the end of the academic year in which the research took place. Question one thus merely asked the children to state their name and year group, which all did; the next question asked for each child to tell me one event that had happened to them since the last taped interview. The first child in group one referred to their own behaviour, the rest of the group then copied the response. In total three of

the four children in the group stated that their behaviour had deteriorated, though later questioning showed this not to be a true belief of theirs, with one child stating that their behaviour had in fact improved. In the second group, the first child replied *nothing* but when prompted by me talked about playing football for the school; once again this answer was given by the remaining three members of the group. Although the final group – five children – didn't restate the first response, each child had to be prompted to give an answer, with one child referring to playing football, one child referring to working with a volunteer in school and three to having achieved 100% attendance so far this academic year. Even at this early stage in the interviews I had the feeling that the children were reluctant to engage in the process, that this was why they were *copying* answers given, but thought that this may be because they had gone through the interview process before and it therefore was not a new and novel experience.

Question three then asked the children how they felt about school at the moment; a deliberately ambiguous question to enable the children to focus on any aspect of school from their own point of view. Group one again needed a lot of prompting to answer the question but eventually commented on the behaviour of others; their own behaviour; their thoughts about the end of key stage two SATs tests they had recently taken and working with the learning mentors. These comments are summarised overleaf. It is to be noticed that, although the responses are mixed, they are also quite negative. The children needed much prompting and, interestingly, would quickly change their responses when prompted further. For the other two groups I paused after their answers rather than prompt and probe for responses. However, rather than provoke a response, the pauses were unfilled. In Group two, the first child responded *all right* to the question (Tell me how you feel about school at

the moment?). After a long pause he replied *yes* to the prompt question asking if he was quite happy. The second child then added *the same as him*. It must be noted that both these children were the twins but did not often copy each other and certainly have quite different personalities. The third child then again copied the first two and answered *the same as Robert*. The last child in this group did provide a personal answer - *very good. No fights, no people bullying me.*

Table 8:4 – Group 1 Responses to Question 3

Behaviour of others	I think it's good a little bit
	A bit good, bit bad.
	It's after SATs so we can relax a bit.
	I don't like it.
Own behaviour	It's sometimes good and sometimes bad.
	Sometimes good, sometimes bad.
	I try to be good but sometimes I'm naughty.
	Bad. Really bad.
Thoughts about KS2 SATs	I'm not getting better at maths but I am getting better at science
	I'm good at maths, quite good at English.
	I think I've done alright in maths and science but I don't know about my English results.
	Rubbish.
Thoughts about working with the learning mentors	Good.
	OK.
	I don't work with the learning mentors very often.
	Not a lot. Because my behaviour's got better.
	Not much.

The final group gave equally short answers, ranging from the negative - *I feel a bit bad about it* and *boring* – to the fairly positive *sound. It's alright* and *I like being*

here. As the researcher I was aware of the stilted responses but expected the following questions would elicit the data needed to support other data in providing recommendations for our continuing development of learning mentorship provision.

Questions four and five asked the children what they enjoyed most about school and why, and what they disliked and why. Of the twenty six replies, sixteen of the children needed prompting again to either give an answer or provide a reason for their answer. The activities cited for enjoying school were:

Football   5 responses

Playing out/P.E.   3 responses

Nothing   1 response

Leaving school soon   1 response

Art/DT   3 responses – all from group 3

The children cited one of three activities as being the most disliked – academic activities (seven responses), bullying and behaviour issues (five responses) with one child replying that he didn't like anything. What was interesting was that all four children in group one cited academic reasons, one stated all lessons and the other three offered English as a reason; all four children in group two cited bullying and behaviour as their most disliked aspect of school whereas in group 3 three children cited SATs, one bullying and it was one member of this group who didn't like anything.

It can be appreciated here that I began to believe the benefits of group interviews suggested by Watts & Ebbutt (1987), and reported earlier, were not being

displayed in these interviews. Rather than allowing for discourse between the children the technique appeared to be stilting the children's responses and leading the children to copy each other's answers. However, the next question, asking the children to describe their behaviour in school at the moment and had it changed since we last spoke did bring about different responses from individuals in the groups, but again required a lot of prompting. The table below summarises the groups' responses.

Table 8:6 - Responses to Question 6

How would you describe your behaviour at the moment and has it changed since we were last on tape?

	Stayed the same	Behaviour has changed	Improved	Deteriorated	Don't know
Group 1		4	2	1	1
Group 2	2	2	2		
Group 3	1	4	3	1	

Improving behaviour had been identified as a secondary aim of the research at the mid-term review; indeed three of the four criteria for success of the changed model of learning mentorship referred to behaviour:

- increased access to the curriculum, which is obviously dependent on the children's behaviour being such that they engage in the teaching on offer in the classroom;

- a more positive attitude to school;

- a reduction in behaviours that, if unchecked, may lead to a fixed term or permanent exclusion from school.

It is therefore integral to the research findings to explore the children's thoughts on their behaviour and so it is pleasing that seven of the cohort believed that their behaviour had improved.

The next set of questions was designed to elicit the children's views on learning mentors and learning mentorship; the main responses given are summarised overleaf. Although the responses provide some information pertinent to the research, albeit limited information, it was the way in which the responses were given that was much more revealing for the research than the responses themselves. The children throughout the interviews needed a lot of prompting and probing to provide comments; indeed this became more marked as the interviews progressed in each of the three group interviews. The views given by the first child were often repeated by other children in the group, when this was challenged they changed their opinion without appearing to give any thought to their responses. What was most striking during each group interview was that the children seemed distracted and disinterested, in fact the last group to be interviewed could not sit still; they were up looking out of the window and onto the corridor and demonstrated no interest at all in the interview taking place. It can also be appreciated that not only were the responses achieved by prompting and probing, they were simple responses that really did not begin to address the effectiveness - or otherwise – of the learning mentorship provision established in the school.

Table 8:7 - Children's Views on Learning Mentors and Learning Mentorship

Have the learning mentors been available for you if you've felt you needed to talk to one of them?	Yes – *three responses.* You just ask them for a quiet word - *two responses.* Sometimes I've had to wait, sometimes they're there - *three responses.* Not always. Because they're busy - *two responses.*
What do you think is the difference between a learning mentor and a teacher/working with a learning mentor rather than a teacher?	Learning mentors have got their own room and there are more of them. If you need help then they write things down for you to copy and everything. You get more help with the learning mentors – *four responses* The learning mentors are more patient with you. You get more work done with them because they're not teaching – *three responses*. They are not as qualified as teachers. There's more learning mentors that can help you. They invite you for dinner. The teachers set you work and stuff – *two responses*. There are three learning mentors but only two adults in the classroom. A learning mentor helps you and talks to you when you're upset. They're quieter – *three responses*.
Have you gone to the learning mentor room when you've been asked to go or have you invited yourself?	Sometimes I go in by myself, sometimes I've been asked to go. Bit of both. Sometimes I'm asked to come in, sometimes I just come in.

What do you think to the learning mentor room now/ What do you think is different about this room to your classroom?	It's quite good/alright – *three responses* It's different – *four responses, all needing qualification* I've not really thought. The classroom is where all the teachers help you. It's bigger. It's got sofas and cushions It's better than the classroom. You can watch the tv while you do your work. I'm getting used to it. It's confusing – *two responses.* They've displayed it. It's boring - *two responses.* It's quiet/peaceful – *four responses.*
What do you think to how the learning mentors work with you?	I like it when they help you with questions and your work. All right – *three responses.* They help me. They teach you how to write. If you're stuck on a question the learning mentor helps you and it gets easier for you. Bored. They make me feel better - *two responses.*
What activities have you done with the learning mentors?	Drawing Literacy and artwork Art
How do you think the learning mentors have helped you with your behaviour?	They calm you down. They calm you down and they refresh your memory.

Table 8:7b - Children's Views on Learning Mentors and Learning Mentorship (continued)

Is there anything else you want to say about the learning mentors or their room?	Nothing to add – *ten responses*. It's a good room with calming rules. It's quiet. It's never noisy when you come here. It helps you chill out.

I next asked who the children would most likely go to if they had a problem in school, to fully ascertain the children's understanding of the learning mentor role in school and their confidence in the learning mentors. The responses were disappointing as only two children stated that they would go to a learning mentor:

- Learning mentor – two responses.

- I don't know. Anybody. My mum. My teacher.

- An adult.

- My teacher - two responses..

- You – as head teacher - two responses.

- No-one - two responses.

Again it was not *what* the children responded but *how* the responses were elicited that disconcerted me and suggested that the data collected from the children here did little to move the research forward. There were few common themes to draw from the data and what perturbed me most (both as researcher and acting headteacher) was the children's apparent lack of interest in the questions and in their received provision of learning mentorship. This lack of interest was in marked contrast to how they had presented themselves previously in the research; indeed throughout all the

group interviews at this stage in the research the children expressed their impatience at having to be out of the classroom.

After completing the data analysis of the group interviews it was hence the conduct of the children that continued to concern me. After consultation, it was considered that a possible reason for the children's stilted and conflicting responses could be that the use of group interview was inhibiting the responses of the children and it was hence decided to re-interview the children individually, thus mirroring the collection of adult data through interview. These interviews were carried out following the completion of the attitudes and behaviour scales by the children and so, in keeping with the chronology of the research narrative, will be reported following the presentation and analysis of the scales.

Attitude and Behaviour Scales

As noted in chapter six, attitude and behaviour scales were identified to further explore the children's attitudes to school, to learning mentorship and their own thoughts about behaviour and would reinforce the data collected through interview. Again the responses of the children are presented in graphical form followed by a short commentary after each set of questions, beginning overleaf.

Attitude 2 Questions 1-10
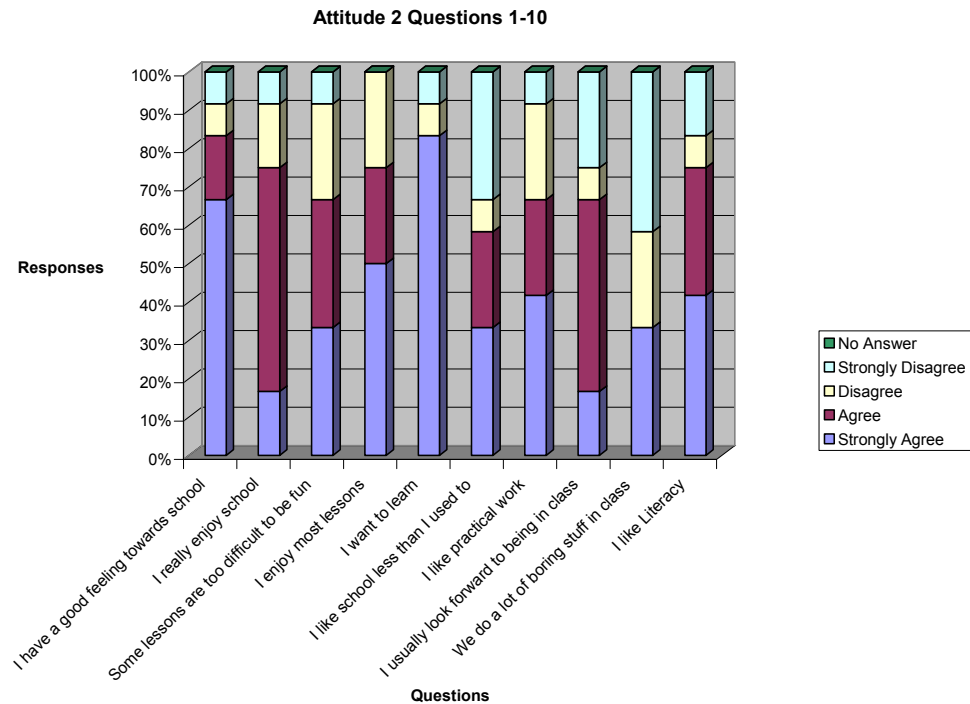
In contrast to the children's confused responses to the interview questions, the attitude scale here shows that eighty percent of the children now have a good feeling towards school and over seventy percent really enjoy school. Both these percentages are slightly increased from those recorded in the first scales used, where just over two thirds of the children reported that they both had a good feeling about school and enjoyed school. In the first scale used, all the children responded that they wanted learn whereas the percentage now fell to only eighty percent; this needed to be explored further and was to be featured in the individual interviews. Over seventy percent enjoy lessons and Literacy now, in contrast to just over sixty percent previously. What is pleasing is that now two thirds of the children want to be in class in contrast to just over fifty percent previously, where one child did not respond to this question.

Attitude 2 Questions 11-20
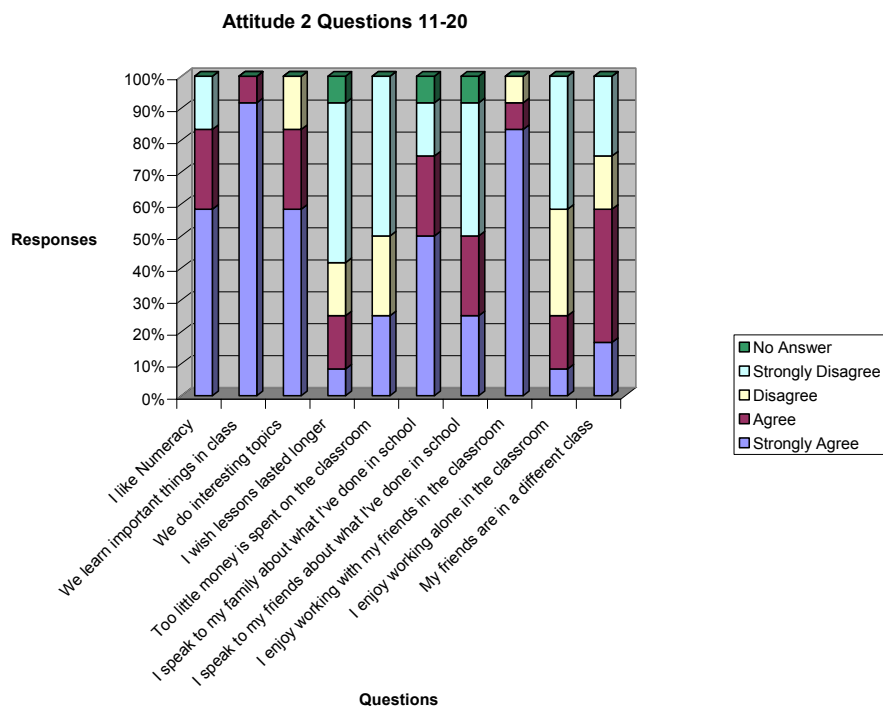
Questions eleven to twenty support the information yielded by the first set of questions - that the children want to learn, they all believe that they learn important things in the classroom and that the topics studied are interesting. However, in support of their earlier reluctance to engage in the classroom, seventy percent of the children now report that they do not like working alone in the classroom whereas ninety percent enjoy working with their friends in the class. Interestingly, two thirds of the children state that their friends are in another class, as learning mentorship, when it takes place in the learning mentor base, often involves groups of children taken from more than one class. It would have been pertinent therefore to consider here who the respondents considered their friends to be.

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Attitude 2 Questions 21-30
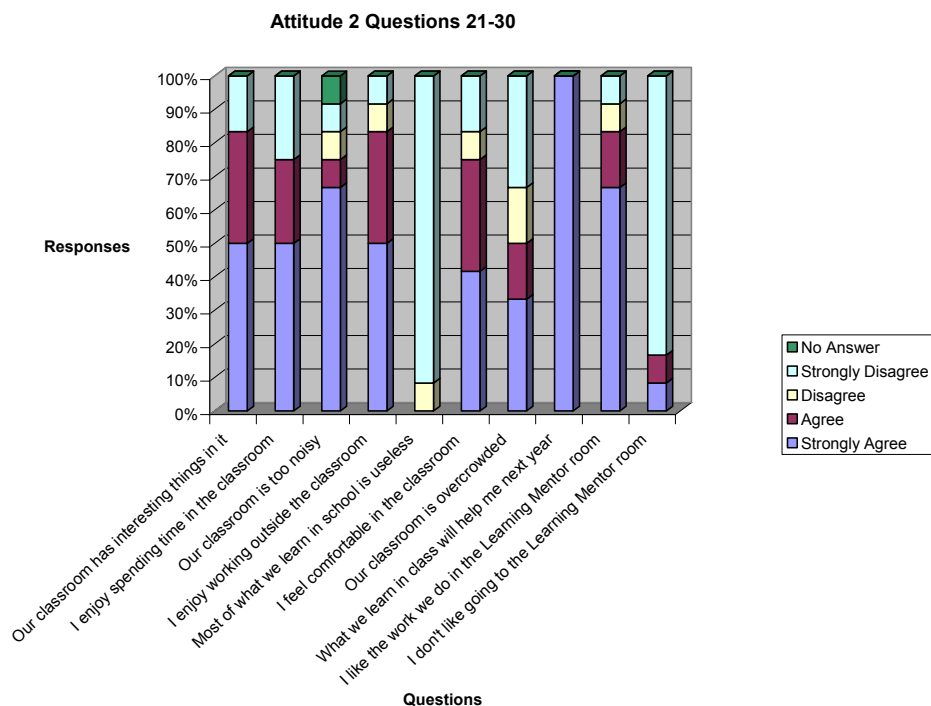
Throughout the research I was surprised by the children's insistence that they wanted to learn and valued the education presented to them. This was counter-intuitive to me as undoubtedly their behaviour impacted on their learning and so I had concluded that their behaviour indicated that they had rejected learning and yet every child disagreed, with over ninety percent strongly disagreeing, that most of what they learned in school was useless. All the children believed that what they were learning this year would underpin their learning the following year. What was pleasing with this set of questions was that the children were beginning to enjoy the classroom more, with over seventy percent agreeing that they enjoyed working in the classroom, in contrast to below fifty percent reporting that they enjoyed the classroom in the previous attitude scale. However, over eighty percent continued to enjoy working outside the classroom and in the learning mentor room.

Behaviour 2 Questions 1-10
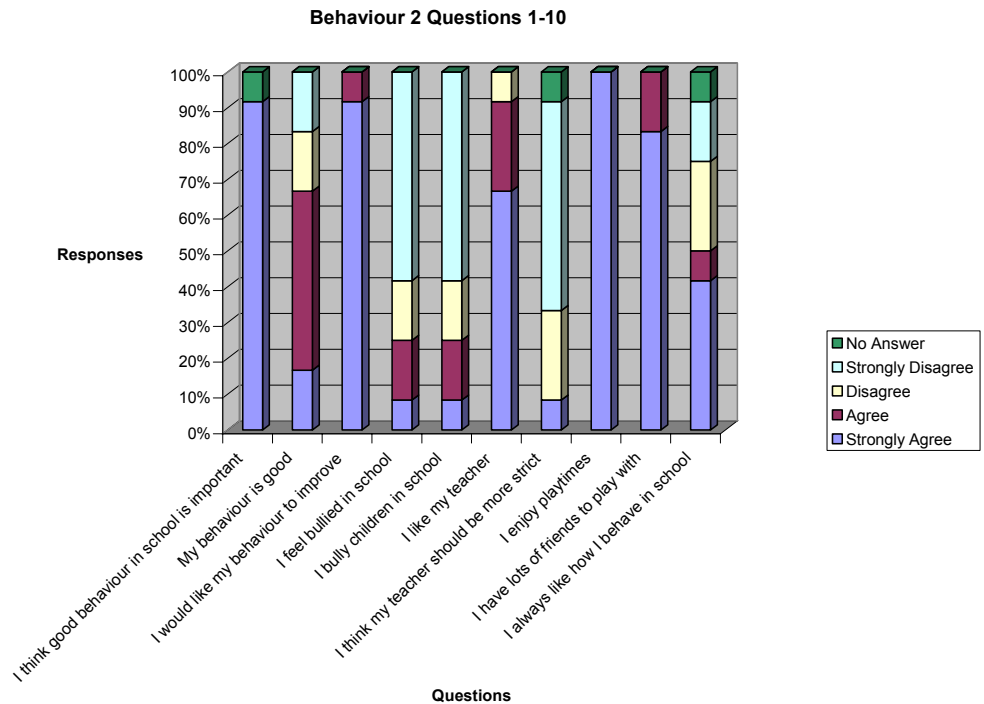
The children continued to believe that good behaviour is important in school and over sixty percent of the children now believe their own behaviour to be good, in contrast to forty percent who reported that their behaviour was good in the first behaviour scale, and fifty percent liking how they behave now although all now agree that they would like to improve their behaviour at this time. With respect to bullying, only twenty percent of the children report that they either feel bullied or bully other children. This is below half the percentages recorded in the first behaviour scale. It must be noted here that bullying was not considered to be prevalent in the school. It was believed that most reported bullying incidents were peer squabbles or aggressive behaviour rather than prolonged acts of bullying; the children's responses here were thus taken to indicate that the proactive work carried out by the learning mentors on dealing with peer conflict had been successful in aiding the children to deal with

issues as they arose. All the children continue to agree that they enjoy playtimes and have lots of friends to play with.

