

High achieving pupils' experiences of Assessment for Learning in
a mainstream junior school: a qualitative case study drawing on
perspectives from psychoanalytic theories

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Declaration of originality

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Roger Hutchins

Word count

The number of words in this thesis, excluding abstract, acknowledgements, contents, personal statement, appendices and references is 44,793; with post-viva amendments the word count total is 49,531.

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Abstract

Assessment for Learning (AfL) remains a controversial and a significant aspect of education across the world, with both opportunities and dangers being presented as this strategy moves from being a radical new initiative to becoming routine. Investigating children's experiences of AfL with a group of higher achieving pupils in a junior school in England, consideration is given to their cognitive responses to AfL, their personal psychological responses and their experiences of AfL in interaction with their teachers. Theoretical positioning is primarily drawn from the psychoanalytic concepts of Donald Winnicott – creativity and compliance, True and False Selves and the potential space.

Lesson aims, success criteria, feedback, self-assessment and peer assessment are viewed through the eyes of the children with results which both support and challenge underlying formative assessment theory. Contributions to knowledge include the effects of the routinization of AfL; the necessity of taking into account the impact of the educational context in any study of AfL; the selective use that pupils make of AfL strategies; and the importance of taking the age, maturity and experience of pupils into account when examining the effectiveness and impact of AfL strategies in the classroom.

These assessment strategies are being developed within a context of 'assessment as measurement' where 'learning', 'progress' and 'improvement' are regarded by pupils and staff alike as taking place when increasingly higher national curriculum levels in maths and English are being achieved by the children. The danger of routinization is apparent as pupils employ the assessment strategies they have been taught and have experienced throughout their school careers in a mechanical and instrumentalist way. As one pupil said, 'It's a bit like cleaning your teeth in the morning. It's something you just do.'

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Personal statement regarding the EdD

On a hot summer's day in 2007 I knocked on the door of Gordon Stobart's room to attend the interview for the EdD course. Being greeted by him with the words, 'Welcome to the rotisserie' (referring to the stifling temperature in his office) immediately set me at ease and also set the tone for the next six years of study. Intellectual rigour, combined with humanity and humour, has been, for me, the hallmarks of the entire course.

I applied for the EdD out of a personal desire to study for a doctorate, something I had wanted to do for many years but had not before had the opportunity. Although enjoying academic study for its own sake, I also wanted to be involved in something that would be grounded in the reality of life – and this course has certainly been that. Over the first two years of the course I appreciated spending two days every month in academic debate and development, but also very much valued being back in work on Monday morning dealing with the realities of school. I suspected I could easily have become immersed in my own world of intellectual contemplation had I undertaken a full time PhD.

It is difficult to disengage what I know now, and indeed who I have become, as a result of the course from where I was in my thinking and understanding six years ago. Various educational, philosophical, ethical, political, sociological and theoretical stances have become so familiar to me and so much part of my everyday thinking that I find it hard to look back to the time when I was ignorant of them. It was not that I knew nothing. I had a first degree in modern history and politics with sociology, and had recently gained a master's degree researching into staff perspectives on inclusion. But the EdD enhanced, enriched and extended that knowledge. Along the way it has resulted in an emotional roller-coaster as I have over the years become angry, frustrated, exhilarated, despondent, hopeful and more – all as a result of what I had been learning and experiencing through the course. Overall I think the greatest gain in learning I have made is to come to a realisation that school, education and even childhood itself are not fixed 'natural' realities but are rather social constructs. Things do not have to be the way they are, someone somewhere has taken decisions that resulted in our present educational system. This has become both an area of frustration (why, therefore, is it as confused and pressurised as it is?) and of hope (it can be changed).

Reflecting on the course as an integrated unit, a number of strands run through each of the elements. The first strand relates to an experience not quite of conflict, but certainly of divergence within my thinking with regards the distinction between learning for its own sake

and learning in order to meet the requirements of assignments and written reports, including this thesis report. Over the six years of the course I have taken advantage of the academic vistas being opened to me and read as much as I could at each stage, especially relishing reading the 'classics' of education and research for the first time – writers such as Bruner, Dewey, Vygotsky, Geertz and Kuhn. Such reading was of benefit in that it broadened my horizons and deepened my knowledge, but it also exposed me to far more information than was needed to write assignments or conduct research projects, which was frustrating in that there was no opportunity to express all that I was learning. In many ways, my experience on the EdD course has mirrored the experiences of the pupils I have researched with – the conflict between creativity and compliance, the capacity I have to conform to the standards and precepts demanded by the course without losing my individuality, the uncertainty as to whether my approach is the 'right' one or my work is 'good enough'. I realise that even as a doctoral student, I, like the 9 and 10 year olds in my study, am not an 'autonomous learner'. Indeed, I wonder whether there can in reality be any such thing.

A second strand running through the course for me is that each of the modules both challenged and enhanced what I knew, or thought I knew, already. Beginning with the first module, 'Foundations of Professionalism', I realised there was a whole realm of meaning to the word 'professional' and to education as a whole that I had never previously thought about. This module gave me the beginnings of a vocabulary to express latent ideas, misgivings and desires regarding the education sector within which I worked. Here, as in every subsequent module and project, I was exposed to a range of authors, journals and books that I had never heard of before. The adage 'you don't know what you don't know' proved true time and time again. As a result of this first module, I realised that within schools we all use words and terms, such as 'professional', in a fairly unthinking and routine way. Much is taken for granted – what has been called 'tacit knowledge'. In this module, as throughout the rest of the course, this 'tacit knowledge' was made more 'explicit' for me. I began to see through this module something that was confirmed in every other aspect of the course – there is a great deal of academic research out there which has much to say about education, but hardly any of it filters down to the teacher in the classroom. As a group, we as teachers appear to be largely ignorant of what is being developed and debated. We have neither time nor opportunity to engage with such knowledge – there are too many initiatives from central and local government and too many immediate pressures that must be responded to, such as marking, which plays such a significant part in my thesis. As a result of this first module I cannot say that my professional practice changed in any way, but the way that I thought about my role and the

context within which I worked certainly did. I no longer took for granted the 'status quo' of school.

Strand three is the theme of 'distance'. I have found that, as a result of my studies, a certain distance has been created between me and the rest of the staff regarding the way we think about particular aspects of school and view education in general. This was recently exemplified in the way we were anticipating a looming Ofsted inspection, which eventually came in February 2013. My perspective on it was very much shaped by an awareness of Michel Foucault's 'surveillance' (Foucault, 1977) and Stephen Ball's 'performativity' (Ball, 2008). However, these concepts are somewhat alien to other members of staff and discussion about them proved fruitless – fruitless not because other teachers do not understand the concepts or disagree with the arguments, but fruitless because consideration of them did not help them in the process of being ever-ready for the inspection and subsequent judgement. Neither, in the event, did it help me – I, along with everyone else, submitted to the pressure to perform. In one sense, therefore, my experience of the course has made my professional life more difficult. What I would have once taken for granted as being 'the way things are' I now question deeply – but that neither makes them go away nor helps me prepare to meet them.

A fourth strand is that in each of the modules and for the two research projects, pursuing references in articles and books or finding articles via library searches on the IOE website, has led me into extended areas of reading. Major areas of interest have in this way been developed and explored, including theories of childhood, giftedness, research methodologies such as phenomenography and theoretical perspectives on life, especially complexity theory (Byrne, 1998; Davis *et al*, 2008). In a sense this knowledge could be termed 'compound knowledge' in that one layer built upon the last. Complexity theory has become one of the major elements in my theoretical perspectives, not only on the researches I have undertaken, but on my work in school and, to a large extent, on life as a whole. In keeping with this perspective, I find the metaphor of a cloud rather than a clock as being eminently applicable to the classroom situation. Whilst still being recognisable as a cloud, each cloud is distinct and it is impossible to predict in detail how that cloud will grow and develop – exactly similar to classrooms.

With regards how the elements of the course fitted together, I view the two research modules, the special interest module and the two research projects as being like pieces of a jigsaw which interlock with the Foundations of Professionalism module acting like a frame around the whole picture. Throughout I have followed the same research interest – pupils' perspectives on

Assessment for Learning. MOE1 introduced me to a wide range of insights regarding research, particularly theoretical and philosophical positionings, which directly linked with MOE2 when I experimented with three different interview strategies arising out of an increased awareness of the 'new sociology of childhood' (Christensen and Prout, 2005). The theoretical insights gained from MOE1 and the practical experiences of MOE2 shaped both the IFS and the thesis research methodologies and methods – particularly in the use of semi-structured group interviews with children, using open ended questions as an *aide memoire*.

The combination of research modules and research practice has impacted on my role in school in practical ways. Using knowledge and strategies gained from the course, I have interviewed a large number of pupils in different contexts and for different purposes, in particular shaping a school-wide response to an annual pupil survey which encompassed whole class discussions, group interviews and school council debates.

My knowledge gained about AfL and its impact on pupils has been shared in school firstly with the Senior Leadership Team and then at staff meetings, where I introduced teachers to the writing of Dylan Wiliam, particularly his 2009 booklet '*Assessment for Learning: why, what and how?*' This became the focus for discussion which influenced the current School Improvement Plan. I also rewrote the school's 'More Able Pupil' policy in the light of my reading around the subject of giftedness.

I find that I no longer take what is produced as 'research' at face value – particularly that handed down via national government policy. This applies to principles of pedagogy, such as the teaching of phonics, or to the way education should be organised, such as the role and value of teaching assistants. I now try and read the actual research with the awareness that banner headlines do not tell the whole story and that there are usually caveats and qualifications to be made. Research is invariably more nuanced and guarded than the unequivocal claims made for it by others. This helps me place a more realistic picture on the results of the research being promoted by central or local authorities. By looking at the methodology, basis of the research, the epistemology of the researchers and the detail of the findings I have been able, with regard to several significant research reports which have been taken up nationally, to appreciate the limitations and parameters of the research as well as their value and impact.

Chapter One Rationale and context

*Taking theories too much for granted leaves us
at the mercy of yesterday's good ideas*

Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 43

The sixth 'R' – reappraisal

It is with a sense of history, and perhaps a certain sense of irony, that this research was conducted in a junior school not many miles removed from the local authority maintained schools where James Callaghan was educated in his early years. Callaghan, as British Prime Minister, initiated what has come to be known as the 'Great Debate' on education in 1976 which set the course for the far-reaching subsequent reforms of the English state system within which we live today. Arguably, though, recent years have seen a restriction of the areas for such debate. Increasingly it seems the 'Three R's' are back on the educational agenda as being *the* most significant, possibly even the *only* significant aspect of modern-day schooling in the country, with the exception of competitive games which became, at least for a time, centre stage in the education media since the closing of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

The return to the 'Three-R' agenda is taking place against a backdrop and in the context of a fourth 'R' – that of recession, or, at least, repercussions of recession. As a consequence of this fourth R it seems that a fifth 'R' is operating within the English state school system – that of 'retrenchment'. Retrenchment is defined as action taken 'to reduce the amount of costs; to introduce economies; to shorten or abridge' (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 1995) and for me, working within the field of special educational needs over the past twenty years, 'retrenchment' certainly seems to be an apt word to describe the experiences of my school. If not gone, at least receding into the background, seem to be the broader consideration of issues such as 'Inclusion', 'Community Cohesion' and 'Every Child Matters'. It may not be an exaggeration to say that standards and standards alone is the aspect by which schools are to be inspected, assessed and judged. And 'standards' refers to pupil attainment and achievement as measured by national curriculum levels in English and maths. This certainly seemed to be our experience in the Ofsted inspection that took place during the spring term 2013.

It was in this context of pressure to achieve ever higher 'standards' that my study of Assessment for Learning (AfL) and the experiences of fifteen children from three classes who were achieving above age-expectations in either or both English and maths took place. The

investigation lasted for one year, beginning when the pupils were in their third term of year 4 (May 2011) and continuing until the end of their spring term in year 5 (April 2012). The names of persons and places used in the thesis are pseudonyms.

Given that it is now (summer 2013) fourteen years since the publication of the seminal booklet '*Inside the black box*' (Black and Wiliam, 1999b) and twelve years since our school introduced AfL as an integral part of the curriculum, a sixth 'R' seems appropriate – a 'reappraisal' of Assessment for Learning. I use the term 'reappraisal' because one appraisal has already taken place. The school's Ofsted Report of 2002 stated that Assessment for Learning was a significant contributory factor in the progress being made by pupils enabling a 'good' outcome to be given. Since that time, with varying degrees of emphasis, AfL has played a part in every year's School Improvement Plan (SIP). The current SIP for instance states that one of the Assessment Manager's tasks is to 'Continue to develop effective AFL marking and develop effective use of children's self/peer assessment where individual need is identified'. The 'sixth R' of this thesis, therefore, is a reappraisal of the place of AfL, its application in classes within the school and its effectiveness for a certain group of pupils. In so doing it presents an analysis of the meaning of assessment itself, an interrogation of what it means to 'learn' and a deconstruction of 'strategies' employed by school staff. It does not seek to develop a theory of assessment or learning that is applicable in any and every school situation, but it may, hopefully, resonate with many in the educational world who are seeking to apply principles of formative assessment in a genuine attempt to promote a love and an appreciation of learning and of self in the pupils they teach.

A final 'R' – routinization

Most articles relating to research on AfL seem to focus on recently introduced initiatives in schools, often with the support of professional academics and researchers from universities. I am looking at something quite different – a group of pupils for whom AfL is *routine*. They have known nothing else, and neither have their teachers. 'Routinization' could be a term used to describe any number of educational initiatives. In my lifetime as a teacher, Banda machines gave way to photocopiers, whiteboards and dry-wipe markers overtook the use of blackboards (as they were called then) only to be edged out by the technology of the interactive whiteboard. For the pupils for whom these were innovations, there was great excitement, thrill and a sense of motivation. The next generation of school children simply took them for granted. Part of the argument of this thesis is that something similar has occurred for AfL – what was once a radical initiative, potentially promising a 'Trojan horse' experience of

transforming education (Black, 2001; Kirton *et al*, 2007) has now become routine, simply something that happens in school, what ‘you do’ in a lesson.

In a sense this is probably inevitable. A good number of writers acknowledge the difficulty of what Black *et al* (2003, p. 113) call the ‘Achilles heel of many innovations’ – that of sustainability over the longer term (*e.g.* Gardner *et al*, 2008). As Smith and Gorard (2005, p. 37) state, ‘It is quite common for educational and other interventions to work better in the pioneering study than in more general practice.’ The danger of routinization is emphasised by Swaffield (2008): ‘Sharing the learning objective, returning to it in the plenary and marking work against it have become routine in many classrooms. This has undoubtedly helped focus learning and feedback, although we need to be alert to the dangers of such practice becoming ritualized and procedural’ (pp. 65-6). In order to avoid this danger, Swaffield (2011) argues that ‘teachers need to be aware of and think about what underlies the practices and to check constantly for the actual (as opposed to the intended) effects of practices’ (p. 438). In this thesis I want to develop this line of reasoning by considering what dangers, but also what possible opportunities, are inherent in this process of routinization of AfL in the classroom. As Black *et al* (2003, p. 120) write, ‘putting ideas into practice usually leads to those ideas being transformed – new knowledge is being created’.

The research problem

My research was of a social reality which ‘stresses the importance of the subjective experience of the individuals’ (Cohen and Manion, 1989, p. 8) with the empirical field (Brown and Dowling, 1998) being that of assessment and pupil voice. The empirical setting was a mainstream junior school in a densely populated inner city on the south coast of England where ‘Assessment for Learning was deemed to be at least “good” and often better across the school’ (extract from the Self Evaluation Form, October 2012). I investigated how one cohort of pupils in my school who were achieving academically more highly than their peers viewed and made use of Assessment for Learning strategies and did this by considering what formative assessment they experienced, what understanding they gave to those experiences and how they used those experiences to enhance their learning. Analysis of the findings was conducted largely through the lens of Donald Winnicott’s (1964; 1965; 1971; 1986) psychoanalytic perspectives on education. By contextualizing my findings within theories of assessment and learning I suggested how improvements might be made within the school to assessment practice and potentially to the learning experience of all pupils.

Using Wengraf's (2001) distinctions between the Central Research Question (CRQ) and subsequent Theoretical Questions (TQs), I sought answers to the following questions:

CRQ: What sense do high achieving pupils in a mainstream junior school make of their experiences of Assessment for Learning?

TQ1 What do the pupils who 'mediate' AfL bring to the process?

Analysis based on data from interviews with both teachers and pupils.

TQ2 What AfL takes place?

Analysis framed around Wiliam's (2009) five key strategies of AfL, adapted to become: learning objectives, success criteria, feedback, self-assessment and peer assessment.

TQ3 What positive learning experiences do pupils take from AfL?

Analysis based on interview data with pupils including discussion of aspects of their written work. Emotional or psychological responses to AfL are taken into account as well as cognitive or behavioural responses.

TQ4 In what ways are these experiences viewed in a negative light, as being either irrelevant to or an actual hindrance to learning?

Analysis based on interview data with pupils including emotional or psychological responses as well as cognitive or behavioural responses to AfL.

TQ5 What factors other than AfL help shape pupils' learning experiences?

Consideration of wider issues than AfL, many of which were introduced by the pupils themselves.

Rationale for the research

My reasons for wanting to conduct this study were threefold – my own professional development and concerns, methodological considerations, and the continued importance of formative assessment in education.

My professional and academic concerns

This thesis relates to three aspects of my professional and academic development: my role in school; my 'research journey'; and my academic concerns.

i) My role in school

I have been the Inclusion Manager in Coastal School since 1999. My non-classed base role encompasses ensuring that appropriate provision is made for pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN), those who are from ethnic minorities and for those recognised as being 'academically more able'. Historically relatively little of my time has been given to the more able pupils and part of the reason I embarked on the research was to redress this imbalance. To some extent I began to do this in my Institution Focused Study (IFS) (Hutchins, 2010) when I observed and interviewed all the pupils in one class who were identified as having SEN or as being academically more able.

ii) My research journey

In my research proposal included in the application to the EdD programme, I stated that '*I would like to explore the area of Assessment for Learning (AfL) as it relates to pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)*'. I wrote of my belief in the importance of assessment that promoted, rather than simply measured, learning, and reinforced my desire to research into the effects of AfL on children with SEN by suggesting that '*[AfL] may be more applicable to certain groups of pupils (those of average ability and the gifted and talented) than others (those with special educational needs)*'.

As a result both of the small-scale research investigation for Methods of Enquiry 2 (MOE2) (Hutchins, 2009) and the larger IFS (Hutchins, 2010), I realised that the application of such strategies to *any* group of pupils is not straightforward. What I thought would be reasonably simple for 'gifted' pupils was actually complex and, in some ways, more varied than for pupils with SEN and I chose to pursue this avenue of research for my thesis. I also became increasingly aware that the concept of Assessment for Learning, rather than being a single strategy generally accepted as aiding learning, is itself complex and contested.

iii) My academic concerns

My academic concerns, insofar as they are reflected in this thesis, relate to the role of AfL in practice, given that government publications have placed a great deal of emphasis on such assessment strategies in promoting and extending the learning of more able pupils (*e.g.* DCSF, 2008a, 2008b).

Methodological concerns

*In 1991 Michael Fullan asked 'What would happen if we treated
the student as someone whose opinion mattered?'*

Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, p. 139

Although many research papers have investigated formative assessment, as Miller and Lavin (2007, p. 4) state: 'There have been fewer papers which look at how children view formative assessment in the classroom.' Instead, they have focused on the views of teachers (Robinson and Fielding, 2007), the experience of countries other than England and, where they have gathered pupils' perspectives, on pupils other than junior school children (*e.g.* Brookhart and Bronowicz, 2003; Moni *et al.* 2002; Smith and Gorard, 2005). The result – little is known about English junior school pupil perceptions of formative assessment (Dagley, 2004; Williams, 2010). Where there have been studies in primary schools, these have often related to specific intervention programmes aiming to test the effects of formative assessment. Miller and Lavin (2007, p. 6) argue that 'there is a need to investigate contexts where teachers are employing formative assessment as an integral part of their day-to-day teaching: in busy primary school classrooms... in doing so there will be value in highlighting the child's perceptions of the classroom experiences'. My research sought to investigate, in the 'ecologically valid lived reality of busy primary classrooms today' (*ibid* p. 9), just such a situation. Investigating AfL from the perspective of the pupils arose from a conviction that their 'voice' counts and that, through listening to their accounts, we as a school would be able to improve our practice of formative assessment so that we are not 'tilting at windmills' (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, p.6). As Carless (2007, p. 171) states, 'The research evidence in favour of formative assessment has been well articulated... yet classroom implementation remains an ongoing challenge'. My research sought to investigate 'classroom implementation' for three classes of children and to do so from their perspective.

With the opening quote from Carr and Kemmis (1986) in mind, I sought to discover to what extent, if at all, Assessment for Learning was one of 'yesterday's good ideas' that was now being 'taken for granted' and, as a consequence, had lost some of its edge. I rather thought that it was.

Chapter Two Literature review

This literature review encompasses the two central aspects of my research – that of Assessment for Learning (the topic of the research) and Pupil Voice (the focus of the research).

The first aspect of the literature review is essentially bounded by two editions of the academic journal *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice* – volume 5, issue 1, 1998 and volume 18, issue 4, 2011, whilst the second aspect relates to current thinking and developments regarding the participation of pupils in research and in education more generally.

Assessment literature

The 1998 edition of *Assessment in Education* featured Black and Wiliam's (1998a) foundational article reviewing research into what made for increased standards in schools, with the answer being 'formative assessment', which has come to be termed 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL). The second edition reflected on the continuing debates regarding Assessment for Learning indicating that AfL remains a major topic internationally in education – it has not been a passing fad. This thesis seeks to make a contribution to that ongoing debate by focusing on the experiences of a particular group of pupils in a mainstream English junior school.

In order to avoid what Gardner *et al* (2008, p. 15) call a 'melee of jargon' regarding AfL and to place my research within a framework of existing literature and academic study which reflects the structure of my thesis, I divide my review of literature into four sections: a consideration of the practice, principles and theory of Assessment for Learning; a discussion of the cognitive aspects of AfL; perspectives on the possible psychological or emotional impact of AfL on pupils; and, finally, reflection on the relationships between pupils and teachers raised by AfL. In each of these sections conflicting views and arguments are compared and contrasted in order to set the scene for my own study, for one theme permeating my thesis is that of *ambivalence* – ambivalence regarding what AfL actually is, how it is (or should be) practised and, primarily, the ambivalent responses of pupils to its various strategies.

It will be noted in this literature review that less is available for comment regarding the psychological impact of AfL on pupils than the other areas of investigation. Also there will be little in the review relating to educational contexts where AfL has become the norm, where both pupils and teachers (at least those relatively new to the profession) have known nothing else in school. My thesis seeks to make a contribution towards filling that gap. First, though, I clarify what 'assessment for learning' means in this thesis by providing a brief introduction to

historic assessment, then considering arguments from the Assessment Reform Group before moving on to some of the writings and research complementing and challenging those arguments.

Practices, principles and theory of Assessment for Learning

'Assessment for Learning', both as a phrase and a concept, is not new. Harry Black (1986) writes of pioneers of formative assessment in mid-nineteenth century England and America and himself uses the phrase 'assessment for learning' in the title of his chapter, although does not do so in the actual text. Writing five years earlier, but describing work that had been undertaken for the previous decade or more, Bloom and his colleagues in Chicago detail concepts such as 'teacher evaluation', 'learning objectives' and 'feedback' – issues which relate to Assessment for Learning, even if used in a different context to that of the British educational system (Bloom *et al*, 1981). And writing four years before them, Rowntree provides a definition of assessment which remains relevant today, in a very different educational climate:

Assessment in education can be thought of as occurring whenever one person, in some kind of interaction, direct or indirect, with another, is conscious of obtaining and interpreting information about the knowledge and understanding, or abilities and attitudes of that other person. To some extent or other it is an attempt to *know* the person. In this light, assessment can be seen as a human encounter.

Rowntree, 1977, p. 4 (emphasis in original)

It is the 'human encounter' aspect of assessment that my study primarily seeks to investigate.

What *is* new in relation to AfL is the central importance placed on this educational strategy by national governments over the past twenty years or so. During the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, an influential group of researchers and academics in Britain, the Assessment Reform Group (ARG), commissioned a number of investigative projects, the results being disseminated to schools and educationalists via a series of booklets and books such as *Inside the black box* (Black and Wiliam, 1998b) and *Working inside the black box* (Black *et al*, 2002). These publications, along with a growing number of articles and books published by various members of the educational establishment, have shaped what is now called '*Assessment for Learning*', a process reinforced, and possibly altered, by various government policies and documents (*e.g.* DfES, 2004; DCSF, 2008a; 2008b). Interestingly, Black and Wiliam do not use the term 'assessment for learning' in *Inside the black box*, and only use

it in small case in their review article (1998a). It is only in later publications that '*Assessment for Learning*' gained capitalisation status, indicating a change from being an adjective describing a process to a noun suggesting the title of a strategy. Such a change in nomenclature may indicate a change in importance, but it could also indicate a confusion in function.

A summary of the principles of AfL was produced by the Assessment Reform Group (2002), and these principles underpin the study of this report. The ARG contend that AfL can have the effect of raising standards for all pupils if the following qualities are applied consistently in the classroom:

- Learning goals (for the pupils) and learning objectives/ intentions (of the lesson) are shared so that pupils understand what they are aiming for
- Feedback from the teacher should relate to the learning objectives and help pupils identify how they can improve
- Time must be given for pupils to respond to this feedback
- Teachers and pupils must be involved in reflecting on the learning taking place
- Pupils need to be taught self-assessment strategies enabling them to become responsible for their own learning
- Peer assessment needs to be encouraged and planned for in a 'safe' learning environment

Arising out of these principles came this description of Assessment for Learning:

Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

Assessment Reform Group, 2002

A few years later Wiliam reshaped this description:

The three processes (where learners are in their learning, agreeing where they are going, how to get there), the three roles (teacher, peer, learner) and the five 'key strategies' they yield [clarifying, sharing and understanding

learning intentions; engineering effective classroom discussions; feedback that moves learning forward; activating students as learning resources for one another; and activating students as owners of their own learning] form a kind of 'creation myth' for effective AfL. These five strategies, I would argue, collectively exhaust the terrain of AfL. If you are doing AfL, you are employing at least one of these five strategies, and if you're not employing at least one of these strategies, then you're probably not doing AfL.

Wiliam, 2009, p. 14

This thesis seeks, in part, to explore the 'creation myth' of AfL in my school. Of significance is the emphasis from both the ARG and Wiliam that AfL necessitates both teachers *and* learners being involved in all processes and strategies. In terms of the principles of AfL, it is not only the teachers who do the assessing. My thesis seeks to investigate both the contributions made by a group of pupils to their experiences of AfL and the impact those experiences had on them as learners.

My argument confirms the findings of others, that the strategies outlined by the ARG and others for the implementation of AfL sound simple, but 'in practice, formative assessment is a complex and challenging process' (Cowie, 2005a, p. 200). This point is reinforced by Blanchard (2009): 'The formative model [of assessment] is complex and dynamic' (p. 2). Pryor and Crossouard (2007, p. 17) welcome disagreement about the nature and practice of AfL: 'The current debate about the way Assessment for Learning is being implemented in a somewhat simplistic way suggests that a more problematic view of formative assessment may not be a bad thing for developing practice'. Pursuing the debate both about the meaning and the implementation of AfL, Bennett (2011, p. 8) argues that 'for a meaningful definition of formative assessment, we need at least two things: a theory of action and a concrete instantiation... The concrete instantiation illustrates what formative assessment built to the theory looks like and how it might work in a real setting'. My research sought to engage with Bennett's contention by investigating how the theory of AfL worked in 'a real setting' and to place that research within the context of the controversies concerning the theoretical underpinnings to AfL.

For most writers, social constructivism, a theoretical position which, according to Stobart (2008, p. 150) 'seeks to hold in balance learning as a cultural activity and as individual meaning-making', underpins an understanding of formative assessment (Kirton *et al*, 2007;

Marshall and Drummond, 2006; Miller and Lavin, 2007). This position recognises that education and learning take place via social interaction: 'all... assessment processes are, at heart, social processes, taking place in social settings, conducted by, on, and for social actors' (Black and Wiliam, 1998a, p. 56). It is influenced by the writings of Vygotsky and Dewey (Crossouard, 2009; Marshall and Drummond, 2006) and stands in contrast to behaviourism, where pupils are believed to simply 'respond' to the 'stimulus' of assessment (Carless, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005). 'Educational assessment must be understood as a *social* practice, an art as much as a science' (Broadfoot and Black, 2004, p. 8), and in this social context, interpretivism rather than positivism is found to be the most helpful paradigm through which to view formative assessment.

Although Pryor and Crossouard (2007) align themselves with a social constructivist position regarding AfL, they develop aspects of the complexity of this theoretical position, placing experience in the classroom within wider cultural settings and concluding that 'neither as teachers nor as learners are we free to become "who we want"' (p. 9). These two writers state they 'are more cautious here than Black and Wiliam (2006), who emphasise the agency of the teacher and consider primarily the classroom environment, rather than the wider socio-economic setting' (p. 11). Simply put, 'our actions shape our world, but we are also shaped by that world' (Crossouard, 2009, p. 80). Their argument bears similarity with Winnicott's views on the inevitable socialization of individuals, that all human beings have to move from what he terms the 'pleasure principle' to the 'reality principle', but whether this is achieved through inward compromise or outward conformity is of crucial significance (Winnicott, 1971). One key underlying contention of my thesis is that, in their experiences of AfL, both teachers and pupils were constrained by the educational context within which they functioned, particularly in terms of the need to 'make progress' as measured by compliance with national curriculum levels in reading, writing and mathematics. In Pryor and Crossouard's terminology, neither the teachers I observed and interviewed nor the pupils participating in the research were 'free to become who [they] wanted'.

Tunstall (2003) asserts something more fundamental, challenging the underlying theoretical perspective of social constructivism itself, arguing that, rather than evidencing socio-cultural or social constructivist approaches, many of the research methods and arguments of the proponents of formative assessment use facets of stimulus-response behaviourism, thereby contradicting their declared theoretical position. According to Tunstall, proponents of AfL in practice function along the lines that, if the 'right' stimulus, *i.e.* effective formative assessment,

is applied correctly, the 'right' response will be elicited *i.e.* enhanced student motivation and learning. Tunstall contends that, for proponents of formative assessment, whatever they say, the mind is still viewed as a machine. The 'paradigm shift' claimed by proponents of formative assessment is problematic. In formative assessment, according to Tunstall the 'locus of control' remains external, where the person (*i.e.* the pupil) remains a 'pawn' (*ibid* p. 509). This argument forms a central plank in my thesis regarding the relational aspects of AfL – there is more than a hint of behaviourism in my findings.

Cognitive aspects of Assessment for Learning

Considerable claims are made for formative assessment in the literature; for example:

The research reported here *shows conclusively* that formative assessment does improve learning. The gains in achievement appear to be quite considerable.

Black and Wiliam, 1998a, p. 61 (my emphasis)

and

[Inside the black box] proved without a shadow of a doubt that, when carried out effectively, informal classroom assessment with constructive feedback to the student will raise levels of attainment.

ARG 1999, p. 1 (my emphasis)

Although advocates of formative assessment are at pains to point out that they are not claiming AfL is a 'magic bullet' for education (Black and Wiliam, 1998b, p. 3), they continue to write using such terminology as the 'formative assessment dream' (Black, 2001) which, according to Black, was at the time of writing in a position to come to maturity. Some (*e.g.* Gipps, 1994, cited in Black and Wiliam, 1998a, p. 54; Harris, 2007, p. 252) write of a 'paradigm shift' in assessment, from summative to formative assessment.

But these claims are contested, or, at least, qualified by writers such as Torrance (2007), 'Formative assessment is not necessarily or inevitably a benign or expansive process, or one that will always promote "learning autonomy"' (p. 292). Even proponents of formative assessment admit that it is difficult to distinguish and separate out the particular contribution made by formative assessment to gains in learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998a, p. 16 and 29). As Black and Wiliam (2003), somewhat revealingly perhaps, state:

In *Inside the black box...* we inevitably, at some points, went beyond the evidence, relying on our experience of many years' work in the field. If we had restricted ourselves to only those policy implications that followed logically and inevitably from the research evidence, we should have been able to say very little... In some respects, *Inside the black box* represents our opinions and prejudices as much as anything else.

Black and Wiliam, 2003, pp. 628 and 633

Writing five years later, Stobart (2008) concludes that 'there is, as yet, little direct empirical evidence of the impact of AfL on achievement. This is partly because this is so difficult to do, as AfL may be only one of a variety of initiatives or changes going on in any one classroom' (p. 154). In similar vein, when reviewing two books on formative assessment, Elwood (2006, p. 222) believes that

Claims made for formative assessment are over-stated and cannot be fully substantiated: What can never be clear from the types of interventions described in these books and other research is actual 'cause and effect'... We have not yet seen the sustaining of such scores and the continued improvement of low-achieving students through comprehensive change to formative assessment.

Elwood, 2006, p. 227

Others argue there is a danger that providing too much formative assessment structure, such as learning objectives and success criteria, can make pupils *more* rather than *less* dependent upon teachers, thereby defeating the object of giving pupils the knowledge and skills to be independent life-long learners (Carless, 2007; Torrance, 2007). This problem is termed 'assessment *as* learning' by Torrance (2007, p. 281), where 'criteria compliance' replaces learning, and this is something very much applicable to my thesis.

Perhaps the most vociferous critique of the claims for formative assessment comes from Taras who consistently seeks to question both the theoretical claims of AfL and the practical outworking of the practice. For her, AfL is now the accepted discourse of educational orthodoxy which has become so powerful and all-embracing that it 'has been difficult to challenge its shortfalls and theoretical incompleteness' (Taras, 2007, p. 55). Rather than being a panacea for educational ills, Taras describes Assessment for Learning as possibly becoming 'the Pandora's box of assessment' (2009, p. 67), primarily because the effectiveness of

summative assessment has been omitted from the research analysis. In similar vein, Bennett (2011, p. 12) terms Black and Wiliam's initial claims regarding AfL 'the educational equivalent of urban legend'. 'In short,' he argues, 'the research does not appear to be as unequivocally supportive of formative assessment practice as it is sometimes made to sound' (p. 13). 'The magnitude of commonly made quantitative claims for the efficacy of formative assessment is suspect, to say the least' (p. 20). In summary, Bennett states that 'Formative assessment is both conceptually and practically still a work-in-progress' (p. 21).

Promoting learning – learning aims and success criteria

Although, as has been noted, AfL is designed to improve learning as measured by 'gains in achievement' (Black and Wiliam, 1998a, p. 61), in practice this may not necessarily be what happens. To consider one aspect of AfL, supplying lists of success criteria can be problematic, as Wiliam himself acknowledges. In itself providing learning aims and success criteria does not necessarily promote learning because of the danger of fragmenting the 'whole' into constituent 'parts' which are never put back together in a holistic way (Marshall and Wiliam, 2006; Sadler, 1989). Stobart (2006) raises the question, 'How explicit should learning intentions be?' (p. 139) – or, for that matter, 'How explicit should success criteria be?' There is no easy answer to what Stobart describes as this 'tightrope' (2008, p. 155). To fall off one way is to make the criteria so general they are in danger of using words like 'improve' or 'good', which do not convey anything to the learner. To fall off the other way is to be so prescriptive that the criteria simply become checklists that pupils tick off in a mechanical, instrumentalist way. If this is the case, there is a danger that learners become simply 'hunters and gatherers of information without deep engagement in either content or process' (Ecclestone, 2002, p. 36, cited in Stobart, 2006, p. 140).

Stobart (2008) suggests that a horizon of possibilities is more appropriate than detailed success criteria. In this situation 'we know the standard of performance that we want to reach, but different students will emerge at different places on this horizon' (p. 156). To some extent this would seem to coincide with Blanchard's (2009) suggestion that a range of success criteria be established within the class: 'Individual learners and groups can have differentiated objectives. Some teachers specify which objectives everyone must tackle, which most should tackle, and which some could tackle' (p. 54). For Blanchard, the important thing is 'for criteria to stimulate thinking, helping learners look forward to and look back on what they do' (*ibid* p. 70), in which case 'constructive use of criteria turns a judge into a coach' (*ibid* p. 71).

