

School leadership and the school inspection regime: an examination of  
policy enactment in a coastal area of deprivation.

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Doctor of Education

I, Alyson Colman, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed.....

## **Abstract**

### **School leadership and the school inspection regime: an examination of policy enactment in a coastal area of deprivation.**

The school inspection regime in England and Wales has recently increased its focus on all state schools becoming 'good' or better. Schools deemed by Ofsted to be performing below this standard receive intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime before a subsequent short notice monitoring inspection. Although all schools may receive a short notice inspection, the perceived autonomy afforded to schools that are judged by the school inspection regime to be good or better is in contrast to those which are deemed 'failing' schools and are disciplined through tighter accountability to the inspection regime.

This study examines the influence of intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime on school leadership and policy enactment. A coastal area of deprivation provides the setting for a detailed case study of school leadership in a state secondary school and a state primary school - both with recent or ongoing experience of intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime. Interviews were undertaken and the analyses of data and discussion form an understanding of how policy is enacted in relation to the dual responsibility that school leaders negotiate between the local context at Seatown and the school inspection regime. Both Foucault and Benjamin inform the discussions that demonstrate that the school inspection regime forces a privileging of a compliant and consistent enactment of policy – a hyper enactment of policy, that reduces the capacity of school leaders in the primary school to address the significant social context of the school. In this respect, the automaton replaces autonomy. By contrast, there are examples of acts of resistance undertaken by school leaders in the secondary school – school leaders often demonstrating a cynical view of the school inspection regime, and therefore willing to place the social context of the school first. A contribution to the panoptic/post-panoptic debate is offered. (299 words)

**Key words: school inspection regime    policy enactment    performativity  
surveillance    discipline    technologies of the self    acts of resistance    coastal area  
of deprivation**

## **Impact Statement**

Since June 2018, UCL requires that an Impact Statement is placed following the abstract page in the thesis, before the table of contents. The aim of this impact statement is to demonstrate how the thesis might offer benefit, both within and beyond academia and how these benefits might be developed. For this purpose, I summarise here the final sections of the final chapter of this thesis where the focus was on the relevance and significance of the research and potential dissemination.

Professional impact: Initially, my proposal for this research developed from my own concerns and frustrations with the work that I was required to undertake in my middle leader role within a college. I needed to gain an insight into the emptiness I felt when leading staff development about consistency to achieve a standardised approach for the inspection regime. I felt that the requirements lacked genuineness in an attempt to address the inspection regime – staff were involved, myself included, in what I now term a ‘hyper-enactment’ of policy. Additionally, I had deeper concerns relating to inequalities that appeared to be concomitant with this process. This study, while focused on schools, has attempted to provide insight into these two aspects of my earlier professional practice.

I now have a teaching role within higher education and so the arena for professional practice has changed. I can continue to be mindful of the practices that occurred in my college role and within the research sites and to be alert to similar practices emerging within the academy. More importantly however, has

been the scope within my teaching of modules on the BA (Hons.) Education degree such as Education and Society and Critical Approaches: Inequality and Education, and MA Education Leadership modules that have allowed me to examine the ways in which education reproduces inequalities.

Potential academic impact: This research was important to undertake in relation to the existing literature because policy enactment as an academic territory in education is gathering momentum through the seminal work undertaken by Ball, Maguire and Braun. Looking at the micropolitics of resistance is a particularly underwritten area and not without its difficulties in the field (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012). The debate between Perryman (2006, 2009, 2017a, 2017b), Page (2016), Courtney (2016) and Clapham (2014) regarding the 'post' panoptic and 'post' fabrication is interesting and relevant and therefore further insight from my research will be of interest to both academics and practitioners. A summary report will be prepared for the main professional teaching and leadership unions.

Contributions from my doctoral research will be disseminated at conferences through presentations and also through journal articles. The ideas will also be shared within my teaching at the University of Brighton. Having given a keynote at the postgraduate conference at the Mauritius Institute of Education in April 2018, I will be undertaking a collaborative research project with a Mauritian academic on coastal areas of deprivation in Mauritius. (484 words)

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## **Candidate Statement**

A summary and synthesis of the learning experience over the programme as a whole is provided, following the contents page, as per the UCL IOE guidelines.

### Foundations of professionalism (FOP)

This was the first module on the EdD and one that started to open up an academic space within the framework of my own concept of professionalism. The wide-ranging input allowed me to engage with literature that was previously unknown. All of it was welcome and offered value either to the possibility of reviewing my professional role or for developing an understanding within the discipline of education.

During the sessions, there were two key texts that spoke to me more incisively than the other literature. The first was an essay by Louise Morley (2008), 'The micropolitics of professionalism: power and collective identities in higher education' and this allowed me to consider the micro tensions that emerged in the day to day goings on between staff within my then, current organisation – an urban sixth form college. The second, following a lecture by Stephen Ball, was his seminal essay, 'The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity' (2003). Here in this term, performativity, I was able to define what I was experiencing in my college. It became apparent that within my college setting, my experience aligned more acutely than for some in the EdD cohort. Why was this? What made my organisation so performative? My FOP assignment gave me an opportunity to examine this. My assignment focused on the impact of performativity: *How*

*might performativity threaten to corrode the professional values that guide educational leadership?*

To write about myself and my organisation was a strangely uncomfortable experience. While the process of writing the essay allowed an academic development of ideas to occur, that resonated strongly with my tacit experience, I also began to feel concerned about the environment I was working within. I had a growing sense that the role Ofsted were playing for the college – an intensive gaze caused by an adverse inspection visit, was exacerbating a performative culture. This marks an important point in my overall development on the programme. Here, while recognising that society is formed by technologies such as performativity, I also understood there to be professional settings by which performativity was more acutely felt by the staff (and students) within it.

#### Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2 (MOE 1/2)

Having written a largely theoretical FOP assignment, Methods of Enquiry 1 appeared initially to require a very different approach. Many of my EdD colleagues and certainly the teaching staff appeared to have a shared passion and affinity for the various methods of research presented during the module. I wrote at the time that I was surprised at how they could delight in something that seemed simply a dull and cumbersome tool. In the approach to my assignment writing: *How might a leadership led values initiative effect the learning culture of a college?*, I located Crotty (1988), Alvesson and Karreman (2011) and Schostak and Schostak (2008). Finally, too, I shared something of the delights of the module that I had seen in that of my peers earlier on in the module. Crotty

presented the critical lens with clarity, while the other two texts offered purpose for research and this has been the driver for all subsequent research projects undertaken.

Methods of Enquiry 2 allowed opportunity to review the initial implementation of a values initiative undertaken at my college: *An evaluation and reflection on the early implementation phase of a leadership led 'values' initiative within a sixth form setting*. Having had more opportunity to process the learning from the first methods module, and starting to position myself by using a critical stance, this research served as a pilot study for both the Institution Focused Study (IFS) and the thesis. I started to learn how to record, transcribe and analyse data, within a novice, insider researcher framework. The project allowed further focus on institutional values and professional cultures in a 'failing' organisation, but more, this study allowed opportunity to reflect on both the processes and practicalities of fieldwork and the increasingly difficult professional environment I was working within. It was shortly after this assignment that I started to search for employment beyond the college that I was working within. I also undertook a leadership specialist module that consolidated and extended knowledge useful for the IFS and thesis.

#### Institution Focused Study (IFS)

*The how(s) of power: how might micropolitics and educational leadership interact in a 'failing' educational setting?* provided an opportunity to return more explicitly to the key texts from FOP that interested me e.g. Morley (2008) and Ball (2003). At this stage, having written to Stephen Ball, I was aware of his then, recent work

with Olmedo (2013), 'Care of the self, resistance and subjectivity under new liberal governmentalities'. This text provided the theoretical basis for the IFS and also informed my interest in seeing something 'cracked', micropolitics and resistance, that are important in the thesis.

The IFS focused on the context of a leadership 'takeover' to improve a 'failing' college. Interviews with staff enabled reflections to be recorded regarding what the impact of the inspection regime had had on leadership. The timing of the research enabled both the 'before' and 'after' of the take-over to be considered e.g. how leaders made decisions when under intense scrutiny from the inspection regime, and how decision-making changed under the new leadership. While the technologies of the self proved a significant frame to understand the fieldwork, this theoretical concept shaped the possibilities of application again in the thesis. In this respect, the IFS was able to serve as a pilot study for the thesis, even though the setting changed.

### How the programme has contributed to my professional development and knowledge

During the six and a half years that I have been studying on the EdD programme there have been significant changes in my overall professional/academic development. I will articulate this in relation to career focus and becoming a novice researcher.

Career Focus: I started the EdD as a middle leader in a sixth form college. I am now a senior lecturer in Education at the University of Brighton. Studying

concepts such as performativity and other related aspects of neoliberalism in the FOP module, forced an acute reading of the professional domain of the sixth form college I was situated in. It became almost untenable. I was required to undertake certain tasks in my middle leadership position i.e. making decisions in the College Management Team meetings, involvement in the recruitment of staff and students, leading staff development opportunities etc. all of which were in response to either efficiency, or notions of effectiveness deemed appropriate by the inspection regime. This had been in conflict with my own values and ethical notions of equity, but from the FOP module, I understood it was part of wider force – not simply a localised, institutional way of doing things. Initially, I tried to influence a values-led approach, inspired by the work of Anne Gold (2003). The articulation of this within the college framework which I attempted to document in MOE2, only served to demonstrate the trivial and disingenuous approach adopted by the executive team. I started to look for alternative positions beyond the sector and was surprised to secure a post without a doctorate at the University of Brighton.

Initially, a new set of issues commenced that actually slowed the rate of completion of my doctorate. While the University of Brighton seemed comparatively well situated in relation to the tight grip of neoliberalism seen at the college, I found myself having to acquire rapidly new theories, module content that was new to me, and a different way of working. I was also appointed initially on a 50% contract, increasing to 80%, while continuing at the college for 50%. While it was good to have a sense of the new possible way to work, the contrast here was almost too painful, and increasingly I found myself undertaking difficult

to do work at the college e.g. observations for those teachers moving towards capability proceedings because they were deemed 'failing' teachers. This said, within eighteen months, I became full time at the university. Increasingly I have shaped a role for myself teaching sociological aspects of education using theories from Bourdieu, Foucault, Butler etc. and introduced Critical Race Theory to the BA programme. I have also written new MA leadership modules that have been taught both at Brighton and in Mauritius, where the university delivers a partnership programme. This work has become congruent with my doctoral research. Very recently, I have become involved in development work in Mauritius. This is first, as the University of Brighton lead of a new Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) Postgraduate Diploma in Education, leading to the MA, and lead of the Leadership route within the programme.

Becoming a novice researcher: I have attempted to outline in the earlier sections of this statement, the ways in which the modules from the EdD have shaped me in some way towards being a novice researcher. Currently, I cannot imagine taking a position other than one of a critical approach. Recently, I undertook a literature review for UCL Grand Challenge: Justice & Equality. The project was one relating to non-university training opportunities for adults aged twenty-four and over. Once into the research, I became acutely aware that it was the inequalities that related to class, race or gender, that were dominating my approach. This was appropriate for the Grand Challenge team. I will have to think in the future however, whether, whatever I do, will come from this stance. Currently, I hope this will be the case.