Behaviour 2 Questions 11-20
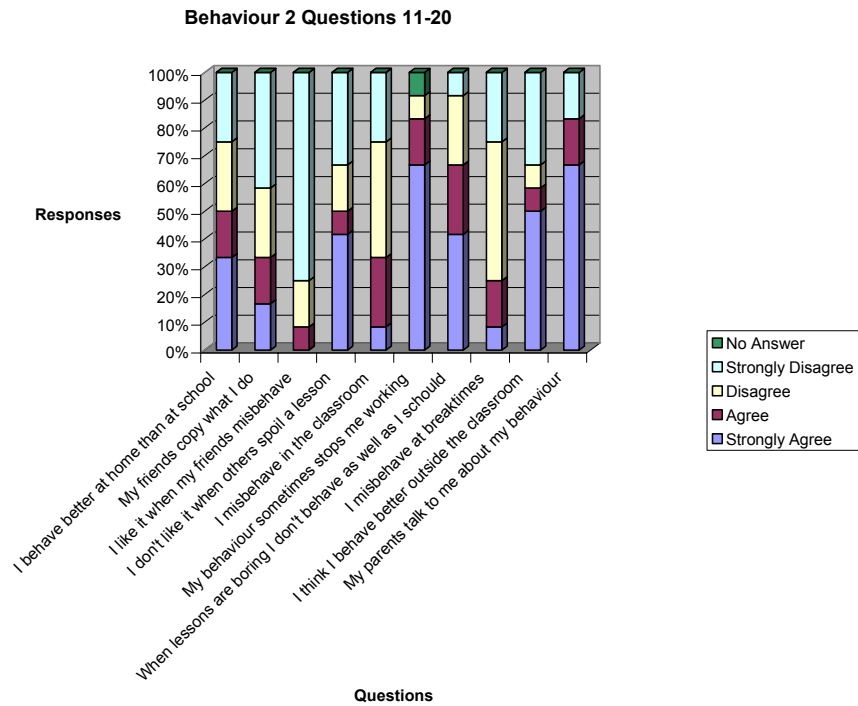
In support of the children's growing rejection of poor behaviour, over ninety percent report that they do not like it when their friends misbehaved whereas previously over forty percent actually liked seeing their friends misbehave. Interestingly, around fifty percent don't like it when others spoil a lesson whereas over eighty percent didn't like it previously. However, this response could indicate that the children coped better now with disruptions rather than previously. Only thirty percent of the children reported that they misbehaved in the classroom whilst eighty percent believed that their behaviour stopped them working, this is down from seventy percent and over ninety percent respectively and again indicates that the children are more understanding of their behaviour and its effects on their own

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learning. Playtime behaviour is improved, with just over twenty percent of children misbehaving compared to almost fifty percent previously.

Behaviour 2 Questions 21-25
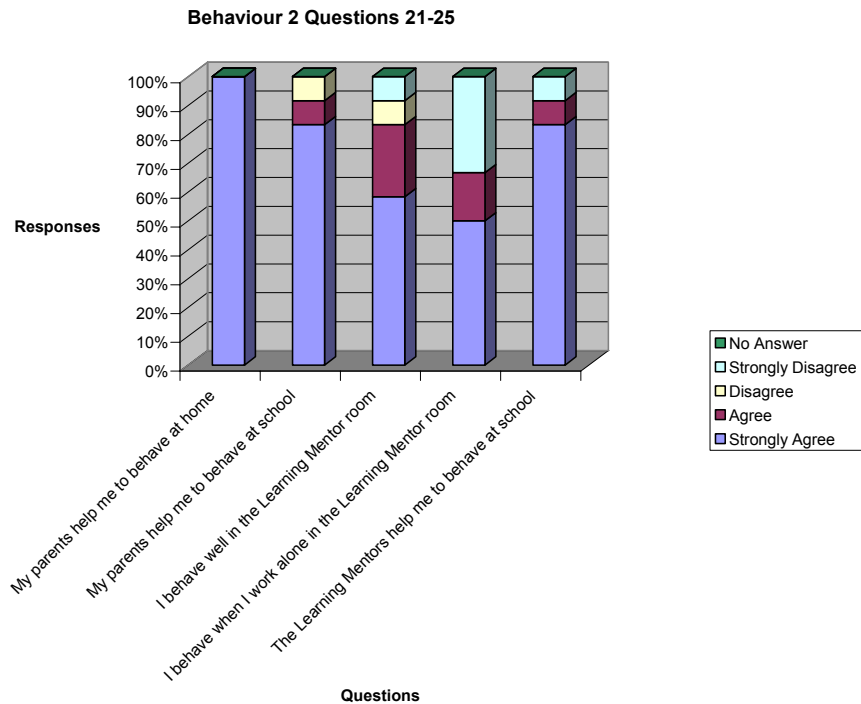
The final set of questions look at the perceived influence of the children's parents and the learning mentors. The responses however vary very little from the previous behaviour scale, with the adults having a profound influence on the children's behaviour in school.

The attitude and behaviour scales therefore yielded much more meaningful data than the group interviews. They strongly suggest that the children were much more able to access school and their learning; that their behaviour had improved and, perhaps more importantly, that they developed strategies for dealing with peer conflicts. And yet none of these conclusions could be made from the group

interviews, where few common themes could be drawn. Also, as noted earlier, the children's behaviour during the group interviews demonstrated an apparent lack of interest in the research and in the provision of learning mentorship and so the children were re-interviewed individually following the completion of the attitudes and behaviour scales.

Individual Interviews

The children's individual interviews were consequently carried out to try to elicit further the children's views on the current provision of learning mentorship. As has been explained earlier in this chapter, the children's responses collected during the group interviews were considered to be stilted; copied from their peers and arrived at through much prompting and probing. It was thus the children's apparent lack of interest in the questions, and the answers, that led to these individual interviews. The interviews were carried out at the very end of the research period – in July of the academic year in which the research was carried out –following the individual completion of the attitude and behaviour scales. The interviews were carried out in my office, away from the learning mentor room and out of sight of the playground, in order to reduce any distractions for the child being interviewed. The interviews were carried out as semi-structured interviews and were based on the interview schedule devised for the group interviews, designed to explore the children's views on their own behaviour and in-school needs; the learning mentor team and on the school provision of learning mentorship. Implicit within the questions was the extent to which the learning mentors had enabled the children to access school life, specifically after the school as a society had changed following the sudden departure of the previous headteacher.

Following the first question, which asked each child to introduce themselves for the tape, the children were asked to name one thing that had happened since their last taped interview. The responses here needed much prompting, as they had during the group interviews, as the example conversation below demonstrates:

> We went into the learning mentors [room] and we did some work about school.
>
> What did you do?
>
> I don't remember.
>
> You don't remember? Was it some writing or drawing or talking?
>
> Talking.
>
> Talking. And were there many of you went?
>
> Not really.
>
> And what did you talk about? Can you remember?
>
> Stuff what we were doing.
>
> In school or out of school?
>
> In school.

All the responses given to this question are summarised thus:

- Nothing
- Played football
- Worked harder [in class] – six responses
- Been ill
- Outside activities – swimming,

- Accessing the classroom

- Excluded from school due to behaviour issues

- Made more friends

These answers were in marked contrast to the responses given during the group interviews where the four children in group one referred to their own behaviour, following the response given by the first child in the group, with three of the four children stating that their behaviour had deteriorated over the research period. Children in the second group, when prompted, had all talked about playing football for the school; whereas behaviour and football were mentioned once only during the individual interviews. Other responses during the group interviews included a further reference to playing football; a reference to working with a volunteer in school and three references to achieving one hundred percent attendance during the academic year, none of which feature in the individual responses. The six references given to working harder in the classroom reflect the responses to the attitude scale, where over seventy percent of the cohort agreed that they enjoyed working in the classroom.

Question three asked the children for their feelings about school; again posed as a deliberately ambiguous question (as it had been during the group interviews) to enable the children to focus on any aspect of school. Although the group interview responses referred to both the behaviour of others and their own behaviour, together with their thoughts about the end of key stage two SATs tests and working with the learning mentors, the comments were believed to be meaningless as the children had needed much prompting and would either change their responses when prompted further or merely respond with *it's all right,* again often copying the response of others. However, the individual interviews not only elicited the children's thoughts on

school but also provided a (reasonable) reason for their response, as summarised below. All the responses here were positive about the school and demonstrate well how the children appreciated the school society and how they now felt comfortable within it, indicating the extent to which they had become socialised within the present society.

Table 8:8 - Children's Views about School at the End of the Year

Response	Reason
Alright – *five responses*	…because we're moving up/the year sixes are moving up.
	…because some people are not behaving and some people are.
	I can trust people more… all teachers and adults in school.
Sad – *four responses*	…because I'm not in Jade's class next year [my best friend].
	It's… it's going to be hard leaving this school because I've got used to all teachers.
	Not very happy to be leaving but I'm quite looking forward to going to Central [Comprehensive].
	A little bit sad because I don't want to still be in year 4…because it's better in year 5.
Good – *three responses*	Because there are good things in school.
	We're doing some fun things in class.
	It's good because we've got a new headteacher and she's really kind.
Not sure	A bit weird….I wish I was staying here [not secondary school]…the teachers are kinder.

The children's responses during the individual interviews were thus already more meaningful to the research than those elicited during the group interviews. Indeed the next questions – what did the children enjoy most/dislike about school and why – required sixteen prompts for responses in the group interviews, in contrast to no prompts needed in the individual interviews. The responses given in the group interviews are re-presented below, alongside the responses given in the individual interviews.

Enjoy Most		Dislike	
Group interview responses:	**Individual interview responses:**	**Group interview responses:**	**Individual interview responses:**
Football – five responses	Having friends - two responses	Academic activities – seven responses	Nothing - two responses
Playing out/P.E – three responses	Academic activities - two responses	Bullying	Getting into trouble
Nothing	Football [matches] - two responses	Behaviour issues - five responses	Academic activities – five responses
Leaving school soon	Art/practical work – four responses	Nothing	Behaviour issues – four responses
Art/DT – three responses	Next year's teacher		
	P.E. - two responses		
	End of year treats		
	Don't know		

It can be appreciated that the individual interviews provided a wider range of reasons for enjoying school than the group interviews but almost mirrored the responses given for disliking school with respect to academic activities and behaviour issues. Again, these responses reinforce the attitude and behaviour scale data, where seventy percent of the cohort agreed that they found lessons difficult and the children were increasingly rejecting poor behaviour in school, with over ninety percent reporting that they did not like it when their friends misbehaved; around fifty percent don't like it when others spoil lessons with thirty percent admitting that they misbehaved in the classroom.

The next questions therefore looked in more detail at the children's thoughts about their own behaviour and the school's management of behaviour generally. It must be remembered here that the impact of the sudden departure of the headteacher on behaviour in the school was marked; indeed it was this change in behaviour that has been key to the development of the piece of research. The downturn in behaviour affected the work of all the staff in school, with the majority of teachers believing that the learning mentors should be available at all times to deal with behaviour issues as they arose in the classroom whereas we, as the reviewers of the learning mentorship provision in school, were committed to dealing with behaviour proactively by enskilling the children to deal with their own behaviour issues. In order to re-skill the staff, in particular the teaching staff, the staff had worked together to revise our school rules and routines and to introduce a workable system of rewards and sanctions. We had categorised inappropriate behaviour into four bands, with examples for each band, and had agreed the sanction to be used for each level. I was therefore interested in the children's thoughts about the school's response to behaviour issues, before moving on to discuss the children's perceived effectiveness of the learning mentor

provision. This emphasis on the school's response to behaviour issues was an additional consideration that had therefore not been addressed at the group interview stage. Indeed the question posed during the group interviews merely required the children to *describe their behaviour in school at the moment and had it changed since we last spoke.* Although the question did elicit different responses from individuals within the groups, thus not providing 'copied' answers to the question, a lot of prompting was again required to elicit any thoughts. The group interview question was thus presented in the individual interviews as a set of three related questions, with the third question in the series focusing on the children's thoughts about the school rules and routines:

- How would you describe your behaviour in school at the moment?

- Has it changed over the year? If so, in what way?

- How do you feel about the school rules and routines? Are you able to follow them?

Breaking the original question down, particularly into questions one and two above, obviously aided the children to consider their responses and, what was most pleasing, was that the children now chose to enter into a thoughtful conversation with me about their behaviour, as the examples below demonstrate.

It's got better than last year, all years that I've been here. It's got a bit better.

How has it got better?

By people calming me down and going back into class...

And what's better about your behaviour?

I'm not shouting too much and about I'm not getting mad so much any more.

And do you know why, why that is?

It's because people have… they keep calming me down every time I get mad

and I've just realised it's not what you'd expect, so…

What *I'd* expect?

Yes.

It's better than last year's.

Why do you think that?

Because I've been quieter.

And why has your behaviour changed do you think?

Because I knew I had to be good.

And who's taught you that do you think?

The school and my parents.

What do you think school has done? How have we helped you?

You've taught me more. Well it seems like you've taught me more.

You've pushed me a bit further.

When anyone starts with me I don't hit them back.

Why don't you hit them back now, do you know?

I know not to.

You know not to. Who's taught you that?

Everyone. My mum and dad and the teachers.

You understand why we say it? Why do we say it?

So no-one gets hurt.

The conversations clearly demonstrate how the children can discuss their behaviour thoughtfully and can articulate not only how their behaviour has changed but also what brought about the changes. They attribute the changes to both parental influence and also to *knowing what is expected by me and by school*. (Although I was conducting the interviews as the researcher, the children were talking to me as acting headteacher, hence the comments directed at me personally.) These conversations therefore support the notion of my acting headship having changed the school society and that the children now felt socialised into the society. They stated that they knew what was expected of them and so tried to behave accordingly.

The overall responses to questions one and two above are summarised below.

How would you describe your behaviour in school at the moment?

- Poor – three responses

- Alright – six responses*

- Good/improved - *four responses*

*It was interesting that one of the boys initially responded that his behaviour was poor because he couldn't *add up as quickly as everyone else* and so he had to stay in at break times. He equated this to *being in trouble* but changed his response to

alright when I explained that he only needed to complete the task and that his teacher wasn't cross with him because he was slower than others in the class.

Has it [your behaviour] changed over the year? If so, in what way has it changed?

- Stayed the same – *three responses*

- Behaviour has changed - *nine responses*

- Improved - *eight responses*

- Deteriorated – *one response*

The responses above do not include the reaction of one of the boys who had been removed from the classroom due to extreme behaviour. As noted earlier in the research report, the small group of children removed from their classes then received learning mentorship and teaching within their group for a short period of time. This particular boy reported that his behaviour had *got a bit better then after it got better it got worse*. When questioned about this response he attributed the initial improvement to one of the learning mentors working with him within the small group and then stated that his behaviour had deteriorated when he returned to the classroom, blaming this on his friends in the classroom. Although this response recognised the contribution learning mentorship had made to his behaviour improvement it did not make note of the continuing support he had received when returning to the classroom. As acting headteacher I can contradict his response as his behaviour overall was vastly improved after the learning mentorship he had received. He had moved from not being able to access the classroom to returning fulltime and progressing in his learning. A second member of this group did however recognise the on-going support

given by the learning mentors for his re-integration into the classroom; his conversation with me is summarised below.

> I've started going back into class and behaving more.
>
> Are you happy? Are you coping in class?
>
> Yes.
>
> Do you need anybody to help you cope in class or are you managing by yourself?
>
> I'm managing by myself.
>
> Does Mrs Baker [learning mentor] still have anything to do with you?
>
> Yes.
>
> Yes? What does she do?
>
> She helps me with my work and she … she's…. She just comes up and speaks to me. In class and in [the] corridor and that.

This particular response validated for me the approach we had taken to behaviour management throughout the research period and began to address the issue of finding a balance in the work of the learning mentors between in-class and out of class support; between proactive and reactive measures and between managing a child's behaviour and empowering them to manage their own behaviour. For this child the learning mentors had been reactive in removing the child from class but proactive in preparing him to return to the class. They had supported him out of class, within the small group, and then in-class on his return. The time spent supporting him directly in class was then reduced and out of class support continued, as noted in his comment that *she [the learning mentor] just comes up and speaks to me. In class and*

in [the] corridor and that. There was also an evident balance between the learning mentors having to manage the child's behaviour initially, when removed from the classroom, to the enskilling of the child to manage his own behaviour; this is implicit in the comment that *I'm managing [coping in class] by myself.*

When other children in the research cohort were questioned about what had helped them to change their behaviour they found it difficult to attribute the change to any specific cause. However, one further response was of particular note as it demonstrated how the children were beginning to think about how their actions impacted on others.

> I've just made more mates and….
>
> You've made more friends? How have you done that?
>
> By being friendly with a couple of the year sixes and playing
> with my friends. Playing games.
>
> What made you do that do you think?
>
> Because it's not fair on the others that don't do anything.
> They just sit on the bench in the garden and that.

The next question considered the school rules and routines, asking the children how they felt about them and if they were able to follow them. All the children responded positively to this question. They seemed to fully understand why the rules and routines were needed, believed that they were fair, easy to follow and that all staff were consistent in their usage. The children also commented that they helped them to behave appropriately because…

> I know what you get in trouble for, get excluded for.

I think they're good…because they actually work. And they're easier to remember 'cos they're not as long.

Because they actually…work… and if you break them you get punished like you're supposed to if you break a rule.

One child commented that he thought the rules and routines were fair but *a bit hard to understand*. When asked about his response he said they were hard because they made you *think about things*. This was exactly what was wanted, for the children to have to make decisions about their own actions. Only when this happened did we consider that the children were fully empowered to manage their own behaviour.

The next set of questions moved on to a consideration of the children's views regarding learning mentors and learning mentorship. Once again it must be noted here that it was at this point in the group interviews that the children's obvious lack of interest in the interviews became most marked and led me to question whether the emphasis I had placed on socialisation within learning mentorship had somehow taken away a part of the children's personalities. This was because they presented as quiet individuals who had no thoughts to share nor wanted to hear what others had to say. Pleasingly, the children's engagement in the individual interviews did not support this view; they had entered into quite lengthy discussions with me about their thoughts on school and, in particular, their behaviour. However, when the questions were posed about the learning mentors they again gave simple answers and seemed to lose interest in the interviews taking place. They needed prompting about having worked with a learning mentor at all and, when asked about the activities they had taken part in, talked about having help with their work. When asked directly what the children thought the role of the learning mentor was they again referred to

> calming people down when they're mad.

> …they help you to not get angry…they took me to the
> learning mentor room and talk to me about something. It
> helped me to calm down, because they…just talked to me a
> long time, telling me about my behaviour so like…I could try
> to be good.

Whilst many of the children reported that they didn't need the help of the learning mentors now, to either calm them down or help them with their problems, another child acknowledged the support given to him by one particular learning mentor.

> She helps me. She's helped me to learn, to do my work and
> then to write if I've got to…she's helped me to calm down.
> She just talks to me. If I've got any problems I tell her. She
> just helps me. She just like talks to me about any… she helps
> me and she doesn't say anything else to anyone about it.