Presenting criteria as a checklist against which children 'tick off' their progress is expressly warned against (Harrison and Howard, 2009).

Arguably pupils such as those in my study who are already 'higher achievers' may be more able to develop, or have in fact already to a large extent developed, independence of learning and function outside the influence of AfL strategies. A pertinent observation is that 'higher-achieving students, who are often at home in school, may already have developed the self-regulation skills which allow them to work out what is needed, even if this has not been made clear' (Stobart, 2008, p. 155). If this is the case, perhaps one expected result would be that they do not see every AfL strategy as being relevant to their learning.

Teachers are the ones who are usually responsible for deciding on learning objectives and success criteria, but the pupils have a part to play as well. For AfL to actually promote learning, three key factors are seen to be required on behalf of the pupils. They must come 'to hold a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher, [be] able to monitor continuously the quality of what is being produced *during the act of production itself*, and [have] a repertoire of alternative moves or strategies from which to draw at any given point' (Sadler, 1989, p. 121 emphasis in original). This 'repertoire' Sadler (1989) identifies as 'guild knowledge' which is gained through 'prolonged engagement in evaluative activity shared with and under the tutelage of a person who is already something of a connoisseur. By so doing "the apprentice unconsciously picks up the rules of the art"' (p. 135). One possible indication of the pupil moving from being an apprentice to being a master is their appreciation of the difficulties encountered by their teachers when marking their books and making assessments. As Sadler (1989) states, 'they become insiders rather than consumers' (p. 135), meaning that the pupils have moved from merely receiving assessment as a finished article completed by someone else to now appreciating what goes into the process of making that assessment in the first place. Such depth of learning and ability to become 'master' assessors takes time – something acknowledged by Black *et al* (2003) when they write of this happening only 'gradually' (p. 48). This concept of acquiring 'guild knowledge' with its concomitant links with 'apprentices' and 'masters' is used extensively in my thesis to help interpret pupils' experiences of AfL and to go towards contributing to the theory of AfL itself.

Promoting learner autonomy – self and peer assessment

The generally accepted purpose of AfL is to enable the pupil 'to become an independent and effective learner' (Marshall and Wiliam, 2006, pp. 1-2). Pupil autonomy could be described as occurring when 'learners have ownership of their learning; when they understand the goals

they are aiming for; when, crucially, they are motivated and have the skills to achieve success' (ARG, 1999, p. 2). For Black *et al* (2003) being an independent learner means being able to make use of lesson aims and success criteria to frame and develop work *as that work is being produced*. Both these descriptions of learner autonomy focus on the learner as an individual, which is largely how it is viewed in my school; but learner autonomy can be considered in a different way. Willis (2011) argues that by emphasising the social interaction involved in AfL, learner autonomy could be 'reconceptualised from a set of universal, individual traits to be understood as a social role or identity fulfilled by a central participant within a specific community of practice' (p. 402). For Willis, learners become more autonomous as they become increasingly familiar with the language, culture and practices of the class as a whole and, in particular, as they develop an intersubjective relationship with the teacher. In this context, 'AfL practices and routines provided students with explicit guidance about what was culturally valued by the teacher' (p. 407) and became the means whereby a learner moved from the 'periphery' to the 'centre' of the community of practice that was their class. Consideration is given to this argument in Chapter Seven of this report.

In terms of the strategies involved with AfL, one aspect that Black *et al* (2003) came to increasingly view as being important in promoting learner autonomy was developing pupil capacity to effectively assess themselves and to engage in peer assessment. They found that peer assessment improved pupil motivation to take care with their work as it would be scrutinised by their colleagues. The advantages of peer assessment were seen to be that students used language that other students understood and would use in normal conversation and that pupils often accepted criticism from their peers that would have been problematic if given by a teacher: 'Feedback from peers is less emotionally 'loaded' than feedback from those in authority and is more easily accepted as well' (*ibid* p. 77). As is seen in Chapter Six, the findings of my research were almost the exact opposite of this.

Theoretically, peer and self-assessment is more than checking whether something is right or wrong; it is providing an opportunity for pupils to reflect on what their learning actually means, 'making explicit what is normally implicit, thus increasing students' involvement in their own learning' (Black *et al*, 2003, p. 66). When this happened, Black *et al* (2003) argue, pupils became more aware of when they were actually learning and when they were simply going through an exercise. They state that, 'This ability to monitor one's own learning may be one of the most important benefits of formative assessment' (p. 67). Dixon *et al* (2011) agree with Black *et al's* (2003) emphasis on the value of peer assessment in promoting learner

autonomy, seeing it as ‘a critical and necessary strategy’ (p. 366). For Black *et al* (2003) and Dixon *et al* (2011) the skills learned in evaluating other pupils’ work will enable learners to effectively evaluate and assess their *own* work, thereby fulfilling the aim of AfL, that ‘students... become self-monitoring, modifying and improving aspects of a performance that have yet to reach the desired standard’ (Dixon *et al*, 2011, p. 366). If this really is the case then the pupils in my study seemed to be missing out considerably on one of the ‘benefits of formative assessment’, as discussed in Chapter Six.

Feedback

Feedback... is the life-blood of learning

Rowntree, 1977, p. 24

Although the term ‘feedback’ includes pupils ‘feeding back’ to each other and pupils ‘feeding back’ to the teacher (Blanchard, 2009), the focus of this literature review is on the feedback which teachers give to their pupils – both orally and in written form (marking their work). In formative assessment theory feedback is central (Black and Wiliam, 1998b), with its aim being that students learn how to monitor their own progress (Brookhart, 2001; Sadler, 1989). Feedback was also perhaps the most significant aspect of AfL discussed by the pupils in my research and thus needs to be considered in some detail.

Like every other aspect of AfL, what feedback is in practice is contested. Black and Wiliam’s terse comment ‘good feedback causes thinking’ (2003, p. 631), for instance, begs the question, ‘What is thinking?’ I have already noted that Sadler (1989, p. 121) argues that for feedback to be truly ‘feedback’ ‘the information given to students must enable them to regulate their learning *during the act of production itself*’ (emphasis in original). Quoting Ramaprasad (1983, p. 5), Roos and Hamilton (2005, p. 14) argue that ‘information on the gap [between what is known and what is needed to be known] when used to alter the gap... becomes feedback. If the information on the gap is merely stored without being utilized to alter the gap, it is not feedback’.

The *quality* rather than the mere presence of feedback is crucial (Black and Wiliam, 1998a; Smith and Gorard, 2005):

By quality of feedback, we now realise we have to understand not just the technical structure of the feedback (such as its accuracy,

comprehensiveness and appropriateness) but also its accessibility to the learner (as a communication)... its ability to inspire confidence and hope.

Sadler, 1998, p. 84

In other words, to be effective, feedback must engage with the learner and be meaningful to him or her (Brookhart, 2001; Dixon *et al*, 2011; Perrenoud, 1998). The 'quality' of feedback can refer to both the amount and the content of the feedback. In terms of the amount, marking takes a great deal of teacher time and is not necessarily productive (Sadler, 2010) with comment only marking being seen as more effective in promoting learning than giving grades or levels or than giving 'rewards' such as stickers or merit points (Black *et al*, 2002).

Feedback for the pupils in my study certainly proved to be significant, but their responses revealed a level of complexity greater than that discussed in many arguments and were more akin to the contention of Askew and Lodge (2001) who state that feedback is a 'complex notion' involving 'dilemmas and tension' (p. 1). Models of feedback in the literature are considered here to provide a basis for a theoretical discussion about what was found to be happening in the classes of my study. Hargreaves *et al* (2000) distinguish between feedback that is 'evaluative', in that judgements are made relative to established norms, or 'descriptive', relating to a child's achievement or highlighting where they have improved. When feedback was descriptive, 'pupils learnt what they should produce again, but also learnt how to extend their achievement towards further progress' (*ibid* p. 27).

Classifying feedback in a different way, Askew and Lodge (2000) distinguish three models of feedback. One, which they argue constitutes the 'dominant discourse' in education, is termed the 'receptive-transmission model' in which teachers 'give' feedback to children. It is exactly that – 'a gift from the teacher to the learner. The teacher is viewed as expert... and feedback is one-way communication, from teacher to student, to provide information to help the student learn' (*ibid* p. 5). Such feedback does not promote learner autonomy, the stated aim of AfL, but rather runs the risk of increasing pupil dependency upon the teacher, a point taken up by Swaffield (2008, p. 59): 'If we create the impression through our feedback that there is only one way of achieving something, that teachers know best and will tell children what to do, agency and resourcefulness will be stifled'.

A second model of feedback identified by Askew and Lodge (2000) is the 'constructivist model of teaching and learning' (p. 9) where the purpose of feedback is not to tell the learner where they have gone wrong or what they have got right, but is rather 'to help make connections and

explore understandings' (p. 10). However, according to Askew and Lodge (2000), 'power still resides with the teacher... because the agenda for the feedback is decided by them' (p. 10). The third model of feedback identified by Askew and Lodge (2000) rarely occurs in mainstream education. This is the 'co-constructivist' model where learning is seen to take place in the context of collaboration between teacher and pupils and between pupil and pupil. In this model feedback is more a discussion between equals. According to Swaffield, (2008) these 'three models of feedback... are lenses through which the complexity of feedback has begun to be revealed' (p. 60), but it is only the latter two that can genuinely be said to be supporting Assessment for Learning.

Whatever the model of feedback, how that feedback is received by learners is also crucial and this is to a large extent influenced by how they perceive that feedback: 'If the learner perceives the gap as too large, the goal may be regarded as unattainable... Conversely, if the gap is perceived as too small, closing it might be considered not worth any additional effort' (Sadler, 1989, p. 130). Also, if feedback is given too frequently, learners may be discouraged from applying themselves: 'Continuous feedback may be distracting and encourage dependency' (Swaffield, 2008, p. 63). This could well equate with what Stobart (2008) terms 'killer feedback'.

Psychological or emotional impacts of Assessment for Learning

'You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting'

Daniel 5:27

Centuries before the birth of Christ, the original 'writing on the wall', as recorded in the book of Daniel in the Bible, signalled assessment – the last king of Babylon being 'weighed', 'found wanting', and, as a consequence, losing his rule to the growing empire of the Medes and Persians. Divine judgement was seen in the ancient world as a real factor in human history. We may not be talking about such ineffable concepts when considering assessment in the classroom, but, nevertheless, the practice of assessment has significant implications both for pupils and for teachers, often carrying with it an implication of being 'weighed and found wanting': 'Assessment... is, after all, a type of judgement' (Marshall and William, 2006, p. 4). Stobart (2008, p. 6) writes: 'assessment... cannot be treated as a neutral measure of abilities or skills'.

Although the term 'assessment', derived from the Latin *assidere*, meaning 'to sit beside', sounds almost benign, there is an edge to it, as Bateman and Holmes (1995) contend. One aim,

for sure is to sit beside someone in order to come to understand them, but a second aim is to weigh up that person's strengths and weaknesses. Youell (2006, p. 147) argues that 'all forms of testing or appraisal carry with them the possibility of success or the fear of failure'. For some pupils, and indeed for teachers, 'Even the most benign observer can become a persecutor in the mind of the individual... being observed' (*ibid* p. 145).

Perrenoud, 1998, states an obvious but possibly too much taken for granted point: 'No learning takes place without the learner' (p. 86). The most ardent advocates of formative assessment and those who seek to question, or at least qualify, the claims made for it agree that the way pupils respond to assessment of any description is crucial in determining its impact and effectiveness. As Swaffield (2011) eloquently puts it, 'Learners... are the beating heart of authentic assessment for learning' (p. 447). Effects of assessment, negative or positive, are mediated by pupils so the effects on learning tend to be muted (Biggs, 1998). Even in their review article setting out the perceived benefits of formative assessment, Black and Wiliam (1998a, p. 21) state pupils are not 'passive recipients of a call to action'; rather there are complex links between the message given, the way it is received, and the motivation which ensures action is taken. They acknowledge a number of areas where pupil differences, responses and perspectives affect the impact of such strategies: differences between 'high and low achievers' (p. 24); the failure to perceive feedback as helping learning (p. 22); a positive rather than a negative attitude to learning (p. 22). They write, 'Students bring to their work models of learning which may well be an obstacle to their own learning' (p. 30). In part, it is these 'models of learning' that I investigated.

In his commentary on Black and Wiliam's article, Perrenoud highlights the importance of taking pupil disposition into account when investigating formative assessment: 'In between what the pupil does and what passes through his or her mind, the mediations are complex. And what happens in the mind does not necessarily affect learning' (Perrenoud, 1998, p. 89). Brookhart and Bronowicz's (2003) research amongst students in American schools led them to state the case more forcefully: 'Patterns in the response suggested that individual psychology was more salient than the classroom assessment environment' (p. 239). Even Fuchs *et al* (1997) in an article cited by Black and Wiliam (1998a) to reinforce their argument that formative assessment raises standards for low achievers, concede that 'achievement effects were mediated by students' learning histories' (*ibid* p. 535) and that 'learning outcomes may be mediated by individual differences' (*ibid* p. 538).

I would argue that such perspectives are significantly underrepresented in the literature on assessment and lend themselves to an exploration of psychoanalytic theory in an attempt to understand more fully pupils' responses and approaches to assessment practices.

Psychoanalytically speaking, the pupils who were the focus of my investigation were in the period of 'latency' – that period between infancy and puberty/adolescence where peer relationships are beginning to take on greater significance (Mitchell, 2003). This is a 'period of teachability' (Winnicott, 1986, p. 24); a time when, according to Bollas (2001), they are becoming increasingly aware of themselves as individuals. However it is possible for that 'latency' to be disrupted or disturbed so that pupils experience pressures on their ability to focus and respond positively to learning situations (Canham, 2006). Children with different experiences of infancy and latency are likely to respond differently to every aspect of schooling, including assessment. Those for whom issues of self-worth and self-identity have become securely established (Parkes *et al*, 1991) are likely to have developed what Winnicott (1971, 1986) termed the 'true self' and may be able to cope better with the inevitable anxieties of learning and assessment than those whose early experiences are different.

A psychoanalytic perspective encourages reflection on what is actually taking place within the learner – both consciously and unconsciously. The psychoanalysts Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion both believed that children are born with an innate desire to learn – what Klein termed the 'epistemophilic instinct' (Canham, 2006). However, learning inevitably involves anxiety (Powell and Barber, 2006). In order to learn children need to accept that they 'do not know' (Youell 2006). Here, as Canham (2006) states, there is opportunity for humiliation, to feel stupid, frustrated and exposed. Learning involves loss. Something must be given up in order for learning to take place. In this milieu of tension and desire, loss and discovery, the writings and theoretical perspectives of the English paediatrician and psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott, have proved to be a useful lens through which to suggest an interpretation of the responses of the pupils in my study. A consideration of Winnicott's perspectives on the psychological and emotional impact of AfL on the pupils is given throughout the second part of this thesis.

Relationships between pupils and teachers raised by Assessment for Learning

In the human, social interaction which is assessment, the roles, understandings and personal dispositions of both teachers and pupils become significant (Biggs, 1998; Carless, 2007). There is general agreement that the role of the teacher is crucial in determining the effectiveness of formative assessment – it is a lot more than simply implementing the 'techniques' of Assessment for Learning: 'The form and extent of innovation is greatly dependent on the

attitude and values of... practitioners, especially teachers' (Priestley and Sime, 2005, p. 476) and 'The apparent success of a particular innovation depends at least as much on the teacher as on the merits of a new technique or strategy' (Sato *et al*, 2005, p. 190). As Dixon *et al* (2011, p. 365) state 'Teachers' beliefs are a mediating factor in the uptake and implementation of assessment reform initiatives'. How teachers understand the principles of AfL and go about implementing those strategies will in large measure determine its effectiveness in any one class and with any one group of pupils as Harrison and Howard (2009) argue:

While there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that developing formative assessment practices will improve learning, putting such practices into reality, in the classroom, requires teachers to have a particular mindset and a repertoire of skills at their fingertips.

Harrison and Howard, 2009, p. 20

One of the most influential writers on formative assessment agrees: 'The idea of teacher-as-assessor assumes that teachers know the learners and are themselves in a special sort of mastery position over the domain of knowledge' (Sadler, 1998, p. 81); but he goes on to argue that, in order for formative assessment to achieve its potential for learners to become able to effectively assess themselves, teachers need to impart some of this assessment knowledge and skill to the pupils. Black and Wiliam (1998a) take up this idea: 'The teacher must provide a model of problem-solving for the students, and needs also to be able to understand the model in the head of the learner so that he/she can help the learner to bring order to his or her 'meta-cognitive haze'' (p. 30).

A central role of the teacher is the establishment of the overall learning environment of the classroom, within which the assessment environment sits (Brookhart, 2001; Brookhart and Bronowicz, 2003). It is the relationships established between teacher and pupils which set the context for the effectiveness or otherwise of learning in general and assessment in particular, interlocking in a continuous cycle, the one reinforcing or detracting from the other, as Cowie (2005b) found: 'Assessment was embedded in and accomplished through routine classroom interactions with both teachers and peers' (p. 150). Brookhart and Bronowicz (2003) agree that the onus is on teachers to initiate communication with their students: 'The way teachers communicate their expectations to students and the way they provide feedback as to how well these expectations were met helps students form concepts of what is important to learn and how good they are at learning' (p. 225). Throughout the literature on AfL factors such as 'trust'

and 'respect' between teachers and pupils are highlighted (Cowie, 2005b; Marshall and Wiliam, 2006). Where such trust and respect are established pupils are not afraid to admit difficulty and to ask for help or to run the risk of making mistakes. Indeed, being placed in situations where they do not always succeed is seen as an important part of the learning process (Earl and Katz, 2008). As Stobart (2006) argues, students have confidence in teachers when they themselves have confidence in the student's ability to learn. How teachers pay attention to the pupils in their class goes a long way to determining what sort of learning environment is created: 'There is no substitute for the teacher actually being interested in what the pupils have to say' (Marshall and Wiliam, 2006, p. 5). The importance of their relationships with teachers is drawn out by many of the pupils in my own research as discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

Much depends on the level of 'assessment literacy' (Mertler, 2009) held by teachers where those who are

assessment literates... enter the realm of assessment knowing what they are assessing, why they are doing it, how best to assess the skill/ knowledge of interest, how to generate good examples of student performance, what can potentially go wrong with assessment, and how to prevent that from happening.

Mertler, 2009, p. 102

Those teachers who are assessment literate are likely to be able to engage in what Marshall and Drummond (2006) call the 'spirit' of AfL rather than simply follow the 'letter' of implementing techniques. The spirit of AfL is described by them as 'high organization based on ideas' (p. 137) where the goal is again learner autonomy. This distinction between 'spirit' and 'letter' is used by many writers and researchers as if they were two contrasting approaches to assessment. In fact Marshall and Drummond argue that the difference is to do with how much teachers have grasped the underlying ideas and principles behind AfL and that rather than being two opposites, 'exploring the two categories, as a starting point, leads to a fuller understanding of the shades of grey that lie between' (*ibid* p. 138), implying that teachers' practices often lie somewhere on the spectrum between 'spirit' and 'letter'.

A number of underlying factors crucially affect a teacher's approach to formative assessment. Tierney (2006) and Carless (2007) both emphasise the importance of teachers understanding the principles of assessment in general and of formative assessment in particular. The more

teachers understand the principles and the practice of AfL, the more effective they are likely to be in its implementation. Their beliefs about the nature of learning are also going to impact on their assessment practice, where those who see learning as an interactive social process between those taught and those teaching are more likely to view AfL positively (Tierney, 2006). A teacher's perception of pupils and their ability, or lack of it, to make progress and succeed in school will also have a major impact on their approach to formative assessment (Black and Wiliam, 1998a; Brookhart and Bronowicz, 2003; Sadler, 1998). For AfL to be 'successful' teachers must believe that all pupils have the ability to make progress and benefit from the strategies of formative assessment. In other words, they must hold to an 'incremental' rather than an 'entity' view of learning and intelligence (Dweck, 2000). Whilst the focus of my study was the pupils, interviews with teachers, observations of their lessons and listening to what the pupils had to say about the teachers led me to an understanding of the 'assessment literacy' of the teachers and of the importance of this in the effectiveness of AfL; something explored in greater depth in Chapter Seven.

Teachers require a range of skills and knowledge to engage with formative assessment, not least being able to understand what causes errors in pupils' work (Brookhart, 2001). Bennett (2011) argues that assessment involves a process of gathering evidence from pupils' work but then, crucially, 'making *inferences* from that evidence' (p. 14 emphasis in original). Teachers readily identify *what* or *when* a pupil has made an error, but the key to successful formative assessment is correctly inferring *why* they have made that error – was it simply a slip or evidence of a misconception or does it show a lack of understanding? As Bennett states: 'Each of these causes implies a different instructional action' (*ibid* p. 17). He concludes this part of his argument with the somewhat depressing observation: 'Teachers need substantial knowledge to implement formative assessment effectively in classrooms. It is doubtful that the average teacher has that knowledge' (*ibid* p. 20). Bennett's points are exemplified and discussed later in the thesis, in Chapters Four and Seven, when consideration is given to the pupils' experiences of teachers' marking.

Blanchard's (2009) concepts of the *transparent* and the *interactive* classrooms seem to me to be a helpful way of approaching the experienced reality of AfL in schools. Whilst both concepts are seen to be an improvement on the traditional didactic lesson, I would argue with him that the interactive classroom rather than the transparent classroom is more likely to promote the development of learner autonomy and independence and therefore more readily achieve one of the stated aims of AfL. The essential difference between the two types of classroom is the

level of shared decision making. In the transparent classroom, 'clarity' is the watchword – lesson aims and success criteria are made clear, teacher marking makes clear what is right and what is wrong, what needs to be corrected and what can be used again and clear feedback is given regarding where improvements can be made. In all this, Blanchard contends, 'pupils... present themselves as passive and dependent, waiting to be spoon-fed or told what to do' (*ibid* p. 5). In an interactive classroom, however, pupils jointly with the teacher agree the learning aims and success criteria and feedback is much more in the form of a dialogue between teacher and pupils – the emphasis within the classroom is on collaboration. More than this, 'interactive teachers ask their pupils about the success or otherwise of activities and strategies. They let their pupils in on the effort of trying to get the most out of what they do' (*ibid* p. 38). Blanchard argues that 'what turns transparent teaching into interactive teaching and learning is pupils having a voice in planning their activities' (*ibid* p. 57). In terms of assessment,

As long as the teacher controls and carries out assessment, however formatively, it can be no more than transparent. When the learner joins the teacher in making assessments, the experience becomes interactive, and greater autonomy follows.

Blanchard, 2009, p. 139

The concept of the 'transparent' and the 'interactive' classroom proved to be a useful mechanism to discuss the findings of my research as detailed in the second part of the thesis.

Summary of issues raised in the literature review which helped frame the discussion of the findings of this thesis

- The distinctive features of AfL strategies
- Assessment as a social interaction, emphasising the importance of pupil-teacher relationships
- AfL being a complex and contested process, both theoretically and in practice
- Learner autonomy/ pupil independence
- The risk of mechanistic compliance with 'techniques'
- The importance of developing 'guild knowledge' in pupils
- The relative lack of data regarding psychological or emotional aspects of AfL

Pupil voice: potentials and problematics

Whilst the 'voice' of children and young people is an increasingly significant aspect of all services provided for the under eighteens in the UK (medical, social and educational), this part of the literature review is limited to the educational sphere.

Practicalities of pupil voice

Since the late 1990's, in contrast to previous decades of education and educational research, 'pupil voice' (or 'child voice'/'student voice') has become mainstream within the education system in the UK. It is now a popular approach (Fielding, 2009) with one particular strand of pupil voice, that of students as researchers (SAR), described as having become 'iconic' (*ibid* p. 106). Arguably, an approach to research seeking to involve children as participants is now dominant (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008), having become a 'policy mantra', almost an 'article of faith' (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 344). Described as a 'vogue', (Bragg, 2007a), with increasing popularity and widespread 'use' pupil voice has aroused suspicion as, according to Bragg, it is becoming 'less clear how to interpret it' (*ibid* p. 343). As two of the most ardent supporters of pupil voice state, there is a danger that schools and educational researchers will jump on the 'bandwagon' of pupil voice without grasping its fundamental tenets and understanding its purpose, and its limitations (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). This final section of the literature review sets out to outline some of the claims, the theoretical underpinnings and potential dangers and pitfalls of pupil voice and does so in the light of the fact that the major source of data generation for this thesis was listening to pupils – engaging directly with 'pupil voice'. The term 'pupil voice' rather than the equally suitable 'children's voice' or 'student voice' is used in this review as an acknowledgement of the positioning of those with whom I undertook the research – they were pupils in the school where I worked.

On the surface, pupil voice evidences a range of factors which promote the well-being of children of whatever age. Listening to pupils appears to be emancipatory, democratic, respecting children's agency as individuals in their own right, giving adults access to children's experiences and perspectives and engaging with 'rights' and 'citizenship' debates (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). But there is more going on underneath – as Fielding (2009, p. 109) comments, the 'tectonics' of pupil voice need to be considered.

'Pupil voice' is a metaphor (Jones and Welch, 2010) and, as such, allows for a range of complex notions, concepts and practices to be encapsulated in a neat phrase, but, as Sfard (2009) states, 'this... is bound to gloss over many differences, some of which may be of vital importance' (p. 45). As an umbrella term, pupil voice covers a wide variety of approaches to

gaining insight into and engaging with pupils' views and perspectives (Arnot and Reay, 2007). Four main approaches are identified in the literature (*cf* Fielding, 2009; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Jones and Welch, 2010):

- Consultation between teachers and pupils which, to be most effective, should be part of everyday school life: 'a conversation that builds a habit of easy discussion between teacher and pupil' (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007, p. 7)
- Participation in decision-making processes which should be respectful of children's identities, be genuine and be geared towards change (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010)
- Dialogue/ conversation between teachers and pupils, something valued by pupils when it is developed as part and parcel of school life through the establishment of relationships of trust and mutuality (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010; Kinney, 2005)

and

- Students as researchers where pupils themselves set the agenda, context and purpose of research, which is regarded as a potentially effective means of rebalancing the dynamics of power in schools held between adults and children (Kellet *et al*, 2010).

Underlying factors

Whatever the practicalities involved in pupil voice, there is general agreement that underlying factors should be acknowledged and addressed. Of absolute importance is the issue of power in any engagement between adult/teachers and children/pupils. Approaching this imbalance of power dynamic from a Foucauldian perspective, Graham and Fitzgerald (2010) stress that 'by its very nature... the process of participation is imbued with networks of power relations' (p. 350), where power is seen not as the possession of any one person or group but as rather something active, produced through those very relationships. Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) point out that, in order to participate children have to participate in *something*, and that something is most often pre-determined by adults, as indeed it was in my research. Power continues to reside with the adults. Such participation may actually limit and restrict what pupils can say and do (Bragg, 2007a) for, in reality, consulting with pupils remains a largely pedagogic experience not so very different from other experiences encountered by pupils in school (Arnot and Reay, 2007). As Arce (2012) states, by being asked to participate in adult-decided activities, children may be precluded from 'spontaneously expressing their voice and making themselves heard' (p. 375).

Related to the issue of power, a second ‘tectonic plate’ (Fielding, 2009) of pupil voice is that of the underlying attitudes held by adults towards the pupils and towards the processes of pupil voice. What Kinney, 2005, describes as a ‘pedagogy of listening’ (p. 121) must be developed such that listening to pupils becomes part of the ethos and culture of the school, an ‘approach to life’ (*ibid* p. 121). Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) agree that genuine pupil voice is ‘less a question of methods or techniques than of attitude’ (p. 511), with adults needing to accept that they do not have all the answers and that pupils’ responses may challenge underlying assumptions. To fully develop pupil voice, ‘adults are required to follow the conversation and the questions that emerge from it no matter how strange or unfamiliar’ (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 354). In order to be able to do this, adults need both to trust the children and to ‘feel comfortable with... ambiguity in dialogue’ (*ibid* p. 356). As developed more in the next chapter, in my research with children I consciously set out to follow these suggestions from Graham and Fitzgerald (2010).

Theoretical positioning

Essentially, two theoretical positions underpin the concept of pupil voice – that of the nature of childhood and that of the rights of the child. Both of these perspectives are complex, contested and problematic, and both are inextricably linked (Jones and Welch, 2010).

With regards the nature of childhood, what came to be generally termed the ‘new sociology of childhood’ emerging during the 1990’s and the first decade of the twenty-first century (*e.g.* James and Prout, 1997; Mayall, 2002) has shaped current views of what children are, as alluded to in Chapter Three of this thesis. From this perspective, children are regarded as being competent communicators of their own experiences and opinions, as having something important to say and as being capable of expressing that ‘something’ (Jones and Welch, 2010). Children are seen as being ‘experts’ on their own lives (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). However, more recently this approach has been problematized in the light of developments in sociological thinking. For instance, one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the new sociology of childhood, Alan Prout, questions what he regards as the too simplistic dichotomies postulated by this standpoint. For him, the dualisms between ‘child’ and ‘adult’, between nature and nurture, between children as ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ do not adequately reflect the complex realities of life (Prout, 2011).

Prout, 2011, argues for the necessity of taking into consideration what he terms the ‘excluded middle’, the ‘mediations and connections’ (*ibid* p. 8) that exist between these dichotomies. For him, children and adults alike are both ‘being’, in the sense that they exist in their own right

and have individual identities, but at the same time both are also ‘becoming’, in the sense that no person, adult or child, is yet complete. We are all still developing into new people: ‘both children and adults should be seen through a multiplicity of becoming in which all are incomplete and dependent’ (*ibid* p. 8). He emphasizes that children and adults are not some ‘different species of being’ (*ibid* p. 9). Rather than the dichotomies of child/ adult, being/becoming, emphasis should be placed on the networks of relationships which construct the lives of both children and adults. For Prout there is no such thing as a ‘pure’ child or a ‘pure’ adult – all are ‘hybrids’ emerging from the ‘complex web of interdependencies’ (*ibid* p. 8) which shape them.

Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) likewise emphasize the ‘becoming’ nature of childhood – not as in previous decades to marginalise and silence children because of supposed incompetencies and immaturities, but rather to conceptualize what they see as the realities of life. They suggest abandoning the notion of either children or adults being ‘experts’ in their own lives and replacing it with both children and adults as ‘emergent becomings – always unfinished subjects-in-the-making’ (*ibid* p. 511). As they state, ‘the concept of immaturity begins to (re)position social research – and life more generally – as a necessarily complex, incomplete and messy process’ (*ibid* p. 511).

The second major theoretical underpinning of pupil voice, that of the rights of the child, is also problematized. Focusing essentially on Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), summarised by UNICEF as:

Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account

(cited in Jones and Welch, 2010, p. 7)

the rights of children to be listened to appears to be straightforward, but in law, in medicine and in education, it is not.

Firstly, application of the UNCRC is not mandatory, is dependent on national law and is, in practice, localised in its delivery – localised to the extent that one school will understand and implement it differently to another (Jones and Welch, 2010).

Secondly, the ‘rights’ given to children are constructed by adults (Arce, 2012) and can be regarded as a sub-set of the human rights prevailing for adults. Arce (2012) raises the question of why this should be: ‘This creates a double standard of incomplete rights for incomplete

people (*i.e.* children) and complete rights for complete people (*i.e.* adults)' (p. 371). For him, 'a protectionist model prevails' in the realm of children's rights (*ibid* p. 374).

Thirdly, Arce (2012) argues that the rights of the child were decided by the UN following norms of what a child and childhood *should* be, rather than what, for the majority of children in the world, they actually *are*. Taking this perspective, the rights of the child conform to a model of childhood propounded by western ideologies and as such are deemed to be 'Eurocentric' as well as 'adultcentric' (Arce, 2012, p. 413). The idea of the child in the minds of those who drew up the UNCRC, according to Arce (2012) is that of the '*domestic child* of the minority world... official childhood must be sheltered and take place inside, inside the family home, inside the school' (p. 385). Such children appear more 'like an asexual cherub in a paradise outside space and time' (*ibid* p. 383) than real children living real lives in real places, certainly very different to the lives of children living in a Mumbai slum as graphically portrayed by Katherine Boo (2012).

The importance of what Jones and Welch (2010) term this 'rights agenda' is seen in how it can 'affect how adults working with children see and review their work' (p. 13). Alternatively, in the day-to-day life of the school, it can largely be ignored. There is potential tension between recognising and responding to the rights of the child and meeting the demands and requirements placed on educational services by society and government (Jones and Welch, 2010).

A significant connection between theories of childhood and the child rights agenda relates to the tensions between adults having both the duty to protect and safeguard children and the duty to respond to them as competent individuals in their own right who have the capacity to make their own decisions about issues that concern them – that which Jones and Welch (2010) distinguish as *liberty rights* and *welfare rights*. As they state, the issue is not so much around protecting the welfare of children but rather, 'the arguments revolve around giving children liberty rights' (*ibid* p. 49). They, along with many others (*cf.* Arce, 2012; Fielding, 2009; Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008), believe that the balance in the UK's educational system, and in society at large, is by far weighted towards children's welfare rather than their liberty, reflecting a largely protectionist mentality. Phrases such as 'in accordance with the child's age and maturity' or 'in the child's best interest' are institutionally defined by adults to limit children's liberty rights in order to promote what is deemed (by adults) to be their welfare rights. In terms of research with children this can most obviously be seen in the area of gaining informed consent. Where parents and teachers are asked to give consent on behalf of the child, but the children themselves are not involved in the decision or, if they are, only in a

cursory way, the liberty rights of the child may be being infringed: 'Areas such as consent... remain an adult and legal prerogative' (Lowden, 2002, cited in Jones and Welch, 2010, p. 76) – an important aspect of my research discussed further in the following chapter.

Potential pitfalls

Potential dangers or pitfalls with pupil voice are many and various. Included in these are what Jones and Welch (2010) term a 'rights veneer' in which organizations such as schools 'give the appearance of engaging with a rights agenda, but do not *actually* do so' (p. 26 italics in original). They argue that although this can sometimes be conscious and deliberate, often it is not, 'revealing just how difficult it can be to alter deep-seated and long-held views, attitudes and practices' (p. 26). Many authors agree with this perspective, citing the dangers of 'tokenism' when it comes to pupil voice (*e.g.* Arce, 2012; Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010; Kellet *et al*, 2010) – children's voices may be heard, but they are not acted on. Closely allied to the issue of tokenism is that of outwardly adhering to aspects of pupil voice in a tick-box mentality in an attempt to pass muster at inspection time (Fielding, 2009).

Another potential pitfall identified by writers such as Fielding (2009) and Jones and Welch (2010) is that of allowing only a certain *type* of pupil voice to be heard by adults. According to them, this raises issues of social exclusion, particularly the silencing of those who do not or who cannot speak in that acceptable voice – which can relate to social class, gender, race, disability and poverty. Children can say whatever they want, but in order for what they say to matter to the adults around them it must fit with the boundaries and purposes of those adults (Arce, 2012). As Fielding (2009) highlights, questions regarding the actual practice of pupil voice in a school need to be asked and answered; questions such as:

- Who is allowed to speak?
- To whom are they allowed to speak?
- What are they allowed to speak about?
- What language is encouraged or allowed?
- Who or what is absent?
- Who or what is silenced?

Obviously pupil voice, although cited in the singular, is actually plural – there are many pupil 'voices': there is 'no one voice that is authentic or representative of young people' (Fielding, 2009, p. 108). Given this, the practice of pupil voice can result in unintentional consequences such as the emergence of new elites of pupils in the school (Bragg, 2007a) who are able to use the 'deep codes of communication and understanding' required in order to have their voice

heard (Fielding, 2009, p. 108). The practice of pupil voice could easily become ‘a middle-class project of the self’ (Bragg, 2007a, p. 353) for ‘deciding whose voices are to count is an ethical and highly charged political matter’ (Bragg, 2007b, p. 510).