In July 2018, I discussed a collaborative research project with an MIE colleague, regarding coastal areas of deprivation in Mauritius and leadership/quality assurance in schools. This proposed research project will seek funding from Mauritius. (1642 words)

## **A dedication**

In the final phase of writing this thesis, K sadly passed away.  
He was a member of the Seatown community and close to my heart.

He was so proud of the town that he grew up in,  
yet at the same time, greatly let down by it.

To K, whose life was cut short on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018,  
and the countless others who struggle in Seatown - the site of this research -  
this thesis is dedicated to you.

## **Acknowledgements**

With unending gratitude to my supervisor, Rob Higham,  
and second supervisor, Jane Perryman.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1. Introduction**

This doctoral research, set within an area of coastal deprivation, explores how school leaders enact policy, particularly when under intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime. Ozga argues that policy is “struggled over, not delivered, in tablets of stone”, recognising the complexities of ‘doing’ policy in such a way that “policy settings” such as schools (Ozga, 2000, p.1) are sites of struggle. Other research has defined the various interpretations of policy as being “enacted” (e.g. Ball, 1994, p.19; Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.2). Policy enactment defines the ways that policy “becomes interpreted and translated and reconstructed and remade” (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.6). The process of enacting policy therefore, involves ‘actors’, i.e. teachers and leaders etc., responding to policy texts in various ways and finding methods and purposes for policy processes. The priorities, contexts and values inherent in decision-making inform policy enactment. While recognising the “competing sets of values” involved here, Ball, Maguire & Braun were surprised by the lack of “values-talk” in their research, noting the “more instrumental priorities invested in policy-thinking” (2012, p.10) and this is pertinent to my research.

Here, I have placed specific focus on policy enactment in schools within a coastal area of deprivation that have experienced recent or continued scrutiny from the school inspection regime (Ofsted<sup>1</sup>), which to align with the literature informing this study will be the term used throughout this thesis. While not providing an audit of

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It is a non-ministerial department responsible for relevant inspection and regulation.

current policy (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.7), nor an examination of policy activity relating to a specific policy text or group of related policies, this research seeks instead to examine the implicit and explicit policy activity that was expressed by policy actors in relation to their recent experience of the school inspection regime. The policy actors in my research were school staff members with some degree of leadership responsibility, whether Head Teacher or curriculum lead. They provided insight into “the ‘wheres’ of policy and the ‘whos’ – that is who does it, and how” (Ball, 2015). Some policy actors referred to specific policy texts, for example, from the government, the school inspection regime or from within the school itself, while others demonstrated the “process of complex iterations between policies and across policy ensembles” (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.8), for example by indicating the pressures of needing to improve outcomes for the pupils through “a piecemeal process of ‘fixing’ problems” (ibid.). Two schools formed a case study for the research: one primary school and one secondary school, both with recent or ongoing experience of intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime.

The introduction explains my interest in the leadership of school improvement and effectiveness in relationship to school inspection developed from a tacit understanding. I then outline some of the current issues emerging through recent educational reform in England and Wales that seek to improve schools and tackle inequality through a 'mantra' of *autonomy, accountability* and *responsibility*.

## 1.2. My personal experience and positionality

Prior to entering a career in higher education, I was involved in a curriculum improvement role within an educational institution deemed by Ofsted to be 'inadequate'. The rapid sequence of state intervention I experienced there included the removal of the existing principal, a carefully orchestrated leadership 'take-over' and relentless interim meetings and monitoring from Ofsted and the local authority. There was also a significant 'reduction' of its currently enrolled students through a rigorous disciplinary process undertaken by the interim leadership team in advance of a cautious approach to the recruitment of new students. This was followed by a strange and rather benevolent Ofsted inspection. This experience alerted me to the tensions that arose through each stage of the journey towards re-inspection and a final 'good' outcome. The tensions evidenced conflict between improvement for both the community within and beyond the institution itself: the context. Crucially, was the 'demonstration' of improvement actual, or manufactured in some way for the school inspection regime, and what would be the implications if this was the case, in relation to context? Certainly, such institutional 'improvement' did not address inequality, as it was largely achieved through both a considerable increase in exclusion rates for students enrolled prior to the 'take-over' and purposeful non-recruitment of students who, under the previous leadership might have been recruited as part of its 'inclusive' approach. These processes are documented in my Institutional Focused Study (IFS) and detailed further in Chapter 3.

This experience made me seek understanding through literature and this has been central to informing my theoretical stance. Concurrently I had been reading

texts seeking to 'explain' neoliberal reforms in education, such as by Stephen Ball, Jane Perryman, Sharon Gewirtz and Deborah Youdell. Their writing contained parallels with the professional environment I was part of. Foucault, Lyotard and Butler informed the theoretical framing for the texts I was reading and terms such as 'surveillance', 'performativity' and 'micropolitics', which will be explored in later chapters, facilitated new ways to understand tacit knowledge. I am situated then, drawing from a post-structural perspective, which I will explain in Chapter 4. In a similar way to some of the work I was reading, was a developing interest in social inequality and education. This emerged particularly once I was teaching in higher education - initially part time while still at the 'inadequate' to 'good' educational institution, before becoming full-time.

This has been a period of significant opportunity to reflect on the deeper ramifications that might be felt, in terms of inequality, by the actions of the 'take-over' leadership team. It was also a time to remake connections with the area I had spent my childhood in. I grew up in a coastal town in England that includes one of the most deprived areas (wards) in the country, based on information from The English Indices of Deprivation, 2015 (Department for Communities and Local Government). This coastal town has formed the location for the case study focus. I have called it Seatown in this thesis, to protect anonymity. Although my childhood memories are that Seatown was a fun place to be with sandy beaches and donkey rides, fairground rides on Seatown's pier and fresh, salt air, like many seaside towns, there have been big changes. People do not visit Seatown much these days. It has a reputation. It has been mocked by newspapers, television programmes and politicians. Most of the hotels and guest houses have been

converted into domestic rental accommodation and there are many houses of multiple occupancy. Seatown has a population well below 100,000 inhabitants. Within one of the wards of Seatown, served by the secondary school in my research, The English Indices of Deprivation (2015, Department for Communities and Local Government) show approximately four times as many working age inhabitants are on out of work benefits compared to the national average. The largest employment category for Seatown is within “routine occupations” and the adult population who have no qualifications are also more than four times the national average (NOMIS Official labour market statistics/Local Government Association).

Recent inspection reports for the schools in Seatown demonstrate higher levels of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding and higher levels of pupils with Special Education Needs and Disability. Importantly, statistically, parents of children attending the schools in Seatown may not have had a positive experience of education themselves. The parents may be subject to low paid or casual employment, or be unemployed, and exist therefore through benefits paid by the state. This contextual setting has impacted for some of the children who attend the schools in the research. The setting demands a positive schooling environment for the children beyond the family setting. Recruitment issues for schools in this area, however, make the appointment of teachers and leaders challenging. Schools are facing challenging times nationally, with the National Association of Head Teachers identifying 79% of all teaching posts being “difficult to recruit for” (NAHT, 2016). Recruitment has been observed as a particular issue for coastal areas where the recruitment potential is reduced by the sea occupying

180 degrees of the potential recruitment area. This factor and others are considered briefly later in this chapter in relation to a study by Ovenden-Hope and Passy (2015).

Until recently much of the school provision serving the town and surrounding areas was judged by Ofsted to be 'inadequate'. One of the state schools in the case study is a secondary school that has recently been judged 'good' following a re-inspection visit. This school has offered insight into some of the approaches to 'improvement' that were made. Reflection about how school leaders worked to get to that point has offered perhaps more insightful data than if the process was still underway. By contrast, the other school - a primary, is currently deemed as 'requires improvement' and faces a more uncertain future. At the time of writing there has been little understood about what will happen to schools that are judged 'requires improvement' at the monitoring inspection. Ofsted states "schools judged to require improvement will be unlikely to receive more than one monitoring inspection" (Ofsted,31/07/14). The recent and ongoing educational reforms are in the process of being reviewed and there has been little development other than "Every school an academy" articulated in the most recent White Paper, 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' (Department for Education, March 2016). The primary school became an academy during the course of my research.

Locating the research within a coastal town focussing on two schools with recent or ongoing experience of the school inspection regime provided an opportunity to see whether the school inspection regime itself *forces* a more specific, preferred

articulation of policy for those schools deemed not yet 'good' than for those deemed 'good' or better. Certainly, my own experience had been of the overwhelming burden of accountability to the inspection regime, alongside little or no autonomy. Literature has suggested this may necessitate fabricated responses of improvement (e.g. Ball 2008, Perryman 2006, 2009) and Perryman argues that leaders and teachers may "perform in order to escape the regime" (2006, p.155). Even authors such as Coe (2009), who advocate an empirical approach to school improvement and effectiveness, suggest there should be greater interrogation of school improvement strategies, stating that some improvement "actually does harm" (ibid, p376). This resonates with Perryman who observed that "learning to perform the good school can be damaging" (2009, p629), despite her different positioning. Coe states, "many claims of school improvement are illusory" (2009, p.363), concluding that by not effectively evaluating improvement strategies we "will fail to do our best for the children whose education matters most" (ibid). This parallels my own experience identified earlier and will be more fully explored in subsequent chapters.

The case study therefore, being set within a coastal area of deprivation, has brought further specific contextual concerns related to that of poverty and aligned social issues. In a recent study of the challenges identified by academy leaders in coastal secondary academies by Ovenden-Hope & Passy (2015), the authors summarised these as including educational isolation, difficulties with staff recruitment, "failing" local primaries, engaging students and their families with education, student behaviour, the quality of teaching and learning within the school, and the shifting priorities of educational policy (ibid, p.36). These factors have proved resonant with this case study. If policy enactment under the

disciplinary gaze of the school inspection regime is not unproblematic, how might this impact on inequality, particularly within a coastal area of deprivation, and how might this impact on the daily practices of school leaders? Is there a resulting tension between what school leaders feel is appropriate for the school, its community and therefore its context, and the disciplinary requirement for preferred forms of policy enactment by the school inspection regime?

To be accountable to the inspection regime with little or no autonomy was in my experience, to relocate focus from the contextual demands of our remit. Is there a conflict of purpose then, between contextual and moral dimensions of leadership, and fabricated approaches to 'improvement' for school inspection? Here, I have been concerned with the spaces that exist between compliance with the school inspection regime and 'acts of resistance' to serve contextual and moral purposes. This space has been described as 'the micropolitics of resistance' (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012) and has enabled my examination here of leadership in terms of compliance and resistance. I have built upon earlier research on how autonomy is understood in different ways by school leaders e.g. Cribb & Gewirtz (2007) 'autonomy – control' dimensions, and Higham and Earley's (2013) typology relating to the perceived levels of autonomy amongst school leaders as "confident, cautious, concerned and constrained schools" (p.715). That schools most likely to be under intense scrutiny by the school inspection regime "are reactive to policy and unable to relax about accountability" (Higham & Earley, 2013, p.714) is significant here and will be discussed further in the next chapter. Before this, however, it is useful to consider how the school

inspection regime is located within a broader policy landscape and the impact of this for social inequality and school leadership.