It was at this point in the data collection that a key interpretation was made. It must be remembered that it was the analysis of the data collected through group interviews with the children that led to the carrying out of individual interviews, due to the responses not yielding data relevant to the research and my disquiet about the children's attitude towards the interviews. However, I now started to consider whether the children's apparent lack of interest was, in fact, their reaction to not now needing learning mentorship to either manage their behaviour or to access the school society. The identification of this interpretation was through the children's responses above and when they talked about what the learning mentors *used to do* for them rather than what they *do now*. Using this interpretation, it was evident that the children were telling me how they had been helped and how they were now able to put into practice

for themselves what the learning mentors had taught them. They were thus explaining to me that they had welcomed learning mentorship when they needed it but they were now beyond this. This interpretation was further validated by one child who stated that he didn't like *being away from my classroom*, that he had enjoyed going to the learning mentor room at the beginning of the year but didn't like it at the end of the year. This interpretation was the most surprising conclusion from the research for me. I had accepted throughout the research that the role of the learning mentor is to remove a child's barrier to learning (Smith, 2000), thereby indicating that the need for learning mentorship is time-limited, but had not considered at what stage we would judge that the barrier had indeed been removed. On reflection, Bennathan & Boxall (2000) suggest an intervention period of two to four terms within a nurture group, but this was not related to learning mentor intervention. Although Smith (2000) explains that barriers to learning may include problems within school which may lead to failure in engagement in school life, with the research focus being engagement in school life of the identified cohort, I had not anticipated that they would reach a point when learning mentorship would not be needed by them. Furthermore, I had expected that the children would need learning mentor support throughout their remaining time in school. However, in line with the interpretation of the data above, I now recalled that the guidance given regarding the learning mentor initiative had cited a time span of three to five terms for learning mentorship to be effective (Hayward, 2001). The cohort had now actually been receiving learning mentorship for over a year, from four to six terms or even longer, and so their rejection of learning mentorship was both appropriate and should have been expected. Indeed the children's rejection of the support of the learning mentors indicated quite clearly that the learning mentor

provision had been effective in removing the children's barriers to learning through the socialisation of the children into the present school society.

The next question further explored the unexpected conclusion I had made. I asked what the children thought to having learning mentors in school and asked them to think what would have happened during the year since the previous headteacher had left the school if we did not have them. Immediately the children became engaged in the question and gave quite lengthy answers. This reaction alone supported the conclusion I had reached about the children believing themselves that they did not now need learning mentorship. It reinforced the interpretation and indicated that their previous short answers were appropriate because they had little to say about the relevance to themselves of learning mentorship at this time. Their apparent indifference was, for that reason, due to their belief that what I was asking was indeed irrelevant to them.

The children believed strongly that learning mentors were needed in school; that they supported the teachers and enabled teachers to carry out the function of teaching; that they helped a number of children with both their behaviour and their learning and that they had played a major role in managing behaviour across school. When asked what they thought about schools that didn't have learning mentors, and if they should have them, the children all believed that all schools should have learning mentors. The reasons given summarised their thoughts on how they had benefited from learning mentorship – the help with their learning, help with managing children's behaviour and helping children to *use their skills*. One child referred to his brother who had been at the school before learning mentors were introduced. He believed that his brother would have been much more successful in school had he had access to a

learning mentor, because they would have helped him to control his behaviour and to access the classroom appropriately.

The interviews continued with an exploration of when the children had received learning mentorship, whether this had been because they had been directed to access it or because they had actively sought out learning mentor support. The majority of the cohort stated that they did not seek learning mentor support without being asked. One child reported that he had approached the learning mentors when he needed them and explained that he knew this was acceptable because he had read an information poster displayed outside the learning mentor room. Another child responded that he approached the learning mentors:

> Because I feel upset and don't really want to go to my teacher. I just go to the learning mentors. Because there are some things I want to talk to them about. About my feelings.

The next natural question was whether the children would welcome learning mentor support the following year. Unsurprisingly, in view of the conclusion I had reached during the individual interviews, the children responded that they would just like them to *help with us work that we have to do in the classroom* in other words, to support them in the role of a teaching assistant. It was only when prompted that the children referred to help *with feelings*.

One child had a discussion with me which summarised well how the learning mentors had worked throughout the research year. It was a thoughtful response that demonstrated how this child had valued the work of the learning mentors and, although he didn't anticipate needing the support of the learning mentors himself, he could appreciate how the school and other children would benefit from their work.

> I've liked how they've worked [this year].

What would you think school would be like if we didn't have them?

Much harder and teachers would get more flustered.

Flustered? Who do you think it would be more difficult for? The children or the teachers?

Both because teachers would have to be dealing with more stuff and children would get more… unhappy, you know because learning mentors are there to take stuff off the teachers.

This view was reinforced by another child who responded that learning mentors would be needed the following year to

…help our children settle in and help out if they have problems by talking to them.

The response moves away from thinking about his own needs to the needs of *our children*, thus demonstrating how he now thought of himself as integral to the school society.

Finally, I asked the children to sum up what they felt was the specific difference between a learning mentor and other adults in school. They cited that the learning mentors calm people down; they work together as a team; take care [of me] when I've been bullied; look after people and are a bit more helpful, in different ways. The children also referred to two specific differences between teachers and learning mentors, that teachers *teach* and work mostly on their own. Their responses were again well thought out and demonstrated both their understanding of learning mentorship and that they appreciated the fundamental purpose of the teacher was to teach. Their responses were not surprising as they had experienced first hand both the

process and product of learning mentorship but were again considered and validated the approach to learning mentorship that had developed through the research.

This question concluded the individual interviews, as all the children except one declined to add a comment when asked if there was anything else they would like to say about what they had been asked about. The only addition was that one child wanted to complement the learning mentors on their room, that it is *a quiet room and you can work in it better*. The child went on to remark they had liked it at the beginning of the research period and continued to like it *as much now as the beginning of the year*.

Attainment Data

As noted earlier in this report, one of the initial criteria for success within the research was that of increased attainment by the focus group of children. However, at the point when the focus of the research was amended, this criterion was reconsidered. What became most important was that the children were able to access the curriculum appropriately; indeed, if the children could not access the curriculum they could not achieve academically and so, in turn, could not demonstrate an increase in their attainment. As the focus of the research became the children's socialisation within the school society, the children's attitudes towards school; themselves as learners and their behaviour became much more important than attainment. It was now expected that any increase in attainment would occur in the following academic year, when the children were expected to be able to engage fully in school life. However, after concluding that many of the Baker's Dozen of children had become so socialised into the school society that they did not need to engage in learning mentorship towards the end of the research period, it remained pertinent to

the research to consider their attainment and to determine whether any progress had been made. And yet it must be remembered that members of the focus group of children had been withdrawn from their classrooms for a period of time and may have had one or more exclusions from school, and so it was expected that a comparison of end of year SAT (Standard Attainment Tests) results from the previous year to the present year would show a range of attainment. Indeed it would be unsurprising for the comparison to show that there had been some apparent decreases in attainment, maintenances and increases in attainment.

It had been decided to use SAT results to compare attainment, although these would show attainment in the core areas of English and maths only, as the SAT results are both comparable and used routinely in the school in May each year. Children in years three to five take the optional SATs and all children in years two and six take the statutory SATs tests; hence the children in the focus group had all taken the optional SATs in the previous year to the research taking place. Children in years four and five would therefore again be assessed using the optional SATs whereas the children in year 6 would be assessed through the statutory SATs tests. The table overleaf compares these results.

Table 8:9 - Comparison of the End of Year SAT Levels of Previous Year with End of Research Year SAT Levels in English and Maths

| Pupil | End of Previous Year Optional SAT Levels | | End of Research Year SAT Levels – Optional or Statutory | |
	English	Maths	English	Maths
JM	2c	2c	2c	2c
AJ	2c	2b	2a	2b
EM	3c	3b	4c	4c
RK	3b	3b	3a	3a
PK	3c	3c	4c	3a
AP	2c	3b	3c	3a
BS	3b	3b	3b	3b
MF	3c	3c	3b	4c
BH	3a	3a	4a	4b
JW	3b	3c	3b	3b
IS	4c	3a	4c	4c
JE	3c	3b	3b	4c
DH	2a	3c	3b	4c

Table 8:9 shows some very pleasing, and indeed surprising, results. Although it was noted earlier that it would be unsurprising if the comparison in attainment showed some apparent decreases in attainment, none were recorded. Out of twenty-six comparisons (one for each of the thirteen children in English and in maths) there were nineteen increases in attainment. This in itself was a remarkable achievement considering the individual children's experiences of school during the research period, and demonstrates well both the progress the children had made and, indeed, points to the success of the learning mentorship they had received. What was even more surprising was the extent to which some children had increased their attainment. The expected, average increase is one full National Curriculum level in two years; therefore an increase of two sub-levels is above average and an increase of one full level in only one academic year is well above average. Of the nineteen increases shown in the chart, six showed an above average increase of two sub-levels and another six had increased by one full National Curriculum level.

The data provided by the children, particularly following the individual interviews thus provided another set of common themes that will be used to draw conclusions from the research having taken place. The themes can be summarised thus:

- The children's attitudes towards school were much improved, with the majority of the children reporting that they have a good feeling towards school; really enjoy school and want to be in the classroom.

- The children were much more able to access school and their learning. They could articulate how they appreciated the school society and how they now felt comfortable within the society.

- All the children saw the value of learning and wanted to learn- this was judged as a surprising theme, as their behaviour obviously impacted on their learning and had led to the belief that they had rejected learning.

- The children believe that good behaviour is important in school.

- The children could discuss appropriately their own behaviour; the behaviour of others and how this affected their learning.

- All children welcomed the support for improving their behaviour.

- They stated that they knew what was expected of them and so tried to behave accordingly.

- At the end of the research period, the children believed that they did not need the continuing support for their behaviour and their access to the classroom, although they thought it important that learning mentorship be available for others who needed it.

- They understood the process of learning mentorship and how it supported the teaching staff in being able to concentrate on their core purpose of teaching.

- When comparing attainment in the core areas of English and maths, there were nineteen out of twenty six increases in attainment.

These themes will thus be used in chapter nine to draw together the conclusions from the research. They will be considered alongside both the themes derived from the analysis of the data collected from the adults and, with reference to the criteria for the success of the change in learning mentor provision, will be used to make recommendations for the development of learning mentorship within both the school at the heart of the research and other primary schools.

Chapter 9 – Evaluating the Results

Chapter eight concluded the consideration of the data collected at the end of the research period, by analysing the data collected and drawing common themes from both the adult and the children's information. The chapter thus also completed the retelling of the story of the research, which had taken place over one year and had tracked the changes made to learning mentorship in one large primary school. The results of each of the three data collection periods carried out have therefore been addressed in preceding chapters; an evaluation is now necessary to understand the effects of the changing pattern of learning mentorship and to arrive at a judgement of its worth for improving learning mentorship, not only within the school in which the research was carried out, but also its relevance to other schools and to add to the shared knowledge of learning mentorship. Within this necessary evaluation, an evaluation of the research process itself is indicated, to establish the research's validity and generalisability and to consider its effect on the findings of the research. The chapter will consequently begin with a review of the research process carried out, including a summary of the research methodology and how this influenced the style of the research report, leading onto drawing conclusions from the findings.

Summary of Research

The piece of research reported here has investigated the provision of learning mentorship within one primary school. At the time of the research learning mentors were a relatively new workforce, employed in a limited number of schools, and so the research was used to investigate the role in practice. The school had interpreted the function of learning mentorship and developed its own policy and practices however; a point was reached when the effectiveness of this interpretation was questioned.

What followed was an exploration of the process and product of learning mentorship, carried out through three consecutive actions:

- identifying a focus for the research;

- developing my own knowledge, as the researcher, of learning mentorship;

- establishing a revised provision of learning mentorship, describing this provision and evaluating its effectiveness.

The research thus involved a full review of learning mentorship; beginning with a consideration of the primary school's response to its own provision towards the end of one academic year; moving on to exploring the issues around establishing a team approach to learning mentorship and ending with a final evaluation at the end of the next academic year. Through this small-scale piece of research into the team approach to learning mentorship, its relevance to the primary school would be formally documented, evaluated and used to establish the effects of the approach within the school, leading to the drawing of conclusions regarding its effectiveness with regards to the individual pupils, the school and the needs of the teaching staff.

It has been documented throughout the research report how the research necessarily included contextual data about the school and the learning mentor initiative itself and how it responded to the later identified changing nature of the school society. The findings, as detailed in chapters six and eight and referred to later in this chapter, were a mixture of what was expected and what was unexpected. Collins et al (2002, p174) give justification for this piece of research when stating that teachers do need to '…reflect critically, with others, on current practices and why they are dysfunctional for so many people.'. I certainly believed that the school's practice of learning mentorship prior to the research taking place was indeed

dysfunctional for many of the pupils at the school as the provision was not available to all children who needed it; following a reflection carried out with the Link Learning Mentor and the school learning mentors the practices were thus redefined. In summary:

- The school context is such that the school was allocated funding for two fulltime learning mentors;

- The allocation was a response to the surrounding area being designated as one of high deprivation with a community that now has a third generation of unemployed adults.

- The majority of families accessing the school are non-nuclear with many having only a single parent.

- Pre-school experience is limited.

- It is known that quite a large minority of the children deal daily with problems and concerns at home that impact on their school life, their behaviour and attainment.

The research began with a review and subsequent redefinition of the learning mentor practices. This resulted in the removal of the learning mentors from four specified year groups to form a team that would respond to the needs of children as they arise, basing the team approach on the ethos proposed by Bennathan & Boxall (2000). The use of this ethos was hence the initial focus of the piece of research; when the focus was later reviewed it was recognised that this ethos already contributed to the socialisation of children into the school culture (The People's Dictionary, undated) and so remained an integral part of the research. The research thus focused on the work of the learning mentor team; how the theory of learning mentorship was

interpreted in practice and the impact this made on identified children within the primary school at the heart of the research. However, from the outset, it was accepted (and has been referred to throughout the research report) that the research data may indicate that the changes to learning mentorship put into practice after the initial audit - and the subsequent evolution of learning mentorship practices - may not lead to an improved provision. If, at any point, the evolving provision was considered to be less effective than the previous model then the previous model would be returned to. In addition, if the research continued throughout the designated period of time it was acknowledged that the findings of the research would identify one of the following outcomes:

- The previous system more effectively met the needs of the children;

- The evolved system fully met the schools' and the children's needs;

- The system needed further development in order to meet the needs of the children more effectively.

And so the research results would be acted upon in response to one of these three outcomes. It was thus to the credit of the learning mentors employed by the school that they worked hard to establish the team approach to learning mentorship when the research may then have concluded that the approach developed may not be an improvement on the previous provision. The approach developed, based upon the nurture group ideals, was nonetheless judged to be a success way before the end of the research period, as this comment from one of the learning mentors demonstrates well:

> I found it quite hard, working separately even though we're a
> whole school and we do talk about things with each other. To
> work as a team is easier. We can bounce of each other and
> you don't feel as isolated. We know that if a child comes to

you with a particular problem or they're upset, we know that
anyone of us could deal with it. If you're in a particular Year
group or class, you're the only one that has that problem
given to you. You feel that you can deal with it if you can
share it with someone else. That's what we've done.

I too firmly believed in the new approach and the research data justified this belief, as considered within chapter six. It demonstrated that the team approach was workable, proactive and was improving the engagement of targeted pupils in the life of the school. It was particularly pleasing that it was the learning mentors themselves that led the development of the new approach, albeit with the support of the Local Authority's Link Learning Mentor, and thus ensured that the approach was put into practice thoughtfully and carefully. When considering the team approach to learning mentorship in practice we recognised that it was a radical change to the provision established at the school and expected that there would be a mixture of opposition and surprise amongst the staff at the changes we were making. However, we believed in the approach, and then the research findings demonstrated that we were right to introduce it. Indeed the LEA Link Learning Mentor supported this view by stating:

It was part and parcel of the acting head's school vision, your
vision, what you wanted to try. To move forward. Its
knowing how to do that. To take the bull by the horns and go
with it, and that's what you've done. Some things will work,
some things won't. It's a learning curve.

The data collected from the children at this time also reinforced the view that the approach established was effective. The attitude and behaviour scales they completed above all showed how the pupils' attitudes to school had improved; they were happier in school; in the classroom and with their own behaviour. Consequently, following the formal evaluation of the learning mentor provision at this stage, the focus of the

research was amended to take into consideration the context of the school at this time; this amendment was outlined in chapter seven. It must be noted that, at the time the amendment to the focus was considered, it was expected to be a change in direction for the research. However, the change was accepted as identifying the focus of the research to be on the socialisation of the child yet the background reading carried out demonstrated that this was a fundamental responsibility of the learning mentor without being stated overtly. Thus the re-focusing of the research merely expanded the focus from learning mentorship provision within the learning mentor base to the role of the learning mentor in the wider school environment.

With respect to the understanding of the concept of learning mentorship across the staff as a whole, this developed slowly throughout the research period and was aided by the raising of awareness through meetings and through the research itself. Nonetheless, it was accepted that this development of understanding was particularly slow and, at times, inhibited the evolution of the learning mentor role. The teaching staff became able to refer to barriers to learning and understood that there was a pastoral side to the role. However, it was accepted that much more work was needed to ensure all staff in school could appreciate the full nature of the role that the research was aiming to demonstrate.

Following the evaluation of its effectiveness, the research would draw conclusions from the findings and make recommendations for further developing the provision of learning mentorship; indeed, that is the purpose of this concluding chapter of the research report.

Case study

The research, in the form of a case study reporting on one *case*, took place in one school. It was considered if the research could actually be described as a piece of action research due to the three distinct cycles of research identified:

- an *action* carried out related to the provision of learning mentorship;

- followed by a period of review which led to changes to the provision;

- further action.

The categorisation of action research was however rejected, as the research was not concerned with the *before* and *after* provision of learning mentorship within the school. It could also have been categorised a piece of grounded theory research due to the learning mentor provision being allowed to evolve as the data was analysed but, again, this was rejected as the research was designed to be a sensitive, systematic study into the interpretation of the role of the learning mentor and did not seek to generate *theory* relating to learning mentorship provision. It was thus an ethnographic study with myself, as researcher, being involved in the interpretation of the role of the learning mentor, albeit in the role of acting headteacher of the institution in which the research took place. It was hence categorised as a case study using the definition of Bassey (1995), that a case study is an *enquiry* of a setting. The definition of *enquiry* was important as the research was not to be concerned with testing a theory, in that it would not be based simply on a change to practice that would be monitored, evaluated and a judgement made on the value of the change. The importance of the research was that it would be responsive to the needs of both the school and the children and so must allow for the learning mentorship to develop over time whereas the use of a theory-testing piece of research may deny the children the most effective form of

learning mentorship that the school could provide. Thus the research was based firmly on an inductive approach, beginning with specific observations and moving through the process of detecting patterns; suggesting hypotheses to be explored and finally developing general conclusions. The approach is therefore open-ended and exploratory, as this piece of research has demonstrated; this is in contrast to a deductive approach which has a narrower focus that is concerned with testing or confirming hypotheses. The research as carried out thus ensured that the role of the learning mentor could evolve within the setting, by beginning with an identified change to practice which was then allowed to grow and act in response to need. The developing system was then evaluated at intervals throughout the research period and recommendations, rather than judgements, made regarding the system of delivery.

The initial aims for the research were to:

- Establish the main features of the nurture group ethos within the work of the learning mentor team;

- Evaluate the effects of the nurture group ethos on the attainment of targeted children in one large primary school;

- Evaluate the effects of the nurture group ethos on behaviour as a secondary focus;

- Make recommendations for the continuing provision of learning mentorship within the school.

However, following a review of the data and its analysis at the mid-point of the research it was concluded that progress towards these aims were as follows:

- Features of the nurture group ethos were well-established in the work of the learning mentor team, and so the first aim had already been met;

- The effects of the ethos on the attainment of targeted children were being considered but could not yet be fully evaluated;

- The effects of the nurture group ethos on behaviour was now being considered as a primary focus rather than a secondary focus, due to the changing nature of the school;

- Although an aim for the end of the research period, recommendations for the continuing provision of learning mentorship within the school were already being considered.

It was accepted that the research could carry on as set out with these aims still being relevant but I believed that I was not getting to the heart of learning mentorship through the research and so questioned whether the research focus would lead to the identification of a model of provision that we could accept as the most effective within school. In addition, the mid-point review highlighted behaviour and behaviour management as becoming a primary concern rather than a secondary concern, with the data collected clearly indicating that the learning mentors did not impact on the children solely when working in the learning mentor base. The research focus was thus considered to be too narrow in focus and so the notion of expanding the focus, in order to investigate further the effects of learning mentorship on behaviour, was explored. It was this exploration than led onto the identification of socialisation as a factor in the barriers to learning exhibited by a small yet significant minority of the children, including the targeted cohort. Therefore, although the overwhelming majority of children displayed appropriate behaviours, and consequently were able to access fully the school society, learning mentorship now became central to the effective and efficient socialisation of the small minority of pupils. Indeed the data

collected demonstrated that the cohort of targeted children wanted this themselves as they were enthusiastic about school and wanted to learn but recognised that they needed help to access school and school life. I therefore came to believe that socialisation was an integral part of learning mentorship that was not restricted to their work in the learning mentor base. Thus, although the use of the nurture group ethos was considered to be essential to the development of learning mentorship provision, the wider application of the approach needed to be considered. The re-focusing of the research therefore aided the evaluation of the nurture group ethos within the wider socialisation aspect of learning mentorship. The core purpose of the research however remained the same, to tell the story of the developments over one year and to determine any further changes needed to provide an effective model of learning mentorship provision.

