

**Toward a Contextual Theory of School Exclusion:  
A Multi-Layered View of the Interaction Between  
National Policies and Local School Practices**

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# Abstract

This study explores the causes and dynamics of school exclusion in England by examining the interaction between national policies and local school practices. A review of the literature reveals a range of psychological-, sociological-, and school-based explanations for exclusion. However, such theories do not explore the impact of the national policy context in which school exclusions increased nationally throughout the 1990s. In this study, I suggest that exclusion is a complex phenomenon which reflects teachers' perceptions, individual schools' practices, and the pressures of national policies. The study is aimed at generating theories about the school- and policy- context in which exclusion occurs.

Data for this study was collected through multiple methods: (1) a review of exclusion rates and patterns of 82 secondary schools in one LEA; (2) interviews with 44 teachers; and (3) an ethnographic multi-case study of four secondary schools using interviews, fieldwork, and school documents. The study, situated in a social constructionist framework, pursued three questions: (1) How do national policies and pressures interact with the context of exclusion? (2) How do teachers perceive the causes and dynamics of exclusion from school? (3) In what ways can a school's organisational context influence exclusion?

The study found that:

- **Teachers have a multi-layered view of exclusion.** Teachers perceive exclusion as a complex problem that is influenced by a pupil's behaviour and social background, as well as by national policy and school-based factors. Confluent pressures from curriculum, assessment, accountability, and parental choice were described as aggravating exclusion by reducing time, tolerance, and flexibility. Five areas of school organisation: 1) leadership and management; 2) behaviour and discipline policies; 3) staff culture and communication, 4) support structures; and 5) school ethos – were seen to either aggravate or prevent exclusion.
- **School organisational context influences exclusion practices.** The study found that schools differ in their exclusion rates and patterns, and this is not fully explained by pupil factors, such as social disadvantage (e.g. free school meals, special educational needs, ethnicity). A comparison between higher- and lower-excluding schools found that higher-excluding schools had hierarchical management structures; an isolated staff

culture; a compliance-driven approach to behaviour; few classroom-based supports for students; and unclear school values. Teachers in these schools described being highly constrained by national policy pressures and having little capacity for resisting exclusion. In contrast, lower-excluding schools had delegating leadership and management; a collaborative staff culture; individualised approaches for supporting students; and a community ethos. Teachers in these schools indicated a greater resistance to national policy pressures and an increased capacity for preventing exclusion.

The study suggests that schools mediate, through their organisational context, the pressures of national policies, thereby shaping the context in which exclusion occurs. The study further suggests that teachers have varying capacities for preventing and resisting exclusion, and that a school's organisational context can enable or constrain this capacity. The study concludes that schools can be organised in ways that can help prevent exclusion. However, without fundamental changes in national curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies, confluent pressures from these policies will limit teachers' capacity to respond to pupils' individual needs, thereby aggravating how exclusion is viewed and used in schools.

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# List of Abbreviations

<b>CRE</b>	Commission for Racial Equality
<b>DES</b>	Department of Education and Science
<b>DFE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DFEE</b>	Department for Education and Employment
<b>DFES</b>	Department for Education and Skills
<b>FSM</b>	free school meals
<b>GCSE</b>	General Certificate in Secondary Education
<b>LEA</b>	local education authority
<b>LMS</b>	local management of schools
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OFSTED</b>	Office for Standards in Education
<b>QCA</b>	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
<b>PRU</b>	Pupil Referral Unit
<b>SEN</b>	special educational needs
<b>SEU</b>	Social Exclusion Unit
<b>SSFA</b>	School and Standards Framework Act

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# ***CHAPTER ONE***

## **Introduction**

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### **1.0 From experience to enquiry: A personal story about exclusion**

During my second year of teaching, an incident occurred which led to a student being suspended from school. A physical fight broke out between two girls one hot and humid afternoon in my classroom. I recall feeling out of control as I looked with horror at the tangled bodies of two previously smiling girls, their hands and braids flying about. I felt distraught and angry about the disruption that this incident had created in my classroom. I had worked hard all term to create a teaching and learning environment based on mutual respect and co-operation, where my students felt safe, emotionally and physically. To me this incident was a violation of the teaching and learning process, signifying a breakdown in communication, and a failure to manage my own students and classroom. I felt professionally incapable and helpless. I told the two girls to leave the class and to go the principal's office.

What happened afterwards was as distressing as the incident itself. One of the students was suspended; the other girl, however, returned to my classroom the next day. I didn't understand why and felt unsure and confused about how to respond towards this student. So I decided to just go on as if nothing had happened. Later,

after school, I approached a colleague to find out what had happened. “Oh those two just don’t like each other. They fight all the time, you know those girls. But Shakira refused to apologise, and so the principal suspended her,” my colleague explained. By the time I had a chance to talk with my principal about the decision to suspend the student, there were new demands and pressures to contend with – lessons to plan, curriculum issues to discuss, meetings to attend, papers to grade. The incident became lost in the shuffle and chaos of teaching.

For me, this incident raised a number of questions about my role and responsibilities as a teacher. One set of concerns was directed at how I should have responded to the incident. Here I looked to my principal for advice, the school’s rules and policies for guidance, and to my colleagues for support. Another set was directed at trying to understand my students and their behaviour. I wanted to understand *why* the fight had occurred. I wanted an opportunity to talk with the two girls, individually and together. I wanted to ask them – what should be the appropriate response to this incident? Why did this happen? What could we do to prevent this kind of incident from happening again? Above all, I wondered whether there was something I could have done differently as a teacher. Neither of the girls was doing well in school and both were struggling in their lessons. One of the girls appeared to be motivated, participating in discussions, but had not been in class for over a week. The other student, the one who was suspended, was a girl who was less engaged and had difficulty reading.

At the time, I did not have a framework for interpreting the context in which this incident of exclusion occurred. Unrecognisable to me at the time was a multi-layered context that extended beyond the behaviour of the girls – a complex interaction of factors involving my perceptions as a teacher, the practices within the school, and the pressures on my capacity. One set of concerns had to do with my individual beliefs and practices as a teacher – how I viewed my students, what I expected from them, how I understood their needs as learners, and how I attempted to respond to their needs. A second set of issues related to the school’s organisational practices and culture, our ways of communicating as a staff, and the internal structures and policies that influenced my actions within the school. A third set of underlying dynamics stemmed from the pressures I felt as a teacher working in that particular school context. We were a newly created school with high expectations from the local community – experiencing a range of conflicts and dilemmas about our responsibilities as a staff, the curriculum we needed to develop to teach our students, and our overall goals as a school. All of these influenced how we perceived ourselves as teachers, interpreted our students’ needs, and responded to their behaviour.

Some years later, after leaving the classroom to pursue my doctorate, my family and I moved to England where I worked as an educational research officer at the University of Surrey Roehampton from 1998 to 2001. I came across a report published by the Social Exclusion Unit (1998), and was astonished to learn that the number of exclusions in secondary schools had risen dramatically over the past

decade, at an alarmingly unprecedented rate, from approximately 2,000 expulsions in 1992 to over 12,000 in 1998. As a teacher, I was disturbed. As a researcher, I was intrigued. Headlines from media and news reports pointed to the increasingly disruptive and violent behaviour of pupils. Yet, such a view seemed both inadequate and overly simplistic. Clearly, there was a more complex explanation. Although I recalled only the one incident of exclusion in my experience as a teacher, I felt strongly that my individual capacity as a professional, the responsiveness of my principal and colleagues, and the organisational culture of my school had all played a role in the process.

However, a critical difference between New York's East Harlem and England was not simply geography, but the national policies and structures which guide how schools and teachers operate. As a teacher in New York, I did not feel directly affected by policies devised at the state- and national- level. For the most part, schools and teachers operated with a relative degree of autonomy. We, like other schools in Community District 4, were allowed a fair amount of freedom and flexibility to structure the timetable, develop the curriculum, and organise our lessons in ways that we felt best suited our students' individual needs.

In terms of accountability, the context in England was one in which we were accountable to the local school district and community – not national inspectors. The external pressures we felt came from the expectations of parents. There were no looming exams or inspections for which we needed to prepare our students and

ourselves. There were no externalised and standardised measures on which we were going to be evaluated, compared, and judged. In 1994, the year that Shakira was suspended, the context in which my school in East Harlem, New York operated contrasted starkly with the national policy climate in which exclusions were increasing across schools in England.

Conversations with teachers whom I encountered before collecting data for the study gave me some insight to begin constructing a theory about the relationship between the context of exclusion and the dynamics of the current national policy context. I heard from these teachers, agonising accounts about the constraints they felt from the combined and unrelenting pressures of testing, league tables, inspection, targets, and a dizzying set of “new” national initiatives aimed at “raising standards”. As I learned more about the nature of England’s educational system and the radical policies that continued to profoundly affect schools, I wondered whether the impact on schools and teachers might be linked to the national increase in exclusions. Could there be a relationship between the impact of policies on schools and teachers, and the rise in exclusions over the past decade? What happens to a teacher’s capacity, when, in addition to the internal pressures of a school, a teacher must also contend with additional external pressures?

Even if such a link could be made – the challenge was to try and understand the nature of this complex interrelationship. As a process of schooling, it did not seem possible to separate school exclusion from the wider educational policy context in

which teachers teach and schools function. What was being described by teachers, seemed to be, in effect, a set of confluent policy pressures in which exclusion was an unintended consequence – an unlikely but almost certain way to remove students whose behaviour and academic performance jeopardised schools from meeting national targets and standards. Such pressures pointed to a perplexing context in which exclusion had become more likely, if not inevitable. Constraints on teachers' time, autonomy, and flexibility within the curriculum pointed to a reduced tolerance for understanding and managing behaviour in the classroom and a more narrow view of student "achievement". This raised crucial questions about the capacity of schools and teachers within such a national policy climate, to manage and cope with the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, special educational needs, and other pupils who might be struggling to achieve the national benchmark, 5 A-C's (GCSEs). I wondered, amidst this tangled set of national pressures and dynamics, whether exclusion might be an unintended consequence of national curriculum and accountability policies that had de-skilled and demoralised teachers.

## **1.1 The problem defined: Patterns and processes in the phenomenon of exclusion<sup>1</sup>**

In this study, I explore the patterns and processes in the phenomenon of exclusion through a social constructionist framework. This view includes the notion of multiple "layers" of "embedded" contexts. Exclusion, I suggest, is not merely an incident of

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, the definition of exclusion is one adopted from the current legal and procedural framework in England, as set out by the School and Standards Framework Act (DFEE, 1998). This piece of legislation refers to exclusion as a procedure for expulsion ("permanent exclusion") and suspension ("fixed-term exclusion") of a student from the school in which he or she is officially enrolled.

disruptive behaviour; but a reflection of how schools and teachers interpret and respond to pupils' needs, and the pressures that can influence their perceptions and interactions. Basically, exclusion is a phenomenon, I argue, that is situated within and influenced by a set of national as well as local contextual factors. In this study, I conceptualise this relationship between these factors and exclusion not in terms of levels, but as multiple layers that are non-hierarchical, overlapping, and "embedded" in schools' and teachers' practices. In this way, I attempt to illuminate the dynamics of exclusion, by exploring the interaction between these elements and layers of context.

The study's enquiry is framed by three sets of overarching questions:

- Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between national policies and pressures, as they are implemented in the context of exclusion? In what ways have national policies influenced how schools and teachers view and use exclusions?*
- Research Question 2: *How do teachers view and interpret the causes and dynamics of school exclusion? Do they perceive a link between their capacity, the impact of national policy, their school's organisational setting, and school exclusion?*
- Research Question 3: *How is the interaction between national policies and school practices mediated by local context? In what ways does a school's organisational setting influence how exclusion is viewed and used?*

To pursue these questions, I carried out three investigations: 1) an examination of secondary school exclusion rates in one LEA, based on a review of LEA reports; 2) an exploration of teachers' perceptions of the causes and dynamics of exclusion based on interviews; and (3) ethnographic case studies of four secondary schools.

## **1.2 Organisation of thesis**

The study is organised into eight chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction and overview of the study. Chapter Two reviews and analyses the research and policy literature on school exclusion. Chapter Three describes the study's theoretical framework, underpinnings, concepts and constructs upon which the study's research approach is based. Chapter Four describes the methodology and methods to carry out a series of linked research investigations aimed at 1) the differing rates and patterns of exclusion in one LEA; 2) teachers' perceptions and interpretations of the causes and dynamics of exclusion; and 3) the organisational context of four secondary schools with high and low rates of exclusion. Chapters Five, Six and Seven discuss the findings for each of these investigations, respectively. Chapter Eight summarises the key conclusions from each investigation and suggests a number of theories for understanding school exclusion in relation to the pressures of national policies, the context of schools' organisational practices, and the capacity of teachers.

## **1.3 Summary of research goals and contribution**

This study aims to make a contribution to knowledge by suggesting new ways of conceptualising the problem of exclusion. In doing so, the study seeks:

- to deepen understanding of the school organisational context in which exclusion occurs by examining the perceptions of teachers and exploring how their conflicts, dilemmas, and tensions might affect how exclusion is viewed and used; and

- to broaden understanding of the national policy-based dynamics by examining exclusion as a phenomenon with dimensions that extend beyond behaviour, and is mediated by multiple layers of interacting contexts.

In this study, exclusion is discussed from a view and angle that does not focus on behaviour. Instead, I direct attention to the wider context – to the ways in which school and national policies interact and affect how teachers perceive and respond to students. I do this with the hope of encouraging a more connected understanding and conceptualisation of the factors that can lead to, and explain such a complex phenomenon as exclusion.

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## *CHAPTER TWO*

# **A Review of Literature**

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### **2.0 Chapter overview**

This chapter reviews the research and policy literature on school exclusion. Its purposes are threefold: (1) to establish a working definition of school exclusion within the study; (2) to understand the various ways that this definition of exclusion has historically evolved and is currently legitimised through policy; and (3) to examine the range of research models, discourses, and explanations about the causes and dynamics of exclusion.

This chapter is organised into five sections. Section 2.1 explains how school exclusion is defined in this study; Section 2.2 discusses how this definition of exclusion has historically evolved and is currently legitimised through policy. Section 2.3 examines the current and national context in which school exclusion is defined and considers the rise in school exclusions over the past decade. Section 2.4 provides a summary of the research perspectives and views about the causes and dynamics of school exclusion. Section 2.5 raises implications for further research and empirical investigation, suggesting the need for more complex theoretical frameworks and models in examining school exclusion.

## 2.1 Defining exclusion from school

For the purposes of this study, the term “exclusion” is defined as the permanent removal or temporary suspension of a student from the school where he or she is officially enrolled. This definition, which is particular to England's national policy context, is adopted from the current national, legal, procedural and statutory framework (DfEE, 1998). As such, the term, “exclusion”, in this study refers to the process adopted in English schools, following the statutory framework, to expel permanently (known as “permanent exclusion”) or temporarily (known as “fixed-term exclusion”) (Ibid.).

The formal definition of exclusion presupposes that the student is being held to account for behaviour for which he or she is entirely responsible. A problem with the procedural terminology is that the phenomenon of exclusion is never fully reflected in its legal definition. Exclusion from school, I suggest, is an occurrence and phenomenon located within a wider local and national context. In other words, the causes and dynamics of exclusion extend far beyond the procedures involved in removing a student from school for behavioural reasons, and may have as much to do with the factors that influence how teachers and schools respond to a student's needs. Indeed, a major motivation of this study is to suggest different ways of examining the relationship between exclusion and the contextual influences of national policies and local school practices.

Another complexity in defining the causes and dynamics of exclusion pertains to the kinds of difficulties and problems which are often associated with pupils who are expelled and suspended from school. Indeed, the symptoms and factors which

can lead to and result from a pupil's exclusion from school are frequently linked with other forms of exclusion from society and education. It is perhaps helpful, here, to point out that the concept of exclusion (again referring to the process used by schools to remove students) is one that, within the research literature, is often discussed as a consequence and outcome of school disaffection and other forms of exclusion from education and society. As Parsons (1996) explains, "Exclusions are at one end of the spectrum of challenges facing education and associated agencies. Disaffection and under-performance in school are the broad area out of which the crisis of exclusion emerges" (p. 185).

In this wider sense, other forms of exclusion, not linked to the procedural definition, include:

- *Exclusion due to disengagement* (e.g. a student who does not attend school, misses or attends classes, but does not participate in learning might be seen as being disaffected by or excluded from learning);
- *Exclusion from the mainstream curriculum* (e.g. a student who is streamed or labelled according to his or ability may be excluded from taking {i.e. deprived of access to} certain types of curriculum and lessons); and
- *Exclusion from society* (e.g. a student who is from a socially disadvantaged family or ethnic minority background may be interpreted as being socially marginalised and "excluded" from participating in mainstream society).

Although these forms of exclusion might raise a particular set of issues and dynamics, which may be distinctly different from the process of school expulsion and suspension, they all represent a form of *exclusion from learning* -- regardless of whether it results from individual choice, social factors, or school processes. For this reason, the causes, dynamics, and consequences of school exclusion can become difficult to separate and distinguish from those of other forms of social exclusion. For example, under the wider view of "exclusion from society" (often

described as “social exclusion”), the process of school exclusion is seen as the removal of an individual’s opportunity and access to formal education, and work. In this way, the consequences of school exclusion can lead to other forms of social exclusion such as unemployment, ill health, and crime – all of which can reinforce an individual’s disaffection or disenfranchisement from mainstream society.

Similarly, a pupil’s expulsion or suspension from school might be linked to a series of experiences within school in which a pupil has become disaffected by the curriculum and “self-excludes” himself or herself from the learning process (Riley & Rustique-Forrester, 2002). This form of self-exclusion from the curriculum is associated with a range of school factors, such as a school’s decisions about a pupil’s ability, placement, streaming and labelling. These types of school-based decisions also provide an important context for interpreting a student’s difficulties in the classroom. In this sense, school-level factors have been linked to the reasons for expulsion and suspension from school (Ainscow, 1991; Cooper, 1993; Docking, 1987; Galloway, 1982, 1995; Galloway et al, 1985).

## **2.2 Historical and political background**

This section now turns to discuss briefly, two aspects of the history of exclusion: first, a history within England's schools of marginalising and excluding certain individual pupils and social groups; and second, a more recent political history in which school exclusion has become enshrined in and legitimised through national policy. I suggest here that the historical and political roots of school exclusion can be traced to the traditional practices of schools as well as to the policy changes that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.

### 2.2.1 Historical forms of exclusion: segregation and removal

The history of exclusion from school is steeped in a longstanding tradition of segregating and excluding certain types and groups of students from mainstream school and curriculum, mainly through labelling, removal and placement into specialised units located off-site from school. Kinder et al (1999) explain that, “Historically, most responses to behavioural problems within schools have focused on segregation -- removing the child from school, rather than supporting them within mainstream education” (p. 4). Studies show that throughout the 1960s, students whose behavioural problems were interpreted by schools as challenges to mainstream classroom teachers were frequently labelled “ESN” or “educationally sub-normal”. These students were often removed from school and assigned to special units. For example, Bernard Coard’s (1971) study, *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Sub-Normal in the British School System*, found that disproportionate numbers of black students were being systematically excluded from mainstream schools and labelled “educationally sub-normal.” Coard (1971) found disturbing evidence of black pupils inappropriately being placed into schools designated for pupils with emotional, behavioural, and learning difficulties. Cooper et al (1994) also suggest that other groups of students who have been historically excluded from school have been those with physical or learning disabilities (ranging from mild, severe, and profound), who, for decades have been “written off as incapable or unsuitable for education” (p. 37).

The passage of the 1970 Education Act marked an important shift in educational policy from the concept of “exclusion” to the notion of “inclusion”, as schools were encouraged to include within mainstream education those children with a range of learning disabilities. The subsequent publication of the Warnock Report (1978) further called upon schools to re-examine their curriculum and teaching practices in relation to students with special educational needs, particularly those pupils with emotional, behavioural, and learning difficulties. The Warnock report also criticised the use of the “educationally subnormal” or “ESN” label, and called upon local education authorities and schools to provide sufficient evidence, clarification, and justification for using the ESN label to exclude students with perceived difficulties.

Yet, despite this national effort to shift schools’ and teachers’ attitudes from exclusion to inclusion, the use of “off-site units” established by LEAs for disruptive pupils flourished throughout the 1970s as a popular response to pupils with behavioural problems (Lovey et al, 1993; Garner, 1996). The use of these units as “sin bins” for disruptive pupils raised growing concern over disproportionate numbers of ethnic minority students who were being placed in these units and being transferred to special schools (Francis, 1979; Brooks, 1981). Although some researchers criticised the use of these units as “dumping grounds” for schools (Brooks, 1981) and others questioned their effectiveness in addressing the causes of disruptive behaviour (Basini, 1981), the use of the “off-site unit” still exists today – with debates continuing over how such units are used to remove disruptive students from school (Hayden, 1997; Sproson, 1997; Kinder et al, 2000).

### **2.2.2 The Conservative reforms and legitimisation of exclusion into policy**

The formal procedure of exclusion and the current national policy legitimising its use in schools can be traced to specific changes in national legislation that occurred in 1980s and 1990s (Harris & Eden, 2000). Kinder et al (1999) observe that “from the 1980s onward, there was growing concern, often fuelled by sensationalist reporting, that disruptive behaviour within schools and exclusions from schools was on the increase” (p.7). Parsons (1999) suggests that beginning in the 1980s, major changes in national policy established new categories of exclusions under which schools could legitimately expel and suspend students. A major change occurred in 1986:

The 1986 Education Act changed the regulations in respect of exclusions, leading to three types of exclusion: fixed, indefinite, and permanent. With a fixed term exclusion the pupil is given a definite date to return to school and indefinite exclusion involves the pupils remaining out of school pending investigations, and if “permanently excluded, the pupil is not permitted to return to the original school”. There are statutory procedures for carrying out this process, involving governors upholding, ratifying or overturning decisions (Gersch & Nolan, 1994, p.16).

The legitimisation of school exclusion into national policy, and its consequence for how schools view and use expulsions and suspensions today, cannot be fully understood without close scrutiny of the educational reforms of the 1980s. The Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher (in the 1980s) and of John Major’s administration (in the early 1990s) brought about the implementation of radical changes to the educational system, including a new system of national curriculum, examinations, assessments, parental choice, national inspection, and

centralised standards of accountability. Some have suggested that Thatcher's and Major's educational policies widely rejected the view that social policy should address issues of social inequality, and thus educational reforms did not appear to recognise social disadvantage as a barrier to educational access and quality (Ball, 1994; Riley, 1998; Docking, 1996). Rather, the view of Thatcher's and Major's administrations was that schools were poorly managed, and that local education authorities were to blame. This set of beliefs set the foundation for a series of radical policy reforms which radically changed the context of teaching and learning throughout schools in England.

Essentially, the Conservative reforms implemented throughout the 1980s and early 1990s included two contradictory processes of decentralisation and centralisation. There is widespread agreement that the impact of these “market-driven” reforms aimed at “raising standards” profoundly affected how schools and teachers began to view their role, purpose, and functions (Woods et al, 1997; Helsby, 1999; Whitty et al, 1998). First, there was a shift in funding and functions from local education authorities under the banner of “locally managed schools” (LMS). School funding was devolved, giving schools an independent budget and linking the number of pupils on roll to their funding (Whitty et al, 1998). Second, greater power and choice was given to parents to select the “best” school for their children, the theory being that schools and teachers would have to “compete” against each other to attract students (Oplatka, 2002). At the same time, powers previously held by local education authorities were reduced, shifting crucial decisions about schooling and educational policy-making to the central government.

The confluence of national educational policies implemented through the 1988 Education Reform Act not only brought about major changes in the basic structures of schooling (Woods et al, 1997, Walford, 1990), but were found to affect the teaching profession in profoundly negative ways. Studies throughout the 1990s attributed the impact of these policies to increasing teacher stress (McEwen & Thompson, 1997); reducing teachers' professional autonomy and flexibility (Silvernail, 1996; McMahon, 2000); lowering teachers' professional morale (Barton, 1991; Bottery & Wright, 1996; McEwen & Thompson, 1997); creating major dilemmas in teachers' classroom practices and decisions (Boaler et al, 2000; Parsons & Howlett, 1995; Silcock, 1990, 1992).

Indeed, researchers who have analysed the current system of schooling over the past decade have suggested that: (1) greater competition between schools (Whitty et al, 1998); (2) "the tyranny of league tables" (Robinson, 1998) and (3) the standardisation of pedagogy through national assessments, exams, and the National Curriculum (Hacker & Rowe, 1997; Helsby & McCulloch, 1997; McEwen & Thompson, 1997) have created a set of pressures and dynamics that have profoundly changed schools' practices and has led to the "reconstruction" of teachers' identities (Moore et al, 2002) and the "reconceptualisation" of how teachers view their role and identity (Oplatka, 2002).

It is also against this very backdrop that a number of studies on exclusion have described the context in which exclusions rose nationally throughout the 1990s (Blythe & Milner, 1996; Cooper et al, 2000; Hayden, 1997; Munn et al, 2000;

Osler & Hill, 1999; Parsons, 1999). Other researchers examining other forms of school disaffection, such as absenteeism and truancy (Reid, 1987; Hoyle, 1998); emotional and behaviour difficulties (Cooper et al, 1993); and school discipline and management (Docking, 1987; Lovey et al, 1993) – similarly suggest that the impact of educational reforms contributed negatively to the rise in exclusions:

Undoubtedly, the problem [of school exclusion] has been made. Exclusions surprised and troubled politicians of all parties, but they were the direct outcome of Tory politics (Parsons, 1999, p. 22).

At present, the core features and basic organising policies, which were put into place by the previous Conservative government, have continued under the present Labour government (Ball, 2001). According to Trowler (2002), “After four years of Labour government, 1997-2001, remarkably little had changed in terms of compulsory education, the period seeing a continuation of much that the Conservatives had put into place” (p. 37).

In particular, the centralisation of educational policy-making, which grew under previous Conservative administrations, appears to have been reinforced by Labour Government initiatives such as that of the National Literacy Strategy (DfES, 1998), a programme of teaching reading in primary schools which details the amount of time to spend and what teachers were to do in very specific terms (Trowler, 2002, p. 22). Other examples of the dominating influence of central government can be seen in the expanded powers of OFSTED to inspect local education authorities, the continued ranking of schools through performance targets and league tables, a recently proposed system of national teacher appraisal based on pay-for-performance (DfES, 1999d); and

national threats to close down schools which fail to meet specified national targets.

## **2.3 The current context: Exclusion in the 1990s and 2000s**

The current context of school exclusion is one that has attracted high levels of public attention and concern from policymakers, first, in responding to the steep rise in exclusion rates between 1990 and 1998 and second, in relation to highly publicised controversy over decisions to exclude pupils.

### **2.3.1 Media and public perceptions of exclusion**

The part played by newspapers and television in creating, reinforcing, and transmitting images of failing schools, poor teachers, and disruptive pupils is public and pervasive (Parsons, 1999, p. 127).

How the media portrays exclusion is a point worth mentioning because it illustrates strongly and entrenched is the belief that exclusion is a problem of disruptive behaviour. In news articles and media reports, for example, school exclusion is largely presented and portrayed as a legitimate response and acceptable form of punishment for disruptive behaviour (Kinder et al, 1999; Parsons, 1999). Indeed, much of the public's concern over the rise in school exclusion appears to be fuelled by concern about the disruption caused by pupils with disruptive behaviour.

One interpretation of this "moral panic" view of exclusion could be the behavioural reasons that are most frequently reported by schools for suspending and expelling students. Indeed, the reasons commonly associated with school

expulsion and suspension include: a) general misconduct; b) a failure to respect or comply with school authorities; c) a more serious breach and violation of school rules involving drugs or alcohol; or d) more serious cases involving criminal offences, such as physical assault, theft, or vandalism (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). However, studies suggest that most exclusions are for non-compliance or disrespect (Parsons, 1999; OFSTED, 1996; Gillborn, 1996), and very few for behaviours that threaten safety. This suggests that exclusion is no longer becoming a policy of “last resort”.

### **2.3.2 Current national policy guidance on exclusion**

The current national guidance on school exclusion (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; DfEE, 1999a) states that:

- Exclusion should be used “only in response to serious breaches of a school’s policy on behaviour or criminal law”.
- It should be used as a last resort when all other reasonable steps have been taken and when allowing the child to remain in school would be seriously detrimental to the education or welfare of the pupil or others.
- Exclusion is not appropriate for minor misconduct, such as occasional failure to do homework or to bring dinner [lunch] money.
- Pregnancy is not in itself a sufficient reason for exclusion.

Although the category of indefinite exclusions was abolished in 1993, subsequent Conservative administrations, and the present Labour government have essentially maintained the general policy on exclusions, which was set out by the School and

Standards Framework Act (DfEE, 1998).<sup>1</sup> At present, the current national policy limits the categories of exclusion to permanent exclusions and fixed-term suspensions for a maximum of 45 days. Following the issuance of national guidance in *Circular 10/99* (DfEE 1999a) and *Circular 11/99* (DfEE, 1999b), primary and secondary schools are now required to convene a meeting of school governors for every school exclusion that is over five days. The assumptions underlying this policy are twofold: first, that schools will be less inclined to use exclusion as a way of managing behaviour because they will have to call a meeting of governors; and second, that schools will be held more accountable for decisions to exclude by their school governors. It remains to be seen, however, whether and how such policy measures will indeed curb the use and length of exclusions. In fact, the national rate of exclusions has recently accelerated, as the next section will show. If the past trends suggested by Stirling (1992) are any indication of how schools might react and respond to greater restrictions, schools will find ways “around” these national requirements – either by excluding pupils informally (a practice that appears to already be used in schools, but is difficult to prove and track) or to use exclusion more frequently, but for fewer days.

Many pupils who are permanently excluded from schools and who cannot be placed by local education authorities into new schools are frequently placed into pupil referral units (PRUs), a term that has replaced the old term, “off-site unit”. Through PRUs, pupils who are excluded receive alternative educational provision.

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<sup>1</sup> The School and Standards Framework Act contained directions and sections on: the power of headteachers to exclude; the duty to inform parents regarding the exclusion of pupils; the function of the governing body in relation to exclusion; the appeals procedures for exclusion; and guidance on the exclusion of pupils. See Kinder et al (1999, p 5) for a detailed timeline of key changes in legislation and policy on exclusion between 1992 and 1998.

A number of studies and reports have criticised the use of PRUs as an effective response to exclusion. In one report, excluded pupils in PRUs were found to receive less than ten percent of full-time education, often amounting to two to three hours of tuition a week (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996 cited in Kinder et al, 1999, p. 9). Other studies claimed that the teaching in some PRUs was frequently of low quantity and quality (OFSTED, 1996) and did not help excluded students to be integrated successfully into mainstream (Cooper, 1993; Parsons, 1999). OFSTED's (1996) report claimed that poorly run PRUs could actually exacerbate the behavioural problems that may have led a student to become excluded in the first place. However, Pomeroy's (2000) study of the experiences of excluded pupils, pointed to the importance of the teacher-student relationship (Pomeroy, 1999), concluding that the informal atmosphere and individualised support often provided by PRUs allows pupils to experience greater opportunities for listening and sharing.

The processes used by schools, their interpretation of national policy guidance, and decisions about when and how to exclude a pupil can vary greatly across local education authorities as well as from school to school. Even in different schools with similar student population, the reasons for exclusion have been shown to range from relatively minor incidents to serious criminal offences (OFSTED, 1996; Gillborn, 1996). In practice and perception, therefore, the rate and incidents of exclusion can vary in schools for a variety of different reasons. This very fact raises important questions about the role of schools in determining how, when, and why exclusion occurs.

### 2.3.3 National trends and patterns of school exclusion

During the past decade, an examination of exclusion trends and patterns show that nationally, exclusions increased between 1992 and 1997 at an unprecedented and exponential rate (Gillborn, 1996; Watkins, 1998; Parsons, 2000). For example, in England alone, the total number of students who were permanently excluded from schools increased from 3,833 students in 1991/92 to 12,668 in 1996/97 (Parsons, 1999). Depending on the source, estimates can vary. However, the evidence suggests that the total number of permanent exclusions for all schools peaked sometime between 1996/97 at 13,581 (according to Parsons, 1999) or 1997 at 12,668 (according to DfES, 2002).

Table 2.1 provides the figures for the past decade, for all phases of schools:

	Primary		Secondary		Special		Total
<b>1990-91<sup>a</sup></b>	378	**	2,532	**	**	**	2,910
<b>1991-92<sup>a</sup></b>	537	42%	3,296	30%	**	**	3,833
<b>1992-93<sup>b</sup></b>	1,215	+126%	7,421	125%	**	**	8,636
<b>1993-94<sup>c</sup></b>	1,291	+6%	9,433	27%	457	**	11,181
<b>1994-95<sup>d</sup></b>	1,438	+11%	10,519	12%	501	10%	12,458
<b>1995-96<sup>e</sup></b>	1,872/1608	+30%	11,159/10,344	6%	550/524	10%	13,581/12,476
<b>1996-97<sup>f</sup></b>	1,856/1573	-1%	10,800/10,463	-2%	707/632	29%	13,453/12,668
<b>1997-98<sup>g</sup></b>	1,796/1539	-3%	10,639/10,187	-2%	605/572	-14%	13,041/12,298
<b>1998-99<sup>h</sup></b>	1,366	-11%	8,636	-15%	436	-24%	10,438
<b>1999-00<sup>h</sup></b>	1,226	-10%	6,713	-22%	384	-12%	8,323
<b>2000-01<sup>h</sup></b>	1,460	+19%	7,410	+10%	340	-12%	9,210

Notes on figures: reported above:

\*\* No data available

<sup>a</sup> It has been suggested (eg. Parsons, 1999; Stirling, 1992) that the National Exclusions Reporting System figures are an under-recording, based on incomplete responses from schools. The yearly figures were also April to April, rather than for a school year. See further discussion in Section 2.3.5 of this chapter.

<sup>b</sup> From Hayden (1997).

<sup>c</sup> The figures for permanent exclusions for 1993/94 for all 109 LEAs in England were estimated from responses from 101 LEAs (DfE, 1995).

<sup>d</sup> The figures for 1994/95 is for all 109 LEAs and is estimated from responses from 41 LEAs (Parsons, 1999).

<sup>e</sup> The first figure for 1995/96 were estimated from returns from 91 of 117 LEAs (Parsons, 1999). The second figure is from DfES (2002).

<sup>f</sup> The first figure for 1996/97 were estimated from returns from 102 LEAs (Parsons, 1999). The second figure is from DfES (2002).

<sup>g</sup> The first figures for 1997/98 were estimated from returns from 119 LEAs (Parsons, 1999). The second figure is from DfES (2002).

<sup>h</sup> All of these figures are from DfES (2002).

Source: Adapted from Parsons (1999, p. 23) and DfES (2002)

Although the total number of exclusions fell in 1998/99, and then again in the 1999/2000, exclusions appear to be rising again. Although the majority of exclusions continue to occur in secondary schools, the most recent data for 2000/01 shows that exclusions are rising far more steeply in primary schools than in secondary schools. Between 1998 and 2000, exclusions for all schools appeared to be decreasing (from 10,438 to 8,323); however, as Table 2.1 shows, the most recent government figures on exclusion suggest that rates are rising yet again (DfES, 2002).

### **2.3.4 Who gets excluded?**

Approximately 25,000 children are not in school at any one time – mostly because of exclusion (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). The total number of pupils

who are excluded from schools represents a small percentage of the total school population (less than 1%) when compared to the overall school population (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). As Table 2.1 shows, the national trend is that the overwhelming majority of exclusions occur in secondary schools. A number of government documents and policy reports (DfEE, 1997; House of Commons, 1998, Social Exclusion Unit, 1998) have also found that the majority of students who are excluded are teenage adolescents and boys. In 2000/01, boys made up 83 per cent of all permanent exclusions and around 60 per cent of permanent exclusions were pupils aged between 13 and 15. (Ibid.). Statistical analyses of the demographic patterns and socio-economic trends of exclusion conducted by the national government (DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2002) and the New Policy Institute (Howarth et al, 1999) also suggest that following groups are being disproportionately excluded.

- *Children with special educational needs (SEN)* are seven times more likely to be excluded than pupils without statements (DfEE, 1999c).
- *Children from certain ethnic minority backgrounds.* Afro-Caribbean groups of children are between three and five times more likely to be excluded than white pupils (Gillborn, 1995; DfEE, 1999c).
- *Children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds* (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998);
- *Children in foster care* (are ten times more likely) (Ibid.);

### **2.3.5 Establishing the “official” extent of exclusion**

In discussing the demographics of exclusion, Abdelnoor (1999) suggests that “It is difficult to accurately describe a situation that is constantly changing” (p. 16). Indeed, while exclusion figures are compiled for LEAs, they are generally not

published for each school. Profiles of pupils who are excluded thus continue to be based on comprehensive surveys of LEAs (see, e.g. Parsons, 1996, 1999; DfES, 2002) which makes it difficult to detect and study how dynamics differ from school to school.

Still, we do know much about the national school trends on exclusion. The groups of students who are disproportionately excluded has also been well documented by a number of studies (Parsons 1996; 1999) and by recent government reports (DfEE, 1999c). However, as was illustrated in Table 2.1, there is some variation in the “official” figures. Other reports also indicate that current numbers are likely to be an underestimate of the actual numbers, and that accurately determining the number of pupils who become excluded can be difficult (Kinder et al, 1999; Stirling 1992).

Kinder et al (1999) explain that, “Nationally, it has been difficult to quantify rates of, and increases in, exclusions, due to a paucity of reliable data”. The problem, as pointed out by Kinder et al (1999), Lovey et al (1993) and Stirling (1992) is threefold. First, the national government only introduced the National Exclusions Reporting System (NERS) in 1990. Second, schools and local education authorities were first required to report numbers of permanent and fixed-term exclusions that were above five days. Third, NERS began as a voluntary system, thus only revealing numbers that schools and authorities were willing to report. Finally, prior to 1993, NERS only required schools to report permanent and fixed-term exclusions, but not indefinite exclusions.

Studies published in the early 1990s (Lovey et al, 1993; Stirling, 1992) suggest that the actual number of excluded students is far greater than the currently published figures. Both have suggested that schools were increasingly resorting to exclusions for reasons that were not being reported. These include exclusions for reasons ranging from violations of dress code to less serious incidents of misconduct. Stirling (1992) also highlighted a significant number of “involuntary” withdrawals in which parents were persuaded by headteachers to withdraw and transfer their child another school.

Vulliamy and Webb (2000), in describing the difficulties associated with interpreting school exclusion rates, argue strongly that such rates are socially constructed reflections of the wide variations of meaning accorded by different groups, which range across different social settings, a view derived from Cicourel and Kitsuse’s (1963) conceptualisation of official statistics. In describing the limitations of evaluating interventions designed to reduce exclusions, Vuillamy and Webb (2000), point to the “unreliability of schools’ exclusion rates” (p.3) suggesting that “recorded changes in [exclusions] data may reveal more about institutional responses to government target-setting than about the impact of a specific educational innovation” (p.9). Vuilliamy & Webb (2000) also point out studies (e.g. Stirling, 1992; Davies, 1998) which found that motives for schools and teachers not reporting or categorising exclusions varied, from wanting to avoid the time-consuming bureaucratic procedures associated with reporting an official exclusion, to not wanting to disadvantage students who hoped to obtain work after school or continue with further education. Finally, Vulliamy and Webb (2000) also note additional difficulties in comparing and interpreting school

exclusion figures when behaviour that might lead to exclusion in one school, does not result in exclusion in another. Similarly, Munn et al (2000) found that “what counts as a high or low excluding school is not straightforward” and explains that the exclusion rate of a school can be defined in different ways: “The exclusion rate can relate to the number of *pupils* excluded, the number of *exclusions*, the *loss of school days*, or to a combination of these (p. 23).

### **2.3.6 Estimating the costs and consequences of exclusion**

Accompanying the alarm over the rise in exclusions are a number of economic, social, and moral concerns, which have been raised by several national reports (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996; Pearce & Hillman, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998):

One set of concerns are the economic costs associated with exclusion. Every school exclusion translates to an additional cost for schools, local education authorities, and social agencies, creating greater financial burdens to the public purse (Kinder et al, 1999; Parsons, 1999). In 1996-97, the estimated annual total cost of exclusion, which included monitoring and provision for excluded pupils totalled £81 million. Replacement education for excluded children, which includes home tuition, pupil referral units, and other forms of alternative provision costs an average of £4,300 per pupil, nearly twice that for mainstream schooling (Donovan, 1998). Another study found that the costs for PRU and alternative provision for recently excluded pupils ranged between £3,000 and £6,000 annually (Kinder et al, 2000). Another study found the cost of ongoing provision for “lost” children (children who were excluded and unable to be

placed in PRUs based in the LEA) to be £10,000 per pupil (Kinder et al, 2000, p. 136)

A second category of concerns relates to the social consequences of school exclusion and its long-term impact on individuals who do not receive schooling. Without access to formal education, the risk of other forms of social disaffection such as ill health, unemployment, a lack of housing, and crime increase significantly (Hayton, 1999; Pearce & Hillman, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). For example, young people who are either truanting or excluded from school commit 1 in 3 youth offences. Approximately 20% of children who are excluded encounter social service, and 10% use health service resources.

A third set of concerns has been raised over the moral and ethical implications of exclusion and the lack of educational opportunity for pupils who are excluded from school. A number of researchers have suggested that exclusion from school fundamentally represents a denial of a student's access to schooling and a right to education (Parsons 1999; Osler & Hill 1999; Commission for Racial Equality, 1996).

According to a recent study on the reintegration of excluded pupils into the mainstream school, more than two-thirds of secondary pupils and one-third of primary pupils never return to mainstream education (Parsons, 2000). One-third of expelled primary pupils also remain out of school for more than three terms, in contravention of government guidelines, which say they should be returned to

ordinary schooling within a term (Ibid.). One-third of local education authorities were also unable to trace all their expelled pupils within six months after the academic year in which they were excluded. Although the number of pupils excluded from school may be small in relation to the total student population, these figures translate into a disturbing national picture of thousands of pupils who are “disappearing” from the educational system and not receiving the educational provision entitled to other pupils.

In December 1997, the current Labour government established a Social Exclusion Unit. Its remit included the monitoring of exclusions and its report published in 1998 committed the government to reduce, by 2002, the number of permanent exclusions by one-third (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). Specific pressure was directed to local education authorities, which were required to demonstrate through “Education Development Plans” and “Behaviour Support Plans” how they intend to reduce the number of school exclusion incidents. Four years onward, the most recent estimates suggest that this target has not been met (DfES, 2002). More worryingly, as I will show in Chapter Five, incidents of both fixed-term and permanent exclusions in primary and secondary school appear to be rising yet again.

### **2.3.7 A global context of exclusion?**

In considering the rise in school exclusions, some have suggested a wider global context in which school exclusions should be viewed. Several researchers and international organisations have linked the effects of global social and economic changes to growing levels of social disaffection among contemporary youth

(McDonald, 1997; Pearce & Hillman 1998; Parsons 1999). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for example, concluded that “many industrialised countries are experiencing unacceptably low levels of educational attainment and high levels of school drop-out amongst youth who are not disabled, and who appear to have the capacity to fulfil a national curriculum” (1996, p.7). Pointing to this globalised context, Parsons (1999) suggests that although school exclusions in the UK might be viewed as a “local difficulty” occurring within a specific “nation-state”, it would be “an impoverished sociology that worked with that view” (p. xii) and suggest that “the problems of unmotivated and disaffected young people should be seen more broadly....within a restricting welfare policy architecture” (p.2).

The context for the national rise in exclusion rates in England throughout the 1990s might well extend beyond than schooling and behaviour, and situated, as Parsons (1999) suggests, within the wider context of social policy and perhaps, wider global forces. In the current policy discourse, the emphasis is on “social inclusion” (e.g. DfEE 1999a, 1999b). Yet, the primary concern of the national policy texts focus on the improvement of school behaviour, assigning schools with the primary responsibility for reducing exclusion by improving their practices. Yet, there appear to be conflicting dynamics between national policies on accountability and target setting (see, e.g. Fielding 1999) which narrowly define what counts as achievement, and the desire for inclusion, which attempts to expand the learning opportunities for pupils who may be under-achieving and socially marginalised. Despite these contradictory tensions, the ways in which these pressures may be aggravating how schools perceive and use

exclusion is hardly acknowledged in national government policy proposals, and there is limited discussion within the research literature on school exclusion. It is the national policy climate in England's schools and classrooms, one in which "unprecedented numbers of children being excluded from school, the rate being far in excess of that in any other western European country" (Parsons 1999, p. 1) that must clearly be taken into consideration.

## **2.4 Research views and perspectives on school exclusion**

This section of the chapter turns to a more detailed review and critique of the research and policy literature on school exclusion. The discussion presented here is based on a review of: a) published research studies, including journal articles, books, and chapters; b) national reports, including government summaries, reports, and press statements; and c) news and media articles.

The body of research and policy literature reviewed shows that there are a range of views and perspectives about the causes and dynamics of school exclusion.

- *Explanations that focus on the individual student.* This view considers a pupil's psychological or sociological background to be a critical factor in describing the causes and dynamics of exclusion. Exclusion is viewed in terms of a pupil's individual characteristics, such as his or her behaviour, personality, family characteristics, culture, race, gender, and class.
- *Explanations that focus on the processes and practices of schools and teachers.* Exclusion is viewed in terms of the influence of the school and teachers. School culture, ethos, and management are viewed as critical factors in managing student behaviour, issues of school discipline, and pupil

learning. Teachers' attitudes toward pupils, beliefs about teaching, level of training, teaching skills, and pedagogical style are seen as important factors in explaining disruptive behaviour and preventing exclusion.

- *Explanations that examine a wider range of external social and policy factors.* Exclusion is interpreted in terms of wider socioeconomic forces such as race, class, gender, and culture, as well as political factors, such as the influence of local and national educational policy.

#### 2.4.1 Explanations that focus on individual pupil factors

This view of exclusion locates the causes of exclusion within the individual pupil. Explanations focus primarily on the psychological and social background characteristics of students in order to explain why exclusion occurs with some students, and not others. Such studies tend to focus on a pupil's disruptive behaviour, perceived lack of discipline, and deviant personalities. These studies vary, however, in their explanations of the factors that actually lead to exclusion and reveal the following themes:

- *Exclusion as a problem that occurs with "deviant", "deficient", and "disruptive" students* (Chazan, 1962; York et al, 1972; Denny, 1974; and Reid, 1987).
- *Exclusion as a problem that results from "feckless" parents and "bad" parenting skills* (York et al, 1972).

The traditional view of these studies, which tend to focus on the psychological and social characteristics of students, explains in part, how the research field has come to view the kinds of behaviour and circumstances that is perceived as leading to exclusion. A criticism of this view of exclusion, however, is the "blame-the-victim" approach that is implied in attributing individual behaviour to the causes of exclusion. An example of this is OFSTED's study (1996) which revealed that over

60% of students who were excluded had recently experienced the death of a friend, family, or relative. Although such findings suggest that exclusion may be linked to the complex behaviour that arises from a range of stress-related factors (Hayden, 1997; OFSTED, 1996) or frustration with learning (Docking, 1987), Castle & Parsons (1997) argues that, “whatever form the unacceptable behaviour takes, the causes cannot be assumed to originate with the child” (p.3). A report issued by the House of Commons (1998) attempted to convey a similar sentiment, but closer scrutiny of its text shows how deeply entrenched is the individual pathological view of pupils. In explaining the basis of using the term, “disaffected children”, to describe the focus and title of the report (which included pupils excluded from school), the committee wrote,

We do not wish to imply that [a young person’s] attitude towards the education system is “their fault”, but because it is a valid description of their current state. For whatever reason (and a variety of factors are involved...) they have become switched off from, or disaffected with, the education and training opportunities available to them (p. vii).

Yet, despite acknowledging the wider institutional context of schooling, in the section called “the nature of disaffection” (Ibid) which follows immediately, a list of “characteristics of the group” (Ibid.) is accompanied by the explanation that “it may be useful to distinguish a range of characteristics, some of which can be quantified objectively, while others are more subjective” (Ibid). The report text then goes on to explain that disaffected children are “likely to come from difficult and disrupted family backgrounds ... they frequently lack self-confidence and self-esteem” ...[and] they tend to have few ‘basic skills’....” (Ibid.)

#### **2.4.2 Explanations that focus on school- and teacher-related factors**

This line of research argues that school- and teacher- related factors are critical factors in explaining the causes and dynamics of exclusion (Bradley, 1986; Galloway, 1982; Galloway et al, 1985; Lovey & Cooper, 1997; Maxwell, 1987; McLean, 1987; McManus, 1987, 1995; Kinder et al, 1999). These researchers argue strongly that exclusion is not simply related to a student's sociological and psychological background, but that schools and teachers play an influential role in how a pupil's behaviour is managed and viewed. This research view of the causes and dynamics of exclusion arises from a line of school-based studies which emerged in the 1980s (Galloway et al, 1982; Mortimore, 1999; Reynolds, 1984; Reynolds & Sullivan, 1981; Rutter, 1983; Rutter et al, 1979) and found that exclusion rates and practices differed across schools with similar populations of students.

A number of researchers conclude that differences in school ethos, management, structures, values, teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and pedagogical practices, are important factors in explaining school exclusion:

- *Exclusion as a crisis of a student's disaffection from school and disengagement from learning* (Lovey & Cooper, 1997; Parsons, 1996; Docking, 1987).
- *Exclusion in relation to schools' and teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the purpose of exclusion* (Evans, 1999; Galloway, 1995; Kinder et al, 1997; 1999)
- *Exclusion as a reflection of school ethos, staff culture, leadership, policies* (Galloway, 1995; Lovey & Cooper, 1997; McLean, 1987; McManus, 1987, 1995).
- *Exclusion in relation to teachers' abilities, practices and training* (Lovey & Cooper, 1997; Maxwell, 1987; Rayner, 1998)

This research view of exclusion is useful for offering a range of explanations for the reasons that schools exclude. Kinder et al's (1997, 1999, 2000) studies on exclusion suggest that schools perceive exclusion as a necessary sanction to have available. Kinder et al's (1997) national survey of teachers' and educational professionals' attitudes towards exclusion revealed a range of reasons provided by schools for using exclusion:

The purpose of exclusion was seen as: an act of removal, in which pupils are removed to protect other children; an act of reprisal, which shows a non-acceptance of certain behaviour and which is a deterrent to others; and an avenue for remedy, which is in the excluded pupil's best interest, whereby he or she has failed to cope within the mainstream and therefore requires a change of context (pp. 2-3).

Galloway (1995) found that perceptions about the necessity of exclusion ranged considerably across schools and practitioners. He concluded that "while exclusions might serve to act principally as a safety valve for teachers .... all the evidence suggests that headteachers vary widely in the length of the fuse which lights it". (p. 54).

In deciding whether or not to exclude, headteachers are likely to be influenced by concerns about the school's reputation, the need to support their staff, the effect of their decision on other pupils in the school, and the effect of the pupil in question" (Ibid.)

This area of research on school exclusion implies that schools exert a major influence on how disaffection and disruptive behaviour is handled within the school. Indeed, whilst national studies reported a national increase in the number of permanent exclusions throughout the 1990s, closer examination of exclusion patterns reveals that, at the local level, exclusion rates varied

significantly across different schools and areas, including those with similar student intakes (OFSTED, 1996). An analysis of national exclusion data conducted by Imich (1994) suggested that a minority of schools exclude the majority of pupils.

Two possible explanations for these differences between schools can be found in the research literature. One view is based on a longstanding historical tradition of pointing to the socio-economic characteristics of the school's student population, suggesting that school exclusion rates are higher in schools where pupils come from a low socio-economic background (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). Explanations within this view are also steeped in psychological- and sociological- theories that children from socially impoverished backgrounds are more likely to exhibit difficult behaviour as well as lack parental support, rather than the view that teachers and schools can make a difference in how children experience learning.

Other studies, however, have suggested a second view: That how teachers perceive and interact with students is a key factor in school exclusion. Hart et al's (1995) study, which concluded that the extent to which exclusion is used in schools is not an indicator of the extent of difficult behaviour, presents a powerful challenge to "conventional wisdom". Such findings suggest that rates of exclusion differ between schools not because of differences between pupil intake and behaviour, but because of how different schools and teachers responded to pupils. Hart et al's (1995) study suggests that exclusion should not be interpreted as an issue of behaviour or school policy, but as a reflection of the

factors which affect the organisational conditions in which teachers work and interact with students.

While schools' explanations and interpretations of their exclusion policies and practices might illuminate their explicit concerns, Galloway (1995) points out that identifying schools' underlying motivations, such as those which emanate from policy pressures, might be difficult for teachers and headteachers to admit (Kinder et al, 1999). One problem in taking a school-based view of exclusion is the implication that schools need only change their policies, practices, and approaches to reduce and prevent exclusion. Such a view does not necessarily take into account the influence of external factors.

### **2.4.3 Explanations that focus on political, social, economic, and policy factors**

There are two interpretations of exclusion within this view:

- *Explanations that interpret exclusion as a form of racial, social, economic, or political discrimination.* This view of exclusion stems from the historical practices of schools in excluding particular groups of pupils through segregation and discrimination. This interpretation of exclusion suggests that school exclusion is itself, a reflection of socially constructed expectations and wider political beliefs about individual or groups of pupils from certain social, racial, or cultural backgrounds. Researchers with this view suggest that exclusion is a politically- and socially- constructed mechanism for controlling access to education and schooling (Gillborn, 1995; Osler & Hill, 1999; Parsons, 1999). As an example, Gillborn (1990)

suggests that different perceptions of behaviour, stereotyping, and other subtle cultural misunderstanding may lead to the behaviour of black pupils being interpreted by schools as challenging, possibly explaining why black students are disproportionately excluded.

Although this view of exclusion focuses on the individual student and the dynamics of a student's social background, the problem of exclusion is constructed *not* as a problem of the student, but as a reflection and dynamic of racism, gender- and class- stereotypes embedded in social norms and schooling. For example, Osler & Hill (1999) in examining the role of racial equality in exclusion concluded that a complex picture of the pattern and causes of school exclusion extends well beyond school-related factors. In other words, school exclusion occurs as a consequence of race-, class-, and gender-based perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs within which the causes and dynamics of school exclusion might be seen as a form of social, economic, and political discrimination.

- *Explanations that interpret exclusion as a consequence of national educational policies and their effects on schools and teachers.* This perspective on exclusion views the recent growth in school exclusions as a consequence of policy pressures and dynamics emanating from the wider educational system. Relatively few studies have attempted to investigate school exclusion within this view, although a number of researchers in other fields, such as those examining the impact of national policies on teachers and schools, have suggested that exclusion does appear to be linked with the

particular pressures of market dynamics and certain educational policies (Parsons & Howlett, 1995; Cooper, 1993). Under this view, exclusion is interpreted in relation to other policy forces, which are operating throughout the educational system. An example of this view is illustrated by Parsons & Howlett (1995) who state that “If schools are to be judged on standards, and particularly on performance in national examinations, there is a pressure to exclude those pupils who exhibit disruptive behaviour” (p. 14).

That a number of news articles and media reports (e.g. Pyke, 1991a; 1991b) linked the rise in exclusions to the consequences of policies on curriculum, assessment, accountability, and parental choice point to the view that exclusion may not be a simple matter of disruptive behaviour or school policy. Other national reports and research studies can also be seen as supporting this interpretation of exclusion, in citing evidence and testimonies from school practitioners who have linked the pressures of current policies to the rise in exclusions (House of Commons, 1998; Osler & Hill, 1999; Parsons, 1999).

#### **2.4.4 Research models and trends**

In reviewing the range of views, perspectives, and interpretations of school exclusion, several models of discourse emerge in the current research and policy literature. The use of these models can be further linked to the research trends of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. These models and trends include:

- *A sociological model* in which exclusion is viewed in terms of social structures and constructs such as race, class, gender, and culture.
- *A psychological model* in which exclusion is defined to issues pupil behaviour and the influence of family and parenting.

- *A school- or education-based model* in which exclusion is understood in terms of the process and practices of schools.
- *A political- or policy-based model* in which exclusion is viewed as a dynamic of policy and a consequence of system-wide pressures and tensions in the schooling system.

#### **2.4.4a Trends in the 1960s – 1970s**

In the 1960s and 1970s, studies on school exclusion relied more on the sociological- and psychological- models to describe and explain exclusion. Researchers viewed exclusion as a consequence of a pupil's individual behaviour, deviance, and phobia. Other studies linked exclusion to a pupil's parents or family background, attributing pupil's disruptive behaviour and exclusion to "bad parenting". Research conducted in the 1960s and 1970s has been labelled as "pupil-blaming" research (Hoyle, 1998). Kinder et al (1999) also observed throughout the 1970s, exclusions tended to have a psychological focus. For example, one study linked the causes of exclusion to a student's intelligence, social background, and personality (York et al, 1972):

Exclusion from school is not an arbitrary act on the part of the teacher or headmaster. It results from the inability of socially deprived, dull children, usually boys, and often from disrupted families with sociopath parents, to meet the demands of school life ... Not only were the children intellectually dull and seriously backward educationally, they also came from family environments characterized by low socio-economic status (p.265).

Hoyle's (1998) review of research studies on pupil absence and truancy conducted during the 1960s and 1970s shows how causes were linked to "individual psychopathologies of incompetent parents, feckless deviants, or of children who experience anxiety disorders because of schooling". This

construction of truancy and pupil absence is not dissimilar to the construction of exclusion as a problem of behaviour, rather than of schooling. One possible motivation for this research focus was the creation of special behavioural units (suspension, sanctuary, rehabilitation, other special alternatives) in the 1970s. During this period, teachers and schools began resorting increasingly to a process of referral and removal, assigning children to these off-site units.

#### **2.4.4b Trends in the 1980s**

In the 1980s, studies shifted to a school-based model, as researchers began examining the decisions and practices of schools and teachers to understand how and why exclusions occurred. Researchers such as Rabinowitz (1981), Maxwell (1987), and Galloway (1983; 1985) took the view that student misbehaviour and suspensions could be linked to differences in schools, and partly explained by the practices and influences of teachers. In the 1980s, studies such as *15,000 Hours* (Rutter et al, 1979) contributed to the school research field a greater understanding of the varying range in schools' practices, cultures, organisational structures, and management styles.