Arnot and Reay (2007) speak of ‘the egalitarian mythology of voice’ (p. 311) and coin the term ‘pedagogic voice’ to emphasize the ‘power relations which create voices’ (p. 312). Drawing on arguments from Bernstein, they distinguish between four types of pupil talk heard in school:

- Classroom talk – ‘the styles of communication and language codes used by teacher and taught’ (*ibid* p. 318)
- Subject talk – talk related to specific academic subjects
- Identity talk – talk between friends

and

- Code talk – how pupils talk about school amongst themselves.

Only the first two types of talk, they argue, is acceptable to adults as pupil voice. The last two, following Bernstein, they designate as the ‘sub-voice’ or the ‘yet-to-be-voiced’ (*ibid* p. 320).

Those pupils who can or have only mastered these voice types will not be heard. What they describe as the ‘puzzling conflation of pupil voice, access and participation’ therefore conceptually ‘depends upon an ideal student’ (*ibid* p. 321).

A third pitfall can be that the interests of the school supersede those of the pupil (Fielding, 2009; Jones and Welch, 2010); as Bragg (2007a) states pupil voice could easily ‘serve the self-interests of the school and ensure organisational success’ (p. 348). In a research project within an English primary school Bragg (2007b) found that by increasing consultation with pupils they increasingly came to think and talk about ‘we at this school’ (p. 512) – the result of their participation seemed to create an enhanced identity with the school rather than the establishment of their own voices as separate individuals. Linked to this is the understanding of pupil voice as being useful for the pupil *later on in life* rather than as a tool for the present. This is exemplified in a largely unproblematic chapter on the experience of pupil voice in Scotland by Kinney (2005) when she states that the express policy of the local authority regarding pupil voice was that of ‘supporting children to learn and develop skills... that *prepare them for their future*’ (p. 112, my italics). Bragg (2007a) develops this argument when she states that participation in pupil voice may actually be ‘disciplining young people into current requirements for modern citizenship’ so as ‘to qualify as responsible members of a group’ (p. 350).

Implications for my research

The arguments and debates surrounding pupil voice and children's rights 'has fuelled much enquiry and research involving children and their lives' (Jones and Welch, 2010, p. 16), including my own, which is premised on an understanding that 'children's experiences [are] worthy of consideration from a child's own perspective' (*ibid* p. 17). As alluded to in other parts of this thesis, particularly the following chapter, my research was shaped by three essential factors emerging from the discussion on pupil voice:

1. An awareness of the power imbalances between myself as an adult (teacher) researcher and the pupils, and seeking to overcome or at least alleviate this by the methods of research (group interviews) and by being willing to follow the conversation where the children took it (albeit within limits); wanting to challenge the potential 'schooled docility' of the pupils (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008, p. 506) by the way I conducted the interviews
2. Exercising an attitude of respect for and trust in the children participating in the research, recognising their rights both to contribute or not to interviews and discussions and seeking to avoid an over-protective stance as exemplified in my approach to gaining informed consent and by seeking to develop mutuality within the interviews
3. Acknowledging that I, as well as the children, was both 'being' and 'becoming' and thus seeking to embrace a necessary 'methodological immaturity' (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008, p. 511) which sought to allow for the complexity, ambiguities, incompleteness and messiness of researching with children resulting, I believe, in a certain humility that I, as researcher, was very much in the position of a learner.

This research, however, reflected only one aspect of pupil voice – that of restricted and partial conversation and dialogue. Of necessity it did not involve habitual conversation nor participation in any decision-making; however, as indicated in the following chapter, I sought to develop the interviews with the children as a 'dialogical encounter' (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 354).

By the very nature of the pupils I interviewed, the issue of a 'dominant voice' was very real. As I only researched with the pupils deemed to be 'more able' they were likely to be those pupils who were able to communicate verbally using the language of the classroom and the subject. I did not set out to marginalise any other 'voice' but rather to investigate what range and variety there might be within that 'dominant voice' as they discussed the topic being

researched. My overall desire was to genuinely hear the voices of pupils regarding their experiences of school and, in particular, those of Assessment for Learning, for:

While the organization may believe that it knows what is best for the children it works with, the children themselves may have different ideas

Jones and Welch, 2010, p. 174.

The extent to which this desire was fulfilled can be seen in the remaining pages of this thesis.

Chapter Three Research Methodology and Methods

In this chapter I give an overview of the sort of research carried out for the thesis and present theoretical perspectives regarding that research before moving on to a consideration of the methods of research employed. After outlining the reasons for choosing these methods a discussion is given regarding ethical issues raised by the research, particularly that of informed consent when researching with children. The final part of this chapter is given over to a deliberation on the effectiveness of the research methods employed.

What kind of research?

This study was a continuation of a hermeneutic inquiry begun in the IFS (Hutchins, 2010) which sought meaning. It took the form of an embedded exploratory case study (Yin, 2003) where a cohort of fifteen children in a year group was the case, with the individual pupils being the units of analysis. An advantage of the case study approach is that the investigation of pupil perspectives on assessment took place within the wider social context of 'the classroom assessment environment' (Brookhart, 2001, p. 158) whereby what Christensen and Prout (2005, p. 50) call 'webs of significance' could be taken into account. James *et al* (2006) argue that 'case study investigations... reflect a level of engagement with complexity that avoids the assumption that the phenomena under study are conveniently simple' (p. 116); with Hodkinson and MacLeod (2010) contending that 'case studies are the best ways to study relational complexity' (p. 177). Walker's (1993) analysis of the role of the 'case study worker' coincides exactly with how I perceived my role in the research – as one who 'attempts to capture and portray the world as it appears to the people in it' (p. 179). In that sense I, as the researcher, was 'a collector of definitions, not the conductor of truth' (*ibid* p. 190).

Again following Walker, my case study did not attempt to explore every aspect of the object under investigation but was rather 'a *selective* mirror of events, accounts and definition of what happens' (Walker, 1993, p. 186 – emphasis in original). This observation, however, can be viewed as a disadvantage of case study in that it suffers, as Elwood (2006, p. 217) states, from being 'only snapshots of work and practice collected for the study over a few weeks', being likened to a 'freeze-frame photograph' of moving events (Robinson, 2008); something Greene and Hill (2005, p. 17) describe as 'smash and grab approaches to collecting data'. My hope and intention was that, in conducting the research over the course of twelve months something of this transient nature of data generation would be alleviated by taking, as it were, a series of 'freeze-frame' photographs and editing them together to produce an animation which more closely approximated to the life lived by these pupils in school. The research took place in what

has been described as the 'ecologically valid' context of 'investigating the lived reality of busy primary classrooms' (Miller and Lavin, 2007, p. 9).

Theoretical positions

Given the 'fundamental premise' that 'the nature of any child's... experience is always in part inaccessible to the outsider' (Greene and Hill, 2005, p. 5), it might seem inappropriate or even contrary to seek to investigate just that experience. However, along with Hargreaves, I want to argue that 'though we cannot say everything, the solution is not to say almost nothing' (Hargreaves, 1985, p. 35). An important starting point is to examine what is meant by 'child' and 'childhood'.

Westcott and Littleton (2005, p. 141) argue that, 'Researchers are seldom explicit about... what model of the child they assume and invoke.' In Hutchins, 2008, I sought to address that deficiency by drawing together arguments taken from the 'new sociology of childhood' (James and Prout, 1997) where children are seen as actively making their own sense of their experiences of education, being active participants in their learning, leading me to conduct research *with* children rather than *on* them (O'Kane, 2000). For me, as for Smith *et al* (2005), talking with children was 'the most important ingredient in [my] attempt to access their perspectives' (p. 484) and 'children clearly have something useful and important to say about their activities and have the competence to tell us if we provide them with the appropriate scaffolding' (p. 485). They are the 'key commentators on their own learning and authors of their own stories' (p. 486) who 'are themselves the best source of information about matters that concern them' (Kellet and Ding, 2004, p. 165). My experience both as a teacher and a researcher leads me to agree with Greene and Hill (2005) when they state that 'children encounter their worlds in an individual and idiosyncratic manner' (p. 3) as a result of which 'setting out to research children's experiences implies a respect for each child as a unique and valued experiencer of his or her world. It also demands the use of methods that can capture the nature of children's lives as lived' (p. 3).

The theoretical underpinning of my study is that of social constructivism whereby 'truth' and 'knowledge' are not so much 'discovered' as 'generated', a term used throughout this report rather than the more usual 'collected', where the implication seems to be that data is somehow present in a situation and only needs to be gathered up using the 'right' research techniques (Mason, 2002). Following Searle (1995, p. 9), I distinguish between 'those features of the world that exist independently of us and those that are dependent on us for their existence'. In terms of this study, events took place within the classroom that occurred

independently of actors; pupils, for instance, received written comments on their work from teachers. This was an event that actually happened, pupils did not invent it. However, the *meaning* they placed on those comments *was* constructed, either consciously or unconsciously; and it is the meanings as well as the events that I wished to investigate. Bruner (1996, p. xiv) writes 'It is through our own narratives that we principally construct a version of ourselves in the world', and it was such narratives, as told by pupils, that I explored.

Psychoanalytic perspectives

*Being able to think and learn has its roots in a
meeting of minds between mother and baby*

Wilfred Bion quoted by Canham, 2006, p. 15

A psychoanalytic perspective attempts to take into account two fundamental aspects of education that are often ignored in textbooks and in schools, including those dealing with AfL – the role of the emotions in the curriculum and the impact of the unconscious in the classroom. In 1976, Caspari wrote 'Little has been written about the emotional meaning of the curriculum' (p. 112). In 2013 it seems that very little has changed; yet the desire and willingness to learn and the ability to accept and learn from correction is surely all to do with emotion, which, in turn, is impacted strongly by the unconscious. Salzberger-Wittenberg *et al* (1999) write that unspoken emotions pass 'like an electric current' in unconscious interchange within a classroom and 'we only know them by the effect they have upon us' (p. 61). Such experiences affect both teacher and pupils and influence not only *how* they teach or learn but *what* they teach and learn. To ignore the reality of what they bring unconsciously to the classroom and to the investigation is to diminish the enquiry.

Psychoanalytic theorists seek to understand and investigate the unconscious, 'that which has roots in the real and imaginative life of earliest childhood' (Winnicott, 1986, p. 16) and, as that 'real and imaginative life' impacts significantly on later childhood and children's experiences of school, attending to aspects of psychoanalytic theory is an appropriate response within educational research. Drawing particularly from the writings of Winnicott, psychoanalytic perspectives have added another layer of depth to the classroom events being investigated, providing a way of interpreting the perspectives held by pupils.

I found Winnicott to be particularly useful with regard social educational research because his theories are not the 'hard-and-fast' result of dogmatic ideology, but are flexible, largely

formed for his own benefit (Winnicott, 1971, p. 27) and developed in response to his own observations and clinical work with children and families. He did not attempt to formulate one overarching formula applicable to everyone, rather his focus was on individuals, drawing similarities or contrasts between them. He gave place to both inherited tendencies and the nurturing environment, although placing more emphasis on nurture. He had an essentially positive view of life and human nature; and his methods of gathering data relate very well to social research into the experiences of individuals with which this thesis seeks to deal. His strongly worded attack on the place of statistical data when seeking to explore the idiosyncrasies of real people in real-life situations exactly coincides with my own thinking:

The data I need are not to be culled from a form-filling questionnaire. A computer cannot be programmed to give motives that are unconscious in the individuals... This is where those who have spent their lives doing psychoanalysis must scream out for sanity against the insane belief in surface phenomena that characterizes computerized investigations of human beings.

Winnicott, 1971, pp. 192-3

In terms of my research, Winnicott's theories were useful for a number of reasons. My focus was on individuals and any generalising arose from commonalities between them. My data were not generated via statistical, surface procedures but by interaction with human individuals and groups. I investigated human beings, not data about human beings. I did not seek to fit my findings into a preconceived theoretical framework but rather drew on instances and concepts from Winnicott in an attempt to interpret what was happening. My study took place in a specific environment (the 'nurture' of the school classroom) and sought to take account of possible family nurture. My research was essentially positive in regard to the life and development of the participants in my study. I sought to use plain language, readily understandable to my colleagues in school. And finally, but by no means least, as Jacobs (1995, p. 100) states, Winnicott's ideas were fruitful places to begin because they 'have provided the incentive for further exploration of fascinating themes' – and they have done just this for me.

Two of Winnicott's 'fascinating themes' for me are 'capacity' and 'space' (Phillips, 2007, p. 58). Capacity refers to an individual quality shaped by early/ previous experiences, with space relating to the area that is created between individuals, within groups and by systems. Space can inhibit or encourage 'capacity'. In interpreting my data and seeking to encapsulate what

they meant for capacity and space, I used three concepts developed by Winnicott (1965; 1971; 1986; 1988) – that of the contradiction between ‘creativity and compliance’; the dichotomy of the ‘True Self’ and ‘False Self’; and the confluence and interaction of ‘internal reality and external life’ – the creation of a ‘potential space’. All three concepts are explored in greater depth in Chapters Five, Six and Seven respectively in the second part of this report when my findings are presented, analysed and discussed. The breakdown into these three separate concepts is largely artificial in that they are in reality not distinct from each other, but rather more accurately reflect different facets of the same holistic experience of life itself and the ways individuals make sense of it. However, for the sake of data analysis, the distinction is useful.

Winnicott’s statement, ‘The world went to meet the infant, and so the infant could go out to meet the world’ (1964, p 80), encapsulates his theoretical position that what the infant experiences in the first days, weeks and months of life will, largely unconsciously, affect his or her childhood, adolescence, adulthood and will even last into old age. Each individual builds up an internal picture or representation of him or herself and the world around them, and, so far as the experience of education is concerned, the relationships pupils build with their class teachers and peers in primary school will be strongly influenced by these internal pictures and representations. They will not be exact representations of the early infant-parent relationship but will be a mixture of lived experience and fantasy response (Youell, 2006). In recognition of these differing experiences, another British psychoanalyst, Wilfred Bion, (quoted at the head of this section), developed his theory of the ‘myth’ which he saw as ‘a person’s representation of an event: This is a myth in the sense that any one person’s description of an event is his or her own unique view of it’ (Symington and Symington, 1996, p. 39). To some extent, this whole thesis can be said to be investigating what ‘myth’ the pupils brought to AfL; and also what ‘myth’ I as researcher brought to the research.

Research Methodologies

Essentially the methodology of this research related to what Hodkinson and MacLeod (2010) describe as a ‘mini-ethnography’, more akin to Hammersley’s (2006) ‘sociological’ rather than an ‘anthropological’ ethnography in that, although I studied phenomena first hand, I did not immerse myself in the culture or the mindset of the participants and generated the vast majority of my data through interviews rather than personal observation. As a practitioner-researcher who has worked in the school for fourteen years, I did not need to spend time acclimatising myself to the field as I was familiar with the language, culture and activities of the

setting. However, this was the familiarity of the teacher, not the pupil. The challenge for me was to 'strip away [my] assumptions and everyday understandings to render the world around [me] 'anthropologically strange'' (Brown and Dowling, 1998, p. 43). Aspects of similarity with Grounded Theory Method (GTM) (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a, 2007b) in my research methodology related to there being no hypothesis postulated which was tested by the data and analysis of the data via a process of coding beginning as soon as data had begun to be generated. Any conclusions arising from the study were tentative and open to different interpretation (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). However, unlike GTM, no generalised theory was developed as a result of my findings.

The research was participatory in that both researcher and researched were active participants where an attempt was made to bring the dynamics of power into the open, although, of course, this could not be guaranteed or measured. By placing her research within a participatory research methodology O'Kane (2000) was able to explore 'complex and abstract issues' with children that facilitated 'the child's own interpretation of the relationships, messages and negotiations that structure their lives' (p. 141). This is exactly what I set out to do. However, one essential aspect of participatory research was not available to me. Within participatory research the participants exercise a good deal of control over the agenda. In contrast to this, I, both as researcher and teacher, had an agenda of my own which may not have coincided with the agendas of those participating in the research. The children involved in my research were not able to participate on their own terms, ultimately, therefore, power lay with me as researcher rather than with them as participants.

Research design - methods

The investigation took place between May 2011 and April 2012 and comprised four overlapping stages: analysis of written documentary evidence, non-participant observation (Gold, 1969), interviews with teachers and interviews with pupils – which are outlined below and detailed in Appendix One:

- Documentary evidence – school policies, School Improvement Plans (SIP), the school's Self Evaluation Form (SEF), Ofsted reports and pupils' written work in maths and literacy;
- Non-participant observation – a total of 13 hours in thirteen lessons – four in year 4 (two teachers) and nine in year 5 (three teachers) with a mixture of observations of class lessons and top maths sets in each year group;

- Individual interviews with five teachers – two in year 4 (Daniel Trent and Julia Esk) and three in year 5 (Diane Avon, Arthur Severn and Fiona Tees) – totalling 3 hours 45 minutes. All the teachers were class teachers, with Daniel and Diane also taking the top maths sets in their respective year groups;
- Interviews with pupils – five group interviews focusing on school in general, what makes a good lesson and what helps them with their learning totalling 2 hours 20 minutes; three group interviews focusing on AfL totalling 1 hour 28 minutes; nine self-reporting interviews with either individuals or pairs using *Blob* pictures (Wilson and Long, 2009; Appendix Two) and the *Myself as Learner Scale* (MALS) (Burden, 2000; Appendix Three) totalling 4 hours 10 minutes; and fourteen individual interviews looking through their exercise books to discuss practicalities of AfL totalling 6 hours 47 minutes.

Rather than seeking to produce a detailed, ‘thick descriptive’ (Geertz, 1973) ethnographic account of life in the classroom, the observations were firstly an attempt to ‘set the scene’, to give a ‘flavour’ of what the pupils experienced in class and secondly to generate data regarding the behaviours of the participating pupils in the context of ordinary lessons. I wrote fieldnotes rather than using observation schedules, enabling me to record events as they happened, distinguishing between what actually happened as I saw it (raw data) and what I thought about it: ‘emerging analysis’ (Brown and Dowling, 1998, p. 55). Unlike Swain (2006) who used pupil interviews to help interpret what he observed, I used observations to help interpret and understand what was being said in interviews.

Interviews, conceived as ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984, p. 102), formed the backbone of my research – interviews with teachers and, most especially, interviews with pupils. Like Hammersley-Fletcher and Qualter (2010), throughout the interviews I took the stance that ‘I want to know what you know, in the way you know it’ (p. 908). This attempted to place the participating pupil(s) at the centre of the interview with me as the learner. The interviews with groups of children were characterised by three factors: the pupils already knew each other and encountered each other on a daily basis; they constituted a ‘natural’ group in that they were of a similar age and came from the same class (Hydén and Bülow, 2003); and I remained in control of the process, more often acting as ‘investigator’ rather than ‘facilitator’ (Parker and Tritter, 2006, pp. 25-26). In that sense they might best be described as semi-structured, topical group interviews (Scheibelhofer, 2008) or focused interviews which ‘allow people’s views and feelings to emerge, but which gives the interviewer some control’

and which 'concentrate on the subjective experiences of those involved' (Robson, 2002, p. 283).

In an attempt to allow the respondents to state their views in their own words, giving them the opportunity to develop their responses and provide opportunity for discussion (Cohen and Manion, 2000), rather than working systematically through a series of pre-determined questions I wrote a list of the topics I wanted to cover on cards (Appendix Four) and used these as an *aide memoire* enabling me to change the sequence of questioning and add questions or topics for discussion as the interview progressed (Kelly, 2007; Scheibelhofer, 2008). My aim was to stimulate group discussion by asking open-ended questions, beginning with general questions and becoming increasingly more specific as the interviews proceeded. I sought to follow Frosh's (2006, p. 37) advice of 'creating the conditions under which a thoughtful conversation [could] take place'.

Whilst free association in an interview context, as advocated by Hollway and Jefferson (2000), is, I would argue, not possible in interviews conducted with children, I sought to be alert to the effect of unconscious interchanges and referred to these when writing memos immediately after each interview when the emotional effects were still vivid. I sought to be sensitive to my own emotional responses (Youell 2006) and to be open to receiving emotional responses from pupils (Salzberger-Wittenberg *et al*, 1999). When analysing the data I sought to pay heed to contradictions and uncertainties, as from a psychoanalytic perspective it is these very contradictions and conflicts that are said to be evidence of the unconscious at work (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). This thought especially influenced my analysis and interpretation of the contributions of the pupils.

In between the two sets of group interviews, the first looking at what pupils felt about school and learning in general and the second ascertaining their views on AfL, I held interviews with the pupils either in pairs or as individuals seeking to use 'mediating artefacts' to gain an understanding of their views of themselves as learners. In each interview I gave the participants a copy of a 'Blob Tree' picture (Wilson and Long, 2009), asking them to colour in an image that they felt represented how they viewed themselves as learners in school and then how they viewed themselves in literacy and in maths. Following that I introduced each pupil to the statements in 'Myself as a Learner Scale' (MALS) (Burden, 2000) which they completed independently. During the rest of the interview I discussed with the participants the reasoning for their choice of Blobs and their responses to the MALS. The final round of interviewing involved sitting alongside pupils individually, looking at examples of written work

in their exercise books and discussing their responses to AfL strategies evidenced there. I chose examples of work where lesson aims and specific Remember To's were in evidence. Some of the pages discussed have been reproduced in the next chapter both to exemplify the findings and to better identify the AfL strategies being employed in the school.

Rationale for the methods used

Although Delamont (2002) calls interviews rather disparagingly 'data to go' (p. 122), and despite McIntyre and MacLeod (1993) arguing that 'there is no reason to believe that pupils' reports on what happened [in class] will be a valid source of information about why and how they learn what they learn' (p. 20), I chose to conduct interviews with pupils because I wanted to 'gain access to children's perspectives of the worlds in which they live and work' (Burgess, 2000, p. xiv). Lesson observation, analysis of school documents and interviews with staff helped set pupils' experiences in context, but by themselves did not lead to an understanding of the meaning placed on assessment by the pupils. As Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000, p. 61) state: 'the reality experienced by children... in educational settings cannot be fully comprehended by inference and assumption' – their views must be actively sought out.

I chose to interview the pupils in different contexts (in groups, in pairs and individually) because, as Greene and Hill (2005, p. 17) observe, 'the same children may behave quite differently when interviewed individually and when in focus groups and may give different types of answers to similar questions'. I wanted to give children the opportunity to present those different types of answers and to place the answers they gave in the groups in the context of a deeper understanding of them as individuals. In the event, of the fifteen pupils interviewed, only three responded significantly differently to me in the various interview contexts, but for these three those differences seemed to be significant.

One reason for conducting the first round of group interviews around the general concepts of school and learning was that, like Smith and Gorard (2005), I wanted to ascertain whether any of the pupils would discuss the object of my research (AfL) without specific prompting or probing from me. This turned out to be important as no pupil raised any aspect of AfL during this part of the investigation, a point discussed in more detail in the following chapters. I chose to use the 'Blob' pictures and the MALS following the examples of Christenson and James (2000) and O'Kane (2000) who argue that using such research 'tools' or 'artefacts' can be helpful in eliciting pupil discussion about abstract concepts, which in my case related to pupils' identities as learners and their experience of AfL. Rather than simply asking them to tell me how they felt about themselves in school I employed the use of 'tools' – colouring in images

and responding to statements, verifying Burden's (2000, p. 11) comment that 'instruments like MALS... are... ways of gathering information that can be used to explore a range of different purposes'.

I recorded all the interviews with a digital recorder to enable detailed transcription. I also visually recorded the group interviews so that I could identify the speakers, given the expectation that pupils would speak over one another. It also made taking into account the 'emotional tone' of the groups easier (Hennessy and Heary, 2005, p. 247). I did not take notes during the interviews so as to allow conversation to flow as normally and freely as possible and so I could actively listen to the pupils rather than concentrate on writing. The rooms where I conducted the interviews were private, were quiet enough to enable recording to take place and were also a suitable size for up to six pupils and me to sit around a table or in a circle with ease.

Ethical issues

I started from the awareness that research is intrusive (Murray and Lawrence, 2000), necessarily affecting both teachers and pupils. As Delamont (2002) forcefully states, 'research is a nuisance' (p. 141). However, I believe that my research was worthwhile with its benefits outweighing any potential harm (Alderson, 2004; Masson, 2004). The topic under investigation was something the head teacher, deputy head and I had discussed over several months and had agreed would be useful for the school as well as for me. Although researching with children raises ethical issues not raised by researching with adults (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000), I believe that listening to children is their right, and not listening to them, even for reasons of 'protection', can in fact be harmful (Jones, 2004). In terms of safeguarding children, I am familiar with the school's Safeguarding Children Policy, have an enhanced CRB police check and am conscious of my legal and moral obligations towards pupils, particularly with regards the Data Protection Act (Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Masson, 2004). Although I sought to conceal pupil and staff identities by using pseudonyms, I cannot guarantee anonymity as anyone who knows me will know where I work and anyone who knows the school will be able to identify the teachers concerned and are likely to be able to recognise at least some of the pupils.

One crucial aspect of childhood that has to be taken into account if children's perspectives are to be researched effectively is that of the unequal distribution of power between children and adults (Fraser and Robinson, 2004). Whilst nobody, adult or child, is totally free to create their own meaning and culture exactly as they please, children are much less able to do so than

adults. They do not have much room for manoeuvre. Many commentators point to the inevitable imbalance of power between a teacher/ researcher and pupils/ participants. This is undoubtedly relevant to this study in that I am a teacher, am recognised as such by the pupils and can never talk with them on an equal footing. I sought to respond to this in a variety of ways. Like Swain (2006) I did not try to be something different, vainly trying to pretend there was no power differential. However, I approached the study with the belief that, as the researcher, it was my responsibility to connect with the pupils and not treat them as 'untrustworthy sources of information' (Davis, 2007). My attitude towards them was one of respect, valuing their contributions and seeking to create a safe 'peer environment' by initially interviewing them in groups whereby the power imbalance could go some way towards being redressed (Burgess, 1984; Hennessy and Heary, 2005). I also sought to address the power imbalance through the way I conducted the process of gaining the consent of the pupils to participate in the research.

Informed consent can be a vexed issue, particularly as it relates to children, but I believe that it is an issue to grapple with – mere pupil *assent* (as, for example, gained by Davis, 2007) is, I would argue, not robust enough. I gained consent first from the head teacher as 'gatekeeper' for the school, and then from the teachers through discussion and by letter (Appendix Five). I then sought to gain informed consent from the pupils, taking care to emphasise that participation in the project was genuinely voluntary and that those who chose not to take part or who later decided to withdraw would not be penalised in any way (Kellet and Ding, 2004; Masson, 2004). The first stage in this process was writing to the parents of the pupils identified as being 'high achievers' in the year group in literacy and/or maths.

Writing to parents brought up the complex topic of who should have the final say (or even the initial say *cf* Kelly, 2007) in giving consent – children or their parents? In a previous study I had 'erred on the rule of caution' (Lindsay, 2000, p. 13), seeking to gain written consent from parents as well as children. By doing this I believe I inadvertently excluded some pupils from the possibility of participation in the research (Hutchins, 2009). Masson (2004) challenges the necessity of gaining parental consent at all, stating that 'Where children can understand enough to distinguish research from other interventions, and to understand the impact on them of participating, it may be more ethical to act on their consent than to require the fully informed consent of a parent' (p. 50). In keeping with this ethical stance and following the process of the IFS (Hutchins, 2010), I wrote to all the parents outlining my research and inviting

them to 'opt out' rather than asking them to 'opt in' (Appendix Six) – a procedure also followed by Attwood *et al*, 2007.

When it was time to begin interviewing pupils, I gathered together all the pupils I wanted to interview and spoke to them in more detail about what my project involved. I taped and transcribed what I said and gave them each an individual consent form which they signed if they wished to participate (Appendix Seven). Whilst I sought to emphasise that they were under no obligation to participate, I cannot guarantee that no pupil felt pressurised to comply. I can only report that all were keen to be involved. The children I invited to participate in the group interviews were those identified within the year group as being 'high achievers' – fifteen pupils in all. Sampling was not necessary as all those so identified were able to participate in the research. However, the concept of 'high achiever' is itself ethically problematic, with 'ability' being a social construct. For the purposes of the thesis I followed the school's procedures whereby children are identified as being 'high achievers' if they are functioning either at significantly higher levels than average or have made above expected progress.

Ethically, researching in my work place presented its own problems and uncertainties. Whilst access to both adults and children was relatively easy, especially being able to be flexible as to when I could observe lessons and conduct interviews, the issue of familiarity was very real. As Costley *et al* (2010) state, 'As an insider who is immersed in work, it is possible to fail to see the obvious' (p. 4), thereby calling into question the validity of the research. Further issues raised by Costley *et al* (2010) relate to interest and influence. They argue that 'it is a moral requirement to have an understanding of what drives the research' (p. 39) – consideration needs to be given to why the research is being undertaken in the first place. In other words, whose interest does it serve? In the event one teacher declined to be involved, but the rest of the teachers and all of the pupils were eager to participate, possibly indicating that it was not only my interests that were being served by the research.

Other ethical issues could have been raised during the course of the research. If, for instance, I became aware of safeguarding concerns over a child through what they said in an interview, my promise of confidentiality would need to have been overridden by my responsibility to report disclosures. Similarly, if I observed malpractice by teachers, the responsibility I had to report this to the head teacher may again have overridden my promise of confidentiality. Neither of these scenarios in fact presented themselves.

Process of data analysis

I approached analysis of the data in a similar way to that outlined by Hammersley-Fletcher and Qualter (2010) – transcribing all the interviews in full, re-listening to the audio recordings to check the accuracy of the initial transcription, viewing the video recordings several times through, reading the transcripts of pupil interviews at least three times to immerse myself in the data and noting down ideas and themes that began to emerge. I then set about coding the pupil interviews in detail – firstly into ‘Free Nodes’ (Bazeley, 2007), following Charmaz’s (2006, p. 47) advice of ‘attempting to code with words that reflect action’, resulting in identifying forty codes (Appendix Eight). The second phase placed these free codes into lists – those codes which definitely related to the research question, those which might have a bearing on it and those which were unlikely to be immediately relevant (Appendix Nine).

The third phase of the analysis categorised the Free Nodes in List 1, and some from the other lists, into various Tree Node arrangements. Initial categorisation was under the overall title of ‘Categories of AfL Strategies’ (Appendix Ten). However, in line with Bazeley’s (2007) account of the coding process, I began to see that certain free nodes were appearing in more than one category. I was also becoming increasingly aware that this initial categorisation did not allow pupil perspectives enough prominence. I therefore developed a second way of categorising the coding, this time under the umbrella title of ‘Categories of pupil response to AfL’ (Appendix Eleven). My final phase of coding sought to combine the ‘Categories of pupil response to AfL’ with theoretical perspectives gained from my reading of Winnicott, and it is this final phase which has shaped the second part of this thesis, differentiating between pupils’ cognitive experiences of AfL, the psychological impact of AfL, and the place of their relationships in their experiences of AfL.

Effectiveness of the research methods

As the main source of data generation was interviewing pupils, this forms the focus of the following discussion.

My overall personal impression was that the pupils participating in the interviews were similar to those in the research conducted by Attwood *et al* (2007) – ‘keen to tell [me] about their school experiences’. How the groups were constituted would have had a major impact on the flow and direction of discussion during the interviews, but what exactly that influence was is hard to say. The relationships held between the pupils in the group may also have had an influence on their contribution to the interviews. Some of the pupils interviewed together were good friends both inside and outside of school, like Grace and Harriet (from one class)

and Linda and Dawn (from another). This was not the case for all the pupils I interviewed together. It did not seem, for instance, that Ian and Michael had much to do with each other inside school and certainly did not meet up outside of school. It is not clear how much, if any, this influenced the tone of the interview or what was said within it.

Some evaluation must be made as to what extent the participating pupils had the vocabulary and the experience to effectively communicate what they wanted to say. As Fraser (2004) comments, 'a child or young person must have a vocabulary and conceptions that are capable of relating to the context of a researcher's concerns' (p. 24). Brookhart and Bronowicz (2003) comment on this need when they state that, 'There may be a developmental progression in understanding – or at least in the ability to articulate understanding – of what it means to succeed in school' (p. 239). This is very important. I was asking 9-10 year olds to articulate aspects of their lives and experience that even adults might struggle to verbalise. Pupils (like adults) need to be given the vocabulary to describe their feelings, views and perspectives. As Brookhart and Bronowicz (2003) go on to say, 'What is not clear... is whether this developmental progression is a result of continued exposure to the learning process throughout students' school careers or a result of maturation, or both' (p. 240). In a study conducted by McCallum *et al* (2000), the age and maturity of the pupils interviewed impacted on their responses: 'By Year 6 the children were better able to reflect upon their skills, knowledge and understanding... The Year 6 children could better abstract and generalise' (p. 287). The pupils involved in my research were younger, which may mean that they were less able to 'abstract and generalise' and to 'reflect upon their skills, knowledge and understanding' than those in the McCallum *et al* study. At certain points in several interviews, pupils commented on the difficulties they were experiencing expressing their thoughts, as exemplified by Harriet:

Harriet: I'm not sure how to say it. I know what I'm thinking, but I don't know how to say it. I don't know how to explain it. Sounds better in your head – it always sounds better in your head.

What needs to be taken into account, however, is that immediately after making comments such as these, pupils *did* express views and opinions about the particular topics under discussion. This would perhaps indicate that the expressed difficulty they experienced with saying what they wanted to say was not so much due to immaturity or lack of vocabulary as lack of experience in thinking and talking about such issues. By saying 'I don't know how to say

it', they were not necessarily indicating ignorance or deficiency, but more likely a process of thinking about something almost entirely new to them. As Dawn said during the MALS discussion, 'This is the first assessment I've ever done on myself...so it's a bit hard'. Several pupils regarded some of the statements in the MALS as being 'trick' questions, seemingly meaning that they were not straightforward to answer because they were different to the norm of questions posed in school, as indicated by this dialogue between Ian and me:

Ian: A trick one

Roger: A trick one?

Ian: 'I'm clever' (MALS statement number 17)

Roger: Why is that a trick one?

Ian: It's not something you'd usually get asked, 'are you clever?'

Emphasis is placed by numerous writers on the responsibility of the adult researcher to create the conditions in which children participating in their research studies are able to express their views with confidence and ease, for instance, Fraser (2004) writes of 'child-friendly' methods of research. The use of 'mediating artefacts' goes some way towards meeting this responsibility. Mediating artefacts are strategies employed by researchers to provide a safe 'scaffolded' environment for children to state their opinions. In my research three types of 'mediating artefact' were used, following the example of Christensen and James (2000), in giving me a 'firm starting point for [my] investigation' – the Blob pictures, the MALS statements and free drawing (in two group interviews). In terms of generating data, the first two were undoubtedly useful whilst the last one was undoubtedly unhelpful. But even the Blob pictures had their 'down side', for instance Olivia and Joan commented about the Blob pictures: 'All the ones that look like they're not good look sad or grumpy' and this did not reflect how they saw themselves in maths – there was no Blob picture that actually represented what they wanted to say: 'I don't think I would colour in any unhappy ones' (Olivia). The use of drawing in the interviews was a real distraction. Where drawings were introduced they immediately drew attention away from the discussion about how learning was helped or hindered. These pupils were quite capable of articulating their ideas without the presence of this particular 'mediating artefact'.

Extracts from interview transcripts and the memos made immediately after the interviews indicated that pupil engagement with topics raised during the course of the interviews varied

enormously. Significantly, in terms of the aim of the research, pupils were often enthusiastic and animated when discussing aspects of school life such as residential trips, school dinners, the library and ICT. Conversation around AfL strategies was, by comparison, usually stilted and largely initiated and developed by me through the use of open ended questions, prompts and probes:

Memo from AfL interview 1: Their entire body language shows what I am asking about AfL does not engage them. Why?

Memo from the individual interview with Linda who was normally very vocal and forthcoming: She doesn't sound too sure. Again my immediate thought is that AfL strategies do not grab children's imaginations, they are so much part-and-parcel of everyday class life the pupils cannot see why I am making such a fuss about them.