### 1.3. School leadership, the mantra of autonomy, accountability and responsibility, and inequality

School leadership has previously received attention from Ofsted (Wilshaw, 10 December 2014) for its perceived role in the "stalling" of progress in secondary schools in England and Wales. In his speech introducing Ofsted's annual report for 2013-14 Wilshaw, the then Chief Inspector for Ofsted, outlined the educational landscape. That "the leadership of teaching was more than twice as likely to be the cause of problems as the quality of teaching itself" (ibid) demonstrated an emerging tension between notions of autonomy deemed by the Academies Act 2010 and other educational reform, and the role of leadership required to sustain such autonomy. To exemplify this, Wilshaw identified the route to an 'outstanding' school: "...autonomy itself is not sufficient... It takes leadership. It takes a refusal to accept mediocrity" (ibid).

Ofsted and the Department for Education identified accountability and responsibility alongside autonomy as central to leading school improvement (e.g. Wilshaw, speech, 10 December 2014; Gibb, speech, 22 January 2015). This is largely linked to schools having to accept responsibility to tackle inequality by being held accountable for school data sets and ensuring gaps are closed in performance between specified groups, in order to enjoy the freedom associated with autonomy. This can still be demonstrated in for example, Nick Gibb, the School Standards Minister's speech in 2017, "Herein lies the power of greater

freedom and autonomy for schools” (Gibb, speech, 2 November 2017). Gibb continued the speech by linking the government’s role in ‘freeing’ teachers to its role in creating a ‘level playing field’:

But government has played, and will continue to play, an important role. As well as levelling the playing field and liberating teachers from unnecessary constraints, the government has played a crucial role in raising standards for all. (Gibb, speech, 2 November 2017b).

Addressing inequality through education has also pervaded most recent education policy and is often enmeshed with notions of competition and choice. The relationship of competition between schools, for example, in terms of league tables of results and other data sets for public display is linked to providing clear visibility in relation to parental and pupil choice of school (Lauder & Hughes, 1999). This has simultaneously aided and secured recent policy directions, for example, the 2010 Academies Act, promoting the notion of more choice in school provision including academies and free schools.

In a 2015 pre-election speech, the Secretary of State at the Department for Education located closing "the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers" as one of the main priorities for the future (Morgan, speech, 21 March 2015). Morgan used an example comparing educational achievement in Trafford and Knowsley<sup>2</sup> to determine the distinction between educational performance in small town and coastal areas with larger towns and cities: "if you're a child born in Knowsley you are less than half as likely to get the standard of education you need to succeed in life as a child in Trafford, and I think that is deeply unfair" (ibid). As Wilshaw stated in 2015, "the long tail of underachievement of the

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<sup>2</sup> Knowsley is one of the local authorities with the highest proportions of neighbourhoods among the most deprived in England (The English Indices of Deprivation, 2015, Department for Communities and Local Government) unlike the considerably more affluent borough of Trafford.

poorest children in our secondary schools shows little signs of improving" (Wilshaw, speech, 10 September 2015). The government, assisted by Ofsted, was to "continue to shine a spotlight on underperformance, even when this is uncomfortable for those involved" (Wilshaw, letter to schools outlining education inspection changes from September 2015, 7 July 2015), therefore requiring the leadership of all schools to close these and other existing gaps, including between social class and socio-economic groupings, ethnicity and gender. In the most recent publication of the Education Policy Institute's *Closing the Gap? Trends in Educational Attainment and Disadvantage* (Andrews, 2017), gaps remain across all age ranges stating, "At current trends, we estimate that it would take **around 50 years for the disadvantage gap to close completely** by the time pupils take their GCSEs" (ibid. p. 6, N.B. emboldened in original text).

By the end of his tenure, Wilshaw, referring to the continued existence of disparity between groups, spoke of education as having the "the power to bring people together, but it can also divide" (Wilshaw, speech, 1 December 2016). The tension alluded to here between education as tackling social inequality and education as a means of reproducing it, is prominent in much critical literature (e.g. Althusser, 1970; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu, 1977 etc.). Recent texts addressing social inequality (e.g. Dorling, 2015, Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) have cited that the largest gaps in educational achievement are seen in countries that have the greatest social inequalities. More equal academic achievement is identified in those countries that have a more even wealth distribution, so the responsibility being placed on school leadership by government and Ofsted to address inequality through education is not unproblematic. Nevertheless, recent

government direction has continued to link social justice or social mobility to school improvement and justifies policy as an attempt to create a fairer society (e.g. Morgan, 2015; May, 2016; Gibb, 2017a, 2017b).

This type of juxtaposition between reform and social justice is described by Ball as the "rhetoric of reform" (2013a, p.17-18) and often serves, regardless of its stated moral intentions, to reproduce social inequality through neoliberal governance (e.g. Ozga, 2000; Lipman 2011; Brown, 2015). The school inspection regime serves as a disciplinary tool of neoliberal governance. The nature of neoliberalism itself will be discussed further in the next chapter, but the "compelling and seductive ideals" spoken of by Harvey (2007, p.5) linked to freedom and equality can be seen in the following example relating to the academies programme. Adonis (2012) stated in his manifesto for change that "every underperforming school should be replaced by a sponsored academy" (p252), and the government has frequently restated this in relation to a perceived social mobility stance. The academisation programme has moved from its original role in 'turning around' schools for those from the least privileged backgrounds in 2000, to gathering increased momentum during the coalition government for any school to become academised (2010-15). This momentum has continued since the election of the Conservative party to government in May 2015. There remains, however, little evidence that the social mobility aims have been achieved. Hutchings and Francis (2017), referring to the academy chains, and especially multi-academy trusts (MATs) indicate that:

Longitudinal analysis shows that, in spite of some marginal movement, including improvement in a few poorly performing chains, and the falling back of a few chains previously performing at the national average, the main picture is one of a lack of transformative change over the period, including a very slow growth in

number of those chains which are succeeding in the original aims of the sponsor academies programme (p.5).

This aligns with findings by Gorard (2014) who concludes that the academies programme “is a waste of time and energy” (2014, p.281) in relation to pupil outcomes and local patterns of socio-economic segregation, as academies do no better or no worse than non-academy schools (ibid.). Also, there have been spurious improvements from multi academy trusts (MATs) that may be more the result of strategies such as purposeful recruitment and non-recruitment of pupils (Machin & Vernoit, 2011), “off-rolling” of pupils likely to make a negative impact on data, narrowing the curriculum or using qualifications inappropriately (Harford, Ofsted School Inspection update, March 2017) and other tactics or games employed to *show* school improvement, without necessarily improving individual pupil achievement per se. Indeed, Machin and Vernoit (2011) conclude their study on school autonomy in relation to the academies programme by stating:

Our results suggest (on average) schools respond to being granted increased autonomy (through the academy conversion) by sharply increasing the 'quality' of their pupil intake at year 7 (p.45-6).

This concurs with my own experience of a 'take-over' leadership strategy to improve a “failing” institution that was discussed earlier. School leaders then, not prepared to undertake such tactics, may find that rather than enjoying the autonomy and freedom spoken of in policy texts, they are instead positioned with little option for their schools other than ‘forced’ or ‘planned’ conversion (e.g. Gunter, 2011; Rayner, Courtney & Gunter, 2018). Within the simple binary rhetoric advocated by government that ‘failing’ schools will improve through academisation, there lies what Wilkins describes as the “new scalar hierarchies and accountability structures” (2017, p.175) that large multi-academy trusts provide. These are for Wilkins, “distinct private entities with monopolising

tendencies and practices” (p.172) which importantly, “undermines rather than enhances school autonomy” (ibid.). There are implications here for the research as one of the schools is part of a large MAT. Hill et al (2012) have also argued that in relation to the application of policy and practices within MATs, an 80/20 split is not uncommon, which while simplifying the emergent complexity, suggests that 80% of policy direction is being standardised across the chain leaving only 20% flexibility for adjusting systems and models to the local context (ibid. p.68).

The landscape of educational reform described so far has been at a point of further evolution over the last two years as the next crucial phase in the academies programme has started to determine the future of those schools still unable to reach the 'good' standard, despite state and other intervention. While the coalition government led earlier phases of the reform, a Conservative government has since been elected. A newfound and perhaps somewhat less constrained vigour to the government's approach to tackling schools that are deemed not yet 'good' has been evident. This was demonstrated in the Queen's Speech given on 27 May 2015, when the then Prime Minister, David Cameron referred to the "new powers to take over failing and coasting schools and create more academies". The first part of the speech referred to "giving new opportunities to the most disadvantaged and bringing different parts of the country together" (Cameron, speech, 27 May 2015). The government's website for the Department for Education cited Nicky Morgan, the then Education Secretary as sweeping "*away bureaucratic and legal loopholes* that previously prevented schools from being improved" (Morgan, press release, 30 June 2015,

N.B. italics in original text) and one of the key implications of this was forced academisation.

Several of the local schools in the coastal area of disadvantage that form the case study in this research were deemed to be “failing” and have experienced forced academisation. The Education and Adoption Bill would, Nick Gibb told us, “...ensure that every failing school is turned into an academy” (Gibb, speech, 12 November 2015), despite a lack of evidence that academies make a positive difference (Machin & Vernoit, 2011). David Cameron went further in the following month by stating that “a school that does just enough is not good enough, not for anyone. So I'm announcing today how we'll crack down on that dangerous tolerance of mediocrity” (Cameron, speech, 7 December 2015). In the same year, Wilshaw explained “Ofsted has reformed, is reforming and will continue to reform” (Wilshaw, speech, 15 June 2015) and therefore the strengthening of the school inspection regime alongside low tolerance of schools that are deemed “not good enough” secured the role of the school inspection regime as concomitant with recent educational reform. By the end of 2015 however, Wilshaw admitted that while academies had “undoubtedly injected vigour and competition into the system”, “success or failure hasn't automatically followed” (Wilshaw, speech, 1 December 2015).

For those schools falling short of the ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ judgement, the school inspection regime monitors improvement in the form of an initial visit following the previous inspection, alongside “further monitoring and other activity” (Ofsted, September 2014) until the subsequent inspection confirms that enough

improvement is deemed to be made. Leadership teams, the staff and pupils therefore, continue to be placed under scrutiny from the school inspection regime until a 'good' or 'outstanding' judgment is made and this places the daily practices of teaching and learning too, under scrutiny. This forms a disciplinary gaze (Perryman, 2006; 2009) that will be discussed in the next chapter and has significance for leadership providing a central theme within this research: how do leaders enact policy when under intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime?

While the school, and more importantly here, school leadership is held accountable and responsible for tackling disadvantage and addressing inequality, the issue of context has only very recently been given a heightened consideration by the school inspection regime. More recent changes at Ofsted have seen a new direction being articulated in relation to context. The recently appointed Ofsted Chief Inspector, Spielman, in her first speech (Spielman, speech, 10 March 2017) told of her disappointment in "some commentators still insisting that data is all we care about". It is "the challenge of interpreting data wisely, and placing it in context" that Spielman emphasised alongside curriculum, funding and a renewed emphasis on "a fresh approach" to the FE sector (Spielman, speech, 17 March 2017). These claims made by Spielman differ from the "no excuses accepted" message (Wilshaw, speech, 9 February 2012) made by Wilshaw at the start of his tenure but as yet, it is not possible to determine whether this direction will serve as useful rhetoric for further tightening of the inspection framework and increased scrutiny of the daily practices school leaders and teachers undertake. Context will form however, a central focus for this study and will be examined further.