#### **2.4.4c Trends in the 1990s**

In the 1990s, research studies on exclusion shifted to a more complex conceptualisation of exclusion. Many researchers have approached the issue with a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing upon a wider range of psychological, sociological and school-based approaches to investigate exclusion (Hoyle, 1998; Kinder et al, 1999; Parsons, 1999, Watkins, 1998; Ainscow, 1991; Parsons & Howlett, 1996). The relationship between school

policy and school disaffection has also been further explored further by researchers such as Cooper (1993) who suggested that certain types of school structures, policies, and practices were more effective for disaffected pupils and reducing exclusion. Studies in the 1990s appear to have shifted from the previously pupil- and school- dominated focus of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s to a wider consideration of issues of pedagogy, curriculum, school management, and policy. However, the traditional use of psychological- and sociological- modes of enquiry to describe the problems that face schools and pupils continues to dominate the research and policy literature. While a number of researchers such as Parsons (1996; 1999), Cooper (1993) and Watkins & Wagner (2000) point out that exclusion is a complex phenomenon with multiple dimensions; few studies have attempted to explore the relationship between exclusion and pedagogy (Rayner, 1998) and teacher knowledge and training (Kinder et al, 1999).

## **2.5 Toward a more complex view of exclusion from school**

This review points to a deeply entrenched tendency within the discourse of educational research and policy to conceptualise narrowly the causes of exclusion and to view exclusion as a problem of behaviour and social disadvantage. This view is reflected in national government reports and proposals to reduce exclusion, which suggest “tackling social disadvantage”, “improving classroom discipline”, and “managing more effectively pupil behaviour” (DfEE, 1997; 1999; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998).

Although reports such as the Elton Report (DES, 1989) on discipline in the schools pointed to the influence of school factors in relation to exclusion, thereby highlighting the relationship between school-level factors, classroom practices, and the behaviour associated with those students at risk of exclusion, subsequent reports have not acknowledged the ways in which the impact of national policies implemented throughout the 1990s – their market-driven nature and the emphasis on raising standards and achievement – may have profoundly changed and redefined how teachers and schools view and perceive discipline and behaviour.

Although there may well be greater understanding of the role that teaching and learning plays in the management of behaviour, proposals to reduce exclusion and disaffection continue to emphasise and highlight the role of student's behaviour and personal circumstances – attributing the causes of and solutions for exclusion to a student's academic difficulties and defining exclusion as a problem linked to his/her social background, community and family. This is not to say that these factors are not part of the equation of factors that can lead to exclusion. Rather, greater attention needs to be directed at improving the conditions and the capacity of teachers to respond better to the diversity of students' needs. Proposals to develop alternative vocational curriculum, work-related experience, or providing pupils with special services that lie outside the classroom and external to the school do not address what lies at the heart of the schooling experience: teachers and teaching (Riley & Rustique-Forrester, 2002).

While it is not my intention to devalue, underestimate, or dismiss the need for school-based changes and improvements, my concern is directed first, at the lack of discussion in current proposals to recognise the complexity of the tasks facing schools and teachers. Likewise, there is little acknowledgement of the pressures and barriers that have constrained and limited the capacity of teachers and schools to respond more effectively and thoughtfully to students' needs. Glaringly absent from the national government's policy discourse on exclusion are proposals to address the pressures and constraints within schools -- the lack of time for teachers, the reduced flexibility to individualise teaching styles and methods, and the need for improved training and professional development for teachers. Although, in fairness, there are some signs of some awareness on the part of the national government about the need for more flexible approaches, such arguments have not yet been introduced into policy and proposals aimed reducing exclusion. The point here is that while current national policy proposals are calling (once again) for schools to be more inclusive, there are few suggestions for changes in the current system which would improve teachers' pedagogy, practices, and overall capacity for change.

### **2.5.1 Exploring the policy- and school-based dimensions of exclusion from school**

This review has established that much is known about the social backgrounds and characteristics of pupils who have been excluded; however there is far less certainty about the schools from which they become excluded. Understanding the effects of policies on schools' practices and teachers' pedagogy can provide a critical lens through which to view exclusion. The well-documented

difficulties experienced by schools and teachers arising from the demands, constraints, and pressures of current educational policies should be examined more closely:

It is clear that further direct investigation about what is happening in schools and what subtle processes might be in operation is needed. It is likely that qualitative studies of . . . teacher styles and attitudes, and school systems are more likely to reveal more meaningful findings . . . (Gersch & Nolan, 1994, p. 36).

The observation that “teachers are having to ration resources of time, care, and attention that they can give to the most demanding children” (Parsons, 1996) suggests a need to investigate the perceptions of teachers and the organisational setting of schools. One area for further exploration is the structures and supports that enable and facilitate teachers’ abilities to understand, diagnose, and respond to pupils who experience difficulties in school. A second related area is how teachers generally perceive their role and capacity, within the current system, to create and sustain a learning environment that is individually responsive to the needs of disaffected and marginalised students. Future research studies might also draw additionally upon the existing body of relevant research on effective schools and teachers, educational policy, as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties and special educational needs.

### **2.5.2 Illuminating the context of exclusion: Implications for this study's view**

In reviewing the current body of research and policy literature, there are various discipline-based models and discourses for conceptualising the causes and dynamics of exclusion. It is evident from this that exclusion is not simply a

process of punishment, but is a complex phenomenon linked to a wider set of changing dynamics in national policy and in schools. Further studies are needed, therefore, to illuminate this context and to examine how exclusion becomes influenced and mediated by the interaction of school- and policy-based factors. More detailed investigation is needed, in particular, which focuses on the practices of schools and the perceptions of teachers. In this study, I hope to illuminate two areas of exclusion where there has been limited exploration:

- *The relationship between national policy and exclusion.* This chapter's review of the research field suggests that the dynamics of specific national policies have influenced and aggravated the use of exclusion. Further studies about the ways in which national policies affect the capacity of schools and teachers to cope effectively with challenging individual pupils, and in particular, those groups at risk of exclusion would be a valuable contribution to research.
  
- *The relationship between schools' organisational practices and teachers' perceptions of exclusion.* Although there is clear recognition of the role that schools and teachers play in exclusion, there is limited understanding of the interaction between the internal features and processes of schools, and how this might, in turn, affect how teachers perceive exclusion. Further study of how schools' organisational practices constrain and enable teachers' capacity to respond to pupils at risk of exclusion would provide an important contribution to the field of studies on school exclusion.

My aim in exploring these areas is to contribute further understanding of: 1) the relationship between national policies and pressures within the context of exclusion; 2) the influence that school-based factors have in how exclusion occurs; and 3) the impact of school- and policies- based factors on how teachers perceive exclusion.

In pursuing these areas, I do not seek to explain school exclusion as a consequence or outcome of a single factor linked either to the student, his or her family, or the school. Rather, I hope to situate the causes and dynamics of exclusion within the wider interaction of school- and national policy- factors, therefore exploring the possibility that exclusion is a dilemma of policy and pedagogy, rather than simply as a problem of behaviour.

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## ***CHAPTER THREE***

### **Theorising the Context of Exclusion from School**

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#### **3.0 Chapter overview**

In this Chapter, I theorise and define the main concepts used to explore the patterns and practices in the phenomenon of exclusion. Chapter Two, which reviewed the research literature on school exclusion, suggested a range of models and discourses for examining the causes and dynamics of school exclusion and discussed the various strengths and limitations in using particular approaches and disciplines. What can be concluded from this discussion thus far is that exclusion is a complex phenomenon, in part because its causes and dynamics have been historically linked to issues of pupil behaviour, schooling, teaching, learning, as well as a wide range of social, economic, and political factors.

What remains critically missing from the literature on school exclusion, however, is a research perspective that considers the possibility that school exclusion is both a dynamic and consequence of national policy, *as well as* a problem and reflection of local school practices. Therefore, if one agrees that school exclusion is a complex occurrence with dimensions associated with student-, school-, social- and policy-related factors, then a more complex theorisation of exclusion is needed. This chapter is aimed at providing the theoretical framework for viewing exclusion as a

phenomenon that is situated within the wider context of national policy as well as local school practices.

The chapter is organised into three main sections:

- *Section 3.1 – Theoretical stance.* This section describes my social constructionist stance and explains my rationale for exploring the causes and dynamics of exclusion using a systems view. I also discuss the limitations of traditional state-centred policy paradigms for explaining phenomenon such as exclusion.
- *Section 3.2 - The multi-layered context of exclusion.* In this section, I introduce the notion of “embedded” contexts to theorise exclusion as a phenomenon that is defined and influenced by multiple contexts. I discuss the relationship between national policies and local contexts, and suggest that schools and teachers locally mediate the impact of national policies and pressures. I define teacher capacity and school organisational setting as two constructs for locating exclusion within the local practices of schools.
- *Section 3.3 – Toward a contextual model of exclusion from school .* This section summarises the implications of my theoretical framework for this study's research approach and methodology.

## **3.1 Theoretical Stance**

### **3.1.1 A social constructionist framework**

This study’s approach is situated within a social constructionist framework – a multi-disciplinary approach to the social sciences that draws its influences from a range of disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, and linguistics (Burr 1995, p. 2). There

are several features of social constructionism, defined and described by Burr (1995), that appeal to this study's approach.

### **3.1.1a A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge**

Social constructionism insists that we take a critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world ... It invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us, to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based on objective, unbiased observations of the world (Burr, 1995, p.3)

One major reason why I have adopted a social constructionist view in this study is that it offers a stance for challenging the ways in which school exclusion has been conventionally studied and conceptualised as a problem situated within an individual child or stemming from a particular category of social deficits. A social constructionist view encourages one to rethink the categories with which human beings are conventionally described and typecast. Social constructionism challenges the use of categories in which individuals are conventionally labelled (for example, as being "naughty" or having "disruptive" personality) and questions whether such labels refer to "real divisions" between human beings.

A social constructionist stance thus offers a theoretical basis for investigating school exclusion within a framework that does not attempt to categorise pupils who are excluded by their behaviour, personal, or social background characteristics. One limitation of psychological- and sociological-based studies is that school exclusion becomes defined in a framework that emphasises a pupil's behavioural or social background (such as race, class, gender), with less attention to the contextual factors

and influences of national policies and schools' organisational practices. As Burr (1995) explains,

Traditional psychology looks for explanations of social phenomena *inside the person*, for example, by hypothesising the existence of attitudes, motivations, cognitions and so on. These entities are held to be responsible for what individual people do and say, as well as for wider social phenomena such as prejudice and delinquency. Sociology has traditionally countered this with the view that it is social structures (such as the economy, or the major institutions such as marriage and the family) that give rise to the social phenomena that we see (p.7).

Social constructionism raises similar criticisms, thus offering a theoretical approach that addresses the shortcomings of such conventional approaches. This study's approach is to look instead at the kinds of factors and circumstances that influence *how* humans perceive and interact with each other, thereby illuminating the context in which exclusion occurs in different settings and contexts.

### 3.1.1b A need for historical and cultural specificity

Another feature of social constructionism, historical and cultural specificity, reinforces the importance of investigating the particular national context in which a phenomenon such as exclusion occurs.

The ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific ... This means that all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative. Not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are products of that culture and history, and are dependent upon social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time (Burr, 1995, pp.3-4).

The notion of historical and cultural specificity builds on the need to rethink critically the appropriateness of conventional definitions. This suggests that how we see the world can profoundly shift, depending on the historical and cultural context in which certain concepts are defined and constructed. As such, the concept of “exclusion” is a notion that needs to be considered within a historically and culturally specific context, and in terms of this study, the period during which national educational reforms were implemented in the 1990s. The national structures and arrangements of educational policy are particularly relevant areas for examining how exclusion is perceived and used in practice.

### **3.1.1c A focus on interactions and social practices**

Finally, social constructionism offers an approach for interpreting social phenomena (such as school exclusion) in a view that is not confined to a single disciplinary orientation, located in the individual psyche of a person, or viewed only in relation to social structures. According to Burr (1995), “the aim of social enquiry is moved from questions about the nature of people or society ...towards a consideration of *how* certain phenomena or forms of knowledge are achieved by people in interaction” (p.8).

A social constructionist stance has important implications for how I define, view, and explore the patterns and practices in the phenomenon of exclusion. First, the importance placed on human beings’ interactions and processes suggests that exclusion is an occurrence that is influenced by a range of contextual variables. Exclusion, as a phenomenon, is neither fixed in policy or limited to a single definition

of behaviour; but a complex and socially constructed process – one that is contextualised and defined by interactions and processes that occur between policies, schools, teachers, and students.

The implications of a social constructionist stance has implications for my methodology – examining the perceptions and practices of key actors in relation to the specific context in which their beliefs and actions are situated. This stance also provides the theoretical basis for suggesting that phenomena such as exclusion can be understood by studying teachers and schools in relation to the influences of national policy and the local school organisational context.

### **3.1.2 A systems view**

In this study, the context and dynamics of exclusion is explored within a systems view, a view which defines social phenomena as being highly relational, connected, and interdependent. This view provides a theoretical rationale for conceptualising exclusion as a phenomenon that extends beyond the boundaries of behaviour and circumstances of an individual student, classroom, or school. Systems thinking derives from the work of a number of systems theorists, such as Senge (1990) and others who have applied an “open-systems” view to interpret a wide range of social phenomena (Morgan, 1997). A systems view, applied in the context of exclusion, brings attention and thought to practices in organisations such as schools, which are maintained dynamically in a wider context. As such, the notion of context is key and will be developed further in the next section.

The notion that schooling can be seen as a sub-system in a wider education system, and part of a wider, more complex social system that influences how individuals think, (i.e. teachers) and organisations (i.e. schools) operate is a view that has been articulated by educational policy analysts such as Ball (1990, 1994) who, in analysing the nature and process of education policymaking draws upon post-structural interpretations developed by Bourdieu (1986; 1990) and Marxist and quasi-Marxist views such as Althusser (1969) to theorise the political, economic, and social dimensions of schools.

Ball's work in "policy sociology" uses sociological theories and methods to analyse policy processes and outcomes to theorise how changes in government policies become reflected in schools' and teachers' practices. For example, in analysing the effects and consequences of introducing "market forces" into school, Ball (1999) argues that "such policy changes in education can be traced to ideological shifts and changing patterns of influence within the Conservative Party" (p.15). Although this study does not focus on the political nature and ideological roots of educational policy, the view that "political, ideological, and economic dimensions can be applied also to any sub-system ... in this case, education and education policy" (Ball, 1990, p. 9) is useful for theorising exclusion as a phenomenon that is reflective of and connected to the wider dynamics and features of the schooling in England.

This view supports the notion that exclusion, as a process of schooling, is a phenomenon that can be influenced by the impact of national policies. A systems view suggests that, depending on how an educational system is constructed, the dynamics of policies on assessment, accountability, and curriculum can interact. In other words, the impact of national policies can, as a result of this interaction, have a confluent impact, which extends beyond the intended effects of a single, particular policy. A systems view therefore suggests that the impact of national policies can be greater than the sum of their individual parts – creating in some cases consequences that, by design, may have been unintended, but through their interaction can become part of the wider dynamics of schooling.

### **3.1.3 A non “state-centred approach” to policy**

In theorising the relationship between national policies and pressures in the context of exclusion, I considered whether education policy studies might offer some existing theoretical approaches for investigating the impact of policies on schools and teachers. However, a review of traditional policy studies revealed a focus on the political and philosophical dimensions of the policymaking process. The consequence of this is the conceptualisation of schools and teachers as policy “actors” or “interpreters”, where their actions and decisions are viewed in terms of political motivations.

A possible explanation for the emphasis on political philosophy, processes, and motivations within the field of education policy studies is the conventional view

of a state-centred approach to interpreting the effects, dynamics, and impact of education policies. This approach defines the state, or central government as the central player, rather than the practitioner, in analysing the dynamics of specific education policies. Such traditional education policy studies employ a “top-down” interpretation of the responses of practitioners in relation to the goals of the central government. A lesser degree of emphasis is given to the practices of schools and teachers, to which conventional policy studies look in providing evidence of political shifts in ideology and to evaluate policy, rather than to illuminate the dilemmas or challenges faced by school practitioners. Moreover, by its very nature and focus, a state centred-approach will define the impact of policy as it is constructed by the state, rather than as it is felt, perceived, and interpreted by schools and practitioners.

In this way, a state-centred policy study will not be so concerned with identifying potential conflicts or describing contradictions between policy and pedagogy. Rather, what is often evaluated in education policy studies is how and whether the policies defined by the state are being implemented by schools and teachers, as conceived and intended by the state’s “policy text” (Bowe et al, 1992). A state-centred approach is useful for interpreting the political changes which have occurred in the wider system and for identifying the changes required by schools and teachers as a result of policy changes and their requirements (Ibid; Trowler, 2002). However, the possibility that the wider system may itself be the source of the problem in explaining the difficulties experienced by schools and teachers is a

rare consideration of traditional policy approaches in evaluating the impact of a particular education policy. Rather, a “practitioner-deficit” model is often what seems to be frequently implied by state-centred education policy evaluations in describing the failures and difficulties of schools and teachers to implement policies constructed at the state level.

### **3.2 Conceptualising the multi-layered context of exclusion**

An exploration of context, Erickson & Schultz (1977) suggest is “an attempt to ask what is going on here” (p. 121). However, within the literature on social sciences, there are multiple ways of defining and analysing the context of a given phenomenon. Indeed, the aspects of context that require examination depend critically on the specific nature of the problem being investigated. Griffin et al’s (1993) review of contextual influences on teaching and learning, for example, described a wide range of different theoretical approaches and strategies in which “context” has been used. One group of studies included the applied work of linguists, behaviourists, and developmental psychologists in interpreting the specific experimental context in which certain types of teacher communication and learning behaviour occurred. Another group of theoretical studies attempted to “concentrate on the general but concrete properties of the beginnings and endings of contexts” (Griffin et al, 1993, p.123).

My own theorisation of context, in the socially-constructed reality of schools' and teachers' practices, is that context cannot be singly defined through discrete

components as Griffin et al (1993) suggests, but comprises of multiple, dynamic, and overlapping elements. Context, in my view, is not static or fixed, but variable, changing, and interacting. A social constructionist stance and a systems view, therefore, suggests that context be viewed as: 1) dynamically affected by a range of interacting influences located in different places; 2) variably constructed and characterised by the actions and expressions of key actors. This dynamic interaction of contextual influences for exploring the teachers' and schools' practices is handled through the notion of "embedded" contexts, a notion upon which I base my theorisation of a multi-layered context of exclusion.

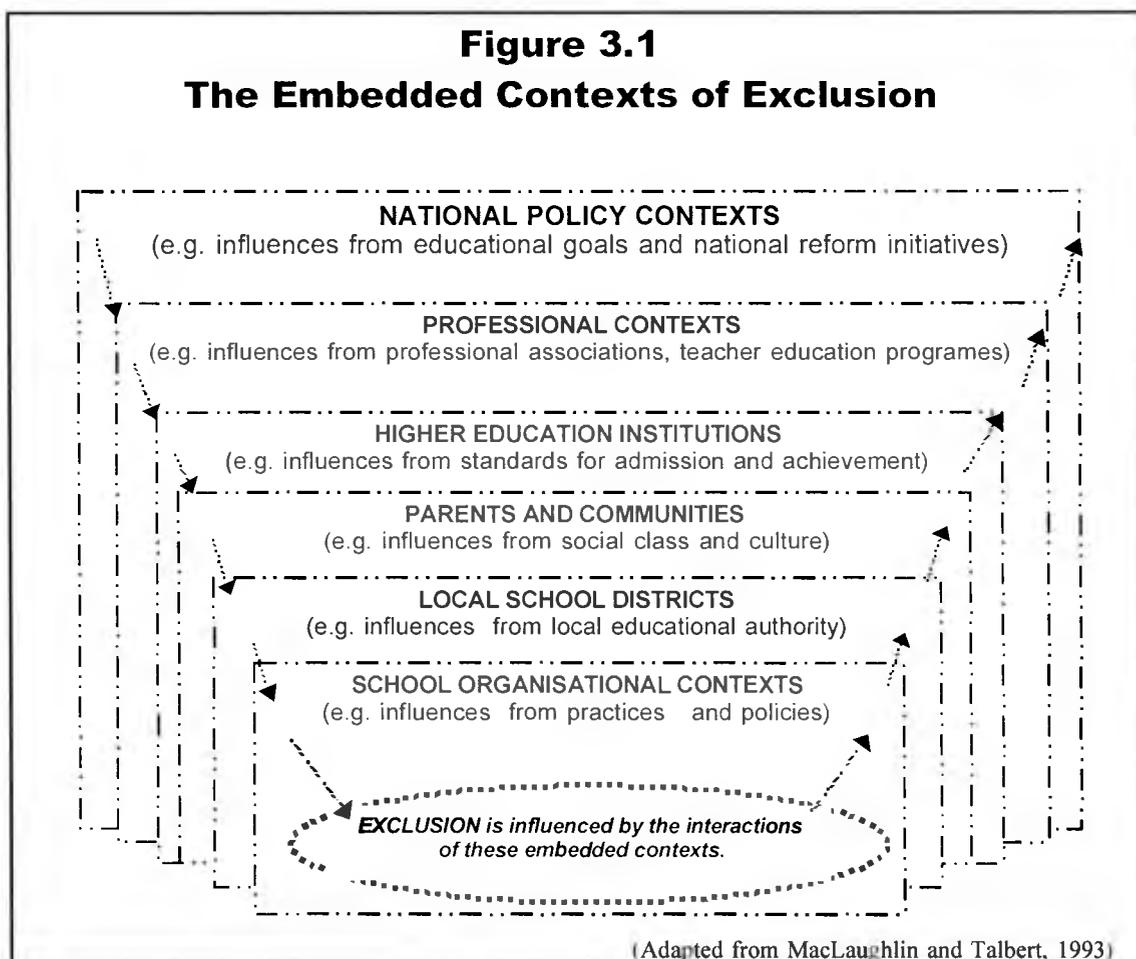
### **3.2.1 The notion of "embedded" contexts**

In this study, the interactions between national policies, their pressures, and the practices of schools and teachers are explored through a framework of "embedded contexts". This concept derives from a set of theoretical arguments developed by the Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). CRC's researchers found that how secondary school teachers respond to their students, and the ways in which they adapted their classroom practices to meet their students' needs was significantly influenced by different contexts. These contextual variables were defined and described using the notion of "embedded contexts", and is depicted by Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 shows how the notion of "embedded" contexts might be applied to explore the phenomenon of exclusion. This figure suggests that exclusion is situated

within a series of embedded contexts, comprising of contextual influences from 1) national policies; 2) professional associations; 3) higher education institutions; 3) parents and communities; 4) local school districts; and 5) schools. Lay readings of Figure 3.1 will often assume a hierarchical pattern of power relationships, characterised by the notion of “levels”, but that assumption is not made here. A systems view does not assume a one-way causality between different contextual variables, but suggests contextual influences are overlapping, or “embedded”. This study’s theoretical framework suggests that in the context of exclusion, the impact of national policies will be seen and reflected in the practices of schools and teachers, differently in different circumstances and cases.

**Figure 3.1**  
**The Embedded Contexts of Exclusion**



Of particular relevance to this study's theorisation of a multi-layered context is the theory that these contextual influences can “constrain or enable” teachers’ abilities and capacities to teach (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993, p.17). In examining how teachers at different levels of these embedded contexts (i.e. at the school-, district-, and state-level) perceived and responded to their students, McLaughlin & Talbert (1993) found that “teachers’ responses to the challenges presented by [students and national policy goals] vary substantially both among, and within schools” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993, p. 6). Moreover, the study found that in the attempt to implement policies to meet perceived policy goals and standards, “teachers’ practices were heavily mediated by the character of the professional communities in which they work”. (p. 8). CRC’s research suggests that in understanding the practices of schools, elements of context are crucial – first, for understanding how teachers perceive and respond to students’ needs; and second, for locating the factors that constrain teachers' practices and working conditions.

The study's theoretical framework suggests that locating where the constraints on teachers’ practices occur within these embedded contexts is central to understanding the causes and dynamics of school exclusion. In considering the current features and dynamics of national policies in England, CRC’s findings provides a conceptual basis for how schools’ practices and teachers’ perceptions in relation to exclusion might be examined, as a process linked inextricably to

teaching and learning. Although CRC's construction and application of "context" and "adaptation" was aimed specifically at describing the context for teaching and learning, these theoretical constructs and definitions also apply in how teachers perceive and respond to pupils, both in the context of national policy as well as their own local school context.

In developing a theoretical model of a "multi-layered" context, each "layer" is a representation of scale. For example, processes at the national level are deemed to apply to a wide range of smaller-scale contexts such as local school districts. However, I do not assume that which is deemed to apply necessarily does so, since local contexts mediate the national scale.

### **3.2.2 Theorising the relationship between national policies and local contexts**

In seeking to illuminate the causes and dynamics of exclusion, I have chosen to focus on the relationship between national policies and the local practices. The key elements in this relationship are depicted in Figure 3.2 and comprise 1) the educational system and national policies (post-1988); 2) the national policy climate and its pressures; 3) The local context and its stakeholders (schools, teachers, LEAs, local agencies, parents, students). This conceptualisation suggests that while such practices such as school exclusion occur "on the ground", their dynamics can be connected to the wider context of national policy.

### **3.2.2a England's national educational policies**

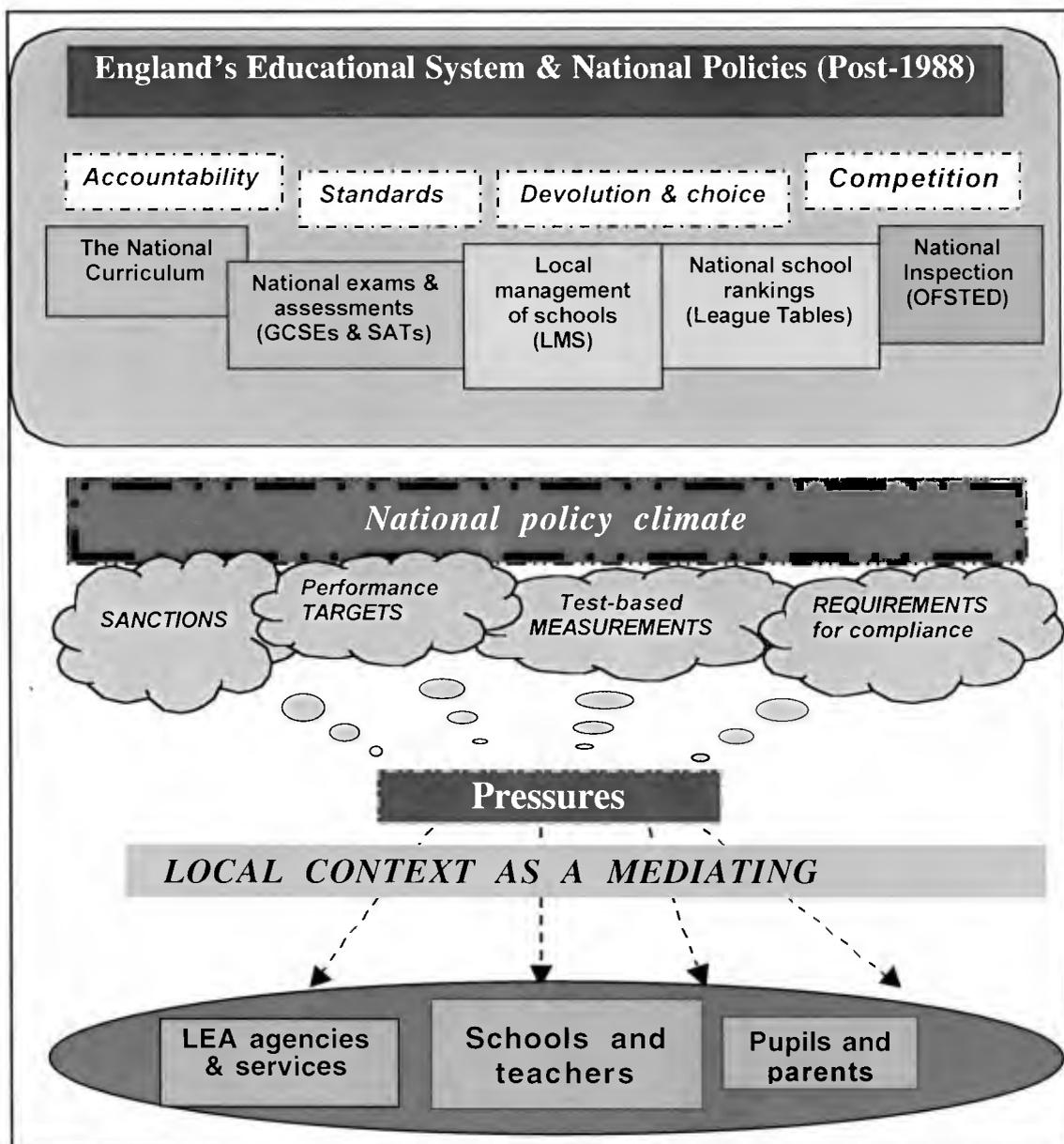
A key dimension of the national policy context is the national education policies that presently govern and guide how schooling occurs in England. Figure 3.2 depicts these key policies as: 1) national curriculum (NC); 2) national exams and assessments (GCSEs and SATs); 3) national reporting and ranking of test results (league tables); 4) parental choice and school competition, and national inspection (OFSTED). Changes to each of these policies have occurred since their original conception and implementation by the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) and John Major (1990-97). However, the major thrust of these policies is still firmly in place under the current Labour government, which continues to drive the context in which state-run schools and teachers operate. (Ball, 2001; Docking, 2000).

### **3.2.2b National policy climate and pressures**

In this study, “policy climate” refers to the national policy conditions and confluent pressures created by the dynamics of national educational policies. The notion of a national policy climate is aimed at providing meaning to the idea that the impact of national policies can be confluent and defined by the pressures created by these policies. My idea to apply the concept of climate to describe the impact of national policy draws from school and organisational climate research (for a review, see Anderson, 1982), in which the concept of “climate” has been applied to describe the organisational conditions and internal environment within a school (e.g. Taguiri, 1968), the “atmosphere” of teaching and learning (Anderson, 1982), or the work environment for teachers (Rosenholtz, 1989).

The concept of a national policy climate is depicted in Figure 3.2 by the series of “clouds” – an attempt to represent as overlapping, the confluence of pressures from national policies on standards and assessments, targets and measurements, sanctions and requirements:

**FIGURE 3.2**  
**Key elements in the relationship between national policy and local context**



An understanding of the national policy climate is relevant in this study's theorisation of the context of exclusion because, as discussed previously in Chapter 2, numerous studies have pointed to the impact of national policies on schools and teachers in describing the national context in which exclusion rose nationally between 1992 and 1998. This implies and points to a relationship between the impact of these national policies and schools, and a potential series of explanations as to why increasing numbers of schools may have resorted increasingly to school exclusion. Here it has been suggested that schools have felt increased pressures to remove disruptive students from school – either through expulsion or by placement in special schools (Parsons, 1996; 1999) – allegedly so that teachers could focus on those pupils likely to achieve the school's academic targets (Parsons, 1999; Docking, 2000). Others have suggested that increased competition has discouraged over-subscribed schools from taking in students who have been excluded (Blythe & Milner, 1996).

### **3.2.2c Local context as a mediating influence**

In theorising the relationship between national policies and local context, I suggest that a key aspect to understanding how exclusion occurs in practice is examining how and why schools respond and implement policy. Trowler (1998) observes that “[policy] outcomes ... tend to be shaped by ground-level characteristics as well as by the policy itself” (p.21) for several reasons:

- There is usually conflict among those who make policy ...as well as those who put it into practice ... about what the important issues are .. and about the desired goals.
- Interpreting policy is an active process ... subject to multiple interpretations; and
- The practice of policy on the ground is extremely complex...both that being “described” by policy and that intended to put policy into effect. ....The implementation of policy in practice almost always means outcomes differ from policy-makers' intentions (Ibid, p.49).

Another challenge for interpreting the impact of national policy is untangling the effects of multiple policies. Whitty et al (1998), for example argue that “it is virtually impossible to separate out the specific effects of any one of these policies” (p. 9). For example, the local management of schools (LMS) was introduced around the same time that other national policy reforms were being implemented. Similarly, the implementation of new forms of national testing and exams overlapped with continuous changes to the national curriculum and a new system of national school inspection.

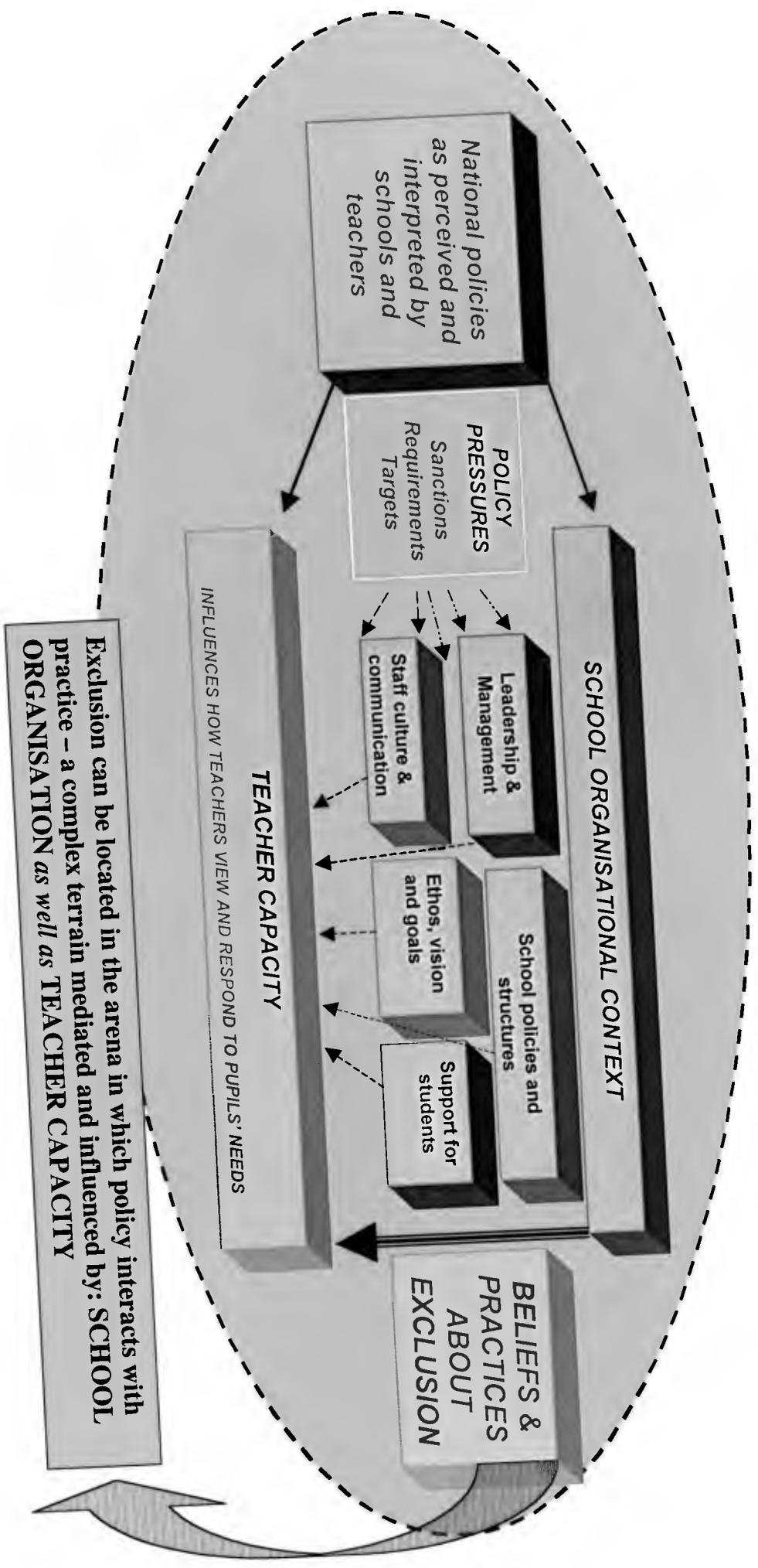
Figure 3.2 also depicts that in the case of England, the national policies of the 1988 Education Reform Act, and the conditions created by the national policy climate are mediated at the local level. The national policy climate is part of the multi-layered context in which school exclusion occurs; however, the local context is an additional layer. Schools and teachers are crucial elements and determinants in how policy becomes interpreted and implemented in local settings (Bowe et al, 1992). This point suggests that school exclusion is not only influenced by the dynamics of national

policies, but is a process shaped by the practices of schools and teachers. Of critical importance in connecting the impact of national policies to the local practices of schools and teachers is examining not only how policies are interpreted in different school settings, but understanding how the pressures affect schools, teachers, and students in the process.

### **3.2.3 Locating exclusion within the local practices of schools**

Another layer in the multi-layered context is the local context, depicted in Figure 3.3 by the features of school organisation and teacher capacity, which are theorised within the study as crucial determinants in how policy becomes interpreted and implemented at the local level (Bowe et al, 1992). Figure 3.3 suggests that the relationship between national policies, local practices, and school exclusion is not a direct one, but is mediated by the complex interaction of school organisational and classroom-based factors. This view suggests that school exclusion is influenced not only by the dynamics of the wider educational system and its policies, but is a process shaped by the organisational setting of schools and also by teacher capacity. Of critical importance in linking the dynamics of the national policy context to the micro-level practices of schools and teachers is examining not only how policies are interpreted in different school settings, but understanding how the pressures and demands of policy affect schools, teachers, and students in the process

**FIGURE 3.3**  
**Locating Exclusion within the Local Practices of Schools**



### 3.2.3a School organisational setting

In developing my theorisation of school's organisational context, I have drawn on a number of studies, both theoretical and empirical, from research on organisational theory, school improvement, and school effectiveness, Figure 3.3 depicts these as the features of school organisation:

- *Leadership and management.* A review by Harris and Muijs (2002) shows that leadership is a key influence in how schools operate, in terms of school effectiveness and achievement. It has been consistently argued that leadership influences levels of pupil motivation and achievement, as well as motivating teachers in the classroom (Fullan, 2001).
- *School policies and structures.* Studies have shown that rules and policies within a school influence how students behave and interact (Murphy et al, 1985; Watkins & Wagner, 2000). The development of systems for rewarding and supporting students has also been associated with higher levels of achievement (Rutter et al, 1979; Rutter, 1983).
- *Staff culture and communication.* Studies have noted the role of teachers' professional working conditions (Rosenholtz, 1989; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993) and the importance of communication in which “staff do not hide information from each other” and offer open feedback to promote trust, respect, openness, and caring (Wynne, 1980).
- *School ethos.* Rutter et al (1979) refers to school ethos to describe collectively, the internal characteristics of a school's organisational context.

These features comprise the organisational context of the school – as “the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behaviour of people” (Hoy & Miskel 1982, p.225). An important theory that emerges from the body of research on school organisation is the view that schools are internally differentiating institutions. In a comprehensive review of the organisation of effective secondary schools, Lee et al (1993) explain that a shift in the field – from studies that characterised school differences primarily in terms of “inputs” (e.g. student background, fiscal resources) toward “the internal workings” of schools – reveals how differences in school’s organisational structures result in different outcomes for students, “creating substantial variability in teachers’ conditions of work and students’ opportunities to learn” (p.172).

The role and influence of a school's organisational features provides an important set of constructs for exploring how and why school exclusion practices might differ between schools. A key aim here is to develop further explanations about the differing rates and patterns of exclusion amongst schools with similar student populations and pupil intake suggested by a line of previous research studies (Galloway, 1982, 1995; Galloway et al, 1985; Hart et al, 1995; McManus, 1987; 1995). However, I do not aim to identify causal or correlational links between the different variables and influences of exclusion, but hope to explore the interaction and interrelationship between a school's organisational features, national policy, and school exclusion.

### **3.2.3b Teachers' beliefs and practices**

In describing how teachers' practices become affected by the national- and local context in which teachers and students interact, this study draws upon a view of teaching as a profession in which teachers operate in a highly contested arena. This view draws from Lampert's (1985) conceptualisation of teachers as a kind of "dilemma manager, a broker of contradictions", in which teachers are faced with making "dichotomous choices ... between promoting equality or excellence; building curriculum around children's interests or around subject matter, fostering independent creativity or maintaining standards and expecting everyone to meet them" (Lampert, 1985 cited in Fang, 1996, p. 53). In short, teachers are not only reflective practitioners (Schon, 1983), but are professionals whose decisions are influenced by the context in which they work and interact (Rosenholtz, 1989). Whilst teachers hold implicit theories about their students, the subject they teach, and their teaching responsibilities (Fang, 1996), the impact that contextual factors such as policy and school organisation have in influencing how teachers perceive and respond to students requires much needed exploration.

One example of the influence of a school's organisational setting on staff practices was studied by Ashton and Webb (1986), who found that teachers base their instructional decisions on classroom realities such as "mutual teacher-student respect, classroom management and routines, the amount of assistance needed by low- or high- ability students, the way students learn, [their] social and emotional characteristics, and textbooks [e.g. the curriculum]". (Cited in Fang, 1996, p. 53).

Similarly, the influence of a school's leadership and management culture was examined by Kilgore, Ross and Zbikowski (1990). They found that the influence of managerial and collegial attitudes, in particular, "can support or diminish the effectiveness of beginning teachers by influencing their beliefs about themselves and their students" (Cited in Fang, 1996, p. 54). Finally, in considering the wider effects of school district policy on classrooms, Sapon-Shevin (1990) found that such practices as evaluation, inspection, testing, and grouping could influence teachers' self-perception, expectations for students and classroom practices. Recent studies in the UK have similarly found evidence that school-wide decisions about setting and streaming can influence how classroom teachers' perceive pupils, critically affecting instructional decisions (Boaler et al, 2000; Ireson, et al, 2002).

A criticism of the school effectiveness and school improvement literature in the UK is that whilst considerable attention has been paid to the relevant issues of classroom management, curriculum planning, and student interaction, the underlying emphasis of this approach is on the interpretation of teachers' behaviour and its relationship to student achievement. Few studies have considered the impact of contextual factors that shape teachers' decision-making processes and interactions with pupils – a key area to be understood in examining the causes and dynamics of exclusion. However, research conducted on the influence of school setting on teachers' practices has also shown that teachers' responses to their pupils varied not only across different types of context, but also *within* schools (Talbert et al, 1993; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996). This teacher finding suggests another problem. A school's organisational setting is

clearly well established as a key factor that influences teachers' beliefs and practices; however, the ways in which specific features and characteristics within a school's organisational setting influences teacher capacity is not a simple or direct process.

### **3.2.3c Teacher capacity**

In this study, the concept of “capacity” is used to examine the extent to which teachers feel and believe they are able to meet the pressures and demands of national policies, while responding and interpreting to the needs of their students. This notion of capacity refers to the extent to which different individuals perceive and believe they are: 1) capable of meeting the perceived goals and requirements of national policies; 2) able to cope with and respond to the changing demands and pressures in their school; and finally, 3) able to adapt their practices and beliefs when responding to students.

In the UK, “capacity” has been used in school effectiveness and school improvement research to inform school-level strategies for improving teaching and learning and analysing teachers' receptivity to change. Stoll (1999), for example, discusses “developing schools' capacity for lasting improvement”, (p. 1) and Jackson (2002) talks about “building schools' capacity as learning communities”. This theorisation of capacity is aimed mainly at the school organisational level, rather than the teacher level.

To develop a construct of capacity for the purposes of this study, I drew upon a number of key ideas from Stoll (1999) and Goertz et al (1996), a US-based study which applies the notion of “capacity” to theorise and understand how and why teachers respond differently to the demands and pressures of national policy. Stoll (1999) offers a definition of a school’s “internal capacity”, which is helpful in constructing the school organisational context in which teachers might be able to resist and prevent exclusion:

Internal capacity is the power to engage in and sustain continuous learning of teachers and the school itself for the purpose of enhancing pupil learning. A school with internal capacity can take charge of change because it is adaptive (p. 32).

While Goertz et al’s (1996) discussion focuses mainly on the context of systemic and teachers’ and schools’ capacity to meet higher standards in the US, several points are made which are helpful for theorising how the notion of capacity might be applied in the context of exclusion and in England’s national policy context. For example, Goertz et al (1996) suggest that teacher capacity is “multidimensional and evolving”, (p.1) pointing out that with the demands and requirements of national reforms teachers must change and adapt their practices. “What is being asked [of teachers] is not simply more effective implementation of known strategies and goals, but the simultaneous creation and implementation of a new conception of educational achievement and of instructional practice” (ibid). Although Goertz et al (1996) is referring here to the demands of systemic reform in the US, the observation that “teachers work most directly with

students, and so discussions of capacity often focus on what teachers need to know and be able to do” is one that is equally relevant in exploring the role of teacher capacity within the context of school exclusion.

Goertz et al (1996) also suggest four “dimensions” of capacity, which they define in terms of “knowledge, skills, dispositions, and views of self”. Their theorisation of “knowledge” and “skills” as two dimensions of capacity is based on a view that defines teachers’ knowledge in relation to subject matter, knowledge of curriculum, knowledge about students, and knowledge about general and subject-specific pedagogy (Shulman, 1986a, 1986b). According to Goertz et al (1996), a teacher’s knowledge base constitutes a critical element of his or her capacity because of the strong influence that knowledge has been found to have on instructional practice. Darling-Hammond (1999) also cites a growing body of evidence in the US supporting the link between teachers’ pedagogical skills and student outcomes. Cooper (1993), Rayner (1998), and Watkins & Wagner (2000) also suggest that teachers’ pedagogical skills play an important role in the effective management of behaviour.

Goertz et al (1996) define the third and fourth dimensions of capacity as “dispositions” and “view of self”, suggesting that a teacher’s response to policy and students will depend on his or her professional orientation, beliefs and practices as a teacher, views about teaching, and themselves. Here Goertz et al (1996) identify a number of “dispositions”, which include 1) attitudes toward their students; 2) their view of change; and 3) beliefs about their role in classroom activity ... and to the

persons they adopt in the classroom” (p. 4). These dimensions of capacity are relevant in considering the factors that influence how teachers view their role and responsibility in relation to exclusion

Goertz et al (1996) make two further observations about capacity, which are useful for considering how a teacher’s capacity to understand and respond to students might be reflected in the context of exclusion. A first point is that “individuals, of course, do not operate in a vacuum” (p. 5). This point suggests that capacity is not fixed, but influenced by a range of factors – a view that has already been established in earlier sections of this chapter. A second point is that “individual capacity interacts and is interdependent with organisational capacity” (p.5). This point is quite important because it suggests that capacity is not fixed, but relational. For, as crucial as an individual's knowledge, skills, and professional orientations are, the school’s immediate daily context – the school or the sub-unit of the school (e.g. department) – can exert a powerful set of influences on teachers’ capacity and practices (e.g. Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989).

The notion of capacity within this study’s theoretical framework suggests that what teachers know *and* what they are able to do are important elements of how teachers perceive issues of pupil behaviour, and more critically, make adjustments to practices accordingly. Goertz et al’s (1996) theorisation of teacher capacity is relevant here because of the close relationship between teachers’ instructional practices and the management of behaviour (Rayner, 1998; Cooper, 1993; Watkins &

Wagner, 2000). Teachers' professional views and attitudes are also relevant within the framework of this study in that they pertain to how teachers establish goals for their pupils and rationalise the purpose of their decisions. Although described within the context of systemic reform, the dimensions of teacher capacity offered by Goertz et al (1996) provide a useful framework for locating the areas which are potentially crucial for teachers in interpreting and responding to pupils, a core assumption of systemic reform. However, a danger in defining capacity in the terms of a teacher's knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes is the implication that capacity rests solely on a teacher's own abilities, faculties, and dispositions.

### **3.2.3 Connecting national policies to constraints on teacher capacity**

Over the past few decades, the implementation of national educational reforms have led researchers in both the US and the UK to study the barriers to improving educational outcomes. The focus of much of this research has been on the internal structures and settings of schools, an area of research in the US known as "school restructuring" and "school climate" research, and known in the UK as "school effectiveness" and "school improvement". Research in these fields has contributed much knowledge about the influence that school ethos, staff culture, policies, structures, management and leadership can have in promoting student achievement. At the same time, we know comparatively less about the context in which these aspects of schools attempt to mediate current national policies and pressures, and even less about the constraints experienced by teachers in the current policy climate.

While there have been, in the recent years, some studies in the UK about the ways in which teachers have “repositioned” themselves and their practices (e.g. Bernstein, 1996; Moore et al, 2002; Coldron and Smith, 1999), the discourse analysis conducted in these studies reveals little about the ways in which teachers’ pedagogical practices have been affected, and more crucially, the dimensions of capacity that can enable or constrain how they adapt their practices and respond to their students within the context of exclusion. Herein lies a rationale for exploring teachers’ perceptions about national policy, the perceived constraints on their practices, and the implications of these dynamics for exclusion.

Of particular concern to this study’s theorisation of teacher capacity is 1) the connection between the national and local layers of context; and 2) the factors that constrain and enable teachers’ capacity to respond and adapt in the context of exclusion. In describing the different constraints on pupil’s learning, Gardner (1991) suggests that there are various kinds of “intrinsic” constraints which can be understood and defined from a psychological and cognitive stance (e.g. developmental and neurobiological). However, the more profound constraints, he suggests, are “extrinsic”, which he describes as “historical and institutional” and deeply embedded in schools’ traditional practices and structures (p. 8).

In the current national policy climate, the constraints that teachers perceive from national policies and those felt at the school level, might be more fittingly theorised

as being “internal” (at the school level) or “external” (at the national level). Little is still known, however, about how schools influence teacher capacity and how different local school contexts act in mediating the various pressures of the wider system. It is this complex arena of pupil-teacher interaction, the perceived constraints on schools and teachers, and the effects on teachers’ capacity to be responsive and adaptive that this study’s framework is essentially concerned.

In returning to the pressures of the wider system and its policies, two constraints might be examined in the context of school exclusion: 1) constraints on time; and 2) constraints on autonomy.

- ***Time.*** In England, the sheer number of policy initiatives and changes which schools (and teachers) have been required to implement has been said to have reduced the amount of time in schools and increased the administrative burdens on teachers. The extent to which a school can “preserve” the time that teachers have for planning, preparation, and pupils suggests a potential constraint on teacher capacity. According to Goertz et al (1996), “time was far and away the resource seen as most essential by respondents ... time for teachers to meet together to plan, reflect, and learn from their practice; time for individuals to pursue professional development opportunities...” (p. ) were all viewed by teachers as a critical teaching resource within their school setting. Within the context of school setting, constraints on time suggest a number of reverberating implications that can reduce the capacity of teachers. The way in which a school

is structured, organised, and managed is thus crucial in **successfully mediating** against national policies and pressures.

- ***Autonomy and flexibility.*** In addition to the reduction of time in schools, some studies found that teachers' flexibility and autonomy has also been constrained by the national curriculum reforms (Hacker & Rowe, 1997; Helsby and McCulloch, 1997), and the pace required by teachers in order to keep up with testing and assessments (McMahon, 2000). According to a recent report on the impact of testing on students, some 75 national tests occur between the ages of 5 and 16 (QCA, 1999). The implications of this suggests particular limitations on teachers' formulation of individualised forms of assessment as well as on their pedagogical skills in that teachers feel pressured to "teach to the test" (Docking, 2000). The ethos and culture of a school, and its views on teaching and learning are thus critical in whether or not teachers feel constrained by the pace and requirements demanded by the national curriculum and its tests.

This study's framework argues that such constraints are what have increased the pressures in schools to resort increasingly to school exclusion. In other words, by constraining schools' time and teachers' flexibility and autonomy, pressures from national policies have a created a climate which has effectively constrained teachers' capacity. I suggest, therefore, that given what we know about the influence of local contexts on teachers' beliefs and practices, the organisational context of schools can either reinforce these constraints or mediate against them.

### 3.3 Toward a contextual model of exclusion from school

I have attempted to develop the beginnings of a theoretical model through which the patterns and practices in the phenomenon of exclusion can be studied in relation to multiple and embedded layers of contexts. In this sense, I seek to illuminate exclusion from school as a phenomenon that is reflective of (1) the climate of pressures from national education policies; (2) the mediation of these pressures by the organisational contexts of different schools; and (3) the impact of these pressures and mediations on teachers' capacity to respond and adapt.

The contextual model that I have developed for this study is aimed at exploring the interaction between different layers of context – in particular the national policy context and the local school context. This multi-layered contextual model does not assign importance or suggest a hierarchy between policies at the national level or school level or practices, but is used to describe where a dynamic or factor is located in the various embedded layers of context. Implicit in this view is the assumption that these contextual layers of influence are, in the end, *equally important and connected*.

To summarise, the interrelationship and interaction of national policies and local school practices is central to understanding the context in which exclusion occurs. The theoretical constructs used to explore the phenomenon of school exclusion are not aimed at analysing behaviour – a view which currently dominates how school exclusion is interpreted. Rather, what is suggested is this: Both national policy and

school organisation are important factors that simultaneously affect how schools perceive and respond to students, and in doing so, can constrain or enable a teacher's capacity. These multiple interactions are what shape the context in which exclusion occurs.

These sets of arguments constitute the theoretical framework for designing a research enquiry that will enable the further development of a contextual theory of exclusion. This enquiry is based on two guiding assumptions. The first is that an understanding of the causes and dynamics of school exclusion requires a systems view that encapsulates both the context of national policies as well as the local practices of schools and teachers. This assumption provides an important rationale for exploring the impact of national policy from the perspective of teachers. A second assumption is that while the traditional discourses and conventional lens of psychology, sociology, and education policy studies can be used to illuminate particular aspects of the school exclusion process, they are not singly designed for exploring the complex interrelationships between policies and their effects on schools' and teachers' practices. This assumption provides the rationale for employing an approach that is multi-disciplinary and aimed at different layers of this context in which exclusion occurs.

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# ***CHAPTER FOUR***

## **Methodology**

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### **4.0 Chapter overview**

This chapter describes the study's methodology and research design. A key assumption that arises from the previous chapters is the need to conceptualise school exclusion as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. This theorisation has important methodological implications for the study's research design, and critically points to the need for a conceptual stance that enables the exploration of the causes and dynamics of exclusion from multiple points of view. This chapter discusses how, with this assumption and conceptualisation of exclusion in mind, I developed a series of research investigations to address the study's research questions:

- ***Research question 1.*** What is the relationship between national policies and pressures, as they are implemented in the context of exclusion? In what ways have national policies influenced how schools and teachers view and use exclusions?
- ***Research question 2.*** How do teachers view and interpret the causes and dynamics of school exclusion? Do they perceive a link between their capacity, the impact of national policy, their school's organisational setting, and school exclusion?

- **Research question 3.** How is the interaction between national policies and school practices mediated by local context? In what ways does a school's organizational setting influence how exclusion is viewed and used?

The chapter is organised into six sections. Section 4.1 discusses the study's research framework, my methodological stance, research approach, and overall research design. Section 4.2 describes the phases of my research enquiry and design. Sections 4.3, 4.4. and 4.5 explain the specific methods chosen for the study's three investigations. Section 4.6 describes the ethical issues and research dilemmas that I encountered in the study.

## 4.1 Research framework

As an aid to the reader, I have provided in Table 4.1 an overview of the study's research design. Table 4.1 summarises for each investigation, the specific research focus, the purpose of the investigations conducted, the methods used to collect data, the data sources and research sample, and the link to the study's research questions.

<b>Research focus</b>	<b>Research investigation</b>	<b>Purpose of investigation</b>	<b>Method used to collect data</b>	<b>Data source and sample</b>	<b>Link to Research Question</b>
Differing rates and patterns of exclusion	<b>Investigation 1</b> An examination of the rates and patterns of secondary school exclusion in one LEA	To explore and investigate whether patterns of exclusion vary across schools.  To select potential sample for school case studies.	Documentary review of LEA school exclusion reports and records	School exclusion data reports and records of 89 secondary schools in one LEA in North England	1 and 3

School context in which exclusion occurs	<b>Investigation 3</b> An exploration of the organisational features of individual schools with differing rates of exclusion	To illuminate specific aspects and features of the school's context and to consider their implications for exclusion patterns and practices.  To examine the school-level features perceived by teachers as influencing the process of school exclusion	Ethnographic multiple case study, using fieldwork, interviews, and document reviews.	Four secondary schools with similar and different rates of exclusion located in Southeast and North England	1, 2, 3
Teachers' perceptions about school exclusion	<b>Investigation 2</b> An investigation of specific areas of teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding exclusion	To provide confirmation of issues identified in the research literature	Survey questionnaire	14 teachers in three secondary schools located in Southeast England	2 and 3
		To explore further teachers' views of school exclusion and to explore these beliefs and attitudes vis-à-vis their school.	Interviews	44 teachers in the four case study schools	2 and 3

Given my theorisation of exclusion as a complex phenomenon, my research questions were aimed at exploring exclusion as an interaction between national policies and local school practices. As such, I needed to design the various investigations using and combining methodological approaches that would enable me to explore exclusion from both the point of view of schools (Investigations 1 and 3) as well as from the perspective of teachers (Investigations 2 and 3). These investigations were carried out in overlapping phases, between April 1999 and January 2001.

- **Investigation 1: The pattern of exclusion in one LEA.** This first investigation (aimed at Research Questions 1 & 3) compared the exclusion rates and patterns of 82 secondary schools in one large local educational authority located in North

England. The purpose of this investigation, which drew upon an analysis of statistical data, was to explore and illuminate a basic assumption that patterns of exclusion vary across different secondary schools. The details of this investigation are explained in Section 4.3.

- ***Investigation 2: Teachers' perceptions of exclusion.*** This second investigation, which was based on interviews, was aimed at Research Questions 1 & 2) and explored how teachers interpreted the causes and dynamics of exclusion. The purpose of this investigation was to explore, from teachers' perspectives, the school- and national policy-factors that influenced how, when, and why exclusion occurred. This investigation was also aimed at generating theory about the relationship between school exclusion, teacher capacity, and the pressures of the wider national policy climate. The methods used for this investigation are explained in Section 4.4
  
- ***Investigation 3: The school organisational context of exclusion.*** This third investigation (aimed at Research Questions 1, 2, & 3) focused on the organisational features of four secondary schools with differing rates and patterns of exclusion. The case for this investigation was supported by my findings in Investigation 1, which revealed differences between schools' exclusion rates; however, I wanted to examine more closely the nature of these differences and therefore, used an ethnographic case study approach. The methods for this section are explained further in Section 4.5.

### **4.1.1 Research stance**

My research and methodological stance in designing and carrying out these investigations derives from a set of theoretical assumptions that have shaped my views about how knowledge is generated. These ontological assumptions about knowledge are situated within a social constructionist framework. A central concern in this study is how a range of actors and settings influences how exclusion is perceived, used, and interpreted. In that sense, my research stance is more interpretative; rather than positivist. I do not seek, through the study, to establish an “objective truth”, to draw causal links between exclusion and a range of different variables, or to prove and disprove current theories about school exclusion. Rather, my aim is to explore and illuminate the relationships between phenomena by analysing the interplay between school exclusion, national policies, schools' practices, and teacher capacity. In this sense, my stance is illuminative. This study is concerned with exploring new ways of conceptualising school exclusion and generating new theories about its causes and dynamics.