One reason for this could be that AfL strategies are adult-initiated and controlled. There is no consultation with the pupils about what sort of assessment strategies should or could be deployed and, whilst there may be some negotiation around particular lesson aims or success criteria, there is no discussion as to whether these should be used in the first place. AfL itself is not negotiated with the pupils. There may be more compliance about AfL than compromise and creativity (Winnicott, 1971), further discussed in Chapter Five.

Of crucial importance is how the pupils perceived me during the interviews – as a teacher, as a researcher or as both teacher and researcher. For sure I was always a teacher – for instance, the pupils continued to refer to me as 'Mr Hutchins'. But, and this is obviously a subjective view, they also seemed to relate to me as an adult sitting somehow 'outside' of the school in the context of the interviews. This could be indicated by comments made about other teachers or about lessons. My response to any comment made by them was one of acceptance which hopefully changed the dynamics of the interview from being teacher-pupil to being inquirer-expert, where the pupil was the expert. In a sense my role in school is in any case one step removed from being a class teacher. Although the pupils knew me through being present in the school, before this research began I had never had direct contact with any of them. Because this was the case, within the interviews I felt no embarrassment about asking questions which would have been incongruous had I been a class teacher and the pupils seemed at ease with me asking such questions. The extent to which this was actually the case may be examined via the findings of the research as they are presented in the following

chapters which form the second part of my thesis – discussion of findings, data analysis and interpreting these findings.

The following chapters explore various aspects of the pupils' responses to their experiences of the AfL. If it is the case that, as Black and Wiliam (2003) argue, 'we adopt "the balance of probabilities" rather than "beyond reasonable doubt" as our burden of proof, then educational research has much to say' (p. 633), then the research undertaken for this thesis does have much to say. It has something to say about what Assessment for Learning strategies were employed in the school, as described in Chapter Four; and it has something to say about how these strategies were experienced by the pupils participating in my investigation, as discussed in the three chapters following. The deliberations of all four chapters are drawn together in the final chapter, when conclusions and implications, as well as reflections on the research are given.

Chapter Four **Assessment for Learning in Coastal School – what took place**

This chapter is very much an introduction to the rest of the report, which analyses and discusses the data generated during the course of the research. It outlines what happened in the classes I investigated regarding the practice of Assessment for Learning. Throughout the report I use AfL terminology that was familiar to the pupils – for example, ‘Remember To’s’ is used rather than the more formal ‘success criteria’. Beginning by introducing the pupils who took part in the research, giving an indication of their overall experiences of and responses to school, the bulk of the chapter describes the AfL strategies deployed in the classes studied – lesson aims, Remember To’s, teacher feedback, pupil self-assessment and peer assessment. The final section seeks to relate the AfL activities observed and discussed to the literature review. Throughout the chapter examples of pupils’ work are given, along with brief quotes from my observational fieldnotes, to exemplify various aspects of the practice of AfL in the school.

The participating pupils

In total, fifteen pupils participated in the research (Table 1). Ten were girls, five were boys. None were in receipt of free school meals. All but one were white British. None had English as an additional language. I use pseudonyms for all participants, including the name of the school.

Table 1 The pupils participating in the research

Class	Names of pupils
4E (Julia Esk) 5A (Diane Avon)	Bob, Dawn (left the school at end of year 4), Eric, Joan, Linda, Olivia (joined the project at the start of year 5)
4T (Daniel Trent) 5S (Arthur Severn)	Alan, Claire, Frances, Kate
5T (Fiona Tees)	Grace, Harriet, Ian, Michael, Nikita (their year 4 teacher did not wish to participate in the project)

Although they did not form an identifiable group within the cohort, I would argue that they shared similar approaches to learning which mediated the effects of the assessments they

experienced in class (Biggs, 1998). They were all largely positive about school, although not all stated this in quite such a colourful way as this pupil who was quite forthright in her comments throughout:

Harriet: So we really like school. Rock on dude!

Throughout the research only two pupils expressed reservations about school as a whole:

Kate: I'm happy with my friends, but I'm not really happy in school.
I just don't like coming to school. I'd rather stand on a stage
and do stand-up comedy.

Bob: I don't think school's my thing.

A second common approach to learning was that of confidence. All said they were confident about their learning, for instance:

Harriet: I'm very confident in class, and when I say 'confident', I mean
chatty.

Their level of confidence was, however, often dependent on the subject – thirteen expressing confidence in maths, but fewer in English, with Grace going so far as to say:

Grace: English is basically me dying

whilst for maths she forcefully stated:

Grace: Maths is great. Maths is awesome!

Writing particularly caused problems, being expressly the least favourite activity for ten of the fifteen pupils, mostly because the physical act of writing caused discomfort. In part this could have been because most of the pupils usually wrote considerable amounts in their lessons within a relatively short space of time:

Dawn: Writing hurts, my hand feels like it's going to drop off.

A third shared approach to learning was that all acknowledged they had ability in certain areas, academically, musically and in sport or drama, but all also said 'I am not the cleverest', often pointing to others in the research who they regarded as being 'cleverer' than them:

Harriet: I'm not like the smartest. I think Ian's very smart. I think I can
be clever.

Grace: I don't think I'm the cleverest (although commented on this by continuing): I like to use my brain – it's got all these thoughts in it. I love using my brain, my brain is good.

Nikita: I think I am a bit clever, although there are some people in different subjects and in different things that I know that they're a bit better than me.

At times during the interviews, a few pupils downplayed their ability and met with a stark response from others in the group:

Linda: I'm not clever though, I'm rubbish.

Dawn: You are (meaning that, in her eyes, Linda was clever).

In one group interview, Claire described her work as 'terrible', emphasising that there were certain things she could not do, drawing this vivid response from Frances: 'Damn it Claire, yes you can!' – an important interchange discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

All felt they were making progress in their learning and all but Grace expressed confidence that they could usually do any new work they were given, although four said they also sometimes felt anxious when presented with such work. With the exception of Alan and Bob, all pupils felt they were good at discussing things, often because they believed they had a lot to say, for instance:

Ian: I'm just always eager to share my ideas with the class when she asks a question.

Harriet: I'm fabulous at discussing things because I have a big voice.

No pupil felt they needed a lot of help with their work and no pupil found learning difficult, again, though, depending on the subject. Alan, for instance, said he needed no help in maths, but often did in English. Others acknowledged that, at times they *did* need help and expressed appreciation when this was given. This ability to move between dependence and independence may, in Winnicott's (1965) terms, be a sign of healthy growth towards intellectual and emotional maturity, as discussed in Chapter Six.

During the interviews more than half talked about their parents being professionals (often involved in education themselves) and being interested and involved in their children's education, for instance, discussing their progress with teachers at parents evening or giving

rewards for a good report. Claire was one of several pupils describing how one or other of their parents influenced their education at school:

Claire: So I'm really into art. My dad helps me at home.

There was thus a consistency in outlook and culture between school and home for most if not all of the participating pupils. Usually parental involvement was viewed positively by pupils (for instance, Linda talked with pleasure about her parents being 'proud' of her). Winnicott's (1965) comment, that 'school gives an extension and widening of home' (p. 216) would seem to be applicable here.

Just about half of the pupils had older siblings who had been educated at the school before them and who, in their turn, were also regarded as being more able students. Several pupils talked about the influence of these siblings, who often provided an example of high academic achievement, gave exposure to a wide range of experiences (such as Kate's older sister sharing her experiences of studying in Egypt and Syria for her French and Arabic course at university) or who helped them directly with their learning:

Joan: My sister usually introduces me to stuff before we do it in school then I already know a lot about it, so I don't need it to be explained so I can just get on with my work.

Pupils experienced positive stimuli outside of school, mainly through sports clubs, although in the case of Michael, via a local theatre group where he regularly performed on stage to the general public, with many speaking of regular visits abroad. All pupils participating in this research had therefore gained a rich, diverse experience of life both outside the school and, often, outside the town and even the country, where they lived. They had these experiences to draw on when it came to approaching academic work in school and to discussing that work with me.

AfL strategies experienced in the school

Lesson aims

All pupils said they were given aims for most lessons, certainly for every maths and literacy lesson and usually for subjects such as history, geography and science. Normally the teachers decided on the lessons aims through their planning and displayed them at the start of each lesson on the class interactive whiteboard, for example: from the literacy lesson observed in 4E (7.6.11) the aim was 'To be able to select effective vocabulary for a poem' and from a

maths lesson in year 5 (8.9.11) 'To multiply numbers by 10, 100 or 1000'. School policy required that pupils wrote the aim in their exercise books before they settled to the task in hand.

Success criteria (Remember To's)

Success criteria were termed 'Remember To's' in the school because children were supposed to 'remember to' include them in their work, and it is this terminology which is used throughout the report. Like the lesson aims, Remember To's were presented to the class on the interactive white board usually towards the start of each lesson. Pupils were not expected to write the Remember To's down, although on occasions they were given out on slips of paper which the pupils glued into their books (as in Figure 1). The Remember To's usually consisted of a list of bullet points relating to the aim of the lesson, as, for example in a literacy lesson in 5S (22.9.11):

Aim: To write the conclusion to a recount

Purpose: To sum up what has happened and to give a personal reaction

Remember To:

- Use an appropriate time connective opener
- Use past tense
- First person
- Personal reaction to what is happening

Wednesday, 7th March 2012



Aim: To express a characters feelings

Dear Petie,

Please have me! I miss you so much! As soon as I got here I knew I was going to be bored. I spent an hour once hitting a swing. I feel so alone and abandoned. I wish you every day feels like forever. How would you like staying in a farm, where each hour feels like eternity. The food is GROSS (with a capital G). I keep thinking you'll come running in with your Petie Burkus special or telling me you can see into the hornets nest. But the strangest thing yet is my room. We live in Bubbas old room, (Bubba is my Aunt Millies son who has left ages ago...) and it's really weird. With one look you can tell it's not my room AT ALL. It has bird eggs and nests, a shotgun on the wall (come on, who lets a child have a shotgun?) and a chest full of hunting things. But ~~except~~ off all there's a stuffed squirrel. Its eyes follow me at night. I swear. Miss you loads,

Tom

P.S Seen the secret room yet?

Great chatty letter with lots of feelings - well done  


Aim: To express a character's feeling	Self Assessment
RT • Write in 1st person. • include details about what is going on at the farm. • Include how he feels about being there. • What is he missing from home? • Chatty Style. Challenge: Descriptive Language Ext: Rhetorical questions to ask Petie.	

Figure 1 Example of Remember To's and how pupils use them to self-assess

Mostly Remember To's were chosen by the teacher, although occasionally the pupils were involved in their choice, as evidenced by this extract from my observation fieldnotes of Julia Esk's literacy lesson of 28.6.11:

On the interactive white board Julia has written – Aim: To be able to select effective vocabulary for a poem; Remember To: - this is blank. She asks the class what they think the Remember To's should be: 'What things are we going to write?' and she writes them on the board as the children give her answers:

- Put name of sport in the middle
- Add nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
- Use thesaurus to find extra words

The significant role played by the teachers in lesson aims and Remember To's is one of the central aspects of this thesis and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Feedback – teacher marking

Pupils essentially used three exercise books in which to record their work – maths books, Learning Journals which contained all the written elements of the subjects they were taught, and Assessment Books in which they wrote mini-summative assessments at the end of every unit of work in literacy. All books were marked by teachers following the school procedure of using green and pink highlighter pens to indicate respectively work that was correct or that met the learning aim and work that needed in some way to be improved (Figure 2). A school jingle had developed over previous years that most pupils were able to repeat – '*green is good and pink to make you think*'. Teachers had developed their own 'style' of highlighting:

Grace: Mrs Tees writes it in a different way to Mrs Avon.

3rd
Thursday ~~4th~~ April May 2012

Aim: To write an informal letter.

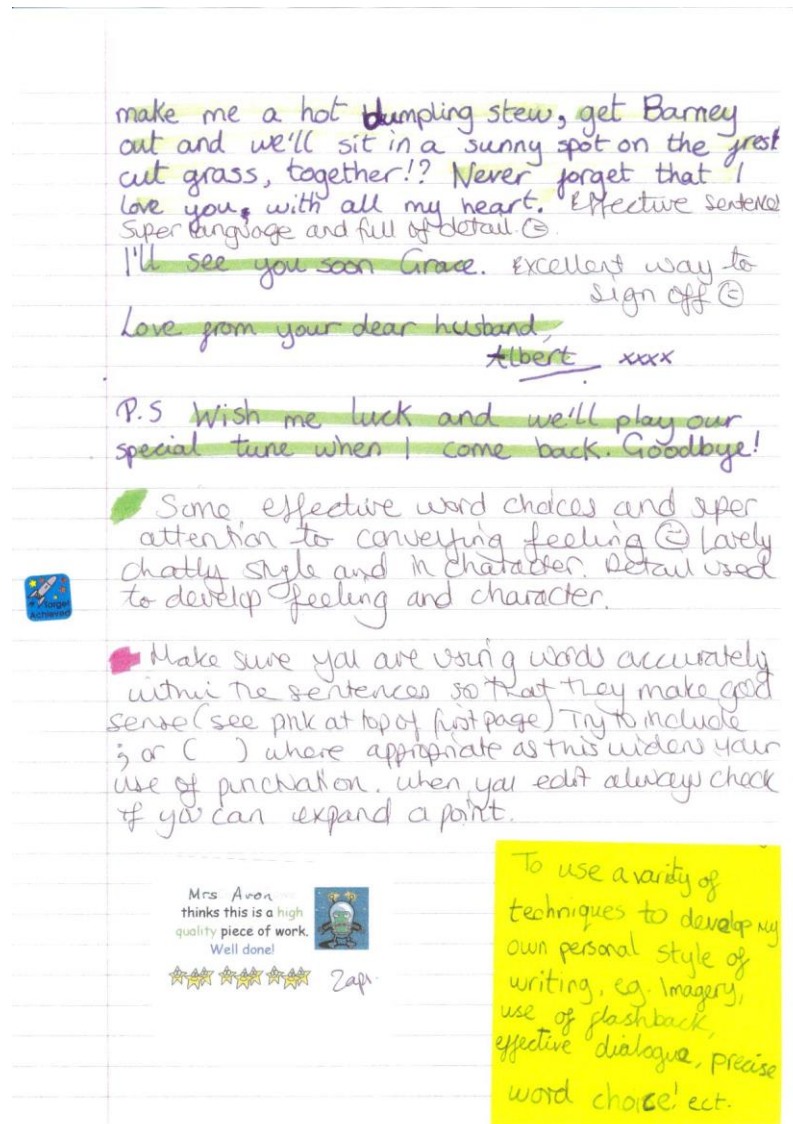
My dearest Grace, effective opening ☺.

I hope you're alright. I missed you terribly, ^{works here} your voice, your sweet playing on the piano, your smile. It feels like I've been here in the trenches for several months but it's only been a week! I wish ^{for} time ^{to} with pass quicker, so I can see you once again. We only eat soups and potatoes but ~~its~~ atleast it's something. I long for one of your delicious dumplings. Effective use of feeling ☺

^{will pass quickly or would pass quicker} You know I talked about my new friend John in my last message? Well... I... I have some terrible news. It all started yesterday, we were practicing our gun and paramedic skills when another soldier ^{super use of phrase} accidentally pulled the trigger and shot him... my best mate. *Our leader told me to forget about him and move on but I'll never can. I'll never find a mate like him... *I couldn't save him, ~~its~~ its all my fault. I'm a paramedic, but I couldn't... excellent way to convey feeling ☺

^{super question effective word choice} It's horrid here my dear. It's like a prison here. Gloomy, dirty, rats are scattering everywhere ^{trigger} One man in my cabin got some fleas ~~and~~ I hope I don't catch them! I miss our home, our fields and our dog, sheep, Barney. Haha, how strange is that ^{dog?} perhaps expand here to say something else about barney.

Please Grace, promise me if I survive, you'll



**Figure 2 Example of teacher marking and feedback to pupils,
with examples of the pupil's response to the marking**

Teachers wrote formative comments in all three books (as in Figure 3). A range of symbols was used by teachers in the Learning Journals which related to technical aspects of the pupils' work such as spelling and punctuation. There was an expectation that pupils would 'respond to marking' once they received their marked work back – either by correcting mistakes or by including additional pieces of information. The pupil in Figure 2 (Linda) had done this by formulating a new target for herself in her writing (the yellow post-it note attached to the bottom of her page) following discussion with the class teacher about her work.

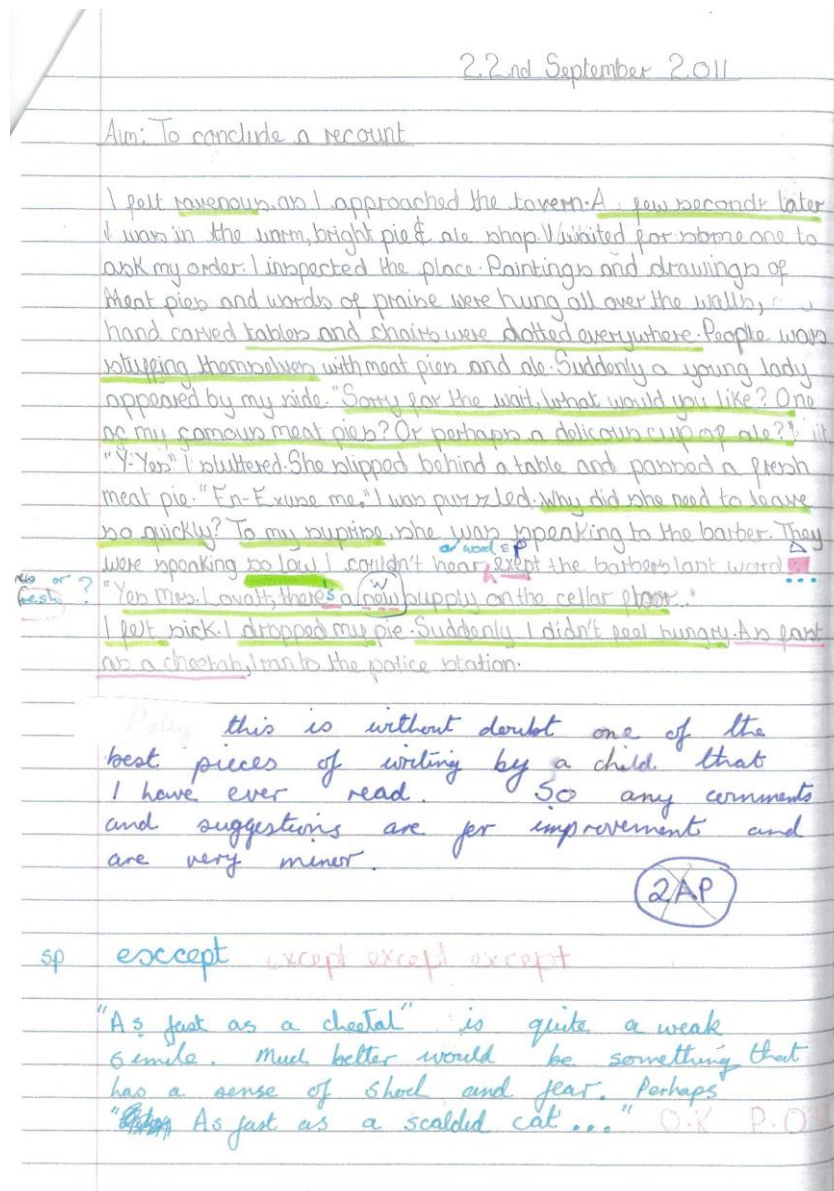


Figure 3 Example of teacher feedback to a pupil

After the work had been marked, the teacher usually either highlighted the aim with a coloured highlighter or drew a coloured square or circle next to it (Figure 4). Green indicated 'aim achieved' and red 'aim not achieved'. Sometimes this was yellow or orange, indicating the aim had been partially achieved or the pupil had needed support to achieve it. Some of the teachers also used stickers to enhance their comments. Within the school a reward system of 'Achievement Points' (APs) leading to certificates was in operation. Achievement Points were given by teachers in acknowledgement of a high standard of work or effort (or both) and pupils crossed them off on their work when they had added them to a class chart. Examples of this can be seen in Figures 1, 2 and 3. One distinguishing feature of the marking in the Assessment Books was that each writing assessment accrued a national curriculum level and sublevel in

addition to the highlighting and teacher comments. In the last few weeks of the study teachers began using APP (Assessing Pupil Progress) to give a level to the written work completed in normal lesson time in their Learning Journals (as is the case in Figure 2).

Feedback from the teachers is discussed alongside the role of the teacher in lesson aims and Remember To's in Chapter Seven of this report when the focus of analysis is on relationships between pupils and teachers.

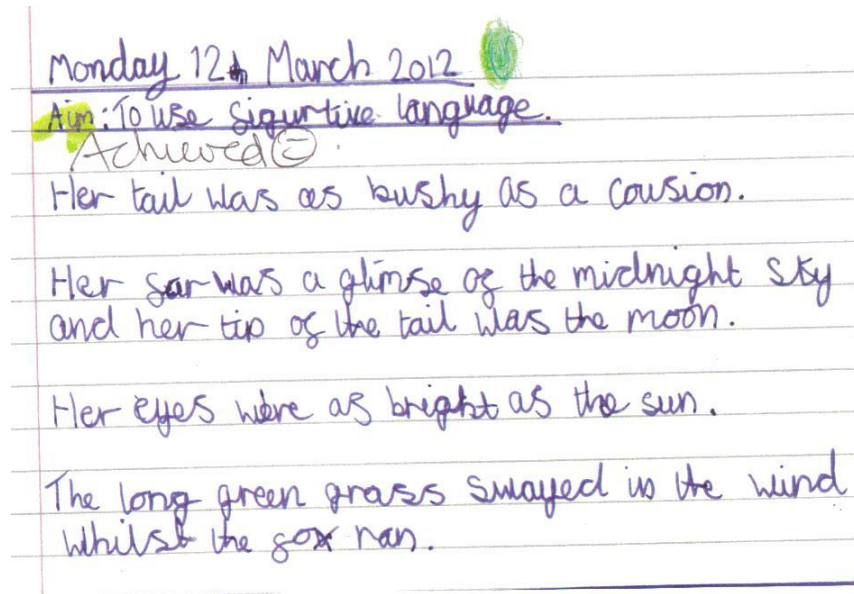


Figure 4 Example of the lesson aim having been achieved – highlighted by both the pupil (the green circle next to the aim) and by the teacher (the highlighted 'Aim' and the word 'Achieved')

Self-assessment

Self-assessment took two forms for the pupils. The first was reading back over their work, checking they had included all the Remember To's (as exemplified in Figure 1):

Kate: We're doing Midnight Fox and we had to write a letter to Tom's best friend, and then we had to self-assess it ourself [sic] and we had to go through the checklist and highlight if we thought we done that.

Bob: When you're doing self-assessing you look through your work and then you look at the Remember To's thingummy and then you check if you've put it in.

Joan: We looked at our work and ticked them if we thought we had included them.


The second aspect of self-assessment was pupils using red, orange/yellow or green coloured pencils in a form of 'traffic-lighting' (RAG rating) to inform the teacher about their levels of understanding in a particular lesson or for a particular piece of work:


Kate: In maths Mrs Avon does this thing called "traffic light assessment" and if we found it really tricky we put red, if you found it alright but need a little more practice you put yellow or orange, and if you found it easy then you put green. Sometimes we do the traffic light thing, but for the beginning and end; so what we felt like at the beginning and what we thought about it at the end. And see if we've moved our learning on.

Grace: I did half green, half orange because I know how to do it and everything, but I just needed to go through it still a bit more. And at the end I only did a bit of orange 'cos I still did need to go through it a bit more, but not as much as I really did [*sic*] (as shown in Figure 5).

21/2/12

Diff. To find the area of shapes.
achieved

B 

E 

① a. 40cm² ✓
b. 120cm² ✓

$6 \times 4 = 24$ ✓ $8 \times 2 = 16$ ✓ $16 + 24 = 40$ ✓
 $6 \times 4 = 24$ ✓ $4 \times 12 = 48$ ✓ $4 \times 12 = 48$ ✓ $48 + 48 + 24 = 120$ ✓

②

L cm	W cm	D cm	A cm ²
7	5	<u>24</u>	<u>35</u>
12	<u>8</u>	<u>40</u>	96
9	6	<u>30</u>	<u>54</u>
6	8	<u>28</u>	<u>48</u>

You seem to understand area and perimeter really well. I'm sure we'll do some more until you feel really confident. OK

③ 1000cm²

④ 10000cm²

Figure 5 An example of Grace’s work showing self-assessment strategies

Peer assessment

Although pupils were not familiar with ‘peer assessment’ as a term, they acknowledged that they often shared their work with others in the class, normally those they were sitting next to. For most, this meant that they shared work with friends who were working at similar levels to themselves. Peer assessment was frequently linked in pupils’ minds with the phrase ‘evaluation sandwich’ – a phrase coined by one of the teachers to encapsulate the essence of feedback from both teachers and pupils where two ‘good’ aspects (the bread) and one aspect for improvement (the filling) were identified. An example of this ‘evaluation sandwich’ can be seen in Figure 6, although in this instance the pupil commenting on the work could not identify anything that was wrong or that could be improved.

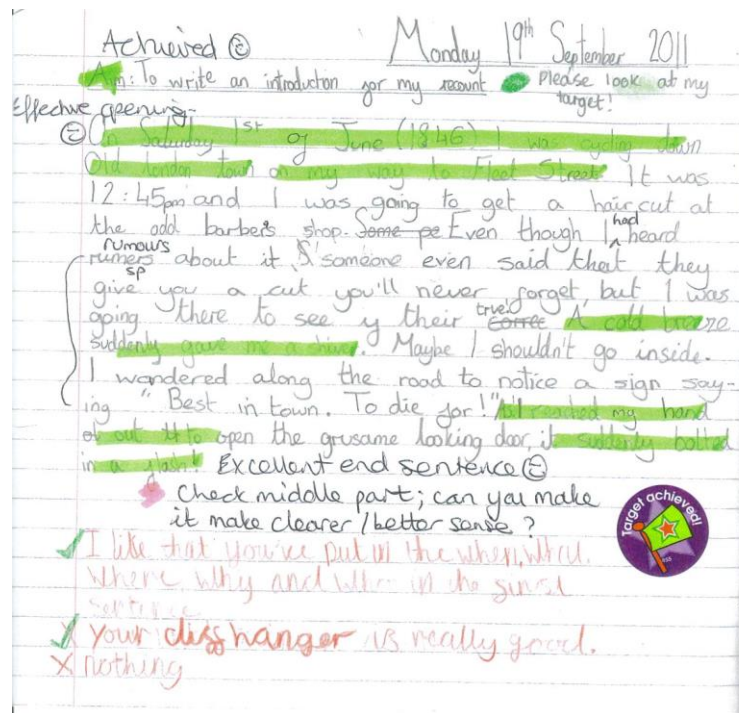


Figure 6 An example of peer assessment

Discussion around self- and peer assessment is given in Chapters Five and Six in particular, where the focus is respectively on cognitive and psychological aspects of pupils' AfL experience, where it will be seen that a stark contrast existed between these two aspects of AfL strategy.

Linking the AfL experienced in Coastal School with the literature

Fundamentally, in line with the 'five processes' outlined by Wiliam (2009), Assessment for Learning was taking place in the classes and each pupil had considerable exposure to these process and strategies. Discussion is held in this section regarding one particular facet of AfL strategy, that of teacher feedback, and the relationship between the experience of the pupils in Coastal School and the academic and research literature in the wider field.

If Wiliam's (2009) argument is followed that, for formative assessment to be most effective, feedback from the teacher to the pupil needs to be immediate, given as the learning is taking place, marking could be seen to be relatively ineffective as it could not be given immediately. In practice, however, the pupils in my study received marking very soon after they had completed the task, usually the next day. When asked about marking in the interviews, no pupil had any difficulty remembering the context of the marking or the work done and relating

that marking to their work. Through discussion it became apparent that these pupils were capable of making meaningful connections between the work they produced and the written feedback given by teachers. What also became clear was that, very often the pupils were asked to reflect on their work *before* handing it in to be marked – something advocated by Shute (2008) as promoting effective formative assessment. I would argue, therefore, that the feedback received by the pupils via marking, although not ‘immediate’, was none the less close enough in time to the learning experience to effectively convey to the pupils what the teachers thought.

With regards the amount of feedback given, the evidence from the examples of work and from discussions with the pupils was that, so far as each separate piece of marking was concerned, this was not the ‘killer feedback’ derided by Stobart (2008) but something far more focused – highlighting one or two aspects where the learning aim had been achieved and at most two areas being identified for development. However, the frequency of the feedback (*i.e.* it being given after the end of virtually every lesson) did run the risk of doing what Swaffield (2008, p. 63) warns against – becoming ‘distracting and encouraging dependency’. The balance between giving too much and too little feedback is a fine one and needs to be judged carefully.

Whether this feedback became truly formative – in that the information provided actually did enhance learning (Carless, 2007) – was largely dependent upon the time given to pupils to respond to marking; and there is some ambivalence here. In one of my lesson observations, Fiona Tees gave very specific time for response to marking, even extending her planned time to allow all pupils to finish this. However, the perception from a pupil like Ian, who was in Fiona’s class, was that they did not often get time to re-write work. Other pupils, like Frances, acknowledged that even when they were given time to reflect on the marking, she did not always make the improvements suggested.

To the extent that marking related to pupils achieving the aim of the lesson or including all the Remember To’s, then the majority of the written assessment strategies used by teachers would seem to fall into the ‘convergent’ rather than the ‘divergent’ categories of Torrance and Pryor (1998; 2001) in that they largely related to finding out *if* pupils knew something rather than teachers and pupils jointly investigating *what* they knew. To use Hargreaves’ (2005) terminology, they had more to do with measurement than inquiry. However, an examination of teachers’ written comments from the examples given, such as ‘*some effective word choices and super attention to conveying feeling, lovely chatty style and in character*’ or ‘‘*As fast as a cheetah*’ *is quite a weak simile. Much better would be something that has a sense of shock and*

fear. Perhaps ‘As fast as a scalded cat...’ (Figure 3) qualify this rather simplistic observation. These would seem to fit more readily Hargreaves *et al*'s (2000) ‘descriptive’ rather than ‘evaluative’ category in that they did not relate to normative assessment but instead commented on pupils’ achievements and suggested areas which might be improved.

These comments, which were typical of those received by the pupils, related to ‘positive’ rather than ‘negative’ feedback (Morrison, 2002) where positive feedback ‘uses information not merely to regulate, but to change, grow and develop’ (p. 17). However, they also seemed to reflect the practice of Audrey in the study by Dixon *et al* (2011), who ‘controlled the evaluative process... it was she who made the productive decisions... Audrey orchestrated [the pupils’] actions’ (p. 372). This was in contrast to another teacher who ‘avoided telling students what to do... [her] feedback was speculative... [she] invited students to consider the ways in which the work could be improved and devolved responsibility for decision making to them’ (p. 373). From this perspective, the pupils’ discussion about marking would seem to indicate that the feedback they received, whilst being positive rather than negative and descriptive rather than evaluative, remained prescriptive rather than speculative. The responsibility for deciding what aspects of the work were ‘right’ and which were ‘wrong’ definitely lay with the teachers rather than the pupils. In this sense, as Dixon *et al* (2011) describe, ‘the students’ role was limited to carrying out [the teacher’s] directive’ (p. 372).

Whilst feedback comments from teachers mainly concerned concepts that pupils had either misunderstood or left out, relating to ‘focusing learning’ (Swaffield, 2008), there remained a good deal of ‘ritualized procedure’ (*ibid*) when it came to more technical aspects of their work such as spelling and punctuation. Despite what Bennett (2011) states regarding the necessity of teachers understanding the cause of pupil error in order to make their feedback effective, it would appear that technical mistakes were all treated the same way, regardless of why they were made. As an example of routinization, spellings which were marked as incorrect had to be written out three times even though the mistake might have been accidental and the pupil actually did know how to spell the word. The following comment exemplifies this:

Harriet I accidentally did an extra ‘d’. I accidentally wrote
 ‘happended’.

On another occasion Kate talked about making a ‘simple mistake that I didn’t even spot’ – and being told to correct it did not help her learning as she knew what she should have done as soon as it was pointed out to her. When Linda received some pink highlighting on her work for

wrong tenses and using 'it' instead of 'she' she needed to correct these by writing them out again – however, on talking with her these were simply 'typos' rather than errors of misunderstanding. What she took from the feedback was the need to re-read and edit her work, which is fine – but she did not actually learn anything new from needing to correct previous mistakes. On the other hand, highlighting mistakes at times did point out genuine errors, again as exemplified by Harriet:

Harriet: I'm terrible with protractors. I think I might have looked at the wrong side of it.

In this instance, repeating the exercise and this time getting it correct *did* aid Harriet's learning.

On the surface, and looking only at teacher marking, I would argue that what Askew and Lodge (2000, p. 5) describe as the 'dominant discourse' of feedback in mainstream education was largely what was evidenced in my school – that of the 'receptive-transmission' model based on a behaviourist understanding of learning. Although there were occasional glimpses of their second category – 'the constructivist model of teaching and learning' (p. 9) – in the main feedback was given by the 'expert' (the teacher) and received by the pupil in order to help them learn. The meaning attached to the marking by the pupils indicated a strong connection between teacher comment and their own sense of what was 'right or wrong', what needed to be kept and what needed to be changed/ improved upon. The pink and green highlighting and the written comments associated with this did not seem to be promoting pupil autonomy, but rather the opposite, seemingly reinforcing Swaffield's (2008) concern that such feedback will cause pupil 'agency and resourcefulness [to be] stifled' (p. 59). If this was actually the case for these pupils, then, according to Swaffield (2008), the whole basis of Assessment for Learning was being undermined.

In order to examine pupils' subjective experiences of the AfL strategies outlined in this chapter, the following three chapters discuss their responses in interviews employing theoretical concepts developed by Winnicott. Chapter Five considers cognitive responses of the pupils, with Chapter Six focusing on more psychological or internal emotional aspects of their experiences. The third chapter of data analysis and discussion (Chapter Seven) does so through the perspective of intersubjective relationships between pupils and their teachers.

Chapter Five Cognitive Impacts of Assessment for Learning – creativity or compliance?

In the literature review it was noted that ‘no learning takes place without the learner’ (Perrenoud, 1998, p. 86) and ‘learners... are the beating heart of authentic assessment for learning’ (Swaffield, 2011, p. 447). This chapter develops that emphasis by outlining, analysing and interpreting what the pupils participating in the research brought to their learning processes and particularly to their engagement with AfL. It continues by exploring how their experiences of AfL in turn shaped that learning. Attention is paid to Winnicott’s (1971) concepts of ‘creativity’ and ‘compliance’ to provide a theoretical lens through which to interpret the data.

Assessment of whatever form could be regarded as one of the world’s ‘knocks’ or ‘impingements’ which inevitably come our way (Winnicott, 1971), but some forms of assessment are designed to be less impinging than others, with AfL theoretically being the least intrusive and demanding of all. However, because of its intimate connection with learning being identified with moving up the levels of the national curriculum, I would contend that even AfL could be viewed as a knock, as a servant of a machine rather than as an encourager of creativity (*cf* Winnicott, 1971, p. 87). In line with Black and Wiliam’s (2003) ‘balance of probabilities’ argument, I make tentative suggestions when discussing the pupils’ verbalised responses to AfL as to whether these strategies were a source of creativity for them or an external pressure requiring compliance on their behalf – or whether they were a mixture of the two.

Winnicott’s statement about examinations is stark: ‘It seems that what is being tested is not only the individual’s intellectual capacity, but also the individual’s capacity to comply and to tolerate being false, to some degree, in order to gain something in relation to society’ (1986, pp. 68-9). If this is true regarding summative assessments, it could be argued that AfL, as an example of formative assessment, should be different, enabling the individual’s capacity for creativity to develop. The discussion in this chapter considers to what extent this was the case for the fifteen pupils in my study and does so by focusing on the AfL strategies of learning aims and success criteria. AfL strategies that the pupils themselves undertook (self and peer assessment) are discussed in Chapter Six, whilst AfL via interaction with teachers is the focus of Chapter Seven. As has been noted in Chapter Three, this breakdown into three constituent elements is somewhat artificial in that all three impacted upon each other, with particularly

pupil-teacher interaction permeating the whole process; however, for the purpose of analysing and interpreting the data, I found the distinctions useful.