The research was identified as being carried out and reported with respect to the ideals of feminist research due to the inherent beliefs of myself as the researcher, including my openness to the use of a variety of sources of data; how the data would be interpreted and how the research report would be presented. These ideals thus allowed for the changing nature of the school to be recognised and taken into consideration throughout the research; indeed it was the recognition that the school ethos had changed under my acting headship, due to my style of leadership, that led to the identification of the school as a society and to the re-focusing of the research, as noted. What was of marked difference in this situation, in contrast to other schools where there is a change in leadership following the appointment of a new headteacher and consequently to a changing school society, was the suddenness of the departure of the previous headteacher. Under normal conditions there would be a period of certainty, with a continuum of events as outlined in figure 9:1 overleaf.

Figure 9:1 - Process of Change of Head Teacher

Present headteacher signals their departure

↓

Next headteacher visits the school and meets staff and children

↓

Departing headteacher introduces new headteacher formally to staff and children
Departing headteacher conveys their approval of the hand-over of the school

↓

Celebration event for the departing headteacher held

↓

Welcome event for the new headteacher held
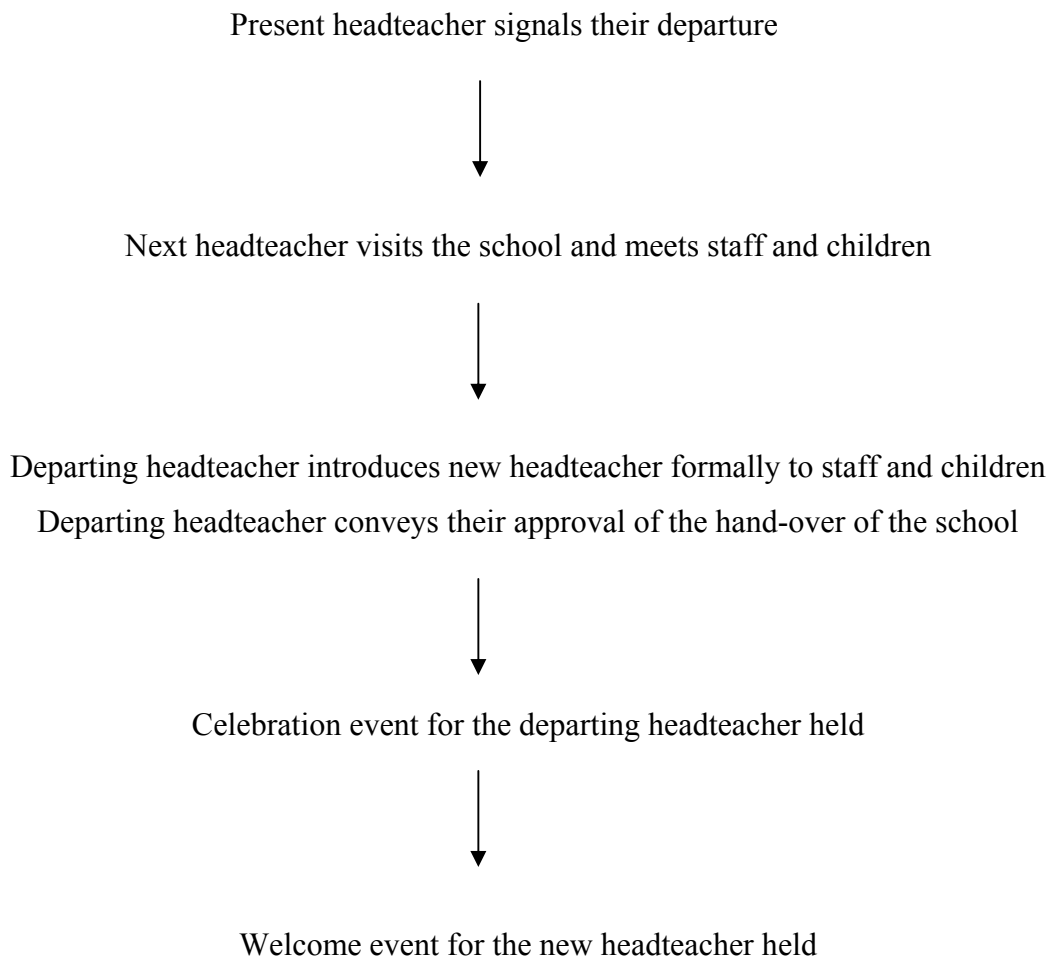
The process outlined in figure 9:1 was hence denied the children at the school in which the research took place. Not only did the previous headteacher leave the school suddenly, the staff and children were not told the full circumstances around his departure. The Local Education Authority had instructed me, as acting headteacher, in how to manage the headteacher's exit from the school, including the provision of a simple explanation for his absence however, a fuller account of the circumstances around his departure were then featured in the local press. What resulted from this was a very confused situation for both the staff and, more importantly, for the children. Not only were they denied the opportunity to take part in the hand-over

process as described in figure 9:1, which would have allowed for me - as the acting headteacher - to be accepted by the school community, but they had not been told the full truth initially and so were unsure what they could believe from what I said subsequently. Indeed this result of the sudden departure of the previous headteacher was first recognised by the Link Learning Mentor. In the early stages of my acting headship it was unclear when, or if, the previous headteacher would be able to return to his post. He was expected to return at some point during the first few weeks of his absence but as the absence continued it was accepted as increasingly unlikely that he would return; this was another uncertainty to add to the situation the school found itself in. It can thus be appreciated how the children in particular had to come to terms with a quite unusual situation. There was confusion about what had really happened to the previous headteacher; what would happen to him in the future and whether he would return to school. This confusion included concerns about why I was leading the school rather than the headteacher; why I wasn't telling them the truth about the situation and why I was making changes in school rather than doing exactly what the previous headteacher had done. It is surprising that these implications of the sudden departure of the previous headteacher were not immediately recognised, indeed had they been acknowledged earlier the pattern of learning mentorship could have responded much sooner. In view of this, it is understandable that a number of children could not accept the situation the school found itself in and thus needed support to adapt to both the changing situation and the changing society. It was therefore this recognition that identified *the role of the learning mentor in the socialisation of the child* as the focus of the research, thus leading to the consideration here of the impact of the learning mentor approach that had evolved throughout the research period.

The main body of the research involved the evolution of learning mentorship practice, with the effectiveness of the approach investigated through the collection of background data about learning mentorship; the views and perceptions of a small number of adults involved in the research and the thoughts of a targeted cohort of children who accessed the learning mentorship provision. Although it could have been considered (Bryman 2001) that the research actually centred on a baker's dozen of case studies of individual children, as a profile of each child was built up using background information and interviews with both the child and the learning mentors, it was accepted that the research involved much more than a narrow exploration of each of the children's development throughout the research period. Indeed the data identified for collection needed to investigate the attitudes and experiences of the researched – adults and children - in order to provide a basis for conclusions to be drawn. For this reason the data needed to take many forms and thus was collected using a variety of strategies, including questionnaire, interview, and other communications. In turn, the data to be collected indicated an open-ended, narrative style of research, as presented in this report.

Although case study was the preferred research technique, it must be noted that case study is accepted (Yin, 1984) to have many disadvantages, including lack of rigour; biased views recorded; the provision of little basis for generalisability and the production of a wide variety of data that makes the research report both long and, at times, even unreadable. In order therefore to evaluate the research carried out here it is important to address these identified disadvantages.

<u>Lack of rigour</u>

Although Yin (1984) cites lack of rigour as a major disadvantage of case study research, Tellis (1997) conversely reports a concern regarding the limitations of quantitative data, thus suggesting that the qualitative data generated by case study research yields more meaningful insights into the focus of the research. Indeed Bell (1993) states overtly that qualitative data is more than acceptable due to this *insight* rather than merely producing a statistical analysis of the issue. Henwood & Pidgeon (1993, p.14) however stress that qualitative research '…cannot be reduced merely to questions of gathering, analysing and reporting non-numeric data.' thus confirming the need to generate theory from the findings. This was particularly important to the research reported here, that reliable recommendations could be made from the research and that this would be achieved through a rigorous process of data collection, analysis and evaluation. The research report thus far has detailed how such rigour was achieved, through the triangulation of data collection; the considered explanations given for the choice of data collection methods used; the detailed analysis carried out and the justifications given for the conclusions drawn from the data. Throughout reference has been made to published sources to consider the choices being made and to further ensure rigour to the research process.

Rigour was also ensured by the collection of data and analysis running side by side, with evaluations carried out at specific intervals. Each evaluation stage was used to ensure that the approach to learning mentorship was at least as effective as the model used before the research took place and centred on the criteria for success identified, as outlined in chapter three, that the children would achieve:

- an increased access to the curriculum;

- increased attainment;

- a more positive attitude to school;

- a reduction in the behaviours that, if unchecked, may lead to a fixed term or permanent exclusion from school.

As noted above, that the approach to learning mentorship developing was at least as effective as the previous model was one of the overriding considerations within the research, as the needs of the children were paramount throughout the research period. It was an unquestionable condition of the research that if, at any point in the research, it became apparent that the current provision was judged to be clearly less effective than the previous model it would be amended immediately, even if this resulted in reverting back to the original model used. It was imperative to this consideration that the research, and the report, was both reflective and evaluative. Reflections and evaluations consequently took place at regular points throughout the research, including both formal and informal reflections that related to the data being collected and observations made.

Recording of biased views

Again this aspect of case study research, the recording of biased views, is cited as a disadvantage by Yin (1984) but disputed by Tellis (1997, p3). Tellis describes case study as being carried out '…in such a way that incorporates the views of the "actors" in the case under study.' and stresses that such views must be considered *legitimate*. Due to the research being carried out within one institution and centred on one aspect of that institution's practice I, as the researcher, accepted that all views expressed would be, for this reason, both valid but biased. They would naturally be based on the respondents' understandings of the issue under research from their own

perspective. However, the taking of the views of different groups of adults and the cohort of children, thus generating data from the different perspectives, provided the triangulation necessary to find the commonality of views that would lead to the identification of trends or commonly-held perceptions. Also, as it was accepted that the views expressed were biased, the quality of the data analysis was known to be of paramount importance; indeed Silverman (1993) regards this quality of data analysis to be most important within any piece of research. Silverman (1993) states that the analysis necessarily takes raw data, interprets it and identifies trends and patterns. Thus the views expressed were known to be biased and so were analysed accordingly.

Much thought was given to the collection of data from the children, to ensure both rigour and to fully explore their views about learning mentorship. Interviews were identified, to be carried out as group interviews to allow for dialogue between the children and with the researcher, and yet it was accepted that the interviewer may influence the children's responses. Thus a second method of collecting their data was indicated, in order to validate the data collected through interview. Questionnaire was considered but rejected due to the age of the children; attitude and behaviour scales were however considered to be a reliable alternative to questionnaire and could be easily accessed by the children (Greig & Taylor, 1999; Proctor, 1993; Burns, 2000). Babbie (1995) describes attitudes, as listed on the scales, as *orientations, beliefs and prejudices,* whilst Greig and Taylor (1999) recognise that such scales provide information about a child's thoughts of their own world however, Proctor (1993) and Burns (2000) both caution that the use of such scales requires great care in their collection, close attention to detail and analysis which justifies the interpretations made; as this piece of research has done.

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Educational research is accepted (Bassey, 1999; Black, 2002) as being critical, systematic enquiries that are used to expand shared knowledge and understanding that, in turn, informs educational judgements and decisions. What is termed generalisability is what can be learned from a piece of research that can be used in other settings (Loftland and Loftland, 1995); indeed this is one of the main purposes of any research. However, this case study was carried out in one institution only and can thus be considered to be a specific, small-scale study with the results – and conclusions - related only to this one institution. This view is supported by the learning mentor guidance (Smith, 2000) that states that the role of the learning mentor is responsive to both the individual needs of the children and the needs of the school. The research arose because of my thoughts that the school's provision was not responding fully or effectively to the needs of both the children and the school at this time; my thoughts were echoed by the learning mentors employed within the school, that there was an inequality in the provision of learning mentorship within the school. The research would therefore be institution-specific, indeed Black (2002) describes this type of study as both isolated and subjective and, consequently, not generalisable. However, Ratcliffe (1999) states that such studies may produce valuable research results, generating knowledge that is indeed generalisable. It is my belief that the findings of this piece of research are *transferable* to other schools rather than *generalisable*, as there is both practical and professional value in the findings that can be adapted for other settings, specifically with reference to the recommendations to be made for the use of learning mentorship to impact on the socialisation of the child. Black (2002), although disputing the generalisability of the research findings, would support my belief through his consideration of the *relatability* of research findings.

Stake (1994) defines relatability simply as how the findings relate to other situations; that it is pertinent to compare the situation studied and other situations, and that other settings may be interested in the application of the conclusions of the study (Bassey, 1995; Schofield, 1993).

Produce long and unreadable reports

The range of data collection methods used within this piece of research, albeit considered necessary to the research, did indeed yield much data with the majority of which was qualitative data that was interesting as raw data and also as analysed data. Although interpreting the data in a quantitative form would undoubtedly have reduced the length of the research report it would also have removed a good deal of the understanding of learning mentorship from it; indeed the decision to write the enquiry as a chronological, narrative account allowed for the data to chart the development of learning mentorship in the school. This was influenced by Bassey (1999) who sets out three distinct categories of case study, as outlined in chapter three, with this piece of research adhering to the second category of *telling the story* of a setting. Searle (1999) also clearly states that case study methods provide open-ended, narrative data; both these references thus provided justification for the narrative form of the research report. Consequently the research report has set out to describe how the research was identified and then to take the reader on a systematic, reflective and informed journey through the development of learning mentorship within one school. Through this I have explained decisions made along the way, resulting in what was judged to be an effective system of learning mentorship, albeit with further developments indicated. The resulting report may therefore be a longer report than one not adhering to the distinct category of case study outlined by Bassey (1999) but it is not *unreadable*.

Ratcliffe (1999, p18) supports this assertion by stating that case study reports '…should be readable and accessible, related to practice, and cumulative.' I believe that this report has adhered to all these recommendations as the use of narrative was explicitly chosen to ensure that it is both *readable and accessible.* The focus of the research ensured that the report is directly *related to practice* and it is cumulative in that it builds on existing knowledge, that available through published sources and the knowledge base of the reviewers involved in the research. Indeed this too supports the relatability of the research considered above as it was based on existing knowledge and is reflective of how a primary school pushed the boundaries of existing practice.

The University of Newcastle (undated) sets out an accepted form of research report that differs only in the *main text* presentation. The principal difference being the inclusion at the beginning of the research report of a chapter reviewing the work that has done in the area – background reading – whereas I have elected to use published sources throughout the report, including it at points in *the story* in order to consider the work already carried out in the area alongside the developments in the research as they occurred. Background reading thus continued throughout the whole research period, including the writing of this report, and so the reading is presented when it is relevant to the story rather than in a separate chapter within the research report although, when considering the change in focus of the research, it was appropriate to include a longer consideration of *Societies and Socialisation* within a reduced background reading chapter at a much later point in the research report. Background reading hence continued to be accessed and used when interpreting the data and drawing conclusions.

Within the University of Newcastle's recommended format for a research report (undated) the background reading chapter follows the introduction to the research and

immediately precedes chapters setting out the main results of the work and a summary of the main findings. In contrast, this report included chapters setting out the context of the research; defining the research and clarifying the scope of the research – all stages deemed necessary in order to demonstrate to the reader of the report the order of events in the research and why they occurred. This was important as the research was directly responsive to school needs; indeed the needs of the school and its pupils were of overriding importance during the carrying out of the research. However, this research report then adheres to the University of Newcastle's recommendations by ending with this chapter summarising the main findings of the research; considering the main contribution of the research and suggesting areas for further research.

Communicating the Results

As it is believed that the research carried out here is of value to both the school at the heart of the research and to other schools, the findings of the research thus need to be made public. Bassey (1995) cites three levels of communication of research findings – through personal communication, through informal interactive communication and by formal dissemination. Personal communication was not considered here as the findings needed to be shared both in school and beyond; informal interactive communication was much more relevant to the dissemination within the school at the heart of the research and within the Local Authority whilst formal dissemination is relevant as the research has been carried out and reported at doctoral level. The communication of the results through this formal report will thus expand the shared knowledge of the provision of learning mentorship within the primary sector.

I believe that this is a piece of original research that will add to the present knowledge regarding effective learning mentorship as, currently, there continues to be little written about research into learning mentorship. What is available are examples of both the process and product of the results of learning mentorship (St James-Roberts & Singh, 2001; Hayward, 2001; National Mentoring Network, undated) and so the research will add to this knowledge base. I believe that interest in the role, in particular research into the role, will develop due to the demands of the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* **(**DfES, 2003**)** that led to the establishment of the five outcomes of the *Every Child Matters* legislation underpinning the work of all schools (and agencies) delivering services to children and young people. The demands set out a requirement for a professional in school to be responsible for children's well-being; the learning mentor strand of the Excellence in Cities initiative thus appears to fulfil this need. Indeed Smith (2002, p2), when writing about the learning mentor initiative, described the role of the primary school as a whole to provide a

> …learning atmosphere where every child succeeds in some
> way and where every adult works towards helping every child
> to achieve his or her potential.

Clearly this description points to a collective responsibility for children's well-being, with teaching and learning being supported by all adults, not solely the teachers, in order to develop the '…intellectual, social, emotional and physical abilities of the child (Smith 2002, p4). It can therefore be appreciated from this that schools now need further professionals to complement the work of the teacher. This also agrees with the rationale behind the introduction of the initiative, as described by Morris (BBC 1999b), who stated that learning mentorship would have enabled her to carry out the core role of a teacher, that of teaching.

It must be reiterated here that initially the learning mentors were expected to be specialist teachers who would concentrate on addressing pupils' problems at home, in order to improve a child's access to the curriculum in school. However, in addition to changing the workforce from that of specialist teachers to specialist support staff, the focus changed from that of addressing problems at home to addressing any problems that impact on a child's access to school life as a whole. The results of this case study were therefore to be evaluated with respect to the effective deployment of learning mentors and how this deployment impacted on the children's access to the curriculum offered by the school. The research is therefore timely and makes recommendations for both the establishment of an effective approach to learning mentorship and for suggested further research into the role in practice.

Conclusions

As noted throughout the research report, I was contracted within the institution being researched to be acting headteacher for a limited period of time only, and so the conclusions to be drawn from the research would therefore be communicated, in the first instance, to the new headteacher. At the time of the research it was not known whether the new headteacher would have had any knowledge of the learning mentor initiative, in either theory or practice. It was thus of major importance to this school, in addition to the wider educational community, that the findings of the research were sound, in order to ensure either continuity of provision or the development of provision, following the appointment of a new headteacher. Therefore, in order to draw meaningful conclusions from the research, the main intention of the research needed to be referred to. For that reason, the description of mentoring that became central to the study, provided by Malderez (2001), also needed to be returned to. This

description (Malderez 2001, p57) stated that mentoring is the '…integration into and acceptance by a specific community', and was used to identify the role of the *learning* mentor; to set the enquiry in context and, in turn, to identify socialisation as an important aspect of the role, particularly in view of the changing nature of the school being investigated. It is thus with respect to this definition that it has been established how this piece of research concerned much more than the introduction of a new pattern of working for a relatively new workforce, to be evaluated and conclusions drawn to its effectiveness; that it resulted in a case study in the widest sense that would explore the evolution of the effective practice of the workforce, to be investigated within both the specific context of the school in which the research would take place and within a consideration of the background to the national introduction of this workforce. The research was accordingly used to define the role of the learning mentor within the school and then led to conclusions being able to be drawn for sharing the best practice developed with other institutions and those interested in developing school-specific effective learning mentorship.