### **4.1.2 Multiple methods**

Because my conceptualisation of exclusion is one that has not been fully articulated or developed in the current field, the research design that I developed to carry out my investigations does not utilise a pre-existing research design or framework. My approach also does not rely upon one research tradition, single discipline, or perspective. Traditionally, a study might be classified as being “qualitative” or “quantitative”. However, my theoretical framework is one that has been informed by

studies influenced by both qualitative and quantitative approaches. As such, I have chosen to distinguish this study as either “qualitative” or “quantitative”. Rather, my research framework draws upon a multiple set of influences, combining research strategies used in psychology, sociology, and education policy research. Although the disciplinary approaches of these fields have been and can be used to illuminate the various dimensions of exclusion – by informing the behavioural-, social-, and policy-aspects of the process and consequences of exclusion – none of these fields are singly designed to examine the interrelationship of policy, pedagogy, and school practices.

My research approach relies upon multiple methods drawing from a range of disciplines and research traditions to enable the exploration of exclusion as a multidimensional and systemic phenomenon. An important feature of the study’s research design, therefore, is the use of “multiple” methods to answer different aspects of the study’s research questions. Given the multiple goals and objectives of the study, I concluded that a single method of data collection would be inadequate and inappropriate. The study’s research questions are framed within a systems view, which includes the dynamics of national policies, the perceptions of teachers, and the organisational settings of schools. Hence, the study’s research framework uses multiple research strategies to collect and analyse data from these different sources of data and points of view.

A number of advantages of using multiple methods for exploring the patterns and practices within phenomenon have been suggested by the research literature on

methodology. Denzin & Lincoln (1998) describe the use of multiple methods for gathering data from multiple sources, thereby defining the concept of triangulation, “not a tool or a strategy of validation” but as “an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon” (p. 4). According to Robson (1993):

There is no rule that says that only one method must be used in an investigation.... A research question can, in almost all cases, be attacked by more than one method in an investigation...[and] can have substantial advantages....Multiple methods can be used to address complementary questions within a study... can enhance interpretability.. and ... can be used to buttress and clarify an account (pp.289-90).

It is this view – that “the combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood ... as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation” (Flick, 1992, p. 4) – which also provides a basis for employing a multi-method approach. In sum, my rationale and purpose for using a range of methods was not to seek out the “one right answer” from a range of sources. Rather, I hoped that data, which emerged from multiple sources and in various forms, would contribute to the overall depth of the analysis and meaningfulness of my interpretation.

#### **4.1.3 “Emergent” research design**

One of the first challenges I faced in designing the study was whether I could specify, at the outset, the methods of my approach. Here I chose to use an “emergent”, rather than a pre-defined research design. Robson (1993) describes the basis for an emergent research approach as having a principled resistance to pre-

specifying details, with the specific methods of the research design emerging and unfolding from the interaction with the study (p. 61). “Proposals for this type of research must convince [the reader] that the researcher has both the need for, and the right to, this kind of flexibility ... [and] must justify why the research questions are best dealt with in this way” (pp. 467-468).

My principled resistance to pre-specifying a research design was based on two reasons. First, no theoretical models had been developed within the field of school exclusion research for pursuing my specific research questions, which were of a complex and systemic nature and required data to be analysed at multiple levels. This suggested the need for a research approach that would provide flexibility in gathering, simultaneously, different kinds of information from multiple sources. Second, as I was conducting research with a relatively new theoretical conceptualisation of exclusion, decisions about each phase of data collection needed to be developed alongside my understanding of issues.

An emergent approach thus offered a number of advantages. First, I was able to develop and adapt specific methods of data collection to fit the areas I wished to explore, informed by the emerging findings from each stage of my investigation. This allowed me to feel more confident about the specific direction of the overall research enquiry and strengthened my rationale for choosing methods that would allow me to pursue questions that emerged during the various phases of data collection. Second, an emergent approach provided the flexibility to select the

issues that I felt needed further investigation and the depth at which these issues would be examined. This emergent process also helped me to ensure that the data that I was collecting could be linked back to my overall research questions and aims. In sum, an emergent research design allowed me to intertwine the collection and analysis of my data, to reflect upon my research questions at each stage, and to play close attention to the findings that emerged during the course of my enquiry.

#### **4.1.4 The goal: To generate theory**

This study's research design and investigations are aimed at generating theory, an intent that is central to studies using a "grounded theory" approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Although I view exclusion as a phenomenon, my research aims are not aimed at describing or illuminating the experience of exclusion. Here Creswell (1998) offers a helpful clarification between the motivations of a phenomenological study and that of a grounded theory study – distinguishing between the intent of a phenomenological approaches as "emphasising the meaning of an experience for a number of individuals" and that of grounded theory as "generating a theory ... of a phenomena that relates to a particular situation" (pp. 55-56). He explains, "The centrepiece of grounded theory research is the development or generation of theory closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied" pointing to Strauss & Corbin's (1994) definition of theory as a plausible relationship among concepts and sets of concepts. My study's framework is aimed at exploring the relationship between practices and policies, and suggesting a theoretical model in which to understand their connections in the context of exclusion from school. As such, the

overall aim of the study is to suggest a more connected view of exclusion and to offer a richer, theoretical model for understanding its causes and dynamics.

The design and conceptualisation of the various research investigations was also influenced by “grounded theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in that a method of “constant comparison” was used to analyse data generated through interviews, observations, and document reviews. Constant comparison suggests that unlike “complete analysis, which waits until data gathering is finished ...a cycle of formulation goes on in the field where observing, interviewing, and gathering artefacts and records provides the grist for the log of events” (Krathwohl, 1998, p.262). Here, one moves “back and forth” between the field (ibid.) or “zigzags” (Cresswell, 1998, p. 57) between the emerging data, and analysis to construct ideas and theories. Krathwohl (1998) also described the use of constant comparison for informing the selection of cases to “flesh out description, densify theory conceptualisation, and test and extend my formulations” (p. 261). This approach also guided my selection of teachers whom I would interview and schools for the school case studies.

The following processes characterised my approach for collecting and analyzing data. First, I gathered and reviewed data from my investigation of secondary exclusion rates to confirm an assumption and to construct a theory about the relationship between exclusion and a “multi-layered” context. Then, I interviewed teachers about how they perceived exclusion in order to develop further theories and ideas about the elements of these multiple contexts and their relationship to

how exclusion occurred. Next, I explored these ideas through fieldwork in schools to further develop and make attempts at explaining how and why school exclusion rates and practices differed. I then refined my theories and reflected on my conceptualisations visually<sup>1</sup> and through written narratives.

Although these steps are described sequentially above, these processes overlapped in that my process of gathering and analysing data became intertwined. In seeking out answers to the study's research questions, I employed a strategy in which multiple sources of data were used to generate theories and to link emerging ideas and insights that emerged from my ongoing analysis. This meant that the collection and analysis of data occurred in a fluid, simultaneous fashion, rather than in an ordered way. How these processes unfolded during the course of the study is further explained in this next section.

In evaluating the study's findings and conclusions, notions of "external and internal validity", "generalizability", and "reliability", as traditionally viewed in positivist research, are not appropriate for describing the methodological limitations of this study. I would not expect the steps and stages of my research process to produce similar findings if the study was replicated in other schools with similar characteristics, because a fundamental assumption is that schools and teachers differ profoundly as organisations and individuals in their processes, perceptions, and practices. However, the theorisation of constructs and concepts, and the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, which present visual representations of the connections between concepts each went through various transformations during the course of conducting the study.

identification of underlying relationships and dynamics between policies and practices might be used similarly to compare and analyse other local and national contexts.

## **4.2 Phases of research enquiry**

Janesick (1998), whose ideas helped me to understand and illuminate my process of designing the study describes the notion of a research design as “evolving” during the course of enquiry. The study’s emergent design and multi-method approach was developed over three inter-connected phases of research enquiry. This section describes how these phases influenced decisions made for collecting and analysing data in the study.

### **4.2.1 “Warming up” and exploring the terrain**

My first stage of research was essentially a phase of enquiry in which I explored the research terrain and made a series of key decisions about the design of the study. During this initial phase, I defined the general focus of my study and mapped the areas that I wanted to examine. Janesick (1998), in using a metaphor of dance to explain how design decisions evolve during the course of a study, describes this first phase and set of decisions as a “warming-up” period. One decision I made, for example, was to explore the causes and dynamics of exclusion within the wider context and interaction of national policy and school practices – a decision that arose during my review of research literature (Chapter Two) and theorisation of concepts (Chapter Three). A second decision was to explore the relationship

between policies, pressures, and school exclusion and to focus centrally on the perspective of teachers and schools, rather than the processes and intentions of policymakers. This decision was motivated by my desire to employ a “practitioner-centred” rather than a “state-centred” policy approach, which I critiqued in Chapter Three.

This phase of research was enabled and facilitated by my work and role as a research officer for the University of Surrey Roehampton, during which I was able to visit schools and talk informally with teachers and local education authority officers about the topic of school exclusion. During this phase of exploring the terrain, I undertook two research activities: 1) a design of a questionnaire which I piloted in three secondary schools; and 2) an assessment of the quality and availability of school exclusion data in one local educational authority. These research activities allowed me to confirm whether my working theories about school exclusion could be pursued further and to begin considering the ways in which I would pursue my research questions.

#### **4.2.2 “Exercising” and developing the methods**

The exploration and piloting undertaken in this phase of my research design helped me to focus on the specific areas that I would investigate, refine my research questions, and clarify the rationale for my chosen methods of collecting and analysing data. Janesick (1998) describes the second phase as a series of

“exercises” in which the researcher tries out the desired methods of data collection, assesses and refines their use, and readjusts the focus of the study.

During this phase, I selected the four secondary schools where I carried out my interviews and fieldwork. I also made a series of design decisions, which included:

- 1) using interviews to collect data on teachers’ perceptions about school exclusion;
- 2) employing an ethnographic case study approach to examine the school organisational context; and
- 3) focusing data collection and analysis on a sample of four secondary schools and the teachers within those schools.

A more detailed discussion of the rationale and basis for each of these decisions can be found later in the chapter in describing each of the study’s research investigations.

### **4.2.3 “Cooling down” and reflecting on the study**

During this third phase, I began to consider how the findings from my separate investigations of teachers’ perceptions and school context could be linked, and began formulating theories about the role of teacher capacity, school context, and the mediation of policy. Janesick (1998) describes this phase as “cooling down” and suggests that during this process,

There is a continual reassessment and refining of concepts ... [and] as the analysis proceeds, the researcher develops working models that help explain the behaviour under study ... [and] as the analysis continues, the researcher can identify relationships that connect portions of the description with the explanations offered in the working models (p.46)

Janesick (1998) further describes this stage as one “where the researcher decides to leave the field setting, and begins the final stage of analysis”. (Ibid.) Although, during the course of collecting the data (conducting school visits and interviews with teachers), I had already begun analysing my data by reducing it into more manageable forms and trying to make sense of what was emerging from it, I needed some way of re-examining my theories and bringing together the themes and insights from the various parts of the study. Having left the field, I now had the insight to articulate a richer picture of the phenomena. During this phase of “cooling down”, I looked collectively at the data and made connections between my various investigations. I sought here to develop theories about the interrelationship between school exclusion, teacher capacity, school context, and external policy pressures.

### **4.3 Investigation 1: Examining the rates and patterns of exclusion in one LEA**

This part of the study was essentially an exploratory exercise, which sought to illuminate a basic assumption that schools differ in their exclusion rates and patterns. This investigation was aimed at comparing schools with similar characteristics and analysing the extent to which differences in their exclusion rates and patterns could be explained by pupil factors, a finding suggested by a number of research studies and reports, which have pointed to socio-economic factors and social disadvantage and in explaining the differences between schools (OFSTED, 1996; Parsons, 1999; SEU, 1998).

This investigation was framed by two specific research questions:

- *How were school exclusions reported at the local level, and what kind of information was collected about pupils, their background, and exclusions?* This question was aimed at finding out what data was available on school exclusion rates; how schools reported exclusions, what information was collected, and how LEAs reported and analysed this information.
  
- *Was there evidence of meaningful differences between the exclusion patterns of schools?* Within the LEA, which schools had the “highest” and “lowest” number of exclusions? The intent of this question was to define a “high” and “low” excluding school and to compare schools' exclusion rates alongside a range of socio-economic indicators.

This investigation also aimed: (1) to examine and assess the quality and availability of school exclusion data; (2) to compare the socio-economic profiles of schools with similar rates of exclusion; and (3) to define and identify a sample of high- and low- excluding schools.

#### **4.3.1 Method of data collection**

For this investigation, I reviewed the exclusion records and reports for 82 secondary schools in a large education authority located in North England (data reviewed did not include the 7 “grant-maintained” schools). The selection of this particular LEA was made out of convenience. In this LEA, I was able to gain access to exclusions data through my role as a research officer for the University of Surrey Roehampton,

where I was working on a project on school disaffection. This project, which was based in the LEA, involved a review of the LEA's data on school exclusions, and I obtained specific permission from the LEA's director to use the data for the purposes of this study. The interpretation of schools' exclusion figures was also informed by conversations with the LEA's exclusion officer, who provided me with copies of the LEA's annual exclusion reports.

A number of steps were taken to conduct this investigation. A first step involved a series of meetings with the LEA's exclusion policy officer to determine what types of documents were available and in what form. A second step involved the assembly of written documentation, reports, and statistical data. This data included reports of permanent and fixed-term exclusions for 89 secondary schools and 500 primary schools over a four-year period: 1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; and 2000/2001 (but I concentrated on the secondary school data). The LEA provided this data in the form of published written reports and statistical data kept on computer files. These reports provided by the LEA were organised into the three regions of the LEA ("North", "South", and "East"). Each of the regional reports provided the total number of exclusions for each individual primary and secondary schools in the region, gender, type of exclusion, and in the case of fixed-term exclusions, the number of days lost.

A second set of data came in the form of a statistical database, which consisted of computer records kept and compiled by each of three regional offices. These files

provided, on a school-by-school basis, information on the exclusion of individual pupils for every secondary school in the LEA. Other information included the school's address, area, type of school, number of pupils enrolled, percentage of pupils from ethnic minority background (including a breakdown by specific ethnic categories), percentage of students with English as a Second Language; percentage of students with special educational needs (with or without statements<sup>2</sup>) and percentage of students on free school meals. To analyse the exclusion figures, I matched and compared schools with similar socio-economic profiles and compared their exclusion rates over the past four years (1997- 2001).

#### **4.3.2 Methodological strengths and limitations**

There were a number of strengths and limitations of the data that I analysed from the LEA. One issue concerned the trustworthiness of the data provided by the schools to the LEA, an issue first reported by Stirling (1992) and also raised by Vulliamy & Webb (2000) who point out that “[exclusion] figures are widely recognised to be considerable underestimates of the actual numbers of pupils excluded from school, either temporarily or permanently” (p.4). It is difficult to verify in this case whether the figures I analysed accurately reflect the incidence of exclusion in individual schools or areas. Indeed, according to the LEA's exclusions officer, discrepancies occasionally arose between the numbers of exclusions reported by a particular school and the incidents of exclusion that the LEA became aware of through phone calls from parents and staff working in the school. Bearing in mind the problems with accurate reporting by schools, the data can only

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<sup>2</sup> The LEA defines SEN pupils “without statements” as being on Stage 1-4 of the Code of Practice (see DfE, 1994).

be assumed to be an indication of general patterns and trends across schools (as will be reported and discussed in Chapter Five).

The comparison amongst secondary schools, based on their published exclusion rates showed that individual schools differed significantly in their exclusion rates and patterns. Although the data did provide, on a school-by-school basis, information about the background of the pupils who were excluded and their reasons for exclusion, data of this sort reveals limited information which explains schools' practices and teachers' responses to their pupils. However, this exercise could neither provide a full explanation about the reasons that schools differed, or illuminate the school-level features and characteristics of their organisational setting.

The limitations of statistical data suggest that in order to explore more fully the dynamics and the differences between individual schools and local areas, I needed to look more closely at what was happening in practice. More crucially, I learned more from discussions with the LEA's exclusion officer about the policy dynamics and local context in which individual schools were excluding than could be ascertained from the statistical data. Thus, for the second investigation, I shifted my efforts to collecting data through fieldwork, and carried out a series of interviews with teachers and field-based case studies of schools.

## **4.4 Investigation 2: Exploring teachers' perceptions of the causes and dynamics of exclusion from school**

This investigation explored teachers' perceptions of exclusion and the factors they attributed to the causes and dynamics of exclusion at three levels: the individual pupil level; the school level, and the policy level. This investigation of teachers' perceptions was framed by four specific questions:

1. How do teachers view the causes and dynamics of exclusion from school?
2. What factors, at the individual pupil level, do teachers associate with school exclusion?
3. How do teachers describe the role and influence of their school in relation to school exclusion?
4. What impact and pressures do teachers perceive that national policies have on their practices, and what implications does this raise for school exclusion?

This investigation was based primarily on data collected through open and semi-structured interviews with 44 secondary teachers in the four case study schools, the selection of which is explained later in Table 4.5. The data collected through these teacher interviews therefore contributed to the data collected for the case studies, which I then analysed on a school-by-school basis.

### **4.4.1 Rationale for interview method**

The decision to use interviews to examine teachers' perceptions arose after designing and considering a teacher questionnaire, which I piloted in three schools and discussed with a small number of teachers who completed the questionnaire

(see Appendix A for a more extended discussion, description, and copy of this questionnaire). In a series of follow-up interviews to the questionnaire, the teachers with whom I talked, revealed perceptions that could not be explicitly ascertained from the analysis of the questionnaire findings.

What teachers discussed in these interviews not only revealed the effects that national policy pressures had on teachers' practices and attitudes, but also illuminated the nature of the dilemmas, conflicts, and difficulties that teachers experienced in relation to individual pupils and their school. More crucially, unlike the questionnaire, the interview offered a vehicle through which teachers could explain the connections and relationships between the multiple layers of context – by describing how these dynamics were connected and linked to school exclusion.

It was at this point that I shifted and focused my methods at exploring how individual teachers' viewed school exclusion vis-à-vis their school's organisational setting and the impact of national policy. Furthermore, I found the process of the face-to-face interview a more suitable and satisfying forum for allowing a teacher to describe, express, and interpret their views in their own words. Unlike the one-way communication of a questionnaire, the experience of interviews facilitates “dialogue and conversation” (Kvale, 1996). Here teachers could, alongside their own process of reflection and thinking, react and respond to my own attempts to make sense and construct theories. In this sense, the interview offered a method that paired with my social constructionist and interpretivist approach and my initial work with the

questionnaire had confirmed that these key participants (teachers) had complex explanations readily available.

#### 4.4.2 Interview areas and questions

Silverman (1993) suggests that interviews can serve multiple purposes, including “gathering facts; accessing beliefs about facts; identifying feelings and motives; commenting on the standards of actions (what could be done about situation(s); present or previous behaviour; and eliciting reasons and explanations” (p. 92-93).

A summary of how these purposes mapped to the areas that I wanted to explore through teacher interviews is shown below in Table 4.2:

<b>Interview purpose (Silverman, 1993)</b>	<b>Specific area for framing interview questions</b>
<i>“Gathering facts”</i>	About the teacher's role in the school About key features and characteristics of their school About process and policy toward exclusion
<i>“Accessing beliefs about facts”</i>	About the causes and reasons for exclusion About why exclusion rates have increased over past decade About school's decisions to use exclusion
<i>“Identifying feelings and motives”</i>	About their attitudes toward students About pressures in school and national policy
<i>“Commenting on actions and situations”</i>	About staff communication in relation to pupils at risk of exclusion About the support provided to students at risk of exclusion. About teacher's ability to prevent exclusion
<i>Present or previous behaviour</i>	About how teachers as individuals, respond to pressures of policy. About how teachers adapt practices to respond to students.
<i>Eliciting reasons and explanations</i>	About the impact of national policy on school exclusion, in relation to the role and influence of the school's organisational setting.

The purpose of the interviews was to illuminate three key areas about the context of exclusion:

- *Perceptions of the causes and dynamics of exclusion.* Interview questions were aimed at exploring how teachers viewed the general causes and dynamics of exclusion, with a particular focus on explanations and theories about the rise in exclusions during the past decade;
- *Perceptions about the role and influence of school organisation.* Interview questions were aimed at exploring how teachers viewed their role and responsibility in relation to exclusion, with a particular focus on the structures, policies, and practices in their own school setting which influenced when exclusion occurred and/or could be prevented.
- *Perceptions about the impact of national policy.* Interview questions were aimed at examining how teachers interpreted and assessed the impact of national policies, how they described the effects on their own practices and beliefs; expectations and attitudes toward students, and the ways in which these effects might be related to exclusion.

#### **4.4.3 Interview sample and school selection**

The main interview sample involved 44 teachers from four schools. This interview sample was drawn from two secondary schools located in Southeast England (“School L” and “School S”) and two schools in North England (“School R” and “School M”), which were also the focus of the case studies which I will explain in the next section of this chapter. The teachers who were interviewed for this part of the investigation were drawn from the four case study schools (with the exception

of one teacher who came from a non case study school where I piloted the questionnaire).

To identify and select teachers for the interviews, I used a combination of sampling strategies at three different stages of the study, which is shown below in Table 4.3. The data collected from these teacher interviews was also analysed both as an entire sample and also on a school-by-school basis, which I report and discuss in Chapter Six.

<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Interview stage</i>	<i>Sampling method</i>	<i>Interview style</i>	<i>Interview Sample</i>
July – Sept 1999	STAGE 1 Follow-up to questionnaire	Convenience, purposive (Teachers who completed questionnaire)	Open	N=4*
Sept 1999 – Jan 2000	STAGE 2 Senior managers	Purposive (Headteachers and deputy headteachers)	Open	N=41
Jan - May 2000	STAGE 3 Teachers	Purposive and fill-in sampling (Teachers recommended by senior management and staff)	Semi-structured	
<p>Notes:</p> <p>*1 teacher was interviewed in a school that did not participate in the main study.</p> <p>A total of 44 teachers were interviewed. The breakdown is as follows: School L: n=12; School M: n= 12; School R: n=7; School S: n=13</p>				

The first stage of interviews was carried out as a follow-up to the questionnaire and preliminary step to inform the issues that I would explore further. These interviews

were conducted with four teachers in two secondary schools: a case study school (where I interviewed the SENCO, the head of behaviour support, and the head of history); and a second school (which did not participate in the case studies) where I interviewed a SENCO). This set of interviews was intended as a follow-up to the questionnaire which I designed and piloted (see Appendix A). There were several purposes for these interviews. First, I wanted to obtain respondents' reaction to the questionnaire. Second, I wanted to experiment with a variety of interview styles. Third, I wanted to identify particular issues that could be pursued further and provide the focus for the remainder of the interviews as well as the school case studies.

The second stage of interviews was carried out with the headteachers and deputy headteachers. These interviews were aimed at confirming participation in the study, establishing a profile of the school, assessing how the school's leadership and management viewed exclusion, and identifying specific areas and issues that I would explore through additional interviews. This initial contact and meeting with the headteacher (or the deputy headteacher, in the case of School R) also resulted in recommendations to talk with other members of staff.

During this second stage of my interviews, I felt it important to pursue these recommendations, rather than seek out specific roles for two main reasons. First, I believed it important to establish outright a respectful and co-operative working relationship with the head and deputy head. I did not want to be perceived as

‘imposing’ my agenda on the school, but rather hoped to be guided by what was being said. Second, I believed that at this stage of data collection, it was less important to have a “representative” sample of teachers, and more useful to have a range of individual views.

The third stage of interviews targeted specific teachers, based on suggestions made by the headteacher, other teachers, and, in some cases, pupils whom I encountered in the school. This set of interviews was conducted in a semi-structured fashion, in order to gather more specific data about issues and areas raised and identified by the school’s senior managers. These interviews allowed me to build on the issues that arose from interviews conducted with other members of staff and to verify and clarify information about specific issues pertaining to the policies, structures, and practices in the school.

A description of the interview sample is shown below in Table 4.4

**TABLE 4.4**  
**Teacher Interview Sample**

	<b>School L</b>	<b>School M</b>	<b>School R</b>	<b>School S</b>
Visits made	2, 7 Nov 1999 28 Feb 2000 7 Nov 2000	22 Oct 1999 18 Nov 1999 22, 31 May 2000 31 Oct 2000	19 Oct 1999 15 Nov 1999 18 Jan 2000 23 May 2000	5, 20 July 1999 16 Oct 2000 9, 13 Nov 2000
<b>Role interviewed:</b>				
Headteacher	X (VW)	X (KM)	X (JD)	X X (JT & SW)
Deputy Head	X (BH)	X (MW)	X (NW)	X X (MR & TS)
Head of Upper/ Lower Schools	X (AF)	N/a	N/a	N/a
SENCO	X (AM)	X (BM)	X (KH)	X X (JF & AN)
Head of Pastoral Care	N/A	N/A	N/A	X (MM)
Head of Year 7	–	X (LH)	–	X (KF)
Head of Year 8	X (LT)		–	–
Head of Year 9	X (AT)		–	–
Head of Year 10		X (SB)	X (R)	–
Head of Year 11	X (TE)	X (MK)	–	X (JO)
Head of Department	–	<i>(Heads of Years 7, 10, 11 also serve as Heads of History, Science, and Geography, respectively)</i>		X (AC) <i>(Head of Year 11 also Head of Geography)</i>
Specialised Learning/ Behaviour Support	X X X (ST, JB, JW)	X X X (LL, VM, BM)	X (W)	X (NR)
Classroom Teachers	X (R)	X X (JP & SC)	X (ST)	X X (LA & MB)
NQTs	<i>Same as above</i>	X X (PE & Maths)	X (MS)	–
<b>Number of teachers interviewed</b>	<b>11 (121 Staff)</b>	<b>13 (39 Staff)</b>	<b>7 (44 Staff)</b>	<b>13 (71 Staff)</b>
Ethnic Composition	10 White 1 Asian	13 White	6 White 1 Afro-Caribbean	7 White 6 Afro-Caribbean
Gender	7 Female 4 Male	9 Female 4 Male	4 Female 3 Male	5 Female 8 Male
Years in teaching	>10 years – 10 > 5 years – 0 < 5 years – 1	>10 years – 8 > 5 years – 3 < 5 years – 2	> 10 years – 5 > 5 years – 1 < 5 years – 1	> 10 years – 10 > 5 years – 3 < 5 years – 0

#### **4.4.4 Interview format and procedures**

The format and style of interview that I used is one that “moves away from the pre-structured, standardised forms ... toward the open-ended or semi-structured” (Cohen et al, 2001, p.146). The rationale for this choice stemmed from my emergent research design. A key consideration was the need for flexibility; I did not wish to define rigidly the issues in a way that would limit my ability to adapt my methods alongside the data that emerged. Although there were clear areas that I hoped to explore through the interviews (as shown in the teacher interview guide in Appendix B), I found that I could use a pre-devised schedule in a loosely constructed manner. This enabled me to treat each interviewee as an individual, and to raise and pursue questions that emerged unexpectedly and were not anticipated. Moreover, I wanted to view each interview as an opportunity for each teacher to reveal his or her own construction and view of reality – an assumption grounded in my social constructionist approach.

Robson (1993) defines the interview as “a kind of conversation; a conversation with a purpose” (p. 228). An open-style of interview was used during my initial set of encounters with the school, for example, in conducting interviews with headteachers. This style of interview allowed me to begin constructing a general profile of the school and to identify particular issues that I would explore through additional interviews with teachers. Another rationale for using this interview style was to introduce an “openness” to my approach as a researcher, and to establish a level of trust and rapport between the interviewee and myself, particularly given the

sensitivity of the topic of exclusion. A semi-structured interview style was then used for conducting interviews with teachers and for pursuing specific issues generated by previous interviews. This allowed me to maintain a focus, and to guide my enquiry toward the collection of data that would help me to answer my research questions, but without a fixed sequence of topics.

Kvale (1996) describes interviewing as a complex process, particularly because, while one might aim to have common procedures for conducting each interview, “on-the-spot” decisions are a common feature of interviewing. Unlike the questionnaire, which allowed me to make decisions about the wording, order, and organisation of questions ahead of time, such decisions needed to be made during the interview itself. Although Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) and Robson (1993) both suggest that while less structured interviews can be more flexible and illuminating than the questionnaire, they similarly warn that the procedures involved in interviewing demand a high degree of skills on the part of the interviewer – specifically, prior knowledge about the topic and a strong grasp of the contentious issues of probing knowledge through conversation (Kvale, 1996, p. 13). Lofland (1971) stresses the features needed for successful interviewing as a series of interpersonal skills, explaining that such skills become crucial when attempting to build a relationship and establish rapport with respondents when one is exploring sensitive or delicate areas.

There were a number of common features in how I conducted the interviews:

- *On school site.* All of the interviews were held on the school site. This decision was made for several reasons. First, having the interview on site provided a setting that was both natural and familiar to the interviewee. The school setting also minimised the time and burden on the interview participant. As such, interviews usually took place in an empty classroom or office. A second reason for conducting the interviews on the school site was that I could then schedule several interviews on one day, during which I collected data through other methods.
- *Tape-recording.* Another feature of my procedures was the tape-recording of interviews. This was done in order to provide a record of the conversation to which I could later refer. The purpose of recording of the interview was explained to the interviewee and conducted using a small, battery-operated, hand-held tape recorder. Recording occurred only with the verbal permission of the interviewee. With one exception (one teacher did not wish to be taped), interviews were tape-recorded and notes were also taken. Interviews were transcribed and portions were used to allow for the use of direct quotations.

#### **4.4.5 Methodological strengths and limitations**

The main limitation of interviews is that it offers a set of interpretations and views, and does not necessarily reflect what may be happening in schools in actual practice. However, data on perceptions was critical to my research question because it revealed 1) how teachers make connections; 2) how they view

relationships; and 3) how they interpret the influence of the school as well as national policy. As I explain in the next section, to explore how the issues and dynamics revealed in teachers' perceptions played out in schools, I used additional methods (observation and document review) in the case study.

The method I used to select teachers relied on the willingness of school management to allow access to staff members. This raises a number of questions about the important role that co-operation and willingness had in my particular approach to selecting teachers to be interviewed. For example, in two of the schools, the headteacher not only recommended that I interview particular teachers, but also volunteered to contact the teacher and make the necessary arrangements for cover. However, in other schools, it was agreed that I would contact teacher, explain the purpose of the interview, and negotiate a time and location for the interview.

In the course of carrying out my enquiries, the interview plan and schedule I developed was used more as a loosely followed guide; that had to be adapted for each individual. The focus and questions of the interviews, as well as the style used, crucially depended on a number of factors. For example, whether or not I had met the individual previously; whether I needed to follow-up on a particular question or issue raised by a previous interviewee; or whether I sought a view or explanation of an incident or event that I had observed in the school. How the teachers whom I interviewed perceived my role and purpose also raises a number of

issues in interpreting the data that was collected. Block (1995) raises the issue of the social constraints of interviews and the social construction of the interviewer, as impinging on the nature of the interview and how they are conceived. One dynamic of the interview was the extent to which revealed my own beliefs about exclusion. Although there were occasions when the interviewee offered a view that conflicted with my own personal stance, I felt it important not to express disagreement in order to allow a full expression of the individual's interpretation.

The different levels of co-operation from schools and responsiveness from teachers about participating in the interview raises questions about whether or not a teacher who is asked by the headteacher or approached directly by a researcher can be considered to be a willing participant. The teacher interviews that were arranged by the headteacher could be interpreted in a number of ways. One possibility is that the teacher might have felt "forced" to participate in the interview. On the other hand, a teacher approached by the headteacher might view the interview as significant and important to merit his or her time. Another possibility is that these teachers might feel they were the school's "representative" and feel obliged to reflect the headteacher's views, as they perceived them. Teachers whom I approached directly to interview may have exercised more choice, but the interviews were generally more difficult to organise logistically and often meant rescheduling an interview. I also found that teachers whom I approached directly were less clear about my role and purpose for interviewing them. Whether or not a teacher had been briefed prior to our meeting called for me to use flexible ways of

explaining the purpose of my study, introducing the topic, explaining my role, and using varied ways of ensuring informed consent. The implication of all of this was that I needed to rely heavily on my interpersonal skills and the interview itself to establish a level of trust and understanding with the interviewee about the purpose, format, and conditions of the interview. The ethics of informed consent, participation, and disclosure are discussed further in Section 4.6.

### **4.5 Investigation 3: Exploring the school context of exclusion**

This investigation was based on a set of multiple, ethnographic case studies of four secondary schools, chosen for their different rates of exclusion. This part of the study aimed to illuminate and compare the school organisational contexts in which exclusion occurs. It may be helpful to remind the reader that this investigation overlapped with “Investigation 2”, which examined teachers’ perceptions of the causes and dynamics of exclusion. The data drawn from these teacher interviews was then analysed on a school-by-school basis for the purposes of the individual case studies.

This investigation aimed to: 1) examine the specific issues identified by teachers in the context of their own school setting; and 2) compare the organisational differences between schools with differing rates of exclusion. The investigation was framed by three questions:

- In what ways do the characteristics and features of a school’s organisational context affect how teachers view and use exclusion in different schools?

- What are the similarities and differences between the organisational context of schools with “high” and “low” exclusion?
- How do national policies and pressures affect schools’ practices, and how are these dynamics mediated by a school’s organisational context?

#### **4.5.1 Ethnographic approach**

Various definitions can be found of “case study” in the literature on methodology. While Cohen et al (2000) suggest that “a case study is a specific instance” (p.181), Stake (1984) suggests that “what distinguishes a case is the object which is to be explored, not the methodological orientation used in studying it” (p.236 cited in Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Robson (1993) takes case study to be a “strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (p.5). In considering each of these definitions, “case study” in describing this part of the study refers to the strategy, as Robson (1993) suggests, that I used to explore the context and practices of schools through fieldwork and multiple sources of data. At the same time, I did define “case” also to mean a specific instance, and selected specific “cases” of schools with differing rates of exclusion, in order to explore from within a natural setting, how their practices, processes, and interactions compared. I will explain this in the next section that follows this discussion.

The methods and approach I used to carry out the school case studies can be described as ethnographic in that data was collected through fieldwork conducted in

the schools, and second, relied on a wide range of sources involving participation, observation, and documentation. LeCompte & Preissle (1993) suggest that ethnographic approaches are more concerned with “description rather than prediction, induction rather than deduction, generation rather than verification of theory, construction rather than enumeration, and subjectivities rather than objective knowledge” (pp. 39-44, Cited in Cohen et al, 2000, p. 138). These views, as well as the general acceptance that ethnography occurs in a naturalistic setting (Atkinson, 1990; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) fit well my own theoretical position about the construction of knowledge (as described in Chapter 3) and my general aims to describe context and generate theory.

#### **4.5.2 Selection of multiple cases**

My case study approach might be viewed as a *collective case study* (Stake, 1984) in that I chose to study not a single case, but a number of cases jointly in order to inquire into the phenomenon. This approach involved using multiple methods within a case study to explore, describe, and compare individual cases (Yin, 1989).

The decision to select two cases of high-excluding schools and two cases of low-excluding schools with similar levels of disadvantage was informed partly by my examination of school exclusion patterns in one LEA, which revealed a wide variation in schools’ exclusion rates and patterns. The identification of schools that were exceptions to conventional explanations – schools with a low incidence of

exclusion despite high levels of disadvantage – motivated me to want to look more closely at these individual cases and their differences.

To explore possible reasons for these differences, I selected four secondary schools on the basis of three criteria: 1) geographic location; 2) student intake; and 3) exclusion rate, though, for practical reasons, all were in locations where I was already working as a research officer.

<b>“School R”</b>	<b>“School S”</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small</li> <li>• High incidence of exclusion</li> <li>• Located in North England</li> <li>• High % of students on free school meals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large</li> <li>• High incidence of exclusion</li> <li>• Located in Southeast England</li> <li>• High % of students on free school meals</li> </ul>
<b>“School M”</b>	<b>“School L”</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small</li> <li>• Low incidence of exclusion</li> <li>• Located in North England</li> <li>• High % of students on free school meals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large</li> <li>• Low incidence of exclusion</li> <li>• Located in Southeast England</li> <li>• High % of students on free school meals</li> </ul>
<b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion rate based on total number of permanent exclusions between 1997-1999.</li> <li>• % of students on free school meals based on 1998-99 school year.</li> </ul>	

- ***Geographic location.*** School R and School M were both located within the same North England town, but with differing rates of exclusion. These two schools were located in areas where I was working as a research officer and where I had negotiated access. School S and School L were located in Southeast England in the city where I lived and therefore could visit readily. All four schools could be described as schools located in urban centres.

- ***Student intake.*** All four schools were selected for their levels of disadvantage. The student intake of all four schools revealed high levels of social disadvantage and special educational needs, based on percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils with statements.
- ***Exclusion rates.*** School L and School M were schools with lower rates of exclusion; School R and School S were schools with higher rates of exclusion. The exclusion rates for the two schools in North England were calculated through the review of exclusion figures in one LEA and could be officially verified by the LEA's published exclusion figures. However, the exclusion rates for the two schools in Southeast England could not be confirmed because I was unable to obtain the LEA's official reports. Therefore, the decision to consider School L as a low-excluding school and School S as a high-excluding school was based on a judgement derived from initial conversations with the school's headteacher and reports from staff.

The rationale for these criteria was threefold. First, choosing schools in differing parts of the country allowed me to examine whether perceptions about the effects of national policy differed among teachers and schools in different parts of the country. Second, choosing schools with differing rates of exclusion allowed me to compare their organisational settings and to consider how differences in their specific features and characteristics might be related to school exclusion. Third, selecting schools in areas with similar, high levels of deprivation allowed me to

examine schools where exclusion was more likely to occur than a school with a lower level of disadvantage. From here, I could examine and compare how the schools and teachers were responding to the behavioural and learning challenges presented by their particular population of students.

The selection of multiple cases – of two schools that were high-excluding and two schools that were low-excluding in different parts of the country – was critical to how I analysed the data and attempted to make sense of the similarities and differences between the practices, interactions, and perceptions within each of the schools. My approach was to conduct a cross-site analysis between the organisational settings of the case study schools. I did not conduct the investigations in a successive manner, but carried them out simultaneously, using a grounded theory approach to construct ideas between visits, and then returning to each site to conduct further investigation.

Huberman & Miles (1998) describe this interim analysis (p. 186) as part of an emergent process. “Typically, too, the more one investigates, the more layers of the setting one discovers”. (Ibid.). Finally, the selection of multiple cases also provided what Miles & Huberman (1994) suggests for “making contrasts and comparisons, a classic tactic meant to sharpen understanding by clustering and distinguishing observations” (Huberman & Miles, 1998, p. 187). Vogt (2002) in a study that also employed an ethnographic multi-case study involving fieldwork in primary school also suggests that:

Comparing is part of making sense of data at the data analysis stage of ethnographic research: even within a single case study, the role of comparison involves analysing and representing multiple perspectives, as well as integrating data from different methods (p. 25).

### 4.5.3 Multiple methods of data collection

As shown in Table 4.6, the data that was collected was drawn through a range of methods, which included: 1) observations; 2) interviews carried out with teachers (as part of Investigation 2); and 3) a review of school documents. These methods were aimed at illuminating the perceptions, interactions, processes, policies, structures, communications, relationships, and expectations that comprise a school's organisational setting.

Research Aims	Teacher Interviews	Observations				School documents
		Lessons & Classroom	Staff Meetings	Assembly	Pupil Shadow	
To illuminate school leadership style and management culture.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
To illuminate aspects of school's culture, ethos, vision.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
To identify difficulties / constraints experienced by teachers.	✓	✓	✓		✓	
To examine school's response to pupils with behavioural and academic difficulties.	✓	✓	✓		✓	
To examine how school policies were described and used.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
To examine how school support structures were perceived, used, and implemented.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

To observe how teachers communicated with each other.		✓	✓	✓	✓	
To observe how pupils and staff interacted with each other across different classroom settings.		✓	✓	✓	✓	
To observe how pupils were perceived and how their needs were discussed amongst staff, within, and across departments.		✓	✓		✓	
To examine how expectations about behaviour and achievement were conveyed to pupils.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

#### 4.5.3a Observations

The purpose of conducting observations was to examine and pursue when possible, the interactions between and amongst staff and students in order to illuminate the particular tensions described by teachers in the interviews. Merriam (1988) describes observation as providing a way for the researcher to “see things firsthand and to use his or her knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed, rather than relying upon once-removed accounts from interviewers” (p.88). In each of the schools, I was clearly identified as a researcher and seen as an outsider, and allowed entry to the school. However, the degree of my participation and the level of access to materials, particularly school documents, varied in each of the school. Another factor in the methods I employed was the extent to which the opportunities for generating data were planned (i.e. requested and organised such as the interviews) and unplanned (i.e. observations of pupils being sent out of class). For all of these methods, the degree of my participation ranged in their level of participation and obtrusiveness, but could generally be described as a participant-observer.

Opportunities to observe consisted of lessons, staff meetings, assemblies, and a pupil shadow:

- *Lessons.* Sitting in on lessons provided me with an opportunity to examine a range of areas that might be relevant to school exclusion. Of particular interest was examining what teachers perceived as disruptive behaviour, how teachers interacted with, responded to, and communicated with students, and how teachers managed a range of pressures within the classroom setting.
- *Staff meetings.* Observing staff meetings provided me with the opportunity to examine the school's leadership, management, and staff culture as well as the structures and policies being used in the school. Areas of particular interest were how the staff communicated, how structures for addressing pupils needs were described and developed, and how such strategies appeared to be working.
- *Assemblies.* These gatherings of students and pupils provided further insight about the school's overall ethos and staff culture. Of particular interest was how beliefs and expectations about behaviour and achievement were conveyed to pupils.
- *Pupil shadow.* These were planned and requested opportunities to examine, from a student's perspective, the experience of teaching and learning in the

course of a day. In each of schools, a student at risk of exclusion was identified by the headteacher, and I followed his or her timetable throughout the day. This enabled me to observe how teachers responded to the student and how aspects of support and policy were applied in practice.

#### **4.5.3b Interviews**

The interviews conducted in Investigation 2, which explored teachers' perceptions were also used to inform the case studies. Using these interviews as part of the case studies allowed me to generate theory about teachers' constructions and views of exclusion in relation to the organisational context of their own school. Interviews with teachers also provided key insight about the specific aspects of the school's organisation setting that influenced exclusion.

#### **4.5.3c School documents**

School documents provided a final source of data that I gathered about the school. Information that I requested included 1) school profile and student background data (e.g. percentage of students with SEN, on free school meals, and from ethnic minority backgrounds) and 2) school attendance and exclusion rates. Information that was offered and provided by the school staff included school prospectus, curriculum materials, written policies, staff minutes, and school newsletters.

#### **4.5.4 Methodological limitations of case studies**

The school case studies provided the opportunity to examine the micro-level context in which exclusion occurs and to look closely at the organisational setting of four schools. However, the extent to which I could compare each school was problematic for a number of reasons. First, the extent and quality of the data and information that I was able to gather and collect varied significantly from school to school. Each school approached my requests for information differently. Some schools were highly responsive and appeared to make a great deal of effort in organising my visits. Other schools were less responsive, and in one case, as time progressed became reluctant for me to continue my research. In this case, I was unable to continue collecting data. Although I attempted to conduct the same number of visits to each school, the reality and need for flexibility meant that I visited some schools more than others, particularly those schools that were in closer proximity. As a result, I felt that the quality of data collected and therefore the depth of my understanding about the practices in the schools was more (or less) better than in others.

#### **4.6 Ethical considerations and reflections**

This section discusses my procedures for negotiating access, informed consent, and reporting data. I also reflect on the ethical dilemmas encountered with these procedures and the implications of these and other choices made in the course of my investigations. This includes: labelling schools as high- and low- excluding; disrupted research environments; burdening schools during difficult times of

change, and the trustworthiness of exclusions data. I end the chapter with a general reflection on employing different methodological approaches in this study.

#### **4.6.1 Negotiating access to schools**

During the initial stages of my research, access to school exclusion data and visits to schools were facilitated through my involvement on an LEA-commissioned research project. I obtained permission from the LEA's director to use and report information for my PhD research on the condition that the LEA and the schools would not be identified. As such, in Chapter Five, where I report these findings, the LEA is not named (except in reference to its geographical location, North England) and the 82 schools are named as "School 1", "School 2", and so forth.

For the teacher interviews and case study investigations, access was negotiated at the individual school level. Permission to interview teachers and observe activities within the schools was obtained through the headteacher. Festinger & Katz (1966) suggest "real economy in going to the very top of the organisation to obtain such assent" (cited in Cohen et al, 2000, p 55). However, as I described earlier in Section 4.4.5, permission from the head of an organisation does not necessarily ensure co-operation or guarantee the willingness of individuals to participate in interviews. Being given permission for access to schools by the LEA also did not guarantee access to individual teachers and their classrooms, and therefore needed to be individually negotiated at both the school- and teacher-level. Permission to report and use data for my PhD study was agreed on the condition that schools

would not be named. As such, in Chapter Seven, I refer to the case study schools as “School L”, “School M”, “School R”, and “School S”.

#### **4.6.2 Informed consent**

My procedures for informing participants who participated in the study included an explanation of: a) the purpose of the study and reasons for selection; b) my research approach and methods; c) the time commitment involved in participating; and d) how data would be reported. This was accomplished through written correspondence, a face-to-face meeting with the headteacher in each of the schools, and an explanation during each interview.

- *Explaining the purpose of the study.* I gave a general description of the study by explaining that I was trying to understand the problem of exclusion. I explained that I had chosen schools that were in highly deprived areas because of the increased risk of exclusion, but that my review of the research literature had suggested that schools varied in how they used exclusion. I explained that I wanted to investigate “the kinds of things that affect how exclusion is used” and that I was “most interested in what teachers had to say”. Here, I offered my view that I believed exclusion to be a problem that reflected dynamics that were not simply about behaviour. I indicated that I was interested in understanding how school and policy factors influenced exclusion.
- *Explaining my research approach.* I explained that my research study would involve conducting interviews with teachers, visiting classrooms, sitting on

meetings, and attending assemblies. I explained that I had chosen this approach because it was important to me, as a former teacher, to hear teachers' views, and that I felt that face-to-face explanations were more suited to my questions than other methods used to gather teachers' perceptions (for example, a questionnaire). I further explained that observing "the life of the school" was also important because this provided insight to the interactions between teachers and students, and therefore, the context in which exclusion occurs.

- *Explaining the time commitment and resources required.* I explained that I hoped to visit the school at least once a term over the next two years. I explained each interview would take approximately forty-five minutes, and no longer than the period of a lesson. It was difficult, however, to pre-specify the number of interviews that I needed from the outset, due to my emergent research approach. I thus explained that the number of interviews and observations that I would conduct in the school depended on the issues that emerged from the interviews and also what occurred during my visits to the school. I emphasised that I did not wish to burden schools (although as I will explain later, this was difficult to avoid given the struggles that one school experienced during the course of my research) and that I hoped to pre-arrange interviews with teachers and visit classrooms only during times that were convenient to staff.
- *Explaining how data would be reported.* I explained that schools would not be identified, that teachers would not be named to protect their identity. As such

schools are identified either by a number (Chapter Five) or letter (Chapter Seven) and all names of teachers are pseudonyms. The conditions of how data would be reported was agreed verbally with schools and each interviewees; however, maintaining this assurance became difficult in the citation of quotes, through which a reader familiar with the area and the school could possibly identify the person through their role. I agreed with the LEA and the schools that I would share the results of the study upon completion. Copies of research conference papers and articles based on emerging findings and preliminary analysis were sent to each of the schools for feedback; however no comments, questions, or suggestions were offered.

### **4.6.3 Ethical and research dilemmas**

This section describes the dilemmas encountered with my research procedures during the course of this study.

#### **4.6.3a Labelling schools and concealing judgements**

The issue of labelling schools in relation to schools' exclusion rates was a dilemma that I faced in explaining to teachers why I had selected their school for the study. Because of the sensitivity of the topic, I did not want participants to feel that they had been labelled, despite my having already made a judgement. In an attempt to resolve this dilemma, I chose not to state explicitly that I was comparing "high-" and "low-" excluding schools, but explained that I was researching schools with "differing" rates of exclusion. Although in reporting my findings, I refer to the case study schools as "high-" or "low-" excluding, I did not use this term when talking

with teachers. I did, however, indicate my awareness that the school had “high” numbers of exclusion. While I did feel more comfortable explaining the basis of my selection with staff in the low-excluding schools, I did not feel this same level of ease with teachers in higher-excluding schools. This raises an ethical question about the extent to which participants in these schools were fully informed about the purpose of the study.

#### **4.6.3b Disrupted research environments**

The experience of conducting research in a naturalistic setting understandably involves a certain level of unpredictability, but can become problematic for the researcher when a respondent does not follow through with expected arrangements and shows increasing signs of unwillingness to continue participating in the study. This was my experience and a particular dilemma in the case of “School R”. Although efforts to ensure co-operation were made prior to visiting this school, for example, in pre-arranging interviews, on each visit, occasions often occurred when the teacher was unavailable due to illness or cover. For example, I was unable to interview the headteacher on my first two visits to the school, which was the primary purpose of my visit.

During these occasions, valuable time and effort was spent travelling to a school, only to find that I could not access the data I hoped to collect. While this was not a particular problem in the other schools because efforts were made to find an alternative time or individual, in School R, I was usually left to wait in one of the

school's offices, unsure of whether a teacher would arrive or not. In other schools, I would use these opportunities to observe and talk informally with pupils and staff, which itself was informative and valuable. However, in this particular school, I did not feel that I could openly wander about the corridors, and staff appeared reluctant for me to observe their classrooms.

In such disrupted research environments, a question is raised as to whether or not a researcher could continue in a setting that shows increasing non-verbal signs of a reluctance to participate. In the case of School R, following the departure of the headteacher, it was agreed with the deputy headteacher that it was no longer "best for the staff" for me to continue my research due to the "stress and uncertainties that staff were feeling". Although this decision meant that I could no longer collect data, the experience itself was a finding that revealed important information about the setting or persons under study. On balance, the need to respect the wishes of the participant outweighed by desire to collect data in this school. Further reflection of this decision and experience in this school is provided in Chapter Seven (Section 7.4.7).

#### **4.6.3c Burdening schools**

Another dilemma that arose from the nature of conducting school-based research was the inevitable and additional burden placed on the schools and individuals in arranging interviews and requesting information. This was especially felt and acute for the schools that were clearly struggling. These schools had been inspected by

their respective LEAs and “judged with serious weaknesses”. During the course of my research, the school and teachers in these schools were under considerable pressure and scrutiny, and were being visited regularly by LEA advisors and OFSTED inspectors. This made visits and interviews increasingly difficult to carry out, raising for me the ethical dilemma of whether I should be adding to these schools’ burdens with my presence and research.

Also, during the course of the study, my contacts and relationships with each of the schools changed as a result of changes in staffing and management, affecting my ability to make arrangements to visit the school. Of the four schools, three underwent major changes in headship. At School S, the head changed twice in the course of two years. At School R, the head was replaced following an unsuccessful inspection. In School L, the deputy headteacher (my main point of contact) left to take on another headship.

The overall implications for my research raised a number of difficulties for communicating and maintaining continuity in my process. I had to collect data, for example, during times that did not interfere with the school’s inspection process, and I began questioning ethically whether my continued presence in the school was creating an additional strain and pressure on staff. Upon reflection, signs of stress and strain within a school might have been a signal to question whether it is ethical for a researcher to burden schools during such periods of change and transition.

#### **4.6.3d The sensitivity and trustworthiness of exclusions data**

Another type of dilemma I encountered pertains to the sensitivity and trustworthiness of the exclusions data that I received from schools (as distinct from the data received from the LEA, which I discussed earlier). The sensitivity of exclusions data raised questions about how to treat the figures and material provided by schools, and whether I could trust its accuracy. Here I had to ask why it was being offered, whether it accurately reflected what occurred in practice, or whether it was purposefully deceptive. The use of multiple methods and sources allowed me to “cross-check” exclusion figures with data collected through interviews and observations, offering further insight to perceptions and actual practices.

#### **4.6.4 Reflection on methodology**

In this study, my theorisation of exclusion as a complex phenomenon that involves multiple focal points and layers of context required me to try out different methodologies to establish the most suitable approach for pursuing the nature of my research questions. This point is important because it explains why, for example, in the course of my investigations, I chose one methodological approach (e.g, analysing statistical data to confirm differences between schools) and then shifted to another type of approach (e.g using ethnography to explore the nature of these differences). I make this general point here to illustrate, from the outset, my recognition that different methodologies can be used to illuminate different questions, and in so doing, can offer different explanations for the same research problem.

The approach I took in choosing the methods to conduct this study cannot be separated from my views and beliefs as an individual. The process of collecting and analysing data is clearly subjective and reflects my experiences as a teacher, my preferences as a learner, and my philosophies as an educator. Although this recognition resonates with my social constructionist stance, the act of comparing statistical data and schools within this view created, at times, tensions between my desire to portray each school in its own right, while searching for common themes. The process of attempting to construct a “picture” of exclusion that reflects multiple realities of multiple actors highlighted, for me, the difficulties of writing within my own theoretical stance.

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## *CHAPTER FIVE*

# **Exploring the Exclusion Rates and Patterns of Secondary Schools in One LEA**

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### **5.0 Chapter overview**

In this chapter, I report the findings from an examination of the permanent and fixed-term exclusion rates and patterns for 82 secondary schools in one local education authority (LEA). We know from national reports and research studies that patterns, trends, and rates of school exclusion can vary locally – by geographic region, by LEA, and by individual school (OFSTED, 1996; SEU, 1998). Such studies, particularly those based on national surveys of LEAs and statistical models, suggest that schools from socially disadvantaged areas tend to have higher rates of exclusion, because of the increased difficulties and needs of students. However, these same studies also point out that exclusion rates can differ between schools with similar student intakes. For example, Parsons (2000) observed that whilst “social factors play a considerable role in the determination of exclusion rates in schools and LEAs ... there is plenty of variation, especially within schools, which may be explicable in terms of school effectiveness” (p. 87). The evidence that is reported in this chapter adds further insight to this important observation.

I have organised this chapter into the following sections:

- Section 5.1 provides a general overview of the LEA, reports how exclusions are recorded, and examines the LEA's secondary exclusion trends between 1997 and 2001.
- Section 5.2 explores how exclusion rates and patterns for each of the 82 secondary schools ranged widely across the LEA. I examine evidence of variation by individual school and within geographic sub-areas. I also compare the exclusion figures amongst schools with similar levels of social disadvantage and pupil characteristics, pointing out exceptions to conventional explanations that differences in exclusion are due to pupil factors,
- Section 5.3 suggests a local explanation for the differences in schools' exclusion rates and patterns, and discusses the context and impact of LEA and national policy changes.
- Section 5.4 points out the strengths and weaknesses of school exclusion data and considers implications for explaining the differences between schools.

## **5.1 The LEA Context**

### **5.1.1 A General Picture**

The LEA, located in the north of England, serves a socially and ethnically diverse population located in both rural areas and a number of urban, inner-city centres. Within the county, there are pockets of high unemployment and social disadvantage, as well as regions with affluent market towns, farming communities, and higher levels of income. According to figures provided by the LEA, during 1999/2000 school year, there were 89 secondary schools (55 county/comprehensive, 27 church/voluntary aided schools, and seven formerly titled "grant-maintained")

schools); 500 primary schools; and 30 nursery schools. The LEA is considered large and has a school-age population of approximately 174,000 students (74,974 secondary and 99,026 primary).

### **5.1.2 Examining how exclusions are reported**

The LEA's system for collecting and recording data about school exclusions relies largely on what is reported by schools. This process is based on a standardised, notification form developed by the LEA, based on national government requirements. According to a 1998 document explaining the LEA's guidelines and procedures for school exclusion, schools are requested to send in a notification form (the PEN form) for every exclusion, both fixed-term and permanent. Information that is required by schools to report includes:

- School
- Sector of school (primary, secondary, special)
- District/area
- Gender
- Age
- Year Group
- Ethnic background
- Date of exclusion
- Reason for exclusion
- Type of exclusion
- Number of days excluded
- In care
- Special Educational Needs (with or without statements)

Using these forms provided by schools, the LEA compiles and generates a series of printed reports that are circulated internally to schools. These regional reports provide a series of analyses, depicted through statistical tables, which includes the overall exclusions figures for the county, the general area (North, South, or East), the specific region within each area, and finally, the individual schools within each area.

A general examination of the data contained in the reports revealed a number of changes in how the LEA recorded, analysed, and reported trends, patterns, and exclusions for the county between 1997/98 and 2000/01. In 1997/98, the reports provided the total number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions for secondary and primary schools. These included individual school breakdowns by gender and a county-wide analysis based on age, gender, and ethnic origin. The LEA also reported fixed-term exclusions under five days and those over five days for each school. In 1998/99, the LEA began to record the total number of days lost for the fixed-term exclusions within each school, which revealed that schools were excluding for longer periods. In 2000/01, the LEA began to calculate the rates and totals for each regional area, and made annual comparisons between total number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions for 1998/99, 1999/00, and 2000/01.

### **5.1.3 Defining the terms used in reporting exclusions**

According to the LEA's policy in 1998/1999 an *exclusion* is defined as “a decision by the headteacher that a pupil cannot attend school for a stipulated period”. A *permanent exclusion* is defined as “the headteacher’s decision that the pupil should leave the school”. The LEA's policy states, “If the decision to exclude the pupil is confirmed, the pupil cannot return, even if a place is available in the school”. A *fixed-term exclusion* is defined as “a temporary exclusion decision made by the headteacher, after which the pupil returns to school”. According to the LEA’s policy officer, a total maximum of 45 days for a fixed-term exclusion is allowed in

any one year for one pupil. A fixed-term exclusion can and does last from one school day up to 45 days.

The *number* of permanent and fixed-term exclusions reported by the LEA refers to decisions made by headteachers. The *rate of exclusion* is calculated by dividing the total number of exclusions by the number of students on roll. This is then expressed as a rate per thousand. The *date of exclusion* is recorded as the first day of a fixed-term or permanent exclusion. According to the LEA's guidelines, recording the date in this way provides a better view of when incidents of exclusion occur and what is happening in the field. It is important to bear in mind that the number of permanent and fixed-term of exclusions refers to the number of reported *incidents*, which may have repeatedly involved the same student, and not the number of students. For example, if a school's headteacher excluded three students for two days each, another student twice for one day; and then decided to permanently exclude another student who had been excluded previously for two weeks; the total number of fixed-term exclusions reported would be six and the total number of permanent exclusions would be one. *Days lost* refers to the total number of days that students were out of school due to fixed-term exclusions. Using the previous example, the total days lost would be 18 days.

#### **5.1.4 Identifying overall exclusion trends**

Table 5.1 shows the total number of permanent exclusions for the last four years, 1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; and 2000/01.