### 1.5. Main aims of the research and structure of the thesis

To summarise the central issues underpinning this research then: this is a study concerned with the way school leadership is involved in policy enactment under the disciplinary gaze of the school inspection regime. The study aims to examine whether there are tensions that emerge between school context - here one in a coastal area of deprivation and the school inspection regime? If there are, then how might this impact on the daily practices of school leaders and the way policy is enacted? Does it 'produce' for example, fabrication, a performance, or simulation? While all state schools in England and Wales are under scrutiny from the school inspection regime, do some school leaders in the case study schools undertake 'acts of resistance' against the school inspection regime to better address the school context?

The thesis is structured into six further chapters. A literature review is presented in the next chapter. This focuses on the impact neoliberalism has placed on policy. Policy enactment and resistance are discussed before then considering the literature that has centred on the school inspection regime. Terms such as panoptic performativity, fabrication/post-fabrication and post-panopticism are considered alongside other forms of government. Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework for the thesis. This emerges in congruence with the theoretical positioning of much of the literature explored in Chapter Two, for example, drawing from Foucault. This chapter also offers something new to the discussions – the use of Walter Benjamin's work on aura, which has until now been mostly associated with culture. This thesis proposes the application of

Benjamin's work to education and offers an alternative reading of the reproduction of standards in schooling that are unrelated to the school's local context. Chapter Four follows, framing the research in its ontological, epistemological and methodological positioning. This chapter also explains the approach taken to gathering and analysing data and the ethical implications of this. Chapter Five presents the findings under the seven main themes that emerged in the research. These are: Context: You can explain it, but not excuse it; Surveillance of marks and marking: Always on a bit of a knife edge; Reproduction: Consistent, consistent, consistent; Curriculum constraints: English and maths, English and maths, English and maths; Instability: Up in the air; Performativity: A feeling of anxiety, and Struggle and resistance: We will take the hit. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. In this chapter, there are discussions centred upon the hyper-enactment of opaque neoliberal policy; presenting the case for the panoptic metaphor to be maintained to understand how surveillance works; education in the age of neoliberal reproduction; and micropolitical acts of resistance: the automaton continuum. A conclusion, forms Chapter Seven.

## **Chapter 2: A review of the literature**

### 2.1. Introduction

To understand the discussions informing this research, the literature considered here is focused largely on the policy issues impacting on school leaders and more specifically, those that relate to the school inspection regime. Inequality and the importance of context form an underlying theme, pertinent here to neoliberal education policy, which will be discussed further. The literature review therefore, first provides an overview to neoliberalism and policy and the resultant issues (2.2). The impact of neoliberal policy is further explored in relation to context (2.3). Context here is understood as both school and locality, while also being placed within a wider policy landscape. The next section examines recent literature on policy and acts of resistance (2.4). The main section of this review then focuses more specifically on how the school inspection regime has been understood in the literature (2.5). The implications of concepts such as performativity, panopticism and post-panopticism, and data accountability, all tightly linked to neoliberalism, are then considered. A thematic discussion then completes this section.

Gunter (2001) identifies three particular intellectual positions within school leadership literature, which can be usefully understood to inform this literature review. While I have not set out to explicitly examine the school leadership canon, Gunter's positioning demonstrates three distinct leadership influences that usefully inform my research. These are critical studies (concerned with power structures) aligning substantially with this research, educational management, and school effectiveness and school improvement (2001, p.2). The second and

third 'intellectual positions' of the school leadership literature, i.e. educational management, and school effectiveness and improvement concern the 'boundary disputes' of the type that emerge here: leadership, policy, improvement and context interlinking in various ways. While the literature draws from all three intellectual positions, the research takes a critical, poststructural stance, and therefore much, but not all of the thinking informing this study aligns similarly.

## 2.2. Neoliberalism and policy

Governments use education for specific purposes (Ozga, 2000, p.10), i.e. instrumental purposes, and therefore the intentions of education policy require consideration before identifying how these are understood by school leadership teams. Recent educational reform in England, led by Labour (1997 – 2010), a Conservative/Liberal Democrats coalition (2010 – 2015), and two successive Conservative (2015 and 2017) governments, has demonstrated commitment to neoliberal principles. A useful definition of neoliberalism is provided by Olssen and Peters (2005) as “a specific economic discourse or philosophy which has become dominant and effective in world economic relations as a consequence of super-power sponsorship”. Neoliberalism manifests itself as, for example, the “free market” (Wacquant, 2009, p.1); “quasi market” (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993), i.e. opening up public services to non-state providers (Ball, 2013a, p.212); promoting competition, not only between businesses and educational providers, but also between individuals as, “different kinds of educational workers or learners” (Ball, 2013b, p.131-2); efficiency in all sectors that effectively demonstrate Lyotard’s “best possible input/output equation” (1984), which may also result in a re-articulation of the meaning of equality (Rizvi, 2010, p72).

This re-articulation of the meaning of equality can be understood within a context of neoliberalism, as building upon what Harvey describes as the ideals of “dignity and individual freedom” (2007, p.5). The notion of ‘freedom’, sometimes expressed as ‘autonomy’, has been frequently articulated in educational policy texts (see chapter 1) as a benefit, albeit often concomitant with accountability and responsibility. Freedom and equality serve as central tenets to democracy and therefore Brown’s identification of neoliberalism as “a peculiar form of reason” (2015, p.17) that, while it “configures all aspects of existence in economic terms, is quietly undoing basic elements of democracy” (ibid.), usefully indicates the potential threat of neoliberalism common to its many critiques (e.g. Ball, 2003, Lipman, 2004, Peters, 2011, Slater, 2015). Lipman (2011), for example, emphasizes the “social process” (p.218) of neoliberalism that “reframes democracy” (p.223), offering “freedom to consume in the marketplace” (ibid.) with the erosion of democratic principles; here aligning to Brown’s identification of a potential threat to democracy cited above. Apple argues that democracy is reduced to consumption practices (2017, p.149). Cheng (2013) usefully summarises neoliberalism as a set of three paradoxes: market principles yet conservative moral agendas; the de-politicization of social risks yet the hyper-politicization of national security; a continuous ravaging of vulnerable populations set against the celebration of humanitarian or human rights interventions (unpaged video transcript). The paradox or contradictions referred to in Chapter 1, between the freedom given to school leaders and the threat of ‘forced’ academisation, aligns here similarly.

Four main criticisms of neoliberalism are captured by Brown (2015): “Intensified inequality, crass commodification and commerce, ever-growing corporate influence in government, economic havoc and instability” (p.30). Importantly however, for my research, Brown aligns herself with Foucault and distances herself from the more observational or distanced standpoint of what neoliberalism is. For Brown, “every being and activity are placed” on a “treadmill” of capitalism (Brown, 2015, p.222) within the neoliberal state so that neoliberalism is rather “an order of normative reason that, when it becomes ascendant, takes shape as a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices, and metrics to every dimension of human life” (ibid.). This feature of neoliberalism and its ‘grip’ on the individual ‘subject’: a neoliberal subject, is pertinent to Foucault’s later work which will be discussed in the next chapter. Wacquant (2009) indicates that neoliberalism is an “ideological project and governmental practice” (p.1) that can be more fully understood in the consideration of governmentality, and more recent work (e.g. Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Ball, 2016; Perryman et al, 2017a) has interrogated how subjectivity under neoliberal governance is manifest. These ideas are also furthered in Chapter 3.

Importantly, the work of Ball and Perryman has illustrated that education too is a target for neoliberal reform (Slater, 2015) and much of this is “produced on the ground” (Lipman, 2011, p.218) by school teachers, leaders and other social actors. Slater (2015) identifies crisis and recovery as integral to the functioning of the neoliberal state, including that within educational settings, and points to the “‘manufactured’ and ‘naturally occurring’” crises (p.1). An example of this can be seen in the identification of ‘failing’ schools in coastal areas in 2013 by Wilshaw,

the then Chief Inspector for Ofsted, who said in a speech to launch the 'Unseen Children' report:

“Many of the invisible children inhabit the classrooms and corridors of the legions of coasting – or sometimes sinking - schools that populate the provinces and hug the coasts of England” (Wilshaw, speech, 20 June 2013).

Wilshaw suggested that to address this 'crisis' was the need to attract and incentivise the best leaders and teachers who “would be willing to work in these areas for a minimum period of time” (Wilshaw, speech, 20 June 2013), i.e. a 'recovery' strategy. This has significance for the research here as the school inspection regime therefore in part, serves to identify crises that may not necessarily be perceived by others as such. The school inspection regime takes a role too in the 'recovery' of such crises at both local and national level. This may take the form of private intervention in state activity within schools, for example in the form of privately sourced Continuous Professional Training (CPD). This might also be seen as schools themselves seek to “conduct themselves more and more like profit-seeking firms” (Connell, 2013, p.102), recommended to schools as part of improvement 'support' following inspection, especially for those receiving a judgment of 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. This aligns with the 'contracting out' of the state sector and is an example of what Dean (2010) identifies as a technology of agency (p.196). Dean explains that once the state engages with contractualization, “its ethos of negotiated intersubjectivity is accepted, then all criticism becomes simply a means of retooling and expanding the logic of contract” (p.196). This plays a role in facilitating educational or other neoliberal reforms and suggests that the continuous process of measuring quality in state schools produces further neoliberal education policies that create and secure for neoliberalism, “the means of its own reproduction” (Slater, 2015, p.2).

### 2.3. Neoliberal policy and context

Gewirtz (2002) usefully summarises some of the contextual factors that contribute to school leadership within a neoliberal policy landscape in her discussions of post-welfarism and social justice. Identifying the formal commitment to market 'democracy' and competitive individualism (ibid. p.2.), Gewirtz aligns post-welfarism with neoliberalism characterising the features of post-welfarism as "the market position of the institution within the local competitive arena, the micropolitics of the institution, and the professional histories and biographies of key players within the institution" (ibid. p.48). These impact on the tensions for school leadership and other professionals within the school and affect all aspects of decision-making.

Gewirtz indicates that staff are "enmeshed in value conflicts and ethical dilemmas, as they are forced to rethink long-held commitments" (2002, p.49). There are obvious parallels here with the "re-articulation of the meaning of equality (Rizvi, 2014, p.78) and the quiet undoing of "basic elements of democracy" (Brown, 2015, p. 17) referred to in the previous section. This places school leaders with potential conflict between democratic/community matters and those of the quasi market. Earley et al (2012), advocate that an important aspect of school leadership is "to interact sensitively with local contexts, people and communities" (p.20) and Wrigley describes how recognising context can be seen in examples of schools "serving poor or marginalised populations" (Wrigley, 2013, p.37). He cites examples of schools where the idea of school improvement in terms of 'turning around' a school has required a literal "turning the staff round to connect and negotiate with the community and its circumstances" (2013, p.37).

The notion of turning around and being responsive to the community being served by the school is however one that has been obscured by the “high expectations, no excuses” approach taken by Wilshaw (Wilshaw, speech, 9 February 2012). This repetitive message from the school inspection regime has been that of challenging ‘low expectations’ in all schools – regardless of context (e.g. Wilshaw, speech, 25 September 2014; Gibb, speech, 3 October 2017). Similarly, most school improvement literature is devoid of, or offers only very partial contextual considerations and therefore needs to be viewed in relation to Dorling’s observation on equal countries achieving more equal educational achievement and vice versa, cited earlier (p.26).