Creativity or compliance

For Winnicott, creativity is an essential part of what it is to be fully human, to experience life rather than simply to be alive, and is the essence of what he terms the True Self (1971).

Individuals are able to be creative because the reality of the external world has been able to be internalised. Creativity is evidenced and expressed whenever an individual of whatever age 'does anything deliberately' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 92); in other words, he or she chooses to do it from internal desire rather than merely as a response to external control:

By creative living I mean not getting killed or annihilated all the time by compliance or by reacting to the world that impinges; I mean seeing everything afresh all the time. I refer to apperception as opposed to perception.

Winnicott, 1986, p. 41

What Winnicott terms a 'False Self' develops as a result of needing to comply with external demands and pressures in a way which crushes or hides the creative True Self. Every human being is born with the innate desire and ability to be creative, to develop into an individual (but not individualistic) True Self (Winnicott, 1964) – but this does not always happen. Some people can 'only fit in on the basis of compliance' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 39). Compliance is such a heinous concept for Winnicott because it 'demands the individual adapts and fits in to an environment it does not identify with or feel it belongs to... [and] carries with it a sense of futility and meaninglessness' (*ibid* p. 87). A person forced into compliance will be 'living uncreatively, as if caught up in the creativity of someone else, or a machine' (*ibid* p. 87). Compliance in the individual makes for dependence, not independence (Phillips, 2007, p. 5). Such compliance is essentially a defence mechanism, an attempt to manage an external world which is 'impinging upon' rather than 'facilitating' natural growth and development.

Compliance, according to Winnicott can have grave implications for education because it can be deceptive: 'Compliance brings immediate rewards and adults only too easily mistake compliance for growth' (Winnicott, 1964, p. 97). Academic success may be genuine, in that it can be an accurate reflection of the pupil's True Self, but alternatively it may be the result of that pupil merely complying in an external way with the demands of an education system with which he or she feels no identification. He likens this to a child taking nasty medicine by 'a

holding open of the mouth with the eyes shut' (1964, p. 203). All the pupils in my study were academically successful, but Winnicott's perspective raises the question of whether their success was the 'success of creativity' or the 'success of compliance'. In order to begin to ascertain an answer to this it is necessary to consider what understanding they brought to the process of learning and assessment – what their 'models of learning' were (Black and Wiliam, 1998a, p. 30).

Pupils' models of learning and assessment

Learning was mostly equated with 'making progress' or 'improving', by which the pupils meant moving up the national curriculum levels, suggesting a reasonably linear view of learning:

Ian: Because you're getting better and better, 'cos you're getting a better level in your maths each year.

Linda: I am going up levels in my writing.

The children were conscious of their levels and what they needed to do to move up through them largely because that was the information and expectation given them by their teachers. The teachers themselves were in turn under pressure from government expectations to achieve ever-higher 'standards'. As Youell (2006) states, 'pupil progress and achievement are measured in an increasingly rigid way, and teachers themselves are subject to scrutiny and judgement of a most impersonal and often punitive kind' (p. 4). This need to make 'progress' in learning via the channels of national curriculum levels would be one clear example of where 'neither as teachers nor as learners are we free to become "who we want"' (Pryor and Crossouard, 2007, p. 9).

The pupils' understanding of learning was similar to those in the study undertaken by McCallum *et al* (2000), who found that the children 'understood "learning" to mean the acquisition of skills, of knowledge or of understanding' (p. 282), something taught them by teachers resulting in individuals making sense of knowledge:

Dawn: Learning is like if you don't know something, and then you find out about something.

When asked what they understood by the word 'assessment', most pupils responded in terms of a test which was teacher-led and teacher-constructed. Assessment was a piece of work teachers set and marked as a form of measurement – either of existing knowledge or of

progress, much of which was again linked to national curriculum levels in the minds of the pupils:

Frances: It's looking at our learning and seeing if we've improved at all over our last assessment. We get given levels.

Grace: It's like another word for a task for our levels or writing at school so they'd know what levels we're working on.

This view of assessment was somewhat in contrast to their understanding of *self*-assessment discussed in Chapter Six.

Factors promoting learning

All participating pupils were very capable of identifying what they thought enhanced their learning, but Assessment for Learning strategies did not feature in any of their discussions until I introduced them myself to the interviews. When issues to do with AfL were raised, the pupils' responses were prescribed and constrained, in stark contrast to conversations about other aspects of school. They became animated in their discussions about teachers, poor behaviour, the school residential trips, computers and the library, but not about AfL. On occasions I gained the impression that some of the pupils were almost bemused by me asking them about aspects of school which were, to them, so mundane and routine. However, as will be seen, they all actually did hold significant opinions about AfL and were capable of expressing them. This could indicate that AfL strategies were regarded as simply being there, as much a part of school life as desks and chairs – part of the fabric of the classroom experience which did not excite any major interest or controversy. It could equally be an indication that these strategies were somehow external to the pupils, not yet an integral part of their identities as learners. If this was the case then they would seemingly more likely be experiencing AfL strategies as something to comply with rather than creatively engage with. When asked about what promoted their learning pupils immediately focused on two other aspects of schooling – the curriculum and the teachers. Their views on teachers are developed in Chapter Seven when consideration is given to the impact of AfL on relationships in the classroom. Summarised here are their comments regarding the curriculum and the theme of creativity permeates this aspect of their learning.

Having subjects they liked was the most immediate and frequent response when asked what helped them learn. Art was the favourite subject for most of the pupils, largely because of their ability to be creative without having to write anything. Maths also ranked high in many

pupils' estimation. Significantly, perhaps, all but two of the participating pupils (Nikita and Michael) were in the top maths set. A number of pupils spoke of 'fun' lessons or 'fun' activities as promoting their learning; but 'fun' did not mean 'easy' or 'messaging around'. Eric considered maths challenges such as constructing 'magic squares' as being 'fun', whereas both Kate and Linda regarded some of the poetry writing they had recently completed as being 'really fun'. Grace showed her 'love' of maths when she said that doing a calculation such as 138 divided by 6.2 would 'be actually quite fun'. Seven pupils regarded having practical activities such as cooking or building models as being helpful to their learning. These were lessons in which pupils could get involved rather than simply listening and writing. Whatever the subject, it was felt that the lesson being pitched at the right level of challenge was of real importance. In lessons such as these pupils could be creative in their exploration of the topics at hand, a creativity aligned with Winnicott's (1971) concept of 'enrichment'. This, he says, is the aim of teaching and takes place in the area 'of overlap between the playing of the child and the playing of the other person' (p. 67) where play is described as being that condition when children are absorbed in an activity of pleasure.

Pupils' experiences of AfL strategies – lesson aims and Remember To's

My study confirmed what was introduced in the literature review, that AfL is by no means a straightforward event, not even for those pupils deemed to be the highest achievers. The findings chimes with Stobart's comment (2006, p. 235): 'What we are... learning is just how complex implementing "assessment for learning" is in practice'. To repeat the quote from Cowie (2005a, p. 200): 'in practice, formative assessment is a complex and challenging process'. It is, for the pupils, the practice rather than the theory of formative assessment that is at issue, and the practice is shown to be complex, to be challenging and to be a process. It is intimately interconnected with both the complexity of the classroom and the complexity of the pupils' personalities and their individual lives. It is challenging because it demands more of both teachers and pupils than traditional 'chalk and talk' didactic teaching. And it is a process in that the pupils in this study were 9-10 year olds, in the middle of their junior school careers, who had experienced four years of formal schooling included in which had been various formative assessment strategies; and they were by no means at the end of their 'assessment journey'.

Lesson Aims

Following Cowie's (2005b, p. 138) argument that 'formative assessment relies on pupil understanding of teacher learning and task goals', then the role of lesson aims is highly

significant – perhaps more than is recognised within the school, either by pupils or teachers. As pupil understanding of learning goals is deemed to be one of the significant factors in promoting learner autonomy (ARG, 1999), then a lack of understanding, or, at least, a sense that the learning aim they have been given carries little or no weight, may be an indication that pupils are not yet autonomous learners. Yet this was the overall impression given by the pupils in my study. Lesson aims seemed to be for many, if not most, pupils something ‘procedural’ rather than a strategy that helped ‘focus learning’ (Swaffield, 2008), more aligned with compliance than creativity. Pupils’ discussion regarding learning aims suggested that, although they largely understood the purpose of lesson aims, their experiences of how they used them were ambivalent. There were very definite reservations regarding how much use they found them to be in their learning.

The most common response of pupils when asked what use they made of lesson aims was that they acted as a reminder of what they needed to do in any one lesson:

Joan: So you look at your aims. Oh yeah, that’s what we’re doing.

This was seen as particularly important if the class had been sitting on the carpet listening to the teacher for any length of time. Pupils candidly spoke of drifting off or being distracted by others talking near them:

Linda: If I’ve been daydreaming, I can just read the aim and it will tell me what I have to do.

Nikita: If you forget or get confused about what the teacher said on the carpet, you can just look at the aim and it will tell you a bit more.

More in keeping with AfL theory, the second most common response was that pupils saw the lesson aims as something to achieve in that lesson:

Alan: What you’re trying to get to (miming firing an arrow from a bow).

Kate: To help you learn, to give you a target to work to.

Others saw lesson aims as something reinforcing the instructions or information given by the teacher:

Harriet: It's a bit like having a teacher giving you input, basically a mini-teacher, but put down in words instead of someone giving you the input. The aim always gives you that little bit of extra information.

For some, the aim helped them grasp the point of the lesson:

Ian: So we understand what we're supposed to do.

Although pupils could see the point of aims, they generally viewed them as an irrelevance – something they needed to write down, but otherwise largely ignore, even if the teachers found them useful. This statement was typical of many:

Frances: I don't think it makes a difference having an aim.

Lesson aims appeared to have become unthinkingly routine for most pupils – possible evidence of compliance rather than creativity:

Nikita: It's just something you go by, like brushing your teeth in the morning. It's something that you do. You don't always want to do it, but you do it.

Pupils saw them as irrelevant because they felt they knew what they were doing in a lesson anyway. In this case, not using lesson aims seemed to be more to do with pupils' creativity than their compliance. Indeed, their creativity caused them to ignore or by-pass AfL strategies:

Claire: Some bits are pointless 'cos you know what you're doing. You could figure that out just by looking at it.

The extent to which lesson aims were seen to be relevant or irrelevant to learning varied according to the subject being taught:

Olivia: [In] literacy, definitely you need an aim.

Joan: In maths aims aren't really that useful 'cos she writes the questions on the board and you just know.

Whilst most pupils commented on the irrelevance to them of the principle of lesson aims, several also emphasised the problems they felt they encountered with the practicalities of having to write the aim down. For them, writing down the aim took time and because of that

they considered their learning to be impeded, even if they did not express this quite as forcibly as this pupil:

Alan: A waste of paper, writing the aim down, you're wasting my time.

Eric's comment was both more measured and more representative of pupils' thoughts:

Eric: We take two minutes to do the aim and date and so we miss writing time.

Interestingly, this view was reinforced by several of the teachers who disagreed with the school policy of having to write out the aim of each lesson for similar reasons to those given by the pupils.

It would appear, therefore, that lesson aims were largely simply routine procedures which made little impact on pupils' cognitive development leading to a conclusion that their experiences of this particular AfL strategy had more to do with compliance than creativity.

Remember To's

Pupils were much more positive about Remember To's, which were generally seen to promote learning and were used by pupils both during and towards the close of lessons. Black *et al's* (2003) argument that AfL strategies are effective when pupils 'bear in mind the aims of their work and ... assess their own progress to meet these aims as they proceed' (p. 53) would seem to be applicable to the pupils in my study. However, the way they appeared to use them was problematic with some aspects seemingly relating to compliance and others developing their creativity.

The pupils expressed three distinct but overlapping ways they understood and used Remember To's – as steps to achieving the lesson aim; as an *aide memoire* during the course of the lesson to keep them focused and help them structure their work; and as a checklist to look through at the end of the task to ensure they had included all they were meant to include. A common factor ran through all – in whatever way the pupils used them, the Remember To's were seen as discrete items to be 'ticked off' either mentally in their minds or physically in their books as and when they used them. In so doing, they saw themselves as 'learning'. Each of these elements is elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

Remember To's were seen as being essentially similar to lesson aims, serving the same function at the start of the lesson:

Ian: They remind you of what to do.

Linda: Remember To's are quite good because they kind of help us by like an aim.

A number of pupils specifically related the Remember To's to the lesson aim:

Eric: Remember To's, they tell you what you've got to do to achieve the aim.

Bob: They tell you stuff like small parts that you have to do.

For most of the pupils, if all the Remember To's had been included in their work, then the lesson aim had been achieved, but if they had not included them all then they had not completed their work effectively:

Dawn: If you haven't done the Remember To's, then you haven't done it right.

Pupils also used Remember To's as a teaching tool, such as giving them ideas during the course of the lesson:

Bob: If you don't know what to write you can look at them – they might tell you what you have to write.

or helping them to structure their work:

Michael: I sort of use them as a kind of guide to what to include in my writing.

A good number of pupils used them as an *aide memoire* during the course of their work:

Nikita: It's on the board and you look at it, then it kind of re-informs you. If you get stuck, look back and try to find out what you've forgotten.

Remember To's also provided a focus for understanding what to do during a lesson, indicating a creative engagement with them:

Frances: Mrs Avon will have Remember To's up there, and then I'll have a look at them and go through them in my head and then I'll make sure I understand it before I go off and I'll pitch my learning and I'll start.

In order for Remember To's to be effective some thinking and consideration was needed on the part of the pupils, again reflecting creative engagement. Linda, for instance, stated that she began a piece of work by 'reading all of the things I should include' and continued, 'and then I think and then I write'.

By far the most frequent response, though, reflected a compliant approach with Remember To's seemingly remaining external to the learner. Pupils routinely used them towards the end of a lesson when they had finished or were nearly finishing their work. In this context they used them as a checklist to go through, mentally or physically ticking them off as they read through their work. This is exemplified in Figure 1 (Chapter Four):

Olivia: We had a little sheet with Remember To's on it. At the end we checked our work and then we ticked them.

Frances: Remember To's help because it's like a checklist for your work and it's what you need to do for that piece of thing.

As Frances went on to explain, Remember To's were used by some pupils as a checklist only at the finish of a piece of work, even though they understood they could, and perhaps should, use them during the actual production of their work:

Frances: I'm not one to look at my Remember To's and definitely make sure I've included them until I get to the end of my writing.

If pupils found they had not included all the Remember To's they would try and write them in afterwards, but they did not always succeed, possibly indicating an ambivalence towards the importance of Remember To's:

Grace: I like using them like a checklist sometimes. If I've got time left over I'll just see if I've got all the things on there and if there isn't anything I'd just try and add it in somehow and if I can't, well then I can't.

Even though pupils were generally aware of the *potential* for Remember To's to enhance learning, in practice they did not consistently make use of them to their maximum effect. They gave a number of reasons as to why, for them, Remember To's could be irrelevant to their learning indicating a sense of futility about them which is a hallmark of compliance. Along with several others, Nikita spoke of her use of Remember To's 'tailing off' as the lesson progressed, 'I look at them while we're on the carpet 'cos you're really trying at the beginning. Then it kind of slips a bit'.

Others spoke of unfulfilled good intentions regarding their use of Remember To's:

Harriet: I look at them and then think, "OK, I'm going to use some of that and I'm going to use some of that". At the end I always think, "Oh no, I forgot to do that and that and that."

At times, however, compliance was dislodged by creativity – but at the cost of the Remember To's. Pupils regarded Remember To's as irrelevant when they were displaced by their own ideas and enthusiasm. This was exemplified by a conversation between Ian and Kate:

Kate: You're not actually looking at the Remember To's for what you have to do, you're just sort of doing what you want to do – writing down what you do.

Ian: I know, 'cos you're full of ideas.

Nikita, too, said she occasionally became carried away in her work so that Remember To's were ignored:

Nikita: Sometimes I get so interested in actually getting it done; I get so excited that I forget to put the paragraphs in.

Use of Remember To's varied according to how confident the pupils felt about the task they were being asked to undertake. They were seen as not being needed:

Frances: If I was really, really good at that thing.

Conversely, if pupils were not so sure of what to do they read the Remember To's to help their learning:

Ian: If it's quite complicated I use them.

It would seem here that pupils felt they had a choice as to when they should or should not use the Remember To's. If that was the case, then the context in which the AfL strategy was being employed was more likely to lead to creativity than compliance rather than the strategy itself.

Very few pupils regarded Remember To's as being an actual barrier to learning, however two girls, Kate and Claire, commented that Remember To's could at times have a negative effect on their learning. In this instance, as in several others, these two pupils reflected a level of False Self compliance greater than that indicated by other pupils:

Kate: I try and follow the Remember To's, but sometimes some of them are a bit confusing and sometimes it's quite hard to put them into the work we are doing. Some of them are quite weird. Remember To's put pressure on you to get all of that in there and sometimes it's impossible to do that.

Claire: When he says, "remember to" I can't do it; I just forget everything; and it says like "include a sentence of three" and I'm like "I can't do a sentence of three".

An immediate impression I therefore gained from talking with pupils about their understanding and use of Remember To's was that their use had become routine and ritualized, being 'tick[ed] off in a mechanical instrumentalist way' (Stobart, 2008, p. 155). If this was the case pupils were likely to be engaging with AfL on the basis of compliance rather than creativity – the strategies remained external to them, an example of control from the outside. The fact that the recurrent response from pupils regarding their use of Remember To's was that they used them only at the end of their work as a checklist to tick off what they had done would seem to relate more closely to Torrance's (2007) '*criteria compliance*' (my emphasis) than developing genuine 'guild knowledge' of what a 'good' piece of work looks like, as described by Sadler (1989) and Kirton *et al* (2007). Consequently, it could be argued that the impact on pupils' learning promoted 'surface' rather than 'deep' learning (Marton and Booth, 1997) or even that the assessments the pupils carried out themselves (ticking off the Remember To's) could be seen to be verging towards 'assessment *as* learning' rather than assessment *for* learning (Torrance, 2007).

From what the pupils told me it did not seem that Remember To's were presented as a 'horizon of possibilities' (Stobart, 2008), as 'fuzzy outcomes' (Swaffield, 2011), that related to

the complexity of the learning experience, but were rather the 'simple judgements' of Dixon *et al's* (2011) study. The warning given by Sadler seemed to be coming to pass in Coastal School:

A problematic mix of mere *compliance*, and of going ever-so-systematically through all the steps, actually turns out to be instrumental in subverting the goal of assessment. At the same time it distorts both the learning itself, and teachers' and students' understanding of what learning entails.

Sadler, 2007, p. 389 (my emphasis)

Importantly, Sadler's warning includes a 'distortion of learning' for both teachers and pupils. Whilst this thesis focuses on the experiences of the pupils, it is worth noting that the pupils' understanding of learning, essentially equating it with moving through the national curriculum levels in English and maths, merely mirrored the presenting understanding of their teachers. Although the teachers expressed their personal views of what learning should entail when interviewed, in practice these views tended to be constrained and overruled by the external pressures of the educational context within which they and their pupils lived and worked. Perhaps the teachers themselves were operating in an environment of compliance rather than creativity – but my investigation did not go there.

It would seem, then, that, despite the school Self Evaluation Form and the most recent Ofsted report describing AfL practices as 'good', in terms of comparing the practice of AfL as experienced by the pupils with the theory and stated goals and benefits of AfL (as outlined in the literature review), there were significant gaps and discrepancies. This somewhat gloomy picture, however, needs to be qualified by at least two caveats.

Firstly, pupils' comments about Remember To's need to be placed in the context within which they were made. As the pupils were asked to describe what their understanding of Remember To's was and how they used them, their responses specifically related to this aspect of their learning experience. This was especially the case in the individual interviews when the pupil and I looked at examples of their written work and how Remember To's were used. As noted in the methodology chapter, the examples of work I chose to consider were exactly those which had Remember To's clearly stated. Thus, a whole area of work where Remember To's may have been a lot more general – presenting much more of a 'horizon of possibilities' – was not considered.

Secondly, when talking about their learning in general, as has already been highlighted, pupils tended to rely much more on direct interaction with their teachers than on AfL strategies,

including Remember To's (as developed more in Chapter Seven). So, whilst they might have used Remember To's in the mechanistic way described above, this was not the only, and probably not the major way they approached their work. As Claire and others stated, the Remember To's were often seen to be irrelevant because the children felt it was obvious what they needed to do and how they were able to achieve the aim of the lesson. The comments made by several that they simply bypassed the Remember To's when they were writing because they were almost carried away with their own ideas would indicate that a good deal of learning was taking place without reference to formal AfL strategies. In which case, Stobart's (2008) comment about pupils who have developed 'independence of learning' because they are high achievers who 'function outside the influence of AfL strategies' (p. 155) may well be applicable to at least some of these pupils. In essence, many of the pupils did not need the Remember To's to give them success criteria – they could work those out for themselves. In such situations Remember To's, as an external stimulus to learning, may not have been needed because pupils had internalised what 'success' looked like. If this was the case, then AfL could be said to have been truly effective for the strategies in place had achieved the aim which is 'to work towards ultimate submergence of many of the routine criteria once they are so obviously taken for granted that they need no longer to be stated explicitly' (Sadler, 1989, p. 134). In Winnicott's terminology, the pupils *were* engaging creatively with their learning, but, it could be argued, this was in spite of AfL strategies rather than because of them.

Creativity, compliance or performance?

The 'balance of probability' from the findings discussed in this chapter would seem to lie towards the AfL experiences of the pupils promoting compliance rather than creativity. Despite much that happened in school to promote creativity, the responses from the pupils would indicate that the creativity they do experience is often, if not usually, as the quote from Winnicott at the beginning of the chapter states, 'the creativity of someone else, or a machine' (1971, p. 87) making for dependence rather than independence (Phillips, 2007, p. 5). The 'machine' in this instance is the machine of the English education system. However, if pupils are to be creative they must learn to comply with the norms of their culture – whether in terms of language or mathematics. They need to conform to the standards expected by society, to the standards required by further and higher education and those insisted upon by employers. The external world is very real and impinges on us all. But for Winnicott there are crucial differences between compliance and conforming through compromise, and these are considered in the next chapter.

To bring the current chapter to a close, we could perhaps say that in school ‘conforming is necessary to survive, but performing is necessary to achieve’ – and performing may involve either compliance or creativity. Of necessity the pupils are learning to perform to make ‘progress’ through the fine grades of national curriculum levels in maths and English and are doing this effectively. Some mostly do it out of compliance, some mostly out of creativity, but probably all perform at different times with a mixture of both compliance and creativity.

The following chapter considers further AfL strategies, and does so from the perspective of the subjective, emotional and psychological experiences of the pupils.

Chapter Six Psychological Experiences of Assessment for Learning – Learner Autonomy and True or False Selves

As discussed in the literature review, assessment is a judgement, not only about pupils' learning, but also about them as individuals – how 'successful' they are at learning, how 'hard' they work, what their capacity for future work is. Assessment, therefore, as Stobart (2008, p. 6) states, can never be 'neutral'. In one sense, all forms of assessment, whether formative or summative, acts as a type of mirror, reflecting back to the individual a commentary about their work and themselves as people (Bibby, 2011). The essence of all assessment is the same. It is a judgement made on the value and worth of what is being produced by an individual. Mostly this judgement is made by somebody else, adding weight to the psychological impact of the assessment. The obvious exception would appear to be self-assessment, but even here there is a judgement, but the judgement is being made by the individual themselves and judging oneself requires a high level of maturity, a well-developed and healthy sense of 'self'. Alongside other educational practises, any assessment experience will therefore shape 'how [pupils] see themselves as learners and as people' (Stobart, 2008, p. 145), and a key element in this is the psychological or emotional impact of that assessment. Moni *et al* (2002) make reference to the reality of the emotional as well as the cognitive responses of pupils to assessment and Brookhart and Bronowicz (2003) found that 'individual psychology was more salient than the classroom assessment environment' (p. 239) when investigating pupil responses to assessment. I would argue that the importance of individual psychological responses to assessment was similarly evidenced in my investigation.

One of the stated goals of AfL is for pupils to become independent autonomous learners (Marshall and Wiliam, 2006), but learner autonomy, seemingly readily distinguishable in theory, like every other facet of AfL, remains elusive in practice. Taken to an extreme, learner autonomy might mean that pupils learn and make progress without the need for a teacher – they do it for themselves. This is clearly not the case, either in practice or in theory. The issue is not so much to do with whether the pupil needs the teacher or not, but what the level of dependence of that pupil is on the needed teacher. Rather than independence or dependence, we should perhaps think in terms of 'interdependence' between pupils and teachers and be saying that effective AfL results in a healthy interdependence between those taught and those doing the teaching. In practice there will of course be varying degrees of interdependence within any classroom. Pupils will differ from each other in their levels of dependence or independence when learning and pupils will experience differing levels of independence

between different subjects, with different teachers and will even experience variations of learning autonomy within a lesson, at times being able to work by themselves and at other times requiring help and support, both from teachers and from each other. One of the factors determining levels of interdependency is psychological – the personal, inner identities held by pupils about themselves as learners and as individuals in relationship with their teachers.

This chapter relates to what pupils said or to what I believe they intimated about their capacity to learn independently and does so largely through their comments regarding their experiences of self- and peer assessment. Their levels of dependence/ independence in learning are interpreted via Winnicott's theoretical perspectives regarding the 'True Self' and the 'False Self'. His underlying premise that 'independence does not become absolute... an autonomous unit is in fact never independent of environment' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 188) and that healthy development means that an individual has the capacity to go 'from dependence to independence' and back again (Winnicott, 1965, p. 131) supports the argument that it is interdependence rather than total independence that is the issue under debate here.

Winnicott and personal identity – the 'True Self' and the 'False Self'

Constructing personal identity is a complex process, taking place over time and bringing together both conscious and unconscious processes. The place of this identity, this individuality, the 'self', for Winnicott is the psyche – the internal reality of a person that 'binds the experienced past, the present and the expected future together' (1988, p. 28). This can be either a place where 'personal wealth builds up (or poverty shows)' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 141). Here is where relationships with the outside world are begun (Winnicott, 1988, p. 29). An individual's psyche is distinct from the 'soma', the physical body of the five senses which can be seen and touched. The psyche is private, secret, hidden – known only to the individual, and that only in part. There will always be elements of the psyche which are unknown even to the individual, residing in the realm of the unconscious and perhaps only accessible through dreams which 'represent a bridge between conscious life and unconscious phenomena' (Winnicott, 1986, p. 16). It is the psyche that shapes how people feel about themselves and about the world around them. It is the place of emotion and motivation, of security and fear, of love and hate – and as such is the most influential factor in how a person of whatever age responds to and engages with learning. It is, of course, the root of the word 'psychological'.

In Winnicott's thinking, a significant aspect of psychological growth for every person is socialization, the development of an awareness of and an integration with the world outside of the individual – what he describes as the growth from the 'pleasure principle' to the 'reality

principle' (1971; 1986; 1988). Every human being is gradually socialized – but some in a healthy, normal way; others in an unhealthy, abnormal way. With healthy growth the psyche of the person develops into a 'True Self'; in the case of unhealthy growth a 'False Self' is constructed. The development of a True Self or the construction of a False Self is an unconscious response to an early environment which is either suitably adapted to the needs of the infant or is one in which the infant has to fight for psychological/emotional if not actual physical survival. According to Winnicott, those who have been able to develop their True Selves experience school as a place which provides 'opportunity... to enrich himself or herself culturally' (1971, p. 69). Cultural enrichment is defined as both the passing on of cultural heritage and the opportunity for creative innovation. Teachers can create an environment where such opportunities are more likely to be available or, conversely, where they are restricted or even destroyed.

The True Self is described by Winnicott as 'the living core of the individual personality' (1971, p. 43), as someone 'living their own life' (1986, p. 27). This 'True Self' is able to take responsibility for its own actions, to take credit for success and accept blame for failure. The True Self does not need to look to others for its identity, but rather takes its identity to its experiences. It is able to relax into itself, yet not be isolated or separate, having the capacity to love and hate, to defy and depend upon others (Winnicott, 1971). The True Self is able to relate to the external world without losing its individuality or its own 'aliveness' (Winnicott, 1986, p. 31). Winnicott uses the metaphor of a cog in a machine to express his thought that a healthy individual can and does relinquish the need to be in control and is content not to comply so much as to compromise with the world: 'Eventually the individual human being relinquishes being the wheel, or the whole gearbox, and adopts the more comfortable position of a cog' (1986, p. 50). For the person who has been able to develop a True Self, there is a congruence between their psyche and the world they experience around them – both they and the world feel 'real'. In contrast, a False Self is essentially a feeling of unreality.

A False Self develops when, as an infant, he or she was not protected from the 'impingements' or 'knocks' of the external world (Winnicott, 1965, p. 24). A False Self is constructed by the individual as a defence around the inner True Self. In this situation the child 'presents a shop window or out-turned half' (Phillips, 2007, p. 120). If the essence of the True Self is creativity, then the essence of the False Self is compliance – compliance initially to the mother or mother-figure who is taken up with herself rather than her baby, but later this can become compliance to any dominant figure (Davis and Wallbridge, 1991). The False Self passes

responsibility for action or inaction to someone or something else and is unable to take credit for success or blame for failure. Compliance results in a feeling of being unreal, of being one-step removed from the reality of the world around. It develops dependency and its relationships with others is fragile and uncertain. It needs to look to external factors for its own identity.

The pupils participating in my research largely reflected aspects which would seem to relate more to Winnicott's True Self than a False Self, but, of course, this is the interpretation of the researcher rather than a more expert 'diagnosis' of a psychoanalyst. However, none of the pupils evidenced a need to be in control – all seemed content to be a cog in the lesson and in school generally, although this was more true of some than others. Responsibility for their learning was accepted by all participating pupils. They showed themselves to be more independent than dependent learners – but they were able to move from one to the other, able to accept help when needed. It would seem to be the case that they came to school 'for something to be added to their lives, they want[ed] to learn lessons' (Winnicott, 1964, p. 207). They certainly did not need to be 'managed' in a way that Winnicott envisaged as being necessary for those without that level of healthy personal development and identity (*ibid* p. 208). They were 'intentional learners' who, according to Black *et al* (2006) benefit most from AfL.

However, two pupils stood out at times as being distinct from this overall quite rosy picture. Claire seemed to resist taking credit for success, or even to recognise that she was a 'successful' learner:

Claire: I like green [highlighting] 'cos it makes you actually feel good that they actually like your terrible work.

Did she genuinely think that her work was 'terrible'? It is not possible to say why she said this, nor why in a group interview regarding Remember To's, she stated that she could never remember what to do, drawing the repost:

Frances: Damn it Claire, yes you can!

When her year 5 teacher wrote on her work, '*This is without doubt one of the best pieces of writing by a child that I have ever read*' (Figure 3), it did not seem that she identified with this. Was she presenting a 'shop window, a turned out half' (Phillips, 2007, p. 120)? This is more than an academic question. All the teachers in years 4 and 5 considered Claire to be the one of the most able pupils in the year group – a 'natural' writer and an able mathematician. But she

herself did not seem to reflect this. What was reflected to her by her teachers and by her peers did not seem to connect with her psyche, her inner personal view of herself. A concern is therefore raised regarding the possibility that, for whatever reason, in school Claire presented a False Self – an academic ability which she did not feel; for the False Self can be deceptive – deceiving parents, teachers, other pupils and even the individuals themselves: ‘The world may observe academic success of a high degree, and may find it hard to believe in the very real distress of the individual concerned who feels “phoney” the more he or she is successful’ (Winnicott, 1960, *Ego Distortion in Terms of the True and False Self*, cited in Davis and Wallbridge, 1991, pp. 51-2).

The second pupil who may perhaps have been putting on a ‘face’, developing at least aspects of a False Self in school, was Kate. When she commented that she did not like school but instead would ‘rather do stand-up comedy’, was that because she saw herself as a comedian or that anything was better than being in school? From her comments it would seem that the only pleasure she received from school, the only benefit, the only sense of being ‘real’, was gained through meeting her friends, of whom Claire was one. If that was the case, why did she work so hard? Was she merely conforming or complying, or was something else happening? It would seem she was genuinely ‘alive’ when playing tennis and dedicated much of her leisure time to this. Was she ‘unreal’ in school when in lessons? It is, of course, impossible to answer such questions conclusively – but they need to be raised to gain a more detailed and nuanced picture of these pupils’ experiences of AfL.

Shaping learner identity

Part of the healthy development of an individual’s identity as a learner concerns their ability to conform to the demands and pressures of school life as well as their capacity to participate in and benefit from activities and experiences of education – and to do all this without a loss of their individuality, their True Self. Unlike the IFS (Hutchins, 2010), where some higher achieving pupils expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to learn or a lack of desire to succeed in school, the pupils in this study appeared to be generally secure in their identity as learners and engagement with learning in the classroom, with even Claire and Kate acknowledging that they had ability and were confident in their learning. In Miller and Lavin’s (2007) terminology, all the pupils’ ‘learning disposition’ was one of ‘self-competence’, having ‘confidence in their abilities to achieve their goals’ (p. 21).

Within school, the emphasis of the pupils, particularly in the group interviews, indicated that, for these pupils, Bruner’s (1996) ‘sense of self’ related primarily to favourite lessons or to

activities they did not like. Grace's graphic comment that 'English is basically me dying' was but a more extreme example of comments made by several pupils, such as Bob, who acknowledged he was good at maths, but just did not like it. Grace's 'sense of self' would therefore seem to be something like, 'I am an able mathematician'; whilst Bob's might be more like, 'I am a capable learner, but am more at home playing football'. When the pupils enthused about their favourite subjects and other aspects of the curriculum (such as the use of ICT) there may be an indication here of their True Selves – their favourite subjects or activities felt 'real' to them and they felt 'real' in those subjects and activities. Two factors seemed to be taken into account by the pupils when describing their favourite subjects. The first, identifying art as their favourite subject (as described in Chapter Five), was due to their ability to be creative, to express themselves, possibly therefore, to be 'true' to themselves when engaged in that subject. Secondly, the subjects they liked or were termed their 'favourite' subjects tended to be those in which they achieved their highest academic standards and where they were making most progress. Alan, for instance, said that he liked maths but did not like English. This reflected the national curriculum levels he was achieving in these subjects, where English, although still higher than the norm for his age, was not as high as maths. There could, of course, be a circular argument here that although the subjects the children felt most confident in were those where they were achieving the highest results, they were achieving those results largely because of their high levels of confidence in those particular subjects. As was stated:

Joan: If you feel confident then it's more likely that you're going to learn it quicker.

Discussion around 'favourite subjects' raises further questions regarding identifying True and False Selves. Again, to consider the examples of Claire and Kate, both expressed a level of enjoyment in creative areas of the curriculum, with Claire expressly describing the positive influence her father had on her pleasure in art and Kate emphasising her commitment to tennis and her exposure to Middle Eastern history and politics via her older sister's studies at university. It could be that they both had experience of their creative True Selves, but only partially in school. Their True Selves were perhaps revealed more fully outside of school. Within school, for pupils such as these who were both able and engaged in creative pursuits, the dichotomy between True and False Selves is possibly not sufficient to interpret their responses and identities as learners. A more appropriate delineation for them could be that within school they were presenting a 'Tolerant Self', a 'Performing Self'; not a False Self as such

because they were not merely complying with external pressures and demands nor yet a True Self because they did not fully identify with the learning processes. They tolerated school and performed within it because they could largely achieve what was being asked of them without too much effort. It could be that, for these pupils, school was regarded as an inevitable part of childhood, something that they had the capacity to deal with but, in terms of their psyche, did not add anything to them as individuals. If this was the case, then AfL strategies would almost inevitably be experienced as irrelevancies. But it also needs to be noted that Claire spoke of her confidence being boosted by positive comments from her teachers. There is thus more likely to be a mixture here – as there probably is for all pupils. No pupil is pure unalloyed ‘True’ or ‘False’ Self in school, but all would be likely to exhibit more characteristics of the one ‘Self’ or the other.