<b>Type of exclusion</b>	<b>1997/98</b>	<b>1998/99</b>	<b>1999/2000</b>	<b>2000/01</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Fixed-Term + (days lost)	4,212 (not reported)	3,406 (13,002)	3,384 (13,855)	4,687 (20,947)	<b>15,689</b>
<b>+/- (increase / decrease)</b>		<b>-19%</b>	<b>+0.6%</b>	<b>+39%</b>	
Permanent	281	225	153	236	<b>895</b>
<b>+/- (increase / decrease)</b>		<b>-20%</b>	<b>-32%</b>	<b>+54%</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Total incidents per year	4,493	3,631	3,537	4,923	<b>n/a</b>
Source: Unpublished data provided by the LEA's Pupil Access Team. <i>Exclusions from [LEA]'s Schools: Academic year 2000-01. "Annual comparison (1998/99, 1999/2000, and 2000/01)". [Document F].</i>					

The data in Table 5.1 reveals two patterns and trends. First, while the total number of permanent exclusions fell 20% (from 281 to 236) between 1997/98 and 2000/01, the number of fixed-term exclusions actually increased between 1997/98 and 2000/01 by 11.1%. Between 1998 and 2001, the total number of days lost as a result of fixed-term exclusion increased 61%, from 13,002 in 1998/99 to 20,947 in 2000/01. These trends reveal that in the LEA, secondary schools are resorting to using fixed-term exclusion more frequently and for a greater number of days. A second pattern revealed by this data is that while the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions decreased between 1997/98 and 1998/99, the most recent numbers for fixed-term and permanent exclusions have since surpassed the 1997/98 levels, increasing most significantly between 1999/2000 and 2000/01. Whereas nationally, the number of secondary school permanent exclusions increased 10%

from 1999/2000, in the LEA, exclusions increased 54%, nearly five times that of the national rate.

## **5.2 Analysing exclusion rates and patterns for variation and exceptions**

My exploration of schools' exclusion rates and patterns was based on data compiled from a series of annual reports provided by the LEA. These reports provided the total number of permanent and fixed-term exclusion numbers for the LEA's 82 secondary schools during 1997/98, 1998/99, 1999/2000, and 2000/01. The data compiled from each of these reports is summarised in Appendix D and provides for each of the 82 schools:

- *pupil background*, including a) region; b) number of pupils on roll, c) percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), percentage of pupils with special education needs (SEN), and ethnicity;
- *total number of permanent exclusions* for 1997/98, 1998/99, 1999/2000 and 2000/01, including a raw four-year total and rate (per thousand); and
- *total number of fixed-term exclusions* for 1997/98, 1998/99, 1999/2000 and 2000/01, including a raw four-year total and rate (per thousand).

My basic aim in reviewing exclusion figures by individual school was to confirm that schools varied in their exclusion rates and patterns. A more specific intent in this analysis was to examine for the role of the school and to look for exceptions to conventional explanations that differences in exclusion rates and patterns is explained by pupil and social background characteristics. In large-scale statistical surveys the variance between schools is examined by correlating exclusion with a range of pupil factors (Parsons, 2000; OFSTED, 1996; Kinder et al, 2000).

However, I am not exploring the data in this correlational way, as this can under-emphasise variations in the data and conceal cases that are exceptions. Rather, my purpose was twofold. The first was to examine the extent to which exclusions varied by individual school. This is examined across the whole LEA and its geographical sub-areas. The second purpose was to inspect for exceptions to conventional explanations that explains away the differences between schools to pupil factors (i.e. FSM, SEN, and ethnicity). This is examined by selecting schools with similar pupil characteristics, but with differing exclusion rates and patterns. In so doing, my thesis that school organisational differences have a significant influence on exclusion and my argument for examining the role of the school is strengthened.

In considering how I would compare individual schools' exclusion figures, conversations with the LEA's exclusions officer suggested that comparisons based on a school's exclusion rate for a single year could be problematic because the circumstances in a school might have been "unusual" for that year. I thus decided to calculate a four-year total and rate for 1997/98, 1998/99, 1999/2000 and 2000/01 and to use the raw total of permanent exclusion as an indicator for comparing schools across the LEA.

### **5.2.1 Examining for variation by school**

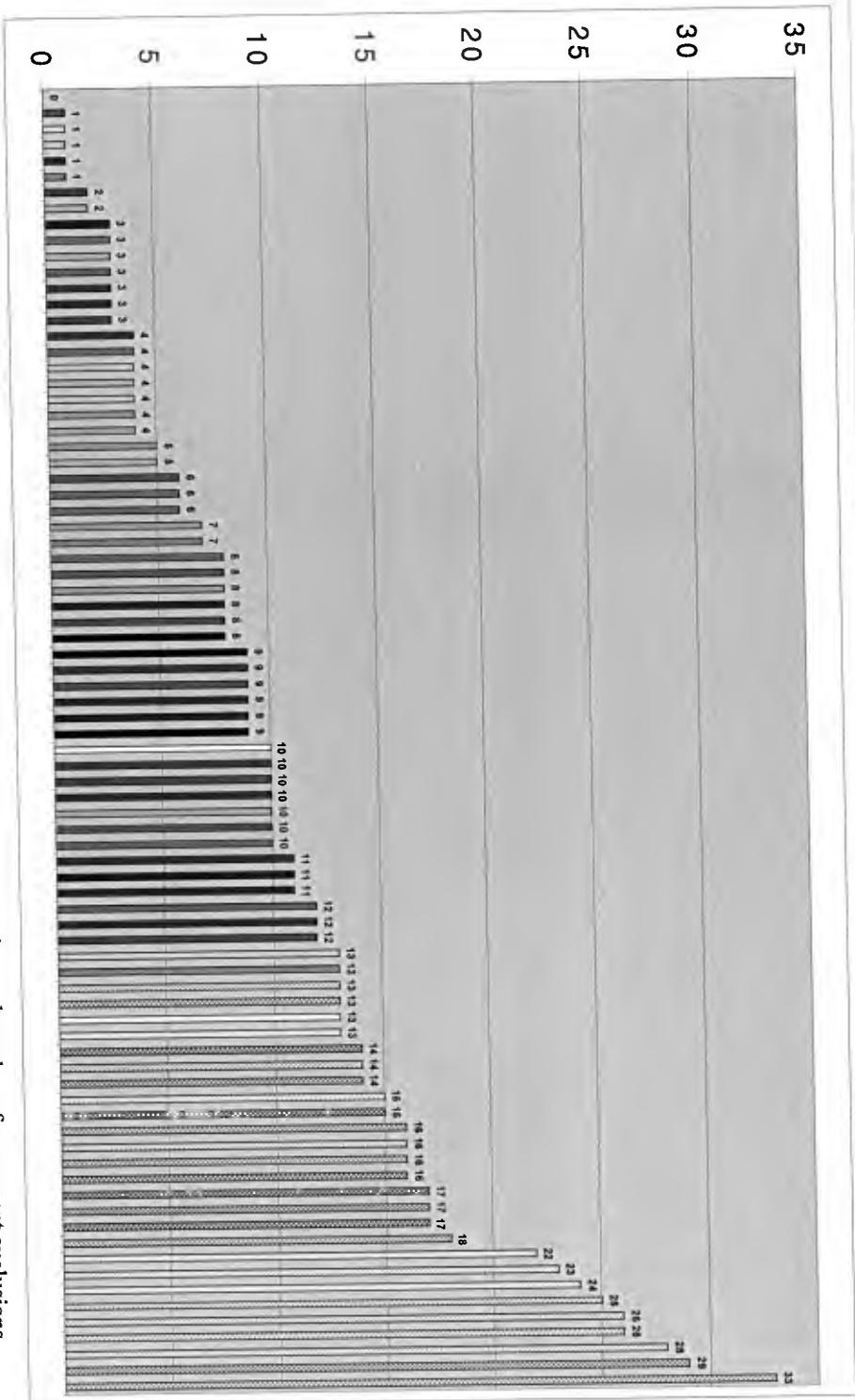
Figure 5.1 shows the total numbers of pupils permanently excluded from school between 1997 and 2001, by individual school. This graph illustrates how the range

of permanent exclusions was large and ranged from zero (only one school in the county did not exclude any pupils) up to 33 permanent exclusions. (This was the school with the highest number of exclusions in the county). For example, while it appears that the majority of schools (48 out of 82) excluded ten or fewer pupils, there were nine schools that permanently excluded over twice as many pupils.

Figure 5.2 shows how the range in schools' exclusion patterns was also reflected within each of the eleven sub-areas of the LEA (North Areas 1, 2, 3; South Area 1, 2, 3, 4; and East Areas 1, 2, 3, 4). This shows that even within the same pupil catchment area, some schools significantly excluded more pupils than other schools. For example, in South Area 1, where there are 11 schools, the number of permanent exclusions ranged from 3 to 33. North Area 2 also reflects a somewhat similar phenomenon of schools ranging widely in their exclusion patterns. Within this geographic sub-area, two schools permanently excluded only two pupils, while two other schools excluded over twenty pupils. Figure 5.2 also shows how the highest- and lowest- excluding schools (based on the total number of permanent exclusions from 1997 to 2001) can be found throughout the county, and are not concentrated in any one particular area.

**FIGURE 5.1**  
**Total number of permanent exclusions, by individual secondary school (1997-2001)**

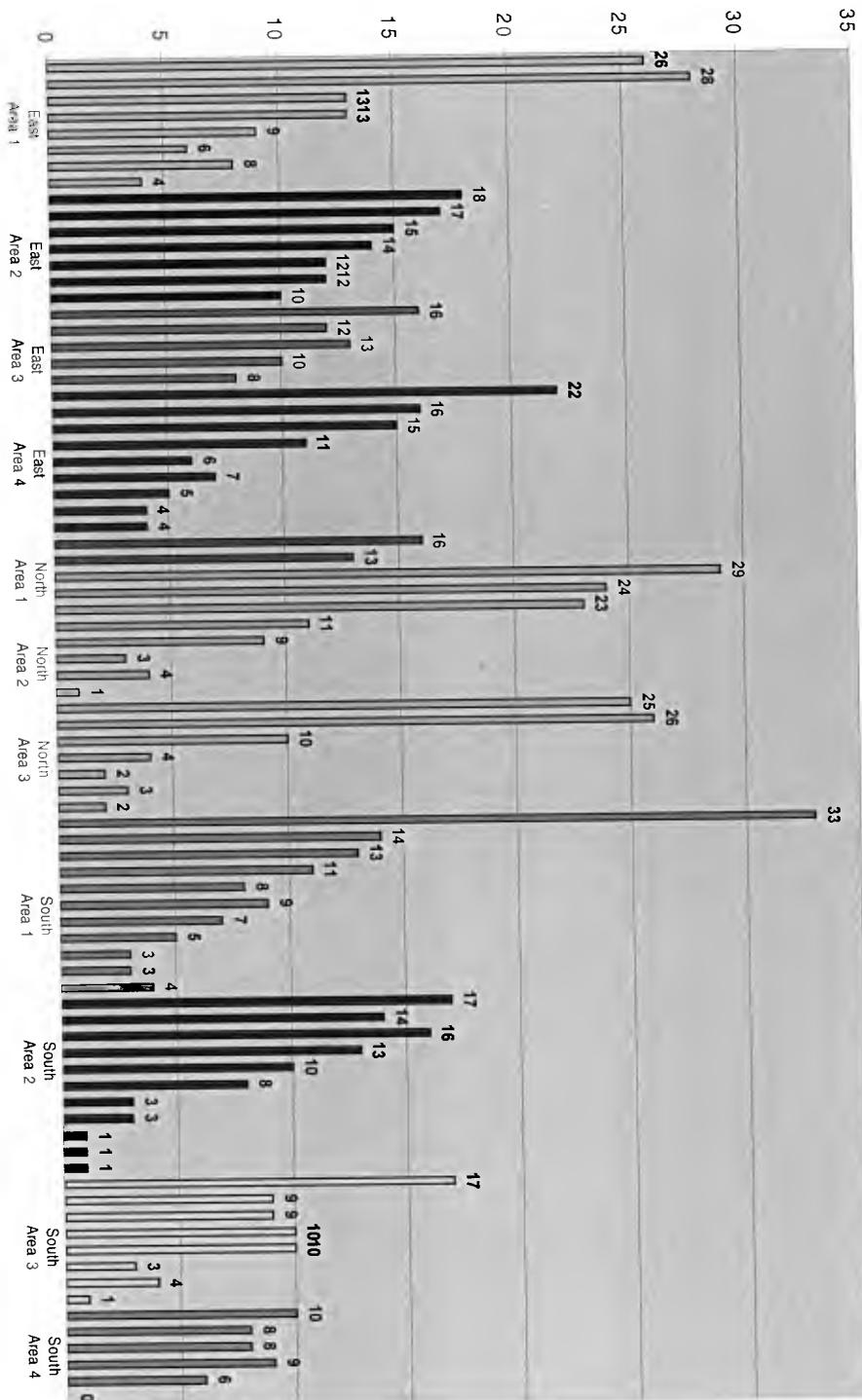
Source: Primary and Secondary Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000-01)  
 Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.



Each bar represents an individual school and shows the total number of permanent exclusions between 1997-2001. The graph shows the wide range in schools' permanent exclusion figures.

**FIGURE 5.2**  
**Total number of permanent exclusions, by individual secondary school and area (1997-2001)**

Source: Primary and Secondary Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000-01).  
 Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.



Each bar represents an individual school. The number shows the total number of permanent exclusions for the four-year period (1997-2001).

## 5.2.2 Comparing schools by *number* versus *rate* of exclusion

In several national reports and studies which have compared and examined schools' exclusion trends and patterns, an exclusion rate (per thousand pupils) has been used to compare individual schools (Parsons, 2002; OFSTED, 1996; Kinder, et al, 2000). The rationale given for comparing schools based on their rate is that a comparison between schools can then be made which is independent of school size. (I have provided both numbers and rates in Appendix D).

I examined the data to assess whether different schools would be identified by number of exclusions versus rate of exclusion. As I was interested in the high and low ends of the population, I divided the schools into quartiles and compared schools with the highest and lowest *numbers* of permanent exclusion with the corresponding group of schools with the highest and lowest *rates*. These comparisons are shown in Table 5.2 and Table 5.3.

Twenty schools with highest <i>numbers</i> of permanent exclusions		Twenty schools with highest <i>rates</i> of permanent exclusions (per thousand pupils)	
(School 22)	33	(School 6)**	68.32
(School 3)	29	(School 1)	55.05
(School 65)	28	(School 22)	53.75
(School 69)	26	(School 65)	36.89
(School 9)	26	(School 63)**	36.21
(School 12)	25	(School 69)	36.21
(School 1)	24	(School 23)	35.35
(School 4)*	23	(School 74)	30.51
(School 59)	22	(School 9)	29.18
(School 74)	18	(School 78)	28.19
(School 78)	17	(School 31)	27.12
(School 39)	17	(School 39)	26.03

(School 35)	17	(School 3)	24.11
(School 71)*	17	(School 26)**	23.75
(School 31)	16	(School 79)**	23.48
(School 55)	16	(School 35)**	23.13
(School 16)*	16	(School 55)	22.63
(School 77)*	15	(School 12)	22.52
(School 57)*	15	(School 34)**	22.30
(School 23)		(School 59)	22.07
<p>* Schools that were not amongst the corresponding group of schools with the highest rates of exclusions.</p> <p>** Schools that were not amongst the corresponding group of schools with highest numbers of exclusions.</p>			

Table 5.2 shows that out of the twenty schools with the highest numbers of permanent exclusions, fifteen schools were also those with the highest rates of permanent exclusion. Out of the schools with the highest rates of exclusion, six did not have the highest numbers.

Table 5.3 shows a similar occurrence with the schools with low numbers of permanent exclusions – out of the twenty schools with the lowest number of permanent exclusions, only one school was not reflected in the group of schools with the lowest rates. The same case applied with the schools with the lowest rates; only one school did not fall into the group with the lowest numbers.

<b>TABLE 5.3</b>			
<b>Comparing the permanent exclusion numbers and rates of the lowest-excluding schools (1997-2001)</b>			
Schools with the lowest <i>numbers</i> of permanent exclusions		Schools with the lowest <i>rates</i> of permanent exclusions (per thousand pupils)	
School 53)	0	(School 53)	0.00
(School 33)	1	(School 33)	1.10
(School 11)	1	(School 11)	1.29
(School 42)	1	(School 42)	1.30
(School 38)	1	(School 38)	1.33
(School 32)	1	(School 32)	1.37
(School 5)	1	(School 5)	1.52

(School 17)	2	(School 40)	2.33
(School 40)	3	(School 2)	2.81
(School 7)	3	(School 7)	2.89
(School 29)	3	(School 17)	3.10
(School 36)	3	(School 29)	3.31
(School 13)	3	(School 36)	3.57
(School 24)	3	(School 13)	3.74
(School 41)	3	(School 18)	4.20
(School 25)*	3	(School 58)	4.53
(School 2)	4	(School 24)	4.55
(School 18)	4	(School 14)	4.80
(School 58)	4	(School 41)	4.98
(School 14)	4	(School 60)**	5.14
<p>* These schools that were not amongst the corresponding group of schools with the 20 lowest rates of exclusions.</p> <p>** These schools that were not amongst the corresponding group of schools with 20 lowest numbers of exclusions.</p>			

In comparing those schools with the highest and lowest total numbers of permanent exclusion and those schools with the highest and lowest exclusion rates, I concluded the four-year raw total could provide a fairly strong indication of whether a school might have a “high-“ or “low-“ incidence of exclusion. However, within the LEA, whether a school is defined as a “high-excluding‘ or “low-excluding” depends not only on the range across the LEA, but also how and where a cut-off point is drawn.

For the remainder of my comparison and analysis, I chose to use the four-year total number of exclusions. Unlike a rate, the number actually reflects the number of pupils excluded, and in this sense, numbers are more telling of the school’s response than a rate. One example of the disadvantages of using “rate” to compare schools was illustrated by the case of the school with the highest permanent exclusion rate for the county, which, as shown on Table 5.2 was calculated to be 68.32 per thousand pupils. However, closer inspection of this individual data revealed that this school enrolled only 161 pupils and had actually excluded 11 pupils. According to the

LEA's reports, this particular school excluded 1 pupil in 1997/98, 5 pupils in 1998/99; 1 pupil in 1999/00; and 4 pupils in 2000/01. However, because of the school's small size, a total of 11 permanent exclusions translated to the highest exclusion rate amongst the 82 schools. Although an exclusion rate per thousand pupils may be needed for comparing schools within a whole sample; this example illustrates how the use of such rates can conceal important individual differences between schools.

### **5.2.3 Examining for exceptions to conventional explanations**

This next set of school-by-school comparisons examines for exceptions, by exploring the extent to which schools with similar pupil characteristics differed in their exclusion rates. This evidence draws on data compiled from the reports provided by the LEA. Exclusion figures for each individual school are detailed in Appendix D.

#### **5.2.3a Variation of exclusion with free school meals (FSM)**

Table 5.4 compares the permanent and fixed-term exclusion figures for the five schools with the highest percentage of students on FSM. While the data show that School 22 had the highest number of permanent exclusions, other schools with similar levels, such as School 44 and School 21 had substantially lower exclusion figures. School 21 stands out as an exception within this group, and excluded only five pupils in the four-year period.

TABLE 5.4 A comparison of exclusion patterns in schools with high percentages of pupils on free school meals (FSM)												
% pupils eligible for free school meals*		NOR <sup>a</sup>	PERMANENT EXCLUSION					FIXED-TERM EXCLUSION				
			97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	4-year total	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	4-year total
<b>(School 22)</b>	61%	614	14	8	4	7	33	54	34	31	74	260
<b>(School 44)</b>	53%	544	2	3	1	3	9	53	38	26	30	147
<b>(School 21)</b>	50%	454	1	1	1	2	5	31	37	53	63	184
<b>(School 63)</b>	47%	359	2	4	3	4	13	16	16	19	35	86
<b>(School 74)</b>	46%	590	4	7	4	2	17	36	53	23	33	145

Data source: Secondary School Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000/01). Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.

<sup>a</sup> NOR is based on 1997-98 school profile data.

### 5.2.3.b Variation of exclusion with ethnicity

This comparison of exclusion patterns further illustrates the differences amongst schools with similar student profiles. Table 5.5 shows the permanent and fixed-term exclusion figures for the six schools with highest percentages of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, and with the highest numbers of black students. Although School 22, the school with the highest percentage of Afro-Caribbean/African pupils appears to have the highest rate of exclusion, the evidence also points to School 18, a school with greater ethnic diversity and comparable Afro-Caribbean/African student population, which had significantly less permanent exclusions than School 28, which enrolled fewer students and also fewer Afro-Caribbean/African students.

TABLE 5.5 A comparison of exclusion patterns in schools with high percentages of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds													
% from ethnic minority backgrounds* Percent of Afro-Caribbean /African students is in ( )*		NOR <sup>a</sup>	PERMANENT EXCLUSION					FIXED-TERM EXCLUSION					
			97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	4-year total	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	4-year total	Days lost**
<b>School 74</b>	79% (0.3%)	590	4	7	4	2	17	36	53	23	33	145	300
<b>School 21</b>	49% (2%)	454	1	1	1	2	5	31	37	53	63	184	625
<b>School 63</b>	38% (3%)	379	2	4	3	4	13	16	16	19	35	86	490
<b>School 18</b>	29% (4%)	953	0	0	2	1	3	24	33	31	67	155	528
<b>School 22</b>	11% (5%)	614	14	8	2	7	31	54	34	31	74	260	1401
<b>School 28</b>	10% (3%)	814	4	3	2	4	13	9	25	28	25	87	496

Data source: Secondary School Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000/01). Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.

<sup>a</sup> NOR is based on 1997/98 school profile data.  
<sup>\*\*</sup> Days lost between 1998-2001.

The data also shows how School 22 and School 28, two schools with similar levels of ethnic diversity also had significantly different patterns of permanent and fixed term exclusions. For example, between 1997 and 2001, School 22 excluded a total of 33 pupils, 2.5 times as many students excluded from School 63, which enrolled 200 more students than School 22, but had markedly fewer exclusions. Another difference could be seen in comparing the total number of days lost from fixed-term exclusions. Although School 21 and School 74 both reported similar number of fixed-term exclusion, the days lost between 1998 and 2001 in School 21 was twice that of School 74.

### 5.2.3c Variation of exclusion with SEN

Table 5.6 displays the permanent and fixed-term exclusion figures for the nine schools with the highest percentages of pupils with special educational needs. This

comparison provides another example of the variation in schools' exclusion patterns. One difference was illustrated by School 69, which reported approximately 124 incidents of fixed-term exclusions – four times as many as School 26. School 74 permanently excluded eighteen pupils, twice as many pupils than School 44 which excluded nine. While School 44 and School 74 had similar numbers of fixed-term exclusions incidents (147 incidents for School 44 compared with 145 incidents for School 74), School 44 lost 244 more days than School 74, suggesting that that School 44 either excluded for longer periods, more pupils, or possibly both.

**TABLE 5.6**  
**A comparison of exclusion patterns in schools with high percentages of pupils with special educational needs (SEN)**

% with special educational needs	NOR*	PERMANENT EXCLUSION					FIXED-TERM EXCLUSION						
		97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	4-year total	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	4-year total	Days lost**	
School 6	61%	161*	1	5	1	4	11	24	20	46	42	132	451
School 1	50%	436	6	9	4	5	24	52	46	25	28	151	532
School 26	42%	379	3	2	2	2	9	24	20	26	23	93	485
School 74	38%	590	4	7	4	3	18	36	53	23	33	145	300
School 44	36%	544	2	3	1	3	9	53	38	26	30	147	544
School 69	33%	718	6	7	5	8	26	124	93	88	105	410	1274
School 59	33%	997	7	9	5	1	22	131	95	85	94	405	1415
School 57	33%	1039	4	1	4	6	15	17	38	46	121	222	1068
School 34	31%	583	3	4	3	3	13	63	64	41	52	220	580

Data source: Secondary School Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000/01). Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.

\* NOR is based on 1997/98 school profile data.

\*\* Days lost between 1998-2001.

### 5.2.3d Variation in exclusion in schools with low social disadvantage

In examining the schools, I noticed that a number of schools with fairly low levels of social disadvantage had unusually high numbers and rates of exclusion. Table 5.7 provides a final illustration of how schools with similar characteristics differ markedly in their exclusion rates, and also reveals that a number of schools with low levels of social disadvantage did not have low exclusion rates. In fact, School 16 and School 35, were amongst the highest quartile of high-excluding schools, based on their total number of permanent exclusions between 1997 and 2001.

				NOR*	PERMANENT EXCLUSION					FIXED-TERM EXCLUSION					
	% FSM	% SEN	% Ethnic		97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	4-year total	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	4-year total	Days lost
(School 15)	9	9	1%	1717	2	6	1	4	13	58	58	74	180	370	1357
(School 17)	9	9	0%	646	2	2	0	0	2	4	12	19	18	53	199
(School 68)	9	5	2%	817	8	0	1	0	9	47	41	33	52	173	452
(School 10)	10	18	1%	1061	3	3	2	2	10	45	49	44	42	180	434
(School 35)	10	17	1%	735	5	3	3	6	17	9	18	17	56	100	264
(School 27)	10	10	1%	923	5	1	0	2	8	59	77	57	81	274	780
(School 32)	11	25	0%	729	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	4	18
(School 37)	12	23	11%	994	4	6	2	2	14	13	24	22	45	104	546
(School 24)	12	16	4%	660	0	1	0	2	3	71	61	54	67	253	801
School 16	12	9	1%	1144	5	4	4	3	16	30	21	20	61	132	787
School 49	12%	8%	2%	1050	0	1	0	7	8	30	44	44	38	150	586

Data source: Secondary School Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000/01). Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.

\*NOR is based on 1997-98 school profile data.  
\*\* Days lost between 1998-2001.

Table 5.7 shows how School 17 and School 68, which had similar levels of social disadvantage, had different patterns of permanent and fixed-term exclusions. While

School 17 permanently excluded only two pupils, School 68 excluded nine pupils, nearly three times the rate of School 17. School 32 and School 35 provide yet another example of the stark differences between schools. Both schools, according to the LEA's reports are located in the same local area (South Area 2). Even though School 32 might be considered as having a slightly more challenging pupil intake, (with nearly 25% of pupils with SEN), the school excluded only one pupil between 1997 and 2001. By contrast, School 35 permanently excluded 17 pupils, twenty-five times higher than School 32.

In comparing the exclusion figures between schools with similar pupil characteristics and levels of social disadvantage, there are indeed differences between schools' exclusion rates and patterns, which cannot be fully explained by "pupil factors". Although pupil factors, particularly social disadvantage, may well exert influence on a school's exclusion practices, the analysis that I carried out was not intended to measure the correlation between such variables.

What I have shown through this comparison is that there is indeed wide variation between schools, which cannot be fully explained by pupil factors. In short, this suggests that school organisational factors do appear to play a role in explaining the individual differences between schools. Therefore, to explain schools' exclusion rates solely on the basis of social factors is to present an incomplete picture of the underlying dynamics and practices within each school.

## **5.3 Local explanations for school differences**

The findings discussed in the previous section relied on raw numbers and patterns to show how schools differ in their exclusion rates and practices. However, what such quantitative data do not explain is the local context in which schools in the LEA are using exclusion. Here I suggest that differences in school exclusion practices may also be partly explained by the mediation of policy. This view draws upon evidence that was not based on gathering statistical data, but which drew upon on informal discussions and interactions with the LEA's exclusion officer. Over the course of the four years, the LEA officer through whom I communicated and consulted in requesting the exclusions figures, offered a local explanation, her views and perspectives, about the local dynamics of exclusion from school within the LEA. Of particular relevance in understanding the differences between schools was her interpretation of how changes in local and national policy affected how exclusion is used and viewed within schools. An analysis of this set of findings suggests two possible explanations for interpreting the context in which schools' exclusion practices differ, and point to a range of school-, LEA- and national- policy dynamics.

### **5.3.1 Explanation 1 – The changing policy context of exclusion**

Between 1998 and 2001, changes in national and LEA policies and guidelines regarding exclusion directly affected how schools were expected to view and use exclusion. During the course of these four years, I requested the LEA's exclusions data at the end of each academic year. Before providing me with the data, the

exclusions policy officer often gave me an overview of the exclusion patterns and trends for the year. In our communications, she offered a view on how schools were responding to changes in national policy and how the LEA was responding to pressures and national targets to reduce exclusions for the county.

According to the exclusions policy officer, the confluence of national policy changes and LEA pressures on schools help to explain the county-wide decline in school exclusions between 1998 and 2000 and the more recent rise in exclusion between 2000 and 2001. With the formation of the Social Exclusion Unit in 1998, new government policies to reduce exclusion were being implemented through Circular 10/99, requiring major changes to exclusion procedures at the LEA and school level. Examples of these national policy changes included: 1) stricter procedures for using and reporting exclusion; 3) £3,000 fines to discourage schools from excluding pupils, and 4) financial incentives called “pupil retention grants” to encourage schools to accept students excluded from other schools and to improve support. According to the LEA’s exclusions policy officer, these combined pressures, and the introduction of Circular 10/99 “sent a strong message to schools not to exclude”.

However, by the end of 1999/2000, the different ways that schools responded to these pressures became apparent through the data. According to the LEA’s exclusions policy officer, schools reduced their permanent exclusions by using longer, fixed-term exclusions. This provides one explanation for the 61% increase in the total days lost for fixed-exclusions between 1998/99 and 2000/01. However, at

the same time, Circular 10/99, required schools to call a governor's meeting for exclusions over five days, which some schools avoided by either excluding "unofficially" or excluding pupils for only one day, but more frequently. This provides a possible explanation for the increase in fixed-term exclusions between 1998/1999 and 2000/01.

### **5.3.2 Explanation 2 – Schools respond differently to policy incentives and penalties to reduce exclusion.**

The LEA's exclusions policy officer also explained that the introduction of penalties and £25,000 pupil retention grants in 1999/2000 were also viewed by and used differently in different schools. Rather than be discouraged from using exclusion, some schools began to "allocate" part of their budget and ironically, the grants towards exclusion, setting aside money for the fine that would be imposed when they excluded a pupil. Other schools, however, which had "strong head" and "strong systems already in place" used the pupil retention grants to strengthen and increase their support within the school, increasing staff and assistance. Still other schools used the grants to set up off-site units or to send students to programmes based outside the schools, which "didn't necessarily change how staff viewed and used exclusion". This provides some explanation for the low exclusion rates of schools with high levels of disadvantage, such as School 21 and School 44.

Another aspect of the policy context in which school exclusions have begun to rise relates to changes at the LEA. Following an OFSTED inspection of the LEA in 2000, the LEA began to devolve funds that were previously used centrally to support

schools and directly allocate these to schools. As such, the LEA restructured its Pupil Support Service team, which previously worked with students that schools had difficulty supporting, and asked schools to “buy back” the teacher assigned to their school. According to the LEA exclusions policy officer, this policy change worked favourably for schools which had a strong and positive working relationship with the pupil support teacher. However, schools that did not have a strong teacher “lost out” because they not only spent their money on support they did not want, but they also faced penalties if they excluded a pupil.

#### **5.4 Strengths and limitations of school exclusion data: Implications for examining individual school differences**

One of the difficulties surrounding school exclusion research is the accuracy and sensitivity of the data that is reported by schools. Unlike a school’s exam performance and other profile data, school exclusions are not published openly within the authority, and therefore are generally difficult to obtain. Also, the reports reflect what schools choose to report; therefore it is difficult to assess whether and how many other schools in a given area may be excluding “unofficially”. Another difficulty with collecting statistical data on exclusions are the problems that can arise when changes occur in how exclusions are reported or calculated by the LEA. For example, between 1997/98 and 1998/99 the LEA began to calculate the days lost for each school. This meant that while this data was available after 1998/99, the “total days lost” that I calculated did not include 1997/98, and therefore could not be used to calculate an accurate average for the four year period.

This investigation confirmed that schools with similar characteristics differ in their exclusion rates, are not fully explained by “pupil factors”, and partly explained by the mediation of policy. Upon reflection, however, I recognise that the statistical data I gathered could be further analysed in ways that could potentially strengthen this set of arguments. Statistically correlating different school- and pupil- characteristics with fixed-term and permanent exclusion rates could have led me to reach these same conclusions about the differences between schools and also to identify outlier schools. A multiple regression analysis, for example, might have pointed to the effects of specific variables on exclusion rates, indicating which school- and pupil-level factors were more significant than others in explaining the differences in schools.

Although this type of analysis could offer a potentially powerful means for predicting rates of exclusion, I did not feel that this approach would provide insight to the internal differences between schools’ practices. The basic analysis that I conducted was sufficient for my purposes, and I endeavoured to shift my attention toward the internal organisation and workings of schools, using an ethnographic approach, to examine and compare differences between high- and low- excluding schools (which I report in Chapter Seven). In short, the nature of my research questions and interests called for a different methodology, one through which I could examine more closely the practices of schools.

Although the LEA's published figures were useful for comparing total numbers of exclusions across schools; the figures alone do not reveal what is happening within schools. The reasons for exclusion, the processes within the school, the school difficulties experienced by pupils who become excluded, and teachers' efforts to prevent exclusion are all vital to understanding the context in which exclusion occurs, and are the main limitations of statistics and official reports. In addition to further statistical analysis of exclusion rates to explore differences between schools, two areas for future exploration are highlighted here, including:

- the ways in which schools with similar pupil reaction and interpretation of LEA
- and the varying ways in which resources are allocated and used to prevent exclusion.

To understand more fully the underlying dynamics of the organisational practices and differences between individual schools and within local areas, a field-based approach would be more suited for exploring such questions.

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## *CHAPTER SIX*

# Teachers' Perceptions of the Causes and Dynamics of Exclusion from School

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### **6.0 Chapter overview**

This chapter reports findings from interviews with teachers and discusses how they perceived the causes and dynamics of exclusion from school, including the factors which they attributed to the national rise in exclusions over the past decade. The explanations that were offered by these key participants illuminate a core part of the study.

The chapter is organised into the following sections:

- Section 6.1 describes how the data was analysed.
- Section 6.2 describes teachers' views about the pupil-based factors that are linked to the causes of exclusion. This section describes teachers' explanations for the source and nature of difficulties experienced by pupils who have been, or are at risk of exclusion.
- Section 6.3 describes teachers' views about the school context of exclusion. This section describes teachers' perceptions of the interrelationship between exclusion and the processes of teaching and learning within the school. This

section also identifies the school-based features which teachers perceive to play a role in the exclusion process.

- Section 6.4 describes teachers' views about the policy context. This section describes the changes in policy that teachers believe to have aggravated exclusion
- Section 6.5 considers the implications of these perceptions and makes a number of observations about the influence of school and national policy factors in enabling or constraining teachers' capacity to respond to their students' needs, thereby influencing the context in which exclusion occurs.

## **6.1 Analysis of data**

The analysis of interview data was aimed at generating theories about how teachers viewed their role in relation to exclusion and the perceived effects that school- and national policy-based dynamics have within the context of school exclusion. Theories generated from this analysis were aimed at explaining: 1) the different exclusion rates and practice of schools; and 2) the construction of and influences on teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding exclusion.

The data and findings that are reported in this chapter involved a number of processes:

- *Fieldnoting.* While conducting interviews and talking informally with teachers, notes were recorded in a field journal. This provided me with a way to record my impressions, questions, and themes. As the evidence gathered for this

investigation was also used for the individual case studies, the notes I took during the interview also contributed to the data gathered for the case study. The field journal provided a flexible means through which I could begin generating some initial ideas about how teachers conceptualised the causes of exclusion, and begin drawing in my journal some conceptual maps of how various issues in the school appeared to be linked to exclusion.

- *Interpreting and coding.* When listening to the interviews, I began developing headings and categories, which I used to code individual teachers' responses. The process was, in part, influenced by my theoretical framework and understandings derived from my review of the literature, and partly guided by grounded theory. Here as I began to generate a more layered understanding of the various nuances of teachers' responses, I began creating a list of sub-categories. A variety of techniques were used to capture teachers' views. Portions of the interviews, particularly those that contained a complex account or detailed explanation, were transcribed and coded. For other portions and interviews, key phrases and quotes were written directly on to individual note cards on which I noted the school and the teacher's role and a category code. (See Appendix C for this coding frame)
- *Grouping and analysing.* The final stage of analysis was to organise quotes under the various categories and sub-categories. This process allowed me to select quotes that would illustrate the themes and issues being collectively

expressed by teachers. The purpose of this analysis was to interpret the meaning and roles of various parties and processes relevant to exclusion.

Data from teacher interviews were analysed using a four-stage process. First, I listened to each interview and made notes of key themes in a written summary. This first stage of analysis allowed me to document my first impressions and to generate a list of concepts and insights that emerged from the interview. My second step was to create a list of themes that reflected these categories and concepts – this was partly emergent and partly based on the issues identified in the literature review and defined in my theoretical framework. The third step was to transcribe and code selective passages. Fourth, quotes and examples were grouped in categories and further sorted according to themes.

In analysing the teacher interview data, attention was focused primarily on constructing and generating categories for teachers' views and less on counting responses and reporting this figure numerically. However, I do recognise the value of indicating the weight of particular responses from teachers, and have noted throughout the chapter when and where particular categories of explanations were frequently mentioned. As such, in reporting explanations where more than one teacher offered a view, I use "several", "a few" or "a couple" (which I then qualify by stating "one teacher said 'X'" and "another teacher said 'Y'"). When I noticed the frequent and repeated mention of a particular issue by teachers in each school,

such explanations or views are reported as “the majority of teachers” or accompanied by an explanation that this view was expressed by “at least several teachers” in each school.

The framework developed for organising and analysing the interview data comprised three areas of analysis.

- The first area of analysis was aimed at illuminating how teachers conceptualised the causes and dynamics of exclusion (Research Question 3). Teachers’ views and responses were coded and analysed in terms of the pupil-based, school-based, and policy-based factors that they associated with exclusion.
- A second area of analysis was aimed at exploring how teachers viewed exclusion in relation to their school’s organisational setting (Research Question 2). Teachers’ responses were coded according to the features in the school which were perceived to influence exclusion, either positively (preventing) or negatively (aggravating). This allowed me to generate of a list of school-level factors, which I categorised into five areas: (1) leadership and management; (2) staff culture and communication; (3) policies and structures, (4) support for students and teachers; and (5) school ethos.
- The third area of analysis was aimed at theorising how teachers described the impact and pressures of national policies and interpreted their effect on school

exclusion. This generated a list of policy and dynamics which teachers associated with aggravating the problems perceived to lead to exclusion.

A mapping of the interview areas, the issues explored, and the focus of analysis is detailed in Table 6.1. A first reading and level of analysis viewed the data at an individual teacher level. I then returned to this compressed data for a second “reading” and examined how the views were expressed as a school staff. The analysis for the first reading, which defines the teachers from all four schools as one sample are reported in this Chapter, and the analysis from the second reading is incorporated into the findings reported in Chapter Seven.

Interview area	Main issues explored	Focus of analysis
<b>Introduction</b>	Explain study and format of interviews Background information on interviewee	N/A
<b>Overall view of exclusion</b>	Beliefs about causes and dynamics of exclusion  Perceived reasons for exclusion in schools  Theories about national trends, e.g. rise in exclusions over past decade	Teachers' conceptualisation of factors at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The individual pupil level</li> <li>• The school level</li> <li>• The national policy</li> </ul>
<b>School context</b>	School's exclusion policy, procedures, processes  School-level strategies for preventing exclusion	Role and influence of school organisational setting, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leadership and management,</li> <li>• Staff culture and communication</li> <li>• Behaviour policies</li> <li>• Supports for students and teachers</li> <li>• School ethos and relationships</li> <li>• Pedagogy and learning</li> </ul>
<b>Impact of national policy</b>	Effects of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ curriculum policy</li> <li>▪ assessment policy</li> <li>▪ accountability policy</li> </ul>	Dynamics of national policy as mediated by schools, in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expectations and attitudes toward pupils</li> <li>▪ Constraints on teacher capacity</li> <li>▪ Pressures in school</li> </ul>

## 6.2 Teachers' perceptions of pupil-based factors

### 6.2.1 Behavioural, social, emotional, and learning difficulties

One category of teachers' responses described exclusion in relation to the individual pupil, linking it with behavioural, social, emotional, and learning difficulties. Pupils who had been excluded or who were believed to be at risk of exclusion were described as having some kind of behavioural, social, or emotional difficulty. Teachers described such students as being "*difficult to control*", "*off-the-wall*", and "*a danger to others*".

Teachers' beliefs about the reasons that pupils experienced such difficulties, however, ranged widely. Although teachers also located the causes to be inherent in the individual pupil, suggesting that pupils "*lacked the appropriate social skills*", "*had little confidence*" and "*suffered from low levels of self-esteem*", others suggested that disruptive behaviour and other social- and emotional- problems were a reflection of a pupil's difficulties at home. For example, one teacher explained that in trying to understand a pupil's behavioural problems it was usual practice in the school to ask parents about relevant home circumstances, such as: "*Is there anything that is happening at home which might be causing this to go on...have you noticed a change?*" This teacher cited an example where he felt that the difficult circumstances faced by a pupil at home had aggravated his behavioural problems, thus placing him at risk of exclusion:

We have a lad who has had a bad three weeks, he has just had his sister move back in with a baby. He is out of his room! He can't kick off at home, so he will kick off somewhere else (Deputy Head, School M).

Whilst the role of behaviour featured strongly in teachers' interpretation of the dynamics of exclusion, the view that such difficulties were inextricably linked to difficulties with learning also emerged. For example, one teacher expressed that, "*Children who have great difficulty learning ...use behavioural tactics as a distraction. I am convinced of that*".

Another teacher suggested that:

In a school where we have a high proportion of children who are weaker academically, they find it very difficult to follow. I think that shows with the way they react in classes ... and their behaviour (Deputy Head, School R).

An overwhelming majority of teachers linked academic achievement with exclusion. One teacher, for example, suggested that pupils who struggled academically "*were at greater risk of being excluded*". Another teacher elaborated on this point, linking a pupil's difficulties with learning to increasing the level of frustration experienced in the school and classroom, thereby "*increasing the kind of behaviour.... that can lead to exclusion*".

Teachers seemed to offer multiple explanations for the reasons for exclusion. Frequently, teachers would begin by explaining the causes of exclusion first by assigning the problem to the individual pupil, describing pupils who had been

excluded as “*not having a high motivation for learning*”, “*impossible to teach*”, and “*need[ing] additional support and help to cope with the pressures of school*”. However, these descriptions would then shift to the influence of factors within the school. Nearly every teacher I interviewed suggested that whether a pupil was excluded from school depended on how their school responded and interpreted the pupils' behaviour and needs. Here, teachers pointed to different factors within the school, including management, staff communication, behaviour policy, the kind of support available to the pupil at risk of exclusion, and the quality of relationships between students and teachers. Indeed, when probed about the specific ways in which individual pupil-based factors interacted with the processes of schooling and learning, teachers began to link the problems that pupils encountered in the classroom with the demands of the educational system, the structures of school, and the response from teachers.

### **6.2.2 Social background factors**

A second category of responses, commonly expressed by nearly all teachers was the perception that exclusion was linked to wider changes in society, family structures, parenting, and other socio-economic dynamics. This group of explanations linked the causes of exclusion with a range of social background factors that included: 1) parents and community factors, e.g. a pupil's parents, family, and local community; and 2) socio-economic factors such as poverty level, social class, and ethnicity. Examples of how teachers expressed these views are discussed in Section 6.2.2a, 6.2.2b, and 6.2.2c.

### 6.2.2a Parents, family, and peers

Another set of teachers' views described the causes of exclusion in relation to social changes and cultural dynamics. A Head of Year, for example, described the interaction of peer and social pressure:

There are pressures ... [pupils] have peer pressure. If I look back at my teaching career, they are different things at different times. One time it was rubber bands. Another time it was chewing gum...Another time it was that Japanese toy.... Then it was the Walkman...now it's the mobile phone. A lot of kids want to conform. And don't forget the home situation...that is changing fast. (Head of Year, School S)

Some described the lack of parental support and discipline as a factor as influencing behaviour that led to exclusion. Examples included the perception that pupils who were excluded "*did not receive support from home*" and "*came from troubled and difficult families*". For example, one teacher suggested that single-parents and mothers were factors in exclusion, "*We have a challenging intake*" explaining,

Many of these kids also come from single-parent homes....And even though it's not politically correct to say this...you'll see that many of the kids who are excluded do not have the same name as their mother or even their siblings (Deputy Head, School R)

The teacher went on to explain that many of the pupils excluded from the school came from "*broken homes ... some whose mums are involved in drugs ... and then these problems get brought into school*". A teacher (a head of year) from the same school added that, "*We have a number of children who do not get a lot of support*

*from home. They don't get a lot of guidance and they are not really sure what they want to do and not focused enough".*

### **6.2.2b Community, culture, class, and ethnicity**

Teachers also suggested that a range of social dynamics, linked to community, culture, race, class, and gender were factors in exclusion, affecting the dynamics and relationships between teachers and students, particularly around the perception of behaviour. Here, the majority of teachers suggested that local community factors could have a negative influence on pupils. One teacher, in describing the local area and council estates from which the school drew the majority of its pupil intake, explained, "Unemployment is high, generations are not working. The ethos has gone from the area ... we get fewer positive types of children than we used to". A teacher from another school in the same area said, "*A lot of problems children bring with them from outside and there is an awful lot of that*". He further observed that "*It is very easy in a place like [this] for children to become disaffected and to kick off*".

Arising from this view was the belief that culture and ethnicity also played a role in exclusions. For example, several (white) teachers from a school with a high proportion of Afro-Caribbean pupils suggested that exclusion was associated with a number of race- and cultural- based perceptions about black students. One teacher who was black believed that "*white teachers were more threatened by the loud voices of black students*", suggesting that white teachers were more likely to view Afro-Caribbean students as being disruptive than white or Asian students. Another

black-African teacher linked the rise in exclusion with culture misunderstandings between teachers and pupils, describing a lack of awareness about the differences between African and Caribbean boys. *“It is subtle”*, he explained. *“In African cultures.... if you are being addressed, you do not look at the teacher in the eye.... Some teachers do not think that [the student] is listening... and then the problem escalates”*. Another black teacher explained that *“[some of the] white teachers [in the school] think that if black girls are shouting...they are being disruptive to the class....[but] it’s part of the culture”*, she explained, *“to be loud”*. A white teacher from a school with a high proportion of Asian students suggested that Asian students were less likely to be excluded because they came from families with a strong work ethic, and were more likely to follow teachers’ instructions and to conform to the school’s rules.

Teachers described social class and race as a dynamic in the exclusion process. *“I know people don’t like to talk about it”*, explained one history teacher, *“but there are definitely racial tensions that exist in the classroom, especially around the issue of behaviour management.... My students see me as being some middle-class white woman with a posh accent who is constantly harassing them”*.

One black-African teacher also described exclusion in terms of racial tensions, confessing that he, too, found it difficult to distinguish between intentional disruptive behaviour, on the one hand, and behaviour which was more a reflection of cultural background, on the other:

Let me put it bluntly, if you are not very exposed, there's always that tendency that you could be intimidated by people from other cultures. That intimidation is there. I'm talking about a white person teaching a black kid. It's the way we perceive other people. So at times, we try to pass the buck because we don't know how to deal, or are not confident enough. That itself is a very big issue.... For instance, the exclusion rate is very high among Afro-Caribbean kids. So the question, I was looking at ... I just asked myself one thing. Is it because you perceive them as aggressive? Or is it because we don't really understand the way they behave. I know ... it's a prejudice thing. Quite a lot [Afro-Caribbean] pupils, they shout. They have this loud voice. So simple things, like could you sit down please. ... that loud voice comes out ... and [teacher] might not be able to deal with that. (Head of Year, School S).

Teachers' descriptions of how a student's personal and social background can play a role in exclusion suggests that teachers view and understand decisions about exclusion as being highly contextualised social phenomena. Exclusion, according to teachers, was obviously linked to a student's behaviour, but how teachers explained the ways in which a student's behaviour could lead to exclusion vary from school to school, and from individual to individual. As all of the teachers interviewed taught in schools in socially disadvantaged areas, many suggested that high levels of skills, patience and understanding were needed to avoid exclusion. This led teachers to explaining the ways in which their school attempted (successfully as well as unsuccessfully) to prevent exclusion. Significantly, all teachers, pointed to the wider context in which exclusion occurred, noting crucially that exclusion did not depend solely on the individual student, but could also be influenced by factors at the school and policy level, as explained in the next section.

## **6.3 Teachers' descriptions of school-level influences**

Teachers identified a number of school-based influences in describing the context in which exclusion occurred. These included: 1) school management decisions and priorities; 2) school-based policies and approaches pertaining to behaviour and discipline; 3) structures for supporting students and teachers; 4) staff culture and communication; and 5) school ethos. The following section discusses how these aspects of school context were seen as relevant to school exclusion in terms of influencing how teachers perceived, understood, and responded to the range of their students' needs.

### **6.3.1 School management decisions and priorities**

Teachers described the decisions and priorities of school management as influencing the school exclusion process in various ways, by alternatively activating, preventing, or aggravating the use of exclusion.

#### **6.3.1a Management as activating exclusion**

One set of views indicated that school management could activate the process of exclusion by having "*final*" and "*senior*" authority over decisions about exclusion. Teachers pointed to a number of management roles and structures in terms of activating exclusion. Some described the overall role of management in making decisions about "*whether to exclude*", "*when to exclude*", "*whom to exclude*", and "*for how long to exclude*".

- Nearly every teacher identified the headteacher as a key factor in exclusion in terms of “*making the ultimate decision*”, “*having final authority*”, and “*having the final say*”.
  
- Others described exclusion as a process that relied heavily on senior and middle management roles. For example, some pointed to the head of department as “*the first point of contact*”, and “*the person I would inform about problems with a pupil*”. Others described going to the head of year, “*if the situation was getting worse*”, “*having authority to exclude*”, and “*the one [who] can decide about sending a pupil home*”. At least one teacher in each school recalled instances of “*going straight to the headteacher*” and “*the deputy head, on occasion*”.

Those teachers in middle and senior management positions described their role in activating the exclusion process in formal and informal ways. Some, for example, reported making decisions that involved “*assessing the student’s situation*”, “*judging the ability of the teacher to handle the situation*”, “*informing the parents of developing problems*”, and “*making recommendations*” about pupils who had been or who were at risk of exclusion. One senior manager described how he perceived his role in the exclusion process:

After you’ve assessed the situation, and you think, it’s not a very good situation... you could actually send the kid home, or you could take the

kid to your own classroom, or you could take the kid to another senior member of staff to calm the situation. In that case, you've taken that decision based on your assessment of the situation. But the relevant people would be informed ... like your line manager, the head, or the deputy head ...of your decision. Then, if it involves exclusion, then the incident report is passed on to the pastoral head or head of faculty. Then, you actually recommend to the headteacher or deputy headteacher, who has the final authority to exclude. So after you've made that recommendation, you leave it at that. Because they would [have] the overall picture. My job is limited to my year group, they would have the overall picture, so they could now decide whether to exclude, and for how long. Because they're not just looking at the kid, they're looking at the effect on the overall .... (Head of Year, School S).

In relating the processes of the school with the decisions involving exclusion, teachers described the school's management as having the *“overall picture”* and *“identify[ing] priorities”*. Overall, heads of departments and heads of years were described as having a particularly important function in the exclusion process by *“acting as a middle layer...between the classroom and the headteacher's office”* and by providing *“several layers of responsibility”*. Some suggested that senior and middle managers provided accountability in the exclusion process. For example, one Head of Year described his role as *“a necessary layer”* in the exclusion process. Another teacher, Head of Pastoral Support, was described by the headteacher as *“the person who sends out letters”* ... *“important for communicating with parents”*, and *“making sure that ... whatever is done gets documented”*.

### **6.3.1b Management as preventing exclusion**

Another set of teachers' views described the role of management as helping to **prevent** exclusion through a number of ways: 1) by helping to mediate and resolve

conflicts in the classroom; 2) by offering support and intervention to individual members of staff as well as students; and 3) by identifying ways to support students “at risk of exclusion”.

Another group of accounts pointed to the role of school management as intervening, in order to prevent exclusion. Teachers frequently described occasions when members of the school’s senior management team “*handled*”, “*resolved*”, “*dealt with*”, and “*followed-up*” with students who had difficulties in the classroom. Teachers in senior management roles, which included headteachers, heads of year, and heads of departments also described their efforts in this way, recounting attempts to prevent exclusion by “*offering a hand of support*” to teachers who were “*struggling to manage*”, or who needed “*an extra body to maintain control*” or “*some back-up*”.

Teachers’ assessments of the extent to which the actions and efforts of school’s management effectively prevented situations escalating to the point where exclusion was a consideration, however, varied from individual to individual. For example, one Head of Year, described being called upon to resolve a situation in the classroom, but suggested that it was situation for which he should not have been called.

One day I was called ... about a seven minute walk from here ... only to get there and be told that a kid had refused to remove his jacket. I had about 27 kids in class, and I’ve been called upon just because a kid refused to take his jacket off! That’s a waste of my time. (Head of Year, School S).

Another headteacher described:

There was a case of a class I intervened in, toward the end of last term, the teacher had walked out....and was going out the corridor. I caught them, and I said, well, what's the problem. I'm never going to go back and teach that class, she said. I said, well look if you don't go back now you never will teach that class. She said no, they're completely out of control. So we went back in, and we calmed them down. I mean nothing spectacular. In fact I had a visitor with me. And we said, no come on, lets' just start again and see what we can do. And we got the lesson going again. It wasn't very well organised, but I was determined that she was to teach a lesson and we would stay with her and keep it calm (Headteacher, School S)

Another teacher, the head of the school's upper grades, described what she felt was a successful effort at preventing excluding a student by working intensively and closely with a struggling student throughout the course of the year. She explained,

He used to do all his work in my office. If I went to my lesson, he'd come to my lessons. We had a very good relationship...and he had a great deal of respect for me. I began to learn quickly what his moods were like and how to deal with him. (Head of School, School L)

Those teachers who described their school as "*being effective*" and "*successful*" at preventing and resisting exclusion noted the "*strong leadership*" of the headteacher and described "*good*" and "*positive working relationships*" within the senior management team, noting, in particular the headteacher's "*ability to delegate*" and "*encouraging teachers to take responsibility*".

One teacher described the role of the management in mediating the pressures on staff:

One of the jobs of the SMT is to absorb all those pressures that are being imposed on the school and to try and protect the staff and enable [teachers] to actually spend the time doing the productive things, which is getting the lessons right...but that's very hard ... (Deputy Head, School S).

For example, teachers from one school described "*the priorities of management*" as "*supporting staff*" and "*the early identification*" of students in need of additional learning and social support in Year 7:

Children coming in from primary schools very often come in with a history and we start to work with those children very very early on.... and we haven't had [School L's] way of life with them. So when they come in to Year 7.... I can think for example, [Dave Hughes], who had great difficulties ...and was identified very early on as a child who could go off the rails. Now he was given support from day one, he made it through to year 11.... That was a surprise to lots of staff because they just didn't think he would make it. (Head of Upper School, School L).

As he came into Year 7, he was identified as having real difficulties with reading. So, in the English department, for example, a lot of support is given to children who cannot read. Numeracy is dealt with in a similar way. They are taught in smaller groups...given much more time...given support. (English Teacher, School L).

### **6.3.1c Management as aggravating exclusion**

While the majority of teachers described ways that management could help to prevent exclusion, the majority of teachers in two of the schools (about a dozen) described the decisions and priorities of school management as aggravating the school's use of exclusion. One teacher, for example, linked the structure of the school's management with aggravating the use of exclusion, explaining,

If there's a school with poor management structure, then of course, that will affect the teachers who are teaching ... [and] affect their attitude toward the students....because if [the teachers] have so much stress being passed down, then they're going to quickly write up incident slips to get kids out of the lesson more and more and more. That means that the level

of expulsions may go up, simply because of mismanagement and the pressures placed on teachers. (Classroom Teacher, School S).

Another pointed out that the use of exclusion by schools “*fluctuated*”, according to the school’s response to “*levels of disruption*.”

I’ve been here when the exclusions in this school have fluctuated quite enormously and that has been down to the response that the school [management] has on the levels of disruption that are taking place in the school. (Deputy Head, School S).

Other teachers pointed to the style and culture of the school’s management as a factor that could exacerbate exclusion. Some classroom teachers, for example, described senior managers as “*not knowing how to prioritise*”, and “*not knowing how to communicate*”. One teacher, a senior manager, elaborated:

You need the people heading up these teams to recognise priorities and ... to be confident to deliver that support. They need quite a high level of social skills...team-building and interpersonal skills. (Deputy Head, School S).

Another teacher described the need for management to “*identify priorities*” and “*to reorganise*” the school in order to create structures that would facilitate staff communication and reflection:

We have to actually identify priorities to deal with exclusion. I think it is all about the school development plan. The other problem is that we reorganise ourselves in such a way that we set aside time where we can discuss these things. It’s about having time to reflect on a lot of issues. (Head of Year, School S).

Among the frustrations expressed by teachers were *“a lack of guidance from the head ... which made it hard to judge ... and to make decisions about how to deal with certain pupils”*. Another teacher, but from a different school similarly felt that there were *“unclear priorities amongst the senior management team ...which affected how we [teachers] managed our classrooms”*. Others described middle managers, such as Heads of Year and Heads of Departments, as *“struggling to keep up with the referral slips”*, *“not having enough time to follow-up”*, *“having a full teaching load”* and being *“overburdened with paperwork”*. One Head of Year explained the difficulties in responding to teachers who needed support:

The difficulty is the lapse ... the waiting side. There could be a delay in dealing with situations ... and that causes a lot of overload ...That’s what happens to a lot of the Heads of Years ... issues are not being dealt with. The problem is that you have to deal with pastoral issues ... while you are called upon to deal with very bad situations. Where it gets lost is that I have a chunk of teaching load. You can imagine the pressure of preparing your lessons ... my teaching load is about 20 periods ... and I see an average of 100 kids [a day]. (Head of Year, School S).

The views expressed by teachers suggest that the leadership and management within a school is relevant to the exclusion by influencing the context in which teachers feel professionally supported and individually enabled to resolve conflicts and issues that arise within the classroom. Teachers’ varying assessments of the overall effectiveness, departmental capacity, and individual competence of their school’s managers and leaders points crucially to the ways in which the structures, decisions and priorities of management might affect how teachers view and assess their own capacity in relation to exclusion.

### **6.3.2 School policies on behaviour and discipline**

As with the role of school management, school policies on behaviour and discipline were also described by teachers as influencing how exclusion is used and viewed within the school. Teachers' descriptions of their school's policies around behaviour and discipline revealed a number of ways in which the nature and development of policy aimed at behaviour characterised the context in which exclusion occurs. This could be seen in three ways: 1) by providing the context in which behaviour is interpreted; 2) providing a context in which expectations are defined; and 3) guiding how teachers respond to difficulties and challenges arising with individual students.