This 'apolitical' approach to school reform (Wrigley, 2013, p.45) is rejected by Wrigley. Wrigley states that "the hegemony of neoliberalism" hinders "a genuine rethinking of educational institutions and activity" (ibid. p.31) and therefore suggests scrutiny of supposed school improvement in terms of 'for what purpose and to whose benefit?' (p.32). Maguire, Braun and Ball (2015) similarly refer to the policy actors within the school and its local context being “simply bleached out of the policy process or positioned as ‘implementers’” (p.485). Context is a mediating factor in policy enactment (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.40) where “participants and institutions, and agency and interpretation, are all typically undifferentiated” (ibid.). Usefully, the authors provide a typology of contextual dimensions of policy enactment. The authors state that the term ‘enactment’ captures the processes of translating policy into actions, and more importantly for this research, the ways in which the “abstractions” of policy texts become embodied in some way within our daily practices (ibid. p.3). The typology locates

the following set of subjective “interpretational” dynamics as situated contexts (i.e. pertaining to the school’s local context), professional cultures (i.e. pertaining to the school’s internal context, or ‘people’ dynamics contributing to an organisational culture), material contexts (i.e. buildings, budget etc.) and external contexts (i.e. support and/or pressure from external forces e.g. the school inspection regime, league tables etc. (ibid. p. 21). The authors recognise the overlaps and interconnectivity between the contextual dimensions but this framework enables policy actors to be held in place for the purposes of policy analysis (ibid. p.41) and for the authors to avoid context being “magically dematerialised”. Within my research, each of Ball, Maguire and Braun’s contextual dimensions are present to some extent with perhaps rather greater emphasis placed on both situated and external contexts.

Gillies (2013) recognises the contextual oversight too, by questioning the generic nature of leadership discourse leading to the conclusion that particularly within the public sector, leadership must have a moral dimension (p.37). Issues relating to inequality for example are addressed rarely, as much of the literature is 'best practice' in nature. Gillies describes this as "decontextualized and ethically anaesthetized" (ibid. p.35). Ozga aligns here by identifying the need to consider the potential of neoliberal education, (or as Ozga observes, “the market in education”) in reproducing or reinforcing inequality (Ozga, 2000, p.61). Such an approach, Ozga suggests, will illuminate how the “unsuccessful consumer and individual pupil” (ibid.), rather than the state, is required to take on the responsibility for failure. Increasingly in recent policy, this shift in responsibility has been placed both on ‘consumers’ and further on school leadership teams and

teachers. The impact of this shift in responsibility can, in part, be understood further through the conceptualisation of school autonomy, while recognising that school autonomy is not simply a question of context alone.

In the first chapter I discussed the prevalence of the mantra of autonomy, accountability and responsibility (p.23). Higham & Earley's (2013) work explores the concept of school autonomy. Identifying similar themes in Conservative - Liberal Democrat Coalition government education policy, such as "'transforming' the 'lowest performing schools' into sponsored Academies" (ibid. p.702), the authors propose a typology to capture the variations between schools, leaders and their experience of this new autonomy. The typology emerges as "confident, cautious, concerned and constrained schools" (ibid. p.715) and builds from comments by the then General Secretary of the Association of Schools and College Leaders, Brian Lightman, discussing 'confident' and 'constrained' schools. The authors state that the "constrained schools, close to government floor targets and at risk of an Ofsted visit, are reactive to policy and unable to relax about accountability" (ibid. p. 714). This builds on earlier work by Cribb and Gewirtz (2007) who explore the shifts between autonomy and control and consider the complexities within the notion of local level autonomy and the balance between this and state control. Cribb and Gewirtz identify three dimensions of autonomy-control as being first, to whose autonomy is in question; second, how it is being exercised and finally who are the agents of control and how is this being exercised (p.204-205). In applying this to the current context, the advocacy by the state for greater autonomy for schools is unlikely to apply to those schools under greater scrutiny from the inspection regime. Perryman

(2006, p.152) too notes: "There is no room within special measures regimes for schools to 'do their own thing' in terms of improvement" and this aligns similarly with Higham and Earley's perceived levels of autonomy (2013, p.715).

These perspectives on autonomy prove useful to inform my research as they identify some of the complex issues relating to context that emerge in other literature too. Additionally, James and Opatka (2015) explore context by taking the idea of the 'good enough' concept to consider three vignettes of school incidents that emerge as the 'inadequate', the 'good enough' and the 'perfect' school. In positioning the "good enough pedagogic and organizational practice in schools between inadequate practice and perfect practice" (ibid. p.81), the authors have highlighted the space between the "containing environment" of an inadequate school and the "constraining environment" of a perfect school (ibid.): the good enough school. The authors argue that risk is minimised in the perfect school, risk is strong and evident in the inadequate school, and yet in the good enough school, "there is risk, but that risk is not undue" (ibid.). How this is manifest can be seen in the ways policy is enacted.

#### 2.4. Policy enactment and acts of resistance

Maguire, Braun and Ball (2015) describe the complexities that policy realisation entails, suggesting that much of these processes "become displaced, invisible and risk going unrecognised in policy analysis" (ibid. p. 485). The authors suggest that the term "enactments" (ibid. p.487) is a useful term for the realisation of policy "read alongside/against contextual factors, by different sets of policy interpreters, translators and critics". Ozga describes the tension between "the dominant

intention or purpose of education” (2000, p.10) and “the way things work out on the ground”. This aligns with Ball, Maguire and Ball (2012) and the recognition of the complexities involved in transmission of policy “as teachers and pupils modify policy intentions, taking advantage of the spaces between planning and outcomes, as well as the contradictions or competition between purposes” (ibid.). Maguire, Braun and Ball (2015) describe the heterogeneity that “lends itself to divergences in the various interpretations of and attention paid to different policies” (ibid. p.487). The authors, for example, identify high levels of compliance, or “policy dependency” amongst new teachers (ibid. p.494) and yet, other policies, that are perhaps specifically linked to a particular member of staff, leave the school when the member of staff leaves the school. They also observe policy passing some teachers by (ibid.) as “a case of ‘now (some of you) see policy and now (some of you) don’t’” (ibid.). Many of these responses to policy lie within factors beyond a deliberate intent to resist policy, however within my study I have wanted to examine the extent to which there was deliberate policy resistance.

In Perryman, Ball, Maguire and Braun’s (2011) research on the accountability culture in schools, the authors state that they entitle a section of the article ‘policy evasion’ rather than policy resistance “because none of our departments could actually resist the policies around attainment” (ibid. p. 190). Ball, Maguire and Braun’s texts too, contribute valuable insight into policy enactment and the authors acknowledge that the nature of examining resistance, in particular, is somewhat problematic within the contemporary English school setting (2012,

p.149). The authors found more easily recognisable evidence of “discontents, murmurings, indifference and disengagements” (ibid. p.150).

The concept of ‘space’ within policy enactment is, from my own professional experience (see earlier, page 19), one that has potential here. Recognising the “terrain of struggle” (Ball and Olmedo, 2013) and “spaces of doubt” in my day to day leadership role enacting policy offered the possibility of an alternative. Identifying this was the beginning of the possibilities of forms of resistance. Ball and Olmedo’s work will be considered further in Chapter 3. Ball and Olmedo’s work had centred upon “a small set of email exchanges between Stephen Ball and teachers” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p.86), which is in marked contrast to a researcher or research team interviewing a number of staff over a relatively short period of time. The “micropolitics of resistance” (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.150) that the authors refer too are linked to positionality and context. The email exchanges in Ball and Olmedo’s work could only provide brief moments of insight into any sort of positionality or context. This remains therefore, a relatively underwritten area, largely because of the difficulties associated with unravelling such resistance. This has, however, been an important element in my research. The ways that I have approached this methodologically will be articulated in Chapter 4.

There are other interpretations of policy work in relation to compliance and resistance, for example in the work of Thomson (2008). Thomson argues for “a more expansive theoretical repertoire” to support the investigation of critique and resistance (ibid. p.87). Usefully here, drawing from post-colonial studies,

Thomson discusses 'emulation' and 'simulation'. Emulation: "taking actions to meet expectations" and simulation: "actions which appear to meet expectations" (ibid. p.87-8) are relevant to the field work undertaken in my research, and as Thomson points out, both suggest "an act of agency", whether compliance or resistance (ibid. p.88). Thomson, citing postcolonial scholar, Szkudlarek, recognises that "acts of resistance may invite acts of repression" (ibid. p.89) echoing here Mills (2003, p.35) on Foucault where she argues that we – neoliberal subjects or school leaders, are "the 'place' where power is enacted and the place where it is resisted". Thomson also indicates a potential issue of research positioning when she states that for Lyotard's theory of performativity, which will be discussed in the next chapter, emulation and simulation would be understood in the same way, i.e. fabrication, "whose accomplishment profoundly limits time and space for resistance" (Thomson, p.88). Compliance and resistance then, emerge from sites of power and struggle, and can be usefully considered in relation to the features of neoliberalism identified earlier:

"the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its positive role through the development of the techniques of *auditing*, *accounting* and *management*" (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p.20-2).

The theoretical nature of acts of resistance will be furthered in Chapter 4.

### 2.5. The school inspection regime

The school inspection regime has been understood as a disciplinary tool by the critical scholars that inform this section of the literature review. The school inspection literature that will be considered here has examined forms of neoliberal governance by focusing particularly on neoliberal technologies such as performativity and surveillance. Performativity as a technology and its impact on

the 'teacher's soul' was detailed in Ball's seminal essay, "The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity" (2003). While not concerned itself with the school inspection regime per se, it has informed much subsequent work that will be considered here, for example, Perryman, Clapham, Courtney and Page. As a neoliberal policy technology (Ball, 2013a), performativity defines the process of accountability for productivity, efficiency and effectiveness, i.e. Lyotard's "best possible input/output equation" (1984, p.46). In the neoliberal state this is to employ "judgments, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change" (Ball, 2013a, p.57). Importantly for school leaders, one school is compared to another school, using the school inspection regime to report on observations, alongside increased forms of additional performance mechanisms such as data reporting and pupil/student/parent feedback etc. This generally produces "simple figures or categories" (Ball, 2003, p.217), for example, grade one – outstanding etc. that form comparison tools such as league tables of school achievement, pupil ability ranking, and other comparative documents. On reading Ball's article for the first time in 2011, I was able to understand my own professional experience at that time, writing in the Foundations of Professionalism essay on the ways I recognised that my own professional values were in danger of being corroded by performativity. I wrote "There is a tension... between what matters to those who are measuring and those who are measured... much of it is done to our self by our self... we are prepared to do whatever it takes" (FOP assignment, p.9). Of particular interest to me at this point of writing was one of Ball's references to school inspection regarding "the management of performance" (2003, p.222).

"What is produced is a spectacle, or game-playing, or cynical compliance, or what one might see as 'enacted fantasy' (Butler, 1990), which is there simply to be

seen and judged – a fabrication... the heavy sense of inauthenticity in all this may well be appreciated as much by the Inspectors as the inspected”.

The ‘spectacle’, ‘game-playing’, etc. have been used to inform the literature on the school inspection regime to be considered here and can be separated into four main themes of surveillance: panopticism, fabrication, post-fabrication and post-panopticism alongside governance and self-governance. I have then provided further thematic discussion.