Throughout the data analysis common themes were identified; the themes identified at the mid-point review led directly to the re-focusing of the research whilst the themes identified from the final data collection stage are used here to draw the conclusions to the research and thus the recommendations to be made. The conclusions have hence been made with respect to these identified themes:

- The belief, by both the adults and the children directly involved in the research, that the model of learning mentorship developed by the school can be considered *effective,* with respect to the benefits for the children; the learning mentors and the school's needs;

- That the team approach, based on the use of the nurture group ethos, had become central to the delivery of learning mentorship in the school, now needed to determine what the balance should be between proactive and reactive work, in-class and out of class support and between shared and individual timetables and responsibilities for the learning mentors, linked to the school timetable.

- The focus group of children have improved attitudes towards school, are more able to access school and their learning, indeed in the core areas of English and maths there were nineteen out of twenty six increases in attainment for the targeted cohort.

- Socialisation had become embedded in the work of the learning mentors and that the children are able to articulate how they appreciate the school society; how they now feel comfortable within that society because they know what is expected of them and so try to behave accordingly;

- The children believe that good behaviour is important in school. They are able to discuss appropriately their own behaviour; the behaviour of others; how this affects learning and how support improves behaviour.

- They learning mentors and the children both held a good understanding of the process of learning mentorship; how it supports the core purpose of teaching; that learning mentorship should be time limited yet available when needed, but that the staff's lack of understanding about the process of learning mentorship needed to be addressed in order to continue to develop the school's provision of learning mentorship.

These themes also address the criteria for success of the research, as outlined in chapter three, and stated as the targeted cohort of children (the baker's dozen) achieving:

- Increased access to the curriculum

- Increased attainment

- A more positive attitude to school

- A reduction in the behaviours that, if unchecked, may lead to a fixed term or permanent exclusion from school

It can clearly be seen from the common themes identified through the end of year data analysis, reported at length in chapter eight, that all these criteria were met; thus deeming the research to be successful in addressing the development of effective learning mentorship, particularly with respect to the socialisation of the child.

Recommendations

One of the most surprising conclusions to be made from the third period of data collection (indeed this was the key conclusion from the research for me) arose through my observations of the children during the group and individual interviews. Their responses and my observations when carrying out the group interviews indicated a deep lack of interest by the children in the questions being posed. The group interviews were followed up with individual interviews which were much more successful in eliciting the children's views about a range of issues in school, but again the children displayed a noticeable lack of interest in any questions relating to the learning mentors and their interactions with the learning mentors. Upon reflection, I was able to conclude that this lack of interest was appropriate as the children being

interviewed had benefited from the learning mentorship to the point that they no longer needed the support of the learning mentors. This was quite a revelation at the point of identification, although I have acknowledged that it should have been anticipated through the guidance of Hayward (2001). Until that point in the research we had not considered that the cohort would cease to need learning mentorship within the research period. Indeed we had assumed that once children were identified as needing learning mentorship they would require supporting for an extended period of time. This view was reinforced by the identification of the research cohort as all had received learning mentorship support the previous year. However, the previous model of learning mentorship provided support for children who often needed support to access the curriculum due to learning needs rather than because they had identified barriers to learning and so it was appreciated that the assumption made was flawed. Accordingly, the learning mentor guidelines (Liverpool Excellence Partnership, 2003) and Smith (2000) were consulted; this led to the identification of an intervention period of one to three terms being the average period of time that a child requires learning mentorship for their barrier to learning to be addressed. This intervention period would be followed by re-integration into class and a staged withdrawal from mentorship. We had not offered this process to the children and yet they themselves had recognised their improvements in socialisation within the school; had begun to withdrawn themselves from the learning mentor provision and began to access the classroom fully. This alone indicates the success of the approach developed by the school, as the pupils were able to take the lead themselves in recognising that they no longer exhibited barriers to learning related to the school's rules and routines. Three particular responses indicated that the children were able to identify for themselves their own improvements with respect to socialisation within the school as they could

adhere to the rules and routines. One child reported that school was *better than last year*, indeed better than *all years I've been here* citing that this was because he'd *just realised what you'd expect*, in other words, he was clear about the society I now represented. This view was reinforced by a second child who stated that his behaviour had improved because he now knew he *had to be good*, because the school and his parents had taught him that. When asked how school had helped him he replied that we had *taught me more*, that we had *pushed me a bit further*. The third child shared these views by responding that he knew what to do in school because we had taught him – school and his parents. These responses thus clearly support the notion of my headship having changed the school society; that the children now felt socialised into the society because they knew what was expected of them and so tried to behave accordingly and could acknowledge how they had become socialised. The data collected accordingly indicated that the learning mentorship provision established through the research period is effective in socialising targeted children within the changed school society, thus enabling the children to build up both the skills and understandings necessary for accessing the school community. In addition, the research data agrees with the suggested time limit for learning mentorship and so, in hindsight, the learning mentor team should have planned to support the identified children for one to three terms and to then begin the transition stage of working towards removing their support. This would also ensure that the children would not become dependant on the learning mentors, and would quickly develop the strategies needed to manage their own barrier to learning; this would therefore be the first recommendation to be made from this piece of research. However, it must be noted that this recommendation appears to be in contrast to the findings of St James-Roberts & Singh (2001) who concluded that mentoring cannot achieve a significant

behavioural change within one year. However, the St James-Roberts & Singh (2001) study cites that mentoring can bring about the development of confidence, self-control, social awareness and social relationships; these gains were certainly mirrored in this research and it was through these developments that the children were more able to access school and, in turn, to demonstrate more acceptable behaviours. The evaluations made of the data collected from the children at the end of the research period hence do agree with the guidance that the most effective intervention is that which takes place over one to three terms, with respect to the socialisation of the child.

It was pleasing to identify within the research that the children had a good understanding of the role of the learning mentor and appreciated how learning mentorship supported them in accessing school and in accessing their own learning; indeed their views influenced the direction of the research and pointed to the main findings of the research. The children's responses collected after the learning mentor team approach had been established and used for a time indicated that the children perceived the learning mentor base to be quieter, calmer and more effective in providing an appropriate working atmosphere. They believed that the *rules* within the base were different to those of the classroom and tried much harder to adhere to them, even though they mirrored the rules established throughout the school. Cooper et al (2001) note that whilst the nurture group surroundings provide a more pleasant environment for the children to work in, it is the holistic approach of the ethos that is important to the effectiveness of such groups. Although it could therefore have been argued that the nurture group ethos should be adopted through school, deeming the research to have provided this as a recommendation, this would necessitate training in the principles of the philosophy and the provision of full-time teaching assistance for

each class – to ensure the adult modelling required by the ethos. It is therefore a second recommendation of the research that the nurture group ethos is adopted and used consistently by two or more learning mentors within a school, or by one learning mentor and another adult in school. The provision of a base for learning mentorship activities to take place both greatly enhances the work of the learning mentors and the use of the ethos but is not essential to the use of the nurture group principles.

The National Mentoring Network (undated) sets out five key points to be considered when using mentorship. Within these key points it is stated that mentoring is '…not a panacea, a cure-all or universal remedy…' and so it is to be used alongside other support strategies used in schools. It must be remembered that at the early stages of the research the teaching staff viewed learning mentorship to be exactly what the National Mentoring Network states that it should not be and the research was used, in part, to try to change this view. However, it was concluded that more information sharing was needed with the school's staff in order to address their misconceptions and that more sharing should have taken place earlier in the research period. The staff needed to understand more fully the purpose of learning mentorship in order to appreciate its effectiveness and its place in supporting other strategies being used by teachers and teaching support staff. Indeed one of the areas to be addressed next by the learning mentors, identified within the data collection period by one of the learning mentors, was training for dealing with children with difficult behaviour. It was noted at the time that this was a surprising response as the learning mentors are already well trained and respond extremely well to such children and so it was concluded that the response was prompted by many of the teachers' over-reliance on the learning mentors to deal with all behaviour problems as they arose. This conclusion was reinforced by the response that stated learning mentors needed to be

really flexible…to deal with whatever needed to be dealt with. Clearly the teachers needed to understand how the learning mentors were supporting the school behaviour issues by working proactively rather than relying on reactive measures when incidences of misbehaviour occurred. The teachers, and all support staff, thus need to be knowledgeable about the specific role of the learning mentor, and so the third recommendation to be made from the research, which is relevant to schools introducing learning mentorship or changing their practice, is therefore that information sharing and development of understanding should take place at the beginning of the introduction or change. The Link Learning Mentor added to this recommendation by suggesting that referral packs should be issued to teaching staff setting out clear criteria for referral and information about how referrals would be dealt with and the strategies that could be employed by the learning mentors with the referred child. It was also noted that, as the role in the school was evolving, information sharing could not simply take place at the beginning of the introduction or change but needed to take place at regular intervals. The data collected throughout the research period demonstrated that, although misconceptions about the role of the learning mentor remained, understanding was developing. I continued to believe that, as the new provision became embedded within the school, the work of the learning mentors would become more explicit and appreciated by the staff. The data collected thus confirmed that the teaching staff could talk about the product of learning mentorship but that their misconceptions related to the process of learning mentorship and so it was with respect to this aspect of learning mentorship that further information sharing was needed. Thus, in addition to the recommendation that information sharing and the development of understanding of staff needs to take place at the beginning of the introduction of learning mentorship, or when a change to

practice is made, further information sharing, in the form of updates, needs to be planned for over time. This would then be used to ensure that the whole school community works towards a shared definition of the process of learning mentorship.

The remaining key points regarding the use of mentorship identified by the National Mentoring Network (undated) include that the provision needs to be well planned and coordinated, with adequate time and resources allocated to it. The initial review of the school's interpretation of the learning mentorship initiative identified that this key point was not met in full, as the learning mentors were allocated to only four out of the seven year groups in school with the target group of children later identified from within the year groups allocated a learning mentor. The provision of learning mentorship now in place in the school meets the key point in full as it is well planned and responsive to need. It is this response to need that is one further recommendation of the research. Alongside this need to fully plan the provision is the requirement to consider the intended outcomes at the time of introduction of the provision. The outcomes of the research carried out here were considered and set out at the beginning of the research, which then allowed for an evaluation against the outcomes to take place; this piece of research would recommend that the use of learning mentorship should be evaluated at regular intervals, to ensure that it is effective in responding to school and pupil needs. Unfortunately, within the research, detailed records of learning mentorship with individuals and groups of pupils were not kept regularly by the learning mentors, although this had been agreed as a requirement at the planning stage. The recording format had been found to be onerous and time to complete them not available and yet the completion of such records would have aided the necessary evaluation of the school's learning mentorship provision. The use of a simplified system of record-keeping, for which time is allocated for their completion,

is thus another recommendation from the research. Although not directly linked to the focus of the research, this recommendation is relevant to the key points identified by the National Mentoring Network.

The research highlighted the need to form appropriate relationships between the learning mentor and mentee, a further key point made by the National Mentoring Network (undated); indeed appropriate relationships were featured in the data collected from the adults, stressing how important they were to learning mentorship. It is therefore recommended that time and strategies for relationships to be formed should be included in learning mentorship provision.

Within the research period, as reflected in the data collected, a re-occurring theme was that of *balance*; balance between proactive and reactive work, between a core caseload and a flexible caseload, between groupwork and individual work, between specific learning mentorship activities and in-class support and between individual and team learning mentor timetables. With respect to the use of proactive strategies and reactive measures by the learning mentors to address the needs of the targeted children it was concluded that a balance was needed for learning mentorship to be fully effective. This was demonstrated most clearly when considered alongside the issue of bullying where a range of proactive strategies were used to raise awareness – including speakers in school, themed weeks, assemblies, posters, circle time activities – and reactive measures were needed where incidences of bullying were reported. This conclusion, that balance was needed between the use of proactive strategies and reactive measures, naturally led onto the consideration of the identification of a workable caseload of targeted children for the learning mentors as a full caseload could not be identified at the beginning of the school year as this would not allow for reactive work to take place. Thus it was concluded that there needed to

be a balance established between an identified core caseload and a flexible caseload made up of children who may need learning mentorship at other times throughout the year. The Link Learning Mentor gave direction on how this balance could be managed, by having children within the core caseload nominated as high, medium or low priority with the children able to move from one priority level to another dependant upon need. This would then provide the time for the learning mentorship of the flexible caseload, where additional children are identified for proactive work or needing reactive measures. The research also briefly considered the balance between groupwork and individual, one to one mentoring. This was a brief reflection as this balance is well established within the guidance for the successful provision of learning mentorship and was found to be most effective within the school in which the research took place.

Another theme re-occurring within the research was that of specific learning mentorship activities, usually taking place in the learning mentor base, and in-class support. At the beginning of the research period the use of the learning mentor base was seen as vital to the development, and improvement, of the school's provision of learning mentorship. However, the school staff believed that in-class support was needed to support their work with the children. The balance of these two demands was addressed throughout the research period, with more in-class support provided as the year progressed. In-class support was also indicated as needed for the children to withdraw from needing the support of the learning mentors. Thus, although the Link Learning Mentor believed that the necessary reduction in specific, out of class, learning mentor activities to allow for more in-class support was a backward step in the evolution of the provision of learning mentorship within the school, it was concluded that such a balance was needed to provide effective learning mentorship

that was responsive to school needs. One child demonstrated this balance in practice when discussing at length the support he had received from the learning mentors when his behaviour was such that he needed to be removed from class for a period of time. He was supported out of class, within a small group, and then in-class on his return. The in-class support was reduced over time whilst some out of class support continued. The child recognised that this balance enabled him to develop the strategies to *coping in class by myself.*

The balance between individual and team timetables for the learning mentors has also been addressed through the research. Initially it was expected that a team timetable would be drawn up and adhered to but this was amended during the course of the research in response to the need to allocate some aspects of the role to individual mentors. Although not relevant to the focus of the research this balance nonetheless is to be recommended alongside the other balances cited. The next recommendation from this piece of research therefore includes the need for the balances identified; those between proactive and reactive work, between a core caseload and a flexible caseload, between groupwork and individual work, between specific learning mentorship activities and in-class support and between individual and team learning mentor timetables.

The recommendations made from the research can be summarised thus:

- That a time limit for learning mentorship is agreed, for one to three terms, and then a transition stage is put into place to work towards removing the learning mentor support.

- That the nurture group ethos is adopted and used consistently within learning mentorship, by two or more learning mentors within a school or by one learning mentor and another adult in school. If available in the school, the

provision of a base for learning mentorship activities to take place both greatly enhances the work of the learning mentors and the use of the ethos.

- Information sharing and the development of understanding of staff needs to take place at the beginning of the introduction of learning mentorship into a school and when a change to practice is made, to ensure the effectiveness of learning mentorship and to place it in the context of supporting other strategies used by teachers and teaching support staff. The provision of referral packs would aid in this information sharing process.

- Information sharing, in the form of updates, need to be planned for.

- The learning mentor provision needs to be well planned and coordinated, with adequate time and resources allocated to it, and is responsive to need.

- The intended outcomes need to be considered alongside the planning of the provision.

- The use of learning mentorship should be evaluated at regular intervals, to ensure that it is effective in responding to school and pupil needs.

- The use of a simplified system of record-keeping, with time allocated for their completion.

- Time and strategies for relationships to be formed between learning mentor and mentee should be included in learning mentorship provision.

- The planned learning mentor provision provides a balance between the use of proactive strategies and reactive measures; between an identified core caseload and a flexible caseload; between groupwork and individual work, between specific learning mentorship activities and in-class support and between individual and team learning mentor timetables. All balances to be established in response to pupil needs and school needs.

Future Research

The process of change of headteacher presented earlier in this chapter, in figure 9:1, was identified in the research as being central to the changes in behaviour of a small number of the children. The process lists a series of six linked events, as summarised here:

- Departure of present headteacher signalled;

- Visit to school by next headteacher, involving meetings with staff and children;

- New headteacher introduced formally to staff and children;

- Departing headteacher demonstrates approval of the hand-over of the school;

- Celebration event held for the departing headteacher held;

- Welcome event for the new headteacher held

The children at the school under research were denied this process, indeed the process they were presented is shown in figure 9:2 (overleaf) and summarised here:

- The present headteacher left the school abruptly;

- The new (acting) headteacher appointed immediately from within school staff;

- No contact was made between the departing headteacher and staff and children, therefore departing headteacher could not convey approval of the hand-over of the school;

- Celebration and welcome events not held;

- Full reasons for departure not given to staff and children;

- Work of the school continues.

Further research into the two models of the change of leadership would be of benefit to determine whether staff and children are suitably prepared for such a change and, more importantly, for the circumstances around the change.

Figure 9:2 - Process of Change of Head Teacher Presented to the Children Within the School Researched

Present headteacher leaves abruptly

↓

Next (acting) headteacher appointed from within school staff

↓

No contact made between departing headteacher and staff and children

↓

Celebration event for the departing headteacher not held

↓

Full reasons for departure not given to staff and children

↓

Welcome event for the new headteacher not held

↓

New (acting) headteacher carries on the work of the school

The results of further research could be used to investigate further the conclusion made within this piece of research regarding the process of leadership change and could lead to the avoidance of the decline in behaviour as experienced within this school. Although I experienced taking over the headship of the school under the process outlined in figure 9:2, which led to a sharp decline in behaviour overall, I have since experienced taking over the headship of a school following the process outlined in figure 9:1 and summarised on the page 302. The process involves a series of six linked events that signal the change of headteacher; conveys the approval of the new headteacher and involves celebration events for both the departing headteacher and for the new headteacher. I believe it was this series of events that led to my successful induction into my new school as headteacher. The children responded positively to me and freely talked about the departing headteacher – why she was leaving and where she was going. They knew that the departing headteacher *approved* of my appointment and so accepted the transition to my headship. Although I have also changed this school society, by bringing about change in policies and practices in much the same way as in the school in which the research took place, the children's behaviour here has not declined. Indeed I have further knowledge where two headteachers in nearby schools have left abruptly; thereby invoking the process outlined in figure 9:2 and in which the behaviour has sharply declined. This is in contrast to other schools where a change of headteacher has followed the sequence of events outlined in figure 9:1 and behaviour has been maintained. Thus further research would establish the worth of the process outlined in figure 9:1 and make recommendations for dealing with situations where this process cannot be used.

To return to the focus of the research, one particular response from one of the learning mentors demonstrated her belief that *socialisation* and the development of social skills was so important that it should be added formally to the school curriculum. She stated overtly that social skills should be in place *in classroom planning* so that socialisation takes place as a whole class activity on a regular basis. The learning mentor acknowledged that social skills are addressed in circle times but believed there would be more emphasis given if there were planned for activities that enabled the whole class to integrate socially. It is interesting to note that the SEAL initiative (DfES, 2007), the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning initiative, begins to address the learning mentor's suggestion. However, the research here has focused more closely on the school as a society rather than on learning as a social activity. Research which investigates the correlation between these two concepts, school as a society and learning as a social activity, could thus expand the knowledge of how children engage in both school life and learning and how children who are unable or are merely reluctant to engage can be supported.

It has been outside the remit of this piece of research to consider in detail how the socialisation of the child into the school society impacts on the world outside school and yet it is reported (DfEE, 1995; DfES, 2003) that schools play an important part in the socialisation of the child into the society as a whole. One of the learning mentor responses indicated that learning mentors are becoming more necessary in schools in order to support parents in teaching social skills, and thus socialisation, and so further research would be able to consider if investing in the socialisation of the child in the primary school provides the skills needed for children to relate to society as a whole. In the interim, it would be of interest to continue the research with this cohort of children in their next phase of education.