#### **6.3.2a Shaping student and staff expectations**

Teachers' descriptions of their school's behaviour and discipline policies highlighted a range of different approaches that schools used to define staff and student expectations. One headteacher, for example, felt that a key factor in the school's ability to resist exclusion was a genuinely whole-school behaviour policy that was "*built upon beliefs and expectations*" rather than compliance and involved both pupils and parents in its development:

One of the things we did early on was look at the behaviour policy together. Students played a part in that and parents...we actually brought them in to the behaviour policy and ... reflected the views of different groups. So the youngsters have a feeling, like ... they've been part of that process. there's a feeling that expectations ... are ones we can subscribe to ... and that they're about self-discipline... rather than like, discipline where one is told that he or she is misbehaving. The idea is more and more to behave in a way because that's the expectation ... If you say to them how does a [School L] student behave, They

should be able to tell you.... It is about “This is what we all do here. We all understand it, we all must take part in it. (Headteacher, School L)

Other teachers from the same school described the school’s approach to behaviour and discipline as being “*driven by values, rather than adherence to rules*” and “*about focusing on what students should be doing ... as opposed to focusing on the behaviour ... [that] should be punished...*”

A group of teachers from another school, however, defined their behaviour policy in contrasting terms, describing a “*code of conduct*”, “*a list of punishable offences*”, and “*sanctions to be used when a pupil fails to abide by the rules*”. A teacher from a different school described the discipline policy using legalistic terms, describing the school’s “assertive discipline” approach as having a “*severe clause*” with various “*stages*” and “*warnings*.”

We have an assertive discipline policy in place. It follows stages like first warning, second warning, and when it gets to fourth warning and there’s no response then it now goes to “severe clause”.<sup>1</sup> “Severe clause” means that there is a teacher assigned, a senior teacher, on patrol or on duty at any particular time. It means that the names of the teachers on duty are published ... so you know who’s on duty. And because they’re on patrol, it means you can walk into the situation, or you can actually send in a reasonable kid, and ask for help. (Head of Year, School S)

Others viewed exclusion within the context of their school’s behaviour policy, casting exclusion as a response to “*a series*”, “*a history*” or “*line*” of “*offences*” and “*breaches*” committed by a pupil. One teacher explained,

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term, “severe clause” is a direct quote from School S’s discipline policy.

You can't just say that we're not going to exclude. You have to have a behaviour policy, and there have to be consequences and the ultimate consequence is that, sorry mate, you've broken every rule ...you've pushed things as far as it can go... and the ultimate sanction has to be invoked. (Deputy Headteacher, School S).

### 6.3.2b Defining when exclusion becomes necessary

In describing the circumstances in which exclusion was felt to be “*necessary*”, teachers frequently identified their school's behaviour and discipline policy as providing the key rationale and framework for exclusion. In general, the majority of teachers suggested that the school's behaviour and discipline policy set out how students were expected to behave and in doing so, defined “*when exclusion was necessary*”.

Some teachers, for example, defined exclusion as a disciplinary measure aimed at addressing chronic challenges and difficulties with individual students. For example, one headteacher explained:

If a child commits an offence, which the Head of Year considers is out of order, if that child has also had a history of other offences, then if it's a severe enough incident ...and if it's not in the interests of the school, then that person will be suspended for a number of days. And parents will be informed. The sort of things that involves is fighting, attacking someone, assaulting someone, being rude to teachers, throwing fireworks. (Headteacher, School S)

According, to another teacher, the school's disciplinary policy stipulated that, “*several fixed-term exclusions equals a permanent. A permanent exclusion*”, he explained, “*is where a child has ... had several fixed-term exclusions, and then they've had their last chance*”.

The majority of teachers suggested that the school's behaviour policy was a key influence in how exclusion was used, and a range of views were expressed about the ways in which a school's disciplinary procedures reflected the school's stance on exclusion. Several teachers, for example, expressed the view that exclusion was needed "*to protect staff*" ... and "*to prevent the disruption of learning*". For others, exclusion was viewed as "*the ultimate*" form of punishment, the "*last*" part of a continuum of sanction following "*an escalation*" or "*breakdown*" in a pupil's behaviour in school. Another teacher explained that although his school had not permanently excluded a student for several years, he still felt that exclusion needed to be an option: "*We don't have a non-exclusion policy. We will exclude if necessary*".

Whether or not exclusion offered teachers a long-term solution to the difficulties in the classroom was a question that several teachers raised. One teacher, for example, suggested that although exclusion "*could...at times... provide a quick and immediate solution*" and "*was necessary in some cases*", [exclusion from school] "*wasn't always effective in the long-term*". According to this teacher, "*Exclusion doesn't help anybody, the problems just come back*". Another teacher also suggested that exclusion did not address the underlying problems of teaching, explaining:

If you're in a classroom, and things aren't exactly right with your teaching, and you've got a student who's acting up, they're expressing the frustrations ... that you're feeling. But they're getting into trouble for

acting this out, but you kind of sit back and watch it all happening...you feel that this is good that your frustrations are being voiced by somebody else, but you don't have the consequences. But then if that person gets excluded, the problems are still there. It needs somebody else to then voice that dissatisfaction. I think that happens ... somebody gets excluded ... well, then somebody climbs into space, into that vacuum. (Deputy Headteacher, School S)

### 6.3.2c Providing the context in which exclusion can be avoided

A number of teachers' descriptions of their school's policies implied a recognition that "*different schools exclude for different reasons*" and "*that some schools try hard to avoid it...whilst other [schools] aren't so good at doing that*". One deputy headteacher, for example, contrasted his school's policies with the practices of others, describing his school as going "the extra mile". He explained:

We go the extra mile – exclusion being the last resort. It definitely is with us. We are used to lots of steps and strategies. In some schools they would exclude a pupil for swearing at a member of staff in the corridor. That might be the first thing that pupil has ever done. Here ... we put lots of layers in to try and resolve this behaviour. In a way we have a much higher threshold ... it is not that we accept poor behaviour it's that we have different cut-offs. (Deputy Head, School R)

According to another teacher, however, it was difficult for his school to avoid exclusion because staff had varying interpretations of the school's behaviour and discipline policy. He explained,

It happens at senior management team level...It happens at departmental level. It happens at some pastoral levels. Then there are gaps at the individual level where people aren't following the system that they're supposed to. For example, you're supposed to put a kid out of class for 2-3 minutes maximum. And then you go and deal with that person. But you find kids all over the place...kicked out of lessons, in some cases, for most of the lesson. (Deputy Headteacher, School S)

Teachers expressed a range of opinions about whether exclusion could be avoided, questioning, for example, the relationship between behaviour and exclusion. For example, one teacher proposed that decisions about exclusion were not always linked to specific incidents, but were more related to how teachers used and pupils responded to authority in the school:

It's not the incident that brings trouble. It is when they are in the presence of someone with authority that messes it up. Simple things, like "You have fought. Sit quietly". No, I won't sit down. They want to continue the fight. That's when the problem starts. It's the disregard for authority ... that makes it worse (Head of Year, School S).

According to the majority of teachers, policies on behaviour and discipline have a direct bearing on exclusion – in terms of defining and communicating what is expected of students, what is tolerated, and how such expectations are enforced within the school. More importantly, as the teacher implied in the quote above, exclusion can arise not so much because how a teacher perceives and responds to a pupil's behaviour, but because of the pupil's subsequent encounter and interaction with a senior manager.

Teachers expressed a range of differing opinions about the kinds of behaviour policies that could deter or aggravate exclusion. Whilst some felt that a policy based on sanctions and a continuum was best for communicating expectations for students, others described their school's policies as being value-driven, rather than being conduct- and compliance-driven. This view suggests that teachers and

schools differ in how they interpret and respond to the behaviour and needs of those students at risk of exclusion.

### **6.3.3 Staff communication and collaboration**

Teachers identified the level and quality of staff communication and collaboration as factors that either enabled or constrained staff's capacity to diagnose, understand and respond to students' needs, thereby influencing the context in which school exclusion occurred.

#### **6.3.3a Enabling the exchange and sharing of information about students**

Teachers described the role of communication as highly relevant to exclusion, describing their reliance upon colleagues and senior managers in "*discussing a student's problems*". One teacher explained, "*Teachers need to know what their students' needs are... and that means that we have to share and exchange information*". Several teachers identified staff communication as factors that helped to increase awareness, suggesting that by "*identify[ing] needs*", "*monitor[ing] problems*" and "*[being made] aware of*" when a student was having difficulty, teachers could provide support to pupils, thereby resisting exclusion.

Teachers described using a range of systems and strategies for exchanging and sharing information about students. A group of teachers from one school described communication as "*central*" to preventing exclusion, describing their reliance upon informal and formal ways for sharing information. "*It's as easy as a note*", said

one. Another described using, “*A quick phone call*”. Another added, “*Everyone has a pigeonhole*”, whilst another explained, “*There is a lot of written notes. There’s no elaborate system*”. A third teacher in the group explained:

An awful lot of communication takes place in corridors going to and from as well. It doesn’t take a long time. We don’t have to set up meetings just to say, [for example] that so and so is with me. We swap information on a regular basis. (Behaviour Support Teacher, School L).

Another teacher from a different school described how staff were “*alerted*” by senior management about individual students, which then set into motion a system of monitoring a student’s behaviour and progress through a system of referral slips and memos.

The child is on alert in effect. This will monitor behaviour we can use that or other systems [demonstrating forms here] different people have different ways of using them. The department will attempt to do something personally, then they might involve the form tutor. If I was a year tutor I would be looking at where this was happening, is it happening in one subject, is it happening in French, the French teacher might express their concerns about his child, we use little memos, so we have a picture (Head of Year, School R).

A common theme expressed by teachers about communication was the need for discussion to “*occur across divisions*”, to be “*school-wide*” and “*cross-departmental*”. Another teacher similarly explained the need for communication to occur across departments, suggesting that whilst “*some departments might be ... better at communicating than others*”, all staff in the school needed to be aware of when and why a student experienced difficulties:

Often with these kids it is across the board, it is not just in one lesson. Very rarely does one member of staff have a problem with one pupil. It often occurs very close together. (Head of Year, School R).

### **6.3.3b Improving awareness amongst staff and parents**

The level of collaboration and discussion amongst teachers was also described as a factor that could prevent exclusion by keeping parents and staff informed about the student's difficulties and progress:

Whoever informs the parents, the Head of Year, or the oversight manager is always informed. It's important, whatever happens, like having a meeting with parents, or if you have a discussion, you note it down, and then you send a note to relevant people, and you say, I've had a meeting with this kid, and we agreed on these targets ... we reached this type of decision. (Head of Year, School R).

In describing the role of staff communication and collaboration around students at risk of exclusion, teachers suggested that greater awareness and understanding improved teachers' responsiveness, thereby helping to "*decrease a pupil's likelihood for exclusion*", and "*prevent[ing] a situation from worsening*", "*help[ing] us to know how to respond*". Other teachers, however, suggested that the quality and ease of communication and the level of accessibility and collaboration amongst colleagues was constrained by a range of factors. For several teachers, their main constraint in communicating with colleagues was the lack of time. One teacher explained:

Time is the problem. The person you want to talk to is teaching when you're not. And in our meeting time, we have meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays, that is directed time. I've got to go to academic department which meets Mondays. I'm in on a pastoral team which meets Wednesdays. So when do we meet? Well, we can meet at our lunch hour, but actually, I want my lunch. Well, we can meet after school, but I have shopping...(Deputy Headteacher, School S).

Another teacher also suggested that time was a key factor, explaining, “*At the end of the day, it is the contact time with the student which is important*”. Another similarly expressed that staff communication was enabled with “*having time to reflect*”. Others felt that communication could be constrained by management that was overly “*directive*”. For example, one teacher stated,

There has to be less directiveness. Because when [management] direct things all the time, we’re not really caring about those [students and teachers] we’re directing. Because if we really did care, we’d listen. We’d open up a channel of communication. (Science Teacher, School S).

According to teachers, the processes and systems that enable staff to communicate, exchange, and share information can influence the exclusion process by affecting teachers’ capacity. In the first instance, this is by becoming aware of those students who are at risk of exclusion and, in the second instance, by encouraging staff to collaborate in developing school-wide ways of supporting and monitoring students’ progress.

#### **6.3.4 Structures for supporting students and teachers**

Another aspect of school that teachers suggested could help prevent or aggravate exclusion concerned the availability, structure, and quality of support for students who were experiencing behavioural or academic difficulties. Teachers described a range of externally based programmes as well as internal school structures for

supporting students in the classroom; and also pointed to several factors that constrained their efforts.

#### 6.3.4a Outside agencies and external programmes

In describing the kinds of safety nets that could help prevent exclusion, teachers described using and relying upon a range of supports both within and outside the school. Some identified a host of local and national projects, initiatives, and programmes as *“helping to address and reduce exclusion by “improving the behaviour”, “boosting self-esteem”, “giving [pupils] a chance to experience success”, “providing alternatives”, and “getting pupils out of school”.*

There’s one young man I can think of ... we could have excluded him and put him out in the streets. Instead, we kept him. We did the best we could with him whilst we worked with education and social services to get proper provision for him. Once that was in place, then he simply transferred. (Deputy Head, School L).

However, teachers expressed different views about whether externally-based support and programmes based outside the school, such as pupil referral units and national work schemes, were an effective way of preventing schools from excluding. One teacher, for example, suggested that *“taking the pupil out of school”* was the *“most viable option ... given the pressures within school”* or *“the most efficient solution...given the limited staff and resource”*. Another teacher claimed that *“schools and teachers...can’t...and shouldn’t be expected to do everything”*. In contrast, other teachers described the dilemma of having

“*contrasting styles of teaching and learning*” between the staff in pupil referral units and those of teachers in the school. One teacher said,

I’m not sure whether sending a pupil in a referral unit really does work ... [a student] might do better in the short-term ... but what happens in the long-run ... when they come back ... they still have to learn to get on with their regular teachers (Teacher, School R)

Others described external programmes as “*partially*” and “*partly working*”:

I think [external supports] partly work, again to use an example we have the youth scheme and pupils go out and help in primary schools. I have a number of students in that, which has been partially successful in that there is an incentive, also it has improved their self esteem, they go outside the school to do it – it might be called work experience. (Deputy Head, School R).

Other teachers described a strategy of integrating externally based resources and staff into their own school staffing to enhance and complement the practices and structures within the school. In one school, teachers described how the school’s management asked a number of LEA-based staff to base themselves within the school, to enable closer communications with staff and parents. One of these staff based at the school, an education welfare officer, explained:

I think being based here at the school makes all the difference because I can pre-empt exclusion. Say, for instance, a child gets into a fight. I might know that child already. And I will think, he may not come into school tomorrow. I would talk to members of staff about it ... and we would work out a plan. If I’m not based in school, I wouldn’t know that [the fight] had happened, so I might come in for my meeting a week later, and then told, that child hasn’t been in school for a week, and already you’ve got the problem [of exclusion]. (Education Welfare Officer, School L).

### 6.3.4b In school support: Pastoral systems and specialist staff

Providing students with support was perceived to be a key strategy for preventing exclusion. Teachers, however, expressed a range of views about the quality, availability, and structure of support available to students within their own school and also had mixed opinions about the types of support that worked most effectively. While nearly every teacher I interviewed felt that having external programmes and resources were necessary for supporting students and preventing exclusion, the majority of teachers also asserted the need for structures and supports that were based within the school that did not need to go outside school to access.

Examples of these included:

- **The pastoral system.** The role of the school's pastoral system was described as "*supporting pupils ... outside the curriculum*" and within the exclusion process – enabling teachers to understand, become aware of, and address students' emotional and behavioural needs.
- **Form tutors.** Included in this category of support was the role of individual form tutors, who were described as the "*first point of contact*" and source of help if a student began to experience difficulties. According to one teacher,

Form tutors support the children ... to help them through school. We have a PSHE lesson each week, which covers a variety of topics – drugs, personal health, jobs, citizenship, and environment. It is a lesson where tutors get to spend some time with the children once a week. As a teacher, you get to build up relationships with students (Head of Year, School S).

Other teachers, however, suggested that supporting pupils through form tutors was “*only part of the solution*”, “*not enough*”, and “*variable*”. One teacher explained that in her school, “*Everyone did their own thing. There is no PSHE curriculum to follow, so form tutors do what they like*”. Another teacher said, “*We have to recognise that some teachers are strong ... at that type of thing ... whilst others are not*”.

- **School-based mentors and counsellors.** A third category of school-based support identified by teachers included specialist staff who worked individually with students around individual needs.

According to several teachers, the stage at which support was provided was also a key factor. One teacher suggested that “*the earlier the better*”. One, for example, suggested that earlier intervention could prevent exclusion:

It makes me feel disappointed that there are not systems that can kick in earlier for these youngsters. I know we have done everything we could possibly do and more. We have done everything in our professional capacity and more, more than I believe any other institution could have done. (Head of Year, School M).

Another headteacher described the need to “*bring in*” a range of supports as a way of preventing exclusion, but acknowledged that a major constraint was finding time to implement such supports:

In a school where there wasn't such a high concentration of misbehaviour, you'd be able to tackle those problems in school – you bring in therapy, or

you bring in remedial action. And you'd be able to punish and reform without exclusion. But in a school like this, you don't have enough time to do all that. And until this school is more stable, then exclusions will be high. (Headteacher, School S)

For a number of teachers, the perceived constraints on time negatively affected the extent and quality of support that could be offered to students. While a number of teachers indicated that "*individual attention*", and "*one-on-one*" could help support a pupil at risk of exclusion, the difficulty was in "*finding the time*" and "*filling out all the paperwork*" to access support. One teacher explained, "*Time is [a] really key [factor in preventing exclusion]... You have to be able to respond quickly, but management don't have the time ... and so the teacher and the pupil ends up having to wait .. and by then... the situation has gotten worse ... and it's too late*".

#### **6.3.4d Support, training, and professional development for teachers**

Senior managers identified the level and quality of support provided to teachers as a factor in the exclusion process. One deputy headteacher's explanation was that teachers who lacked support, and felt they had to "circumvent" the system to find support, aggravated exclusions.

It works some of the time, but you will always [find] some [teachers] who will think it's not working and ... try and circumvent the system. And what they'll do is... instead of going to their head of department ... or following whatever the sanction system is, they'll try and jump it up three or four levels. And if you allow that to happen, that's when you start to get kids being excluded. That's when you start to get your exclusion rates going higher and higher. But it's a normal thing to expect teachers to want to do that. Because as a teacher, you go where you think you're going to get support. If you've got a strong head of department, you'll go there. If you haven't got a strong head of department, you go to the head of year,

you go wherever you think you're going to get effective support. But there are times when that counteracts the system that we've put in place. (Deputy Head, School S).

Some described the general need for teachers to have *“better skills”*, *“more training”*, and *“opportunities to share experiences”*. For example, one head described the necessity of support for teachers as *“a way to prevent the escalation from.....happening too quickly”*. Some described the context in which exclusion had risen as one in which *“teachers need more training”*, and also *“lack[ing] opportunities in order to “share experiences”*.

Before it was possible to attend what was called borough-centred INSETs. We used to as Heads of Departments, attend INSETs. It had a lot of advantages because it was an opportunity to exchange ideas, share views, and interact.... But that is no longer there ... now everyone is working in isolation, trying to deal with things ... and so you just feel the pressure ... you don't know what is happening. If you have a class that is constantly difficult, you may start questioning your own skills. But when you get to know there are teachers who face similar problems, that helps a lot. It helps to develop skills to deal with difficulties. In the process of sharing experiences, you are able to support one another. (Head of Department, School S).

We need more training.... In terms of identifying new patterns ... and equipping teachers with the skills of coping....that's quite important. Teachers need to be given the opportunity to attend conferences or situations where case studies are actually looked at.... (Head of Year, School S).

Teachers suggested that constraints – operating within and outside the school – could affect the extent and quality of the support they provided to students, thereby helping to prevent a situation from escalating to exclusion. One teacher described support as being *“a safety net”* from *“pressures within the system”* thereby helping to prevent exclusion.

What you need to try and build in are lots of safety nets, before you actually get to that situation. The more you can build in, the better. There will always be pressures within the system to burst through those safety nets. (Deputy Head, School S).

According to two teachers in another school, “*having a range of support ... not just for students*” ... “*but also [for] teachers ... helped to prevent exclusion*”. Another teacher, however, described how a lack of support for teachers lowered teachers’ tolerance and capacity to resolve problems within their own classroom:

There should be an understanding between how much an obligation a teacher has to resolve a problem within his or her turf ... the actual classroom... however there should be some support once the teacher has done all the teacher can do ... again it gets back to management... if there is no structure in place to support that teacher ... then, of course, that stress gets to the point where the teacher ... literally, blows up and chucks the student out. (Classroom Teacher, School S).

### **6.3.5 School goals, vision, and mission**

Teachers revealed school ethos to be another significant factor that affected how exclusion was used in the school, describing a number of ways in which the clarity and nature of the school’s “*goals*”, “*vision*”, and “*mission*” worked to either encourage or discourage its use in the school. These perceptions began to show key differences in how teachers described their school, and highlighted differences in whether teachers felt it was possible, in the context of their school, to prevent exclusion.

### 6.3.5a Resisting exclusion through an inclusive ethos

One deputy headteacher, for example, in describing the school's ability to resist using permanent exclusion, distinguished his school from what he felt was a "*tendency to want to use exclusion*", describing the ethos in the school as "*inclusive*" and the goal of "*finding alternatives*" to exclusion:

There's very much an ethos that this is an inclusive school ... we haven't excluded anybody permanently for many years ... I think it's about four years now...we don't have a non-exclusion policy. We will exclude if necessary. We prefer to find alternatives and we've been successful at doing that so far. The governors are fully behind that approach. And it's very evident that the entire teaching staff [is] behind that approach as well. Nationally, there is a certain amount of difficulty over this because in some institutions, the staff feel children should have been [excluded]. (Deputy Head, School L)

The headteacher, in describing the school's view toward exclusion, similarly described the influence that the school's ethos and "*philosophy*" had in encouraging "*mutual respect*" and "*positive relations*" between pupils and staff, stating, "*Its more about shared expectations. And I think being inclusive is a big part of our philosophy*".

One headteacher, for example, described her school's small size and supportive staff culture as contributing to an ethos, which she compared to a "*close community*". She explained:

I think if we went much bigger we wouldn't do as good a job at it [resisting exclusion] .. it is that notion of being a close community, being supported, everybody knowing you ... all of those things play a part in helping pupils to cope. What we've done is to try and make achievement accessible.... Something everyone can aim for .. so success is everyone and you can see yourself reflected. (Headteacher, School M).

Not all teachers, however, described their school as having an inclusive ethos. One teacher said, *“At our school, if a pupil can’t fit in, he or she needs to go elsewhere”*. A teacher from another school suggested that it was *“the pressure to be inclusive ... [that] actually makes exclusion worse....when you don’t have the resources or staffing to attend to some of these children’s needs”*.

### **6.3.5b The role of trust and relationships**

Another aspect of school ethos that teachers frequently noted as a factor that could actively discourage exclusion was the level of trust and quality of relationships amongst pupils and staff. One teacher explained that a community ethos *“fostered co-operation and reduced conflict...[creating conditions which] helped to prevent exclusion”*. Nearly every teacher described the teacher-student relationship as important.

Teachers suggested that *“friendly”* and *“positive”* communications between teachers and students reduced the likelihood for exclusion, and as one teacher suggested, *“made the management of behaviour...much much easier”*. Another teacher, noted the importance of *“just talking to pupils”* and *“asking how they are getting on”* as a way of *“building trust”*. He added, *“If you talk to any member of our staff, they will talk to a lot of children here... you listen to staff ... they are always talking to kids, using their name.”*

Other teachers explained how “*poor*” and “*negative*” relationships between teachers and pupils exacerbated the need for exclusion. One teacher, for example, conveyed a negative atmosphere in their school, describing the relationships between pupils and teachers in their school as “*strained*”. “*Pupils think they are in control...as opposed to the teachers*”, said another member of the school. Another teacher felt that:

It’s not the incident that brings trouble. It is when they are in the presence of someone with authority that messes up. Simple things, like “You have fought. Sit quietly”. No, I won’t sit down. They want to continue the fight. That’s when the problem starts. It’s the disregard for authority ... that makes it worse. (Head of Year, School S).

### **6.3.5c Valuing effort and recognising progress**

Having a school ethos and culture that “*celebrated achievement*”, “*rewarded progress*”, and “*recognised pupils’ achievement*” were also suggested by several teachers as “*ways of resisting exclusion*”. Several teachers, for example, described the need to “*recognise hard work*”, “*celebrate success*”, “*praise*”, and “*reward pupils*”. “*This...gives those pupils a chance*”, suggested one teacher in describing how staff viewed students at risk of exclusion. Another teacher suggested that a school ethos that valued effort and praise, “*gives those [students at risk of exclusion] the opportunity to succeed*” and “*helps others who may be struggling to not give up... and not feel so discouraged*”.

A few teachers, however, described their school as “*not having a very positive ethos... or a culture built on praise*”. One teacher, for example, felt that in her school “*there’s no culture of achievement*”:

There's no progression built in.... for example, there's not unified merit system. The first year I was here, people said, 'Well, we thought we were doing that, we have positive discipline.' That's all well and good, but what we really should be looking at is what are we going to do to make the kids feel like they're achieving? The merit system should be high profile. It should be a big issue. When the kids do a beautiful piece of work, they are given certificates in assembly, but it's all very desultory. The kids don't actually want to go up and get them because there's no culture of achievement. It's never been built in. (Teacher, School R)

### 6.3.5d Encouraging pupil participation and involvement

Another aspect of school ethos that a majority of teachers felt helped to resist exclusion was the level of student participation in the school. A group of teachers from one school described the need for pupils who had become disengaged with learning to "*feel part of the community*" and "*to become more involved*" in the school. One of the group, a deputy headteacher, described the success of using peer tutoring with one pupil at risk of exclusion who "*had difficulty coping with authority*" and had been getting into conflicts with other pupils.

His salvation was to work with the students with special needs. We found that he worked well with youngsters who had physical and other learning difficulties ... Basically, that strategy has worked extremely well. He's actually addressed several conferences and he's spoken about his experiences. (Deputy Head, School L).

Rather than "*control[ling] the learning process*", explained one teacher, "*pupils need to be part of the learning environment*". One factor that could aggravate exclusion, he said, were "*not recognising and building pupils' experiences into the classroom*". He added:

Here we get the children involved....For instance, one of the subjects I teach is about volcanoes, earthquakes, and natural hazards. We have

children from Montserrat who had experienced first hand, and have been evacuated from a volcano. I give them the opportunity to share experiences with us. (Geography Teacher, School M)

### **6.3.5e Adopting individualised approaches to teaching and learning.**

The extent to which the school facilitated an individualised approach to understanding students' needs and interests also emerged as a factor that defined the context in which exclusion occurred. Here several teachers suggested that the school's ethos toward learning, pedagogy and teaching styles could also play a role in exclusion, by affecting how students viewed and experienced learning within the school.

A majority of teachers, for example, described pedagogy as "*essential*" for enabling students "*to feel positive*", "*confident*", and "*understood*" by their teachers. Another teacher, for example, described the need for teachers to adapt their classroom practice and "*teaching style*" around their students' "*frame of reference*", suggesting that exclusion arose out of a failure to "*appreciate*" the individual needs and interests of students:

The teaching style is one the magical ingredients in terms of reaching a student. If the teaching style is one that is offensive or foreign...and not really receptive to the student, then straight away you have the angst that the student may have of not wanting to fit [in], and that angst can grow into more negativity because the teacher doesn't listen. [If I'm a student] and the teacher's learning doesn't appreciate my particular frame of reference, my culture ... then the student starts questioning... and possibly becoming more rebellious, possibly being added to the exclusion list. Of course the teaching style matters in terms of the receptivity of the student ... in terms of diffusing the possible problem ...[and] the animosity when the system is up against that student. It happens all the time. (Teacher, School S)

One teacher described “*a dire failure*” among her department to develop pedagogical strategies around the different needs of their pupils.

When you’ve got a department that has no schemes of work, you’ll get major problems. I don’t think children’s needs are always met, appropriately. There is very little evidence that there’s differentiation... We’ve got difficult kids ... I’m not disregarding that ... but they’ve been given materials to keep them quiet. (Teacher, School S)

Other teachers similarly linked students’ learning difficulties with a greater risk of exclusion, indicated the need for “*specialised curriculum support*” and “*one-on-one tutoring*” as a strategy to prevent exclusion. The kinds of pedagogical strategies described by teachers ranged from “*curriculum withdrawal*” and “*differentiation*” to “*specialised support staff*” who could provide “*in-class support*” for pupils at risk of exclusion.

### **6.3.6 School-level influences on exclusion: Emerging themes and differences**

Teachers’ descriptions of the structures, policies, and practices within their school provide further insight to how a school’s internal organisational features shapes the context in which exclusion can be aggravated, avoided, or prevented. In particular, the extent to which teachers felt that they, along with their students, were supported, valued, understood, and encouraged appears to be a key aspect in explaining the patterns and processes of school exclusion.

Teachers, however, expressed differing views about their school's level of responsiveness and effectiveness in creating and sustaining the kinds of structures, relationships and understandings that could help prevent exclusion. Those teachers who viewed personal and social background as the primary cause of exclusion tended to suggest that little could be done at the school level to prevent exclusion. Underlying this externalisation of the causes of exclusion was a 'deficit' model and view of pupils. As such, solutions were perceived by such teachers as being outside the scope and power of either themselves or their school. Such explanations were often characterised by a sense of inevitability and powerlessness.

Teachers who described their school's policies, structures, and culture as enabling their capacity to respond to students tended to suggest that they, as teachers, and their school, as an organisation, could exert some control and influence in preventing exclusion. Such teachers tended to be less fatalistic than those who had a negative view of their school or who narrowly defined the causes of exclusion in terms of pupil- and social- characteristics. The range of teachers' views suggests that schools not only vary in their organisational features, but therefore vary in their influence on exclusion.

#### **6.4 Teachers' views about the impact of national policy**

A final category of teachers' perceptions linked the causes and dynamics of exclusion to the policy environment created by national government policies. Teachers identified a number of policies as having created a climate in schools that

had increased the pressures in schools, thus aggravating the use of exclusion: These included: 1) the National Curriculum; 2) national assessments and exams; 3) national systems for accountability, namely league tables and OFSTED inspection; and 4) school choice and local school management.

#### **6.4.1 Pressures from the National Curriculum**

For a majority of teachers, pressures from the National Curriculum were suggested as having aggravated the increase in school exclusion. The impact of the National Curriculum was described in terms of having created “*pressures*”, “*constraints*”, and “*tensions*” within the classroom, which had created a number of pedagogical conflicts, that teachers suggested increased frustration in the classroom, thereby aggravating the use of exclusion. Two areas of constraints included: 1) difficulties responding to individual students’ needs; 2) difficulties exploring topics in-depth.

##### **6.4.1a Difficulties responding to individual needs**

According to several teachers, a major pressure was the pace and structure of the National Curriculum, which was described as “*limited*” “*prescribed*”, “*strict*”, “*imposed*”, “*inflexible*”. One teacher said:

Certainly, throughout the country, the numbers [of exclusion] have gone up. I think one reason put forward is the introduction of NC, which is actually very strict, and gives very little room for movement...it does mean that [for] children who find school very difficult ... teachers have very little leeway with them. Therefore when [teachers] feel they can't get deal any longer, then the answer is exclusion. (Head of Year, School L)

Another Head of Year described the “*constraints*” of the curriculum as creating difficulties balancing the needs of the individual student with the wider class:

In the past you could accommodate the needs of the individual and the rest of the group. But now with the constraints of the curriculum, teachers find it affects what they are doing and the learning of the other pupils in the class .... You have got balance. So if you have a child in Year 10, where children are starting to get involved in exam courses, you have got to balance the needs of a child who has a problem and causing a fuss with the wider audience in the classroom. It is something I am trying to tackle. Pupils have behavioural problems, which need addressing, but I see the wider needs of the group (Head of Year, School R)

Teachers suggested that curriculum pressures aggravated exclusion because the “sheer pace” made it “impossible for some pupils to keep up”, and “difficult to stay on top of all the coursework”.

You follow a syllabus which is tested and so ... the children have to be there and sometimes they are involved in coursework which is assessed and so therefore the teacher is trying to get on with those commitments under that sort of pressure ... you have only 2 years to get through this and it makes it critical that you can get through the work. (Head of Year, School R).

Another teacher added:

I think the national curriculum had had a bad effect [on exclusion] because all the children are under pressure to reach the levels. There is pressure on the staff as well to teach that work. I was teaching before the National Curriculum was introduced across Britain and in that particular school, lessons...were far freer. You did not have the restraints of having to do that work in the a set time. You could actually teach the children without frustration. The national curriculum has so many boundaries on the work that has to be done. The work seems to overtake the social aspects of the school. People feel they are under pressure to get the work done and they deal with behaviour in a different way. (Head of Department, School M)

As a teacher, you are under pressure to basically do a job. And the NC and [assessments] ... are very prescriptive. But I think expulsions have risen, because everything else has become very prescriptive as well. I don't think it's just the national curriculum. I think the management structures within schools have changed within the last ten years to bring in line with industry. And that's not necessarily the best or right route for education to go down. And I think that in itself has an effect. Because it's not just teachers in a classroom ,... everybody has targets to meet now. And I don't think that was the case ten years ago. (English Teacher, School L)

#### 6.4.1b Difficulty exploring ideas and topics in-depth

One teacher explained how the pace of the curriculum created pressures to move quickly through topics, discouraging him from pursuing areas that were of interest to his students:

I teach geography ... I think there is a case to be made that some students are alienated from what they are doing [in the National Curriculum]... I think in a lot of cases there is a lot of leeway to follow students' interests, [but] you have to move on and say we are doing this today. In a school where we have got a high proportion of children who are weaker academically, they find it very difficult to follow these sort of courses (Teacher, School R).

Other teachers described the prescribed structure of the curriculum as discouraging teachers from "*spending too much time*", "*taking risks*", "*being creative*" and limiting the adaptation of content to fit the needs and interests of their students. One teacher suggested the rigidity of the curriculum made pupils frustrated and disengaged with learning:

The curriculum can be very rigid, and for certain pupils it doesn't work and once they come up against the curriculum, frustration sets in then you see the different types of behaviours and attitudes come out. Ones that can overcome and make it ...will succeed and achieve. But there's a significant number of others who don't. (Science Teacher, School S)

## 6.4.2 Assessment and exam pressures

The pressures of national assessments and exams were described as aggravating exclusion in a number of ways.

### 6.4.2a Increasing student and teacher stress levels

Teachers described the pressures of exams as having a number of negative effects on students and teachers, which were suggested as aggravating the likelihood for exclusion. In each school, there were teachers who described pressures “*directed at both students and teachers*” to produce results and to raise test scores as have a negative impact on behaviour and attendance. For example, one teacher explained:

In Year 11, you see that tolerance diminished rapidly. Pupils are stressed. Teachers feel the pressure. No one likes it. At our school, we even call it “exam confusion” because students get confused with all the deadlines, the coursework, and the schedule for preparing for exams. Everyone gets aggressive, panicked, and upset . . . and it comes out in pupils’ behaviour and attendance. Pupils, who can’t cope, they act out, they bunk off, they don’t come to school. We try hard not to exclude, we really do, and we try to sympathise with what the pupils must go through.

Another teacher felt that exam pressure made “*some [students] want to give up ... and so then ... exclusion becomes an option for everyone*”. In every school, there were at least several teachers who described the impact of SAT assessments and GCSE pressure as lowering the confidence of students who were struggling academically, such as those special educational needs. One teacher explained that the target of achieving 5 A-C’s made it “*hard for some [pupils] to feel confident and positive about taking exams*”. The rigid timetable of exams and coursework

were also described as providing relatively few options for pupils who missed school, who were absent, or who could not access certain subjects.

#### **6.4.2b Decreasing the tolerance and time for students who need support**

Teachers also described the impact of assessment and exams in terms of their perception and tolerance of students who were experiencing academic difficulties.

One teacher described exam pressure as decreasing the teacher's tolerance for disruptive behaviour, which was perceived as preventing other pupils for learning:

E: Why do you think there are more exclusions now?

T: Because of exam pressure, if you have students who are continually disruptive and are stopping able students from doing well then the easiest way is to ship them on elsewhere!

(Deputy Head, School M)

#### **6.4.2c Lowering and narrowing expectations for students struggling academically**

A number of other teachers described the pressure to meet exam targets as creating a dilemma between "*raising achievement*" and trying to support students who are struggling academically, but required help "*beyond what is currently available*".

One teacher concluded:

Now, if you want to concentrate on raising achievement, at the end of the day, pupils who you can't help, you have to let them go. (Teacher, School S)

The views expressed by teachers in this section points to the belief that the impact of exam and assessment pressure influences exclusion by decreasing teachers'

tolerance for disruption, increasing the disengagement of students who lacked confidence, and lowering teachers' expectations for pupils who are struggling and unlikely to contribute to improving the exam results for teachers.

### **6.4.3 Accountability policies**

The pressures of accountability were also felt and described by teachers to be a factor in exclusion. Teachers linked growing accountability with a pressure to raise exam scores, meet school inspection targets, and maintain or improve their position on league tables. Teachers described two ways in which accountability pressures had increased the likelihood for exclusion:

#### **6.4.3a The marginalisation of “low performing” pupils**

For one teacher, the pressure of having the school's exam (GCSE) and national assessment (SATs) results published on national league tables, translated to as “*a system-wide incentive to exclude pupils who don't perform*”. Another teacher believed that “*league tables give an incentive for heads to exclude pupils ... who are not keeping up and disrupting others*”. One teacher described how pressures to raise exam results resulted in a decision to begin streaming and setting pupils, which “*worked fine for high-achieving kids, [but] was completely disastrous for the low-achieving kids, who felt labelled and worthless*”.

### 6.4.3b Lowering teacher morale

Another teacher described the impact of league tables as dramatically changing the perception within his school, lowering pupils' and staff morale:

I think league tables have been used to brow beat schools, and a school like this ...now sees itself as always being a failing school. We were happy ten years ago knowing that the children that we got, we did a very good job with [but] there has obviously been a mistake ... league tables have put pressure on children terribly ... staff are under pressure to get results.

### 6.4.3c Need for unofficial and strategic exclusions

Teachers cited the pressures of OFSTED inspection, suggesting that exclusion had risen over the past decade because schools had "*no or low tolerance*" for pupils whose behaviour would be perceived as disruptive during an inspection. For example, one teacher said,

There's another angle...because when schools near inspection, they get rid of those kids who are causing problems...I've been at other schools as well...where, even if it's just a week or two to get rid of those who are causing problems...then you have a nice rosy picture when the inspectors come. You can send these pupils to a certain location. And just hide them for a day. Or you can ask them to stay home. And it's done at a number of schools. And officially, whether or not schools call them expulsion, it really is a type of exclusion.

Another teacher attributed a decreased tolerance for disruptive behaviour with the pressure to produce results:

Over the years, I wonder if [student's] behaviour has got more difficult, or if their behaviour has changed over time. I think perhaps it hasn't but I think there is a greater expectation over what we are expected to do. This is to produce results to improve A-C numbers on the GCSE exams, to increase your entry of GCSE results ... that is true.

#### **6.4.4 School choice and local school management**

In each of the four schools, there was at least two teachers who described explicitly the impact of school choice and the local management of schools had aggravated schools' use of exclusion by creating pressures in schools' admissions processes and the allocation of resources.

##### **6.4.4a Pressures to be selective and to achieve a “balanced” student intake**

Teachers suggested that the current policy on school choice and competition, and the “*marketization of schools*” had “*caused schools to be more selective ... turning away and also excluding*” those students “*who did not contribute positively to the school's image*”, One teacher observed an “*unwillingness amongst schools to offer a place to students [who were] previously excluded*”. He explained:

Schools want to be seen as performing. No school wants to be associated with low performance. So the school tries as much as possible ... and the only way we can do that is to get rid of those who in one way or another ... are not allowing it to happen. (Head of Year, School S).

Others described that with school choice, exclusion had become a “*transfer of pupils*” from “*good*” schools to “*bad*” schools. One teacher described that “*better schools had no incentives to retain or keep pupils*” who were “*challenging*” or “*had special needs*” because “*such students represented an additional drain on school's resources and teacher's time*”. Another teacher said, “*There's less time and little interest on the part of a school to devote valuable resources to a pupil who is not performing*”.

Other teachers described that schools that were not fully subscribed “*didn’t have a choice...but to take those pupils who were excluded*”. One explained:

We accept a lot of pupils who come from other schools who may have been excluded or banished from other schools. We take on here and it can cause us problems. Some of these schools have not actually have worked hard with ... the children before excluding them. That is a pressure from these policies, it is a pressure from having to produce results having to appeal to parents, that is certainly there. (Head of Year, School R).

Another teacher concluded: “*At the end of the day, the solution lies with the pupils we take into this school ... we need to be more selective if we want to reduce disruptive behaviour and exclusions*”. One headteacher concluded:

I think nationally, the reason for the increase in exclusions has been parental choice and competition between the schools. That’s been the real reason. When the government introduced parental choice, the idea was that parents could send their children to the school of their choice. They didn’t necessarily have to send them to the neighbourhood schools, which was the traditional way. The government introduced this idea of parental choice with a view to raising standards. Presumably the best schools would get better, and the poor schools would be disgraced and go out of existence if no one chose to go to them. But it’s not quite as simple as that because schools don’t actually go out of existence. But certainly, the good schools got better, and the poor schools generally got worse.

Exclusions, as I saw it, certainly working in a school outside an inner city, was a tool which heads were able to use to purify their schools... in the worse form of purification. So if there were difficult children who were causing discipline problems in the school, this was an easy way out for them. If a school was seen by the parents as one where they just excluded difficult children, their status went even higher. If the children saw that children were being excluded, then there was also greater emphasis on behaving, so they stayed in that school. There’s no question in my mind that schools used this as a ploy to become more popular... because they’ve gotten rid of themselves of difficult children. And once you’ve permanently excluded a child, okay, the parents can appeal, it’s difficult for those children to get back in.

Now I believe that the number of exclusions went up dramatically with choice because it wasn’t in schools’ interest to have too many difficult

children. Now, no one would ever admit that, but that's what actually happened. Everybody says that the reason that exclusions have gone up is because children have gotten naughtier. It's nonsense. Children have always been naughty. And okay, there's changing standards and changing way of life, but children in Victorian times were naughty and up to terrible pranks. Maybe the sort of imagination of children has got greater, but I'm not a great believer to believe that children have gotten naughtier, I think they've gotten more challenging, not necessarily naughtier.

#### **6.4.4b Pressures in the allocation of time and resources**

Teachers also suggested that the local management of schools was linked to exclusion by influencing how schools prioritised and allocated resources, thereby affecting the support available to students at risk of exclusion. Whilst several teachers perceived the LEA's devolution of funding and staff as having provided some benefits, such as "*more staff to be brought in*" and "*more resources to support pupils;*" others believed that the local management of schools had created "*a negative view*" of students with difficulties and increased likelihood for exclusion because "*additional funds could quickly be used up*". One teacher explained,

If you don't have enough resources in your budget to support those pupils with enormous needs ... and you're faced with needing a new roof or copier ... then it may be easier to exclude and let the LEA handle it.... sometimes you have to exclude so that the pupil can have access to the range of services and support provided by the LEA. (Teacher, School R)

#### **6.4.5 Emerging theme: The confluent pressures of policy**

For a number of teachers, the rise in exclusions during the last decade linked directly with specific national policies, but nearly every teacher described the "*increased pressures*" on schools and the "*demands*" on teachers and students, pointing a set of confluent constraints on the practices of schools. Nearly every

teacher linked the constraints they felt with the pressures from national policy, which teachers frequently associated with “*the government*” or also referred to as “*the system*”.

Current policies aimed at raising standards and improving performance were “*not the solution*” according to one teacher, but “*part of the problem*”:

Over the years, the government has been less supportive. All they are talking about is raising achievement. The facilities are not there. We don't have planning time. Class sizes are very very high. A lot of demands are made on us in terms of rigorous assessments, continuous assessments. There are so many statutory things you have to do. That itself, takes a lot of time. The most critical thing[s] are performance-related pay ...[and] the league tables.

In being asked to describe the national policy climate, teachers suggested that the pressures of national policies had an overall negative impact in terms of 1) having less time; 2) raising results and being discouraged from spending too many resources and time on pupils less likely to achieve the national target of 5 A-C'.

It is a complex issue... there aren't any simple answers...a lot of people will say, well, it's the pressures on schools...the league tables...trying to recruit a balanced intake...pressures from the LEA to improve results, from Ofsted, from everyone, and that has led schools to exclude the students who are preventing them from reaching the targets that have been set. And all of that's true. I don't think you can disassociate the two.

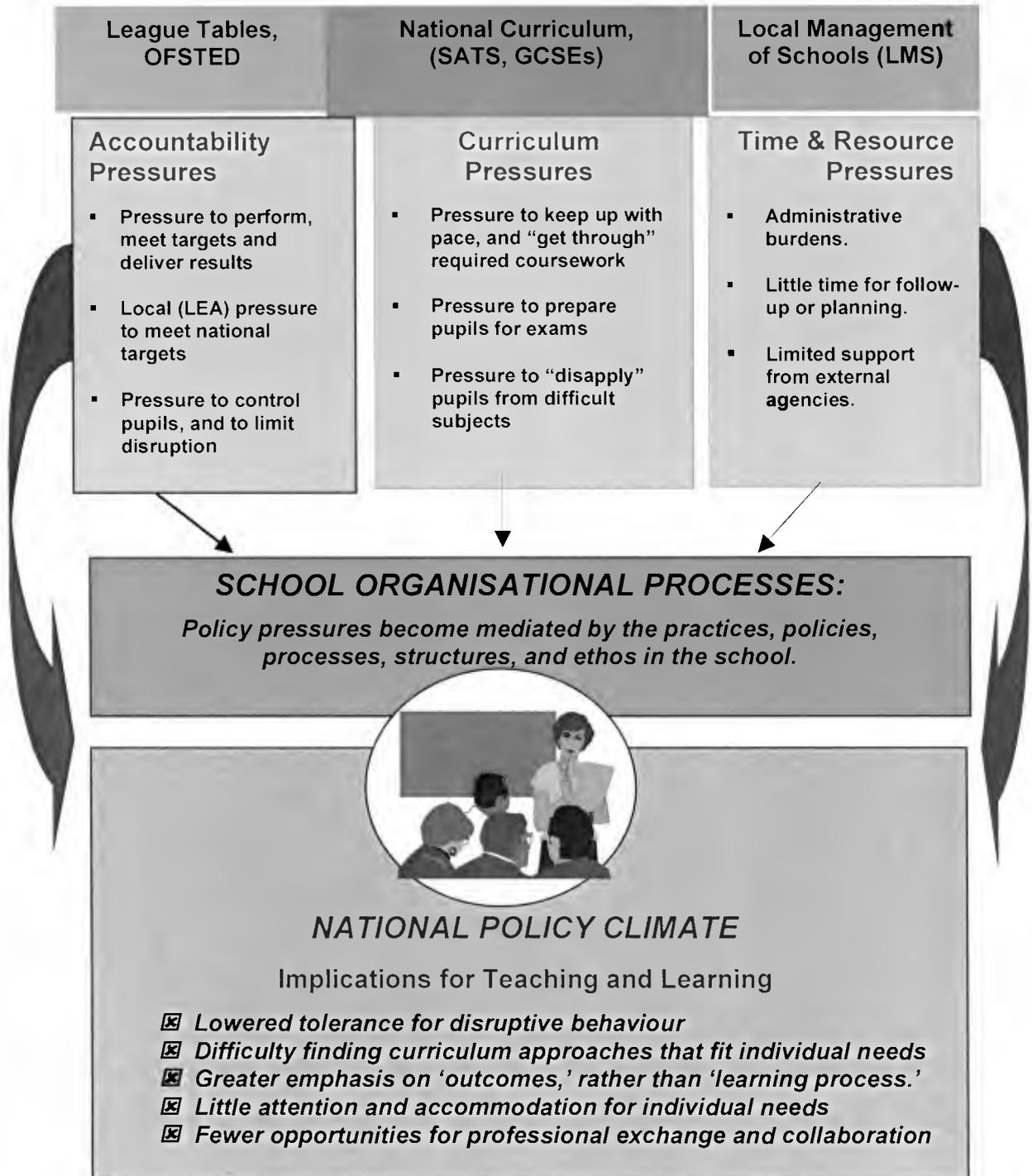
What I noticed, however, is that individual teachers, expressed differing perceptions of the ways in which these pressures affected their practices within their own school. A couple of teachers, for example, suggested that their school enabled the staff to “*resist*” and “*battle against*” the pressures of national policies; other teachers indicated their capacity as having been more directly affected and

constrained. These differences amongst teachers suggest that while the pressures of national policy may be widely perceived as having aggravated the use of exclusion, the actions that teachers take in response to these pressures appears to be mediated and influenced by the conditions within their school. An illustration of how these pressures are linked to exclusion and mediated by schools is suggested in Figure 6.1.

## **6.5 Discussion: Interpreting teachers' constructions of exclusion from school**

Overall, teachers' descriptions of the context in which school exclusion occurs suggest that teachers perceive the causes of exclusion to lie at multiple layers – at the individual student level, at the societal level, at the school level, and at the national policy level. At the individual pupil level, exclusion was most commonly linked to behavioural and academic difficulties. Outside of school, exclusion was most often linked to problems with home and parents. Within the school, teachers described the role of behaviour policy, collegial support from management and teachers, and the availability of a range of individualised supports within the school as key factors which affected how, when, and whether exclusion occurred. At the national policy level, teachers linked the impact of national policies on exclusions by noting, the effects on pupils (e.g. stress from exams), the effects on teachers (e.g. reduced time), and the effects on schools (e.g. incentives to exclude during inspection and to improve performance).

**FIGURE 6.1**  
**Linking the Pressures of**  
**National Policies to School Exclusion**



In short, teachers view exclusion as a complex dynamic that involves and is influenced by the micro-level processes of schooling as well as the macro-level pressures of national policy. Five themes emerged in the analysis of teachers' perceptions:

### **6.5.1 Teachers have multiple explanations**

Teachers appear to view a complex interaction of factors involving the student, the school, and the system as influencing exclusion. The causes of school exclusion do not appear to be viewed by teachers as being solely influenced by pupil and social background factors, but rather were described as also being influenced by a wider set of factors, located at both the school- and national policy-level. Whilst there was an initial tendency amongst teachers to externalise the causes of exclusion, and to perceive a link between social and behavioural “deficits” with behavioural difficulties, very rarely did a teacher limit their interpretations to this single category of factors. Rather, the general view was that individual, family, and social circumstances increased the likelihood for exclusion; but that factors in the school and the system, such as the curriculum and the availability of individualised support, could play a significant role in whether, how, why, and when a pupil was excluded.

### **6.5.2 Layers of context influence each other**

The ways in which teachers described factors at the student, school, and policy level as influencing exclusion suggests that teachers see the school and national policy context as being *connected and interacting*. This was illustrated by teachers'

explanations of how their students' backgrounds could increase the risk of exclusion, but could also be prevented by the level of responsiveness and quality of support within their school. Other teachers, however, suggested that a lack of support within the school created a context, which made it difficult to resist, avoid, or prevent exclusion. According to teachers, a range of factors at the school organisational and policy level influences how they become aware of their students' needs, communicate with their colleagues, and respond through their classroom practices. Across the four schools, the majority of teachers interviewed felt that the rise in exclusion was aggravated by greater demands on their time, a decreased flexibility within the curriculum, and fewer incentives for taking risks and being creative in terms of pedagogy.

### **6.5.3 The school layer is important**

Teachers' descriptions of exclusion point to school organisation as a key influence in how national pressures are interpreted and translated by teachers. The ways in which teachers described the dynamics of school exclusion suggest that teachers' views and experiences in relation to exclusion is influenced by both their school's organisational processes as well as by the pressures of national policies. Teachers' descriptions of their constraints and dilemmas point to a number of ways in which their school influenced how they perceived, interpreted, and implemented national policies. For example, a number of teachers who linked the rise in exclusion with the rigidity and prescriptive nature of the National Curriculum suggested that such pressures made it difficult for individual teachers to adapt the content and structure

of the curriculum with the interests and abilities of students. Others described the impact of external policy pressures to improve exam results, describing the growth in exclusions as a reflection of increasing pressures on schools to minimise both the perception of disruptive behaviour as well as to contain those students who interfered with learning.

#### **6.5.4 Teachers have varying capacities**

Fourth, teachers expressed varying levels of confidence about efforts to resist and prevent exclusion in their school, suggesting that teachers have varying capacities. Although nearly all the teachers described exclusion as necessary; there were major differences between the individual attitudes and beliefs expressed by teachers who suggested that exclusion could be resisted and prevented in their school, and those who felt that the challenges presented by students made exclusion almost inevitable.

Two contrasting pictures of teachers' capacity to resist and prevent exclusion emerged.

- *High-capacity teachers.* These teachers indicated being able to prevent and resist exclusion, which was described in terms of their ability and confidence in responding to their students' needs. These teachers attributed their capacity to their school, indicating high levels of support and communication from their management and colleagues.
- *Low-capacity teachers.* These teachers conveyed a view of exclusion as inevitable and unavoidable, a process and decision that they, as teachers, could do

little to influence or prevent exclusion. These teachers conveyed difficulties coping and responding to their pupils' needs, difficulties that were described as being aggravated by a range of school-based factors, including a lack of support, isolation, and low morale.

The evidence from this part of the study suggests that teachers' efficacy and attitudes within school plays a key role in the capacity to resist and prevent exclusion. Evans' (1999) study of teachers' attitudes toward disruptive behaviour similarly suggested that teachers who believed strongly in the effectiveness of strategies used in their school were more likely to tackle directly problems related to behaviour themselves, rather than to refer problems internally to management. By contrast, teachers who may be demoralised and lack support within the school are more likely to have a lowered capacity, one indication being a low "self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1986), thereby decreasing a teacher's individual willingness, confidence, and capability to cope not only with the uncertainties of classrooms (Raudenbush et al, 1992), but to respond to the challenges and needs of his or her students. Such studies, in finding that an individual's beliefs influence action, contributes to the thesis that the school in which a teacher works influences how they perceive and respond to their students.

#### **6.5.5 Schools and national policies can constrain or enable teacher capacity**

Teachers' views about exclusion appeared to be influenced by their experience in their school. That teachers' views about exclusion varied from individual to

individual was not so interesting, given my view of how human beings individually construct and view reality. However, what was interesting was that the perceptions of individual teachers seemed to vary according to the school. The extent to which teachers felt that they were able to prevent exclusion, seemed to depend on their perceptions and attitudes about their own school, pointing to school organisation as a key influence in how teachers manage the constraints and dilemmas associated with national policy.

In all four schools, teachers expressed common concerns about the impact and continuing influence of national policy in aggravating the context in which exclusion had risen. At the same time, however, teachers' views about their capacity to prevent and resist exclusion seemed to be influenced by their views of and experiences within their school context. In particular, teachers who had a critical and negative view of their school described themselves as powerless, constrained, and accepting of the inevitability of exclusion; whereas teachers who described the features of their school's organisational context as being highly effective described feeling more enabled.

In linking the impact of national policy to school exclusion and describing the influence of their school on their beliefs and practices, we gain a better sense of the different levels at which teachers view their role and responsibility in relation to exclusion. On one level, teachers defined their role in term of being able to interpret and understand their students' needs, describing the importance of

responding and supporting those students who were perceived as being at risk of exclusion. On another level, teachers defined their role vis-à-vis their school, pointing to a collective capacity to resist the policy pressures to exclude. Here again, however, the extent to which individual teachers assessed their ability and confidence to prevent and avoid exclusion, seemed to depend on their perceptions, attitudes, and efficacy within their school. To illuminate further the influence of school context on exclusion, I thus explored further the ways in which specific aspects of school organisation mediated how teachers view and use exclusion. These findings are discussed in Chapter Seven.

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## ***CHAPTER SEVEN***

### **Exploring the Organisational Contexts of High- and Low-Excluding Secondary Schools**

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#### **7.0 Chapter overview**

This chapter reports the findings from an ethnographic multi-case study of four English secondary schools. These case studies sought to illuminate the organisational differences between high- and low-excluding schools, and to explore the ways in which differences contributed to the context in which exclusion could be resisted and prevented by teachers.

- The first case study describes “School L”, a large, ethnically diverse secondary school with over 1,000 pupils located in an inner city area of Southeast England, a school with one of the highest levels of social deprivation in the country. At the time of the study, School L had not permanently excluded any pupils since 1993.
- The second case study describes “School M”, a small, ethnically diverse secondary school with less than 500 students and high levels of social disadvantage located in an urban area of North England. Like School L, School M had a low incidence of exclusion and permanently excluded five pupils between 1998 and 2001.
- The third case study describes “School R”, a medium-size secondary school located in the same town as School M with similarly high levels of social disadvantage, but less diverse and with a significantly higher rate of exclusion.

- The fourth case study focuses on “School S”, a school located in the same inner city as School L with similarly high levels of social disadvantage but with a greater proportion of Afro-Caribbean students and a higher incidence of exclusion.

The selection of the case studies schools was made partly, on the basis of their exclusion rates and their level of social disadvantage; and partly out of convenience in that all four schools were located in areas where I worked as a research officer and therefore could readily visit. A profile of each of four schools is provided in Table 7.1

	<i>School L</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>School M</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>School R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>School S</i> <sup>1</sup>
Location	Southeast England	North England	North England	Southeast England
NOR	1922	454	614	820
% FSM	44%	50%	61%	63%
% SEN	30%	44%	40%	43%
% Ethnic minority	66%	49%	11%	50%
Number of permanent exclusions between 1997 and 2001	0	5	33	24
Data source: <sup>1</sup> Obtained from OFSTED report (School L, 1999/00; School R, 2000/01) <sup>2</sup> Obtained from LEA, based on 1998/99				

The findings discussed in this chapter draw primarily upon data collected through fieldwork, which comprised: 1) interviews and informal conversations with senior

management, teachers,<sup>1</sup> students, and other support staff; 2) observations during school visits, school assemblies, staff meetings, and classroom lessons; 3) school policy documents and curriculum materials; including school profile and exclusion data obtained from the school, the LEA, and government agencies (e.g. DfES, and OFSTED). To protect the identity of the respondents, all the names used in the case studies are pseudonyms.