(i) Panoptic performativity: Most significant for my research has been the work of Perryman. Considering the way in which the school inspection regime undertakes surveillance of the teacher (or leader) as a neoliberal ‘subject’, is understood by Perryman (2006) as demonstrating how neoliberalism functions using a tool or technology by which we are governed. Perryman uses Foucault’s panopticon metaphor, that in turn draws on Bentham’s prison design, amalgamated with the concept of performativity, creating the term, ‘panoptic performativity’. Perryman uses panoptic performativity to act as a metaphor for the ways in which the school inspection regime continually monitors schools, specifically in her research of one school, Northgate, in ‘special measures’ within a culture of performativity. Regardless of whether inspection was taking place or not, teachers performed “in ways dictated by the discourse of inspection” (2006, p.148). Perryman describes the staff at Northgate under scrutiny from the school inspection regime feeling “as if they are constantly being observed” (p.155) by a “vigilant eye (*that*) is increasingly everywhere” (p.148). The ‘inmates’ are the teachers who feel under constant observation by the inspection regime (Perryman, 2006, p.155). This parallels the experience of the inmate in Foucault’s panoptic prison design.

Perryman highlights the "game played according to a closely prescribed set of rules" (p.158) and the "'unnatural' lessons 'performed' in front of inspectors" (Ibid.). This then produces a fabricated response Perryman argues, drawing further from Ball's (2003) seminal essay.

(ii) Fabrication: Fabrication is manifest in a range of professional contexts, processes and positions within education, and performativity is a key factor in its presence. Ball has described the impact of performativity in education and the resulting fabrication issues that emerge. As we set out to be accountable we focus on "making a spectacle of ourselves. We become transparent but empty, unrecognisable to ourselves" (Ball, 2008, p56). While many educational professionals will recognise this, perhaps in the moments of annual self-assessment, performance reviews or indeed in the day-to-day activities we undertake, the inspection regime as an impetus for such fabrication is the primary focus here. Perryman identifies a fabricated 'performance' being undertaken by teachers who "learned to perform the good school" (2006, p158) and the performance of inspection forms a central theme in a later follow-up study at Northgate by Perryman (2009). Pertinent to the research here is Perryman's observation that in,

"Learning to perform the good school... management and staff became adept in disguising the real problems and issues which face the school. This can mean that these issues do not get the attention and support they require" (2009, p629).

The ramifications of 'disguising' issues to divert attention away from inspection teams, particularly at a time of short notice inspections might be, at the very least, problematic. Given my experience outlined earlier of the impact of the school

inspection regime in relation to context, I was particularly interested to examine this area further in this research.

(iii) Post-fabrication: Since Perryman's research, the school inspection regime has changed in ways that enable the metaphor to be more explicitly apparent for schoolteachers and leaders. This is due to the short notice inspections that are applied to all schools leaving most with what Perryman observed as schools and teachers in "a state of perpetual readiness" (Perryman, 2009, p.627). Clapham (2015) argues that this results in a state of 'post-fabrication' as "inspection readiness was omnipresent to such an extent that it was not a fabricated version of events" (ibid. p.1) regardless of a school's previous inspection outcome. The teachers in Clapham's study were perceived as wanting to be 'outstanding' not only for the school inspection regime, but because "their own standards were far more exacting than those of both internal and external inspectorates" (ibid. p.13). This suggests that the technology of performativity had worked on the teachers to such an extent that they were fully governed: the surveillance discipline was capable of producing a neoliberal subject (teacher) that performs, not just for the school inspection regime but also on a daily basis (ibid. p.13). Clapham refers here to Perryman's notion of the "model prisoner". While the concept of post-fabrication raises some opportunities to reframe 'fabrication' in response to the new school inspection requirements, Clapham bases his study on just two teachers from two different schools. One school was deemed 'good' by the school inspection regime and the other was deemed 'satisfactory' - a term that has been replaced to demonstrate a strengthening neoliberal agenda as 'requires improvement'. One teacher is described as a 'beginning teacher' and the other a

'veteran teacher'. This proves problematic in terms of understanding the impact of the current school inspection regime in relation to notions of post-fabrication. This aside, the notion of post-fabrication is an interesting term that will be evaluated in later chapters.

(iv) Post-panopticism: Aligning loosely with Clapham, Page (2017a, 2017b) is suspicious of the extent to which focus has been placed on surveillance from the panoptic viewpoint, preferring to see surveillance, as post-panoptic. He suggests that researchers have “clung doggedly to the panoptic” (2017, p.3) even though this notion of surveillance is “rendered obsolete” (ibid, p.2). The “panoptic uncertainty” of the past is replaced, Page opines, by continuous and visible surveillance (2017b, p.4). Importantly, Page continues, the tense changes from present to future: “surveillance in schools can be seen as a simulation, following simulated conditions to predict future outcomes” (ibid. p.5). This therefore creates for Page, a distinction between “*what is* to *what will be given the present conditions*” (ibid. p.6). The subtlety Page offers here is that teachers’ ‘fabrication’ for school inspection is no longer appropriate because of inspection, data and other demands, and therefore “fabrications fool nobody and so become redundant” (ibid. p.9-10). This aligns with earlier work by Ozga (2009) who examines the use of data as a “key adjunct of new governance” (p. 160). The “data driven and data dependent” (ibid.) systems reflect “a constant search for more complete state knowledge, for a ‘bridge’, that allows panoptic visions and strategies while ensuring compliance” (ibid.). For Page, however, simulation “has replaced the real, it has become hyperreal” (2017b, p.9) and this, Page suggests, is because our “data doubles”, drawing from Haggerty and Ericson (2000), exist,

to provide “quantifiable units of measurement” (Page, 2017b, p.9). Simulated surveillance becomes the only reality for new teachers (ibid. p.10), who know only the ‘hyperreal’, while longer-serving teachers are required to either accept this with nostalgia for the past or to leave the profession (ibid. p.10).

Page’s work (2017a, 2017b) initially prompted review for my own conceptualisation of the school inspection regime. Like Clapham (2015), seeing fabrication as obsolete, and hyperreality instead as the dominant form of surveillance, or simulated surveillance, is compelling, up to a point. Page demands that we make clear distinctions between fabrication and simulation and forms his argument from Baudrillard. This, then becomes the crucial distinction in the panoptic or post-fabrication/post-panoptic debate – the positioning of the researcher. While there are many overlaps between postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches, there are clear distinctions between Lyotard’s performativity and fabrication work (1984) and Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* essay (1994). As Thomson (2008) observed, Lyotard would not discriminate between fabrication and simulation (or emulation), “both would be taken as a ‘fabrication’” (p.88).

Courtney (2016) however provides a view on fabrication in relation to changes in the school inspection regime in his compelling article on post-panopticism. He suggests that changes to inspection arrangements have resulted in the destabilisation of fabrication “to betray the players’ ignorance of the rules and the artifice of their performed identity” (ibid. p.634) – for Courtney, panoptic performativity relied on “everyone knowing the ‘rules of the game’ in order to play

it" (ibid.). The ideas presented by Courtney appear more considered than that of Page and Clapham. His reference to "the (*school inspection*) regime's goal of demonstrating its authority, especially over the socio-economically disadvantaged" (ibid. p.638) is particularly resonant with my research. Yet, throughout the article, it is difficult to understand whether the 'post' prefix to panopticism is required. Neoliberalism itself is the discourse that demands its subject will feel a sense of destabilisation, "'fuzzy' norms" (ibid. p.623) and heavy penalties for failure to comply – as Courtney states "more desired but less possible" (ibid. p.632). Nevertheless, there is much in Courtney's work that regardless of the term panopticism or post-panopticism is of relevance to my research and findings. Perryman et al (2017b) also consider the nature of post-panopticism in relation to policy enactment. Using secondary analysis from the ESRC-funded study on policy enactment (e.g. Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012), and recognising that this research was undertaken ahead of the changes to the school inspection framework, Perryman et al (2017b) accept Courtney's notion of the post-panoptic. This produces a compelling case for the post-panoptic that will be returned to in the final chapters.

(v) Other forms of governance: Later work by Perryman et al (2017a) suggests that alongside the disciplinary gaze is a "more subtle persuasion" (ibid. p. 755) through forms of self-governance. Self-governance ensures that individual subjects – neoliberal subjects, are productive and flexible for the realisation of neoliberal aims. These will be considered in the next chapter. It is useful however to consider some of the other forms that do not appear within the theoretical framing of my research, but are of significance in the literature.

Issues of school data underpinning the disciplinary gaze from the school inspection regime have underpinned much of the research discussed above. This access to data monitoring is used to precede or even prompt school inspection. Grek and Lundgren (2015) term the widespread use of data from afar as "governing from a distance". Similarly, 'governing by numbers' within educational research has offered a relevant theme since earlier work on the 'audit culture' (e.g. Shore and Wright, 1999; Rose, 1999). An audit culture is defined as "the principles and techniques of accountancy and financial management" that are applied to "the governance of people and organisations – and, more importantly, the social and cultural consequences of that translation" (Shore and Wright, 2015, p.24). This has been recently articulated as 'datafication' (e.g. Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2016) and while the examples here relate to early years education and are therefore outside the scope of this research project, their concerns, for example, that the "hegemony of performativity in which the discourses of school data accountability were so dominant that there was little space for alternatives" (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2016 p.605) is of some significance. That the report is entitled 'They are children...not robots, not machines' has some alignment with the automaton like approach taken to policy enactment that will be discussed in later chapters.

The notion of on and off site inspection is taken further by Grek and Lundgren (2015) who explore the ways that schools are governed across Sweden, England and Scotland and consider the concept of governing as "a continuous process of managing tensions between centralised and decentralised levels of governance,

deregulation and existing or new (re-) regulatory instruments of governance" (ibid. p5). The term 'governing' here embraces the more recent shift from 'government' to the co-production involved in 'governance' (ibid. p11). Clarke, in the same text explores this in some detail (2015, p.12). Clarke sees inspection as " a form of embodied regulation" (ibid. p.11) and suggests public interest is "*embodied* in inspectors" (ibid. p.22). He describes how the term 'governing' draws from both concepts of governance and governmentality. Interestingly, governance, while not a new term in school management, has been used recently by the school inspection regime in connection with the ways schools might forge links with businesses through school governance as a way for schools to improve. This can be seen in the recent example from a speech by Michael Wilshaw while still in his role as Chief Inspector for Ofsted, when he states that, "The role that governance plays in ensuring that every child receives the best possible education is often overlooked" (Wilshaw, speech, 11 December 2015). In the speech, Wilshaw encouraged local businesses to become involved in the management (or governance) of schools aligning public and private sectors. Gunter (2011) describes schools being created as if "small businesses regulated by a performance management regime" (p.1) stating that the Coalition had maintained and accelerated the neoliberal education policies of the past thirty years (p232). The connection between neoliberal practice and forms of governance within education are strong.

(vi) Summary: This section of the literature review has prepared the foundation for the theoretical discussions that follow in Chapter 3. The short notice inspection has led to further examination of the term panoptic performativity, which

Perryman defined in terms of education and the school inspection regime, using Foucault's work. Other authors such as Clapham (2015), Courtney (2016) and Page (2017b) have questioned the relevance of this term in relation to the increased use of data by the school inspection regime and the revised inspection arrangements. While these scholars have argued for a reframed approach to panopticism, that of post-panopticism/post-fabrication, I will explore whether the case is compelling enough to embrace the new terms in relation to my research in Chapter 6.

Here I have raised initial questions from the review of literature that informed the final articulation of the research questions that will be addressed in Chapter 4. The questions reflect the central findings emerging from the review of literature but are more precisely articulated to align with the research itself.