Psychological responses to self- and peer assessment

Self-assessment

One of the *Ten Principles of Assessment for Learning* (ARG, 2002) which underpin national strategies for formative assessment emphasises the importance of self-assessment in promoting learner autonomy, and does so in definitely psychological terms:

Teachers should equip learners with *the desire and the capacity* to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment.

ARG, 2000 (my emphasis)

‘Desire’ and ‘capacity’ both refer to internal, psychological dimensions of pupils’ lives – their psyche – and would seem to be something the pupils in my study reflected on in a positive way, again possibly indicating the development of True Selves. Self-assessment was the one AfL strategy universally viewed in a positive light by all the pupils, seeming to indicate that they had the desire to ‘take charge of their learning’. Although not all found it straightforward to do, no pupil viewed self-assessment as being either an irrelevance or a hindrance to learning. In keeping with this positive approach, pupils’ perspectives on self-assessment contrasted with their expressed understanding of ‘assessment’ in general, as discussed in Chapter Five. Rather than being a measurement or a test, self-assessment was regarded as an integral part of everyday learning in the classroom. For all the pupils, self-assessment was a definite aid to learning, with virtually no drawbacks being expressed.

Pupils reported that over a period of time they could look back over the self-assessment comments they had made and plot their progress for themselves, indicating their capacity to link past learning with present realities:

Harriet: If say I did that and then a few days later I look back on it I can know I started off a bit unsure but then I'm much better on that subject.

Kate: When I go back I can sort of say that I struggled with it, but now I'm fine.

They used the time of self-assessment to reflect on which aspects of the lesson they did not understand, which they partially understood and which they fully grasped. To be able to do this required a high level of individual capacity for self-reflection, a further indicator that these pupils were engaging in at least this aspect of AfL as their True Selves rather than merely because they were instructed to do so:

Alan: At the beginning I was in between red and green. I knew it and I didn't – but in the end I got it. I just done that, how I felt about the work.

Joan: We mark ourselves to see if we've found it easier at the end than the beginning or found it hard as we went through or when you did it if you found it easier or could have done some more of it.

Self-assessment also had something to say to the pupils about choices they could make in the future regarding their learning (depending on the lesson and the teacher). For some it enabled them to choose levels of differentiated tasks which were appropriate for them, thereby not only evidencing an integration of past and present, but also future expectations:

Kate: It sort of says that I can check if I found it hard last time and see what group I should choose.

Eric: It tells us that we can do it really so if we do it next time we know that we can pick a harder column or challenge ourselves a bit.

Although, of course, these decisions could have been made without the pupils writing anything on their books, they seemed to appreciate having the opportunity to write down what they

thought about their work. Their written self-assessment gave them a sort of permanent yardstick by which they could measure their capacity for future work. Self-assessment gave pupils the opportunity to say how they themselves felt about their learning and what they thought about it. They were able to express their own opinions, even if they were unsure whether this coincided with the teacher's views, thereby possibly moving towards more autonomous learning:

Joan: It helps because it tells you how you felt about yourself doing it instead of just what the teachers thought. You can write down what you thought too. I think it's cool. I think it's quite good.

Eric: Show if you think you've made progress. I think I did personally, but if Mrs Avon didn't, I don't know.

For many, undertaking such self-assessment boosted their confidence in themselves as learners and was an enjoyable experience, if not an easy one:

Frances: When a piece of writing that I've done I feel very confident with it, and I like marking it and looking at the comments.

Alan: I'm capable of doing self-assessment. It's hard but I do enjoy it. I like marking my work in maths, but I hate marking it in English.

Linda: I do like doing it. At the end of a lesson you feel that you understand, but if you do beginning as well, then you've kind of understood it throughout the lesson.

It would seem then that engaging in self-assessment pupils were more able to be their True Selves. They could be creative, relaxed, 'playful' in that through it they made their own choices, gained a measure of personal control over their future learning, expressed their own opinions and related their personal past, present and future expectations. Psychologically, therefore, it would seem that self-assessment was an entirely positive experience for the pupils.

However, from a learning perspective, there remains the question of what exactly the pupils were gaining from these self-assessment practices. On one level, the form their self-assessment took – 'traffic-lighting' the aim or ticking off their Remember To's – appeared to be

ritualized procedure (Swaffield, 2008), merely a matter of pure routine which did not necessarily involve thinking. It would seem at this level that pupils were tending more towards 'checking whether something [was] right or wrong' than reflecting 'on what their learning actually mean[t]' (Black *et al*, 2003, p. 66). It could be argued that self-assessment for pupils related to a mechanical approach to specific, isolated pieces of work rather than thinking about themselves in a more holistic way as learners. Insofar as pupils did think about the nature of their work when they self-assessed, this thinking was largely in the context of what it would mean for the teacher, rather than what it could signify to them. It is debatable to what extent these strategies had enabled these pupils to 'become self-monitoring, modifying and improving aspects of a performance that have yet to reach the desired standard' (Dixon *et al*, 2011, p. 366) – something seen by most writers as the ultimate goal of AfL (*cf* Brookhart, 2001; Sadler, 1989). But 'monitoring their own learning' is not at all straightforward either to understand as a concept or to see put into practice. And it is not something pupils of this age (or probably any age) can grasp easily as discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this report.

Peer assessment

Dixon *et al* (2011) emphasise the value of peer assessment in promoting learner autonomy, seeing it as 'a critical and necessary strategy' (p. 366). Yet it is the one strategy pupils consistently said they had difficulty with. The argument suggests that through peer assessment pupils gain the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in self-monitoring – to make judgements about current performance and take action to close the gap between actual and expected performance. The practice, however, as described by the pupils, would seem to indicate something very different. Whilst several acknowledged the value of gaining ideas from others through reading their work, none found it helpful in developing their own awareness of what a 'good' piece of work was. Unlike the process of self-assessment, peer assessment was definitely not universally regarded as an asset to learning. Whilst some pupils welcomed it, most expressed at least some measure of reservation, sometimes in quite strong terms.

Pupils understood peer assessment to be useful in regard to checking that their own work made sense, because as Joan indicated:

Joan: It might make sense to them, but that's probably because it's their work and they just read it really quickly and think, 'Oh yeah, I did it in my head so it must make sense'. So if they let

someone else read it, they know it makes sense if everybody else thinks it's good.

Also, by looking at the work of others, pupils said their own learning benefitted – they gained 'inspiration' (Harriet) or 'ideas' (Grace and Joan). A third value pupils attached to peer assessment was the ability to make improvements before the teacher marked it:

Linda: It is quite helpful 'cos if someone else reads it, then they give you their opinion and how you could improve the work. Kind of like a teacher, but before Mrs Avon actually marks it, then you can quickly change something.

A more negative view of peer assessment was, however, expressed by many, including those who were otherwise generally positive about it. This was particularly the case with regards the psychological effect on their friends of making what pupils perceived to be negative comments:

Dawn: It can hurt your feelings

Linda: You might think that would make them sad. So then you feel bad and then sometimes it's hard marking other people's work, 'cos you think they're going to be upset;

but also with regard the practicalities of other pupils' marking:

Harriet: I write it really neat and then they ruin it with all the little scribbles.

Other pupils were consistently negative about the whole procedure of peer assessment, often due to the practicalities associated with it:

Grace: I had to mark [another pupil's] work and I couldn't even read his writing. I'd rather mark my own.

It could be argued, then, that when engaging in peer assessment the pupils were largely doing this out of the compliance of a False Self. They had no choice about it and they felt no sense of creative ability or personal identification with it.

Having considered the pupils' psychological experiences of various AfL strategies in this chapter, the next and the final chapters in the analysis and discussion of data dwells on that which seemed to be uppermost in pupils' thinking – their relationships and interactions with teachers.

Chapter Seven Relational Aspects of Assessment for Learning – inner reality, the external world and potential space

If, as Rowntree (1977, p. 4) states, ‘assessment can be seen as a human encounter’, the experience of it must of necessity be largely shaped by the nature and quality of the relationships between those doing the assessing and those being assessed – teachers and pupils. This chapter considers what the pupils participating in the study said about their relationships with teachers insofar as these concerned assessment. Pupil-teacher relationships are not considered from the perspective of the teacher nor from data generated through lesson observations. However, both comments made by teachers and observations made by me form the context for the pupils’ statements and are included where appropriate.

In order for learner autonomy to be achieved, it could be argued that teachers need to ‘let go’ (cf Winnicott, 1971, p. 145) – to ‘let go’ of their control, of their centrality in pupils’ learning and assessment. However, in the process of ‘letting go’ pupils may feel threatened and a sense of suspicion of their teachers rather than trust in them might ensue. Conversely, if teachers feel constant pressure to ‘give effective feedback’ and ‘move the children’s learning on’ it might in practice not be *possible* to ‘let go’. Arguably, if this is the case, the practice of AfL is inherently contradictory – perhaps what Winnicott would term a ‘paradox’ – learner autonomy is the goal, but learning autonomy is the very thing stifled and inhibited by the process of assessment. This chapter explores this issue using Winnicott’s concept of ‘potential space’.

Potential space

Between the inner psychic reality of an individual and the external world of shared life Winnicott postulates there is an area which he terms ‘potential space’ (1971; 1986). This is a ‘hypothetical area that exists (but cannot exist)’ (Winnicott, 1971, p. 144). External reality is shared between individuals; inner reality is secret and private to the individual and the potential space connects the two. The use of the term ‘potential’ is significant – this space is neither predetermined nor fixed, it is ‘potential’ and is something which can, in Winnicott’s thinking, vary in capacity between ‘maximal’ and ‘minimal’ (1971, p. 144). Applying these concepts to pupils’ experiences of AfL, minimal potential space could be said to relate to a feeling of being constrained, of being ‘boxed in’, whereas maximal potential space could allow for a breadth of creativity, a feeling of ‘enlargement’. Much will depend on the relationships established between pupils and teachers.

Three aspects of Winnicott's theories about potential space have particular implications for the consideration of the experience of schooling: the space continues to be created throughout life (Winnicott, 1971); it is variable between individuals; and it is the place where symbols (such as writing and number systems) are used to pass on cultural experience. The 'area available for manoeuvre' (*ibid* p. 144) in this potential space is variable between individuals and is determined both by their early experiences in infancy and by the experiences they have had prior to their current interchange between inner psychic reality and the external world of shared objects: '*It depends for its existence on living experiences*' (*ibid* p. 146 emphasis in original).

Healthy development of the potential space results in the ability of the individual to form and use symbols, such as language and writing, thereby bringing 'meaning to the world of shared reality' (Davis and Wallbridge, 1991, p. 162). Enrichment takes place within the potential shared space, where enrichment is defined as both the passing on of cultural heritage and the opportunity for creative innovation, a central function of teaching (Winnicott, 1971). The opposite of enrichment, for Winnicott, is indoctrination, and this, too, can occur in school: 'It is an insult to indoctrinate people, even for their own good, unless they have the chance by being present to react, to express disapproval, and to contribute' (Winnicott, 1957, cited in Davis and Wallbridge, 1991, p. 66). Indoctrination occurs when interpretation is given 'outside the ripeness of the material' and the result is compliance (Winnicott, 1971, p. 68). What Winnicott calls the 'prostitution of education' occurs when 'the child's most sacred attribute: *doubts about self*' (1964, p. 204 emphasis in original) is overwhelmed and overruled by dominant teachers or a dictatorial system which attempts to force preconceived ideas and concepts into the minds of children so that they do not have to think for themselves.

One question that arises from this discussion is vitally important: *Is Assessment for Learning a source of enrichment or of indoctrination?* Whilst it is impossible to generalise one way or the other, part of the answer can be found by considering the realities of the space provided to pupils by their teachers and the capacity they have to respond creatively as well as to inherit the tradition. The onus upon teachers to establish an environment in their classrooms where opportunity is given for pupils to develop a creative potential space is considerable. The rest of this chapter is given over to a consideration of how this played out for the pupils in my investigation.

Teachers and learning

Winnicott argues that two key factors in the establishment of the potential space are the reliability of the teachers and the trust of the pupils in those teachers (1964). In order to show themselves reliable, teachers should be able to bear the frustrations and disappointments of teaching that will inevitably occur without becoming anxious or insecure (*ibid*): 'Being reliably present and consistently ourselves we provide a stability that is not rigid, but alive and human' (1965, p. 44). And mostly this is exactly what the pupils in my study indicated was happening. What they felt about their teachers and how they perceived their personal relationship with them permeated every aspect of their conversations about school, including AfL, and those relationships seemed largely to have allowed for the creation of a healthy potential space and the development of True Selves.

Teachers were generally seen as reliable, even though the pupils did not use that term:

Linda: The teachers aren't strict... and I like the head teacher, he's nice.

Harriet: I like school because you can really bond with the teachers. They're kind and not stern.

Harriet's comment that 'you can really bond with the teachers' may be especially poignant in that, later in the interview, she forcefully stated that a teacher she had previously encountered was 'terrible' and 'should be sacked'. As has already been noted, Harriet was prone to making sweeping statements and expressing herself in hyperbolic fashion, however, her comments here I believe reveal something quite profound and significant which may have been shared by many pupils if not expressed in quite such colourful language. Whoever the current teachers were shaped to a very large extent pupils' experiences of learning, but this experience was also coloured by previous experiences. If the contrast between the current and past teachers was positive, then that learning experience was likely to be enhanced. Harriet felt she could 'bond' with her current teachers in a way she had not previously been able to do. The different teachers may well have been employing similar teaching and assessment strategies, but the experiences of the pupils at the receiving end of those strategies were markedly different because of their contrasting relationships with the teachers. Whilst Harriet did not use this terminology, it could, I believe, be argued that the teachers she felt she could 'bond' with had proved themselves reliable to her and she therefore trusted them (Winnicott, 1965, 1971), previous ones had not and a relationship of distance if not actual distrust had developed.

Through their comments about what they liked in lessons, how they valued talking with teachers about their work and how they commented on their teachers in general, the pupils conveyed a sense that they felt listened to by most of their teachers, that the teachers took an interest, not only in them as learners who were to be taught 'knowledge', but as people, as individuals in their own right, something which Marshall and Wiliam (2006) highlight as being crucial in establishing healthy pupil-teacher relationships: 'There is no substitute for the teacher actually being interested in what the pupils have to say' (p. 5). Even Claire, who, as has been noted, expressed a good deal of ambivalence about her work and learning, commented how she appreciated the fact that 'the teacher knows the pupils'. The crucial importance to the pupils of their relationships with teachers reinforces Cowie's (2005b) finding that 'routine interaction with... teachers' was central to the lives of pupils.

Reliability in the teachers was seen in their ability to promote learning, central to which was not any assessment strategy, but listening to the teachers and responding to what they said:

Dawn: You always listen. You're always focused on the teacher.

Frances: If you listen then it's not difficult. If you listen hard, ask questions, it's not that difficult.

Not surprisingly given the centrality to the teachers in the lives of the pupils, teachers were also sometimes seen to be inhibiting learning through the way they occasionally responded to pupils in the class and through the way they taught. For some pupils, either the pace of the lesson was too slow or the subject being taught was going on for too long:

Ian: I think if we get bored the class should have a vote on whether we should change the subject.

For others it was having to listen to the teacher talk for a long time:

Kate: A bad lesson is when the teacher sits you down for half an hour and explains things.

Claire: Sometimes teachers don't explain it well.

Where pupils were quite able in a subject, learning could be frustrated by the teacher taking time explaining to other pupils what they felt they already knew:

Nikita: When she's explaining to other people that don't know spellings that gets a bit boring because I know what it is and I just get bored with listening to her telling other people.

Ian: It slows your learning down.

Overall, though, and despite the acknowledgement of areas of difficulty in their dealings with teachers, for these pupils, their teachers were there not merely as producers of information or as facilitators of learning – they were in the class in order to forge relationships with pupils as persons. When Linda spoke of the 'pride' the teacher had in her and her work (see below), this was, I believe, evidencing those elements of trust and respect such that, when the teacher *did* point out errors or room for improvement, she was able to actively engage with this feedback, make use of it and, in her own words, 'move her learning on'. This relative intimacy with teachers went a long way to ensuring that the pupils were well disposed to respond positively to assessment.

Teachers and Assessment for Learning

Lesson aims and Remember To's

Alongside commenting on how lesson aims and Remember To's affected their learning and impacted on them psychologically (as discussed in Chapters Five and Six), pupils tended to place a good deal of significance on the role of the teacher when talking about these aspects of AfL, indicating a lack of 'letting go' by the teachers. Their understanding of the purpose of any particular lesson seemed to be gained not so much from the actual learning aim which was written down but by what the teachers told them.

Harriet: I find it strange that lesson aims are given because we have teachers to do that.

As a commentary on this observation, if one essential facet of 'guild knowledge' is the extent to which pupils come to 'hold a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher' (Sadler, 1989, p. 121), listening to and learning directly from the teacher was significant. In all likelihood, pupils probably understood and used lesson aims and Remember To's more in terms of creative engagement than external compliance, but if this was the case it was a creativity borne out of interactions with teachers rather than through the following of an AfL strategy.

A number of pupils related to lesson aims from the point of view of the teachers and the use they made of this aspect of AfL, such as helping the teachers when they came to mark their work:

Joan: So that the teacher can highlight it in colour to see if you've done it or not.

Frances: If your aim was 'To be able to write a recount', Mr Severn, or whoever your teacher was, would be able to see whether you could write a recount.

Given this emphasis on the role of the teacher for these pupils' experiences of AfL, teacher awareness – their level of 'assessment literacy' (Mertler, 2009) – needs to be taken into account, even though this was not the major focus of my study. One example of the 'assessment literacy' of the teachers of the pupils in my study related to the possible danger of criteria compliance in how pupils used Remember To's, as discussed in Chapter Five. This was very much in the minds of the teachers, as indicated by Julia Esk. Their teaching and interaction with the pupils, particularly through individual or group conversation, was likely to be shaped by this awareness, thereby alleviating if not entirely removing the danger:

Julia

I think if it is 'In our school we're going to do lessons this way, and that's what we want to see for 90 per cent of our lessons', then you run the risk of it just becoming a list of ticks, and the children tick things and they're not doing the thinking behind it. You're spoon-feeding them assessment. I want them to think more carefully about 'Is it appropriate?' and then have a conversation with that child. I think you have to have a lot more risk-taking to say, 'These are the skills we want. And we're going to see where the children want to take this learning.' I think that's scary, but brilliant.

Feedback

Teacher reliability was experienced through marking which conveyed more than whether the work was right or wrong, sufficient or insufficient. Through it pupils received messages from the teacher which had a profound effect not only on their work, but on how they regarded themselves as learners, as persons in relationship with the teacher. Affirmation from teachers seemed to be important to all pupils who spoke about it:

Linda: I know that she's *proud* of me (emphasising the word 'proud').

Harriet: Teachers give you lots of praise.

It mattered to the pupils what their teachers thought about them. It was important for the pupils to know what their teachers *felt* about their work and, perhaps more importantly, how they felt about them as individuals – something the pupils often seemed to see as being expressed in the awarding (or not awarding) of the 'reward' of Achievement Points (discussed below). It was also evidenced by what pupils said about how the teachers made use of AfL strategies alongside how they, the pupils, made use of them. The pupils were able to identify how both they and their teachers made use of the same lesson aims, Remember To's and self-assessment 'traffic lighting'. Often this was in a complementary way, but occasionally in a potentially contradictory or at least incompatible way. There was no indication here that teachers were either seeking to 'let go' nor that pupils actually wanted them to. Teacher reliability was something providing security to the pupils.

Aspects of Winnicott's (1971) thinking about how individuals gain a sense of their own identity through what they see reflected back to them has relevance when considering relational aspects of Assessment for Learning. He states that, in healthy development, the infant finds itself reflected back firstly in the face of the mother and then from the family as a whole. For him, when an individual has received such consistent reflecting back of themselves from mother and family, as they reach older childhood they are not so dependent upon 'getting the self back... from the face of others' (1971, p. 158). This has importance when studying the impact of assessment on children who are 9 or 10 years old. Pupils of that age will have had a sense of 'self' formed before they came to school so that, within the classroom, if what has previously been reflected back to them has facilitated the development of their True Selves, they, perhaps, are not as dependent upon teacher reflection as they might have been. Nevertheless, what the teacher reflects back has significance for any pupil, and teacher reflection is most clearly experienced via feedback.

Routinely for the pupils in my study the assessments they received in terms of spoken and written feedback from their teachers reflected back to them what their previous experience was already telling them – they were capable and secure learners. As Bibby (2011, p. 35) argues, 'We look for evidence that we are seen and that the way we are seen accords with the way we like to think we are seen'. For these pupils the assessments they received generally

seemed to do just that (as always, depending on the subject): their teachers had 'seen' them and the way they had been seen accorded with the way they saw themselves – as capable learners. Where this was the case their experience of teacher feedback likely contributed to the development and expansion of their True Selves rather than force the construction of a False Self. Using different terminology, a similar thought is developed by Sadler (1998) who argues that effective feedback should 'inspire confidence and hope', and this is exactly what was told me by the majority of the pupils. Much of the psychological responses from the pupils to feedback related to having their confidence (present experience based on past capabilities) boosted when they received green highlighting whilst hope (future expectations) was engendered through pink highlighting. Such 'confidence and hope' would seem to relate to a True rather than a False Self in that it integrates past, present and future resulting in apperception as well as perception (Winnicott, 1971; 1986).

Confidence and hope were indicated throughout the interviews where two key words were repeatedly used by the pupils when talking about the feedback through marking they experienced – 'good' and 'improve'. 'Good' could be described as the pupils' *emotional* response (marking affected how pupils felt and thought about themselves and their learning) whilst 'improve' could be described as their *behavioural* response (marking affected what they did in their future work). 'Good' related both to the marking that was in itself 'good' and also to the 'good' work to which that marking referred. 'Improve' related to marking which indicated errors, mistakes or omissions, in which case 'improvement' meant 'change that' or 'do not do that again'; and also to marking which indicated work that was good or 'right' and which therefore could be repeated in future work.

Pupils said they appreciated the marking given by teachers because it told them what they did well, that the work they had completed was 'right':

Frances: Highlighting is helpful because I know what I got right.

Bob: It's good 'cos you can see if you did it good and what's good about it.

Kate said that if she felt confused whilst doing a particular piece of work, the fact that the teacher highlighted it in green when she marked it 'sort of helps' because she was able:

Kate: To see that you done it right, even though you thought it was confusing.

Marking also confirmed to pupils that they had included all the Remember To's for that lesson:

Claire: The green highlighter means that you might have remembered your Remember To's and stuff like that.

Marking was perceived as helping pupils improve their work by confirming to pupils what could be repeated, because it was 'good':

Ian: The green stuff helps you for future if you're doing the same thing then you can use it.

Frances: Because it's good and I can carry on doing it like that or I can put this in another piece of writing.

The sense of trust and respect held between pupils and teachers was perhaps most evidenced by the response of pupils to the pink highlighting of their work, indicating errors or mistakes. Despite the few comments about how pink highlighting made them feel 'bad' (see below), most pupils expressed their ability to 'take' such correction and to see it in a positive light rather than feeling crushed by it or viewing it as the teachers unfairly picking on them – aspects which were indicated in my IFS (Hutchins, 2010):

Olivia: They highlight the part that was wrong so you could remember that thing; then you improve it on your next work.

Bob: It tells you what to do to make it better.

If, as the ARG (2002) state, 'feedback from the teacher should... help pupils identify how they can improve', then the coloured highlighting strategy employed in the school appeared to be working. The vast majority of the feedback comments discussed with pupils were understood by them; in Sadler's (1998) terminology, they were 'accessible' to the pupils. Improvement, however, did not happen unless the pupils themselves made use of the marking – in the terminology used in the school, they 'responded to marking'. However, *how* they responded to marking was crucial in determining its impact on their learning. For some their response was more akin to outward compliance, for others genuine creativity was developed.

Frances, as a possible instance of compliance, was clear that she tried to do this, but did not always succeed:

Frances: I often go and look back at those bits and I see what they're saying and next time I try and include it. I don't think I always do, but next time I do try.

Linda, on the other hand, was very explicit that to make progress in learning required a creative response from her to the feedback received from her teacher:

Linda: When Mrs Avon tells me what I need to do, and I do it, then I'm moving my writing on because I get her kind of like advice.

Pupils acknowledged that it was important to respond to marking and if they did not respond in this way:

Ian: There isn't any point in her marking it.

The key question, however, is '*what* needed to be improved?' Indeed, what did 'improvement' mean to these pupils? What was promoted by the marking – pupil creativity or pupil compliance? Swaffield (2008) asks whether feedback truly helps pupils focus their learning (in which case it is likely to foster creativity) or whether it is rather a 'ritualized procedure' (probably thereby encouraging compliance). These questions are important. The pupils in my study clearly viewed teacher marking as aiding their learning, but largely did so because, for them, it showed what was 'right' and what was 'wrong' rather than what a 'good' piece of work looked like, seemingly promoting compliance rather than developing creative 'guild knowledge'. Using feedback to change what they wrote in future work was often experienced in terms of correcting spellings or punctuation, the more technical aspects of writing. Corrections to spelling mistakes were required to be written out three times by the pupils, regardless of the reasons those mistakes were made – surely a 'ritualized' rather than a 'learning' procedure (*cf* Marshall and Wiliam, 2006). For most pupils, improvement meant doing something different in order to move up the national curriculum levels. At no time did a pupil say that 'improvement' had to do with being able to write better poetry, or more concise newspaper articles or understanding more about place value, as might be expected if they were truly developing 'guild knowledge'. If the 'ultimate goal' of formative assessment is pupils being able to monitor their own progress (Brookhart, 2001) and to regulate their own learning, 'during the act of production itself' (Sadler, 1989, p. 121), then this 'ultimate goal' seemed to continue to remain elusive for the pupils in my study.

Alongside questions relating to the theory of feedback, the practice of feedback was also sometimes suspect. On occasions I found what Moni *et al* (2002) found, that pupils misunderstood what was being fed back to them from the teacher and that different pupils interpreted teacher feedback in different ways. What the teacher intended by the feedback was not necessarily what was understood and acted upon by the pupil. Sometimes pupils were unaware of why something had been highlighted:

Harriet: I'm not sure why that's highlighted. Don't know.

Teachers highlighted aspects of the pupils' work for a reason, but that reason may not have been the one understood by the pupils. When commenting on some pink highlighting, Harriet, for example, said:

Harriet: It tells me I need to re-read it at the end to sort of make sure I've got everything correct.

For Harriet in this instance, the pink highlighting had conveyed nothing specific to her about her work. Joan expressed similar confusion over the meaning of marking when discussing the highlighting she had received on a particular piece of writing. One sentence had been highlighted in green with the comment '*super effective short sentence*'. Her next sentence read '*I still can't get to sleep after what happened today*', but that was *not* highlighted in green. When asked why she thought this was, Joan replied,

Joan: Probably not as effective as the shorter sentence. I don't know.

The implication for Joan, then, of highlighting only one sentence out of a number of equally 'effective' sentences was that, in her mind, the other sentences were not as good – which was probably not what the teacher intended at all. Michael, similarly, could not say why one piece of writing was highlighted in green whilst others, of a similar standard, were not highlighted. For both Joan and Michael, therefore, even the green highlighting led to confusion about their learning, or at best did not inform their learning.

Some of the pupils in my study mirrored the experiences of the students investigated by Smith and Gorard (2005) who said that they 'felt that the comments did not provide them with sufficient information so that they would know how to improve' (pp. 32-33), for example being told to 'improve' their work presented difficulties for Alan and Frances:

Alan: He says 'Read your work and improve it' and I just find that really hard.

Frances: I think that's mad because he says to make it the best as you can, and then he goes and says, 'Try and improve your work'. If he says, 'Do the best you can' and we're doing the best we can, how can you improve it?

This thought was mirrored by Julia Esk commenting on how some pupils responded to her marking: 'When you've written them a question, you sort of see them going, "Well I dunno. I didn't know in the first place, and I don't know now"'. Kate was very explicit when reflecting on highlighting and marking she did not understand:

Kate: I don't really understand it because she didn't put why that's pink and why that's yellow and didn't tell me what I had to do to make it change. It wasn't clear.

Practical problems with marking mitigated against the usefulness of the feedback. Pupils' concerns reflected some of the concerns discovered by Black *et al*, 2003. Several pupils commented that their teacher's handwriting was too poor for them to read whilst others objected to how the marking interfered with the flow of their work:

Harriet: Do you know what's really annoying? When I'm writing a story she'll write comments and then you'll have to go on to the next page. You want to join on a paragraph, but she writes so you can't carry on.

There were also times when the marking could be read by pupils, but was not able to be understood by them:

Grace: She just gave me an example of what I could do; but I don't really get it.

Similarly, Olivia had read the teacher's comment '*Make sure sentences that follow aren't a repeat of a prior one*', but she did not understand what the word 'prior' meant. Teachers, however, were very aware of this and often asked pupils to speak with them if they could not read or did not understand what they had written on their books. It was not clear to what extent pupils took them up on this offer. Certainly none of the pupils being interviewed raised this as something they had taken advantage of.

Pupils also experienced confusion over marking when part of a piece of work was highlighted in pink but they were unable to see what was wrong with it. In one instance, Olivia had written a poem in which she included the line, *'only in the night you can see'*. This had been highlighted in pink by her teacher, with the comment *'Improve the sentence, it needs to read better.'* Olivia expressed her confusion regarding this marking, being unable to say why it had been highlighted. She had read the teacher's comment but did not know what to do in response because she felt that her original line sounded better than any change she could make. Difficulties also occurred when the marking was itself incorrect. Ian and Joan represented this aspect of confusion when discussing some of their work in maths. In both their books a piece of work had been highlighted in pink indicating a mistake; however the work was actually correct. Neither of them could say what was wrong with their work (because there was nothing wrong to identify), but, perhaps as an indication of the power disequilibrium in school between teachers and pupils, neither could bring themselves to say or perhaps even recognise that the teacher was the one who had made a mistake.

Over time, marking showed pupils where they were making improvements, but it also may inadvertently have limited the development of learner autonomy by increasing pupil dependence upon teachers, leaving it to the teachers to judge whether a piece of work was good enough or not:

Bob: If you didn't have any marking you wouldn't know if you're getting better.

Grace: I don't really know if I've done anything right, not until Mrs Tees checks it.

From a psychological perspective, providing that most of the teachers' highlighting was green rather than pink, marking was seen to be good by pupils because it boosted their confidence in learning, making them feel good about themselves and their work:

Ian: Pleased that I got it right.

Joan: When I've used some effective words and sentences then it makes me feel a lot better; that I know that they were good things that I wrote down.

However, there were difficulties for some pupils related to the negative emotional impact of pink highlighting:

Kate: Pinks kind of let you down, like you think you've done really well and then you go 'This is wrong, this is wrong, that's wrong' (gesticulating wildly).

Nikita: When you see the pink you sort of get a bit, you know if you have a lot you get quite annoyed.

These sorts of response to receiving pink highlighting would seem to indicate that negative feedback does exactly what Morrison (2002) argues, that 'negative feedback is regulatory' which 'brings diminishing returns' (p. 17). However, these comments were very much in the minority, and even for those pupils who voiced them, the positive aspects of pink highlighting were also emphasised.

There could, however, be some sort of circular argument here. Cowie (2005b) found that 'pupil perceptions of self as learner, about learning itself and pupil commitment to a particular idea, influence what feedback is attended to' (p. 139). So the pupils' response to feedback in my study may not be so much a source of confidence and hope, but an indication that they already possessed that confidence and hope – and the feedback merely reinforced this. This would certainly be what the majority of the teachers intended. Diane Avon's statement about how she saw her role as a teacher was typical of the teachers interviewed, evidencing her level of 'assessment literacy':

I see it as a partnership with the children. I see it as a supportive role in the sense that you're not always giving answers or giving knowledge, but you're helping them to develop ways to find those things within themselves. [To] try and make the time that they are in school with me a positive experience where they are valued.

Julia Esk was even more explicit about the role of her feedback strategies:

I like what we're doing at the moment with the green and the pink sort of thing. The children seem quite clear about that; they understand that. So I like the principle of it 'cos I think it's exactly that idea of getting them involved and thinking about what they need to do next.

These comments from Diane and Julia, taken alongside the responses of the pupils, would seem to indicate that, in Winnicott's terms, what was being reflected back to the children was not anxiety or pressures experienced by their teachers, but a genuine reflection of themselves

– of their capabilities, their progress and their areas for improvement. The ‘judgement’ of feedback spoke to them that their teachers both noticed and approved of them (Winnicott, 1971). Perhaps this was one reason why their responses were so largely positive in the subjects they thought they were good at and liked, even if their work had been highlighted in pink as well as green.

Alongside written comments, teachers also feedback to the pupils via a system of rewards (Achievement Points – APs). The place of external rewards in promoting learning is controversial (Harlen, 2006), and it is certainly not clear what part these rewards play in promoting either a True or False Self. The pupils in the research reflected something of this controversy. Whilst some pupils did not set any store by them:

Bob: I don’t really mind about them;

most viewed receiving Achievement Points as an integral and positive aspect of marking:

Kate: Marking is good because you get APs.

Eric: We get APs. They help ‘cos they’re a reward.

Ian: Achievement Points are trying to motivate you to work harder. They reward us with Achievement Points so we know, like say if we got more Achievement Points it would have been a better piece of writing.

For some it seemed that the receiving of the external ‘reward’ of Achievement Points was met by a positive internal psychological response.

Claire: APs make you feel more confident with things.

Frances: It makes me feel good. Achievement Points do also make me work a little bit harder.

Receiving Achievement Points indicated to pupils that they had worked well and that their teacher was pleased with them:

Linda: It’s kind of like a bit of an award, she gives me Achievement Points then she kind of tells me that I’ve done something good and she gave me like a mini award;

whilst not receiving Achievement Points could have the opposite effect:

Olivia: Sometimes I don't get any so I know I haven't done that well.

It could be argued that where the receiving of Achievement Points had been internalised by pupils, this was an indication of the pupil's creative True Self, whereas if they were only seen as a medium of external control this could relate to the compliant False Self.

Although relatively few pupils gave an opinion about talking with the teacher about their work, those that did appreciated this opportunity for consultation. There was general confidence that teachers discussing their work with pupils individually would enhance their learning:

Nikita: That's a bit better than the marking because they can explain it a bit further.

Dawn: Teacher talk is good because they explain what you have to do. The teachers know more so they can help you.

Linda: Teachers give us their opinions and they say, 'I think you should put more adjectives and you can do different sentences' and that can help you with your work so you get a higher level.

But the practicalities of *how* teacher talk was done were very important. Teachers who respected pupils' privacy were valued:

Nikita: It's better for you to speak to them in private so they can talk through it face-to-face. They kind of kneel down and whisper to you, facing away from the other people.

Claire: If you did something wrong he'd bend down and talk to you so no-one except the person next to you and so only he can hear.

However, pupils experienced difficulty if it took place in what they perceived to be a public arena. This included talking to pupils so loudly that other pupils could hear the conversation:

Alan: I don't like it when [the teacher] shouts your name out and then says what you done wrong in front of the whole class.

Conversations held between teachers and pupils were valued by the teachers as well as the pupils, as evidenced by Diane Avon:

What's really important to me is that they feed things back to me all the time, because I can't possibly, as one person, know where in that learning process, or that understanding process, thirty children are... Even at the end of a lesson when I look in books, I cannot possibly know without them telling me something... In an ideal world you would do this all the time, every single day and you would pink and green every single day as a physical feature of 'Assessment for Learning'. But there isn't the time in the day. But that thought process and that talk is going on all the time because I can do that all the time... as long as it's rich talking.

The greater benefit to pupils of talking through their work with teachers reinforced the point that formative assessment is a social activity, strongly influenced by teacher-pupil relationships, and that marking is only one aspect of the feedback received by pupils. The context in which feedback is given is crucial to an understanding of its effectiveness (Shute, 2008) and, for these pupils, the most significant context remained their relationship with their teachers. The pink or green highlighting and the written comments were not made by an anonymous 'marker' with whom they had no contact or who knew nothing about them. The feedback was being given and received in the context of the social and academic relationships being forged on a daily and even hourly basis. These 'assessment events' (Black and Wiliam, 1998a) were part, but only part, of what made up the entire 'classroom assessment environment' (Brookhart, 2001; Brookhart and Bronowicz, 2003), which, for these pupils was almost entirely positive. They made use of the feedback given to them – but they also made use of every other aspect of the life of the classroom.