This investigation was aimed at examining further the implications of the findings reported in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, which found 1) that schools do indeed differ in their exclusion rates, 2) that differences in exclusion rates are not fully explainable by pupil factors, and 3) that the policies, structures, cultures, processes, and supports in a school play an important and profound role in how schools use exclusion. This chapter reports findings from case studies of two high-excluding and two low-excluding secondary schools to illuminate how differences in exclusion might be explained by differences in organisational practices.

The conceptual framework for these school case studies was informed partly by the investigations carried out in Chapter Five, through which I established the basis for examining school differences, and partly by the emerging analysis of teacher interview data as reported in Chapter Six. The five key areas of school organisation which I examined in each school included: (1) leadership and management; 2) staff

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<sup>1</sup> The teacher interviews conducted as part of the investigation reported in Chapter 7, which were conducted with teachers in each of these four schools were analysed on a school-by school basis for the investigation.

communication and interaction; 3) behaviour and discipline policies; 4) support for pupils and teachers; and 5) the school's goals, ethos, and vision. These five areas influenced how I organised, analysed, and reported the evidence in this chapter.

This chapter is organised into six sections. Section 7.1 explains how the data was analysed. Sections 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, and 7.5 report evidence from fieldwork conducted in School L, School M, School R, and School S, respectively. Section 7.6 considers the differences between the higher-excluding schools (School R and School S) and the lower-excluding schools (School L and School M), and considers the implications for theorising the relationship between school organisation and the national policy context in which exclusion occurs.

## **7.1 Analysis of data**

In analysing the data from each of the schools, I sought to:

- 1) compare the similarities and differences between the high and low-excluding schools;
- 2) understand and illuminate the different contexts in which school exclusion occurs; and
- 3) raise implications about the ways in which schools mediate the pressures that teachers feel can aggravate the use and need for exclusion.

A conceptual map of how the data I collected mapped on to my analysis is shown in Table 7.2.

<b>Source &amp; method of data collection</b>	<b>Method of analysis</b>	<b>Area of school organisational context illuminated by data</b>	<b>Focus of analysis</b>	<b>Link to research question</b>
Teacher interview	Content analysis	Teachers' views about the role and influence of school vis-à-vis exclusion	Features of school that aggravates, prevents exclusion  Effects of school organisation and national policies on teacher capacity	1, 2, 3
Observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lessons</li> <li>▪ Meetings</li> <li>▪ Assemblies</li> <li>▪ Pupil shadow</li> </ul>	Content analysis	Interactions and relationships amongst and between teachers and students.  Application of school-based policies (e.g. behaviour and discipline) and systems for support.  Communication and interpretation of expectations for students and teachers.	Ways in which schools mediate pressures of policy  Ways in which schools support or constrain teacher capacity	1, 2, 3
School documents: Homework diary Prospectus Behaviour policy	Document analysis	School policy on exclusion, behaviour, and discipline.  Goals and expectations for students and teachers.	School's interpretation of national policy	1, 2, 3

The process of analysing data followed a number of stages:

- *Stage 1 - Analysis of interview data.* The first stage of my analysis focused on the data generated through the teacher interviews. In conducting this analysis for the case study, I returned to the data and organised it by school. Here I attempted to examine how teachers, in each school, viewed exclusion. How did they conceptualise its causes? Did they describe it as a process, which their school was able to prevent? Second, I asked how did the teachers in each school identify factors in the school, which either prevented or aggravated

exclusion? Third, I asked how did teachers describe their capacity, in relation to the impact of national policy?

- *Stage 2 – Analysis of observational data.* The second stage of my analysis examined the data generated through my observations and interactions in the school and gathered through school documentation. Because of my goals and my conceptual stance, I did not attempt to analyse the material to generate numerical data. Rather, I recorded observations in a field note journal, through which I kept a record of what occurred during school visits. The analysis of my field notes was generally guided by the themes and issues generated by the teacher interview data. This analysis of material included 1) notes from my conversations and observations, 2) quotes and comments made by staff and students during the pupil shadow, 3) questions that were raised during the visits, 4) a range of witnessed behaviour, events, and activities.
  
- *Stage 3 – Analysis of school documentation.* A third stage of my analysis included a review of the school policy documents and materials provided to me by the school. This analysis of the school documents and materials focused on: 1) the school's stated goals and policies, specifically how expectations were defined for pupil; 2) the composition and roles of the staff; 3) description of student intake (total enrolment, percentage of pupil from ethnic minority background percentage of pupils on free school meals and with SEN); 4) documentation; on exclusions. I also used OFSTED inspection reports, which I obtained online to provide a profile of the school's student intake.
  
- *Stage 4 - Constructing a "pen portrait" of each school.* For the fourth stages of my analysis, I examined the data on a school-by-school basis and constructed a rich pen portrait of each school (Marble et al, 1996), bringing together evidence to illuminate the processes, beliefs, conditions, structures, and practices that appeared to influence how teachers viewed and responded to their pupils. As such, these pen portraits focused on describing five elements of the school's

organisational setting: 1) leadership and management; 2) staff culture and communication; 3) behaviour and disciplinary policies; 4) structures for supporting teachers and students; and 5) school ethos. These elements were partly generated by the data from teacher interviews and partly defined by my review of the literature and theorisation of school organisational setting, as discussed in Chapter Three.

- *Stage 5 - Comparing the differences and similarities between schools.* The fifth and final stages of my analysis – aimed at generating theories about the role and influence of the school’s organisational setting in relation to school exclusion – involved a comparison between the schools, on the basis of their exclusion rates and practices. This comparison focused on the organisational differences between the two schools that were high excluding and those that were low excluding.

The overall goal of my analysis was aimed at illuminating the role of school organisation as part of the multi-layered context of exclusion and generating theories about the relationship between teacher capacity, school organisation, national policies, and school exclusion.

## **7.2 The Case of School L**

### **7.2.1 Background**

I first learned about School L at an educational conference on school inclusion, which I attended in Spring 1999. The headteacher of the school was facilitating a workshop that I attended. During her presentation, she explained that the school had not permanently excluded pupils for the past five years, since 1993. Interested,

I approached her afterwards and told her about the study I was embarking upon, and asked whether it might be possible to arrange a visit to the school to help gain a sense of the issues I hoped to explore. She agreed and following a meeting and visit to school in July 1999, she formally agreed to participate in the study. Between July 1999 and November 2000, I made four visits to the school.

School L is a very large, ethnically diverse, co-educational, comprehensive school located in an inner-city suburb of a major metropolitan city in Southeast England. The school is located in an urban residential area and surrounded by school fields and comprises several multi-level large buildings connected by a series of walkways. In 1999/2000, the school enrolled nearly 2,000 pupils, with a 121 teaching staff and 59 administrative and learning support staff. In 2000/01, approximately 44% of the pupils were eligible for free school meals, 30% had special educational needs, and 1271 pupils spoke English as an additional language. In 2000, the school was awarded Beacon status.

### **7.2.2 A “fluid and non-hierarchical” management culture**

The school has been under the leadership of headteacher, Victoria Winters since 1992. Victoria says that when she was appointed head, the school was “already seen by the community as a good school”, but that she felt the structures for supporting teachers “needed to be linked and improved”:

I didn't feel there were the structures in place for supporting the staff. There was a reasonably good pastoral system .... Good department system... but the two weren't linked ... they were very separate.... And so there was very little teamwork in my view ...lots of individuals ... And so I

felt like a lot of what teachers could give wasn't being tapped... Also structures didn't allow younger staff to make the steps up within the school, so we lost good young staff very early... good ones ... because there weren't the career opportunities.

Victoria described her first year as head as “doing simple things ... like making physical changes ... creating a parents' room and changing the reception area ... and working with the staff to figure out “what are the things that we need to do as a school”. Victoria also reflected on her first years as important for building “a vision for the school”. She talked, for example, about the task and of “engaging staff and involving students” to create a school development plan, which she said, “had been sitting in a file drawer before I came”.

Victoria describes her leadership style as “fluid, not hierarchical” and her decision-making and planning approach as “organic, dynamic, and evolving”. Victoria also spoke positively about the senior management team, praising the hard work of teachers, and frequently describing their way of working as “team-oriented”. Bob, the deputy headteacher, described Victoria as a “strong leader” [who] encouraged staff to take on responsibilities”. Bob explained, “[Her] secret is planning ahead [and] she expects a great deal from her senior management team”.

When I first met and interviewed the headteacher in 1999, it was her eighth year as head. She described herself and the school as “constantly evolving” and said “I'm always thinking about what's next”. One of these decisions that Victoria talked with me about was the organisation into the school into upper and lower schools, which

she explained, “I’ve been mulling over for a while ... as a way of flattening the hierarchy ... and improving communication... within the staff”.

### **7.2.3 A supportive staff where there is “always someone to go to”**

Teachers described their staff culture as “supportive”, “team-orientated”, and “highly able”, – pointing to structures and describing practices in the school that contributed to a supportive staff culture. A few teachers, including the headteacher, described the role of *senior teachers* as helping to support teachers’ skills and practices in the classroom, particularly for teachers experiencing difficulties with classroom management. “They will work with a struggling teacher”, described one teacher, “in a supportive way”. She went on to detail the support provided to first-year, or Newly Qualified Teachers, emphasising the need for beginning teachers to “have lots of support”. She further explained that in the school, “NQTs don’t cover and have one less period to teach”.

Victoria described senior teacher position as a way of “recognising a teacher for his or her experience, leadership, and expertise”. She described senior teachers as “critical friends” to teachers who needed mentoring and support in the classroom. Victoria described her working relationships with the staff in positive terms, but admitted, at times, “having its challenges”. She cited her first years as headteacher as example, explaining, “Some wanted to be told ... others were enthusiasts... there was a middle group of cynics”. As a result, Victoria explains, “some [teachers] left of their own volition, others changed, others were encouraged to stay”.

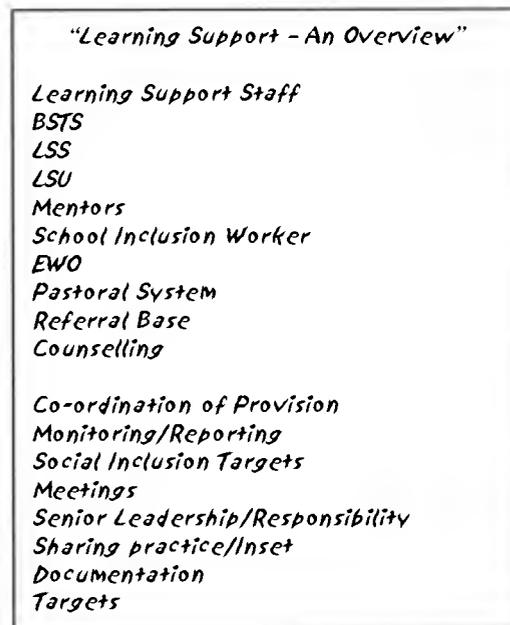
Victoria believes that the key to improving the school was encouraging staff involvement. “I put a lot of emphasis on staff development”, Victoria said, in describing her first years as head of the school. Bob alluded to staff communication across departments and years being a challenge “because of the school’s large size”; however, this did not appear to be a problem according to teachers, who described a range of informal and formal systems for communicating. Teachers interviewed described the communication about pupils as being “constant” and “intense”. One said, “If you want to find out about a pupil, there is always someone, sometimes, several teachers you can go to”.

According to the head, there is a mixture of teaching styles and cultures: “Everything from traditional to adventurous”. She describes the current staff as “committed, confident, and consistent”, and explained that “the key is having respect for students” and “allowing students to have a voice”.

#### **7.2.4 Support where “everything is connected”**

Ava, the Special Needs Co-ordinator, and Simon, the Head of Behaviour Support described the school as operating a “multi-layered” network of learning support. In explaining the specific structures in place, Ava showed me a piece of paper on which she had been scribbling notes. (See Figure 7.1)

**Figure 7.1**  
**Student Support in School L:**  
**“Everything is connected”**



“Every pupil is going to need different things”, explained Ava, “and so we have to rely on these strategies to provide support”, pointing to a piece of paper labelled *LEARNING SUPPORT: AN OVERVIEW*, which is shown in Figure 7.1. As we spoke, Ava drew arrows in between the various elements, describing how “everything is connected”. She drew lines between BSTS (behaviour support teachers), LSU, and LSS (learning support), explaining that “Sam works closely with Learning Support”, and drawing another line, “and they work with me to co-ordinate the provision”. She then went on to explain how information was passed between teachers through written memos and reports, and named specific teachers who were responsible for monitoring and evaluating the pupil’s progress.

Another characteristic of the school's support was the use of multiple strategies and combined approaches so that support was "individualised" explained one teacher, and "not one size fits all". Other teachers described using a "range of resources" and "putting together different pieces", which "depended on the needs of the child".

During one visit, I met with a group of teachers who discussed the role that peer support played within the school, describing how they, as a staff, encouraged pupils to "support each other" as a way of preventing exclusion. The deputy head joined in, providing an account of "one young man who's now in the Upper School who when he first joined us had lots of behavioural difficulties." He explained that, "[The pupil] couldn't cope with authority ... [and] was getting into difficulty with other students", describing how "encouraging the pupil" to help students with special needs "gave him the opportunity to show his other side, the caring side of his personality".

He's acknowledged himself that had [the school] not gone down that road, he probably would have ended up excluded from school, or in trouble with the police. (Deputy Headteacher).

The school's system for supporting pupils with difficulties was not explained in terms of a formal mechanism, set of procedures, or forms that needed to be filled out and given to senior managers. Rather, teachers described support as being activated through a range of communication pathways. What could be ascertained from interviews was that difficulties that arose with pupils were brought to the attention of the Head of Year, through whom the school's senior management team

was made aware of the problem. From here, a team of teachers, usually comprised the pupil's form tutor, learning support, and a specialist teacher then developed an individualised strategy.

### **7.2.5 The approach to discipline and behaviour: "It's about values"**

In describing the school's behaviour and discipline policy, teachers described the approach as "being about values", "respect", and "involving students". In reflecting on the evolution of the school's approach to behaviour, Victoria described the school's approach and policies as being about "self-discipline", distinguishing between the "kind of behaviour [that was] rule-based" and behaviour defined in terms of values and expectations:

I think behaviour here was okay ... I think it has always been a place where youngsters behaved because there were structures and because there were expectations ... it was okay, but it was about behaving in a way because we're told to do that...rather than behaviour that is about "This is what we all do here. We all understand it, we all must take part in it".

She explained, "There's a feeling that expectations here, largely, are ones we can subscribe to ... and that they're about self-discipline... rather than like, discipline where one is told that [the pupil] is misbehaving. The idea is more and more to behave in a way because that's the expectation". Victoria described a school-based view of behaviour, adding, "If you say, 'How does a [School L] student behave?' They should be able to tell you!"

Victoria also explained that in developing policies, the school sought to involve pupils and parents:

One of the things we did early on was look at the behaviour policy together. Students played a part in that and so did parents...we actually brought them in to sit down and to look at the behaviour policy. And so our policy actually reflected the views of the different groups. So the youngsters have a feeling, like, they've been part of that process.

Several teachers in the school similarly indicated that policies for behaviour were "always being continually looked at for improvement" and "evolving". According to Victoria, "We revisit them every year to see if they are working", adding, "Obviously we have to revisit it because as time moves on, it's a different group of youngsters". Very little was said by staff and senior management about specific procedures or policies for dealing with disruptive pupils. Little mention was also made about the types of sanctions or punishments used in the school. Instead, what was described by the staff and observed in the classrooms were the systems in place for supporting teachers and pupils.

In enquiring about the grounds for exclusion, the views offered by individuals suggested a strong consensus that behaviour, which might be considered verbally abusive or physically violent, did not constitute automatic grounds for exclusion.

We haven't excluded anybody permanently for many years ... I think it's about four years now....we don't have a non-exclusion policy. We will exclude if necessary. But we prefer to find alternatives and we've been successful at doing that so far. The governors are fully behind that approach. And it's very evident that the entire teaching staff behind that approach as well (Bob, Deputy Headteacher)

When I asked Victoria about the school's apparent success in preventing exclusion, Victoria explained the school's apparent success in preventing exclusion in terms of strategies and procedures to prevent escalation of the problem:

I think that when it comes to exclusion ... schools can forget to build in systems for supporting teachers. [When] a problem arises between a pupil and teacher, and there is little in the way of support for them to work through the problem and find a solution ... the problem [then] goes straight to the head or senior management... He or she is put in the position of having to then do something drastic. Exclusion happens because the problem escalates too quickly.

Victoria, however, believed that exclusion was necessary for problems that "threatened the community", citing an example of a pupil who been excluded for dealing drugs. The deputy headteacher said: "We don't have a non-exclusion policy. We will exclude if necessary".

### **7.2.6 A school ethos where "there is room for all"**

The staff of School L spoke with pride in describing the school as an inclusive school, where "success is celebrated" and "pupils and staff are given recognition for their work". According to Bob, the School M takes a concerted attempt to provide pupils with opportunities to participate in the school:

There's very much an ethos that this is an inclusive school ... We say there is room for all... We try to make sure that every child gets some kind of opportunity. We don't reserve special treatment for youngsters that have difficulties. If you look in our entrance hall, you'll see the variety of things that our youngsters are involved in... We very much try, when we have a special occasion or an important visitor, we make a deliberate effort to find new youngsters to get involved. There are some youngsters that we will use repeatedly. We don't use the same group over and over again. Some of those youngsters identified with emotional and behaviours difficulties, we make a point to welcome visitors and to give them a tour. We also try to

pick out the other youngsters who may be shy or very quiet and are just getting along. We try and give them an opportunity to shine.

Teachers referred to a number of ways in which they sought through activities and the curriculum to “give students a voice”. I observed, as an example, pupil-led debates during one English lesson and also during a school-wide assembly about a similar theme: the dilemmas and ethics of euthanasia. In asking one teacher about how the topic was chosen, she explained that “we came up with some current topics that we thought would interest our pupils”. I then recalled a comment that Victoria made during one of our informal conversations which I had written in my field journal, “Students love to debate issues”, she said, “It helps [pupils] to develop participation and interest about what’s happening in the real world”.

### **7.2.7 Discussion**

Victoria attributed the school’s ability to resist exclusion to a range of factors within the school, identifying the school’s strongest assets as the staff (who she described as “committed” and working “incredibly hard”); its physical and fiscal resources (“because we’re a large school we have a lot of resources”); and students (“they come from diverse background, our diversity is our strength”). School L has a vibrant community ethos with a highly motivated staff. Teachers’ skills, experiences, and potential are reflected in the staffing structures and positions. The school’s ethos is aimed at fostering diversity, encouraging student participation, and promoting collective responsibility. Behavioural expectations are described in relation to values, beliefs, and expectations, rather than in terms of conduct. The

school operates a complex, multi-layered network of structures aimed at providing internal support to individual pupils and teachers. The school's senior management team engenders a team-based approach – systems for supporting pupils are dependent on staff collaboration across and within teams of teachers. Staff describe the school's headteacher as having a strong vision and delegating style of leadership. The headteacher describes herself as a non-hierarchical manager who thinks continuously about ways to improve the school.

## **7.3 The Case of School M**

### **7.3.1 Background**

School M was identified as a another school with a low incidence of exclusion, which I noted when examining the school exclusion rates and patterns of one LEA and the investigation conducted in Chapter Five.<sup>2</sup> Despite having high levels of deprivation and a significant percentage of pupils with SEN, the school was amongst the lowest-excluding schools in the area. I thus enquired about the school with the LEA's exclusion policy officer and also an LEA school adviser. Both suggested that the school would be a "good" school to study in terms of its practices and strategies for preventing exclusion. A headteacher at a school in London where I piloted my questionnaire and interviews also recommended the school. She knew the headteacher of School M and offered to facilitate contact, which I then followed up with a personal letter and phone call. After a meeting and visit with the headteacher in October 1999, she formally agreed to participate in the study.

School M is a small, co-educational, comprehensive school situated in the outskirts of a small urban town located in North England. In 1999-2000, the school had a staff of 12 teachers and enrolled approximately 461 students. During that time, 48% of the students were eligible for free school meals, 34% had special educational needs, and 86.5% were from ethnic minority backgrounds. According to the LEA's records, the school had 1 permanent exclusion in 1997/98; 1 in 1998/99, and 1 in 1999/2000. The school's grounds formerly belonged to a church. The school is located on the edge of a park in a largely residential area.

### **7.3.2 Leadership & management: “We value highly our own processes”**

The headteacher, Karen, was in post from 1993 to 2001. One of the Heads of Year, Marvin, described Karen as “someone who knows how to bring out the best in you”. During our interview in 1999 and also in her statement, she described having a “strong team”. She was described by one of her deputy headteachers as someone who likes to delegate, yet “strategic about when and with whom she does this”. “She never fails to appreciate”, said one teacher, citing an occasion when she received a thank-you note from the head: “[The headteacher] wrote, “I realise how hard you are working and wanted to say how much I appreciate it”. Very positive views about Karen emerged from the staff. She was described as “sweet”, “respectful”, “a good leader”, “a good mentor”, and “a very capable manager”.

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<sup>2</sup> In Chapter Five, this school is also identified as “School 21” (See discussion in Section 5.2.3.a, p. 150).

Following one of my visits, Karen mailed me a document with a note that read, “I think you might find this interesting for your research into the school”. The document was a written statement that Karen prepared and wrote in 1998, following an OFSTED inspection in which she wrote, “The school was in a very vulnerable position.....We were at the bottom on the local and national league tables...however, I knew that the quality of teaching and learning was good”. On my next visit to the school, I asked Karen about the statement she sent me, in which she had also written,

The School Development Plan is the vehicle for promoting and co-ordinating whole school development and improvement. The School Vision statement, which was agreed by staff, parents, governors and pupils in 1994 and has recently been reviewed and re-endorsed by staff, summarises our aims

“Well, a key step in improving the school”, Karen explained, “was developing a school vision that reflected the views not just of staff, but of the wider community”. In describing the school’s approach to raising achievement, subsequent interviews with Karen, as well as her statement, emphasised and confirmed her beliefs about the importance of a student-centred approach and focusing on the individual needs of pupils. For example, in her 1998 statement, she wrote:

Whilst we have responded to recent external requirements for target setting, we value highly our own processes for identifying individual potential and promoting individual achievement. The process of monitoring and analysing individual and whole school performance and progress has been significant in promoting individual achievement. The fact that we are a small school has enabled us to analyse by potential and outcome more easily.

The value that staff placed in the headteacher's individual and small team approach in the school was further revealed by staff members in interviews who described the benefits of being a teacher in a small school as "having management [who you] could always go to and see on a day to day basis" and "who supported you as a member of a team and recognised your strengths and potential as an individual".

### **7.3.3 Staff culture: "You are never alone"**

Karen described the school's staff culture as "very supportive", a view also expressed by a number of teachers. One Head of Year explained:

We are all professionals and we can help each other. We all bring different things. It is about the ethos of the school that is drummed in all the time. I think Karen brought out the value in everyone, and the praise.

Karen praised her staff for their competence and ability to work as a team: "We have a number of staff who have been here many years who are extremely skilled and who give a huge amount of support to the staff who are new". A staff list showed nearly all of the teachers to have a leadership role and additional responsibilities in the school. For example, one of the teachers I interviewed was not only the Head of Year, but also Head of Geography, and Senior Pastoral Tutor. He was also being trained to be part of the Senior Management Team. When I asked Karen about her view on teachers having multiple responsibilities, she replied, "I can't afford not to!"

The staff room was cited by a number of staff as a key area for teacher support and communication... Indeed, during my visits to the school, I observed teachers enquiring about individual pupils or others describing a meeting with parents in a purposive and professional way. Teachers who described the staff room as “a great place to be”. One English teacher described the staff room as a place where “you can always find someone who will listen”. An NQT said, “You can share ideas and get help”. A Head of Department said that in the staff room,

You are never alone ... In some schools, you'd never say I had a horrible lesson. But it's okay to say that here. Colleagues will ask you why.... Did you try this.....

Even the most senior teachers described the staff room as a place of refuge. One teacher of 10 years said, “Even today I went in and said, “I can't take this. Am I in the right job? I feel I'm boring. What's happening?” She went on to explain that in the staff room teachers are not afraid to be open and frank, and to ask for help. “It helps the new teachers, I think, to see us struggling sometimes”.

In asking Karen about how School M meets the needs of its pupils, a majority of whom have special needs, Karen pointed to the staff's expertise as a key factor, which she then linked with the professional expectations and culture of the school:

E: With such a high proportion of SEN pupils... how do you think that affects the staff? Do you have to do things differently?

K: Yes. I think our staff are exceptionally skilled...at dealing with individual needs.. and I think that's something that's developed... because you have to.

E: Do they get special training? How do you nurture that ability?

K: I don't know. That's a difficult question. I don't think that we actually set out to nurture that ability.... it's part of the brickwork. It's part of the school. It's part of the way staff support each other.

E: Do you mean it's part of the expectation? Part of the professional culture?

K: Yes, yes. Yes it is. If you're faced with a huge complexity of needs .. that's the issue I think. If you're going to move those pupils on.. you've got to deal with individual needs. And we have a number of staff who have been here many years who are extremely skilled and who give a huge amount of support to the staff who are new. But I think it's a question of...two things, I think. Professional pride – that you're doing what you should be doing for your children. And it's also about survival. Because if you didn't couldn't deal with those needs, then you wouldn't know how to cope in the classroom. The children would make their own statement about the fact that their needs weren't being dealt with . And that's when things start to break down.

A pupil receiving support through the school's in-school counselling programme described the school as “a place where people care”, his teachers as “patient”, “caring”, and “wanting to help...even when they're busy”. Many used the words “supportive” and “positive” in describing the staff culture, but also observed that “the demands on staff are high” and “relentless”. One teacher said that the past several years, “It has been push, push, push”. Another teacher, a Head of Year, explained, “You cannot afford, as a teacher here, to do the same thing over and over. You must always be on your feet, encouraging the kids, changing your style. Communication within the school was described by teachers as “constant” and between senior management as “mostly informal”.

#### **7.3.4 Approach to discipline: “Trying to understand, rather than punish”**

When asked how the staff at School M attempted to prevent exclusions, teachers described a range of classroom- and teacher-based strategies. They did not describe

or refer to a specific unit, member of staff, or a programme, or specific policy, but continually referred to the relationships amongst staff and students. “It’s part of the brickwork”, said the headteacher. One teacher described the school’s approach to discipline as “trying to understand” rather than “trying to punish”. Another teacher, Sally, observed that teachers “shared similar ideas about behaviour”, saying, “We have a collective approach ... and it’s about how to tailor-make teaching and individualise how you relate to individual pupils”.

Here teachers’ descriptions of the school’s behaviour policies overlapped with their descriptions of strategies for supporting students. Here again, teachers described the policy and approach to behaviour as “focusing on the individual” and “working one-on-one... [both in and] outside the classroom”. Frequently teachers provided their own examples of how they worked with individual pupils. Sally described working with pupils outside of lessons, expressing the importance of “seeing that child outside the context of the lesson”. She smiled, and said, “I give ‘counselling detentions’ ... I talk to [pupils] about what’s wrong ... I ask them ... why is this happening... why did you get angry ....why did you react this way?” The deputy head, Milton, explained,

We have a lot of steps in the process and ... a forgiving nature of the staff. If there is a behavioural problem in that department, we will expect [the teachers in the department] to put in a number of steps themselves. They may make contact with home with a simple letter, saying they are not happy with behaviour. Parents may [or may not] be called in. There may be a departmental detention for bad behaviour. The form tutor will monitor what is happening around the school, and if so, they will step in. They will look at the monitoring sheets. They may then contact the head of year who will take appropriate steps and again, may contact home. If there is a serious incident or a recurring problem, then the next step is that they

would come to me, so I give them another step. They only go to the head if there is going to be an official exclusion. [The headteacher] gets involved when there is an official exclusion. She will occasionally issue a warning but rarely. I will warn the parents and let them know we will exclude.

Other teachers, for example, the Head of Year 10, described classroom practice and pedagogy as being “a very big part” of the school’s approach to dealing with behaviour and supporting pupils.

We have to develop a style and strategy. You have to provide for the individuals in that group and use a style and strategy that is achievable for them, and the majority of staff are doing that. You are aware of the difficulties that you find and you plan the lesson around that.

Other teachers said that before exclusion, they would first attempt a range of supports and interventions, before taking the problem to the headteacher. One teacher, when I asked about how he dealt with a disruptive pupil smiled, and said, “Well, it depends on the pupil .... I treat each pupil differently ... and I think that many of us will turn a blind eye to behaviour that might not be tolerated somewhere else ... but the line is drawn in terms of safety”. A pupil brought to the headteacher’s attention, explained another teacher, was “very serious” and “quite close to being excluded” because “that meant that classroom strategies weren’t working... and we needed to try another approach”. Karen described teachers as “quietly handling problems ... teachers share information about a pupil’s behavioural difficulties ... and that helps everyone to be effective”.

When I asked the headteacher about the use of a pupil referral unit, Karen immediately replied, “I don’t believe in having a referral room”. Karen expressed

that “teachers should take responsibility”, adding, “We don’t believe in just taking a pupil out of class ... if [a pupil] leave[s], [the purpose] is to work on prevention”. Here Karen explained that “to work on prevention” involved a pupil leaving the lesson, but for the purposes of receiving individual help and support, as distinct from being sent out as a form of punishment. I recalled observing, on several different visits and throughout the day, a different pupil working independently in a small room outside the staff room, which was periodically visited by teachers, asking whoever was in the room whether he or she was “alright” or “needed any help”. I had not realised that this room was where pupils were sent when, as one teacher explained, “a pupil needed to take a break from the pressures of the classroom”.

A year later, however Karen told me about plans to use the additional resources from the Pupil Retention Grant to fund an “inclusion unit” and to hire full time, a learning support teacher assigned from the LEA’s “Pupil Referral Service”, whose services were now being devolved directly to school. Karen explained. “We’re lucky, because Liza is good...she’s previously worked effectively with individual staff members and also with groups of pupils. “I’ve always said that I didn’t believe in a referral unit which teachers might come to depend on...but I’ve been thinking and talking with Liza and staff... and we have this money [from the Pupil Retention Grant] and so we’re going to create an “inclusion unit”. Karen described it as “a place where pupils can get additional support”.

### **7.3.5 Supporting teaching & learning: “Information is vital!”**

The structures for supporting teachers and pupils were described in terms of the specific systems in place, such as academic monitoring and counselling, and also in relation to the information that was shared within the school’s small staff. These systems of support and communication appeared to facilitate a school-wide culture which emphasised the importance of understanding pupil’s individual emotional, social, and academic needs.

One example described by staff was that of a school-wide system for monitoring pupils’ progress. Here Karen described, “a monitoring system where every half-term every child is graded according to how hard they work”. She explained, “The grade 1’s get letters [sent home] and they get recognition in assembly. A grade 3 is you’re not working hard enough... you’re not fulfilling your potential”.

What struck me about this was the attempt to emphasise with pupils and parents, the value of effort and progress. More crucially, this measure of learning was individualised and developed by the school. Indeed, during an interview with one of the learning support teachers, Vicky described her work with one boy, explaining and showing me how his progress was monitored and communicated to him. Karen also cited the school’s in-house counselling program as a key part of the support provided to pupils and teachers.

Home visits provided a way for teachers for “finding out about our pupils’ needs”. Another teacher, in describing the home visits conducted by teachers to pupils’ homes, described that “certainly, one the most common opening sentences is asking, ‘Is there anything that is happening at home which might be causing this to go on? Have you noticed a change at home?’ He said that understanding what might be happening at home “doesn’t solve the problem, but if you understand it, you are halfway there!”

Developing individual relationships with students was described by a number of teachers as an essential part of supporting pupils. One geography teacher, in explaining how he differentiated the curriculum, said that “positive relationships between teachers and students were an absolute necessity” in motivating pupils who experienced difficulties in school. He explained:

You must have a relationship one on one. The whole of the curriculum here is based on a relationship with staff and children. If you try hard enough you can build up really positive relationships. If you look at our children, there are many positive relationships with the staff. [The students] are reliant on staff for pastoral help, but we rely on them for their knowledge and understanding that they share with us. It is symbiotic really....

Attempts have been made to make the curriculum different. From a geography point of view ...we can make it relevant to them ... we have got so much to offer ... For instance, one of the subjects I do is about volcanoes and earthquakes and natural hazards. We have children from Monserrat who had experiences firsthand and had been evacuated from a volcano. I gave them the opportunity to share their experiences with us and they could do far better than myself from a textbook.

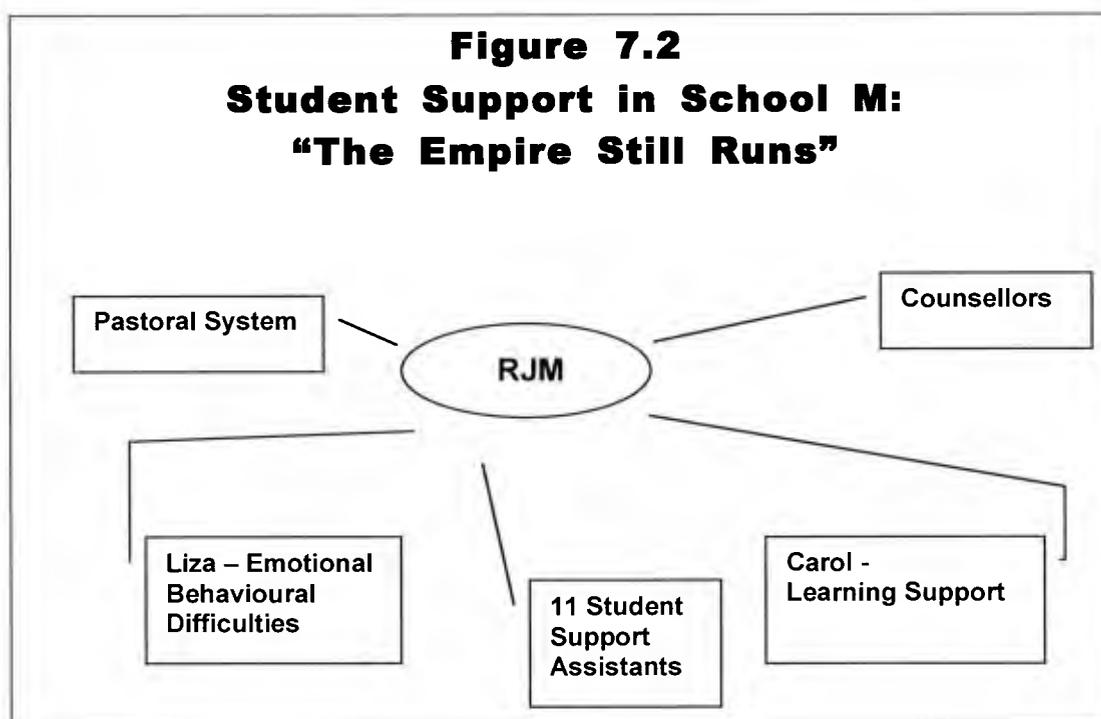
Here, we get the children involved. It is very good. The students have helped each other. Because of their wide range of groups, we can use that to positive effects ... and they have something positive to give.

Differentiation was described by a number of teachers as a way to make learning relevant, according to one teacher, and also helped “to make sure that everyone could succeed”, according to another. During my observations of several lessons – a Design & Technology lesson, a history lesson, and an English lesson – I observed how teachers responded to a pupil who had been absent for nearly three weeks. All three took the pupil aside during the lesson, explaining what she had missed, and what she needed to do to catch up. One teacher, whilst sitting with the pupil, told her the pupil that “she would have to work very very hard”, adding, “but I know you can do it”. The other teachers made similar comments. One said, “You’ve missed a lot, but you’re nearly there”. Another said, “I’ll tell you what you need to do, and if you get stuck, come and see me outside of lesson, during lunch”.

For Karen, the small size of the school was perceived as a key factor in the staff’s ability to provide individual support to pupils. She explained:

I think if we went much bigger we wouldn’t do as good a job .. it is that notion of being a close community, being supported, everybody knowing you ... all of those things play a part in helping pupils to cope....There are all sorts of support systems, but again ... having a small school is a tremendous bonus. So if you’re in a small department with lots of experienced teachers ... that helps. The first point, I think, is that staff first need to feel that they can say that they’re struggling. In a small school, you can find out. Everybody knows that’s it’s difficult... and nobody’s afraid to say, “I’m having difficulty with this child, or I’m having difficulty with that child” ... and that includes me.

During my interview with Bill, the school's Head of Learning Support, I asked about how the school provided support to pupils with difficulties. He drew a diagram on the board, starting with his own role, "RJM":



Bill proceeded to describe how each of the components worked.

B: Now, I could just disappear”, he said, “and it still works. The empire still runs”.

E: Why?

B: Because we are colleagues. We work together. What we do is exchange information. I depend on information. Information is vital!

He described Bob, the co-ordinator of the counselling program, as “an angel who works miracles with the most difficult pupils”. He moved on to describe Carol as being “very strong on administration” and providing “specialised support for special needs pupils”, adding, “but [the] SENCO doesn’t work for everybody ... which is where EMAG and Liza comes in”. Bob then went on to describe what he saw as the potential of other staff members, scribbling other names on the board, and noting in particular one NQT Joanne as a “gifted” new teacher. “Karen saw [Joanne] as a highly able teacher and so we asked her to take on this responsibility. She works with the Kosovan pupils”. He described Liza, the teacher who would help run the new “inclusion unit” as being a new layer of support.

### **7.3.6 School ethos & mission: “We focus on what’s positive”**

In describing the school’s general ethos and culture, teachers described the school’s mission as “encouraging individual pride and success”, “building confidence and self-awareness”, “helping pupils to succeed”, and “creating a culture of praise”. Milton, the deputy headteacher said, “Every opportunity, we will praise. We do get a lot of parents through the door, we may send a letter or ring them up”. One teacher perceived the school’s purpose as “improving one’s self-worth”, and “fostering independence”.

Several teachers also described the school’s mission as building a positive relationship with the community and being “welcoming”, “supportive”, “friendly” and “open” with parents. One teacher said,

We have known families for quite some time ... some [of the teachers] have taught the parents! That is a strong bond. But when a parent is asked to come in and talk about something, if they have not been in the school before, I don't think you can get round the fact that it is going to be a frightening experience because the parents' experiences might not have been positive.

Other teachers described the school's ethos as one of "celebrating progress", and "building on small improvements". One teacher explained that rather than "dwelling on bad results ... we focus on what's positive ... what we have achieved ... our progress". Karen explained, "What we've done is to try and make a achievement acceptable... Something everyone can aim for .. so success is everywhere and you can see yourself reflected".

### **7.3.6 Discussion**

Several distinguishing features and themes emerged in School M, pointing to a number of ways in which a school's organisational culture makes a difference for both teachers and students in the context of exclusion.

- The first was a headteacher whose pedagogical beliefs encouraged an individual-based approach to learning and whose management style also facilitated staff to take on leadership roles and multiple areas of responsibility.
- The second was a team-orientated, highly collaborative, and collegial staff culture which used a range of strategies and structures to integrate specialised resources, such as the counsellors and the teacher assigned from the LEA's Pupil Referral Service to enhance and strengthen the support provided to pupils

in the school. This suggested a staff culture that was also highly adaptive to change, but responded in ways that built upon their own processes.

- The third was a view of pupils as individuals and a conceptualisation of behaviour in which support for learning was integrated and inter-connected.
- The fourth was the school's small size which appeared to facilitate the sharing and exchanging of information and a caring, community-based school ethos.

School M shared a number of similar characteristics with School L. I was struck in particular by the similarities between the two schools' SENCOs, both of whom described their role and the structures in their school as being complex and connected, and who used diagrams during my interview to explain the inter-connectedness of this ways in which teachers worked together. I also so struck by the similarities between how the two school's headteachers perceived the national policy climate. While both Karen and Victoria alluded to the pressures of national policies, particularly the pressures to demonstrate performance on league tables, both similarly suggested that policies such as league tables "don't tell the full story", as Karen indicated. Victoria said, "Everyone who needs to know about our school does. What we do for our pupils [looking around] speaks volumes more than test scores". Although both schools were significantly different in size, the positive community atmosphere in both schools appeared to be facilitated through similar ways – by the management and leadership philosophy in the school which viewed teachers as central to preventing exclusion, the emphasis on supporting individual needs, the level of staff communication and collaboration, and finally,

the ways in which learning support was structured flexibly and adapted to suit the individual needs of both students and teachers.

## **7.4 The Case of School R**

### **7.4.1 Background**

Like School M, School R was identified through my investigation of school exclusion patterns and practices which I reported in Chapter Five and is identified as “School 22” (see Table 5.2, p. 147). Of the 89 secondary schools in the LEA, School R was amongst the highest-excluding schools in terms of permanent exclusions as well as days lost from fixed-term exclusions between 1997 and 2001. Conversations with the LEA’s exclusion policy officer and advisers suggested that the school was experiencing difficulties, however, the reasons were unclear. In a letter to the school’s headteacher, I asked whether it might be possible to visit the school and talk with her. I explained that I was working on the LEA’s project on school disaffection, as well as conducting research for my PhD. Although I attempted to make contact through the headteacher, it was the deputy headteacher with whom I initially met and subsequently communicated throughout the course of my research.

School R is a medium-sized, co-educational, comprehensive school situated in the outskirts of a small urban town located in North England. In 1999, the school enrolled approximately 635 students. The level of social disadvantage is significant: approximately 61% of the students are on free school meals and 40%

with special educational needs. 11% of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school excluded a total of 33 pupils between 1997-2001: 14 permanent exclusions in 1997/98; 8 in 1998/99; 4 in 1999/2000; and 7 in 2000/2001.

#### **7.4.2 Leadership & management: “A no-win situation”**

Julie was headteacher from 1995 to 2001. When we met in May 2000, she described the year as “extremely busy” and observed that “a lot of development is taking place”. During our interview, her comments focused on the changes being made in the school’s management, curriculum, school day, and staff. These comments revealed a number of the difficulties that she was experiencing as the headteacher.

For example, in describing the appointment of a second deputy headteacher, Julie alluded to having problems with “capacity” (a term she herself used) and being dissatisfied with the progress and overall direction of the school:

They appointed a second deputy.... And that’s given us the capacity that we knew we needed to move forward. Before that stage, we had been making progress, but it was more limited than I wanted ... because you’re so tied up with a lot of day to day things that you haven’t got the space for more strategic development. I knew that was an issue and talked to the governors about it.

In describing “strategic development” as difficult to balance alongside her daily duties and management responsibilities, Julie seemed to imply having difficulties

with the school's development plan. She described "working very closely" with two deputy headteachers who had recently been appointed, but explained that "it's also hard.... as they're both new".

J: One has been in post since January 1999 and the second since Easter 1999...

E: How do you see their role?

Q: Their official role? [Sam] is more the curriculum side.... [Ned], well, pupil achievement is how we termed it .. but it's pupil welfare, it covers the pastoral side but it also covers reviewing pupils ... the progress file ... it also covers professional development ... staff development. That's their official role.

Julie said little about her management approach and leadership style, but appeared to differentiate between how she and the deputy heads worked together as a senior management team and how they then worked with the other staff.

Having said that, they work, we work, very closely together. I think that what they have done in the last 3 or 4 months is to step back a little bit, for example from the curriculum and pastoral managers meeting, so I don't go each time because that gives them a bit more space. What they found was that people were turning to me, rather than letting them chair the meetings. We've done that .. because that's important, delegation, professional development.

In suggesting the need to distinguish between her authority and that of the deputy headteachers, Julie revealed some difficulties in how the staff viewed the school's leadership. Indeed, interviews with different members of staff described mixed support and a lack of confidence in the school's leadership and management. One teacher perceived "a lack of vision". Others said that the headteacher "did not know how to use her team", "worried too much about pleasing others", and

“doesn’t have the strength and courage to be tough”. One staff member bluntly suggested, “She might do better at another school”.

Another teacher, described the headteacher as “beleaguered”, offering her analysis of the school’s leadership:

[The staff] don’t recognise that [the headteacher’s] strengths are the fact that she is clearly co-operative, and a very kind person – those are strengths – but those are seen as weaknesses. Before my time .. I think she made two or three mistakes when she first came, and headteachers do, that’s how we all learn ...but she’s never been forgiven for those.

Julie also alluded to a profound division between how she perceived her role in the school and how others teachers and parents perceived it.

Amongst the staff there are some in particular who are outstanding, but I still think that I’m trying to break a mould. When I came the league tables had just started ...but people were saying ... forget exam results, it’s a caring school. What I tried to say to people is that the best way we can show our care is by giving people the best opportunity to succeed and to get a good education. But there are a lot of people and I’m speaking outside who don’t value education and don’t see it as a stepping stone.

Staff changes were another key development identified by Julie, who described the departure of teachers “who needed to move on” and their replacement by “new young and enthusiastic teachers” as providing “two new departments”. However, Julie also indicated that “good” teachers were leaving, and voiced general concerns about her staff in the future: “I worry about the school”, she said. “Good teachers are leaving... pupils will feel that it is because of them. They will feel worthless”.

Julie described the restructuring of the school day as another major change in the school. According to Julie, the impetus for these changes was a response to external pressures.

J: We're also changing the school day in September

E: What was wrong with the current day?

J: The first thing the DfEE will say about the current day that it's below the minimum recommended 25 hours a week. We're on 23 hours 20 so we're quite a bit below that....

Julie further explained that "although she did not set out to extend the school day" a review of the curriculum by the deputy head also revealed the "need for more flexibility, highlighting the need to restructure the lessons:

I didn't set out to extend the school day. We set out to review the curriculum and it was when we were doing that [we saw] what needed to take place. It didn't fit with the pattern that we had. [The deputy head] was working on this. He said, We're going to need more flexibility. We need more periods to work on that.

According to Julie, restructuring the lessons from two double periods of 35-minute each to one hour-long lesson would improve the effectiveness of teaching.

I think there's some dead time in an hour and ten minutes, I think that it's too long. I'm not just saying that about pupils here. I think the general feeling is an hour lesson, even 50 minutes is most effective. Because what I think will happen is we'll have ... about as much material covered, but with a bit more pace to it ... and that's what we need.

However, Julie's views and proposed changes did not appear to be supported by the whole staff or the school governors:

J: When we went to governors to get their feedback ... they felt very differently ... that we should be working on 25 hours, and that could be done through the 40 period model by having an hour and quarter instead of an hour and 10 minutes, or the hour. We had debate with the staff .... there were some were very vociferous ones who did not want to change.

E: What were some of their resistance about?

J: Resistance to change. I think that is the crutch. I think they were saying .... that pupils ... couldn't cope with an extra 20 minutes of teaching a day.

E: Do you believe that?

J: No I don't. I don't. I think it's insulting to them. I think it's lowering expectations.

In describing how staff were responding to these changes, Julie presented a conflicted and mixed view of her staff, praising some as “outstanding”, and referring to others as “die-hard”, “difficult to change”, and “needing to move on”. Julie described her appointment as headteacher as not being fully supported by the staff. “I was not a popular appointment here”, she explained. “I was not what the staff wanted. I was what the governors wanted and felt the school needed. But I have encountered a lot of resistance. And it is still there”. In describing the key changes that were occurring in the school, Julie did not talk about the contributions of individual staff like the headteachers in School L and School M did, but referred generally to the staff, indicating hesitantly about the resistance “amongst a few staff”.

Julie expressed concern over pupils who were willing to learn but needed a lot of support, which she felt “the school did not have the resources to offer”. However, when I asked Julie what she would change in the school, Julie's reply revealed her

belief that the school needed “more able” pupils. “If we could have more of a mixed intake”, she suggested, “that would make a big difference because I think you’ll get more balance that would help everybody”. At the end of our interview about how she felt she was coping with the present situation of the school. She replied:

J: Absolutely shattered. It is a very wearing job. I go between feeling optimistic and feeling like I’m in a no-win situation”.

E: When do you feel you’re in a no-win situation?

J: When? Right now.

In October 2000, I received a call from the deputy headteacher who told me that the headteacher was leaving at Christmas. He said that “a lot was happening on a large scale” and that after receiving their exam results, “Julie had been called into the LEA”. He said, “They told her that she had had six years and that the school was still at the bottom of the league tables”. He remarked, “They were quite nasty with her” and “placed the blame on her shoulders” which was “not fair” because it was a “social problem really”. He went on to explain, “The government target is that 25% achieve between 5 A-C [GCSEs] ... our school will never make that”. Ned then told me “they are going to put in an associate head to turn the school around”. He added, “I don’t know if you read the TES [*Times Educational Supplement*], but that doesn’t work”.

#### **7.4.3 Staff culture: “Clashes, conflicts, and doing their own thing”**

Interviews with the senior management team and staff indicated that working relationships were fragmented and divided. According to one teacher, the staff was

dominated by “too many old teachers” who did “their own thing” and “would not be led by the headteacher”. One teacher described “a hard core of disaffected teachers who resist change and undermine the headteacher”, saying, “A lot of these teachers do not know any better. Some have been at the school so long that they don’t know what’s out there”.

One teacher described the staff culture as being weakened by “ongoing personality clashes” and “conflicts over policy” and “disagreements about staff appointments” made by the school’s governors and headteacher:

There’s a long history to it ... there’s a high degree of politics here. They are a staff that are accustomed to being allowed to go their own way, basically.

Similar views were expressed by another teacher, who described some veteran staff as “disaffected....like the students”. A culture of working in isolation and within one’s own department was described by one teacher who said, “Everyone just did their own thing”, adding, “There’s no common assessment. Every department does it differently”.

Implementing change was described as difficult for many staff, according to one teacher, who said,

I think you would have to have the courage and personality of somebody like Attila the Hun to pull [staff] back.

One consequence for the staff culture, according to this teacher, was a lack of direction, who said:

There hasn't been a head of history since October...The school is a mess. I have never experienced a staff culture as unusual as this. It is so multi-layered".

#### **7.4.4 Support for teaching & learning: "Basic structures do not exist"**

Ned perceived the school's pastoral system as a key part of the support provided to pupils. He described the system in terms of its staffing

The pastoral system works through line managers in each subject. There are heads as well supporting them. If a year 9 pupil is causing a problem in a science lesson, the head of science supports them. The head of year and myself get involved in the stages. The most important thing is to try and look at the problem and see if we could lose this disaffection. Is it a learning difficulty, a personality clash, or whatever.

Interviews with several teachers confirmed the view that "support was available", but few described how the actual systems or structures worked, and little could be gleaned from staff about how these systems enabled them to support pupils who were experiencing difficulties, or who were at risk of exclusion. A number of teachers suggested that "more was needed". One teacher expressed that "basic structures for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress ... did not exist in the school", remarking,

There is no diary. How can we keep track of pupils? We were told we can't afford them. I say we can't afford not to afford them.

Staff described the system for rewarding pupils as “there to support achievement” but also indicated that “not all teachers subscribed to this belief”. One teacher explained:

Some teachers believe in it, others don't. There is no culture of celebrating achievement. You give out certificates and it is desultory.

In enquiring about the level and type of support available to pupils who were experiencing difficulties in school, Julie and Ned described external resources, outside schemes, and alternatives to the mainstream curriculum. For example, When I asked Julie, the head, what she felt was needed to address the needs of pupils who were experiencing major behavioural problems, she replied, “What we need is an off-site unit” to “take pressure off staff”.

In terms of curriculum support, Julie observed, “There's a lot been taking place on the curriculum development side”, describing their involvement in the area's “education action zone”.

E: What need did you see the EAZ filling?

J: As much as anything it's a way of targeting resources where it's very much needed so the main thrusts of that are basic skills, literacy, numeracy, ICT, it's developing the work related curriculum We're introducing GNVQ courses that year, in Sept that's new. And looking for further development the following year. We're also having a group of pupils on extended work experience.

Julie described the need to make the curriculum more relevant to their pupils and indicated problems in finding ways to adapt the mainstream curriculum:

E: What's all this [alternative curriculum] about? Why?

J: To try and make it more relevant. To try and reduce disaffection.....

E: What were you seeing?

J: It was a straitjacket of .. it was really a straitjacket.

E: For whom?

J: Not just lower-ability children, actually. There were some bright pupil who didn't respond because they couldn't see the relevance of some of what they were doing.

Ned also described difficulties with engaging the pupils in the curriculum, and explained the kinds of programmes that were in place.

E: How are you, as a school, coping with the needs of your pupils?

N: We have a literacy initiative... We have a summer school to try and get the Year 6 pupils up to speed before they start secondary school... The EAZ should bring in a lot of resources ... We are an SRB school ... We also have "Valued Youth" which takes disaffected pupils and puts them into primary schools where they are mentors for the children.... We also got pupils on extended work experience ... they can do vocational courses at the local college.

There was little mention of attempts to differentiate the curriculum.

#### **7.4.5 Behaviour and discipline policies: "Sanctions build up"**

In describing the school's policies on behaviour and for supporting pupils, various members of the senior management team referred to guidance provided to the school by the LEA and the DfEE. Ned, the deputy head, described the challenges of implementing them in terms of meeting "outside" requirements. During our

interview, he held up Circular 10/99, to show me an example of the DfEE's policies and guidance on social inclusion, which he described as "a slap in the face:"

N: You think it is going to be packed with all the different things you can do.

E: This came from central government?

N: DfEE, the Secretary of State's guidance on pupil attendance and reintegration – you need one of these!

E: So does this guidance come straight to you from the DfEE?

N: Anything that is statutory comes straight to schools. The LEA has to see what is new, and they are always playing catch up, because by the time the LEA have decided, and started, we are already up and running. That's the way it works.

E: So why is this a slap in the face?

N: The slap was the new laws coming in straight away regarding the exclusion from school, making it far more difficult to exclude from school.

Ned described the school disciplinary policy as one based on "positive behaviour" policy, but indicated that staff had resisted its implementation, describing it as "a battle" between management and staff:

N: It is a battle. But we decided right, we must reward the children, so we have a positive behaviour scheme....which is pupils turning up to the lessons on time well equipped and participate get a token every lesson, they get bronze stickers then get a small prize, and they get silver, etc. They get the opportunity to go into a draw for a mountain bike

E: How well do you think the awards work?

N: In the lower schools, they like it. The pupils who are disruptive don't get anything.

During this conversation, Ned also showed me a range of forms that teachers needed to fill out if a pupil was disruptive during a lesson. He explained that these

were used for lunchtime detentions and all the forms were passed on and reviewed by the Head of Year. Dave, a Head of Year described this procedure in a similar way:

D: The department will attempt to do something personally, then they might involve the form tutor. If I was a year tutor, I would be looking at where this was happening. It is happening in one subject? Is it happening in French? The French teacher might express their concerns about the child. We use little memos, so we have a picture. {Dave showed me an example of a referral slip.]

E: So what happens in the referral room?

D: It is staffed on a rotating basis. You enter the details, and then I can write to his mother to tell him what has been done.

In discussing the school's exclusion policy and procedures, the deputy head described the school as having a high threshold before resorting to exclusion:

We have always had problems in our school, so we go the extra mile, exclusion being the last resort. It definitely is with us. We are used to a lot of steps and strategies, in some schools they would exclude a pupil for swearing at a member of staff in the corridor. That might be the first thing a pupil had ever done. Here, we put layers in to try and resolve the behaviour....

I asked about the types of strategies used to prevent exclusion, and Ned explained,

We have things like lunchtime detention. Pupils who get to a certain level and interrupt the class get sent to a referral room in the school to work on their own for a day. Then we reintegrate them back into the lessons. We have a layer of sanctions and the staff fully understands how the sanctions match the crime.

Ned felt that such strategies, however, were not always effective in the school, particularly with "repeat offenders, who are always pushing at that level". He explained, "Hour long detentions, subject detentions...they build up". Ned described the escalation of a pupil's problem as "getting to a stage when exclusion

is an option”, but that “within each level, we don’t just wait for them to go to the next level. We are proactive”. According to Ned, “Quite often, the breakdown of behaviour and the build up of sanctions is also linked to SEN”.

Following our meeting, I looked over the set of papers and forms given to me, and noted one document in particular, titled, “Classroom Expectations”.

**Figure 7.3**  
**Behaviour Policy in School R:**  
**“You must expect to be punished”**

**CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

So that we can all work together safely and make progress, it is necessary to have a few basic rules for the pupils. These exist so that both pupils and teachers know exactly what standards they have a right to expect.

**SO**

**START LESSONS BY:**

- arriving on time;
- entering the room quietly and going to your place;
- taking off your coat;
- taking out your books and equipment;
- putting your bag away;
- being quiet unless spoken to by the teacher.

**DURING LESSONS**

- listen and concentrate when the teacher speaks;
- put your hand up to answer questions;
- do not shout out;
- work sensibly and do not distract others;
- keep a record of your homework;
- do not chew or eat;
- always work to the very best of your ability.

**END LESSONS BY**

- packing away only when told;
- leaving your place neat and tidy;
- leaving the room in an orderly way.

**REMEMBER**

If you break these rules you must expect to be punished.  
There can be no excuse for rudeness towards a teacher.

#### **7.4.6 School ethos & goals: “You either fit in or you’re out”**

Students and staff expressed mixed views in describing the school’s ethos. According to one EWO who worked with students who had been excluded from the school, the school was described as an intolerant place. I recalled this comment from the EWO, when one student said to me, “[In this school], you either fit in or you’re out”. Other pupils described the school as a place where “you get shouted at”. According to another, “teachers should try and praise the pupils more for good things”. Yet, the deputy headteacher, described the school and staff as “having a high threshold for challenging needs and behaviour” and “being very good at managing ... a poor [pupil] intake”.

A fundamental conflict over the goals and direction of the school was expressed by the headteacher, who described external pressures as running counter to the notion of being an inclusive school:

Well, I was reading a booklet last night about inclusion and school improvement and I think the major problem is, well, I can understand the drive for school improvement, for raising standards, but I think that quite a lot of those agendas runs counter to the inclusion agenda ... especially with thinking about competition between schools

Amongst the staff interviews, little was said about the school’s mission, which, apart from the changes brought about in response to DfEE guidance, seemed vague and ambiguous.

### **7.4.7 Discussion**

In Chapter Four, I refer to the experience of conducting research in this school as a “disrupted research environment” (see Section 4.6.3b). The experience of studying School R was a challenging experience in terms of collecting data. The signs of distress and increasing difficulties experienced by the staff culminated in the departure of the headteacher, an event that led to the decision (made with the deputy headteacher) that I not continue my research after December 2000. Although this meant that I could no longer collect data as I had originally anticipated, this experience itself, and the difficulties I encountered during the process of conducting research in the school, highlighted a number of themes about the organisational context of the school.

One major theme concerned the staff culture and the effects that a strained senior management team had upon communication and relationships in the school. Although several individuals described the need for supportive relationships within the staff, teachers did not appear to work collaboratively as a team. Interviews with individual teachers indicated that while many on the staff considered the headteacher to be a nice person, teachers felt isolated and unsupported. The teachers I spoke with did not believe that the headteacher had the vision, ideas, or strength of character to create change and sustain improvements in the school. Others expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of the senior management team and uncertainty about the school's leadership in the future.