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Appendices

1. Learning mentor team and individual timetables

2. Programme of learning mentor activities

3. Description of each child in the baker's dozen

4. Questionnaire for teaching staff

5. Interview schedules

6. Attitude and behaviour Scales

7. Transcript of the unscheduled conversation

8. Learning mentor end of year review report

Appendix 1: Learning Mentor Team and Individual Timetables

Team timetable

	9.00 – 10.30	10.30 – 11.10	11.10 – 12.00	12.00 – 1.30	1.30 – 2.15	2.30 – 3.05
Mon	Small group work	Playground duty + break	Circle time groups	Lunchtime Club + break	Classroom support	Small group work
Tues	Circle time groups		Classroom support		Small group work	One –to-one activities
Weds	LM assembly + classroom support		Small group work		One –to-one activities	Small group work
Thurs	Small group work		Small group work		Circle time groups	Circle time groups + after school craft club
Fri	Planning + reward activities		Family groups		Reward activities	Reward activities/ one-to-one

Circle time – Anger management, friendship, bullying, self-esteem etc

Individual Timetables

Mrs Collins	Mrs Edwards	Mrs Jackson	Mrs Baker
Attendance – 1 day per week	Y5/Y6 Nurture Group – when group removed from classroom	Attendance – 4 days per week	Y5/Y6 Nurture Group – when group removed from classroom
Parent workshops	Parent workshops	Child Protection	Playground improvement
Child Protection	Multi Agency Support Team meetings	Case conferences/Core group meetings	Multi Agency Support Team meetings
Case conferences/Core group meetings	SEN support	Monitoring/ordering resources	
Monitoring/ordering resources			

Appendix 2: Programme of Learning Mentor Activities

- Parent workshops

- Parental liaison

- Group circle time

- Groupwork for anger management, circle of friends, self-esteem development

- Drop-in sessions for targeted children

- Twinning assemblies

- Lunchtime invitations

- Classroom support

  - in-class

  - in learning mentor base

  - through drop-ins

- After-school craft club

- Playground duty

- Child protection meetings

- MAST meetings

- Attendance monitoring

Appendix 3: Description of Each Child in the Baker's Dozen

Name: Jacob Morrison

Age: 8 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: Mixed race – Afro Caribbean

Ability: Below average

Home life: Looked after child – placed with foster parents

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Lack of concentration.

- Disrespectful towards adults

- Inappropriate behaviour

Name: Adam Johnson

Age: 8 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Below average

Home life: Nuclear family with four siblings in total

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Lack of interest in school.

- Lack of concentration

- Beginning to display inappropriate behaviours

Name: Emma Moore

Age: 9 years

Gender: Female

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Above average

Home life: Lives with mum, sister and mum's female partner

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Slow to complete tasks set

- Difficulty in maintaining friendships

- Aggressive outbursts

Name: Angela Peters

Age: 9 years

Gender: Female

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Average

Home life: Lives with mum and two siblings, her older brother has had numerous

              school exclusions and now attends a behavioural unit in addition to his

              secondary school placement.

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Inappropriate behaviour – will remove herself from the teaching situation

- Disrespectful to adults – can be verbally abusive

- Low concentration

Name: Robert Knowles

Age: 9 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Average

Home life: Lives with mother, father and twin brother - Peter – also one of the

                      baker's dozen

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Increasing misbehaviour, including aggressiveness towards children in year

   above him. Robert often loses his temper and needs time to calm down.

- Inconsistent approach to his learning

- Increasing rudeness to adults, including open defiance

Name: Peter Knowles

Age: 9 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Average

Home life: Lives with mother, father and twin brother – Robert - also one of the

                      baker's dozen

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Low self-esteem.

- Increasing misbehaviour, including removing himself from the classroom.

- Overt rudeness towards adults.

Name:		Bradley Shaw

Age:		9 years

Gender:		Male

Ethnicity:	White British

Ability:		Below Average

Home life:	Large single parent family

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Inappropriate behaviour

- Refusal to comply with adult direction

- Does not take responsibility for own actions

Name:		Ben Holt

Age:		10 years

Gender:		Male

Ethnicity:	White British

Ability:		Above Average

Home life:	Nuclear family with one (younger) sister

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Indifferent towards his learning

- Beginning to display more inappropriate behaviours

- Easily influenced by peers who behave inappropriately

Name: Daniel Hudson

Age: 10 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Below Average

Home life: Single parent family with four siblings; two siblings not full siblings

             having different fathers

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Low self-esteem

- Daily displays of very inappropriate behaviours, including verbal abuse of

  adults

- Refusal to engage in his learning

Name: Joe Evans

Age: 10 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Average

Home life: Lives with his older sister, brother-in-law and their two (younger)

             children

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Low concentration

- Inappropriate behaviour – including beginning fights at breaktimes

- Refusal to engage in his learning

Name: James Wilson

Age: 10 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Average

Home life: Nuclear family with one (younger) sister

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Lack of engagement with his learning

- Displays extremely disruptive and threatening behaviour

- Does not communicate with adults

Name: Michael Fowler

Age: 10 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Average

Home life: Nuclear family with one (younger) brother

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Lack of engagement with his learning

- Beginning to display inappropriate behaviours

- Does not communicate with adults

Name: Ian Scott

Age: 10 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Ability: Above average

Home life: Nuclear family with one (younger) sister

Main *barrier(s) to learning:*

- Very aggressive towards his peers

- Displays extremely disruptive and threatening behaviour

- Does not work to his potential

Appendix 4: Questionnaire for Teaching Staff

I am carrying out a piece of research into the theory and practice of the role of the learning mentor and how this aids the attainment of children in the curriculum. The research will focus on the barriers to learning that a significant number of children present in school, and to what extent the practice of the learning mentor team is successful in dealing with these barriers to learning.

The questions within this questionnaire are related to the work of the learning mentor in identifying, assessing and interacting with pupils who need help to overcome their barriers to learning and the support this gives to teachers.

All responses will be treated as anonymous and will be used solely within this one piece of research. I would be grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it to me before the October half-term break.

Thank you.

Q1.In which year did you start work as a teacher at this school? _____

Q2. How many full years have you worked with Learning Mentors?
(The Learning Mentor strand of Excellence in Cities began in 1999)
Please circle the appropriate length of time below.

None	1	2	3	4	5
(First year)					

Q3. How would you describe the role of the Learning Mentor?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q4. Have you at least one child in your class who exhibits a barrier to learning?
(Such barriers may include behavioural problems, difficulties at home and problems within school.)

Yes	No

Q5. Are the children in your class who exhibit barriers to learning currently meeting expected attainment levels within the curriculum?

Please circle the appropriate response below:

No - none are meeting expected levels	Some are meeting expected levels	Most are meeting expected levels	Yes - all are meeting expected levels

Q6. Are the children in your class who exhibit barriers to learning currently working with the Learning Mentor Team?

Please circle the appropriate response below:

No - none are working with the Team	Some are working with the Team	Most are working with the Team	Yes - all are working with the Team

Q7. In what ways are the children in your class who exhibit barriers to learning currently working with the Learning Mentor Team?

(List as many different ways below as you wish.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q8. It is reported that the effective learning mentor will carry out regular one-to-one sessions with children, agree targets with the child for areas of concern (e.g. attendance, behaviour and attainment) and talk through any concerns the child has which are impacting on his or her learning.

Do you think the ways the children in your class who exhibit barriers to learning are working with the Learning Mentor Team are supportive of this model?

Yes	No

Q9. Please comment further below on your response to Q8.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q10. It is also reported that the role of the learning mentor is to support identified children, freeing up the teacher to teach, and for the Learning Mentor to carry out the '…social work dimension of the primary teacher's role.'

Do you feel that the Learning Mentor Team is achieving this?

Yes	No

Q11. Please comment further below on your response to Q10.

_____

_____

_____

_____

That is the end of the questionnaire, thank you for taking the time to complete the questions.

Appendix 5: Interview Schedules

Learning Mentor

Link Learning Mentor

Children's Group Schedule

Interview Schedule - Learning Mentor 1

Introduction

- Welcome interviewee.
- Introduce my role as interviewer.
- Provide brief summary of research project and how the interview will provide relevant information.
- Explain use of tape recorder. Interviewees invited to operate the tape recorder.
- Ask if respondent is happy to be recorded.
- Explain how anonymity within the research is to be assured.
- Explain that as a respondent they will receive a copy of the interview questions and their answers at a later date for the respondent to 'check' the answers given.
- Ask if the respondent has any questions or would like anything said so far to be repeated.
- Begin interview, using prompts below.

Interview

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
How long have you been a learning mentor?	Question to 'break the ice'. Explore any other roles the interviewee has held in school. Did the respondent choose to take on the role or was it the head's suggestion.
How would you explain the role of the learning mentor?	General comments sought. Expect references to 'barriers to learning' and 'attendance'. Expect references to specific roles e.g. assisting the class teacher.
What did you understand by the team approach to your role?	Explore how the role has changed from a Year group-based approach to the team approach. Why the approach changed. How the interviewee expected the new approach to work.
Had you heard of nurture groups before I introduced it into school?	If no, proceed to next question. If yes, explore interviewee's ideas/knowledge of nurture groups.
How have you developed your knowledge of nurture groups?	Explore present understandings. Explore reasons for response given.
How would you describe the nurture group ethos of your room?	Explore present provision. Expect reference to weekly nurture group sessions. Explore other factors e.g. layout of room, lunchtime provision, etc.

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
In what way did you think establishing a nurture group ethos would affect your work with the children?	Open question. Expect interviewee to talk about benefits to socialisation of children. Follow up responses. Explore reasons for response given. Look for themes/connecting links. Use prompts from own knowledge of the nurture group ethos. (Interviewer not to provide information, this may affect interviewee's responses.)
Which children did you think would benefit most from the nurture group ethos within your room?	Expect named children. Expect names of most vulnerable children Follow up responses. Explore ways in which children will benefit. Explore if interviewee believes behaviour and/or attainment will be affected.
Have your ideas of which children would benefit most from the nurture group ethos changed in the few weeks the provision has been in place?	Expect answers related to siblings. Look for links between this question and previous question.
Are there any immediate changes you would like to make to the nurture group?	A very open question. Respondents may need clarification, e.g. extend specific sessions, provide more resources. Explore all answers given - nature of changes, why and how they would enhance our provision.
What support, e.g. from staff, Head, BSS would you consider to be needed at this present time?	A very open question. Respondents may require further clarification. Remind interviewee of anonymity, therefore names of colleagues will not be used. Explore all answers given. Ask respondent to expand on nature of support considered – why and how they would influence the nurture group. Look for themes/connecting links.

Ending

- Explain that is the end of the interview.
- Invite the interviewee to make any further comments they wish – about the subject matter or the interview itself.
- Reassure the interviewee about any aspects of the process e.g. anonymity, reporting of findings etc.
- Formally thank the interviewee for their time, willingness to be interviewed and their answers.
- Remind the interviewee that they will receive a copy of the interview questions and their answers at a later date. They may then wish to amend or clarify their responses.

Interview Schedule - Learning Mentor 2

Introduction

- Welcome interviewees.
- Introduce my role as interviewer.
- Recap on research project and how the interview will provide relevant information.
- Explain use of group interview rather than individual interviews – working as a team, responding as a team.
- Ask if happy to be interviewed as a team.
- Recap on use of tape recorder, interviewees may operate the tape recorder if wished.
- Recap on anonymity within the research and that they will receive a copy of the interview questions and answers at a later date for them to 'check' the answers given.
- Ask if the respondent has any questions or would like anything said so far to be repeated.
- Begin interview, using prompts below.

Interview

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
Once again I'd like each of you to sum up your current thoughts about the role of the Learning Mentor in one sentence.	Question to 'break the ice'. Expect answers relating to confusion about the role in practice.
How would you describe the basic learning mentor role?	Follow up all responses. Expect references to: • Barriers to learning • Attendance, behaviour and attainment • Mentoring children in groups, regular one-to-one sessions with children • Agreeing targets with the child for areas of concern • Talking through any concerns the child has which are impacting on his or her learning Expand on all basic references.

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
What part has relationships paid in your work with the children this year?	Open question. Follow up all responses.
How would you describe the evolution of the work of the learning mentor within the school?	Open question. Expect responses related to many changes that have taken place over the year.
What do you think have been the successes this year?	Very open question. Respond to all answers given. Expect references to successful activities. Explore reasons for successes. Look for links between successes and role of LM – removal of *barriers to learning* and improvement in *attendance*.
What have been the weaknesses this year?	Very open question. Respond to all answers given. Expect references to timetable/role changes. Explore reasons for weaknesses. Look for links between weaknesses and role of LM – removal of *barriers to learning* and improvement in *attendance*. Are any weaknesses really strengths?
How do you feel now about the team approach to your role? How do you feel about the current balance of work in the classroom and in the learning mentor room?	Very open question. Respond to all answers given. Expect references to strengths and weaknesses. Look for links to the role of LM.
What do you think are the main lessons to be learned for next year? How do you think we should start the year in September?	Very open question. Respond to all answers given. Expect references to strengths and weaknesses. Look for links to the role of LM.
Have you used the Cluster meetings and training sessions to identify how the LM role in practice varies from both child to child and from school to school?	Open question. Look for commonality of work in practice + ideas for further development.

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
How do you think we, as a school, we are responding to the need for learning mentors to work with teaching and support staff to identify, assess and interact with pupils who need help to overcome their barriers to learning?	Open question. Explore all responses given. Expect reference to more time supporting teachers as year progressed.
How do you feel you, as a team, have impacted on the focus group of children?	Very open question. Explore all responses given. Expect LM referral to time spent on other children/duties. Relate to changing behaviours of children.
In what ways do you think you have impacted on the socialisation of children into the culture of the school?	Very open question. Explore all responses given. Explore reasons for response given. Relate to changing behaviours of children. Relate to strengths and weaknesses of provision.
How could this improve, to ensure you impact more?	Open question. Expect interviewees to talk about benefits to socialisation of children. Follow up responses. Explore reasons for response given. Look for themes/connecting links. Use prompts from own knowledge. (Interviewer not to provide information, this may affect interviewee's responses.)
How have you ensured that your role is responsive to the needs of the individual child?	A very open question. Explore all answers given.

Ending
- Explain that is the end of the interview.
- Invite the interviewees to make any further comments they wish – about the subject matter or the interview itself.
- Reassure the interviewees about any aspects of the process e.g. anonymity, reporting of findings etc.
- Formally thank the interviewees for their time, willingness to be interviewed and their answers.
- Remind the interviewees that they will receive a copy of the interview questions and their answers at a later date. They may then wish to amend or clarify their responses.

Interview Schedule – Link Learning Mentor 1

Introduction

- Welcome interviewee.
- Introduce my role as interviewer.
- Provide brief summary of research project and how the interview will provide relevant information.
- Explain use of tape recorder. Interviewees invited to operate the tape recorder.
- Ask if respondent is happy to be recorded.
- Explain how anonymity within the research is to be assured.
- Explain that as a respondent they will receive a copy of the interview questions and their answers at a later date for the respondent to 'check' the answers given.
- Ask if the respondent has any questions or would like anything said so far to be repeated.
- Begin interview, using prompts below.

Interview

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
How long have you been a learning mentor?	Question to 'break the ice'. Explore any other roles the interviewee has held in school. Did the respondent choose to take on the role or was it the Head's suggestion.
How long have you been the Link Learning Mentor?	Follow up question to question 1. Explore difference in roles. Follow up answers relevant to research aims.
How would you explain the role of the Link Learning Mentor?	General comments sought. Expect references to specific roles e.g supporting schools/overseeing work of learning mentors in schools. Expect references to 'barriers to learning' and 'attendance'.
What did you understand by the team approach to Primary Learning Mentor provision?	Expect general comments about work of LMs in a range of schools + how the team approach would work in practice.
What was/is your knowledge of nurture groups?	Explore interviewee's ideas/knowledge of nurture groups.
What are your impressions of the learning mentor room as you've seen it today?	Open question. Explore all answers given. Follow up answers related to research aims.

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
How would you describe the ethos of our learning mentor room?	Explore present provision. Expect reference to weekly nurture group sessions. Explore other factors e.g. layout of room, lunchtime provision, etc.
In what way did you think establishing a nurture group ethos would affect our work with the children?	Open question. Expect interviewee to talk about benefits to socialisation of children. Follow up responses. Explore reasons for response given. Look for themes/connecting links. Use prompts from own knowledge of the nurture group ethos. (Interviewer not to provide information, this may affect interviewee's responses.)
Which children did you think would benefit most from the nurture group ethos within the room?	Expect reference to most vulnerable children Follow up responses. Explore ways in which children will benefit. Explore if interviewee believes behaviour and/or attainment will be affected.
Are there any immediate changes you would like to make to the learning mentor provision/nurture group ethos of the room?	A very open question. Respondent may need clarification, e.g. extend specific sessions, provide more resources. Explore all answers given - nature of changes, why and how they would enhance our provision.
What support, e.g. from staff, Head, BSS would you consider to be needed at this present time?	A very open question. Respondents may require further clarification. Remind interviewee of anonymity, therefore names of colleagues will not be used. Explore all answers given. Ask respondent to expand on nature of support considered – why and how they would influence the nurture group. Look for themes/connecting links.

Ending

- Explain that is the end of the interview.
- Invite the interviewee to make any further comments they wish – about the subject matter or the interview itself.
- Reassure the interviewee about any aspects of the process e.g. anonymity, reporting of findings etc.
- Formally thank the interviewee for their time, willingness to be interviewed and their answers.
- Remind the interviewee that they will receive a copy of the interview questions and their answers at a later date. They may then wish to amend or clarify their responses.

Interview Schedule – Link Learning Mentor 2

Introduction

- Welcome interviewee.
- Recap on my role as interviewer, the research project and how the interview will provide relevant information.
- Recap on use of tape recorder, interviewees may operate the tape recorder if wished.
- Ensure respondent is happy to be recorded and will receive a copy of the interview questions and answers at a later date for 'checking'
- Recap on how anonymity within the research is to be assured.
- Ask if the respondent has any questions or would like anything said so far to be repeated.
- Begin interview, using prompts below.

Interview

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
What work are you carrying out in school at the moment?	Question to 'break the ice'. Open question. Follow up responses given.
What are your first impressions of the learning mentor team today?	Question to set the scene. Expect general comments about work of LMs in school + how the team approach is working at present time. Follow up all answers given.
What can you tell me about the theory and practice of the role of the learning mentor at this present time?	A very open question. Expect references to *barriers to learning* and *attendance.* Expect references to supporting teachers in their role. Expect general comments about work of LMs in a range of schools. Follow up all answers given. Look for links to research focus.
How would you describe the basic learning mentor role?	Follow up question to above question, but searching for references to: *Regular one-to-one sessions with children, *Agreeing targets with the child for areas of concern (e.g. attendance, behaviour and attainment) *Talking through any concerns the child has which are impacting on his or her learning. Follow up all responses, as before.

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
How do you think our Primary Learning Mentor provision – using the team approach – fits in with the theory and practice of the role of the learning mentor?	A direct question relating theory to our practice. Follow up all answers given. Look for links to research focus.
What do you consider to be good practice in working with teaching and support staff?	A very open question. Look for connections to theory and practice and research focus. Follow up all responses given.
What do you consider to be good practice in identifying, assessing and interacting with pupils who need help to overcome their barriers to learning?	A very open question. Look for connections to theory and practice and research focus. Follow up all responses given.
How do you think the learning mentor is able to be responsive to the needs of the individual child and the school?	A very open question. Look for connections to theory and practice and research focus. Follow up all responses given.
In your experience, how does the role of the learning mentor in practice vary from both child to child and from school to school?	A very open question. Expect references to a variety of school settings. Look for connections to theory and practice and research focus. Follow up all responses given.
Where do you think the notion of 'Relationships' fits into the learning mentor role?	A very open question. Look for connections to theory and practice and research focus. Follow up all responses given.
As I've asked you before, any there any changes you would suggest making to the learning mentor provision in school at this time?	A very open question. Look for connections to theory and practice and research focus. Follow up all responses given. Explore all answers given - nature of changes
What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of our approach as it has evolved to today?	A very open question. Follow up all responses given.
What do you think the learning mentor team should build on at this present time?	A very open question. Follow up all responses given. Explore all answers given - nature of developments/training etc.
What support, e.g. from staff, Head, BSS would you consider to be needed to further develop the provision?	A very open question. Explore all answers given. Ask respondent to expand on nature of support considered – why and how they would influence the LM team. Look for themes/connecting links.

Ending

- Explain that is the end of the interview.
- Invite the interviewee to make any further comments they wish – about the subject matter or the interview itself.
- Reassure the interviewee about any aspects of the process e.g. anonymity, reporting of findings etc.
- Formally thank the interviewee for their time, willingness to be interviewed and their answers.
- Remind the interviewee that they will receive a copy of the interview questions and their answers at a later date. They may then wish to amend or clarify their responses.

Interview Schedule – Group Interview (children) 1

Introduction

- Welcome children.
- Explain I am going to ask a series of questions about themselves and the Learning Mentor room.
- Provide brief summary of research project and how the interview will provide relevant information.
- Explain use of tape recorder.
- Ask if all children are happy to be recorded.
- Explain how anonymity within the research is to be assured.
- Explain that I will be contacting parents to ask their permission to use what I've taped.
- Ask if the children have any questions or would like anything said so far to be repeated.
- Begin interview, using prompts below.