Self-assessment

If marking carried a message from the teacher to the pupils, then self-assessment was seen as conveying messages from the pupils to the teachers. The teacher could see where they had struggled and what they found straightforward:

Joan: It helps Mrs Avon know that I was comfortable with doing that work.

Linda: I like doing them in maths because if I didn't understand at the beginning and I only did the traffic light next the aim and Mrs Avon didn't know I didn't understand it at the beginning, then it's quite good to do it there.

The pupils 'traffic-lighting' their work particularly, in their view, aided teacher marking:

Harriet: Mrs Tees usually looks at what we've done for our self-assessment and she usually just checks how you've been doing on that particular thing.

It was also seen to inform their planning:

Ian: Traffic lighting lets the teacher know whether she needs to revisit it, how long before she revisits it by looking at everyone's traffic lights.

Frances: The 'B' and 'E' [as exemplified in Chapter Four Figure 5] – that's for Mrs Avon, so she knows, I think, so she knows what to plan for the next lesson and where some others might be.

However, the centrality of the teacher was evidenced even in this sphere of self-assessment. Often pupils saw self-assessment as being teacher-initiated rather than an integral part of their own learning process. Despite engaging in self-assessment activities, pupils continued to be dependent upon the teacher to be secure in recognising what a 'good' piece of work was, not always being able to decide which colour to 'traffic light' a lesson aim.

Some of the caution expressed by pupils related not to the principle but to the practice of self-assessment such as teachers taking different approaches to it or seeing it as only happening on specific occasions:

Ian: We don't do it in literacy; might just be the different teachers do it differently. We're doing that on Thursday.

Eric: We do it when the teacher tells us to do it.

Others felt that it did not happen very often:

Kate: We don't actually really do that a lot. We only do it like a couple of times. It's usually the teacher that does it.

It is stating the obvious to say that there are, and always will be, varying degrees of interdependence in the classroom between pupils and teachers, which could well be different for the same pupil with different teachers or in different subjects. Winnicott's (1965; 1971; 1986) concepts of a True or False Self, compliance versus creativity and potential space all come together in this consideration – the capacity of children to stay 'true' to themselves whilst also identifying with wider groups, including school. This chapter and the previous two have sought to show that, for the pupils participating in my research investigation, they largely came to school 'for something to be added to their lives' (Winnicott, 1964, p. 207). Amongst other things, what was added to their lives was an engagement with Assessment for Learning with the concomitant development of their ability to learn for themselves, to become increasingly autonomous, intentional learners which largely took place through their capacity to identify with the values and systems of the school (Willis, 2011). As one pupil graphically put it:

Olivia: I fit in.

This 'fitting in', I would argue, indicated more a fitting in on the basis of creative, True Selves rather than one of external, reluctant compliance resulting in a feeling of meaninglessness and disengagement, the False Self (Winnicott, 1971 – as discussed in more detail in Chapter Five). The pupils mostly *did* identify with the values and culture of the classes and genuinely felt they belonged to them, albeit to differing degrees. They were all active participants in them. None were disengaged learners as some of the higher achieving pupils had been in my IFS (Hutchins, 2010). However, there remains the question as to what extent this engagement, if not one of compliance, was one of performance rather than genuine creativity and whether, at least for some of these pupils, their spheres of creativity were actually to be found beyond the realm of class and school, as has already been discussed in this report.

The final chapter pulls together the strands of this report, with particular emphasis on the themes of the central role played by teachers in AfL, the possible routinization of AfL in the school, the educational context within which AfL was functioning, the selective use of AfL

strategies made by pupils and what the pupils themselves brought to the AfL process in terms of their age, maturity and experience. After possible implications for my school of my study are outlined, a final section relates to my personal reflections on the research study.

Chapter Eight **Concluding thoughts**

As has been stated before in this report, along with Walker (1993) I see myself as ‘a collector of definitions, not the conductor of truth’ (p. 190). This final chapter is therefore based on the definitions I have collected from pupils over the course of one year regarding their experiences of Assessment for Learning. The report is not a ‘conductor of truth’, but rather a presentation of interpretations, of insights and of ‘probabilities’ which, I believe ‘on balance’ (Black and Wiliam, 2003) point in certain directions more than others. In this chapter I outline general conclusions, state what I consider to be original about the research and what contribution I believe it has made to knowledge of AfL in schools. I complete the report by considering possible implications of my study for the school and by reflecting on the whole process and experience from a personal perspective.

The ‘Creation Myth’ of AfL (Wiliam, 2009) in Coastal School

I set out to reappraise the practice of AfL as experienced by a group of pupils in my school through investigating possible pitfalls and opportunities presented by the routinization of AfL; and the first conclusion is that Assessment for Learning strategies, as described by Wiliam (2009), did actually take place as part of the routine of school. Lesson aims were established, success criteria were set out, feedback was given to pupils, pupils did assess their own work and to some extent, that of their peers, in line with the success criteria. The mechanics of the strategy were in place and to that extent AfL was part of the everyday routine of the pupils’ classroom experience. In terms of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) alluded to in Chapter One, my research confirmed that ‘developments in AfL strategies – pink and green highlighters used by staff – scaffolding, dialogue, peer/self-assessing to move learning forward’ did take place. From what the pupils said, again referring to the SIP, ‘AfL marking [did] enable... children to move on in their learning’ and ‘effective use of children’s self-assessment’ was being developed; and it was against this backdrop, extended across the school, that the head teacher’s Self Evaluation Form, again quoted in Chapter One, stated ‘Assessment for learning is at least “good” and often better across the school’. The recent Ofsted inspection (February 2013) agreed with this judgement. So, in the school’s official documentation, AfL was making a significant contribution to pupils’ learning, as it had in 2002.

A second overall conclusion is that AfL, or at least significant aspects of it, being ‘good’ was something endorsed by all the pupils in the study in one way or another. Pupils valued certain opportunities created by teachers for what Winnicott (1971) would call ‘cultural enrichment’. They particularly valued opportunities for self-assessment, being given opportunity to

comment on teachers' marking, having their knowledge and expertise confirmed by the teacher, receiving clear feedback which enabled them both to make sense of their learning and to make appropriate changes, having their thinking focused on the structure of the lesson by Remember To's and engaging in personal discussion with teachers about their work and understanding. Viewed in this light, these pupils were largely experiencing AfL in a creative way as their 'True Selves' where there was a congruence between their inner psyches and the external realities of the classroom (Winnicott, 1971). However, by comparing the practice of AfL as experienced by the pupils with the theoretical underpinnings of AfL and with other pieces of research, this sense of 'goodness' is called into question.

As one would expect, the learning culture of the classroom was still in the process of being created – pupils were growing in their ability to engage with aspects of AfL which are intended to promote learner autonomy, such as self-assessment, but they inevitably had a long way to go. There remained contradictions within the purposes and practices of AfL in the school. Pupils were central participants in the classroom community of practice (Willis, 2011) and understood and used AfL strategies effectively but only within certain parameters. They collaborated with teachers in their learning, but not on an equal footing. AfL remained essentially a mechanistic tool applied to enable pupils to progress through the hoops of centrally laid out criteria in order to achieve higher and higher national curriculum sublevels and levels, thereby almost inevitably promoting the 'letter' rather than the 'spirit' end of the AfL continuum (Marshall and Drummond, 2006). From a theoretical perspective, it would appear that the AfL experienced by the pupils largely reflected a behaviourist rather than a socio-constructivist basis, as evidenced by pupil compliance with writing out lesson aims, but not usually interacting with them; by the routine of ticking off Remember To's in a checklist style seemingly promoting Torrance's (2007) 'assessment as learning' rather than 'for learning'; and by responding to teacher feedback in a procedural way without great opportunity for discussion or thought.

One essential element to be seen from the research is the central role the teachers played in every aspect of learning for the pupils, including their experiences of AfL. The 'locus of control' (Tunstall, 2003) remained the teacher, making the classrooms more towards the 'transparent' end of the assessment spectrum than the 'interactive' (Blanchard, 2009). This is hardly surprising given the structure of the English education system, but it raises questions regarding the experience of AfL, particularly with regard learner autonomy. Each of the teachers remained central to pupils' learning and to their experience of AfL, as evidenced, for example,

by Harriet's and Ian's comments that they learnt about the purpose of the lesson from what the teacher taught them rather than from thinking about the lesson aim that they had been asked to write down. The teachers set the lesson aims. For the vast majority of lessons the teachers set the Remember To's. They marked the pupils' work and fed back to them their thoughts which carried great weight. They mostly set the pupils' individual targets. They planned what was to be taught as a result of their assessments, they organised the resources and they delivered the teaching. They dictated when self and peer assessment was to take place. They gave time (or didn't) for the pupils to respond to marking. They set the pace of the lesson. In terms of the definition of AfL quoted in the literature review (ARG, 2002), there was limited collaboration evidenced between pupils and teachers regarding using and interpreting evidence of learning, deciding where learners were in their learning, where they needed to go and how best to get there. The underpinning theoretical perspective that AfL should be a joint exercise between pupil and teacher, with both taking responsibility for the process did not appear to be happening. Whilst the pupils may not entirely have been passive receivers of teacher input – the 'pawns' of Tunstall's (2003) argument – what they did and what they learned was almost totally determined by their teachers. Assessment for Learning remained, largely, something done *to* pupils rather than *with* them.

Pupil discussions about friendship groups, relationships with teachers, how they were grouped within lessons and how they saw themselves in relation to other high achievers in the class, would indicate there were definite 'webs of significance' (Christensen and Prout, 2005) or 'networks' (Davis *et al*, 2008) being formed within these classrooms which impacted on learning. However, during lesson times these seemed to revolve around the teacher when the class 'network' tended towards being 'centralised' with only aspects of 'decentralisation' (*ibid*). But, even when the network was more decentralised, such as when peer assessment took place or genuine group work was experienced, the timing and manner of such activity was determined by the teacher. All pupils looked to their teachers for their learning, for instruction, to see how well (or not) they had done – whether their work was 'right' or 'wrong', 'acceptable' or 'not acceptable'. Despite the teachers' stated aims of developing learner independence, empowering pupils to be responsible for their own learning and giving them the skills to find information out for themselves, they remained the key factor above all else in the pupils' thinking about the learning process.

Teacher-centrality could be regarded as an example of deliberate 'complexity reduction' (Biesta, 2010) – something arguably essential for organisations and systems to work

effectively, especially schools in the context of the current education system's emphasis on standards and progress; but it was also an example of Blanchard's (2009) 'transparent' rather than 'interactive' classroom. I would argue that the pupils in my study seemed to have less opportunity for 'playing an active part in deciding some of these things [referring to AfL strategies] with the teacher, with assistants, with one another and for themselves' (*ibid* p. 21) than did the pupils in his study. This could be problematic as it was this aspect of AfL that seemed to engage the pupils in Blanchard's study the most.

Whatever the justification (or not) for teacher centrality, AfL had not been for these pupils either revolutionary or evolutionary (Kirton *et al*, 2007) but had rather become something more static and simply part of the way things were, the status quo of school. For them AfL was no Trojan horse changing the way they experienced school and learning. There had been no 'paradigm shift' from summative to formative assessment (Black and Wiliam, 1998a; Harris, 2007); indeed, summative assessment, in the form of end-of-unit mini-summative assessments, remained a central aspect of the learning and assessment experiences of these pupils. Even when relationships and self-identity were positive and largely compatible with the aims and structures of formal schooling and, as such, conducive to learning as it is understood in the current educational climate, not every aspect of this educational strategy policy was responded to in equal measure. From what the pupils indicated, it cannot be stated with any confidence that AfL as a general overarching strategy improved learning, only that pupils made use of certain aspects of it in accordance with their relationships with those who were in control of those strategies, *i.e.* teachers, and with their own perspectives on themselves as learners, including which subjects they enjoyed and in which they felt confident. Their identities as learners, whilst being shaped over time by their experience of assessments they received, also shaped the assessments they experienced.

It would seem, therefore, that, whilst Assessment for Learning continues to be a 'good idea' rather than being assigned to a bygone era of educational practice and theory, it nevertheless is being 'taken for granted' in such a way that Carr and Kemmis' (1986) comment quoted at the head of Chapter One of this report remains valid – Coastal School at least is 'at the mercy' of this theory due to the unquestioning nature of its application. What must be borne in mind, though, are the limitations of my research. Most of what happened in the classroom was *not* investigated, including pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil conversations in class, classroom discussions and questioning, the content and structures of lessons and the influence of summative assessment. Much of what happened in class – elicited through my observations of

lessons and through interviews with teachers – in fact related much more to the concept of assessment as ‘sitting beside’ rather than ‘looking over the shoulder’ and thus was more in keeping with the principles of AfL (Swaffield, 2011), but this was not enlarged upon by the pupils in their interviews.

Originality of the thesis

Originality within this thesis is drawn from four elements:

- (i) by reporting on research undertaken in a context not usually investigated – that of junior school classrooms in England with the research being conducted by an ‘apprentice’ practitioner-researcher rather than a ‘master’ professional researcher from an external higher educational establishment;
- (ii) by considering Assessment for Learning at a stage distinct from most other studies – where AfL has become routine and normalised rather than being a radical initiative;
- (iii) by viewing the project through distinct theoretical lenses – that of particular psychoanalytic concepts; and
- (iv) by emphasising the perspectives of the pupils rather than the teachers or any other adults.

Contribution to knowledge

Essentially there are four elements in the findings of my research which, I would argue, make a valid contribution to knowledge:

1. The routinization or normalising of AfL which has taken place within the classroom has led to strategies becoming more complex in their application – certain aspects promote genuine learning whilst others have become ritualized and largely irrelevant to pupils’ cognitive development.
2. Whatever the desire of the teachers and the individual needs of the pupils, the educational context of the ‘standards’ agenda and measurement both of schools and of pupils by academic performance has constrained the ability of AfL strategies to be implemented fully in the classroom.
3. Pupils make selective use of the AfL strategies they encounter according to their cognitive abilities and understandings, their psychological dispositions and their intersubjective relationships with teachers and, to some extent, with their peers.

4. When considering the efficacy of AfL strategies, the age, maturity and experience of the pupils needs to be taken into account – there can be no ‘one-size-fits-all’ theory that predicts what will happen in practice if certain actions are taken regardless of the nature of pupils involved.

These four elements are developed in more detail in the following sections.

The routinization of AfL

The strategies of AfL have become normalised and routinized to such an extent that pupils take them for granted and view them as merely what happens in school. Developing Nikita’s graphic analogy of aspects of AfL being like ‘brushing your teeth in the morning – something you do’, the routinization of AfL carried with it opportunities but also presented dangers. The opportunities related to the fact that, by taking the strategies almost for granted, the pupils could focus their attention on what they were being asked to do in any one lesson. They did not need to agonise over which success criteria to follow or how to go about self-assessing. This was something they did every day, and had done in one way or another ever since they had begun to learn to read and write. When someone has learnt to brush their teeth and has accepted the fact that they have to do it, they can keep their teeth clean whilst also listening to the radio or planning the day ahead. They do not have to focus their thinking on it. In varying degrees, the pupils had attained to this level of routine with regards their learning – they could think about what they needed to write or to calculate without worrying about what the Remember To’s meant. In this sense, the routinization of AfL can be said to have resulted in ‘embedded’ practice.

The reverse of this, the danger of routinization, again like that of brushing teeth, was that of unthinking compliance which results in sloppiness and a lack of application. Just as brushing teeth can become a cursory exercise which fails in the key objective of removing plaque and preventing decay, so an unthinking application of AfL resulted in pupils often merely going through the motions of, for instance, checking their work against the Remember To’s without thinking about the wholeness of their work or responding to teacher’s pink highlighting and comments simply to respond to the teacher rather than genuinely reflecting on their work. When this occurred pupils’ experiences of AfL tended more towards being mechanistic and instrumentalist rather than imaginative or creative. In this situation, pupils appeared to be following AfL strategies in a routine, formulaic way resulting in ‘ritualized’ practice (Swaffield, 2011).

The educational context within which AfL was being implemented

Pryor and Crossouard's (2007, p. 9) comment that, 'neither as teachers nor as learners are we free to become who we want to be' is eminently applicable here. Although pupils demonstrated they generally understood the purpose of the various AfL strategies, they did so within the context of a learning climate dominated by 'standards', 'progress' and 'improvement' as measured by national curriculum levels in English and maths which permeated every aspect of their approach to school. The authenticity – in the sense of it being genuine rather than a misrepresentation (Swaffield, 2011) – of AfL as described by the pupils was questionable because of the use to which it was put – a use mirrored in pupils' understanding of what 'learning' and 'assessment' were. Both learning and assessment were seen almost exclusively in gaining knowledge so that each pupil could move up/ make progress through the national curriculum levels for English and maths. For them, AfL was seen as a 'teacher driven mechanism to advancing students up a prescribed ladder of subject attainment' (*ibid* p. 440). The AfL experiences of the pupils, although 'formative' in that it helped shape their learning as they were in the process of learning, was actually contextualised within a discourse of 'assessment as measurement'. Deciding 'where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there' (ARG, 2002) almost exclusively related to pupils knowing which national curriculum level they had achieved in English and maths, what they needed to do to get to the next level or sub-level, and what they needed to learn and do in order to achieve that level.

These pupils shared the goals and culture of the classroom, were central participants in the classroom community of practice and had developed a 'high degree of intersubjectivity with the teacher' (Willis, 2011, p. 406). However, I would argue that this classroom community of practice, despite the teachers' desires and personal beliefs, was almost inevitably geared towards ensuring pupils made as much progress through the national curriculum levels as they could. In this context the values, goals and culture of the classroom within which these pupils participated remained largely instrumentalist, geared around achieving measurable outcomes rather than focusing on developing genuine expertise where pupils developed as 'masters' of the guild. The community of practice the pupils were becoming central to was itself restricted and limited, almost inevitably and of necessity one in which the centrality of the teacher was paramount and all-pervasive.

Pupils' use of AfL

The pupils made selective use of AfL strategies, adapting them to suit their personal tastes and strengths. Their individual attributes of motivation and confidence in their own ability to learn and to make progress in their learning were crucial aspects of their experiences of AfL. How pupils perceive themselves as learners is an integral factor in this process. The high achieving pupils in my study largely experienced AfL positively and constructively not so much because of the nature of the strategies themselves, although this was clearly important, but because of their positive relationships with teachers and their established confidence in themselves as learners. Other pupils with different experiences either of teachers or of learning may view the same AfL strategies in a completely different light – as did some of the equally high achieving pupils participating in the research for my IFS (Hutchins, 2010).

Pupils made sense of AfL in the context of their interaction with specific subjects. They understood what they were for and used them in similar ways across the subjects, but with certain provisos. They found it easier in the sense of being able to see what to do and do it more straightforwardly in subjects in which they were more confident, but at the same time found aspects of AfL (lesson aims and Remember To's) more useful in subjects where they were less confident or found harder.

The age, experience and maturity of the pupils engaging with AfL

Although academics and educationalists recognise that it takes time for children (and adults) to develop the necessary skills for AfL to become effective, such as the ability to self-assess work, (Black *et al*, 2003; Dixon *et al*, 2011; Earl and Katz, 2008), I would contend that little attention has been paid in the literature to the age of the pupils under consideration. On the basis of Sadler's (1989, 1998) observations and arguments, I would argue that, almost by definition, junior school pupils are still 'novices', possibly 'apprentices', but certainly not 'masters' in terms of the acquisition of 'guild knowledge'. However good they are academically, they remain apprentices rather than full guild members. In Sadler's (1989) terminology, these pupils are being 'gradually exposed to the full set of criteria and the rules for learning them' and are working towards 'build[ing] up a body of evaluative knowledge' (p. 135); they are in the process of developing their capacity to 'monitor their own learning' (Dixon *et al*, 2011, p. 366), but they are not there yet.

Given the age and relatively limited experience of the pupils in my study I would argue that it is relevant to ask the question: 'To what extent can the full theory of AfL be applicable, or be

expected to be applicable, to 9-10 year olds, even those who are deemed to be the most 'able' in the class?' The aim of developing learner autonomy, for instance, is surely a school-long aim, one that is gradually built towards year on year. There must be a limit to learner autonomy for 9-10 year olds. Perhaps the primary phase of schooling is giving the pupils practice at self-assessment and we should not expect it to be fully developed – just like every other aspect of their learning, it is part of a process. Clearly the junior school classroom is different both from the nursery and infants school which precedes it and the secondary school framework of subject lessons, setting, different classes with different teachers which follows it. Relationships will be different at each stage of formal schooling because the nature and structure of those settings will be different. Just as they would not be expected to write a piece of literature at GCSE standard or complete an exercise in differential calculus, so there should not be an expectation that junior school pupils have already achieved expertise in any aspect of AfL. Such expertise takes time. This raises the question of how much studies of older students (in secondary schools, or, perhaps more importantly, in further or higher education) can be applied to children still in the primary phase of their formal education.

Extending Winnicott's 'fascinating themes'

Throughout the previous three chapters of data analysis and interpretation I have drawn on various themes developed and described by the English paediatrician and psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott. As noted in the body of the thesis text, I have found these themes to be 'fascinating' (Jacobs, 1995) and useful as a means for interpreting data; but they are not sufficient. This is not to say they are inadequate, merely that the dichotomies of creativity and compliance, True and False Selves and internal and external reality, as I have used them in the analysis of data, are too simplistic. They do not in themselves sufficiently account for the complexities of the classroom situation and pupils' responses to and experiences of AfL. Something more nuanced is called for – what Winnicott himself might call a consideration of 'paradoxes' (Clancier and Kalmanovitch, 1987).

In his own reflections on analyses conducted with young infants and children, Winnicott (1971) came to appreciate the value of paradoxes in describing what he observed. For one, he argued that, to be alone the infant paradoxically needed to be in the presence of someone else. Later on in a young child's life, a further paradox was experienced – that of the infant creating an object in its thinking. However, in order for that object to be imaginatively created, it had first to actually exist. According to Winnicott, such paradoxes have 'to be accepted, tolerated, and respected without forced attempts to solve [them]' (Abram, 2000, p. 88). As I reflect on the findings of my research and the application of themes from Winnicott to their interpretation,

two such 'paradoxes' emerge for me. The first paradox is one of pupils being able to be creative whilst at the same time complying with adult instruction in an attempt to meet externally imposed standards. A second paradox is that of pupils remaining true to themselves whilst also presenting a 'school persona' within the classroom.

To aid consideration of these paradoxes, I draw on the argument of André Green (Abram, 2000), who suggests that, rather than viewing Winnicott's themes as dichotomies, they should be seen as being more like a journey: 'The journey expresses the dynamic quality of the experience, implying a move in the space [between the two opposites of Winnicott's dichotomies] linked with time' (*ibid* p. 88). Here I enlarge on this thought by reflecting on possible 'journeys' that the pupils in my study, and, indeed, pupils in any school and any classroom, might have taken between compliance and creativity and between the False and the True Self.

As a model of pupil response to AfL, I use the metaphor of a journey by train and propose that there could be four 'stations' marking out stages in their travel from a compliant False Self to a creative True Self: pupils can be uncreatively compliant, compliantly creative, creatively compliant or be developing creative non-compliance. In the context of pupil experiences of AfL strategies the outworking of these four stages of the journey could be something like the following:

At the first station of *uncreative compliance* pupils experience a largely False Self where AfL strategies are experienced as external impingements (to use Winnicott's, 1965, terminology), mostly exterior to the inner reality of these pupils' current thinking and knowledge. There is here a marginal capacity to respond creatively or imaginatively, to make decisions for themselves, to choose which aspects of tasks to focus on and develop. The potential space experienced by pupils at this stage is minimal, there is a feeling of being constrained, of being 'boxed-in'. In Winnicott's (1971) terms – there is limited 'area for manoeuvre'. Responses to AfL strategies and the use of symbols such as letters and numbers are likely to be mechanistic, exemplified by a 'checklist' mentality. Criteria compliance is the norm.

The second station, that of *compliant creativity*, is indicated by the beginnings of an internalisation of some of the AfL strategies, such as learning aims, success criteria and an understanding of feedback from teachers. Here, rather than a False Self, what could be described as a Tolerant Self is beginning to be born. Pupils at this stage are tolerant of what is being taught them and shown via assessment and although they continue to comply with

specific AfL strategies largely as external impingements, they are beginning to make creative use of them.

Moving to the third station of *creative compliance*, a major development towards the creative True Self is taking place. In this instance a Performing Self is developing, where pupils are largely internalising learning objectives, success criteria and teacher feedback, and they are developing an increasing capacity to self-assess and also, on occasion, to engage in peer assessment. They are choosing to comply with AfL strategies as they increasingly understand and relate to their purpose. It is possibly in this stage where AfL strategies are most effective – where ‘guild knowledge’ (Sadler, 1989) is beginning to develop; where ‘criteria compliance’ is being replaced with ‘criteria engagement’.

The final station in the journey is termed *creative non-compliance*, not to express resistance to AfL strategies, but rather to indicate that pupils have so internalised aspects such as success criteria and teacher feedback that they no longer need to comply with them as external constraints. Instead they have the capacity to use them in an automatic, natural way. This part of the journey is marked by pupils experiencing maximal potential space, a sense of enlargement where they have the capacity to respond creatively and imaginatively to tasks and that response is a genuine expression of their True Selves. In this stage there is an enriched response to the use of symbols, but AfL strategies may be being largely ignored or bypassed because they are no longer needed.

As in all models of educational development, these ‘stations’ are somewhat artificial, an edifice to act as ‘markers’ along the way in pupils’ AfL ‘journeys’ and, in reality, movement between these stations for individual pupils is not one-way, completed once-for-all time. As noted in chapter six, Winnicott himself wrote of people in healthy development being able to move between dependence and independence (Winnicott, 1965), and something similar is the case here. As they are exposed to new unfamiliar concepts and modes of learning, each pupil, whatever station they have ‘arrived’ at, is likely to revert back to the first station. From here they begin their journey towards creativity anew. From this perspective, every station can be regarded as ‘healthy’ at given points of time, providing that movement is being made towards the next station until the final station of independent creativity is gained. It may, of course, be the case that, for a variety of reasons, particular pupils will not progress to the final station in every subject, but may get ‘stuck’ or even ‘derailed’ along the way; however, for the pupils in my study it seemed that, largely, their journeys were reasonably smooth.

Possible implications for school

This study confirms the overall finding of my IFS (Hutchins, 2010) and reinforces arguments and findings of educationalists and researchers such as Perrenoud (1998), Radford (2006) and Stobart (2008): the application of highly resourced pilot projects does not yield the same effects when rolled out into the 'normal' classroom. Because schools and classrooms are places which are fundamentally and essentially complex, no single factor, however well-theorised or applied, will bring about educational change. Teachers do not have the control over pupils' thinking and responses to act as bulldozers pushing through an academic 'vision', but are more in the position of 'the canoeist shooting the rapids continuously adapting in the face of unknown and unpredictable challenges and with sufficient information only to respond to the local and the immediate' (Radford, 2006, pp. 184-5). Because this is the case, 'teachers need to be aware of and think about what underlies the practice, and to check constantly for the actual (as opposed to the intended) effects of practices' (Swaffield, 2011, p. 438).

In terms of the implications of this study for Coastal School therefore, to further develop the school as a 'learning organisation' (Morrison, 2000) the staff as a whole (teachers and teaching assistants) could take time to reflect more deeply about the theoretical underpinnings, overall purpose and nature of the entire Assessment for Learning strategy – lesson aims and Remember To's, particularly with regard to their relationship with national curriculum levels; the use made of Remember To's by pupils; how Remember To's could be developed beyond a prescriptive list into a 'horizon of possibilities' or 'fuzzy outcomes', differentiating them into those that all pupils *must* adhere to, those that most pupils *should* relate to and those that other pupils *could* respond to (Blanchard, 2009; Stobart, 2008; Swaffield, 2011); how pupil errors could be investigated to ascertain the reasons for these errors so as to more effectively target feedback (Bennett, 2011); about peer assessment with the aim of more fully understanding its nature, its purpose, its current outworking and teaching pupils how to engage with it creatively, in line with their True Selves. On a practical level, when marking, teachers need to ensure that the pupils can read their handwriting and that they use terms the pupils can understand and relate to. Overall, the key message, I think, from this research is the need to make our classrooms more interactive rather than transparent (Blanchard, 2009) in order for AfL to be truly 'good'.

Personal reflections

This research study, taken alongside the IFS, has had a significant influence on my professional development on three levels. The first level concerns the deepening and extending of my

knowledge through background reading undertaken as preparation for the research, including much that has not had the opportunity to be included in the report. Primarily this relates to extensive reading on the theme of 'giftedness' as a result of which the imbalance in my role alluded to at the start of Chapter One has to a large extent been redressed. Becoming familiar with the arguments of academics and practitioners such as Freeman (1998, 2010), Gagné (2004, 2005), Renzulli (2005) and Sternberg (2005, 2009) has enabled me to provide advice and support to colleagues in identifying children who might be described as being 'more able' and in more effectively providing for their learning. Becoming more confident myself in this area has enabled me to participate effectively in a county-wide network of gifted and talented co-ordinators which seeks to improve practice for more able pupils, not least by sharing a summary of my findings for this thesis within that group. I have also disseminated my findings at one of the termly meetings held between the Inclusion Managers and Special Educational Needs Coordinators of our local cluster of schools with some of the initial findings being recently published in a book jointly written for Routledge under the chapter heading 'Motivating students through assessment' (Bentham and Hutchins, 2012). Most recently I have discussed the findings of my research with the gifted and talented co-ordinator at the secondary school where all the participating pupils will be going in September 2013.

The second level of personal impact is perhaps not so positive – or at least, presents me with more difficulty. To some extent the thesis, and indeed the whole of the EdD, has, perhaps inevitably, put a distance between me and the rest of the staff. Due to the knowledge and insights I have gained I find I now tend to view aspects of school and education in general differently to the majority of the staff. Coming to an understanding of much educational theory, developing an awareness of educational research and becoming familiar with educational academics' arguments has so shaped my view of what school could and should be that I often 'stand outside' of the day-to-day pressures and take a more overall, generalised look at events and situations, something not readily available to teachers who are enmeshed in the pressure to perform and prove their teaching is 'good' or 'outstanding'. I now have a vocabulary which allows me to express hopes and disappointments, expectations and frustrations in ways that previously were not available to me.

However, for me the third level of impact is the most important and, potentially the most significant. Researching with pupils directly has been remarkable. I have been constantly impressed by how pupils as young as nine can relate to me their understandings of learning and the impact on their lives of various strategies employed in the school. As my research

journal shows, the emotional impact on me of the various interviews has been somewhat of a roller coaster ranging from supreme excitement to abject despair. At the end of a day of interviewing I have been emotionally and physically drained – one consequence of which was that I learned not to undertake more than one group interview in a day. Relating to pupils in this way has been one of the most rewarding activities I have engaged in over twenty five years of teaching. As a result of talking with pupils directly I have become even more convinced of the value of ‘pupil voice’ than I was before embarking on this project, but I have also become intensely aware of how this term can be misused or misapplied. I am now even more persuaded that, in order to ascertain pupils’ views and perspectives, questionnaire surveys are at best limited if not downright misleading. If we as teachers really want to know what pupils think – we need to ask them directly and engage in dialogue with them.

Reflexive considerations

In an attempt not to be biased in favour of the teachers who I like, trust and respect and the school, which I value highly, perhaps I have been overly critical of practice and too empathetic towards AfL theory. I have deliberately focused on pupil perspectives almost to the total exclusion of my own observations and of the teachers’ views which were extremely insightful and thoughtful and would have presented different perspectives. My findings are open to alternative interpretations – if I was a class teacher investigating my own practice I suspect my interpretation of what the pupils said would be different. There is a nebulous quality to much of the data, which perhaps is inevitable given what Bibby (2009) calls the ‘intangible qualities’ of teaching, teachers and pupils.

If I was to conduct the study again, or to pursue a similar investigation in the future, I would use essentially the same methods and follow a similar methodology. I remain convinced of the value of interviewing pupils in the way I did, beginning in a general way and becoming more specific as time went on and seeking to develop a meaningful exchange through asking open-ended questions and allowing, so far as possible, the pupils to take the discussion in ways of their own choosing. I would probably not employ drawings as a mediating artefact and I would like to have spent more time observing the pupils in class and talking with them in that context, but I would certainly use the Blob pictures and the MALS statements as I consider them to have been useful participatory techniques which enabled the pupils to effectively discuss ‘abstract and complex issues’ (O’Kane, 2000).

Whether or not interviewing pupils in groups allowed for ‘thoughtful conversations’ (Frosh, 2006) to take place is a matter of uncertainty. Essentially similar conditions (room, seating

arrangements, day, introduction and questions) produced vastly different responses between the groups, which I can only put down to the constituency of the groups. Had the pupils been organised differently, say into single gender groups, I suspect different data, or at least different emphases of data, would have been generated. However, there was great value in interviewing pupils in different contexts (as groups, as pairs and as individuals) because, as Greene and Hill (2005) argue, several did present themselves differently in these varying contexts and a fuller picture was gained of their views and understanding. I also believe the research process as it was conducted was of benefit to the pupils as it gave opportunity for them to think about and express concepts and ideas which are not normally raised within school but which could have considerable bearing on their learning.

In terms of future research, the investigation that springs immediately to mind would be the usefulness of conducting a longitudinal study with this same group of pupils, following them through to the end of their educational careers to see how their experiences of Assessment for Learning developed. Only in this way could one come to a genuine understanding of how their learning was shaped by such strategies. However, given the fact that I am first and foremost a teacher and not an academic professional researcher (much as that has an appeal), such a study is not possible. So, at the conclusion of this investigation I have to walk away from it, agreeing with Walker (1986, p. 188): 'Like works of art, case studies are never finished, only left'.