1. How do schools do policy? (2.2.)
2. What tensions emerge for school leaders between the demands of policy and the demands of context? (2.3.)
3. Is it possible to identify micropolitical acts of resistance amongst school leaders in the case study schools? (2.4.)
4. How has the school inspection regime worked on the ways the school leaders enact policy? How might concepts relating to surveillance be understood from school leaders and how does the school inspection regime influence this? (2.5.)

These initial questions arising from the literature review will be considered in relation to the theoretical framework that is presented in the next chapter. The

theoretical framework conceptualises disciplinary technologies and technologies of the self to understand the ways leaders and teachers are governed through policy and the inspection regime, alongside the concept of 'aura' (Benjamin, 2008).

## Chapter 3, Theoretical Framework

### 3.1. A theoretical overview

A critical, post-structural perspective underpins the theory applied in this research. Critical literature views society as “cracked” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013) or unjust, and tends to question rather than accept existing structures and systems. It is usually concerned particularly with the experience of the most vulnerable or least powerful in society. In this research similarly, my concerns lie with those living within an area of coastal deprivation and particularly the most disadvantaged within these areas. The population of this case study area experiences lower than average household incomes, higher levels of people on out of work benefits, as well as a less qualified population than the national average and the potential issues relating to the reproduction of existing inequalities as a result of this (The English Indices of Deprivation, 2015, Department for Communities and Local Government). The research presented considers this particular manifestation of social inequality in relation to policy, school leadership and the school inspection regime. The government’s mantra of autonomy, accountability and responsibility that was discussed in Chapter 1 provides a political influence – political domination even, for the everyday practices undertaken by leaders in schools. The extent to which this might be in conflict with contextual or community issues is pertinent here.

A post-structural perspective enables an understanding of policy, leadership and practice, or more particularly the impact of neoliberal governance, power and discourse that is apparent in society, and the ways we are *disciplined* or *governed* as individuals. Post-structural positioning facilitates analysis and critique of the

constraining elements of existence from the realities that are produced, and recognises that we are all subjected to the exercise of power in some way. We are governed by neoliberalism's "hegemonic discourse" (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p.314), and are made neoliberal subjects that are required to be competitive, agile and productive for economic purposes. The neoliberal subject is required to be a self-governing subject and effectively aligned with economics. Masschelein et al (2007) note for example, the importance of a "regime of government and self-government in which the 'economic'... plays a central, strategic role" (p.5). Neoliberal education reform is "multifaceted, complex and adaptive" (Slater, 2015, p. 1) and can be seen to engage education in policies and processes that are similar to those of businesses. There is a gradual shift of assets from public to private (Gunter & McGinity, 2014, p.301) through a process described by Hatcher (2015) as "*pull, push and drive*". The process of communities 'pulling' and employees 'pushing' services out of state provision through Coalition government strategies is not as powerful however as the 'driving' out of public services from state provision through governmental cuts to public services (Hatcher, 2015, p.390). A reminder of the earlier reference from Apple that democracy is reduced to consumption practices (2017, p.149) is appropriate here.

The theory employed to understand the fieldwork is drawn principally from Foucault. This is largely because I have found his conceptual tools to be useful in the past, when applied to tacit knowledge of leadership in the 'failing' context that was outlined earlier. Foucault discusses power relationships rather than power per se and in doing this, considers "the relationships in which one wishes

to direct the behavior of another" (Foucault, 1984, p.11). These are the "micro-practices of lived experiences" (Olssen, 2003) and this has relevance to leadership by enabling a view of "the approved and authorized exercise of power" (Gillies, 2013). The concept of micro-practices within a context of power dynamics has been particularly useful to my research as not only does it enable analysis and critique of the school inspection regime but also facilitates consideration of the space between policy compliance and resistance, or policy enactment and refusal/resistance.

Drawing on Foucault has been a fertile terrain for academic researchers considering the school inspection regime (e.g. Perryman, Clapham). The work of Walter Benjamin, a member of the Frankfurt School, has however generally been overlooked by critical education researchers. Additionally, I have drawn briefly here, from Benjamin's seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (2008) that was first published in 1936. Benjamin's concern related to what happened to fine art when reproduced through the then, newfound capacities for technological reproduction of fine art exploited by capitalism. Genuineness, or aura, in the process of reproduction of fine art is lost – or 'fades' as Benjamin tells us, because the "unique existence in the place where it is at this moment" (ibid. p. 5) is removed. There are parallels here with the decontextualized and ethically anaesthetised neoliberal policy stance identified by Gillies, discussed in the previous chapter. Is there an alignment then between the expectations of schools placed on them by the school inspection regime and government in terms of preferred policy response; the identification of 'exceptional leaders' and 'great heads'; the best practice scenarios advocated by

the school inspection regime; and 'all' school data accountability, and fine art, removed from its specific context and reproduced over and over again? For Benjamin, the process of reproduction caused fine art's 'aura' to fade – it lost its genuineness. In the specific case study context set within a coastal area of deprivation in neoliberal times under scrutiny from the school inspection regime to reproduce the highest standards, regardless of context, what might 'fade' by the reproduction of 'good' or 'outstanding'? Does it become disingenuous or inauthentic? If it does, what might be the implications for inequality?

The use of Benjamin's seminal essay therefore has offered scope for the understanding of the reproduction of educational standards, attainment and policy articulation that neoliberal education policy demands, especially when under the disciplinary gaze from the school inspection regime. The physical and emotional effects of my own experience outlined earlier aligned with the loss of aura or genuineness. The overwhelming sense of recognising the "cracked" (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p.85) emerged for me at the point of feeling an 'emptiness': automaton rather than autonomous. I take the liberty here of juxtaposing Foucault's ideas of the technologies of the self with the single concept of 'aura' from Benjamin. I am aware, however, that the 'intellectual jumping', as Alvesson describes it (2002, p.133), required when moving between theoretical positioning is not always easy. Even if the theories fall within the same paradigm, Alvesson cites the requirement for "unfreezing" and "desocialization from the previous position" (ibid.). Within a study of this scale, there is scope to adjust the focus somewhat to establish richer interpretations and understanding. Alvesson suggests that this process is "unsatisfying" (ibid. p. 134) unless each theoretical

interpretation produces “some potentially good or interesting idea” (ibid.). The brief use of Benjamin’s work in this study, I suggest, generates further understanding of the way policy enactment, compliance and resistance can be understood.

In my Institution Focused Study, I focused on micropolitics within a 'failing' educational setting to explore how power works – using Foucault’s notion of the how(s) of power. Theoretical understanding was drawn explicitly from Ball and Olmedo’s paper, ‘Care of the self, resistance and subjectivity under new liberal governmentalities’ (2013). Leadership staff interviewed in the research setting - a sixth form college in England, were asked to focus on their experience of the intense scrutiny from Ofsted following successive judgments of ‘inadequate’. Describing experience both before the ‘takeover leadership’ that had been ‘forced’ in to replace the outgoing Principal and the early signs of the new leadership direction, it was possible to determine some of the ways that power interacted in the micropolitical relationships between staff during this period of time. My definition for micropolitics, drawing on Hoyle (1982, 1999) and Morley (2008), was “the tensions apparent within professional, and sometimes personal relations within the organisation, influenced by power” (IFS, 2014, p.9). I explored these 'tensions' through Foucault's the 'how(s) of power' and Ball and Olmedo's work (2013) considering the production of subjectivity and the ways teachers recognised the 'cracked'. Ball and Olmedo viewed the teachers’ articulations via email correspondence, as illustrative of a site of struggle and resistance (ibid. p.85).

Similarly, in this research, I have been interested in the ways that struggle and resistance might be experienced. This might be a moment of reflection by leaders or teachers that a strategy, approach or model directed by the school inspection regime is not the right one for this school, or indeed any school. It could also be that a specific response to policy is enacted in a way that is different from the preferred interpretation or indeed, that there is policy refusal or resistance. Power relationships are formed from both micro and macro tensions influenced by power, and for Foucault, these are all *acts of domination*. To enable specific practices of domination to be discussed, and here I am concerned with disciplinary and self-disciplinary technologies, I will provide a brief summary of the terms governmentality and discourse. Both underpin the theoretical approaches taken here. Governmentality is a term used by Foucault later in his writing that describes specific practices of government that are important to the research. Governmentality is drawn from the eighteenth century and Foucault explains that it is "the tactics of government that make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not" (1991b, p103). Dean (2010, p.195-6) describes techniques of government that include different forms of technology, for example, the technologies of agency and the technologies of performance; both relevant here. Dean reminds us that government can consist of any deliberate attempt to control "aspects of our behaviour according to particular sets of norms and for a variety of ends" (ibid, p18). The shaping of the individual in this way produces then for Foucault, a subject that is "convenient" (Foucault, 1991a, p95). This may be contemporarily, a neoliberal subject, and while the political rationality related to schools can be seen easily in terms of the state, government and policy, it is

important, as Ball reminds us, to note that "it is something broader and more varied than those powers that might be said to be held by state" (2013b, p120). By this it is useful to understand how there are various techniques that are used to achieve this, such as discourse, surveillance and self-discipline. These will be considered further but importantly here, there exists tensions that emerge from governmentality and these can be seen in "the ways in which we might struggle to escape or engage with these practices" (Ball, 2013b, p120).

The micropolitical 'tensions' described earlier (p.55) can be seen to align with those arising from governmentality and the types of techniques that relate to the ways in which humans understand themselves (Foucault, 1988, p18), and to the ways in which we are self-governing individuals (Gillies, 2013, p.15). Foucault groups technologies or techniques emerging from governmentality into four main themes: production, sign systems, power and self (Foucault, 1988, p18). The latter two thematic areas, i.e. technologies of power and technologies of the self, are most relevant to the research area. Technologies of power, or disciplinary technologies realised largely through the disciplinary tool of surveillance are useful to understand governance through policy, the school inspection regime and school leaders. Technologies of the self are useful to understand self-governance and the practices undertaken by school leaders in response to particular elements of the disciplinary technology of surveillance and will be considered fully in the conceptual framework.

An understanding of discourse provides an overarching concept that will be referred to throughout the research, relating as it does to all 'acts of domination'

and the realities that are produced by the constraints of it. We are formed and made subjects by disciplinary powers and discourse (Gillies, 2013, p.15). In *The Order of Discourse* (1970) Foucault proposes a theory that identifies the production of discourse as being "at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality" (p52). Importantly discourse creates knowledge and we too, are constructed through discourse, for example as a *school leader, in a failing school or in an area of deprivation*. By this we can understand that power "is constituted by and exercised through discourse" (Wright, 2012, p.289) by defining and thereby constructing what we understand of what is spoken of. Foucault's use of the term discourse is "concerned to address the structures and rules that constitute a discourse rather than the texts and utterances produced within it" (Ball, 2013b, p19). Drawing from Butler, Gowlett et al (2015) identify discourse and discursive practices as shaping what is seen to be 'culturally intelligible' (p.155). This term is usefully applied by the authors to the ways we might understand policy enactment through our capacity to understand in relation to the cultural context we find ourselves in, and this has had significance in relation to an understanding of school leaders, policy enactment and context.