Another major theme concerned the bureaucratic nature of the school's policies, procedures, and systems for communicating to parents. In looking back through the material I gathered from the school, I came across a range of forms used to explain the schools' behaviour policy, notify pupils about detention, and to inform parents of an exclusion. What struck me, as I examined this evidence, was that the school did not appear to have adapted or developed its *own* systems and values, but was literally following policies and practices that were "cut and pasted" from various documents developed outside the school. Strongly featured in this material was guidance from the LEA's guidance on exclusion procedures and the DfEE's (1999a) *Circular 10/99*. Fundamentally missing in this school was evidence of how the school adapted this external guidance to fit the needs of the staff and students. It occurred to me that this was understandably difficult because fundamentally lacking were a set of cohesive values, goals for the future, pupil ownership, and staff pride.

## **7.5 The Case of School S**

### **7.5.1 Background**

I learned about School S through a personal contact and friend who was making a documentary about one of the students in the school. She suggested that it might be interesting for me to study the school, in light of the difficulties the school was facing in terms of exclusion. She offered to make contact on my behalf, and put me in touch with a teacher, a head of department of history, who agreed to talk with me about exclusion in general. This teacher then recommended that I speak further to

two of her colleagues, the SENCO and the Head of Learning Support. Following these initial conversations (which took place the week before the school year ended), I then formally contacted the headteacher in the autumn (who had just been appointed) to explain that I had spoken with a number of staff, and would like to ask whether it was possible for me to continue with my research. After a meeting and interview with the headteacher, she formally agreed, and introduced me to the staff at my next visit, which occurred the following morning.

School S is a medium-sized, co-educational, comprehensive school based in an inner city area of a large, metropolitan city located in Southeast England. In 1999/2000, the school enrolled approximately 820 students and with a staff of teachers. 63% of the students were eligible for free school meals, 43% had special educational needs (with and without statements); and nearly half of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, mostly Afro-Caribbean. The area is one that like School L, is characterised by poor housing, poverty, and high levels of unemployment. According to the LEA's reports, the school's permanent exclusion rate (per 1000) was 1.3 pupils in 1997/98; 20.5 pupils in 1998/99; and 3.7 pupils in 1999/2000. Based on an average enrolment of 820 pupils, this suggests that approximately 24 pupils were permanently excluded between 1997 and 2000.

Reflecting on my visit, I noted my impressions in my field notes. I noted the school as being housed in a complex of several buildings, the main of which is a seven story tower-block style, office-like building with two sets of lifts that pupils are not

permitted to use. During one of my visits, I wrote: *On a typical day, teachers hold their arms up and students bump along through overcrowded corridors, squeezing to get past each other as they climb the seven sets of stairwells, shouting to communicate in the frenzy, and racing to get to class on time. As I walk through the corridors, I notice that many of the classroom windows are covered in dark paper, so that no one can look in.*

### **7.5.2 Leadership and management: “Major changes are taking place”**

As with School R, major changes and transitions in the school’s leadership and management occurred during the course of my investigation. In July 1999, when I first visited the school, the school’s governors had dismissed the headteacher. I did not have the opportunity to interview the headteacher. Teachers were divided about the school’s leadership. Some openly expressed disagreement over the removal of the previous headteacher and confusion over the rationale and recent appointment of two heads. One teacher stated:

I’m not prepared to go down that line and criticise the school in any way, shape, or form. I think that’s quite unethical. But what I would say is that any successful school, no matter what it is, not matter whether it is special, special education, primary ... needs to have clear lines of line management, and that everybody knows what it is that they should be doing.

Others offered no comment, and some described the headteacher’s dismissal as “terrible”, “unbelievable”, and “outrageous”. According to one, “She wasn’t given the chance”.

In 2000, the headteacher was replaced by two headteachers, Sam and Jane, who were recruited from outside the LEA on short-term contracts “to turn around the school”. I interviewed each of them on separate occasions. According to Sam, the biggest challenge in the school was pupil behaviour: “The level of disruption is so great...teachers never get any teaching done”. An added challenge, he explained was “the sheer scale of the problem”. According to Jane, the problems lie in the staff’s relationships with pupils, an ineffective group of middle managers, and “the curriculum”, which she said, “was not relevant to the pupils”.

In 2000, Jane was appointed as the new headteacher and began to implement a series of major internal and physical changes in the school, which included 1) a series of new staff appointments, 2) changes to the composition of the senior management team; 3) the reorganisation of the school into four houses; 4) changes in the school’s behaviour policy. A second interview with Jane provided further insight about the current leadership and management issues within the school. According to Jane, the school needed structures to be put into place. She described her approach as “heavily managerial”, explaining that her priority was “to get the right structures in place”.

I’d like to get the balance between the structures and the curriculum, but at the moment I want to make sure that we get the right structures in place. We need to have those structures in place so that we can begin to systematically target and systematically respond to pupils. You cannot do that if you do not have the right structures and systems in place.

She described external pressures – “the scrutiny of inspectors, national and local” – as a double-edged sword. “On the one hand”, she explained, “I am able to push ahead on changes and say to teachers, this is what we have to do. On the other, there is no room for development and talking. There is simply no time for that”. Janet explained, “We have one year to raise our attainment...and the action plan is non-negotiable”.

Jane felt that she had not yet tackled the curriculum, an area described as a “major barrier and challenge” for the pupils. “We haven’t hit the curriculum yet”, she said, explaining that the school needed to recruit SEN staff. “Learning will be driven by SEN”. Jane added that she felt strong and clear about the changes which had been made in number of areas “Vision. Internal exclusions. External exclusions. Pupil Support Centre”. Jane perceived a number of challenges for the staff and expressed that for many, “fear”, was a major barrier to change. “Overcoming this fear – fear of how pupils will respond, fear of not getting it right”, she explained. “I am increasingly in the position where I have to say to staff...This isn’t working. The expectations for [staff] will be new ... It’s there, but not yet embedded in the culture of the school”, and emphasised again, “We are spending a lot of time on the structures”.

Staff expressed mixed, but generally positive feelings about Jane’s appointment as headteacher in 2000. Some described a renewed faith in leadership, and one said “Major changes are taking place...and hopefully this will lead to improvements”.

Jane described that her role would “be about helping and guiding staff.... telling them when something is not working, what might work, and how to improve practices and relationships with pupils”. The newly appointed pastoral coordinator, Melissa, described how, as result of “breaking down the barriers between teachers and senior management – teachers are starting to come forward”. Melissa shared, “I get notes asking for help, telling me about problems”.

Conversations with veteran staff members, a year after I first visited the school, conveyed more optimism about the future of the school. However, a few expressed continuing uncertainties about the decisions made by the school’s governors, the LEA, and the school’s management. “You can’t rely on management for support right now”, explained one teacher. “You fill out these forms and nothing happens”, he said.

### **7.5.3 Staff culture: “Frantic and fearful”**

During the first year of my visits and interviews in the school, teachers described feeling “under siege” and “unsupported”, but also described “sticking together to survive”. When I asked one teacher about whether the staff culture was supportive, he said, “Certain staff .... do stick together”. However, he indicated that “sometimes, I feel like an outsider here”. He described working in isolation and without support from his department and other colleagues. “I know what I do is good ... but I don’t know about the others”. During one year group meeting, one teacher said, “I’m not doing [what had been suggested by the Head of

Year]...There's no way I'm going to be running after pupils who have not been allowed to go on the school trip". Other teachers in the meeting did not respond to the teacher's comment.

According to the headteacher, the impact of the internal changes, in combination with the external pressures to raise attainment in one year had created a "frantic" and "fearful" staff atmosphere. When I came to visit the school a month before an OFSTED inspection, I asked Jane how she and the staff was doing. "The pressure [of OFSTED]", she explained, means there is "little time for laughing, for talking, for sharing, and for talking long-term".

#### **7.5.4 Support for students: "I don't know this pupil"**

According to one head of year, there were "various things" in the school aimed at preventing exclusion, but a limitation to the resources and time that could be spent.

Before it got to the stage of exclusion, various things would come before, e.g. pupils would be put on report, they would have to report to various teachers. If it was things like behaviour or attitudes in the schools, we have a student support centre. We have various support agencies like the Afro-Caribbean mediation agency. After those avenues have been exhausted, if the problem continued, parents would be brought in. And if there was still no remedy, the school has to balance what future the pupil has at the school. Perhaps it would be better for the pupil to go somewhere else.

According to several staff, students who needed "extra help" could go to the student support centre. One senior manager, however, described the history of the school's student support centre, and warned about the tendency of staff to "send students there .. [but] not think about how to bring them back".

They wanted to set up an on-site support centre ...I helped them set that up....so I did that ... but then I wanted to shut down the unit ...you see, it was very effective at doing what it was doing .. which was absorbing the students who people in the mainstream schools didn't want to teach. So we took all the kids ... they enjoyed coming to us ... and I enjoyed teaching them ... but it didn't do anything ... the kids never went back to mainstream. They didn't want to go back and the teachers didn't want them back ... so it wasn't doing anything to actually address the actual problem, which was the schools jettisoning the kids in the first place. I used to describe it like a leaky pipe... you put a tray under a leaky pipe, and it's fine, it catches the water, but it doesn't do anything to fix the pipe. So I decided that the only thing to do was to take the tray away, and then somebody would have to fix the pipe, that's what I thought.

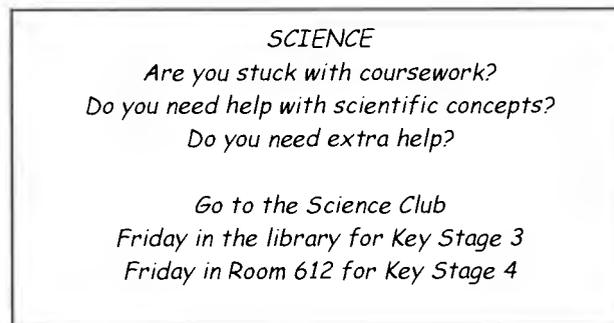
He explained, however, that staff resisted and indicated that many teachers used the centre to deal with students in the classroom, when what was required was more whole-school support:

Take an example like literacy ...here we've got a literacy problem in the school...what we should be doing is working with the English department...in fact, no, the whole school. Literacy is a whole school thing. We should have a whole school policy about literacy. Well, we do on paper, but the easier thing to do is buy in reading teachers. So we buy in reading teachers, and the kids come out of lessons, and they go, and they get taught to read. It's effective, but ...it's taking kids out of the classroom, out of their lessons, out of the mainstream, and providing them with something different. So, that sort of thing happens all the time. And so you end up ... with people saying, oh that's great, look at these results... and you have to present the results to the governors, and the governors love it. Look at this, look at how these reading scores have gone up...it's fantastic. Buy another reading teacher! Give him more money! So you get another reading teacher. And it's great, the reading scores go up, and that's fine and everything... but what's actually happening is that droves of kids are coming out of their lessons and going down to have reading lessons ...so it's never quite as simple as it looks at the outset.

On a day spent shadowing a student who had been previously excluded, and had just returned to school after a period of two weeks, I asked what kind of support he would get to help him catch up. He shrugged, and said, "I don't know". At the

end of the day, on my way out of the school, I noticed a sign hanging in the corridor:

**FIGURE 7.4**  
**Student Support in School S:**  
**“Are you stuck with coursework?”**



I wondered whether and who would tell the student about this. In my interviews with teachers, many described the pupil support centre as a form of support, but did not indicate the ways in which they, as a staff, supported students through their daily interactions. The reasons for this became evident to me one afternoon when I came across a young boy crying in corridor. When I asked him why he was crying, he explained that he had forgotten to bring his swimming costume, and that “he really really really wanted to go swimming”. Holding his hand, I took him to a teacher that I had interviewed and explained the situation. The teacher replied, “I don’t know this pupil. I’m sorry”. I took the boy to another teacher, a Head of Year, and again explained the situation, when another teacher came out, “[The boy] has to learn his lesson. If he forgets to bring his costume, he can’t swim”.

### **7.5.5 Behaviour and discipline policy: “Children do not yet own this document”**

During my interview, Janet gave me a copy of the school’s new behaviour policy. I reviewed this 60-page document, which outlined a range of policies and procedures. One page outlined a set of expectations for staff and pupils. Another section gave instructions for dealing with pupils who were disruptive during lessons. I enquired about the new behaviour policy with Melissa, Head of Pastoral Support, who described the new policy as “a major change” in the school.

I enquired how it had been developed and how it was working:

A number of staff helped to develop it and want it to work and are putting in the effort, even though they’ve been here a long time. They, like the pupils, have slipped. They need to know that we [the Senior Management] will support them ... [but] a major barrier is cynicism and a lack of belief.

She summarised the key changes:

Pupil support is expanded. The referral room is used for a pupil to cool off. It is used for 1 period only. There is now a senior management detention on Saturday.

Jane, along with other staff, described the challenges in engaging the pupils in the expectations that were being set. The head cited the behaviour policy as an example. “We realise that the children do not yet own this document”. The pastoral co-ordinator also expressed the desire to develop systems of peer support. “I’d like to see Year 11 pupils talking with the younger pupils – guiding them, advising them... but we are not ready for that yet”.

In terms of exclusions, Jane described a core group of 30 pupils who continued to be a challenge to staff, and alluded to their imminent exclusion from school, “I’m not doing it because of [OFSTED] inspection... the majority are good, but they are desperate to go on”. Jane explained another change affecting exclusions was that instead of decisions being made by the Heads of Year, exclusions would now go through the Head of Pastoral Support.

I remember when I took on this role as Head of Year, I looked at the year group and I actually took it on myself to note the number of times I was called, and the reasons my attention was needed, and the kids I had to deal with. I built a profile and I saw that six kids kept coming up, and I actually quantified it. And then I called them and I said, I’ve spent about six hours on you, which I should have been using doing this, this, and this.

#### **7.5.6 School ethos and mission: “I think it will get better”**

When I first visited the school in 1999, I noticed a sign that read, “High achievement for all”. In 2000, the sign was replaced with “Everybody can be Somebody” and a new desk staffed by a receptionist was placed at the entrance along with a set of chairs. While waiting to meet with the headteacher, I met a Year 8 pupil and commented to her that it seemed like the school had changed. “It feels different”, I said to the pupil and asked her how she thought the school was doing. She replied, “I think it will get better. They’ve made changes, like a new dining hall”. Another pupil joined in our conversation, adding, “We have two form tutors now, so they can handle us better”. I learned from the pupils that other changes they “liked” was a new school uniform and a new dining hall.

Teachers, however, seemed to be less clear about the future direction of the school and their goals and priorities as a staff. “I’m not sure what we’re about”, shrugged one teacher. “I think the school will improve only by improving our student intake”, suggested another. One head of department explained:

Quite frankly these days, the role of the teacher is not to spend time bringing youngsters around to fitting into the curriculum. The role of the teacher is to increase achievement. Increase GCSEs. Increase entry into GCSEs. That is their role, not to spend too much time with disaffection, attitude, or behaviour. Their role is to teach.... If the ethos of the school is solely academic, high achievement, teachers need to be a bit more strict. You cannot be allowing too many resources or time to disaffected students. If your aim and ethos is achievement, then that is what you must go for. It needs to be made clear. If teachers or schools are given clear instructions what’s required of them, that would make it easier to do their job.

Teachers and the headteachers indicated that although attempts were being made to cultivate a set of values and shared ownership over such changes, such as the new behaviour policy, what appeared to be driving the school’s goals were the external pressures of OFSTED and the pressure to raise attainment by next year.

### **7.5.7 Discussion**

The case study of School S provides an illustration of the dilemmas and conflicts that “struggling” schools (Stoll, 1999) face in trying to improve and rebuild trust amongst staff in the face of external pressures of accountability and amidst pressures to raise attainment. On the one hand, School S can be seen as “trying really hard”, as the head explained, “to get the structures right” and to move students and a demoralised staff towards “ownership” of the school. However, a largely hierarchical structure, heavily managerial approach and “non-negotiable” agenda – adopted by the management of the school as a strategy for responding to

pressures – meant that teachers felt fearful and constrained. Although the school’s leadership and management expressed hope that teachers were becoming more involved, the views of teachers suggested that they did not yet feel confident and share a common set of values.

Another area of conflict that raises implications for how teachers viewed exclusion, emerged in the concerns expressed by management about the role of behaviour and its “interference” with learning. While there appeared to be many policies and procedures in place for dealing with behaviour, the structures for supporting learning within the classroom did not appear to be understood or known by students, was voluntary, and or available outside school time, as the sign offering extra help with science indicated. The need for pupils to have individualised forms of support appeared to be aggravated by a lack of time and the strained relationships between teachers and students, as evidenced by how teachers responded to the young boy who needed a swimming costume.

## 7.6 Summary: Organisational differences between high- and low- excluding schools

This section analyses the key differences in the organisational context of the four schools, based on their exclusion rates and practices, and raises a number of implications for how these differences appeared to influence how school exclusion is used and viewed in the school and how teachers perceived their role and responsibility.

### 7.6.1 Differences in leadership and management

A comparison between the case study schools suggests that leadership and management has an important bearing on how teachers view their capacity to resist and prevent exclusion. Table 7.3 summarises the similarities and differences in the leadership and management of the four schools:

	<b>High-excluding (School R and School S)</b>	<b>Low-excluding (School L and School M)</b>
Style of leadership	<i>Heavily managerial</i>	<i>Delegating</i>
Structures for decision-making	<i>Directive, by senior management Department-based</i>	<i>Bottom-up, by teachers and students</i>
Opportunities for teacher leadership	<i>Clear distinction between management and teachers</i>	<i>Teachers with multiple roles; overlapping areas of classroom and management responsibilities</i>

A common perception and experience amongst the teachers in the lower-excluding

schools was a positive view and assessment of the school's leadership and management.

- In School L, teachers described the headteacher as a very capable leader with strong values and a clear vision. The culture of management was team-oriented and the management structures more “flat”, than hierarchical. The school's headteacher actively encouraged teachers to take on additional management responsibilities and there were clear opportunities within the school's management structures for teachers to take on leadership roles.
- In School M, teachers described the headteacher as a warm and caring individual with strong management skills. She worked closely with her management team and much evidence of teamwork and collaboration came across through interviews and observations of meetings. As a small school, the majority of teachers held multiple roles and responsibilities.

In the schools with higher exclusion rates, School S and School R, views about their school's leadership and management team were mixed, negative, or uncertain. The concerns expressed by teachers ranged from feeling discouraged and unsupported by the school's leadership and management. In general, teachers described a lack of confidence in the decisions made by the school's management. In both schools, teachers distinguished between themselves and the senior management, referring to the school's senior managers as “they”.

- In School S, teachers described the headteacher with mixed views. In interviews, the headteacher came across as a strongly principled individual with a clear vision and a heavily managerial style. The school's management team underwent restructuring by the head, which resulted in a significant number of staff leaving the school. Remaining staff expressed mixed opinions about the "top-down" management culture of the school, though some were optimistic about the future, indicating that positive changes were being made by the headteacher.
  
- In School R, teachers described the school's leadership as ineffective, weak, and lacking confidence. In interviews, the headteacher did not convey a clear vision for the school and described a number of difficulties in the school, referring to a core group of veteran teachers who were difficult to lead and manage. Management decisions appeared to be made by a small number of individuals whose working relationships with the staff were difficult to ascertain. Teachers did not indicate a team-oriented culture. Divisions between groups of teachers and departments and difficulties working with the management team also emerged through interviews.

A key issue that emerged in the schools was how teachers viewed and assigned responsibility for exclusion. This seemed to be strongly associated with the leadership and management the school. In School R and School S, the style, structure, and culture of management tended to be hierarchical, managerial, and

directive. The heavily managerial culture in these schools meant that teachers deferred and looked primarily to senior management or specialised support teachers to deal quickly with a problem arising from a student with challenging needs. As such, teachers perceived exclusion as an area of responsibility for management and a decision made by their senior managers, which in both schools were the heads of department, the deputy headteacher, and finally, the headteacher. Teachers in School R and School S described reporting problems to their senior managers, and described having little influence and control over decisions about exclusion. Such a view appeared to encourage teachers to go directly to management before attempting to resolve issues with colleagues or within own classroom.

In contrast, in School L and School M, the management (particularly the headteachers) shared the view that teachers were responsible for managing classroom behaviour, conveying exclusion as a whole school responsibility, rather than one assigned to a specific member of staff or at the level of a department (which was the case in School R and School S). The varied leadership roles that teachers held in School L and School M were also similar features of the management culture, and also seemed to influence how teachers described their level of responsibility in relation to exclusion. In these schools, headteachers described identifying individual teachers with strong skills and expertise to take on school-wide leadership roles. This seemed to create a staff culture in which teachers were empowered and encouraged to take responsibility for school-wide

issues. The role of management and leadership in terms of exclusion was also described similarly in School L and School M. Here both heads described their responsibility in terms of ensuring and providing teachers with support, advice, guidance, rather than a quick solution of removal. The view expressed by the headteachers and staff in both schools was exclusion was a decision made only when all efforts by teachers had been exhausted. As one teacher expressed, “Before we go to the headteacher, we will have tried almost every kind of support and strategy to prevent exclusion”.

### 7.6.2 Differences in staff culture and communication

Table 7.4 provides a comparison of the staff culture and communication between the higher- and lower-excluding schools

	High-excluding (School R and School S)	Low-excluding (School L and School M)
Structures for collaboration	<i>Isolated Department based</i>	<i>Team-oriented Cross-departmental Collaborative</i>
Communication	<i>Fragmented</i>	<i>Highly communicative</i>

In the higher-excluding schools, the staff ethos appeared divided and fragmented. Whilst a closely-knit staff culture was described by some, this did not apply to the whole staff. A number of individuals described feeling isolated, being unsupported, and working largely within their own department. Staff in these

schools also described a division between the concerns of the management and those of teachers. In both schools, senior managers pointed to apathy and resistance from disaffected staff – veteran teachers who resisted change and undermined decisions made by senior management – as major barriers. Teachers in the higher-excluding schools also seemed to distance themselves from the decisions made by “they” – the school’s senior managers and governors – which included decisions about pupil exclusion. In these schools, the professional staff culture was role- and title-driven.

In contrast, teachers in School L and School M both described and were observed using communication and collaboration to improve their awareness and increase the understanding about their students – diagnosing students’ problems rather than simply labelling them. The staff culture that came across through interviews and visits was one a strong professional community: highly supportive, collaborative, and team-oriented. For example, staff described these strategies as being a collective response, and linked their own actions as helping another colleague. Teachers in both schools described using a range of systems and structures (“whatever works best, depending on the situation” according to one teacher) for supporting students. The frequency and quality of communication was facilitated by having a flexible set of structures which further enabled teachers to adapt structures and policies around their own style of working and their individual pupils’ needs. As such, staff described feeling supported, valued, and having influence over decisions made in the school. Finally, teachers’ professional views and beliefs were

aligned with and supported by the direction of the school's leadership and management. Staff in both schools suggested that the staff culture was a reflection of the headteacher's trust in the staff and the delegating style of leadership.

The key issue in this comparison and analysis is the influence that staff culture has on the level and quality of professional community, and the effect that this has on teachers' confidence and capacities to work together towards developing alternatives to exclusion. The case studies suggest that staff culture plays a key role in characterising the environment in which teachers become aware of pupils needs, share practices, and exchange information – thereby influencing the extent to which teachers have the capacity – knowledge and skills – to prevent exclusion. In the lower-excluding schools, where teachers reported high levels of professional engagement, support, and collaboration, exclusion was described as a collective responsibility, and a problem that affected the whole community. Teachers in School L and School M, described working across departments to develop strategies for supporting students, and relying heavily on the information exchanged and shared amongst their colleagues. In the higher-excluding schools, where the staff culture was divided and communication constrained, teachers worked in isolated groups and did not appear to benefit from the quality of information and level of awareness of the staff in School L and School M. In School R and School S, teachers conveyed less optimistic views about whether exclusion could be prevented. The low levels of interaction and communication made it difficult for teachers to become aware of their students outside their own classroom, to problem-

solve with colleagues at a classroom-level, and to connect their practices with those of their colleagues. As a consequence, teachers in the higher-excluding schools had a lowered staff capacity – less expertise, skills, or information – to respond to students needs, particularly those at risk of exclusion. This was reflected by the views of teachers who questioned or were unsure about the influence of their own practices for preventing exclusion.

The effects of having a strong professional community within the school appear to enable teachers to share and exchange information widely and openly, which seems to increase and encourage teachers’ levels of awareness of and involvement in those students experiencing difficulties – both in terms of pupils’ home and personal circumstances and by weighing in on the decisions made in school and feelings of involvement in critical areas of policy, such as behaviour and discipline.

### 7.6.3 Differences in behaviour and discipline policies

Table 7.5 compares the different policy approaches to behaviour and discipline in the higher- and lower-excluding schools.

TABLE 7.5 Key differences in the behavioural and discipline policies between the high- and low- excluding schools		
	High-excluding (School R and School S)	Low-excluding (School L and School M)
Approach to behaviour	<i>Sanction-driven</i>	<i>Value-driven</i>
Purpose of intervention	<i>To control behaviour</i>	<i>To help pupil learning</i>

Aim of procedures	<i>Containment Removal</i>	<i>Support</i>
Goal of policy	<i>Consistency and uniformity</i>	<i>Suitability and flexibility</i>
How policy is developed	<i>In accordance with current guidance</i>	<i>Adapted to fit changing needs of pupils and teachers</i>

In the higher excluding schools, approaches to discipline and behaviour were defined largely in terms of the conduct and rules that pupils were expected to follow and obey in the classroom and the sanctions that were imposed if a student did not comply. These policies emphasised conformity and consistency in following a set of rigid procedures. In School R and School S, policies were described as being developed at the senior management level, which needed to be implemented and enforced at the classroom level. Policies and procedures in the higher excluding schools tended to be hierarchical and bureaucratic in their development and implementation, which was also reflected in how teachers communicated and reported difficulties. Procedures described by teachers depended largely on form filling and action depended on whether management followed up the form. In both School R and School S, teachers showed examples of a range of multi-coloured forms that needed to be filled out and submitted to senior managers in order to access specialised support.

Teachers in both schools described time as a major constraint. Teachers described “not having the time to fill out” these forms and “not being followed up by senior managers”. Teachers defined the effectiveness of their school’s behavioural policy in terms of consistency – of their colleagues in following procedures and of their

managers to following up the paperwork which they filled out by teachers. Teachers tended to explain aspects of their behaviour and discipline policy as being enforced, rather than being instilled through values.

A common practice and strategy described and observed was for school managers to remove pupils who were perceived as disruptive from their classroom. These disciplinary procedures were aimed at punishing the student and removing the student from the classroom situation. Finally, a major driver of policy was the perceived need to align the school's own policies and practices with national government policy (DfEE/DfES and OFSTED). As such, goals for behaviour and discipline were defined in terms of targets and guidance set externally – nationally (by DfEE/DfES) and locally (by the LEA). Staff perceived discipline and behaviour as major barriers to learning and achievement, and described their major difficulties with pupils who “failed” or “refused” to follow school rules.

By contrast, in School L and School M, staff described behaviour and discipline as reflecting a set of values, and being part of a wider responsibility to the community as well as a teacher's classroom responsibility. Teachers in the school did not detail the use of punishments to discourage behaviour, but rather described the need to support and involve students to become part of the community. Policies were also flexible and highly dependent on the individual student, and according to staff, what constituted “good” behaviour varied from individual to individual. In both schools, staff described strategies for improving behaviour in terms of understanding the

student's needs and finding out about the nature of their problems. In the lower-excluding schools, a value-driven approach to behaviour encouraged staff and students to have a shared set of understandings and expectations, rather than rigidly set rules. Students who experienced difficulties with their behaviour, for example, were offered a range of supports within school, rather than a punishment or sanction. This meant that teachers were encouraged to focus on learning, rather than just behaviour. Adapting policy to fit the changing needs of pupils also encouraged teachers in the lower-excluding schools to take a more individualised approach in dealing with behaviour and discipline, and to take a more flexible approach in providing support.

The issue here is the effect that policies have in shaping and defining how teachers view and respond to students' individual needs. In the higher-excluding schools, a dominantly bureaucratic approach to discipline and behaviour created a rigid culture of compliance in the school in which teachers followed a set of procedures to maintain control and used a continuum of increasing sanctions, which ultimately led to exclusion. The need for consistency over flexibility constrained, rather than enabled teachers' capacity to develop ways of responding to student's individual needs. In the lower excluding schools, however, a value-driven approach to policy encouraged a view of behaviour and discipline that was defined in terms of expectations that were instilled in students rather than enforced through a set of rules and procedures. The context in the lower-excluding schools was one in which teachers viewed exclusion as a breakdown in values important to the community,

rather than a form of punishment and violation and infraction of rules. Both schools indicated awareness about the changes and pressures of national policy, but expressed little worries about adapting their own practices. In School L, teachers similarly expressed “already doing ... what is being recommended as good practice”. In School M, teachers said, “Yes, we know how to take what the government tells us to do and make it work for our students and needs”.

#### 7.6.4 Differences in the support available to pupils and teachers

The fourth area of analysis – the structures available for supporting students and teachers – reveals the importance of having multi-layered and flexible systems as a strategy for preventing exclusion. Table 7.6 highlights the key differences between the supports in each of the schools:

	<b>High-excluding (School R and School S)</b>	<b>Low-excluding (School L and School M)</b>
<b>Goal of support</b>	<i>To raise achievement and prevent exclusion.</i>  <i>To improve behaviour.</i>	<i>To improve student learning and to identify areas in which students could be successful.</i>  <i>To improve teaching and to help teachers' address students' needs.</i>
<b>Type of support</b>	<i>Specialised programmes, dependent upon external workers or space and funding in on-site units.</i>	<i>Multiple types and sources.</i>
<b>How support is activated</b>	<i>When pupil shows signs of difficulty, is at risk of exclusion, or after having been temporarily excluded.</i>	<i>When pupils begin school, through links with primary school.</i>
<b>How support is developed</b>	<i>By specialised teachers who work with students outside of school or out of class.</i>	<i>By teams of teachers who monitor students across their lessons.</i>

In the high-excluding schools, the focus of support was aimed at improving how students behaved in the classroom and to help them to “fit into the curriculum”, rather than to differentiate learning. The structures for supporting students comprised largely of ad hoc programmes and LEA-based support workers who worked individually with students outside the classroom and communicated with single teachers (such as the SENCO) and not with teams of teachers. This approach meant that the layer of support described by teachers in the higher-excluding schools did not necessarily fit well with the workings and needs of teachers. Teachers seemed to suggest that when support was exhausted, exclusion was inevitable. In the higher-excluding schools, teachers appeared to look toward senior management in responding to pupils’ difficulties their classroom, They assign the problem to other types of support, e.g. look for special support assistants, pupil referral teachers. In the high-excluding schools, teachers viewed the support as being separate from their own practice, and did not indicate the need to collaborate with other staff or change their own practice. Few suggested that changes in their own practice could make any difference in their teaching.

In School L and School M, teachers similarly emphasised the need to provide students with individualised support for learning and indicated a strong cohesion of beliefs about what they felt constituted good practice. A common perception amongst teachers in these low-excluding schools was the need to make the curriculum relevant through differentiation, rather than disapplication. Teachers also described the relationship between teacher and pupil as a key component of the

teaching and learning process and described similarly their attempts within the school to focus on pupil's individual strengths and interests. In School L and School M, teachers also described their systems for supporting students as being shaped by individual needs. As such the strategies, goals, and type of support provided to students appeared to vary from individual to individual. For some students, support included academic tutoring and counselling. For others, support included a further education course, a reduced timetable, and more time with fewer teachers. These structures and systems were also described as flexible and dependent upon information that was shared between teachers. These structures were described as "fluid" and strategies described as "always changing" as a result of constant feedback. Teachers also described their school as having a responsibility for providing support to pupils who were experiencing difficulties and problems in the classroom. This responsibility did not appear to be assigned to one individual or senior management, but was described as being both a whole School responsibility as well as part of their individual responsibility. This view emerged most strongly in School M, where teachers described their individual actions in the classroom as having a direct impact on their colleagues. In both School L and School M, teams of teachers played a key role in how support was structured, devised, and monitored.

The key issue here is not simply the availability of support, which all four schools had in place, but the extent to which the support was individualised, classroom-based and involved teachers – thereby affecting the extent to which teachers viewed

exclusion as a problem linked to learning, and not just behaviour. In the lower-excluding schools, the main aim of support was to help students understand the connection between behaviour and their learning (for example, through counselling), and to assist teachers with integrating and adapting the curriculum around students' individual needs. Another key strategy in the lower-excluding schools was utilising external support (LEA based staff) to improve teachers' knowledge in specialised areas and to increase staff capacity to provide and deliver the support. This enabled teachers to feel that they had access to the support necessary for developing alternatives to exclusion. In the higher-excluding schools, an externally-driven system of support, involved taking the student out of the classroom and school and providing alternatives. Although teachers described the goal of the support as integration, the criteria for success were defined in terms of behaviour, reinforcing the view that exclusion resulted from a failure of students to improve behaviour, rather than to consider whether support had been devised flexibly and more crucially, aimed at improving learning.

#### **7.6.5 Differences in school ethos**

The fifth and final issue of analysis in the case studies – school ethos – reveals how the goals and values of the school – in influencing the expectations and relationships amongst staff and students, define the context in which exclusion occurs. In the lower-excluding schools, the ethos and mission of the school was aimed at encouraging an inclusive learning culture which celebrated the progress, potential, and diversity of their students and provided opportunities for students to

participate in the decisions and influence policies in the school. Staff described their responsibilities and role as being inclusive and responsive to their students' needs, which were described in relation to pupils' social and family backgrounds. There was also an expressed recognition amongst staff as well as the structures in place within the school about the importance of trust and positive communication between pupils, parents, and teachers. School L, for example, operated a "parent surgery" and used newsletters published in multiple languages to encourage and to increase parental involvement and awareness, and to build school pride. In both schools, staff described their challenges in terms of their student's social backgrounds, emphasising the need to recognise their students' progress and potential, rather than their failures and inadequacies.

In the higher-excluding schools, staff perceived similarly the limitations and challenges that students presented due to their socially deprived backgrounds as their biggest challenges. However, staff expressed mixed opinions and tended to be less optimistic in describing their own role in the classroom, and the influence of the school in general. In these schools, staff tended to be concerned with meeting national targets. The leadership and management of the school was also results-oriented, and described success in terms of achievement on exams. In both schools, staff expressed the view that better pupils would help to attain better results for the school.

Amongst the higher-excluding schools, the goals and expectations for pupils were defined externally, in terms of government's national examination targets. Staff in these school tended to view such exam-based goals as unobtainable for their students, and thus saw their own classroom practices as making little difference or having no effect for pupils whose behaviour had placed them at risk of exclusion. In the absence of a school-wide vision and mission, teachers in the higher-excluding schools described the likelihood for achieving success and progress in narrow terms. Pupil expectations were defined in relation to the national targets rather than the potential and progress of individual pupils. Without a school-wide vision that was separate from the government's own terms, teachers appeared pessimistic, expecting less from pupils whose behavioural difficulties posed a threat to other pupils' learning. This view reinforced the view that exclusion was necessary, in order to allow other pupils to learn and succeed.

The key issue here is the impact that the goals, values, and vision within a school has on teachers' expectations – how they define their students progress, strengths, weaknesses, success, and failures – thereby influencing defining what teachers believe can be accomplished with their students. In all four schools, staff described their expectations as being influenced by their students' social backgrounds. However, the clarity of the school's vision and goals also raises a number of implications for how teachers interacted and communicated with their students, thereby defining the context in which exclusion occurs.

In the lower-excluding schools, a school-wide mission and goals aimed at building self-esteem and celebrating progress and diversity provided staff and students with a collective sense of purpose and multiple opportunities for encouraging and rewarding pupils. The leadership in these schools were clear in their convictions about maintaining a school-wide ethos built on positive, individual relationships between students and teachers. This vision provided the staff with the added incentive to develop individualised strategies for supporting students and also helped to reinforce the need to resist exclusion. In the higher-excluding schools, the goals, values, and vision of the school were at best, undeveloped and uncertain; at worst, unclear. The implications of this had profound consequences for the capacity of teachers in School R and School S, who described their goals and indicators for success as being driven by national set of targets and pressures. In the absence of a strong vision and culture, teachers did not appear to view their school as mediating these pressures, and described exclusion as being difficult to resist and prevent in this context.

McManus's (1995) comparison of the social relations of schools with high- and low- exclusion rates, revealed findings of a similar nature – particularly in analysing how schools developed its policies and ethos. Using a theoretical framework based on Durkheim, McManus (1995) suggested that schools with high-exclusion rates exhibited “mechanical solidarity” (where the ethos and division of work within the school was driven by mechanistic procedures that devalued the individual) and schools with low exclusion rates as having “organic solidarity” (described in terms

of a “unity and capacity for action ...[which] increased in proportion to the increasing individualisation of its parts”).

Of particular resonance to my findings is McManus’s description of the effects of “organic solidarity” and “mechanical solidarity” on how teachers view and respond to students. McManus (1995) explains that where solidarity is “organic”, there will be a “willingness to let the uncertain line be crossed and re-crossed before a pupil is finally excluded”. This point provides some explanation, in part, the ways in which a school’s policies and ethos can enable teachers to have greater tolerance, and thereby, higher resistance to using exclusion and increased capacity for developing strategies aimed at the individual pupil.

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## *CHAPTER EIGHT*

### **Toward a Contextual Theory of School Exclusion**

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#### **8.0 Chapter overview**

This final chapter draws on the themes and insights that have emerged from the conclusions and findings of different parts of the study to illuminate the causes and dynamics of exclusion from school. In this chapter, I offer a number of possible theories about the ways in which school exclusion is influenced by a complex interaction of teacher capacity, school organisation and national policy. A critical aspect of understanding the nature of these dynamics and their relationship to school exclusion, I conclude, lies in how teachers perceive and respond to their students; and also in how the needs of students *as well as* teachers are supported within the school and by the wider system. The interactions of these perceptions, actions, and forces, I argue, make up the multi-layered context of exclusion.

This chapter is organised into five sections. Section 8.1 provides a summary discussion of the main conclusions from the investigations reported in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. Section 8.2 “Why Teachers Matter” considers the central importance of teachers’ perspectives and reflects on the role that teacher capacity plays in the context of school exclusion. Section 8.3, “How Schools Make A Difference” reflects on the ways in which a school, through its organisational

culture, practices, and structures can activate, aggravate, or prevent exclusion. Section 8.4, “The Impact of National Policy on Exclusion” concludes that the pressures of national policy are central to context in which exclusion occurs. Section 8.5, “Toward A System of Less Exclusions” examine the wider implications for the future of school and teacher practices, national policy, and research.

## **8.1 A summary of key findings**

The five major conclusions of the study are summarised here:

**Conclusion 1. Teachers have a complex conceptualisation of exclusion, indicating varying levels of capacity for resisting exclusion.**

Teachers view exclusion as a complex phenomenon. While the majority of teachers associated exclusion with disruptive and difficult behaviour – a finding that is not surprising given the behaviourist view in which the procedural and legal definition of exclusion is located – nearly every teacher described a wider context in which exclusion occurred. Teachers did not associate exclusion with a single cause or factor, but offered multiple explanations, linking the causes and dynamics of exclusion to a range of pupil-, school, and national policy factors. Most teachers also acknowledged that whether exclusion occurred could also depend on how a student’s behaviour and needs were interpreted and supported within the school. In this sense, teachers confirmed the role of school organisation and national policy as crucial influences in how exclusion was used and viewed.

An important aspect to these findings was that individual teachers' perceptions varied in the extent to which they felt exclusion could be resisted or prevented within their own school and classroom context. In describing how particular aspects of the school could activate, aggravate, or help prevent exclusion, differences emerged in how individual teachers: 1) viewed their role and responsibility in relation to exclusion, and 2) assessed their individual capacity to support students, particularly those at risk of exclusion. Here it became apparent that these views reflected their experiences and attitudes in their own school, a variance that was highlighted by comparing the views of teachers in the higher- and lower-excluding schools. Although teachers in both schools described exclusion as a process that was necessary to use in certain circumstances, teachers in the higher-excluding schools described their policies in terms of a series of escalating sanctions that inevitably led to exclusion.

Teachers in these schools tended to:

- view exclusion as a decision made by senior managers;
- describe the resources and staffing in their school as limited;
- depend on support and programmes which removed pupils from the classroom; and
- suggest that the level of behaviour and social challenges was beyond the scope of classroom teachers to address.

In this sense, teachers in the higher-excluding schools indicated a lowered capacity for resisting exclusion. In contrast, teachers in the lower-excluding schools tended to:

- view exclusion as a decision that involved senior managers after a range of efforts to support a student, by teachers and within the school, had been exhausted;
- describe a range of structures and systems designed for supporting students and teachers;
- exchange with colleagues information and strategies to understand the needs of their students;
- suggest that behaviour could be improved within the school through individualised support and the willingness of staff.

In this sense, teachers in the lower-excluding schools indicated a higher capacity for preventing and resisting exclusion.

**Conclusion 2. Schools vary in their exclusion rates and patterns, a variance that is meaningful, significant, and partly explained by the mediation of policy.**

The analysis and review of permanent exclusion rates of 89 secondary schools in one local educational authority and the comparison of schools based on pupil characteristics (free school meals, special educational needs, and ethnic minority) showed that schools with similar student profiles differed in their rates of exclusion. The present study found that the differences in school exclusion rates and practices also reflect differences in how schools interpret national and local policies. Schools respond “strategically” to the incentives and sanctions that have been aimed at

reducing exclusion. Evidence of schools' differing responses to local and national policies occurred in three areas: 1) the allocation and spending of funds devolved from the LEA to reduce exclusion; 2) the hiring and use of LEA-based specialist staff assigned to support pupils at risk of exclusion; and 3) the interpretation and translation of national government guidance into school-level procedures. Two types of strategic responses to policy incentives and guidance aimed at exclusion are summarised here:

- **Strategic translation of policy guidance.** The study concludes that schools will differ in how they perceive and interpret policy guidance – some schools apply a strict and narrow interpretation following guidance very closely; while other schools will have a more broad interpretation, depending on how exclusion is viewed and used in the school.
- **Strategic use of resources.** The study concludes that schools will strategically allocate funding and respond to incentives differently, depending on the management's view and schools' practices regarding exclusion. Schools, therefore, will also respond, positively or negatively, to policy incentives and services offered by the LEA, even if intention is to provide support.

The main implication of these strategic responses is that schools that are already effective and successful in preventing exclusion will be more likely to know how and where to use funds and staffing to strengthen practice. The schools with an unclear goals, weak and haphazard structures for support will have staff and management that is less confident about the ability to resist exclusion, therefore setting aside funds in anticipation of having to resort to exclusion. Likewise,

schools with bureaucratic policies and rigid structures will be more likely to take a strict interpretation of guidance, and be less flexible in adapting policy. A telling example of this was found in School R, which used in a letter informing a parent about an exclusion, the exact wording and format provided by the LEA.

**Conclusion 3. The organisational context of a school can activate, aggravate, or prevent how exclusion is used and viewed.**

The views of teachers suggested that: 1) leadership and management, 2) behaviour and discipline policies, 3) staff culture and communication; 4) the support provided to students; and 5) school ethos were factors that could activate, aggravate, or help prevent exclusion. A case study analysis of these organisational features in the four secondary schools found differences between the schools that were high- and low-excluding.

The characteristics of low-excluding schools included:

- Management that encouraged teachers to take on leadership roles and school-wide responsibility.
- Staff culture that was collaborative, team-oriented, and supported by communication.
- Behaviour and discipline policies that were based on community-defined expectations and values.
- Support that was flexible, adaptable, and learner-centred, and aimed at providing individualised support.
- School ethos aimed at inclusion, and goals that rewarded progress and celebrated individual diversity.

The characteristics of higher-excluding schools included:

- Leadership that was heavily managerial and imposed decisions on teachers and students.
- Staff culture that was fragmented and divided.
- Behaviour and discipline policies that were rule-driven, rigid, and sanction-based.
- Support targeting behaviour and aimed at placing pupils in programmes or units outside of school.
- School values and goals that were unclear and lacked a sense of community.

The implications of these differences for preventing and aggravating exclusion is summarised in Table 8.1:

<b>Table 8.1</b> <b>School organisational influences on exclusion:</b> <b>A merging of themes from teacher interviews and school case studies</b>		
<b>Area of school organisation</b>	<b>Aggravating exclusion</b>	<b>Preventing exclusion</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	<i>Hierarchical, heavily managerial, top-down and directive</i>	<i>Delegating, consensus-building</i>
<b>Behaviour and discipline policies</b>	<i>Emphasis on procedures and rules. Rigid, and compliance-driven,</i>	<i>Emphasis on values Flexible, value-driven,</i>
<b>Staff culture and communication</b>	<i>Fragmentation, divisiveness, isolation</i>	<i>Supportive, collaborative, collegial</i>
<b>Level and quality of support</b>	<i>Aimed at behaviour and removing from mainstream</i>	<i>Holistic, flexible, adaptable, individualised, learner-centred.</i>
<b>School mission, ethos and goals</b>	<i>Unclear ethos and values Goals based on national targets Pressure to raise attainment.</i>	<i>Cohesive and shared values Inclusive, community-based Emphasis on progress.</i>

**Conclusion 4. The impact of national policies, by constraining teachers' time, flexibility, and autonomy, contributes to the pressures that aggravate exclusion.**

The study found that teachers believe that pressures introduced into the school, and more critically, into the teaching and learning process contributed negatively to the increased use and perceived need for exclusion. These pressures were linked to the impact of five national policies: 1) the pace and level of prescription from National Curriculum; 2) the pressures to pass OfSTED inspection; 3) the pressure to improve ranking in the publication of league tables; 4) the pressure to prepare students for GCSEs exams; and 5) the pressure from parental choice and competition.

These effects of these policies and pressures were described as having:

- Lowered the tolerance for behaviour perceived as disrupting learning during exams and inspection.
- Created difficulties in adapting the content and pace of the curriculum to meet individual needs
- Increased the pressures to demonstrate outcomes, raise attainment, and meet targets
- Reduced the time for preparation, reflection, and collaboration

These findings suggest that pressures that aggravate exclusion include:

- *Pressures to comply* – Pressures to follow national government guidance and to implement national initiatives and directives imposed by the national government and senior management.
- *Pressures to align* – Closely linked with the pressures to comply is the pressures to change practices in order to cover scope and sequence of National Curriculum.
- *Pressures to perform* – Pressures to pass inspection as well as to demonstrate and raise results on national tests and league tables.

- *Pressures to compete* — Market-driven pressures were viewed as creating competition between schools in order to attract good” pupils and to achieve a “balanced” student intake.

What teachers also detailed in the study were the consequences of these national policies and pressures for students, which, as one teacher suggested, “increased the likelihood for failure, rather than success”. However, what was particularly striking was that teachers differed in how they felt their *own* practice and school had been affected by the impact of national policy. Although teachers across all four schools appeared to acknowledge a national policy climate as having constrained their overall level of flexibility and professional autonomy, the pressures appeared to be more acutely felt by teachers in the higher-excluding schools. Here again, the concept of local mediation is supported.

## **8.2 Why teachers matter: Enabling the capacity to resist exclusion**

Developing a contextual theory of exclusion requires further consideration about what the study’s investigations imply for the theorisation of two key constructs: the role of teacher capacity and the contextual influences of school organisation and national policies. The study’s finding that teachers view exclusion as having multiple explanations and influences supports the notion that teachers have complex beliefs and practices, whose capacity to interpret and respond to students is not fixed, but is sensitive to context. In this sense, my earlier theorisation of teachers as “managers of dilemmas and broker of contradictions” Lampert (1985) is one that can now be more fully understood in the context of England’s national policies.

Moore et al (2002) suggests, for example, that teachers position themselves in the face of rapid and extensive educational change, drawing upon a range of strategies which combine “compliance, resistance, and pragmatism. Coldron & Smith’s (1999) contribution to this understanding of teachers is the notion that “teachers are active agents ...[who] position themselves within [a] plurality of related resources in response to needs that arise from an assessment of the circumstances in which they find themselves (p. 714). Indeed, the complexity of how teachers viewed and assessed their ability to prevent exclusion was revealed in how teachers described the dilemmas, conflicts, and tensions they experienced in relation to the effects of national policies on their practices.

What might explain the different views of teachers and their varying levels of capacity to resist exclusion? One explanation points to school organisation and the effects that professional community and collaboration can have in enabling teachers to understand and support their pupils’ needs. In the low-excluding schools, the school organisational setting was one where teachers appeared to thrive professionally – empowered by the knowledge and practices shared through a collaborative staff culture, enabling them further to support students’ individual needs. This was evident in the ways in which teachers in School L and School M described and were observed participating in a range of school-wide decisions about policy and working cross-departmentally to devise strategies to support students. The kinds of highly collaborative activities in which teachers were involved in the

lower-excluding schools could be described as “capacity-building”. Further examples of these types of activities were revealed in teachers’ descriptions of their increased participation, decision-making and involvement in policy.

In contrast, teachers in the higher-excluding schools described having little influence over decisions in the school, few opportunities for collaboration, and a constrained ability to exercise judgement over key areas of their practice. This context was one in which teachers indicated a lowered capacity for developing strategies aimed at preventing exclusion. The management and organisational context in these schools was aimed at control, creating what Linda McNeil described as a “contradiction of control” (1986), confusing the symptoms of disruptive behaviour as “out of control ... and instituting more controls, making policies even more impersonal” (1988, p. 334). The consequences for the relationships between teachers and students were evident in the nature of the school’s behaviour policies, and in how teachers described and were observed using strategies that McNeil describes as “‘defensive teaching’...the tendency of teachers, where controlling goals overwhelm educational purposes, to accommodate to controls...in order to gain compliance” (2000, xxviii).

The theory being suggested here is that in the multi-layered context of exclusion, both the national and local layers play a part. A teacher’s capacity to resist exclusion is not only powerfully mediated by the specific policies, processes, and practices within their school but can also be simultaneously aggravated by the

pressures of national policies, which can constrain teachers' time and flexibility in responding to the needs of their students. The extent to which a school can enable a teacher's capacity can therefore affect how teachers resist and prevent exclusion.

### **8.2.1 Re-theorising teacher capacity in the context of exclusion**

The notion of capacity, as I defined earlier in Chapter 3, is one that might be "re-theorised" in light of the study's findings. First, the notion of teacher capacity, I suggest, is not individually situated, pre-determined, or fixed, but highly relational and contextual. In other words, a teacher's capacity is a concept that is embedded and influenced by a range of contextual factors. The study found that teacher's ability to resist and prevent exclusion can either be enabled and constrained by the organisational context of schools and the interaction of national policies. In this sense, in order for capacity to have sensitivity to context, its dimensions cannot all be located at an individual level, a stance that needs to be repositioned from Goertz et al's (1996) individuated construction of teacher capacity. In the context of exclusion, a point made earlier in Chapter 3, "that individual capacity interacts and is interdependent with organisational capacity" (Ibid, p.5) is worth emphasising again here.

I suggest here a refinement of the dimensions of capacity to illuminate the specific aspects of teachers' knowledge, skills, and beliefs that enabled – at *both a school and an individual level* – teachers' capacities to resist and prevent exclusion:

- *A capacity for collaboration.* A specific skill and practice that facilitated teachers' levels of awareness and their responsiveness to their students' needs in the low-excluding schools was collaboration. Rosenholtz (1989) suggests that teachers who work in highly collaborative environments are more likely to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to cope with the pressures of teaching, learning, and policy. Rosenholtz's (1989) study on teachers' workplace conditions found that teachers who had structured opportunities to engage in shared decision-making and collaborated with colleagues 1) described being individually supported within the classroom; 2) appeared highly aware and empathetic towards their students' needs, and 3) conveyed a willingness to problem-solve and devise solutions with colleagues. Evidence of similar benefits was reported by teachers in the low-excluding schools.
  
- *A capacity for problem-solving.* This notion describes the ability of teachers to continuously gather and access information about their students, integrate that knowledge into their classroom practices, and transform and share that knowledge back to their colleagues to address problems that arise with pupils. This process was revealed in how teachers in the lower-excluding schools combined multiple strategies of communication and collaboration – as was indicated by a teacher in School M who said, “We get information about our students, any which way we can” and another in School L who explained, “We exchange knowledge ... we're about solving problems”.

- *A capacity for understanding individuals.* This refers to the capacity to view pupils as individuals, which is essential for supporting the needs of a student at risk of exclusion. This capacity is facilitated by the relationships between and amongst staff and students – described and observed by the teachers in the low-excluding schools who indicated a higher level of empathy and willingness to adapt their practices in relation to the needs of an individual pupil. The kinds of strategies that facilitated teachers’ capacity for individual understanding included: assessing holistically a pupil’s needs, building on students’ interests, differentiating the curriculum according individual abilities, and finding ways to recognise and reward an individual’s effort and progress. This aspect of capacity might also be described as contributing to “personal experience” – a concept which Cooper, et al (2000) suggests “plays a central part in the dynamics of exclusion ... and [refers to] the continuous acts of meaning making that teachers and students engage in throughout the school day ... every day” (p.185).

Although I suggested and described teachers as having “low” and “high” capacity, in re-theorising the notion of capacity, it is now apparent that within the context of exclusion, capacity is not situated within an individual or at an organisational level – it is both. Furthermore, these areas of capacity are not mutually exclusive, but inter-dependent. More crucially, as revealed by teachers’ perceptions and schools’ practices, capacity is actively facilitated (or constrained) not by a single factor, but by a combination of factors within a school’s organisational context.

In the lower-excluding schools, it was the interdependence of delegating leadership and management, a strong professional community, pupil- and learner- centred policies, and a multi-layered systems of supports which enabled teachers with the areas of capacity – the knowledge, skills, personal disposition, attitudes – to develop strategies for preventing and resisting exclusion. My view is that in the context of school exclusion, the effects of particular organisational features cannot be separated out.

### **8.3 How schools make a difference: The mediating role of organisational context**

Reviews of research studies conducted in England and abroad suggest that a school's organisational setting affects teachers and significantly shapes for students the learning experience (for a review, see Lee et al, 1993). We know, for example, that a school's context influences the relationships within a school, and shapes how teachers and students interact and that the character of the professional community in which teachers work heavily mediates their responses to their students (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

This study's findings resonate with Hart et al (1995) Galloway (1995), and McManus (1995), studies which found that school variance in exclusion rates and patterns are not fully explained by student intake, but by differences at the school

structures, and ethos affects teachers' levels of tolerance, responsiveness, awareness and understanding of their students' needs.

### **8.3.1 School stance on policy influences teacher capacity**

The study concludes that how a school conceptualises and develops policy affects what teachers feel they can, should, and are able to tolerate. What teachers are able to tolerate in the classroom, whether it stems from behaviour or an academic difficulty, is a key factor that appears to affect how and when exclusion occurs. The study found that the kinds of behavioural policies and disciplinary procedures played a critical role in how teachers perceived their students, what was expected, and how they responded. High-excluding schools that had a rigid, bureaucratic approach to policy developed practices that emphasised compliance and followed an escalating process of sanctions, an approach which could inevitably result in exclusion for students who repeatedly did not follow the school's rules. Although some individual teachers in these schools described having a personal threshold that was higher than their colleagues, the nature of the school's policies perpetuated an authoritarian atmosphere in which teachers had little choice but to apply the rules in a consistent manner. In contrast, the low-excluding schools pursued a more supportive, flexible, individualised, and less rigid approach to behaviour and discipline, developing policies that not only reflected the school's values and goals, but were developed in consultation with students – a process that did not occur in the higher-excluding schools. The implications for these different approaches to behaviour and policy resulted in two very different contexts – one in which teachers

were concerned with consistency and uniformity; another that was aimed at instilling values and improving individual participation in the school.

### **8.3.2 School stance on communication influences teacher capacity**

The study found that how a school facilitates communication and collaboration amongst staff affects teachers' levels of knowledge and awareness about their students' needs. How teachers respond to pupils depends crucially on what teachers know about their pupils' individual needs, how teachers become aware of these needs, and teachers' desire for and access to such information. Here the study revealed how, in the lower-excluding schools, high levels of staff communication, teacher interaction, and collaboration enabled teachers to be highly aware of their students' home backgrounds and family circumstances. In the low-excluding schools, a strong professional community, and highly supportive staff culture facilitated greater levels of awareness than the staff in the higher-excluding schools. In the high-excluding schools, information about students was not openly shared with teachers, as management expressed concerns about confidentiality. A constrained approach to communication appeared to discourage teachers from knowing, and understanding, the particular needs of individual students.

### **8.3.3 School structures for support influences teacher capacity**

The study concludes that how a school designs its systems for supporting its pupils will affect whether teachers can act flexibly and responsively to students' individual needs. The nature and type of support available to students and teachers varied

between the schools, revealing differences in the kinds of skills and strategies that teachers used to prevent exclusion. In the low-excluding schools, support could be described as “multi-layered” (Riley & Rustique-Forrester, 2002) – aimed at reducing disaffection and improving students’ opportunities for learning. A flexible and holistic approach for providing support further enabled teachers to target students’ particular needs and to be individually responsive. As such, teachers attributed the level of support in their school as a key factor in their capacity to resist exclusion. However, in the high-excluding schools, support was aimed primarily at improving student’s behaviour and involved placing students in a unit, room, or programme that took pupils out of the classroom and mainstream curriculum. Although there was a cadre of specialised staff working throughout the school and with individual pupils, these specialist teachers’ communications with staff were haphazard and infrequent and information was not as openly shared as in the lower-excluding schools.

#### **8.3.4 School ethos influences teacher capacity**

The study concludes that the ethos in a school affects how teachers view their role and responsibility in relation to students. A key theme that emerged in comparing the ethos of the low- and higher-excluding schools was the values and goals that underpinned the school’s culture, policies, and practices. In School L and School M, the values emphasised participation and supported individual learning – beliefs reflected by the staff culture and reflected throughout the ethos of the school. In these schools, teachers viewed exclusion as a community issue, rather than an

isolated problem. Teachers described supporting their colleagues and individual students as a collective role. The presence of these shared values seemed to drive teachers to pursue goals and practices that were not defined in terms of national policy, but were, as one headteacher put it, “about what we value, rather than what the government wants”. In contrast, a lack of clear values and goals in the higher-excluding schools seemed to exacerbate the pressures felt by staff and students. This was evident in how the leadership and management in School R and School S defined their “targets” for the school and the pressures teachers described in attempting to meet these externally-devised targets. In these schools, exclusion was not viewed as a collective responsibility, but as one teacher said “down to what you did in your own classroom”.