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Appendix One Lessons observed and interviews conducted

Observations conducted

Date of observation	Class	Teacher	Lesson observed	Length of observation
7.6.11	4E	Julia Esk	Group activities preparing for display highlighting aspects of the town where the pupils lived	1 hour 25 minutes
16.6.11	Mixed	Daniel Trent	Top maths set (Y4)	1 hour
28.6.11	4E	Julia Esk	Literacy - part of 'sports-week' activities, pupils creating imaginary sports	1 hour 50 minutes
8.9.11	5A	Diane Avon	PSHE	1 hour 10 minutes
8.9.11	Mixed	Diane Avon	Top maths set (Y5)	55 minutes
13.9.11	5A	Diane Avon	P.E.	55 minutes
15.9.11	5S	Arthur Severn	English writing	1 hour
15.9.11	Mixed	Diane Avon	Top maths set (Y5)	55 minutes
22.9.11	5S	Arthur Severn	English writing	1 hour
23.9.11	5T	Fiona Tees	Responding to Marking, then English writing	1 hour
29.9.11	5A	Diane Avon	English writing	1 hour
6.10.11	5T	Fiona Tees	Peer assessment then English writing	45 minutes in two sections

Interviews with teachers

Date of interview	Teacher interviewed	Time taken
21.6.11	Daniel Trent (Y4 class teacher and top maths set)	59 minutes
4.7.11	Julia Esk (Y4 class teacher)	43 minutes
15.9.11	Diane Avon (Y5 class teacher and top maths set)	48 minutes
3.10.11	Arthur Severn (Y5 class teacher)	40 minutes
11.10.11	Fiona Tees (Y5 class teacher)	36 minutes

Interviews with pupils*Group interviews*

Date of interview	Class	Names of pupils	Focus of interview	Length of interview	Mediating artefacts
26.5.11	4E	Linda, Dawn, Eric and Bob. Joan was absent.	School in general	28 minutes	None
26.5.11	4T	Alan, Kate, Claire and Frances	School in general	22 minutes	None
24.6.11	4T	Alan, Kate and Claire. Frances was absent.	Good lessons/ Aids to learning	29 minutes	Drawing
20.7.11	4E	Linda, Dawn, Joan, Eric and Bob	Good lessons/ Aids to learning	26 minutes	Drawing
22.9.11	5T	Ian, Michael, Nikita, Harriet and Grace	School in general/ good lessons/ aids to learning	35 minutes	None
14.10.11	5S	Alan, Kate, Claire and Frances	AfL	29 minutes	None
18.10.11	5A	Eric, Joan, Olivia, Linda and Bob	AfL	26 minutes	None
18.10.11	5T	Ian, Michael, Nikita, Harriet and Grace	AfL	30 minutes	None

MALS and Blob interviews

Date of interview	Name(s) of pupil(s)	Length of interview
21.7.11	Linda and Dawn	42 minutes
15.9.11	Alan	25 minutes
15.9.11	Bob and Eric	25 minutes
16.9.11	Frances	30 minutes
22.9.11	Claire and Kate	32 minutes
6.10.11	Ian and Michael	30 minutes
11.10.11	Grace and Harriet	27 minutes
13.10.11	Olivia and Joan	28 minutes
13.10.11	Nikita	26 minutes

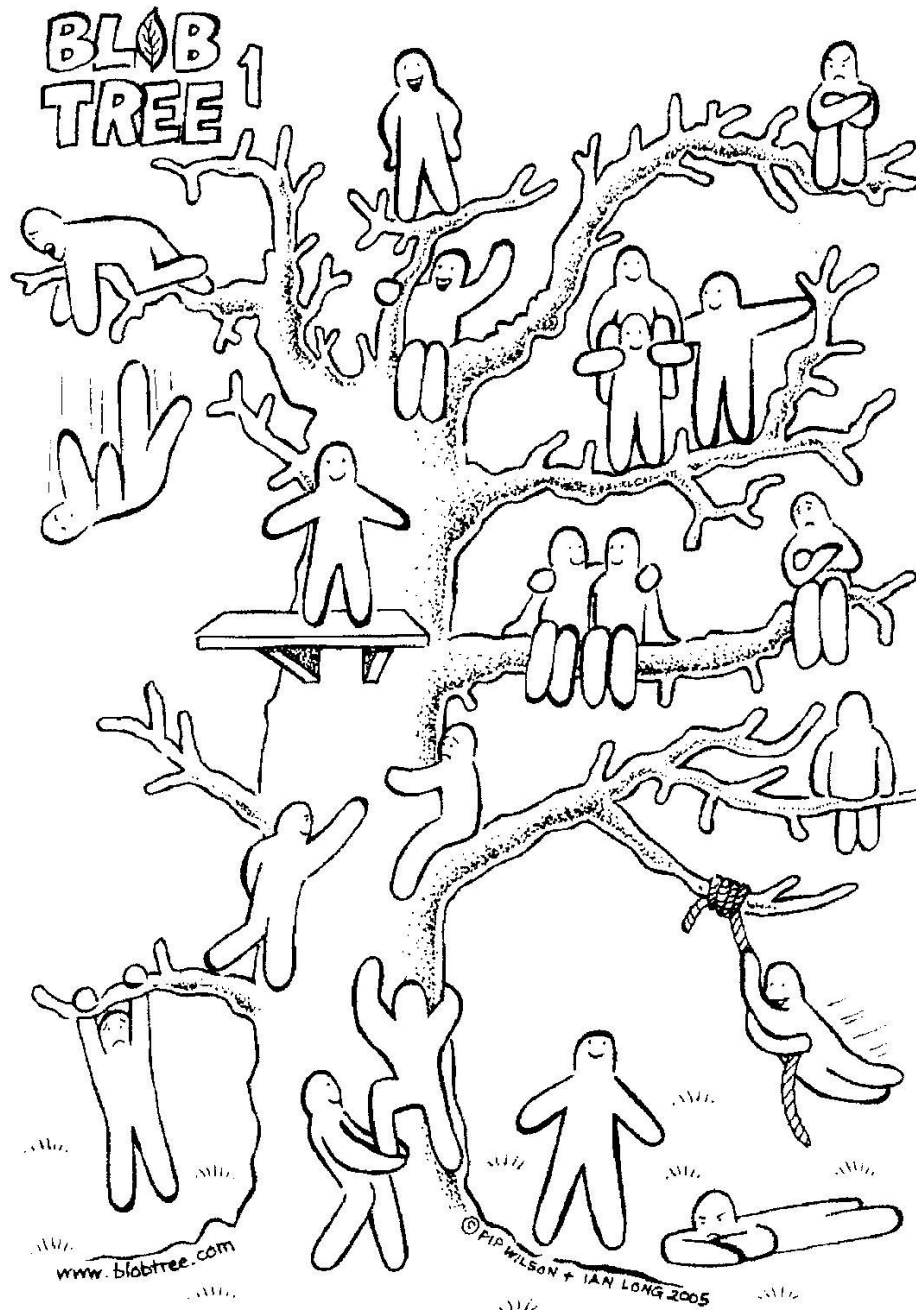
Individual pupil interviews looking at their books

[NB Dawn had moved schools at the end of year 4 and therefore did not participate in this part of the research]

Date of interview	Name of pupil	Length of interview
1.3.12	Grace	30 minutes
1.3.12	Ian	28 minutes
1.3.12	Michael	18 minutes
8.3.12	Alan	22 minutes
8.3.12	Harriet	38 minutes
8.3.12	Nikita	38 minutes
15.3.12	Bob	20 minutes
15.3.12	Claire	29 minutes
15.3.12	Frances	34 minutes
15.3.12	Kate	28 minutes
20.3.12	Eric	31 minutes
20.3.12	Olivia	30 minutes
27.3.11	Joan	25 minutes
24.5.11	Linda	36 minutes

Appendix Two Blob Tree

Wilson, P. and Long, I. (2009), *The Big Book of Blob Trees*. Milton Keynes: Speechmark.



Appendix Three Myself as a learner scale (MALS)

Burden, R. (2000), *Myself As a Learner Scale*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

How I see myself

- a** = Yes, definitely true about me
b = Yes, a bit true about me
c = Not sure. Sometimes true and sometimes not
d = Not very true about me
e = No, definitely not true about me

Be as honest as you can. Circle the letter that describes you best.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I'm good at doing tests | a | b | c | d | e |
| 2. I like having problems to solve | a | b | c | d | e |
| 3. When I'm given new work to do, I usually feel confident I can do it | a | b | c | d | e |
| 4. Thinking carefully about your work helps you to do it better | a | b | c | d | e |
| 5. I'm good at discussing things | a | b | c | d | e |
| 6. I need lots of help with my work | a | b | c | d | e |
| 7. I like having difficult work to do | a | b | c | d | e |
| 8. I get anxious when I have to do new work | a | b | c | d | e |
| 9. I think that problem-solving is fun | a | b | c | d | e |
| 10. When I get stuck with my work, I can usually work out what to do next | a | b | c | d | e |
| 11. Learning is easy | a | b | c | d | e |
| 12. I'm not very good at solving problems | a | b | c | d | e |
| 13. I know the meaning of lots of words | a | b | c | d | e |
| 14. I usually think carefully about what I've got to do | a | b | c | d | e |
| 15. I know how to solve the problems I meet | a | b | c | d | e |
| 16. I find a lot of schoolwork difficult | a | b | c | d | e |
| 17. I'm clever | a | b | c | d | e |
| 18. I know how to be a good learner | a | b | c | d | e |
| 19. I like using my brain | a | b | c | d | e |
| 20. Learning is difficult | a | b | c | d | e |

Appendix Four **Questions for pupil interviews**

Group interviews – first phase

- What do you think about school?
- What makes for a good lesson?
- What helps you learn?
- What stops you from learning?
- What do you think learning is?
- What do you think assessment is?

Group interviews – second phase

I Learning Objectives and Remember To's

1. What are learning objectives and Remember To's?
2. What are they for?
3. How are they produced?
4. How do you use them?
5. What effect do they have on your learning?
6. How do you feel about them? What do you think about them?

II Feedback

1. Who gives you feedback on your work?
2. How do they do this?
3. How do you feel about this feedback? What do you think about it?
4. What response do you make to feedback?
5. What effect does feedback have on your work?
6. What do you find most helpful about feedback?
7. What do you find difficult about feedback?

III Self- and peer-assessment

1. When do you assess your own work?
2. How do you do this?
3. What do you feel about this? What do you think about this?
4. What effect does this have on your learning?
5. When do you assess other pupils' work?
6. How do you do this?
7. What do you feel about this? What do you think about this?
8. What effect does this have on your learning?

MALS and Blob interviews

1. What can you tell me about this picture?
2. Which Blob best shows how you feel in school most of the time?
3. Which Blob best shows how you feel in literacy?
4. Which Blob best shows how you feel in maths?
5. From the MALS sheet once completed by the pupil – can you talk to me about...? Why did you put that?

Individual interviews looking through books

1. Tell me about the marking
2. What did you understand by the learning aim?
3. How did you make use of the Remember To's?
4. What effect did the marking have on your learning?
5. Tell me about the traffic lighting

Appendix Five **Permission requests for school**

To the head teacher

Dear Mr Dart

I am now at the stage in the EdD course at the Institute of Education, University of London, of conducting a research project which will result in a thesis report of 40,000 words. Once examined and passed by the Institute a copy of the thesis will be placed in the Institute's library. Alongside this a summary of the thesis will be made available to the school. I am therefore writing to formally request your permission to conduct this research project in Coastal Junior School over the next year. If you are willing to give your permission, would you please sign your name in the 'consent' section at the end of this letter. Once signed, I will give you a copy of this letter for your records. The focus of the research will be on the views and perspectives of high achieving pupils (those identified as 'gifted' by members of staff) on their experiences of learning and assessment. As part of this investigation I also want to explore various conceptions of 'giftedness' and how 'gifted' pupils are identified in the school.

I would like to base my investigation in the current year 4, with a view to it progressing into year 5 in the new academic year. The research will involve analyses of documents (primarily written feedback in pupils' books); observations in class; interviews with the class teachers and with pupils identified as gifted by their teachers. Pupil interviews will be in small groups initially, followed by individual interviews and informal conversations. I will also be asking pupils to make personal video diaries for a short period of time (possibly each day for a week, or once a week for a month). My proposed timetable is to begin the research at the start of the summer term and continue it for one year.

A number of ethical issues arise from this study. One is that of confidentiality and anonymity. I will alter the name of the school and the names of teachers and pupils involved, meaning that my examiners and tutors at the Institute of Education will not be able to identify the school or any persons participating in the research. However, anyone reading the report or the summary who knows the school will know the names of the teachers in the year group at this point in time. There is more chance of making the children anonymous as there will be a number of them (hopefully a total of fifteen) and it will therefore be more difficult to identify individuals through my report.

A second ethical issue is that of informed consent. I will need to get permission from the teachers, but I will also require the consent of the pupils. I intend to gain this through talking

with each class before the end of term, explaining my research to them and asking for their participation in my lesson observations. I intend to write to the parents of the children I wish to interview, using the phrase 'my research group' rather than 'gifted pupils' or 'high achievers'. I will ask that they 'opt out' if they do not want their children to be part of the project. To both children and parents I will raise the issues to do with confidentiality and anonymity, especially the fact that, although my report will be primarily for my tutors and examiners at the Institute, the finished article will actually be placed in the Institute's library. The value of the study to the school will, hopefully, be wide-ranging: My understanding of theories relating to assessment and learning and to giftedness will be expanded which could be disseminated to other members of staff. I would be enabled to help shape future school policy and practice. The research should effectively contribute to the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), giving the school empirical rather than anecdotal evidence.

I want to thank you formally for all the support you have given me over the past three years and for the continuing interest and encouragement you show.

Yours sincerely

Roger Hutchins

I give my consent to this research being conducted in Coastal Junior School

Signed: _____

Head teacher Coastal Junior School

Date: _____

To teachers in year 4

Dear

I am now at the stage in the EdD course at the Institute of Education, University of London, of conducting a research project which will result in a thesis report of 40,000 words. Once examined and passed by the Institute, a copy of the thesis will be placed in the Institute's library. A summary of the thesis will be made available to the school. My hope is that the focus of the research will be on the views and perspectives of high achieving pupils (those identified as 'gifted' by members of staff) currently in year 4 regarding their experiences of learning and assessment.

With this as a bit of background, I am writing to formally request your permission to conduct this research project with you and some of the pupils in your class over this next term. If you are willing to give your permission, would you please sign your name in the 'consent' section at the end of this letter. Once signed, I will give you a copy of this letter for your records. The project will go into the new academic year and I will need to seek the permission of the new class teacher as well.

For the research I would like to analyse written feedback in pupils' books; conduct a series of observations in your class; individually interview yourself and the other year 4 teachers; and interview pupils in your class identified as gifted in either or both maths and English (and possibly science), initially in groups and then individually.

A number of ethical issues arise from this study. One is that of confidentiality and anonymity. I will alter the name of the school and the names of the teachers and pupils involved, meaning that my examiners and tutors at the Institute of Education will not be able to identify the school or any persons participating in the research. However, anyone reading the report or the summary who knows the school will know the names of the teachers in the year group at this point in time. There is more chance of making the children anonymous as there will be a number of them (hopefully a total of fifteen) and it will therefore be more difficult to identify individuals through my report.

A second ethical issue is that of informed consent. I need to get permission from you in order to interview you and to conduct observations in your class. I will also require the consent of the pupils. With your permission, I intend to gain this through talking with the class before the end of term, explaining my research to them and asking for their participation in my observations. I intend to write to the parents of the children I wish to interview, asking that they 'opt out' if they do not want their children to be part of the project. Following this I will

write to and speak with each of the pupils I would like to interview to gain their informed written consent.

With regards interviewing teachers, my aim is not to present you with a long list of questions, but to conduct the interview(s) more in the way of a 'directed conversation' where we talk around areas to do with giftedness, assessment and learning. I want to find out how you view 'giftedness', learning and assessment, in particular AfL, and am keen to learn from your perspective. My thinking at the moment is that we meet for an interview fairly early on in the study when we can discuss general issues, then spend time observing in your class and possibly hold a further interview later on in the study picking up on specific issues that have arisen during the research. Each interview will last no more than an hour. I would like, with your permission, to audio-record the interview using a digital recorder. I will transcribe the interview, but no one except me and my supervisor will see the transcript. It will be stored on my lap top, which is password protected and the file will also be encrypted. You are, of course, welcome to read the transcription to ensure that I have correctly represented you. If I intend to quote you in my report I will ask your permission first as, legally, you have the intellectual property rights over what you say.

I want to assure you that the research in no way seeks to pass judgement on any member of staff or pupil; it's purpose is purely to investigate what is happening in class from a certain viewpoint and in that sense, will be descriptive and analytical rather than judgemental.

Yours sincerely

Roger Hutchins

✂-----

I give my consent to this research being conducted in my class and with me via document analysis, observations and interviews

Signed: _____

Name (printed): _____

Date: _____

To teachers in year 5

Dear

I am now at the stage in the EdD course at the Institute of Education, University of London, of conducting a research project which will result in a thesis report of 40,000 words. Once examined and passed by the Institute, a copy of the thesis will be placed in the Institute's library. A summary of the thesis will be made available to the school. My hope is that the focus of the research will be on the views and perspectives of high achieving pupils (those identified as 'gifted' by members of staff) currently in year 5 regarding their experiences of learning and assessment.

With this as a bit of background, I am writing to formally request your permission to conduct this research project with you and some of the pupils in your class over this next year. If you are willing to give your permission, would you please sign your name in the 'consent' section at the end of this letter. Once signed, I will give you a copy of this letter for your records.

For the research I would like to analyse written feedback in pupils' books; conduct a series of observations in your class; individually interview yourself and the other year 5 teachers; and interview pupils in your class identified as gifted in either or both maths and English (and possibly science), initially in groups and then individually. I will also be asking pupils to make personal video diaries for a short period of time (possibly each day for a week, or once a week for a month).

A number of ethical issues arise from this study. One is that of confidentiality and anonymity. I will alter the name of the school and the names of the teachers and pupils involved, meaning that my examiners and tutors at the Institute of Education will not be able to identify the school or any persons participating in the research. However, anyone reading the report or the summary who knows the school will know the names of the teachers in the year group at this point in time. There is more chance of making the children anonymous as there will be a number of them and it will therefore be more difficult to identify individuals through my report.

A second ethical issue is that of informed consent. I need to get permission from you in order to interview you and to conduct observations in your class. I will also require the consent of the pupils. With your permission, I intend to gain this through talking with the class, explaining my research to them and asking for their participation in my observations. I intend to write to the parents of the children I wish to interview, asking that they 'opt out' if they do not want

their children to be part of the project. Following this I will write to and speak with each of the pupils I would like to interview to gain their informed written consent.

With regards interviewing teachers, my aim is not to present you with a long list of questions, but to conduct the interview(s) more in the way of a 'directed conversation' where we talk around areas to do with giftedness, assessment and learning. I want to find out how you view 'giftedness', learning and assessment, in particular AfL, and am keen to learn from your perspective. My thinking at the moment is that we meet for an interview fairly early on in the study when we can discuss general issues, then spend time observing in your class and possibly hold a further interview later on in the study picking up on specific issues that have arisen during the research. Each interview will last no more than an hour. I would like, with your permission, to audio-record the interview using a digital recorder. I will transcribe the interview, but no one except me and my supervisor will see the transcript. It will be stored on my lap top, which is password protected and the file will also be encrypted. You are, of course, welcome to read the transcription to ensure that I have correctly represented you. If I intend to quote you in my report I will ask your permission first as, legally, you have the intellectual property rights over what you say.

I want to assure you that the research in no way seeks to pass judgement on any member of staff or pupil; it's purpose is purely to investigate what is happening in class from a certain viewpoint and in that sense, will be descriptive and analytical rather than judgemental.

Yours sincerely

Roger Hutchins

✂

I give my consent to this research being conducted in my class and with me via document analysis, observations and interviews

Signed: _____

Name (printed): _____

Date: _____

Appendix Six **Permission requests for parents**

Parents of pupils in year 4

Dear

For those who have not met me, please let me introduce myself. My name is Roger Hutchins and I am the Inclusion Manager at Coastal Junior School. As part of my professional development, I am undertaking an educational doctorate (EdD) with the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London. For the final part of this I need to conduct research in the school which will last at least two terms, and I wish to do this with some of the pupils in the current year 4. My aim is to gain from pupils whose learning is progressing well their views and perspectives on their experiences of learning and assessment. I plan to do this through observing lessons and by interviewing children initially in small groups and then individually. Although by participating in the research the children will miss some lessons, I will make sure that there is minimum disruption and that no child will miss lessons from the core curriculum. The benefit to the children will be that they share their views of learning, giving them both experiences of developing their own ideas and opinions, listening to and discussing with others and, ultimately to a learning environment which takes account of their perspectives.

I would very much like [name of pupil] to take part in this research, but, if you would rather he/she did not participate, please let me know by completing the cut-off slip below. If you wish to take this option, I would be grateful if you could return the slip to me via the school office. If I do not hear from you I will assume that you are happy for your child to participate in the research. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time during the research by contacting me at school. I shall also be seeking the consent of all the children I would like to formally interview.

All the interviews will be audio recorded, and the group interviews will be video recorded as well, this is to ensure that I am able to tell who is speaking in the group. All recordings will be immediately downloaded onto a password protected computer and the recording instruments (digital recorder and camcorder) will be wiped. I will have sole access to the recordings. When I write up the interviews and write a report of my findings I will change the names of all participants. Anyone who knows the school will be able to identify the year group I have been working in, however, no individual child will be able to be identified. My final report will be read by the relevant staff at the IOE and will also be placed in the Institute library. I will write a summary report for school use and parents will be able to read this if they wish. Observation notes and pupil interview transcripts will only be seen by IOE staff with reason to do so.

If you wish to ask anything about this project, please do not hesitate to contact me at school.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours faithfully

Roger Hutchins

✂-----

I would rather my child did not take part in the research project being undertaken by Roger Hutchins.

Name of child: _____ Class: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Parents of pupils in year 5

Dear

For those who have not met me, please let me introduce myself. My name is Roger Hutchins and I am the Inclusion Manager at Coastal Junior School. As part of my professional development, I am undertaking an educational doctorate (EdD) with the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London. For the final part of this I began last term to conduct research in the school with some of the pupils who were then in year 4. Now I wish to extend this to include more pupils from the same year group, i.e. those who are now in year 5. My aim is to gain from pupils whose learning is progressing well their views and perspectives on their experiences of learning and assessment. I am doing this through observing lessons and by interviewing children initially in small groups and then individually or in pairs. Although by participating in the research the children miss some lessons, I have made sure and will continue to make sure that there is minimum disruption and that no child misses lessons from the core curriculum. The benefit to the children is that they share their views of learning, giving them both experiences of developing their own ideas and opinions, listening to and discussing with others and, ultimately to help create a learning environment which takes account of their perspectives.

I would very much like [name of pupil] to take part in this research, but, if you would rather he/she did not participate, please let me know by completing the cut-off slip below. If you wish to take this option, I would be grateful if you could return the slip to me via the school office. If I do not hear from you I will assume that you are happy for your child to participate in the research. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time during the research by contacting me at school. I shall also be seeking the consent of all the new children I would like to formally interview. All the interviews will be audio recorded, and the group interviews will be video recorded as well. This is to ensure that I am able to tell who is speaking in the group. All recordings will be immediately downloaded onto a password protected computer and the recording instruments (digital recorder and camcorder) will be wiped. I will have sole access to the recordings. When I write up the interviews and write a report of my findings I will change the names of all participants. Anyone who knows the school will be able to identify the year group I have been working in, however, no individual child will be able to be identified. My final report will be read by the relevant staff at the IOE and will also be placed in the Institute library. I will write a summary report for school use and parents will be able to read this if they wish. Observation notes and pupil interview transcripts will only be seen by IOE staff with reason to do so.

If you wish to ask anything about this project, please do not hesitate to contact me at school.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours faithfully

Roger Hutchins

✂-----

--

I would rather my child did not take part in the research project being undertaken by Roger Hutchins.

Name of child: _____ Class: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Appendix Seven Pupils' consent form

Read out to all pupils I wished to interview

Thank you for coming to the office. I want to ask you a favour really, quite a big favour, for my research. What I'd like to do is to interview all of you in three groups and then individually as well. I want to explain a little bit about that, give you a bit of paper that says it, because for my research and for the university that I'm working with, we need to have your written permission, written consent, to say 'yes, I agree to be interviewed'. If you do agree I'll copy the letters so that you have one to keep. As you may know, I have already written to your parents, now I want to find out if you yourselves are willing to take part in my research.

I've got a letter for each of you. This is what it says (I distribute the letters and read it aloud with them):

- I agree to be interviewed by Mr Hutchins.
- I understand that the interview will be in a group.
- I understand that Mr Hutchins will ask to interview me later on my own.
- I understand that the interview will be recorded using an audio and a video recorder.
- I understand all recordings will be kept safe by Mr Hutchins, and only be used by him for his studies.
- I understand that all names will be changed in all written and spoken reports so that the identities of pupils will not be known.
- I understand that I can change my mind and withdraw from the research within one month of the interview taking place and, in that case, Mr Hutchins will not use any information from me.

The group interviews will be recorded using an audio recorder and a camcorder. The reason for the video is that when you're in a group and just chatting together, I won't know, from listening to the digital recorder, listening to the audio, who is saying what. So the only reason for having the video is that I can see, see who's saying what. I will record the individual interviews just with a digital audio recorder.

I'm going to download all recordings onto my laptop which is password protected. Nobody else has access to it. The only people who are going to hear what you say, if you are willing to be

involved, is me and the person who is my supervisor, my teacher, at the university. Nobody else in the school will listen.

All your names will be changed in all I write and in everything that I say outside of the school, so that nobody will be able to identify you. I'll change your names to something else.

If you change your mind, if you say 'yes' today, but after a bit you change your mind and don't want to be involved any more, please tell me within a month of actually doing the interviews. I'll take your name off and remove the information you have said. But after that it might be quite hard to do that because it'll be beginning to be written about.

When we meet in the interviews I want to find out what you think about learning and about how you know how well you are doing in class and how you know what you have to learn in the future.

Is that OK?

Any questions?

Consent form for pupil interviews

I agree to be interviewed by Mr Hutchins.

I understand that the interview will be in a group.

I understand that Mr Hutchins will ask to interview me later on my own.

I understand that the interview will be recorded using an audio and a video recorder.

I understand all recordings will be kept safe by Mr Hutchins, and only be used by him for his studies.

I understand that all names will be changed in all written and spoken reports so that the identities of pupils will not be known.

I understand that I can change my mind and withdraw from the research within one month of the interview taking place and, in that case, Mr Hutchins will not use any information from me.

Name of pupil	Signature of pupil	Date

Appendix Eight **'Free Node' codes of pupil interviews**

Achievement points

Aids to learning

Ambitions

Ascertaining other pupils' views

Asides

Behaviour

Boredom

Choosing Remember To's

Comments about other pupils

Directing the group

Emotional response to feedback

Enjoyment in school

Family support

Feedback

Friendships and relationships in class

Frustration

Hindrances to learning

Learning Objectives and Remember To's

Liking school

Making lessons 'fun'

Marking

Motivation - rewards and sanctions

Not liking lessons

Not liking school

Out of school activities

Peer assessment

Pride

Questions regarding the research

Remember To's - helpful or otherwise

Response to marking

Self-assessment

Self-confidence and competence

Stress of school

Summative assessments

Teacher confidence in pupils

Teachers and their response to pupils' behaviour

Teachers helping learning

Variety is needed

Working hard or not working hard

Appendix Nine Lists of the 'Free Nodes'

List 1 - Those which definitely relate to the research question (pupils and AfL strategies)

Choosing Remember To's

Emotional response to feedback

Feedback

Learning Objectives and Remember To's

Marking

Peer assessment

Remember To's - helpful or otherwise

Response to marking

Self assessment

List 2 - Those which might be related and which could well have an influence on the question

Achievement points

Aids to learning

Behaviour

Boredom

Enjoyment in school

Family support

Friendships and relationships in class

Frustration

Hindrances to learning

Liking school

Making lessons 'fun'

Motivation - rewards and sanctions

Not liking lessons

Not liking school

Out of school activities

Pride

Self-confidence and competence

Stress of school

Summative assessments

Teacher confidence in pupils

Teachers and their response to pupils' behaviour

Teachers helping learning

Variety is needed

Working hard or not working hard

List 3 - Those unlikely to be directly relevant, although might still be of interest

Ambitions

Ascertaining other pupils' views

Asides

Comments about other pupils

Directing the group

Questions regarding the research

Appendix Ten 'Tree Nodes' 1 – Categories of AfL strategies

Feedback	Learning Objectives/ Success Criteria	Pupils Assessing	Issues with the interviews
<p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers ○ Pupils ○ Family <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Written feedback (marking) ○ Verbal feedback <p>Usefulness</p> <p>Levels of understanding</p> <p>Emotional response</p>	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice ○ Choosing/deciding <p>Levels of understanding</p> <p>Usefulness</p>	<p>Self-assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice ○ Difficulties ○ Usefulness <p>Peer assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice ○ Difficulties ○ Usefulness ○ Emotional response 	<p>Pupil disposition</p> <p>Disagreement/ conflict</p> <p>Contradictions/ inconsistencies</p> <p>Problems with remembering</p> <p>Confusion</p> <p>Deviations/ digressions</p> <p>Peer influence</p> <p>Little or non-contributors</p> <p>Following pupil lead – inconsistencies of questioning</p>

Appendix Eleven 'Tree Nodes' 2 – Categories of pupil response to AfL

Understandings	Misunderstandings/ Confusions	Emotions	Pupil action	Issues with the interviews
Feedback Learning Objectives/ Objectives/ Success Criteria Peer assessment Self-assessment	Feedback Learning Objectives/ Success Criteria Peer assessment Self-assessment	Pride Happiness Disappointment Feeling 'bad' Feeling 'down' Confusion Annoyance Frustration Anxiety Embarrassment Ambivalence	Response to marking Taking note Ignoring/ by-passing Assessing others Assessing self	Pupil disposition Disagreement/ conflict Contradictions/ inconsistencies Problems with remembering Confusion Deviations/ digressions Peer influence Little or non- contributors Following pupil lead – inconsistencies of questioning

Appendix Twelve Profiles of the pupils

Personal profiles based on comments made by the pupils

[Pupils are identified by the initial letter of their pseudonym]

Pupil	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Parent(s) interested and/ or influential in school	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	
Influence of siblings			X							X	X	X			
Holidays/ trips abroad	X		X			X			X		X			X	
Sports and/ or music	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Future prospects	X	X	X	X	X			X	X			X		X	
Friendships/ relationships in school important		X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Involved in school clubs		X		X		X						X	X	X	
Positive views about learning in school	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Negative views about learning in school	X		X	X	X		X						X	X	
Noncommittal about learning in school		X												X	
Confident in school	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Not confident in school	X		X	X			X							X	
Generally OK in school		X				X					X			X	
Generally happy in school	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X
Generally pleased/ proud with work									X	X		X			X
Finds most school work easy					X				X			X			
Feel they are making progress	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Commentary

D (Dawn) was only in school for the first term of the research

J (Joan) only took part in one group interview (she was absent for the first one)

O (Olivia) did not take part in any group interviews (she joined the research at the start of year 5)

Seemingly contradictory statements (such as being confident in school and also not being confident in school or both positive and negative views about learning in school) were usually subject dependent e.g. confident in maths but not in English

National Curriculum levels*Reading*

PUPIL	Key Stage 1	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Alan	3	4C	4B	5C
Bob	3	4C	4B	5B
Claire	3	4C	4A	5B
Dawn ¹	3	4C	4A	n/a
Eric	3	4C	4A	5C
Frances	3	4C	4A	5B
Grace	3	3A	4B	4B
Harriet	3	4C	4B	5B
Ian	3	4C	4B	5C
Joan	3	4C	4A	5B
Kate	3	4C	4A	5C
Linda	3	4C	4B	5A
Michael	3	4C	4B	5C
Nikita	3	3A	4B	5A
Olivia	3	4C	4B	5B

¹left the school at end of year 4

Writing

PUPIL	Key Stage 1	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Alan	2A	3C	3B	4B
Bob	2A	2A	3A	4C
Claire	3	3A	4B	5C
Dawn ²	2A	3C	3A	n/a
Eric	2A	2A	3A	4B
Frances	2A	3C	4C	4A
Grace	2A	2A	3C	3C
Harriet	2A	3B	3B	4C
Ian	3	3C	3A	4C
Joan	2A	3B	3A	4B
Kate	3	3A	4C	4A
Linda	3	3C	3A	4A
Michael	2B	2A	3B	3A
Nikita	2A	3C	3A	4A
Olivia	2B	2A	3B	4B

²left the school at end of year 4

Maths

PUPIL	Key Stage 1	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Alan	3	3A	4A	5C
Bob	2A	3A	4B	5C
Claire	3	3A	4A	4A
Dawn ³	2A	3A	4A	n/a
Eric	2A	3B	4C	4A
Frances	3	3A	4B	5B
Grace	3	3A	4A	5B
Harriet	3	4C	4A	4A
Ian	3	4C	4A	5B
Joan	2A	3B	4C	4A
Kate	3	3A	4B	4A
Linda	3	3A	4B	4A
Michael	2A	3C	3C	3B
Nikita	2A	2A	3A	4C
Olivia	2A	3C	3B	4A

³left the school at end of year 4

Results of Myself as a Learner Scale (MALS)

[Pupils are identified by the initial letter of their pseudonym]

Pupil	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
I'm good at doing tests	a/ b	b	b	b	c	c	b	b	a	c	b	b	c	c	c
I like having problems to solve	b	b	c	b	a	a	c	c	a	b	b	c	d	e	b
When I'm given new work to do I usually feel confident I can do it	b	a	b	a	b	b	c	a	b	b	b	a	a	b	a
Thinking carefully about your work helps you to do it better	a	a	c	a	a	b	b	b	b	-	b	a	a	b	a
I'm good at discussing things	c	c	a	b	b	a	b	a	a	a	a	b	b	d	b
I need lots of help with my work	d	d	e	e	d	e	c	c	e	d	c	e	e	e	d
I like having difficult work to do	a	c	c	b	c	c	d	d	b	d	c	b	d	c	c
I get anxious when I have to do new work	e	d	c	d	c	b	c	c	d	b	c	c	b	d	b
I think problem solving is fun	c	b	c	c	b	a	b	b	b	b	c	b	d	e	b
When I get stuck with my work I can usually work out what to do next	b	b	c	b	b	b	c	c	b	b	c	b	c	c	c
Learning is easy	b	b	c	a	b	b	c	b	c	b	b	b	c	c	-
I'm not very good at solving problems	c	c	b	b	e	e	d	d	e	c	c	d	b	b	b
I know the meaning of lots of words	b	b	a	a	b	b	d	a	a	a	b	b	b	b	b
I usually think carefully about what I've got to do	a	a	a	b	b	b	b	b	a	a	c	a	a	b	d
I know how to solve the problems I meet	b/ c	b	c	c	b	b	c	c	a	b	c	c	b	c	b
I find a lot of schoolwork difficult	e	d	e	d	d	d	c	d	c	b	d	d	c	e	d
I'm clever	b	a	a	b	a	b	b	b	b	c	a	b	b	b	b
I know how to be a good learner	b	b	a	b	a	b	b	b	a	c	a	b	a	b	b
I like using my brain	a	c	b	b	a	b	a	b	b	b	a	a	a	c	a
Learning is difficult	e	d	e	d	e	e	c	d	d	c	c	e	c	e	d

- a** = Yes, definitely true about me
- b** = Yes, a bit true about me
- c** = Not sure, sometimes true and sometimes not
- d** = Not very true about me
- e** = No, definitely not true about me

Appendix Thirteen**Summary of AfL perspectives**

[Pupils are identified by the initial letter of their pseudonym]

Positive response

Pupil	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Lesson aims		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Remember to's (RTs)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Verbal feedback from teachers			X	X					X		X	X		X	
Written feedback from teachers	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Self-assessment	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Peer-assessment		X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X			X
Targets			X			X	X	X				X			
Response to marking		X	X			X		X			X	X		X	X
Modelling of work														X	

Noncommittal response

Pupil	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Lesson aims					X	X	X	X	X			X		X	
Remember to's (RTs)			X			X							X	X	
Verbal feedback from teachers															
Written feedback from teachers						X		X							
Self-assessment								X							
Peer-assessment					X	X							X		
Targets											X			X	
Response to marking															
Modelling of work															

Negative response

Pupil	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Lesson aims	X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X		X	
Remember to's (RTs)			X								X				
Verbal feedback from teachers	X		X					X	X					X	
Written feedback from teachers	X		X			X	X	X	X		X			X	X
Self-assessment	X		X			X					X				
Peer-assessment	X		X	X			X	X				X			
Targets								X							
Response to marking								X	X						
Modelling of work							X								

Appendix Fourteen Factors other than AfL influencing learning

Aids to learning	Hindrances to learning	Motivation to learn	Emotional response
Tests (Summative assessment) Relationships with peers Curriculum – <i>what</i> is taught Teaching – <i>how</i> it is taught Teacher response/ attitude to pupils Behaviour Physical environment Perceptions of the school Home/ family Attitude to learning Level and type of teacher support	Tests (Summative assessment) Interactions with peers Curriculum – <i>what</i> is taught Teaching – <i>how</i> it is taught Time pressure Routines/ boredom Teacher response/ attitude to pupils Behaviour Physical environment Attitude to learning Level and type of teacher support Distractions (external) Distractions (internal) ‘Dropping off’ during the year	Influence of teachers Lessons Self-motivation Rewards (‘working’ to motivate) Rewards (not ‘working’ to motivate) Ambition Awareness of the need to learn Valuing school	Anxiety/ worry/ concern <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Particular lessons/ activities ○ Self-perceptions ○ Summative assessments ○ Relationships with teachers ○ Relationships with peers ○ Teachers’ views of the class and of individual pupils Enjoyment/ fulfilment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose of school/ reasons for learning ○ Love of learning ○ Particular lessons/ activities ○ Friendships ○ Self-perceptions