Interview

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
Introduce yourself for the tape – name and Year group.	Question to 'break the ice' and introduce the use of the tape.
Tell me one thing about yourself I don't already know.	Another question to 'break the ice' and ensure the children are comfortable with each other and the interview process.
Tell me one thing about school.	Question to begin to explore attitudes towards school and behaviours in school. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
What is your favourite subject and why?	Question to continue exploring attitudes towards school and behaviours in school. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
How would you describe your behaviour in school?	Specific question related to behaviour. Explore present thoughts on own behaviour. Explore reasons for response given.
Who has been to the learning mentor room?	Question to begin to explore attitudes towards LM team and LM room. Closed question.

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
What activity/activities have you done in the learning mentor room?	Open question. Follow up responses. Look for themes/connecting links to children's favourite subjects, attitudes and behaviours.
How often have you been in the LM room?	Closed question. Follow up responses given if appropriate.
Have you asked to go to the LM room or only gone when invited?	May be closed question. Follow up responses if appropriate.
What do you think to the LM room?	A very open question. Children may need clarification, e.g. layout of room, sofa area, dining table, how children are expected to behave, how children are expected to work. Explore all answers given.
What do you think about how the LMs are working this year?	A very open question. Children may require further clarification. Remind children of how LMs worked last year. Explore all answers given. Ask children if they worked with LMs last year.
What did you think about going to the LM room with your brothers and sisters?	Begin to explore LMs interpretation of Nurture Group. Open question. Follow up all responses given.
Are there any changes to the room you would make?	Very open question. Explore responses given. Look for themes/connecting links to children's favourite subjects, attitudes and behaviours.
How is the LM room different to your classroom?	Very open question. Explore responses given. Look for themes/connecting links to children's favourite subjects, attitudes and behaviours.
How do you feel when you have been in the LM room and then gone back into class?	Very open question. Explore responses given. Look for themes/connecting links to children's, attitudes and behaviours and how they change/are influenced by working with the LMs.
Is there anything else you would like to say about anything I've asked you about or about the LMs and their room?	Question to close interview. Allow children to add anything to discussion.

Ending

- Explain that is the end of the interview.
- Reassure the children about any aspects of the process e.g. anonymity, contacting parents, reporting of findings etc.
- Formally thank the children for their time, willingness to be interviewed and their answers.

Interview Schedule – Group Interview (children) 2

Introduction

- Welcome children.
- Explain I am going to ask another series of questions – refer to last time.
- Recap on research project and how the interview will provide relevant information.
- Explain use of tape recorder.
- Ask if all children are happy to continue as before.
- Recap on anonymity.
- Remind children of need for parents to give permission.
- Ask if the children have any questions or would like anything said so far to be repeated.
- Begin interview, using prompts below.

Interview

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
Introduce yourself for the tape – name and Year group.	Question to 'break the ice' and introduce the use of the tape.
Tell me one thing that has happened to you since our last taped interview.	Another question to 'break the ice' and ensure the children are comfortable with each other and the interview process.
Tell me how you feel about school at the moment.	Question to begin to explore developing attitudes towards school and behaviours in school. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
What do you enjoy most about school at the moment and why you enjoy it.	Question to continue exploring attitudes towards school and behaviours in school. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
What do you dislike most about school at the moment and why you dislike it.	Question to continue exploring attitudes towards school and behaviours in school. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
How would you describe your behaviour in school at the moment? Has it changed since our last interview?	Specific question related to behaviour. Explore present thoughts on own behaviour. Explore reasons for response given.
Have you worked with the learning mentor team since our last interview?	Question to begin to explore attitudes towards LM team. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
What activity/activities have you done with the LM team?	Open question. Follow up responses. Look for themes/connecting links between children's favourite activities and their attitudes and behaviours.
Have you worked in the learning mentor room? How often?	Closed question. Follow up responses given if appropriate.
Have you asked to go to the LM room or only gone when invited?	May be closed question. Follow up responses if appropriate.
What do you think to the LM room now, after a term and a half?	A very open question. Children may still need clarification, e.g. layout of room, sofa area, dining table, how children are expected to behave, how children are expected to work. Explore all answers given.
Do you still feel that the LM room is different to your classroom?	Closed question. Explore responses given. Look for themes/connecting links to children's attitudes and behaviours.
What do you think about how the LMs have been working this year?	A very open question. Children may require further clarification. Remind children of how LMs worked last year. Explore all answers given. Ask children if they worked with LMs last year.
Have the LMs been available when you have needed them?	A very open question. Children may require further clarification/prompting to remember incidences when they were referred to the LMs/ when they self-referred and/or the LMs weren't available when needed.
What do you think is the difference between a LM and a teacher?	A very open question. Explore all answers given. Look for references to pastoral care.
Have you had more opportunities to attend the LM room with your brothers and sisters? Any comments about this?	Closed question initially. Follow up answers given. Look for connections between responses and research focus.
How do you feel now when you have worked with the LM, or been in the LM room, and then worked in class on your own?	Very open question. Explore responses given. Look for themes/connecting links to children's, attitudes and behaviours and how they change/are influenced by working with the LMs.
Is there anything else you would like to say about anything I've asked you about or about the LMs and their room?	Question to close interview. Allow children to add anything to discussion.

Ending

- Explain that is the end of the interview.
- Reassure the children about any aspects of the process e.g. anonymity, reporting of findings etc.
- Formally thank the children for their time, willingness to be interviewed and their answers.

Interview Schedule – Individual Interview (children)

Introduction

- Welcome child.
- Explain I am going to ask another series of questions – refer to last time.
- Recap on research project and how the interview will provide relevant information.
- Explain use of tape recorder.
- Ask if all child happy to be interviewed alone.
- Recap on anonymity.
- Ask if the children have any questions or would like anything said so far to be repeated.
- Begin interview, using prompts below.

Interview

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
Introduce yourself for the tape – name and Year group.	Question to 'break the ice' and introduce the use of the tape.
Tell me one thing that has happened to you since our last taped interview.	Another question to 'break the ice' and ensure the children are comfortable with the interview process.
Tell me how you feel about school now, at the end of this year.	Question to begin to explore attitudes towards school and behaviours in school. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
What do you enjoy most about school now, at the end of this year, and why you enjoy it.	Question to continue exploring attitudes towards school and behaviours in school. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
What do you dislike most about school now, at the end of this year, and why you dislike it.	Question to continue exploring attitudes towards school and behaviours in school. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
How would you describe your behaviour in school at the moment? Has it changed over the year? If so, in what way?	Specific question related to behaviour. Explore present thoughts on own behaviour. Explore reasons for response given.
Do you feel able to follow the school rules and routines now?	Specific question related to research focus. Explore present thoughts on socialisation within school. Explore reasons for response given.

Main question	Notes/Follow up questions
How have you worked with the learning mentor team this year?	Question to begin to explore attitudes towards LM team. Expect specific activities to be stated. Follow up responses related to research focus – LM, behaviour, and attainment.
What did you enjoy most about working with the learning mentors? What did you not enjoy?	Open question. Follow up responses. Look for themes/connecting links between children's favourite activities and their attitudes and behaviours.
What do you think to having LMs in school? How do LMs differ from teachers and LSAs?	Open question. Follow up responses given.
Do you go to the LMs without being asked? What sort of things do you go to the LMs for?	May be closed question. Follow up responses if appropriate.
Has how you've worked with the LMs changed over the year?	A very open question. Children may still need clarification. Explore all answers given.
How have the LMs helped you to be successful in school this year?	Open question. Explore responses given. Look for themes/connecting links to children's attitudes and behaviours/research focus.
Would you like to have access to LMs next year? How would you want them to work with you?	A very open question. Children may require further clarification. Explore all answers given. Ask children if they worked with LMs last year and follow up positive and negative responses to how LMs worked.
What about schools that don't have LMs? Do you think they should have them?	A very open question. Explore all answers given. Look for references to pastoral care, more time for problems etc.
Is there anything else you would like to say about anything I've asked you about or about the LMs and their room?	Question to close interview. Allow children to add anything to discussion.

Ending

- Explain that is the end of the interview.
- Reassure the children about any aspects of the process e.g. anonymity, reporting of findings etc.
- Formally thank the children for their time, willingness to be interviewed and their answers.

Appendix 6: Attitude and Behaviour Scales

Attitude Scale 1

		😊	🙂	🙁	😞
1	I have a good feeling towards school				
2	I really enjoy school				
3	Some lessons are too difficult to be fun				
4	I enjoy most lessons				
5	I want to learn				
6	I like school less than I used to				
7	I dislike practical work				
8	I usually look forward to being in class				
9	We do a lot of boring stuff in class				
10	I like Literacy				
11	I like Numeracy				
12	We learn important things in class				
13	We do interesting topics				
14	I wish lessons lasted longer				
15	Too little money is spent on the classroom				
16	I speak to my family about what I've done in school				
17	I speak to my friends about what I've done in school				
18	I enjoy working with my friends in the classroom				
19	I don't enjoy working with alone in the classroom				
20	My friends are in a different class				
21	Our classroom has interesting things in it				
22	I enjoy spending time in the classroom				
23	Our classroom is too noisy				
24	I enjoy working outside the classroom				
25	Most of what we learn in school is useless				
26	I feel uncomfortable in the classroom				
27	Our classroom is overcrowded				
28	What we learn in class will help me next year				
29	I like the work we do in the Learning Mentor Room				
30	I don't like going to the Learning Mentor Room				

Behaviour Scale 1

		😊	🙂	🙁	☹️
1	I don't think good behaviour in school is important				
2	My behaviour is good				
3	I would like my behaviour to improve				
4	I feel bullied in school				
5	I bully children in school				
6	I don't like my teacher				
7	I think my teacher should be more strict				
8	I enjoy playtimes				
9	I have lots of friends to play with				
10	I don't always like how I behave in school				
11	I behave better at home than at school				
12	My friends copy what I do				
13	I don't like it when my friends misbehave				
14	I don't like it when others spoil a lesson				
15	I misbehave in the classroom				
16	My behaviour sometimes stops me working				
17	When lessons are boring I behave well				
18	I misbehave at break times				
19	I think behave better outside the classroom				
20	My parents talk to me about my behaviour				
21	My parents help me to behave at home				
22	My parents help me to behave at school				
23	I behave well in the Learning Mentor Room				
24	I behave when I work alone in the Learning Mentor Room				
25	I don't behave when I work in the Learning Mentor Room				
26	The Learning Mentors help me to behave at school				

Attitude Scale 2

		☺	☺	☹	☹
1	I have a good feeling towards school				
2	I really enjoy school				
3	Some lessons are too difficult to be fun				
4	I enjoy most lessons				
5	I want to learn				
6	I like school less than I used to				
7	I like practical work				
8	I usually look forward to being in class				
9	We do a lot of boring stuff in class				
10	I like Literacy				
11	I like Numeracy				
12	We learn important things in class				
13	We do interesting topics				
14	I wish lessons lasted longer				
15	Too little money is spent on the classroom				
16	I speak to my family about what I've done in school				
17	I speak to my friends about what I've done in school				
18	I enjoy working with my friends in the classroom				
19	I enjoy working with alone in the classroom				
20	My friends are in a different class				
21	Our classroom has interesting things in it				
22	I enjoy spending time in the classroom				
23	Our classroom is too noisy				
24	I enjoy working outside the classroom				
25	Most of what we learn in school is useless				
26	I feel comfortable in the classroom				
27	Our classroom is overcrowded				
28	What we learn in class will help me next year				
29	I like the work we do in the Learning Mentor Room				
30	I don't like going to the Learning Mentor Room				

Behaviour Scale 2

		☺	☺	☹	☹
1	I think good behaviour in school is important				
2	My behaviour is good				
3	I would like my behaviour to improve				
4	I feel bullied in school				
5	I bully children in school				
6	I like my teacher				
7	I think my teacher should be more strict				
8	I enjoy playtimes				
9	I have lots of friends to play with				
10	I always like how I behave in school				
11	I behave better at home than at school				
12	My friends copy what I do				
13	I like it when my friends misbehave				
14	I don't like it when others spoil a lesson				
15	I misbehave in the classroom				
16	My behaviour sometimes stops me working				
17	When lessons are boring I don't behave as well as I should.				
18	I misbehave at break times				
19	I behave better outside the classroom				
20	My parents talk to me about my behaviour				
21	My parents help me to behave at home				
22	My parents help me to behave at school				
23	I behave well in the Learning Mentor Room				
24	I behave when I work alone in the Learning Mentor Room				
25	The Learning Mentors help me to behave at school				

Appendix 7: Transcript of the Unscheduled Conversation

AP	So you've found your room now?
JC	I think that its beginning to find its own feet. Its taken quite a few weeks to get into the role of it. There's still some areas to iron out a little bit, but I think if we do what we've been doing, continue with the same children through the next half-term, I think we'll have given them all a fair go. What do you think ladies?
KJ	Its improving
JC	It is improving. The system's starting to come. What's interesting is the children are, slowly beginning to know when they are coming. The readers this morning they arrived. The staff are getting used to it as well, the staff have got to get used to it, the teaching staff just the same.
AP	Yes. I think its evident today, been walking round talking to them (the children) what they think about this room and certainly, from my point of view, it was nice to hear them say that they all had a similar perspective on it, but what they particularly took from it. Some said that they really liked to sit on the settees and listen to music, some said that they enjoyed sitting with friends watching some video at lunchtime and then other children have said they really enjoyed being invited for lunch.
JC	They all like that, the staff like it as well.
AP	You think so.
	All talking at once.
JC	Every child will soon have come through. We do give time to everyone.
SB	They like working in here as well, because of the calm atmosphere.
AP	So that is mentored children and non-mentored children?
SB	Yes
JC	It's a cross-mix. It's an interesting cross-mix. They will say to one another if they are a bit noisy, that if you can't hear the music then you must be talking too loud. If they can hear it, they know its OK.
AP	So its obvious, or evident to the staff, that you've worked individually through school, and you're now working as a team, but obviously you've got flexibility within that team.
KJ	I think it would be interesting for staff to come in and observe us, if they could have a bit of time out, for them to see us. The children obviously have a good idea what the room's all about, but it would be nice for staff to come and have an idea of what we do. To sit and observe whether it be group work,
JC	Yes, particularly children from their own class. To come and see what they do and what's involved.
KJ	Yes, because they are different when they enter this room. They seem to know the atmosphere of the room, whereas in the classroom there's a lot more children there and the noise level is maybe higher. Its different for them. You see a different side to children that often can't concentrate.
AP	Having said that, today when I walked in there was quite a lot of children in here and they were all sort of paying attention. There was everything going off. You were chatting to me, SB was actually trying to explain to them about things, and they were obviously aware of everybody within the room, but sat so intently listening to SB.
JC	The poster competition was open to all children, it wasn't just our children, the

	children choose to do it, which is quite nice. I think, slowly but surely the class teachers are, its difficult for them trying to take on board yet another system, there's loads of systems going through school, but the head wants this to work and we're trying our hardest to make it work. Certainly I think the group work's been the one that's worked the slowest, but that's only because we've had to feed it round the whole school timetable, so that's been difficult, but its slowly beginning to work. Everything else I think – circle time, anger management time.
KJ	Like we've said, its going to take time. Its different. What we're doing is different. It's a different approach to what it was last year.
AP	What's your feelings on the differences?
KJ	Personally I think it seems easier because we're sharing, we're working together, we're bouncing off each other.
JC	I don't think its been easy for us though because we've been used to working on our own, within our own year groups or classes and we've worked at our own pace to suit our own needs, along with the children we work with, and we've had to come to terms with working with ourselves as well as working with groups. Its taken us quite a few weeks to get used to doing that, but I think we're starting to tailor it to suit all of us.
KJ	If one child or an adult asks us a question we don't answer the question until we've consulted the rest of the team.
JC	We discuss it. We do get back to the children, or anyone else. But we are trying to work as a team.
KJ	I think its working well so far.
JC	There have been a few hiccups.
AP	I think even now that's evident, just by today.
SB	We've still got flexibility. It's a bit like being the SAS if you like. You've got the core things that you do on your timetable, but you're still available to mentor a child that's having a difficult day, to come out of class to deal with any situation. We've got that flexibility that you can't have as a class teacher because their responsibility is to their whole class whereas, because we now work in a team, one person can leave the mentor room.
JC	It doesn't affect the rest of the work.
SB	I think that works better.
AP	I think you have got a fantastic back up system.
SB	Absolutely
AP	It's a fantastic back up system because if you specifically work with one child and for instance something happens to you, obviously the team before was aware of bits of it, you are more aware of it now and likely it would not be such a disruption now you are working as that team. That's got to be more beneficial to the child and to the school.
SB	Its given us a chance to work holistically with children. Its not just the Literacy or the numeracy, everything can be brought in for that child. We're looking at the whole child. Social skills, peer mentoring, all sorts of things we can use to get them to get on together.
AP	It all helps with independence because they're not dependent on one (of you). Their whole world wouldn't fall apart if you're not in.
SB	Its not good practice I don't think for them to be reliant on one person. We're not here to be a prop.

KJ	And that's how it was last year.
SB	We're here to get the children to do it for themselves.
KJ	Last year they would only talk to JC or SB, now they come to the room and whoever is available will speak to them, which I think is a good thing for children to do.
JC	I've noticed that happening more and more. They will confide in whichever one of us approaches.
CF	I think the visitors today will not have known the new member to the team.
KJ	JE has fitted in really well. You'd think she'd been doing it as long as we have.
AP	Its part and parcel of CF's and the school vision, your vision, what you wanted to try and move forward and its knowing how to do that and move it forward. To take the bull by the horns and go with it, and that's what you've done. Some things will work, some things won't. It's a learning curve.
KJ	I think its working.
JC	We've made mistakes and we're quite aware of them. We've realised them ourselves, been told about them and we've done our best to offer an alternative. We knew straight away, more or less within the first week, that the timetable we'd come up with wasn't going to work, or part of it wasn't going to work, so we set about then trying to adapt it, rework it, and we've got there now with the timetable.
AP	I've certainly sold your praises to a few primaries in …because they were asking about mentors in …working together within schools, if schools have got two or three mentors in schools, how do they work within schools. The majority of schools do work as you were working previously, in set years.
KJ	I found that quite hard, working separately even though we're a whole school and we do talk about things with each other. To work as a team is easier. We can bounce of each other and you don't feel as isolated. We know that if a child comes to you with a particular problem or they're upset, we know that anyone of us could deal with it. Whereas if you're in a particular year group or class, you're the only one that has that problem given to you. Sometimes the problem that you've got, it can be mega, and you feel that you can deal with it if you can share it with someone else. That's what we've done.
SB	I do think another benefit as well is that you don't always gel with every child, therefore if you don't get the response your looking for from a particular child then someone else might find that they've got the key, and that's what its all about. It doesn't matter to me if it matters to that child.
KJ	We've all got different personalities haven't we?
SB	And different strengths and weaknesses.
CF	That's what DG [the acting deputy head] and I do. I know the children that I can deal with and I know the ones that she can deal with and we're quite happy…
KJ	We know the children that I can deal with that maybe JC couldn't, or SB, and you think to yourself, and try and direct that child to someone you know could handle them better.
SB	You pick up on those things as a child.
JC	I've a lot more to learn than the other three because they've had more experience with the key stage 2 children. As a TA [teaching assistant] I worked across the board in the early years while I was here, but in the latter years I've been based at key stage 1. Therefore I've just mainly worked with key stage 1

	children and that is a lot different to working with key stage 2 children, a lot different. I've had to learn a few more things working with key stage 2 children. But I've learnt a lot from my colleagues.
AP	I think as well it's a learning curve with skills as well because you'll all have certain skills that you can pick up from each other. I'm sure, I know by sitting working with colleagues sometimes, that they've actually got a lot of skills that I can hone in onto, very very quickly, and its shown me how to do that, and I've certainly picked up on things when I've had that chance, that opportunity.
SB	We're learning all the time. I might just happen to observe one of the other mentors using a particular technique and immediately think I'll lock that one away for next time. You're absolutely learning from each other all the time.
KJ	We're learning all the time aren't we? We've all get different techniques.
SB	The day we sit back and think 'well we know what we're doing' is the day we've failed.
AP	I actually think, from listening to what you say, its made you more sort of a reflective practitioner. That you're actually thinking about what works, what doesn't work.
JC	We do that all the time though, all the time.
AP	But I think you do that even more as a team don't you?
JC	When we do a circle time, if there's two of us in it, and one observing, if its possible and it normally it is, while the fourth one is doing the group work. That's how we do it now.
AP	And that's really supportive.
JC	It works quite well.
KJ	We feed off each other then how you think that went, or you notice children doing things that they're doing better with.
SB	And combine them. If you were working on your own it maybe take you two circle times to maybe see how a child is reacting whereas you're getting more out of the sessions because what you might have missed, another mentor may have picked up on and you can add it together to what you've picked up on and you get a fuller picture much more quickly.
JC	Are you happy with the way its going CF?
CF	Very much so, yes, and well done for today. Its been brilliant.
JC	I enjoyed it. You were a bit, you know…
SB	Well I just don't like…
JC	You thought about it this morning and you weren't sure were you?
SB	I just don't like people…
JC	But I think you've enjoyed it after all that haven't you?
KJ	Well we just carried on and did what we normally do didn't we? And I think that if its what you do everyday.
SB	But they were very good, very good? The children responded well. They seemed interested in what the children were doing.
KJ	The response we got from ML, that came …
CF	I never saw him.
KJ	I did a circle time this morning and he sat there and observed it and he was really, really impressed.
AP	Has anyone else been from the LEA?
JE	No!
CF	MS from the EAZ [Education Action Zone] came. Two governors came.