### **8.3.5 School stance influences how teachers interact with pupils**

The study concludes that the impact of a school is not through separately defined practices, but occurs through a confluence. A theme that resonated in comparing the organisational contexts of the low- and higher-excluding schools was how embedded and connected the organisational features were in the daily interactions and relationships between and amongst students and teachers. In the high-excluding school, a staff culture that was fearful and frantic, such as that in School S, was one that affected the overall ethos within the school and impinged on the level of support available to both students and staff. Worries over inspection and targets created an atmosphere of little willingness or patience to spend time helping or supporting students outside of the classroom. In School R, an ethos in which, as

one teacher admitted, “there is no culture of celebration”, meant that teachers did not smile during assembly. In contrast, in the low-excluding schools, an ethos of “helping pupils to succeed” (School M) and where pupils and staff are given recognition for their work” (School L) was evident in teachers saying hello and stopping to ask students how they were doing.

## **8.4 Linking teacher capacity, school context, and national policy pressures**

In this section, I attempt to link the concepts of teacher capacity, school context, national policy pressures to exclusion – suggesting that the interaction of teacher capacity and school organisation influences the context in which exclusion occurs by affecting how schools and teachers cope with and mediate the external pressures of national policy.

### **8.4.1 Mediating the pressures of exclusion: A strategy of resistance?**

An important basis for suggesting a theoretical link between national policies and exclusion was the finding that nearly every teacher believed that national policy had negatively impacted on how schools use exclusion. The study found, however, that within this same interpretation of a national policy context, teachers differed in how the impact of national policies affected their own practices within their school. Although teachers across all four schools similarly and widely observed how national policies had constrained for the teaching profession in general, overall level of professional autonomy, flexibility, and time for planning and collaboration,

the effects of these pressures appeared to be more acutely felt by teachers in the higher-excluding schools. For example, teachers in the higher-excluding schools described the need to “meet targets” and “get out of special measures” as their core challenge. As such, there was a strong concern and worry expressed by the staff in these schools about the extent to which their schools’ internal practices and procedures reflected national guidance. In contrast, teachers in the lower-excluding schools described resisting the pressures of national policy. This was powerfully illustrated by one teacher who explained “following [national requirements] because we have to, but adapting because we can [and] for the sake of our pupils’ needs”. In a national policy climate characterised by pressures to keep up with the pace and curriculum, adapting the curriculum to suit the particular pace and interests of the class is a strategy of resistance. In other words, teachers must come up with a range of coping strategies to cope with the tensions and contradictions created by the system’s pressures. In re-theorising the notion of capacity, it is now apparent that within the context of exclusion, capacity is not situated within an individual or organisational level – it is a relational construct influenced also by national policy context. In a national context where schools and teachers operate in a “performance culture” and “the stakes are high” (Gleeson & Husbands, 2001, p. 1), the possibility of developing alternatives to exclusion must take into account the continuing pressures surrounding schools and teachers.

What this study suggests is that for schools and teachers to resist pressures that can aggravate exclusion, they must also resist to some degree, the impact of national

policies on curriculum, assessment and accountability by adapting their practices. This resistance to exclusion could be theorised in a number of ways. One form of resistance is to be “proactive” in the form of capacity building. This strategy of “proactive resistance” was reflected in the capacity of the teachers in the low-excluding school to not be organised and driven by external forces. Proactive resistance thus encourages teachers to focus not on the external goals and targets of national policy, but on their needs as professionals and of their students. In the context of current national policies and their effects on teachers and schools, resistance and capacity-building might be seen as a process that are inextricably linked – that is by enabling capacity, teachers are able to develop practices and beliefs that allow them to resist pressures.

A second view of resistance, in the context of exclusion, is one that is clearly less promising in terms of preventing exclusion. This strategy of resistance does not sustain capacity-building, but involves reacting to national policies and their pressures. “Reactive resistance” could be found in the higher excluding schools, which were less successful in preventing exclusion. Teachers in these schools appeared to be both driven by, at the same time, constrained by pressures to align their practices and policies with national targets and requirements. Reactive resistance, in the context of exclusion, is to be organised and driven by external pressures.

#### **8.4.2 Mediating pressures through collaboration, flexibility, autonomy**

One of the key conclusions of this study is that school context has an important bearing on how teachers cope with and mediate the pressures and demands of national policies, thereby characterising the context in which exclusion occurs. Why? In the context of pressures from accountability, how a teacher understands and responds to his or students, depends critically on the structures within the school and the information available from colleagues and staff. In the context of pressures to raise attainment, whether a teachers can and should spend time on the student who needs individual attention is a dilemma that can become frustrating for both the teacher and the student. A school with meaningfully devised structures for supporting students and a collaborative staff culture that allows teachers to access this support flexibly can enable teachers to resolve this dilemma more readily than a teacher who does not have access to such resources.

When teachers are faced with a seemingly dichotomous choice – such as whether to help a struggling student make small progress, or whether to focus on those students whose results will help the school meet national targets – a school that has a series of supports and a collaborative culture is, as was evident in the School L and School M, more likely to help teachers either to balance or reject a pressure which conflicts with their professional judgement and school's ethos. Likewise, a teacher who receives support and encouragement from management and colleagues is more equipped to resolve a dilemma and to make a decision based on the school's values.

By focusing on the individual to organise and devise forms of support, teachers in the lower-excluding schools mediated away the pressure to meet national targets, by placing greater value on the individual progress and strengths. In contrast, teachers in the higher-excluding schools, in focusing on the national targets, described their challenge in terms of performance. Watkins (2001) describes this focus on attainment as emphasising the evaluation of pupil performance at the expense of learning.

The staff in lower-excluding schools appeared to mediate the effects of these pressures by 1) pursuing goals and policies based on what was valued by teachers and students; 2) focusing on individual styles of learning; and 3) enabling teacher to exercise leadership and professional judgement. In the low-excluding schools, the pressures of national policy were mediated through collaboration. Here again the differences between the higher- and lower-excluding schools revealed how the school's context played a key mediating role. Among the key features of the management, staff culture, policies, supports, and ethos in the lower-excluding schools was the emphasis and encouragement of teachers to work across departments and to use collaboration to problem-solve and share information about their students and practices in order to develop strategies for supporting students. In a national climate described by one teacher as "not trusting teachers", schools that were low-excluding created a teaching and learning environment that relied and depended on teachers exercising high levels of professional judgement. Collaboration and support helps teachers not only to interpret the implications of

implications of national policy for the practices within the school, but allows teachers to share and develop with their colleagues ways of responding to these pressures in ways that did not aggravate exclusion.

## **8.5 Toward a system of less exclusions?**

The study's contribution to research is one that has aimed at illuminating the context in which exclusion occurs – by pointing to role and influence of teacher capacity, local school practices, and national policies. Each of these layers of contextual influences suggests areas that require further study. This section presents some final thoughts and reflections about future implications for research, practices, and national policies.

### **8.5.1 Implications for research**

There are three areas in which future studies could contribute further to the views and theories suggested by this study:

- *Recasting exclusion as a problem of policy and pedagogy, not behaviour.* A central goal in developing a contextual theory of exclusion is to provide a view that will help to illuminate the conflicts, dilemmas, and tensions that teachers experience in their teaching – such as those associated with exclusion. This view was aimed at addressing a need within educational policy studies to recast problems that have largely been confined and limited to the dynamics of social

poverty and theories about behaviour toward a re-orientation of policy. Future studies on exclusion with this view might examine other areas that are crucial to both teachers, such as the role of pedagogy. This was an area that the study provides limited insight, but is a crucial dimension of the organisational context of schools that should not be ignored.

- *Further studies on teacher capacity – its dimensions and influences.* A study that draws upon my theorisation of exclusion, in seeking to understand how and why schools vary in their exclusion practices and processes, will look critically at the role and capacity of teachers. The differences between how teachers in the low-excluding school and teachers in the higher-excluding schools described their professional working conditions points strongly to the influence that schools have in their ability to resist exclusion. The notion of capacity requires far more an exploration and theorisation, in order to understand more deeply the factors that enable and constrain teachers on an organisational and individual level. The study was limited in terms of the number of teachers and schools explored and the number of school visits also limited the observation of practices. The study's conclusion that teachers require a greater capacity for collaboration, problem-solving, and individual understanding are areas that might be examined using different methods, for example, through observational methods or on a day-to-day basis to understand more deeply how teachers use collaboration to interpret and respond to their students' needs. Further

understanding of capacity and its relationship to exclusion could also be gained through other perspectives, particularly through the voice of students.

- *Further studies on the mediation of policy.* Future studies wishing to explore the policy-based dimensions of exclusion may want to explore the mediating influence of local policy. One area of analysis that was limited in this study and could be investigated further is the role and influence of LEAs in relation to how schools view and use exclusion. The findings reported in Chapter Five point to the role of LEAs in mediating for schools, how national policies are implemented locally, through a range of ways: 1) communicating national directives and interpreting guidance; 2) defining national targets; 3) allocating resources and staff. Also, there was some evidence from teachers, that the LEA also influenced exclusions through the appeals process, decisions about student intake, school size, admissions, and support. The role of LEAs varies in supporting schools' efforts to prevent exclusion could be examined further.

### **8.5.2 Implications for school and teacher practices**

This section highlights three areas where school and teachers need to re-examine their practices in light of the study's findings:

- *Re-examine current policy approaches to discipline and behaviour.* The current thrust of national policy has been about consistency, control and containment – notions that seemed to have their source originate from key studies on effective

schools, such as Rutter et al (1979) who described the need for “a clear set of policies” and identified a characteristic of effective schools as “consistency of behaviour expectations”. However, this study’s examination of low-excluding schools suggests that far more important than consistency and uniformity of procedures is having policies that reflected values and beliefs that promoted a sense of community, inclusion, appreciation for diversity, collaboration (rather than co-operation), and collective responsibility (rather than individual) responsibilities. The finding, however, that effective schools “regularly reviewed school policies and practices” was confirmed and illustrated further by the school’s ethos of continuous reflection and re-examination of whether approaches were meeting students’ needs.

- *Expand opportunities for students to participate and feel involved.* The value and importance of providing students with opportunities to feel involved in the school, through activities that encourage collective responsibility and individual participation has been well established and documented for over thirty years, from Rutter et al (1979) who found that schools which assigned pupils tasks of responsibility were associated with higher levels of efficacy. A major theme in the lower-excluding schools concerned the value and emphasis placed on students – as individuals and members of the school community. These schools suggest that pupil participation does not necessarily come about through one-off opportunities or outside programmes that are imported into the school. Rather, the engagement of pupils requires the engagement of teachers in considering

how pupil participation is facilitated at an individual level and integrated into the whole ethos of the school. Here again, the theme of teacher collaboration, flexibility, and autonomy is key. Without a culture in which teachers feel they can participate and have influence over key decisions in the school, neither will pupils.

- *Structure schools around teachers' and students' needs.* To build the capacity to resist exclusion, schools need to be organised in such a way that the processes and practices in the school are driven centrally by teachers' and students' needs, rather than by national policy. This involves providing systems for teachers to collaborate and communicate, providing opportunities for continuing professional development and training. The biggest constraints to these, according to teachers, were not simply a matter of resources, but of collegial support and time.

### **8.5.3 Implications for national policies and solutions**

What we do about this tension, is, of course, an immensely difficult matter. But what we cannot do is pretend it does not exist, wish it away by sheer strength of will, or simply fail to see there is a fundamentally important issue to be addressed. (Fielding, 2001, p. 10).

To move toward a system of less exclusions, policymakers must recognise the tensions created by the current policies in place, re-examine the confluent policy climate in which schooling is based, and rethink the consequences that pressures

can have on the capacity of teachers to be responsive to pupils. Darling-Hammond (1998) in pointing out the effects of accountability on schools warns of the consequences for teachers:

A vicious cycle is launched: the more paperwork teachers are asked to do, the less time they have for teaching; the less time for teaching, the less learning occurs; the less learning, the more the demand for paperwork intended to ensure that teachers are teaching as the bureaucracy insists they should”(p.43)

While the study suggests that schools can mediate some of these dynamics and effects of policy pressures away; a key question remains: Why should schools have to develop structures for supporting teachers’ and students’ needs in order to resist the impact of policy? As one teacher in a lower-excluding school said, “I don’t worry about the ability of the staff; I worry about the possibility that the government will find evidence to show that what we’re doing doesn’t work, even though we know it does”.

In the recent years, a number of researchers have offered a range of strategies and possible scenarios for reducing exclusion, aimed at various aspects of the educational system and schools’ practices. Parsons (1999), for example, defines the problem as a “fragmentation of effort”, and devotes an entire chapter to argue for an inter-agency and “integrated” approach to tackle disadvantage and reduce exclusion. He outlines five foci for attention – 1) agency; 2) family; 3) schools; 4) individual; and 5) criminal justice – and describes a scenario of “bringing it all together: schools, agencies, and voluntary organisations working together” (p.155). The title of Cooper et al’s (2000) study and book, *Positive Alternatives to*

*Exclusions*”, defines the problem as a need for schools to have alternatives, expressing their belief that reducing exclusions is about the development of schools’ and teachers’ practices. They observe that “there is no simple formula, or any *right way* for schools to work out developing positive alternatives to exclusion (p. 184).

A future scenario of institutions working together and of schools and teachers improving their practices to enhance the personal and learning experience for students is one certainly worth striving toward. However, there is still in these solutions, a silenced acceptance of the current thrust of national educational policies. There do not appear to be questions about whether the system and its current policies may be fundamentally flawed, or whether are just not good enough for motivating teachers to teach and students to learn in meaningful ways. My own view is that the national policy context in which agencies work together and schools and teachers develop their practices remains a critical issue.

What would a system that does not aggravate exclusion look like? It would have three core features:

- *A system that enables, rather than disables teachers.* The emphasis of policies is aimed at increasing the supports provided to schools and teachers. Changes implemented at the national level would recognise that teachers need time, collaboration, and professional development to support the process of change.
- *A system that does not attempt to standardise the practices of schools.* The emphasis of policies should be on encouraging the diversity of local practice. Such a system would value and invest in local school and teacher

based forms of evaluation. This would shift the discourse from concern about national targets to the development of local practices, which centre upon the individual needs of individual schools and pupils.

- *A system that recognises that a school's effectiveness is not easily reflected through a single measure.* Rather than continue measuring a school's effectiveness using through test-based measures which emphasise the rate and pace of results, policies on assessment would encourage the demonstration of learning in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways. Such a system views teachers *and* pupils as individual learners and recognises that a school's effectiveness can be defined and achieved through multiple ways.

What would enable the current system of schooling to reduce exclusion? It depends, I suggest, on how one defines the problem. This study suggests that exclusion be understood not as a problem requiring strategies aimed at the behaviour of students, but as a phenomenon that occurs when the capacity of schools and teachers are constrained. In the current policy climate, "There is a limit", suggests Whitty (2002) "to what schools and teachers can do". I agree almost entirely with this statement, but believe that what schools and teachers could otherwise accomplish in a different policy climate might be limitless. Schools in England can be amazing places, which are capable of overcoming social challenges and institutional barriers. However, so long as schools continue to be structured and organised in ways that are intended and designed to meet the goals of current national policies, what they can and will do is limited.

This study provides a cautionary tale of the unintended consequences that the interaction of national policies on curriculum, accountability, assessment and competition can have on the exclusion of pupils from school. While schools may

aspire to similar goals and face similar pressures within a common national policy climate; the differences between schools' organisational contexts mean that schools are remarkably diverse and complex in how these interactions manifest in their day-to-day processes. A final point here is that schools and teachers can be, at different times, both fragile and resilient in how they respond to policy changes and adapt practices to meet pupils' needs. To understand the causes and dynamics of exclusion from school, researchers must therefore look not only more widely at the interaction of national and local factors, but also at the variations in schools' and teachers' practices. Learning from differences within this multi-layered view should enable a better understanding of the local and national conditions necessary for schooling to inspire children, and of those circumstances where it does not.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Teacher Questionnaire**

*(See attached for copy and discussion which follows)*

## Teacher Questionnaire (Pilot for Discussion and Feedback)

### ***Instructions:***

The purpose of this survey is to gather specific information about teachers' thinking, attitudes, and perceptions about teaching and school exclusion. The information you provide in this questionnaire will be kept ***strictly confidential*** and will be used for reporting and statistical purposes only.

If you have any questions, please call Elle Rustique-Forrester at 0181-392-3441. Please keep track of the amount of time you spend completing this questionnaire. At the end of the survey, please indicate below the amount of time spent. It is recommended that you ***use a pencil*** to answer this questionnaire in case you need to change your answers. THANK YOU!

Time spent:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

**SECTION A -- PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHING**

**1. At this school, how much actual influence do you think teachers have *OVER SCHOOL POLICY* in the following areas?**

*Use the scale of 0-5 where 0 means "No influence," and 5 means "A great deal of influence."*



- a. **Setting discipline policy.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- b. **Determining the timetable.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- c. **Deciding how school resources are spent.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- d. **Deciding how students are assessed.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- e. **Establishing curriculum.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- f. **Determining the content of in-service training.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- g. **Establishing school's academic targets.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- h. **Recommending action for students with behavioural or learning difficulties.**      0     1     2     3     4     5

**2. At this school, how much actual control do you feel you have *IN YOUR CLASSROOM* over each of the following areas of teaching and planning?**

*Use the scale of 0-5 where 0 means "No control," and 5 means "Complete control."*



- a. **Selecting textbooks and other instructional materials.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- b. **Selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- c. **Selecting teaching methods.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- d. **Evaluating and grading students.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- e. **Disciplining students.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- f. **Determining the type of work and projects assigned to students.**      0     1     2     3     4     5
- g. **Streaming or grouping students based on ability.**      0     1     2     3     4     5

**SECTION A -- PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHING --- continued ---**
**3. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I am satisfied with my knowledge and understanding of inclusive teaching approaches.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. My previous training as a teacher has prepared me to teach students of diverse ability and cultures.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Teachers in this school are encouraged to consult with each other about difficult students.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. I sometimes feel that I am unsure about how to deal best with a disruptive student.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. I find it difficult to reintegrate into my classroom students who have been absent from school for more than a week.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Students who have learning difficulties in this school receive adequate support and provision to help them improve.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
g. This school would willingly accept students who have been excluded from another school.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
h. The learning environment in this school is emotionally and physically safe for all students.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
i. I have to follow rules in this school that conflict with my best professional judgement.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
j. The level of student misbehaviour (noise in the hall, excessive talking, fighting) in this school interferes with my teaching.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
k. I would feel comfortable to teach a student who has been excluded from school.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
l. I am encouraged to coordinate the content of my courses with that of other teachers.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
m. I am satisfied with the size of my classes.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
n. I am satisfied with the amount of time I am able to spend with students who may require additional help or tutoring.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
o. Students would feel comfortable approaching me with a personal problem.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
p. The size of this school makes it difficult to develop close and trusting relationships with the pupils I teach.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
q. I have to teach pupils in ways that conflict with my best professional judgement.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
r. Pressure to raise academic targets discourages spending too much time with pupils who are unlikely to take or pass exams.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
s. The requirement of a national curriculum makes it difficult to change or adapt lessons to meet individual pupils' needs.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
t. The government's policy to publish school exclusion rates will discourage schools from excluding pupils.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
u. I sometimes feel that it is a waste of time to try and do my best as a teacher.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
v. Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my effectiveness as a teacher.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
w. I sometimes feel unsure about whether I am using the most appropriate teaching methods for certain students.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
x. The school receives a great deal of support from parents for the work that teachers do.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
y. I am satisfied with the school's communication to parents about the difficulties their child may be experiencing in school.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
z. Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>

**SECTION A – PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHING – continued –**

**4. Please indicate the extent to which you believe the following factors explains why pupils are (or may become) permanently excluded AT THIS SCHOOL:**

*Use the scale of 0-5 where 0 means "Not a factor" and 5 means "Always a factor."*

	Never a factor	Rarely a factor	Occasionally a factor	Usually a factor	Frequently a factor	Always a factor
a. Lack of positive parental support.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Pressure to raise school's standards.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Traditional teaching methods.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. Student's lack of discipline.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Too little teacher time with pupils.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Uninspiring teaching.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
g. Pressure from league tables.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
h. Lack of provision in the classroom.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
i. Increased violence in the media.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
j. Pressure from key stage assessments.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
k. Inadequate teacher training.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
l. Negative peer influence and pressure.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
m. Lack of adequate support structures in school.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
n. Insufficient teacher knowledge of SEN.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
o. Pressure to meet government's targets	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
p. Inappropriate curriculum.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
q. Student's lack of motivation.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
r. Strict school disciplinary policies.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
s. Lack of flexibility for different learning styles.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
t. Inflexible school procedures.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
u. Pressure from school inspections.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
v. Student's low academic skills and ability.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
w. Pressure from national exams (GCSE's).	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
x. Personality clash between teacher and student.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
y. Student's frustration with learning.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>IN GENERAL, how frequently do you believe the following factors plays a role in exclusion (both temporary and permanent)?</i>	Never a factor	Rarely a factor	Occasionally a factor	Usually a factor	Frequently a factor	Always a factor
a. Student's racial background.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Student's social class background.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Student's gender.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

## SECTION B – VIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES

To what extent do the following national educational policies influence areas of your teaching and planning *AT THIS SCHOOL?*

Use the scale of 0-5 where 0 means "No influence" and 5 means "Very positive influence."

	No influence	Very negative influence	Negative influence	Mixed influence	Positive influence	Very positive influence
<b>5) National Curriculum</b>						
a. Time spent with individual pupils.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Use of teaching strategies based on students' individual learning styles.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Teachers' academic expectations for low-achieving students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. School's tolerance for students with behavioural difficulties.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Time spent planning with other teachers.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Development of innovative school approaches to meet needs of students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6) OFSTED</b>						
a. Time spent with individual pupils.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Use of teaching strategies based on students' individual learning styles.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Teachers' academic expectations for low-achieving students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. School's tolerance for students with behavioural difficulties.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Time spent planning with other teachers.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Development of innovative school approaches to meet needs of students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7) League tables</b>						
a. Time spent with individual pupils.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Use of teaching strategies based on students' individual learning styles.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Teachers' academic expectations for low-achieving students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. School's tolerance for students with behavioural difficulties.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Time spent planning with other teachers.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Development of innovative school approaches to meet needs of students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>8) National examinations (GCSE's)</b>						
a. Time spent with individual pupils.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Use of teaching strategies based on students' individual learning styles.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Teachers' academic expectations for low-achieving students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. School's tolerance for students with behavioural difficulties.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Time spent planning with other teachers.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Development of innovative school approaches to meet needs of students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>9) National assessments (Key Stages)</b>						
a. Time spent with individual pupils.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Use of teaching strategies based on students' individual learning styles.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Teachers' academic expectations for low-achieving students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. School's tolerance for students with behavioural difficulties.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Time spent planning with other teachers.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Development of innovative school approaches to meet needs of students.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

**SECTION C – PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES**

**10. If you could go back and rethink your career, would you become a teacher or not?**

- Mark [X] only one box:
- 1  Certainly would become a teacher.
  - 2  Probably would become a teacher.
  - 3  Chances about even for and against.
  - 4  Probably would not become a teacher.
  - 5  Certainly would not become a teacher.

**11. Has a student from this school ever made verbally abusive comments (e.g. verbally threatening comments, curses) at you?**

- Mark [X] only one box:
- 1  Yes.
    - 11a) Has a student made verbally abusive comments in the past 12 months?
      - 1  Yes. → If yes, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_ (Please fill in)
      - 2  No.
  - 2  No.

**12. How would you rate the support available to teachers for helping students with behavioural issues or learning difficulties?**

Use the scale of 0-5 where 0 means "No opinion" and 5 means "Daily basis."

	No opinion	Not available	Very poor	Minimally satisfactory	Good	Excellent
a. Pupil Referral Service.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Education Welfare Service.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Peer mediation.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. Peer counseling.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. On-site referral service.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. School Advisory Service.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
g. Other type? (Please indicate) _____	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

**13. Have you received any training for teaching limited English language students?**

Limited English students are those whose native or dominant language is other than English and who have sufficient difficult speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language.

- Mark [X] only one box:
- 1  Yes.
  - 2  No.

**14. How often do you participate in EACH TYPE of professional development?**

Professional development is the opportunity to meet with other teachers and professionals for the purpose of improving practice and developing more effective ways of working with pupils.

Use the scale of 0-5 where 0 means "Never participated" and 5 means "Weekly basis."

	Never participated	One Off	Once or twice a year	Once a term	Monthly basis	Weekly basis
a. General subject / content area.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Special educational needs.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Pupil-based support projects.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. School leadership training.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Behaviour management.	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Other type? (Please indicate) _____	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>15. Are you male or female?</b></p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Male.</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Female.</p>	<p><b>16. What is your race?</b></p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> White,</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Black.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> African</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> Asian</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Indian</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> Other.</p>	<p><b>17. What is your age group?</b></p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Under 25</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> 26 – 35</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> 36 – 45</p> <p>4 <input type="checkbox"/> 46 – 55</p> <p>5 <input type="checkbox"/> 56 – 65</p> <p>6 <input type="checkbox"/> Over 65</p>
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**18. What best describes your position at this school?**

**a) Mark [X] one box only:**

1  Year Head

2  Head of Department

3  SENCO

4  Head of Pastoral Care

5  Newly Qualified Teacher

6  Classroom (Subject) Teachers      7  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**b) Indicate main subject area: (Mark [X] one box only)**

1  English / Literature

2  Maths

3  Sciences

4  History / Humanities / Geography

5  Arts / Music

6  Modern Languages

7  IT

8  Physical Education / Sports      9  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION D. CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Would you be willing to be interviewed for a follow-up interview?**     Yes.     No.

**If yes, please provide your contact information below:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_      **Tel:** \_\_\_\_\_      **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ASSISTING ME IN THIS IMPORTANT SURVEY.  
YOUR TIME AND EFFORT ARE APPRECIATED!**

**PLEASE RECORD THE TIME YOU TOOK TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY  
ON THE FRONT COVER AND RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE  
IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE TO:**

**Elle Rustique-Forrester  
Centre for Educational Management, Roehampton Institute London  
Grove House, Froebel College, Roehampton Lane  
London SW15 5PJ  
Tel. 0181-392-3441  
[elle@merf.demon.co.uk](mailto:elle@merf.demon.co.uk)**

## **APPENDIX A (continued)**

### *An Extended Discussion of Teacher Questionnaire*

The original purpose of the teacher questionnaire was to collect data about how school practitioners in secondary schools viewed the causes and dynamics of exclusion and to identify specific issues that could be explored further through interviews and case studies. This method and approach offered some advantages. First, I could administer the questionnaire to schools located in different parts of the county, thus allowing me to compare teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and views both within and across schools and regions. A survey questionnaire also offered an efficient means for gathering data in a wide array of topics and areas, without the physical and time constraints of conducting interviews. Finally, a survey questionnaire provided a way of comparing attitudes and beliefs, and developing accordingly, potential theories and profiles of teachers based on the analysis and manipulation of different variables, such as school, field/subject, or other items included in the questionnaire.

#### **Questionnaire design**

To word specific items and to develop the layout of the questionnaire, I examined several examples of questionnaires, which had been used to gather information about teachers' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. I based the design of my questionnaire on a model developed by the US Department of Education, entitled the 'Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). SASS was designed with a similar intent in mind: to gather information from teachers across the country about their personal and professional views regarding their career, their school, their pupils, and their beliefs about teaching and learning. The SASS questionnaire had also been validated and administered to tens of thousands of teachers, and so I felt confident about using both a similar layout and similarly worded questions and phrases. A number of items were also reworded in accordance with British spelling and

usage. This was done with the help and assistance of British research colleagues who had experience in designing and administering questionnaires to teachers.

The 8-page questionnaire consisted of closed questions of two kinds. The first type of question comprised of a range of attitude statements using a Likert-based measurement scales (Scales varied from a four point scale, e.g. 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-agree, 4-strongly disagree) to a six-point scale, e.g. 1-never, 2-arely, 3-occasionally, 4-usually, 5-frequently, 6-always). The second kind of question was of a categorical nature in which respondents were asked to indicate a response with a discrete category (Oppenheim, 1996, p.156). There were several reasons for using closed questions, rather than openly worded questions. Oppenheim (1996) discusses a number of these advantages. First, closed questions would be less time-consuming to analyse. Second, they don't require the participants to write, thus reducing the time needed to fill out. Third, the questionnaire would be easier to process and to compare responses. Fourthly, it would be more useful for testing specific hypotheses. Although the use of open-ended questions could illuminate the construction of teachers' thinking, I intended to pursue this through interviews.

## **Questionnaire Content**

A wide range of issues pertaining to teachers' attitudes and beliefs about teaching, learning, schooling, and behaviour were included. The items included in the questionnaire were designed to gather information about:

- Perceived control over curriculum and decisions about school.
- Views, attitudes, and beliefs about the causes of exclusion
- Perceptions of and experiences with pupils at risk of exclusion; and
- Views about the role and influence of national policies on teaching and learning
- Perceptions of their school environment

The questionnaire comprised of three main sections:

### **Section A – Perceptions and attitudes toward teaching**

This first section comprised of four sub-sections: 1) level of control over school policy; 2) level of control in classroom; 3) level of agreement with a list of statements about teaching and learning; and 4) perceived reasons for exclusion. On the first two sections, respondents were asked to indicate their felt level of influence using a six-point Likert scale. On the third section, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements using a three-point Likert scale. On the fourth section, respondents were asked to indicate, using a six-point Likert scale, the extent to which they perceived that a range of factors explained why pupils were excluded.

### **Section B – View of national policies**

This second section comprised of questions about how a range of national policies (National Curriculum, OFSTED, league tables, national examinations, and national assessments) were perceived to influence areas of teaching and learning. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed that specific policies influenced areas such as 1) time spent with individual pupils, 2) the use of individually-based teaching strategies, 3) their tolerance for students with behavioural difficulties, and 4) time spent planning with other teachers. This section used a six-point Likert scale (1-no influence; 2-very negative influence; 3-negative influence; 4-mixed influence; 5-positive influence; 6-very positive influence).

### **Section C – Personal background and professional experiences**

This final section comprised a range of questions about the respondent's level of professional development, attitude toward career, position at school, ethnic background, age, gender. Unlike data collected by the previous sections, these items had no underlying continuum, units, or intervals. Respondents were asked to place a response within a discrete category, which allowed for respondents to be individually classified and coded.

## Questionnaire Distribution

The teacher questionnaire was piloted and distributed to an opportunity-based sample of three schools in London. I had several purposes in mind: 1) to pilot the questionnaire and to assess its feasibility as an instrument for collecting data on teachers' views; 2) to determine a method for distributing schools; 3) to confirm research questions and areas to be investigated using teacher interviews and school visits; and 4) to compare teacher responses across schools.

A summary of responses is shown below:

School A	Distributed to 10 teachers and received 1 return.
School B	Distributed to 7 teachers and received 4 returns.
School C	Distributed to 10 teachers and received 9 returns.

- School A. The first school was located in a highly-deprived area of London. I met the headteacher at a research conference on school inclusion. According to the headteacher, the school was highly successful and had not permanently excluded any pupils for the past five years. I contacted the headteacher, visited the school, explained my study, and asked if she would allow me to pilot my questionnaire. She agreed and distributed the questionnaire to ten teachers; however, I received only one return.
- School B. The second school was also located in a highly-deprived area of London. I learned about the school through a friend who was filming a documentary in the school. According to her, the school was experiencing enormous difficulties and she observed numerous incidents of fighting, aggressive and disruptive behaviour. Although I could not be certain without interviewing the headteacher, I surmised that it was highly likely that the school had excluded a number of exclusions. The school, however, was

experiencing difficulties in its management and leadership, and the current headteacher was in the process of being dismissed and replaced. According to my friend, she would be difficult to both find and talk with, therefore, I would not have the “consent” of the headteacher, but rather would be able to contact directly with teachers themselves. On a visit to the school, I asked seven teachers if they would be willing to fill out the questionnaire. I received four returns.

- School C. The third school located in London was one where a colleague knew the headteacher, initiated contact on my behalf and set up a meeting. The headteacher seemed very interested, although indicating that she and her staff were very busy. She recommended that I talk with two teachers in the school and agreed to distribute the questionnaire amongst a cross-section of 10 staff. I received nine returns.

### **Methodological limitations of questionnaire**

The use of a questionnaire revealed a number of limitations and difficulties for interpreting the data. First, the sample of teachers who filled out my questionnaire was prone to several problems. In the first and the third school, I provided a broad description that I wanted a “cross-section”, however, I was not clear what this meant, therefore it was prone to different interpretations by the headteacher. It also meant that the headteacher could give the questionnaire to particular teachers who might provide favourable responses, or teachers who were reliable and highly-motivated enough to fill out a questionnaire, thus not being a “representative sample” of teachers. In the third school, I gave the questionnaire to teachers who were recommended by a friend and also asked a few teachers who I encountered in the teachers’ lounge if they were willing to fill it out. Two said yes but never returned it; one simply declined. In the two schools where the headteacher distributed the questionnaire, I received 7 out of 8 by self-addressed stamped envelope from School C. by the date I asked; 2 a few weeks after the date requested. In School C, I received only 2 out of 8 questionnaires. I was later told that the deputy headteacher distributed the

questionnaire, collected them back, and apparently mailed them to me, but I never received them. In School B, where I made direct contact with teachers, 4 out of 7 which I distributed were returned.

This process of questionnaire distribution also raised several problems for interpreting the data. A first was that of timing. Questionnaires were sent in at different times. Second of reliability in that receiving the questionnaires relied on the management as well as the mail; third of potential bias from the headteacher's selection of teachers; and fourth, sampling error in a poorly defined use of "cross-section". Finally, I was not satisfied that only 14 out of 21 questionnaires were returned, which equated to an overall response rate of 62%.

The potential burden that a questionnaire would place on teachers and schools was also a concern expressed by the headteacher and teachers themselves. It was clear from reports and current experience in the field that paperwork and administrative responsibilities overwhelmed schools and teachers. This led me to doubt whether I would receive a high response rate. Although developing a relationship with staff might help to encourage a better response, this would be difficult with a large sample of schools. The burden of questionnaire raised concerns about the potential quality of the information and responses that I would receive via the questionnaire. As Robson (1993) aptly points out, "Try observing yourself the next time you are asked to fill out a market research or other survey form, and see how far you feel that similar responses, aggregated, are likely to be trustworthy!" (p. 50).

During the process of piloting the questionnaire, the views that emerged from follow-up interviews revealed far more about how teachers viewed exclusion and their school than I could ascertain from the questionnaire. Whilst the findings did confirm certain views and degrees of opinions, the questionnaire was not useful for "explanation-building", (Yin, 1989) and could not explain how and why teachers indicated feeling certain dilemmas, conflicts,

and tensions surrounding exclusion. I concluded that probing the perceptions of teachers through interviews offered a better means for seeking out explanations.

Whilst the questionnaire did help to reaffirm the relevance of exploring particular areas such as the impact of policies and the features of the school, analysing responses “on paper” simply motivated me to question *why*. For example, a number of teachers explained that questionnaire items, which asked them to assess the impact of policy on their classroom practices, was “too hard” and “too difficult” to indicate on a questionnaire. In my follow-up interviews, several teachers felt that they could see why I might be asking these types of questions, but that such issues were better discussed. This, in turn, led to a lively discussion about the relationship between the external pressures of policies and exclusion.

After administering the questionnaire, I concluded that although interviews would require more time; they were far more illuminating than questionnaires responses. After discussing the questionnaire with teachers, I became more aware of the nature of the dilemmas, conflicts, and difficulties that teachers experienced in responding to pupils, and I began to theorise how such tensions might be related to exclusion. It was at this point that my research objectives shifted from a desire to compare teachers’ attitudes within and across schools to a need to understand *how* individual teachers’ viewed school exclusion vis-à-vis their school context. As such, the focus of my data collection during the second phase shifted towards a more qualitative-based approach, which relied upon interviews and observations.

Unlike the questionnaire, the process of the face-to-face interview allows individuals to describe, express, and explain their perceptions in their own words. Unlike the one-way communication of a questionnaire, the experience of interviews allows for a “conversation” (Robson, 1993), thus providing the possibility of a dialogue through which I could probe more deeply teachers’ views and attitudes toward exclusion. More crucially, teachers could

react and respond to my queries and suggestions in the process of their reflection and thinking. I thus felt strongly that a methodological shift toward a more qualitative-based approach was necessary in seeking the answers to my research questions.

# APPENDIX B

## *Teacher Interview Guide*

<b>Part I – Introduction and purpose of study</b>	
<b>EXPLAIN BACKGROUND</b>	From the US, trained as high school history teacher, taught for about 3 years in New York City, inner city, East Harlem
	Moved to London about 1 year ago with husband who is from England.
	Presently working at Roehampton Institute London as a research officer  Currently involved in a team-based research project on school disaffection, looking at the different types initiatives [in Lancs] in order to develop policy recommendations.  Project examining different aspects of disaffection, among groups of young people are those who have been formally excluded from school.
<b>EXPLAIN PHD STUDY</b>	Focusing on school exclusions. Want to understand the causes and the dynamics from the perspective of schools, and particularly of teachers.
	My view is that exclusions is complex, not just about behaviour, but possibly about wider dynamics in the school as well as outside of the school, such as those related to the system.
	Studying a sample of secondary schools in London and Lancashire, approximately 6-8 schools in different types of areas, e.g. disadvantaged and advantaged, want to try to understand what might be happening in different schools in terms of school exclusion.
<b>EXPLAIN REASON FOR INTERVIEWS</b>	Research will be based on interviews and school visits with senior managers, teachers, and possibly students.
	Questions about their views on exclusion, experiences with pupils who have been excluded. Asking them to draw upon their personal beliefs, professional opinions, and current experience in the school.
	Views confidential quotes that will be used will be cited generally (e.g. 'one teacher said') if specific, I will ask for permission. Recording a) to reduce note-taking; b) to learn & reflect on interviewing process.

## Part II. Personal Information

School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s)

Race

Gender

Age

Position(s)?

Subject?

How long held position?

How long at school?

How long teaching?

How many schools?

Different areas?

### Part III. School Exclusion Policy

- ARE TEACHERS AWARE OF EXCLUSIONS IN THEIR SCHOOL?
- DO THEY THINK THE NUMBERS ARE HIGH OR LOW?
- HOW ARE THEY INTERPRETING THE SCHOOL'S POLICY?

#### Awareness of Statistics

Do you know what the numbers of exclusions are in this school?  
Would you consider the numbers to be high? Low? Average?

#### Process

How do you find out when a student is permanently excluded?

What about fixed-term exclusions?

What about being sent home / cooling-off?

#### Interpretation of exclusion policy

How would you describe the school's policy on exclusion?

Where would I find it?

How is it explained to students?

Do you think it is working? Why or why not?

<p><b>Part IV – Example of Exclusion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WHY DO TEACHERS THINK EXCLUSION OCCURS?</li> <li>• HOW AWARE ARE TEACHERS OF THE SIGNS LEADING TO EXCLUSION?</li> <li>• DO THEY BELIEVE THAT IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN OR COULD BE PREVENTED?</li> <li>▪ WHY DO TEACHERS BELIEVE THAT EXCLUSIONS HAVE RISEN?</li> <li>▪ DO THEY BELIEVE TRENDS ARE REFLECTED IN THEIR SCHOOL?</li> <li>• WHY DO THEY THINK EXCLUSIONS EXIST?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Example of Fixed-Term</b></p> <p>Have you had an incident when a student might be suspended? What happened?</p>	
<p><b>Example of Permanent Exclusion</b></p> <p>Do you know of a student who was permanently excluded?</p>	
<p><i>[For this section – ask interviewee to think of a student who they know experienced / was having difficulties, i.e. at risk of being excluded or perhaps a student who already has been]</i></p>	
<p><b>View of student at risk of exclusion</b></p> <p>When did you think that student was getting into trouble, e.g. headed for exclusion?</p> <p>Were you able to discuss the student's problems with anyone? Who was told?</p> <p>How did that student who was experiencing difficulties receive support?</p> <p>How was the support initiated?</p>	
<p><b>Communication about exclusion</b></p> <p>What information was given to you about what was happening with student?</p> <p>Were other teachers kept informed? How often? Did you discuss with other teachers?</p> <p>How helpful was the information? Was it enough, too little, or too much information?</p>	
<p><b>Support for students at risk of exclusion</b></p> <p>How well did the various supports work for that student?</p> <p>Why do you think that the support worked or did not work?</p> <p>What worked particularly well? What didn't?</p> <p>Were other strategies tried?</p> <p>How long was the support provided?</p> <p>Do you think it was too long? Too short? Long enough?</p>	
<p><b>Theories about national trends</b> <i>[Explain that a well-publicized aspect of school exclusion has been the documented rise over the past decade ... ]</i></p> <p>Why do you think exclusions have increased so dramatically?</p> <p>Do you know if the trend been reflected in this school, or other schools you've been in?</p> <p>Do you think exclusions should continue to exist? Why or why not?</p>	

<b>Part V. School Policies &amp; Supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WHAT IS THE EMPHASIS OF THE POLICY &amp; SUPPORT?</li> <li>▪ ARE POLICIES ARE WORKING?</li> <li>▪ ARE SUPPORTS ARE WORKING?</li> </ul>
<b>Behaviour Policy</b> How does the school's behaviour policy work? Can you try and describe it? What does it consist of? (e.g. Detention? Isolation? Rewards? Phone calls? Meetings?) How was it developed?	
<b>Behaviour Support</b> What types of internal and external supports are available to students? (e.g. counseling, learning support) How are these supports working? Anything in particular that's working well? Anything that is needed? Or could be improved?	
<b>Pastoral Support</b> How does the school's pastoral support system work? Can you try and describe it? How is working? What's working well? \What would make it better? Are there any plans to change the pastoral support system?	
<i>In my review of the literature, there is a suggestion that national policies have aggravated exclusions over the past decade? Do you think this has been the case? If so, which policies -- and how does this play out in your own experience?</i>	
<b>National Curriculum</b>	
<b>League Tables</b>	
<b>Exams / Assessments</b>	
<b>Target-Setting</b>	
<b>Choice</b>	
<b>Others?</b>	
<i>Final Questions –</i> What do you think are the biggest challenges / barriers facing schools in terms of exclusions? Anything else that you want to say that I haven't asked you about in terms of exclusions?	

## APPENDIX C

### *Coding Frame for Analysing Teacher Interviews*

#### FOCUS AREA 1:

Teachers' general perceptions of the causes and dynamics of school exclusion

- ❖ *What did teachers perceive to be the causes of exclusion?*
- ❖ *How did teachers explain the rise in exclusions over the past decade?*

#### FOCUS AREA 2:

Teachers' explanations of the school- and classroom-based factors that influenced exclusion

- ❖ *What did teachers perceive as the school- and classroom-based factors that were linked with exclusion?*
- ❖ *What were the school- and classroom-based factors that teachers perceived could make a difference for exclusion?*

#### FOCUS AREA 3

Teachers' interpretations of the policy-based factors associated with exclusion

- ❖ *What changes and features in policy (LEA and national government) did teachers perceive have aggravated school exclusion?*
- ❖ *How did teachers explain the impact that policy has had on schools, themselves, and their practice, and their students – and how were these effects linked with exclusion?*

#### **PU: Pupil-based factors**

PU1	Behaviour	PU4	Gender
PU2	Social / emotional	PU5	Age
PU3	Academic / learning difficulties	PU6	Personality

#### **SB: Social background factors**

SB1	Home	SB5	Community
SB2	Parents	SB6	Race
SB3	Family	SB7	Ethnicity
SB4	Culture	SB8	Class

#### **SC: School-based factors**

SC1	Curriculum	SC6	Class sizes
SC2	School environment	SC7	P/S/H support
SC3	School management	SC8	Learning support
SC4	Teacher-student relationships	SC9	Staff communication
SC5	School policies		

[Example of SC7 and SC8]

I think there is support available, probably not enough for some of these children, and people get support in one lesson and not another. And that causes difficulty. We talk about putting children who are having behavioural difficulties in certain groups, [but] that is dependent on what support is on offer. Sometimes there may be support in geography, but not RE or history. The geography

teacher, might find it comparatively easy to manage that child ... but it may not be the same [for the teacher] in history or RE.

#### **NP: National education policy factors**

NP1	Exams	NP4	Choice
NP2	League tables	NP5	OFSTED Inspection
NP3	Accountability	NP6	Curriculum

(Example of NP6)

In the past you could accommodate the needs of the individual and the rest of the group. But now with the constraints of the curriculum, teachers find it affects what they are doing and the learning of the other pupils in the class .... You have got balance. So if you have a child in Year 10, where children are starting to get involved in exam courses, you have got to balance the needs of a child who has a problem and causing a fuss with the wider audience in the classroom. It is something I am trying to tackle. Pupils have behavioural problems which need addressing, but I see the wider needs of the group.

#### **SOL Teachers' views of solution**

Sol1	Schemes outside school
Sol2	Curriculum adaptation
Sol3	Individual pupils support

[Example of Sol1]

I think things partly work....to use an example, we have the youth scheme and pupils go out and help in primary schools. I have a number of students in that, which has been partially successfully in that there is an incentive, also it has improved their self-esteem, they go outside of school to do it.

[Example of Sol2]

Special programmes only apply to a few students ... some students in Year 11 may be accepted to go on a college course. That helps ... it is an incentive to them, but really, we have no design to cater for those students who find GCSE unstimulating.

[Example of Sol3]

Schools have to provide stability, we have got to be the stable influence.

#### **GEN – Teachers' general view of exclusion**

GEN1	Necessary but avoidable
GEN2	Necessary, but difficult to prevent
GEN3	Not necessary and doesn't work

[Example of GEN2]

I don't think exclusion solves anything, you put a child out and there is a problem. I think you cause problems outside and to the child itself. The dilemma is where you are doing that you can cause dilemmas internally, in fact, by keeping these [pupils] in, and causing problems in class.

# APPENDIX D

## Profile and Exclusions Data for 82 Secondary Schools

Source: Primary and Secondary Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000-01).  
 Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.

Code Name	NOR	% Free Meals	% SEN (with and without statements)	% Ethnic minority	Permanent Exclusions						Fixed-Term Exclusions												
					97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	Total	Rate	Per 1,000	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	Total	Total days lost	Rate	Per 1,000				
					days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	Rate	Per 1,000	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	Rate	Per 1,000						
(School 01)	436	42	50	1%	6	9	4	5	24	0.055	55.05	52	—	46	227	25	92	28	213	151	532	0.35	346.3
(School 02)	1426	4	10	1%	0	2	2	0	4	0.003	2.81	0	—	1	2	3	45	1	17	5	64	0.00	3.5
(School 03)	1203	33	22	0%	6	7	7	9	29	0.024	24.11	126	—	142	559	119	372	151	543	538	1474	0.45	447.2
(School 04)	1399	15	8	0%	9	6	5	3	23	0.016	16.44	108	—	110	352	98	328	86	364	402	1044	0.29	287.3
(School 05)	658	18	23	1%	0	1	0	0	1	0.002	1.52	114	—	48	197	21	79	28	127	211	403	0.32	320.7
(School 06)	161	29	61	0%	1	5	1	4	11	0.068	68.32	24	—	20	82	46	167	42	202	132	451	0.82	819.9
(School 07)	1038	17	23	2%	1	1	0	1	3	0.003	2.89	66	—	56	153	72	168	81	227	275	548	0.26	264.9
(School 08)	610	25	17	7%	3	5	1	0	9	0.015	14.75	64	—	69	219	60	239	51	284	244	742	0.40	400.0
(School 09)	891	16	13	2%	10	8	3	5	26	0.029	29.18	41	—	50	237	51	277	77	313	219	827	0.25	245.8
(School 10)	1061	10	18	1%	3	3	2	2	10	0.009	9.43	45	—	48	143	44	133	42	158	180	434	0.17	169.7
(School 11)	773	9	18	0%	0	1	0	0	1	0.001	1.29	10	—	23	71	6	16	6	22	45	109	0.06	58.2
(School 12)	1110	25	27	1%	11	4	1	9	25	0.023	22.52	198	—	158	494	49	259	83	578	488	1331	0.44	439.6
(School 13)	803	14	22	2%	1	1	1	0	3	0.004	3.74	11	—	19	66	14	70	7	21	51	157	0.06	63.5
(School 14)	834	6	11	1%	1	1	1	1	4	0.005	4.80	28	—	18	66	47	227	34	176	127	469	0.15	152.3
(School 15)	1717	9	9	1%	2	6	1	1	13	0.008	7.57	58	—	58	219	74	397	180	741	370	1357	0.22	215.4
(School 16)	1144	12	9	1%	5	4	4	3	16	0.014	13.99	30	—	21	119	20	231	61	437	132	787	0.12	115.4
(School 17)	646	9	9	0%	2	2	0	0	2	0.003	3.10	4	—	12	50	19	82	18	67	53	199	0.08	82.0
(School 18)	953	22	26	28%	1	0	2	1	4	0.004	4.20	24	—	33	126	31	143	67	259	155	528	0.16	162.6
(School 19)	885	7	12	5%	1	2	2	2	7	0.008	7.91	29	—	54	181	65	228	73	279	221	688	0.25	249.7
(School 20)	780	21	23	9%	1	2	3	5	11	0.014	14.10	29	—	36	207	41	181	92	400	198	788	0.25	253.8
(School 21)	454	50	24	49%	1	1	1	2	5	0.011	11.01	31	—	37	124	53	228	63	273	184	625	0.41	405.3
(School 22)	614	61	26	11%	14	8	4	7	33	0.054	53.75	54	—	34	138	98	476	74	787	260	1401	0.42	423.5
(School 23)	396	29	24	3%	8	3	2	1	14	0.035	35.35	37	—	25	201	20	157	58	410	140	768	0.35	353.5
(School 24)	660	12	16	4%	0	1	0	2	3	0.005	4.55	71	—	61	261	54	302	67	238	253	801	0.38	383.3
(School 25)	431	8	22	0%	0	1	0	2	3	0.007	6.96	2	—	6	46	8	42	17	69	33	157	0.08	76.6
(School 26)	379	41	10	38%	3	2	2	2	9	0.024	23.75	24	—	20	99	26	197	23	189	93	485	0.25	245.4
(School 27)	923	10	10	1%	5	1	0	2	8	0.009	8.67	59	—	77	290	57	182	81	308	274	780	0.30	296.9
(School 28)	814	29	17	9%	4	3	2	4	13	0.016	15.97	9	—	25	121	28	206	25	169	87	496	0.11	106.9
(School 29)	905	8	10	2%	0	1	0	2	3	0.003	3.31	49	—	23	24	30	38	79	131	181	193	0.20	200.0
(School 30)	588	24	14	0%	4	2	1	3	10	0.017	17.01	13	—	32	108	12	79	28	158	83	345	0.14	141.2
(School 31)	590	17	14	1%	3	3	4	6	16	0.027	27.12	47	—	66	263	74	231	108	288	295	782	0.50	500.0

## APPENDIX D

### Profile and Exclusions Data for 82 Secondary Schools

Source: Primary and Secondary Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000-01).  
 Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.

Code Name	NCR	% Free Meals	% SEN (with and without statements)	% Ethnic minority	Permanent Exclusions					Fixed-Term Exclusions					Total days lost	Rate	Per 1,000					
					97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	Total	Rate	Per 1,000	97-98	98-99	99-00				00-01	Total	Rate	Per 1,000	
(School 32)	729	1	25	0%	0	0	1	0	1	0.001	1.37	0	1	4	5	2	9	4	18	0.01	5.5	
(School 33)	913	3	7	2%	1	0	0	0	1	0.001	1.10	56	39	68	42	60	78	143	215	271	0.24	235.5
(School 34)	583	21	31	2%	3	4	3	3	13	0.022	22.30	63	64	23	41	172	52	385	220	580	0.38	377.4
(School 35)	735	10	17	1%	5	3	3	6	17	0.023	23.13	9	18	89	17	40	56	135	100	264	0.14	136.1
(School 36)	840	4	7	4%	1	1	1	0	3	0.004	3.67	35	26	142	21	73	32	82	114	297	0.14	135.7
(School 37)	994	12	23	11%	4	6	2	2	14	0.014	14.08	13	24	200	22	107	45	239	104	546	0.10	104.6
(School 38)	752	12	6	18%	1	0	0	0	1	0.001	1.33	38	11	31	11	23	26	60	86	114	0.11	114.4
(School 39)	653	24	13	1%	7	5	3	2	17	0.026	26.03	35	34	140	29	98	19	66	117	304	0.18	179.2
(School 40)	1290	6	8	1%	1	1	1	0	3	0.002	2.33	22	16	58	17	105	16	80	71	243	0.06	55.0
(School 41)	602	7	10	1%	0	0	3	0	3	0.005	4.98	55	0	0	0	0	2	5	57	5	0.09	94.7
(School 42)	768	6	16	0%	1	0	0	0	1	0.001	1.30	5	10	36	10	30	12	34	37	100	0.05	48.2
(School 43)	920	18	10	0%	4	2	0	3	9	0.010	9.78	56	55	181	59	155	82	258	252	594	0.27	273.9
(School 44)	544	53	36	0%	2	3	1	3	9	0.017	16.54	53	38	202	26	164	30	178	147	544	0.27	270.2
(School 45)	659	9	14	1%	2	0	2	0	4	0.006	6.07	32	16	36	33	193	49	208	130	437	0.20	197.3
(School 46)	722	39	13	1%	2	0	2	6	10	0.014	13.85	6	4	17	60	366	51	275	121	658	0.17	167.6
(School 47)	802	33	20	0%	4	2	3	1	10	0.012	12.47	18	16	184	22	164	43	346	99	694	0.12	123.4
(School 48)	955	17	21	1%	4	4	1	1	10	0.010	10.47	25	27	94	9	28	28	116	89	238	0.09	93.2
(School 49)	1050	12	8	2%	0	1	0	7	8	0.008	7.62	24	44	209	44	167	38	210	150	586	0.14	142.9
(School 50)	745	15	17	1%	3	4	1	0	8	0.011	10.74	16	19	108	14	67	26	128	75	303	0.10	100.7
(School 51)	1049	9	16	1%	2	2	1	1	6	0.006	5.72	32	23	66	27	57	49	286	131	409	0.12	124.9
(School 52)	802	23	20	4%	2	3	3	1	9	0.011	11.22	51	53	296	42	214	37	179	183	689	0.23	228.2
(School 53)	844	5	18	1%	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.00	153	7	39	6	13	11	24	177	76	0.21	209.7
(School 54)	597	23	15	14%	2	0	0	4	6	0.010	10.05	56	46	172	73	209	102	238	277	619	0.46	464.0
(School 55)	707	24	20	18%	5	4	2	5	16	0.023	22.63	70	38	190	78	231	115	405	301	826	0.43	425.7
(School 56)	691	22	13	7%	5	2	2	2	11	0.016	15.92	60	38	92	40	169	57	229	195	490	0.28	282.2
(School 57)	1039	30	33	29%	4	1	4	6	15	0.014	14.44	17	38	147	46	237	121	684	222	1068	0.21	213.7
(School 58)	883	6	11	1%	0	2	1	1	4	0.005	4.53	11	16	71	18	84	33	171	78	326	0.09	88.3
(School 59)	997	32	33	18%	7	9	5	1	22	0.022	22.07	131	95	413	85	486	94	516	405	1415	0.41	406.2
(School 60)	972	9	13	1%	0	2	0	3	5	0.005	5.14	82	75	184	35	248	55	257	247	689	0.25	254.1
(School 61)	342	9	19	1%	1	2	0	1	4	0.012	11.70	19	24	124	16	65	29	195	88	384	0.26	257.3
(School 62)	1054	8	11	4%	1	4	1	1	7	0.007	6.64	7	17	101	24	165	22	143	70	409	0.07	66.4

# APPENDIX D

## Profile and Exclusions Data for 82 Secondary Schools

Source: Primary and Secondary Exclusions Data (1997/98; 1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000-01).  
 Provided by the LEA's Pupil Services and Pupil Access Teams.

Code Name	NCR	% Free Meals	% SEN (with and without)	% Ethnic minority	Permanent Exclusions					Fixed-Term Exclusions												
					97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	Total	Rate	Per 1,000	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	Total	Total	Rate	Per 1,000			
					days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost	days lost					
(School 63)	359	47	14	52%	2	4	3	4	13	0.036	36.21	16	16	68	19	111	35	317	86	490	0.24	239.6
(School 64)	1159	15	5	25%	0	3	0	3	6	0.005	5.18	58	91	279	59	182	82	310	290	771	0.25	250.2
(School 65)	759	29	11	3%	3	7	8	10	28	0.037	36.89	87	75	273	67	127	99	130	328	530	0.43	432.1
(School 66)	941	20	15	1%	3	3	3	4	13	0.014	13.82	48	52	193	80	318	115	529	295	1040	0.31	313.5
(School 67)	738	13	10	2%	3	0	1	0	4	0.005	5.42	11	7	32	9	30	14	49	41	111	0.06	55.6
(School 68)	817	9	5	2%	8	0	1	0	9	0.011	11.02	47	41	92	33	95	52	265	173	452	0.21	211.8
(School 69)	718	40	33	5%	5	7	5	8	26	0.036	36.21	124	93	355	88	282	105	637	410	1274	0.57	571.0
(School 70)	809	42	29	62%	3	2	2	1	8	0.010	9.89	36	33	109	31	93	38	85	138	287	0.17	170.6
(School 71)	931	29	15	14%	4	5	3	5	17	0.018	18.26	30	35	161	36	151	47	334	148	646	0.16	159.0
(School 72)	729	16	22	4%	1	6	1	4	12	0.016	16.46	74	149	290	116	201	142	332	481	823	0.66	659.8
(School 73)	1171	19	15	19%	2	0	1	7	10	0.009	8.54	18	29	101	27	120	49	268	123	489	0.11	105.0
(School 74)	590	46	38	79%	4	7	4	3	18	0.031	30.51	36	53	170	23	62	33	68	145	300	0.25	245.8
(School 75)	777	30	14	35%	8	3	2	1	14	0.018	18.02	38	70	225	60	316	41	189	209	730	0.27	269.0
(School 76)	956	17	22	2%	4	2	2	4	12	0.013	12.55	49	26	71	37	130	49	207	161	408	0.17	168.4
(School 77)	697	15	13	4%	3	3	2	2	15	0.022	21.52	42	58	216	46	125	89	417	235	758	0.34	337.2
(School 78)	603	21	20	11%	7	4	4	2	17	0.028	28.19	65	84	297	75	399	72	351	296	1047	0.49	490.9
(School 79)	511	20	17	0%	5	2	1	4	12	0.023	23.48	36	46	187	47	231	84	307	213	725	0.42	416.8
(School 80)	538	18	18	0%	2	1	1	4	8	0.015	14.87	25	18	57	24	120	60	268	127	445	0.24	236.1
(School 81)	910	25	19	1%	3	3	2	2	10	0.011	10.99	36	44	248	33	148	73	329	186	725	0.20	204.4
(School 82)	1422	16	8	11%	4	4	2	3	13	0.009	9.14	46	25	206	46	252	65	473	182	931	0.13	128.0