AP	So what is the follow on from today? I know you said earlier on you were disappointed with the response from parents.
JC	I'm disappointed. I spoke to CF earlier on and she did ask me how, if there was anything I felt that could be improved on or anything I would like to do, and I would like more liaison with parents, particularly with the children we are focusing on, or have been focusing on this term, and who are going to continue with through 'til Christmas, then change over children after Christmas.
CF	A personal invitation rather than a blanket invitation.
SB	We have very much got to work round what is convenient to them, to ensure that we get them.
JC	If we can get some response from a letter initially. We could give them an option of dates and then go for the majority one, something like that.
SB	I tend to favour more on the one to one invitation to be honest than an open day, because we've had two other open days just for parents besides this one and we have never had more than four parents.
JC	No we haven't.
SB	So we've tried it twice and then today. I think, particularly for the children that we're most concerned about, I feel that if we had the personal invitation, and for it to be when it suits them to come, because it must be difficult for those who are working, for whatever reason, or they've got little ones at home or whatever, and I think I'd be prepared to bend over backwards to get them in on a one to one and get them really to understand what we're trying to do.
JC	It's a thought, a possibility, to have tied it up with parents' evening because if they're coming into school…
CF	We've done that before.
JC	Yes we have done that before and its not always worked because they've either not come to parents' evening or they've just not bothered.
AP	I think sometimes it's a case of you can try things and try things, and at the end of the day you just have to keep battling and find another way and if you only get a couple of parents, its two more than today.
JC	If we had a focus of 16 children, that's four each, so a personal letter out to those parents and then they could see one of us.
CF	The new starters to the Annexe, the youngest children, we do home visits. Two people go out and go and talk to the parents and maybe that's an option if we don't get them in.
AP	I'd certainly do that.
CF	You could take some work with you couldn't you? You could take the posters and some photographs.
SB	Eventually everybody's had a meeting.
CF	You could take the photos and make an album out of them.
AP	The mentors at another school could not get parents into school at all and it was their age old fears of school, there were a lot of young parents with young children and certainly we set up a little scheme where she (the mentor) went out to pre-school children for four weeks, for different things. She went out to try to get them into school. She made some packs up and it was on a four-week cycle and I went with her. I actually went and supported her because school couldn't really afford for her to be out and send somebody else with her. She really had a burning issue about the parents and we went and we did it and it was brilliant. For me it was good because I worked with Y6 at the time and I

	got to meet three and four year olds in their own home and it was absolutely brilliant. The parents have moved on now. They started with four parents and they've now got, I think something like twenty odd parents, that actually have a room in the school. Parents actually are working within that school. And that's where its moved on from, from not having any parents in at all, to having some kind of room for parents, whereas now they've got more involved and what happened is its word of mouth. Its not so bad after all, its changed since my day, that's some of the things parents were saying. This Learning Mentor's approachable, she's not like a teacher, she's not like anybody else, you know. She's down to earth, we can tell her our problems, we can sit in with her. And she's certainly has found a lot of support from them, having had parents in, because it's a little mining village, out on outskirts, and at the end of the day she felt very, very, sort of on her own.
JC	Maybe that's something to think about, the home visit.
SB	I think its so important to get the parents on our side because I know I've had experience where, in front of a parent, you've tried to explain to a child how they're behaviour hasn't been appropriate, and you've not even had the back up of that parent. And that makes it so difficult and if you've got the opportunity to talk to that parent and to explain why you want their back up and how its going to benefit them and get them on your side, but you can't do that in school when their child is there. You want the opportunity to give them techniques and strategies.
JC	To have a discussion.
AP	It actually falls in line with the course I've been on, the Stratton course for, positive parenting, and the dinosaur school, and that highlights the importance of working with parents, alongside parents, doing whatever it takes to get them on board, and they've proved, its proved successful in America, its proved successful here. They've found that once parents have bought it, and they're on board, then you're half way there, you're half way there. Because its all about parenting skills, and its all about what you're trying to do in school holistically, with that child, is then considerably brought down at home because of, and I'm not saying it's the fault of the parents because they might not have the skills to be able to do that, and its you as a Learning Mentor that could facilitate that and support that parent and inevitably, what happens is, you get it back because if that child's behaviour then changes within school, you're onto a winner, you're onto a winner. You've suddenly got a child that might have changed their behaviour, pattern of behaviour, it could be that a sibling of that child could be, eventually, a role model, a peer mentor for someone else. I've been there, I've done it, I've sat in your seat, my behaviour's not been as it should have been, and look at me now.
SB	You've broken the cycle.
AP	And that's what its about.
SB	You've broken the cycle. And if you don't break the cycle…
AP	You've got it.
SB	I'd be interested to do some circle times with our parents. It would be very interesting.
JC	If we see them at home we could explain that and ask them to come in.
SB	How can you expect a child to control its emotions when its parents don't, or isn't able to.
AP	You need to see the Webster Stratton stuff.

JC	Angela was on about that.
AP	I've just done it. I've just been on it for a week. I went to Sheffield. The guy was from America. They work a lot with puppets with the children, but your focus is three days working with parents, and there is a parenting group that has to run for so many weeks. Parents do come together and obviously that might be a bit ambitious when you've not got parents' evenings in school but it is something to look at. There's certainly things from that programme, definitely, that you could pick out.
All	Mmm.
AP	You can borrow my file on it. I think you'll find it very interesting. Certainly it's like modelling things, and what you do is you model things to parents and you ask parents to do homework and everything. It's nothing major, but all the research has shown that once parents get into the third week, the drop out rate is zilch.
CF	We could bid for funding as well, through the family learning couldn't we.
AP	You could. And even if you got one mentor on that, the training, then you can facilitate that to your other mentors. I'm certainly going into a school to do this. I'm going into …. I'm going to be getting my practice in at …The idea for me to do it, was so that eventually, if it does come about that I can pass on some knowledge to schools, and facilitate that within schools, I'm going to be a resource so to speak. How have you found today? That's what I want to know.
CF	Difficult to be in three places at once but lovely. Especially the award. I'm really proud of that because that is not me saying I want you to do this, this and this, they're taking hold of it and they're running with it and that was totally their idea. So they've got the award totally for something they've brought about.
SB	The impression that we made on the team that came to give us that I think they genuinely were very impressed with the whole idea of how we were running this.
AP	You've actually got the award today?
CF	Yes, they brought it in today. It's going to be in the Advertiser (the local paper), the Advertiser was here and the mayor and what have you.
AP	That's quite good for your profile isn't it?
CF	Yes it is.
CF	It was quite a radical idea wasn't it? I think we all came up against some, not opposition, but surprise at what we were doing. I think its really being vindicated now that we were right to do it.
JC	There's still a little bit of hostility here and there about it, about the system. Not as much as there was.
SB	I don't think it's hostility, I think it's just…
CF	What on earth are they doing?
SB	Yes!
JC	It's still there a little bit but I think it's improving.
AP	We talked about having a, you doing a kind of an assembly at some point, it might be you can just keep chipping away at it, is to do something in assembly. It might be a celebration of the children you've got in here.
SB	I must admit I want to go in…I wouldn't mind having a five-minute slot or

	something.
CF	And I want to release all staff for at least half an hour each, to come in and see it in operation.
AP	That's good. I think it was at a school last week, what they've done at one school, 'cos I was trying to pick their brains as well, they said they hadn't got a lot of hostility at that particular school, and they now do an assembly. You know they have a long assembly, about forty minutes, and what they do is, originally they started doing it with all the teachers and everybody was in, they now take an assembly and the mentors just take it with the head present and all the teachers get that time out. And it's one way, and what they said did initially was, they invited them all to the mentor room. Basically they all went to mentor room and had a chill, just basically chilled in mentor room or whatever, and they said it's unbelievable how the staff said 'oh when's your assembly?' They really found it built a lot of bridges. It built a lot of bridges. That's what they said. It's been slow.
JC	We did have ideas about that first assembly though didn't we?
SB	I think we've got to be proactive. I mean we've got to look for, when we're passing a classroom or whatever, and see that there's a problem with a child, and just suggest that shall we take them with us for a little while and not wait to be asked and I think we do do that. I think it's important that we do and if it's not what that class teacher wants then they just say no its OK thanks.
AP	Yes
SB	It's not personal, its just you're trying to allow them to get on with their job and then hopefully we can make a difference like that.
AP	Do you get self-referrals from children?
SB	We do in that, we do get children who come down at breaks and lunchtimes and ask if they can sit in here, work in here. And we do occasionally, there are certain children who tend to do it, who will come and say I've got my work can I come and work in here, and as long as it's OK with their class teacher and we have physically got room for them, as long as they appreciate that it's here to allow them to work and to get on with their work, and for no other reason, not to be able to sit back and wander about. So long as they appreciate that we are keeping an eye on them and we will ask them to go back to class if they abuse it, we are very happy for children to do it. It's not something that we've told the children that they can do but they've actually taken it on board themselves to come and say can I do this.
AP	Right. I think what I meant was some schools, I've had two recently, where I've seen a couple of children that haven't been picked up for whatever reason, they've not been picked up, they've been missed, and they might have just come on board but they are very, very quiet children, the type of children who are never in any trouble, the one that's very quiet but they've had an awful lot of sort of problems, got a lot of problems and nobody, they're always quiet anyway but they've had something kicking off in their life that's been very traumatic for them and I was just wondering would there be a measure. One of the schools I've been into, have got a self-referral box. I said what do you mean? And they've got a box and its got little slips of paper on and there's a pencil there and all the children do is put their name on it and the class where they are and then that initiates a Learning Mentor to go and chat to them. So the quiet one that may not venture into here, because of other children being

	here, there's an opportunity for them.
SB	I think that's a good idea but however, in our defence, I would say, because there are four of us, and because we're always on duty at every break, I do think that we tend to pick up on those quiet children and keep an eye on them and encourage them to come and talk to us. I'm not saying that we wouldn't ever miss one and I think that self-referral is a good idea.
JC	We've had one or two new families in but the children are, there's two sisters come into school, there's Amy in Key Stage One.
SB	Rwandan refugees, asylum seekers.
JC	And that little girl, the younger one, I don't know about the older one because I've not actually seen her on the playground, but the younger one does tend to be on her own a lot in the playground, I've noticed that, and I've often gone to talk to her and she's said that she's not made any friends yet, and I've encouraged other children to, children I know would make friends, who would go and speak, to go and encourage her to play and to take part, and she is starting to play.
SB	And there are buddies at break outside to encourage…
AP	You know your buddies? How would I, if I came into this playground, how would I be able to identify your buddies?
SB	They have hats on.
JC	They have caps on them but there's also some very kind buddies who keep taking them off and kicking them round the playground.
JE	They have a stand where they stand don't they?
JC	They have a stand.
SB	A 'bus stop' thing.
AP	Oh right a 'bus stop, brilliant.
JE	That's where they go up to isn't it?
AP	RM Infants they have a similar system but they have two benches in school and they have a blue bench, one's where they can sit and it's just a pleasant… and its painted blue and one's red and one's called 'time out quiet bench' and the other one's 'find a friend bench'. And what they do is, if, if someone's sat on the blue and it's 'find a friend' it's because they're wanting a friend and the buddies then will find them a friend. Pair them up.
JC	You'll probably find four hundred kids trying to sit on that bench.
All	Laughter
JC	All at the same time. Just to wind us up.
All	Laughter. All talking at once.
AP	Do you know it's like that old adage how many people can you get into a mini?
All	Continued laughter and talking all at once.
AP	There's thirty-two staff on this bench!
SB	There's so many different ways you can encourage it aren't there and I think you've got to provide different ways because different children respond…
JC	Sometimes you just have children, I'll tell you something it's very rare children wander in. They'll stand at the door and wait.
JE	SC does, doesn't he?
JC	SC always does, every day of his life he comes in and says 'Good Morning'. too us.
JE	He comes to say 'Good Morning' to us now doesn't he?
JC	Every day. Little SC stands at that door.

SB	Especially, I've found in the last couple of days…
JE	He's very good yeah.
JC	He sits here, I mean he has to kneel up on there he's that little, he has to kneel up on the chair to eat his dinner otherwise he'd be eating it like this you see because he's so tiny isn't he? But he loves coming and…
AP	Yeah. Right.
SB	But the older boys tend to use us for calm down, chill out, even if they don't come themselves. You've only got to suggest it and they're happy.
AP	There's a couple of boys earlier on who were sat here.
SB	OT and OB.
AP	And this one here, definitely, and I was chatting to him.
SB	OT.
AP	I was chatting to him and said basically, he said 'I really like it 'cos I can come in here and I can just think.
JC	He is a quiet boy.
AP	'I can think.' And I said 'Oh right' and he said 'But sometimes it's really hard to do things as you should do, or do properly.' Right.
JC	And he's not on our focus list but he will be incorporated in group work as we rotate…..
JE	He's a Y4 in a Y5 classroom.
AP	What Year was he?
JE	He's a Y4 but he's in a Y5 class.
AP	That's very perceptive of, of a child isn't it?
CF	That's very much what we're trying to do, get children to take responsibility for their own behaviour. And we're seeing it aren't we? There's little chinks all the time and they're coming out with comments like that. JS another one.
SB	Absolutely.
AP	Who was the little boy that was sat there?
All	AB.
JC	He's quite new to school.
AP	He sat so….
CF	He did. I was so pleased you chose him.
AP	He was sat and I watched him and when you were speaking. He sat there so…
All	Talking at once.
AP	So upright and I thought shall I talk to him but I could see what he were doing, he were sat up and he were intent on keeping his eyes on you when you were speaking and he had actually had got his back to you, but not being rude about that you know, and when you'd finished speaking, I started to chat to him. And he sat up so, so upright you know. The other lad at the side of him.
JE	LM.
AP	Was the same.
JE	He did well actually.
All	Talking at once.
AP	He was the same. I chatted to him as well.
JC	He can be one of our challenging children can't he?
AP	And who was the one with the glasses on that sat at the far end?
JE	That was JW
JC	He can be challenging…
All	Talking at once.

AP	He was very nice.
JE	I like JW
CF	I like him but…
JC	I don't mind him at all
JE	If anyone's having a fight James ' it's my best mate that' and jumps in…
All	Talking at once.
CF	He smiles at you when you're telling him off and I don't like that.
AP	That boy who was there.
JE	Joe ...I like Joe
All	Talking at once. Commenting about liking Joe
JC	His is a sad case 'cos he's no mum or dad.
CF	He can be very challenging.
AP	He described, I asked him to describe what he liked about the room.
CF	He's a star. His sister needs a medal as big as a dustbin lid I think that woman.
AP	He likes the people.
JE	That's nice isn't it?
AP	Which is a nice thing to say. He didn't say mentors, he didn't say children he said 'I like the people.' And I said who's this?
SB	Again, I mean it's, a lot of it, it's how you react and encourage them…
AP/ SB	Both talking at the same time
AP	For his picture he'd drawn a lovely character…he'd got a lovely character there hadn't he and I asked who he was, he just said nobody in particular, it's just somebody…but it wasn't anybody. I thought it was OK.
All	Talking at once.
JC	I think, he can be challenging in schools but I think he does really well.
CF	I do.
JC	Don't you think? He does have a lot to carry.
AP	There was a little girl sat here, now did she have…
JC	ZP
All	Talking at once.
AP	This one here. And then there was another one that had got like; she'd got plaits in with beads or something.
All	Talking at once.
AP	You know. You know how you can just catch focus on them really…
JC	She was sat there?
AP	Yes she was. You can focus on them really quick and try to focus something about them but it's not what they look like it's what they said. I think it's what they were saying, you know, talking to me about their pictures… Why, is this? It's the plant and it's the wonderful, and you know and I'm looking and he said it's part of the room…
JC	Is that AB?
AP	Yeah It's part of the room and I'm looking, I'm looking for a plant you had, you know what I mean?
JE	I thought it was those dangly things actually.
AP	Did you?
JE	Because that's what, that's what he was looking at.
All	Talking at once.
SB	Quite honestly, all, as I said, the only help they had on that whole work was

	maybe half a dozen words on the blackboard.
AP	Well it's, that's, that's a credit to you.
SB	We've not, we've not discussed it further than that.
JC	They did a pencil sketch first, they did a plan of it, of what they chose and then they transferred that onto A3.
AP	I think what I actually liked, the fact was that, you know like today, I mean I'm a stranger they don't see me from anybody
JC	No. Which is why we asked you to do it.
AP	I came in and a it's very difficult for them to talk, a) to talk to strangers, especially I'm a big bloke as well, so if I got down to their level…
JC	I know what they mean
AP	It's a case of…. do you know I were coming down to their level and it were brilliant how they were just, just telling us, just about their picture.
JC	That's our children for you though.
AP	Lovely.
JC	'Cos they are like that.
AP	Lovely.
	Acting deputy head entered room. Conversation moved to DG. Conversation between learning mentors and the Link Learning Mentor (AP) ended.

Appendix 8: Learning Mentor End of Year Review Report

At the beginning of the school year, the LM Team was re-launched with a whole school approach. This strategy was very successful and provided a varied flexible timetable that allowed us to make an impact across more of the whole school.

We started enjoyable and productive lunch time sessions, inviting children by rota. We promoted good manners, social skills and an awareness of healthy eating. Our efforts helped the school to gain an award from the Healthy Schools' Initiative. We also set up an after school craft club which is open to all children.

Our aim was to be proactive not reactive. Family groups, twinning assemblies and circle times for anger management, self-esteem etc were, we felt, particularly successful.

We worked well as a whole team and communicated well between ourselves, with other members of staff and our line manager.

We received positive feedback and responses from pupils and their families or carers and were well supported by our line manager and our Link Learning Mentor.

The whole school approach however did present some problems in key stage one where the strategies were not as effective and the support too diluted.

At the beginning of the spring term the school situation changed, especially in upper key stage 2, where behaviour issues had to take priority because of disruption to children's education.

Fortunately, good support across the whole school from different agencies gave us more confidence in dealing with difficult situations. Positive handling training was especially useful. We also had a lot of support from our Link Learning Mentor who joined us at school whenever possible.

A nurture group was set up internally [for upper key stage 2 pupils] which meant a review of our timetables and roles.

It was at this point an alternative structure was put into place in key stage 1 with a learning mentor being directly involved with targeted children, engaging in their curriculum timetable. The focus was on year 2 with year 1 being monitored and supported by a learning mentor. This had a very positive effect on the children's learning as quality time is often the key to encouraging children to stay on task and ultimately lifting some barriers to learning.

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Also at this time the attendance issue was addressed. We feel this has been a very successful initiative which we are confident will continue to show excellent results in minimising absenteeism. A beneficial relationship developed with the Education Welfare Officer who has given us consistent support.

Staff morale at this time was low, the LM team was no exception because although we supported pupils and staff throughout the school, we did not feel we were carrying out our LM duties properly. We recognised however that this was necessary for the school's well-being.

The learning mentor team has always supported each other and this is one of the main reasons why we have survived and why we have a very positive attitude to the start on the new school year in September.