Butler's work on discourse too has informed the conceptual framework. While Butler's concept of discourse is applied to, for example, an understanding of gender and of sexuality, she moves us further towards an understanding of "bodily acts" (Butler, 2015, p.29) in ways that have been useful here in

understanding how school leaders and teachers 'act' too. For Butler, "Performativity characterizes first and foremost that characteristic of linguistic utterances that in the moment of making the utterance makes something happen or brings some phenomenon into being" (ibid. p. 28). This definition informed my thinking on performativity as Butler specifically focuses on that moment when our decisions, informed by linguistic utterances, become manifest in action or articulation – bringing something into being. This has significant insight in relation to my study exploring how school leaders enact policy i.e. how performative discourse works on school leaders to produce an effect, or specific enactment of policy. This has offered scope to consider how discourse through neoliberal policy might produce specific policy enactment by school leadership, and also ways in which "daily practice" (Artemidorus, cited in Foucault, 1990), or what Butler calls "the lived modes of embodiment we acquire over time" (Butler, 2015, p.29), in schools is impacted by the school inspection regime. There have been further implications similarly for understanding the ways that social inequality in relation to poverty has been uttered linguistically to make something happen, or to "produce" us (ibid. p.29). Bhaskar (2016, p.103) refers to discourse as "a collection of texts that have been pressed into service by an individual, a group or institution for a particular purpose or end". Discourse here has been considered, alongside disciplinary technologies and technologies of the self, to examine some of the ways we are governed in relation to subjectivation and the resultant compliance/resistance response. A critical perspective recognises that policy might "persuade social actors to subscribe to particular beliefs that delineate action" (Ward et al, 2015, p.1) as well as being an attempt to tackle problems. Discourse in current education policy provides, for example, a much-

repeated coupling of *disadvantaged children* to notions of social justice (e.g. Morgan, Cameron, Gibb). This is simultaneously presented alongside the mantra of autonomy, accountability and responsibility as stated earlier. Occasional 'good practice' scenarios are used to 'interpellate' or hail, to borrow Althusser's term, the discourse of successful leaders. For Althusser we are hailed through ideology, and here more specifically discourse, and this can be used to construct "concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (Althusser, 1970). Discourse serves then to interpellate school leaders to provide a solution to the issue of social inequality and identifies the isolated, reconfigured tales of 'successful' leaders who can be drawn upon for this purpose, for example in Wilshaw's speech (July 2015).

The way policy is employed for the purpose of producing "particular subject positions" (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.3) has been considered too. Ball describes discourse as "that which constrains *or enables*, writing, speaking and thinking" (2013b, p19) and therefore doubts whether it is possible to have any critical detachment (ibid.). As I am particularly interested here in the impact of policy enactment by school leaders under scrutiny from the school inspection regime and its impact on social inequality in the coastal areas of disadvantage, it has been useful to consider discourse, despite sharing the notion that we can never be disconnected from the realities produced by it. Again, it is the spaces of micropolitical resistance that are of most interest here. This will be furthered in the following conceptual framework that will consider disciplinary technologies, technologies of the self and the fading of aura.

### 3.2. The conceptual framework

The following illustrates how the conceptual tools will be explicitly used in the analysis and interpretation of the data presented in Chapter 6.

#### (i) Disciplinary technologies

Foucault explored the disciplinary technologies that are most relevant to education and leadership in *Discipline and Punish* (1991a). The "specific technology of power" (Foucault, 1991a, p.194) that Foucault calls 'discipline', outlines the ways that "individuals and populations are managed and controlled, and surveillance is the term for all the means by which they are monitored, assessed, judged" (Gillies, 2013, p. 14). Foucault identifies the individual as "the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society" and as "a reality fabricated" by it (Foucault, 1991a, p.194). While discourse plays a role in the fabricated realities that contribute to the 'subjectivation' of the individual, surveillance has an explicit significance within the context of the school inspection regime.

Choosing a narrative based initially on actions to control the plague at the end of the seventeenth century - where "Inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere" (Ibid. p195) - Foucault uses Bentham's prison design, the panopticon, as a metaphor for societal surveillance and discipline. In providing backlight shone onto the subject, here "a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy" (ibid. p. 200), Foucault suggests the inmate, or subject, is induced into "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (ibid.) regardless of whether being watched by

the 'supervisor' or not. The parallel here between schools and the school inspection regime has been well documented by Perryman (e.g. 2006, 2009) and is detailed in Chapter 2. Perryman (2006) identified the threat of the 'supervisor' figure as aligning with the omnipresence felt from the school inspection regime. Currently the concept of surveillance, while being experienced by all schools, due to both short notice inspection and widespread data reporting, is more likely to be intensely felt by the schools that have not yet reached the 'good' or better judgment. This would include the recent experiences at the case study schools. In the research site, there is one school that has experienced the disciplinary technologies forcefully and explicitly but is now 'rewarded' by a 'lighter touch', and a second school that is more similar to that observed by Perryman. Schools currently have further surveillance through the form of an increased data monitoring of schools, teachers and pupils through a "results driven approach" (Perryman et al, 2011) and "high stakes testing" (Roberts-Holmes, 2015). The impact of the disciplinary tool of surveillance through the inspection regime is considered specifically in relation to the types of policy response, or enactment it produces, and the impact of this on social inequality within a coastal area of deprivation. Foucault concluded *Discipline and Punish* by suggesting that what presides over punitive mechanisms is "the necessity of combat and the rules of strategy...that permit the fabrication of the disciplinary individual" (1991a, p.308). This informs the discussions on fabrication in relation to the school inspection regime – a punitive mechanism. It is in this respect that there becomes a shift in being disciplined by a disciplinary mechanism such as the school inspection regime, and self-discipline. Perryman et al (2017a) suggest that while teachers may not now fear the "autocratic head" or the "tendrils of performativity that

terrorise their soul (Ball (2003)", they may undertake the disciplining themselves, "by becoming a truly reflective practitioner under the subtle persuasion of governmentality, dominated yet free" (p.755). The second Foucauldian concept used in the research therefore, is the technologies of the self, that was of increased concern in Foucault's later writing.

#### (ii) Technologies of the self

While the concept of domination remained a central preoccupation for Foucault and remains influential in this research, he became increasingly interested in the ways in which we as subjects continue to be worked on through the techniques of self-government he termed, technologies of the self. Foucault describes the process of transforming ourselves "in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988, p18) as 'the care of the self' (Martin, 1988). This is not a departure from previous ideas, and indeed it returns to the concept of self first explored in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* written in 1976 (Martin, 1988), but here the focus is away from sex, and instead concerned with "a certain number of operations on their (the individuals) own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being" (Foucault, 1988, p19). The technologies of the self include any particular shaping of self in response to discourse (Gillies, 2013, p15). In my experience, this might include for school leaders: internally and externally rationalising difficult decisions for staffing or pupils; developing a more competitive edge to demonstrate commitment to the direction the school is taking; simply ensuring that performance management targets are met at the next review point regardless of how *meaningful* they might appear. These examples demonstrate the potential

areas of tension for school leaders that relate back to conflict of purpose, and the space within compliance and resistance (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 4). Ball states, "The neo-liberal subject is malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled" (2013b, p.139). Neoliberalism demands that we are agile, competitive, fit etc. to adjust and respond to the changing demands that neoliberal governance demands. Olssen and Peters usefully illustrate the features of neoliberal demands in their 'Ideal-type model of internal governance of universities (2005, p.329). The neoliberal (or private) attributes for work relations, for example, are "Competitive; hierarchical; workload indexed to market; corporate loyalty; no adverse criticism of university" (Olssen cited in Kolsaker, 2008, p.514). This is compared to "Trust; virtue ethics; professional norms; freedom of expression and criticism; role of public intellectual" (ibid.) for the Liberal or public sphere. For Foucault then, this demonstrates "the techniques, the practices, which give a concrete form to this new political rationality" (1981, p153). Foucault questions these types of technology that have "been put to work and used and developed in the general framework of the reason of state in order to make of the individual a significant element for the state" (Foucault, 1981, p153). Technologies of the self is concomitant with domination and Foucault reflects in his later writing, "Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power' (ibid, p19). School leaders and teachers have been required to 'work' on themselves through being "truly reflective practitioners" (Perryman et al, 2017a), concerned with continuous improvement.

The research I am presenting here considers how leaders enact policy to produce reality through disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991a, p194) and self-regulation or

self-discipline. Gillies (2013) reminds us that the acts of compliance or of resistance are formed in relation to discourse (ibid. p.15). Indeed, Foucault spent much of his writing on the genealogy of discourse. Ball and Olmedo (2013) however, apply "the terrain of struggle, the terrain of resistance" (ibid. p.85) drawing on technologies of the self and ask whether this makes social reality "not as inevitable as it may seem" (ibid). The authors conclude that the "spaces of doubt" (ibid. p.93) opened up by the teachers they studied may be "ways of exploring the possibilities and impossibilities of transgression" (ibid. p.94). This has been significant for the research, as it enables school leaders, policy enactment and context to be examined in relation to similar notions of compliance and resistance. This is the care of the self and when asked whether the care of the self could become an "exercise of power on others" (Foucault, 1984, p.8), Foucault replied that "a tyrannical power only comes from the fact that one did not care for one's self and that one has become a slave to his desires" (ibid.). This suggests that the micropolitics of resistance that might be seen in policy enactment, for example, has some scope for providing a 'space of doubt', refusal or point of transgression (e.g. Ball, 2016).

The final concept which has been used in addition to the two main Foucauldian concepts is from Benjamin. This subsidiary theoretical concept is applied here to offer further insight into the decontextualised nature of reproducing the 'good' school.

### (iii) The fading of aura

Benjamin makes a distinction between two poles: cultic value and display value (2008, p.12). Cultic value is described by Benjamin as the moment of artistic production whereby “their presence is more important than the fact that they are seen” (ibid.). This typically means that the work of art remains in the location (or context) for which it was designed, for example, an altarpiece or an oratorio in the cathedral, a symphony in the concert hall etc. In art that is reproduced through technology, that which is the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction Benjamin refers to in his essay title, displayability, or display value, becomes the main purpose. This renders therefore, that “the artistic function, stands out as one that may subsequently be deemed incidental” (ibid. p.13). The capacity to display displaces then, a sense of context. When this occurs, its genuineness “starts to wobble” (ibid. p.7). Reproduction “substitutes for its unique incidence a multiplicity of incidences” (ibid.) resulting in “a fading of aura” (ibid. p.9). Benjamin continues by stating “The uniqueness of the work of art is identical with its embeddedness in the context of tradition” (ibid. p.10).

While reading about the conceptual tools used in the existing educational literature on fabricated and other performative responses to the school inspection regime, and connecting these terms with what I had experienced in my earlier previous professional setting under the school inspection regime, it was an earlier reading of Benjamin’s essay that aligned with that experience. Under the disciplinary gaze of the school inspection regime, my own professional experience at the ‘failing’ institution led to policy enactment that seemed to me somewhat lacking in genuineness – inauthentic. The contextualised narratives of

the educational setting were disregarded by the school inspection regime – displayability was more important than moral purpose, or ‘artistic function’ to align with Benjamin. There is also an explicit connection here with ‘normalisation’ (Foucault, Butler, Ball, Perryman etc. as a process of neoliberal governance by which we become easier to govern. I have therefore used the term ‘fading of aura’ from Benjamin, as a further conceptual tool to examine the fieldwork in this research.

### 3.3. Relationship between key questions for my research arising from the review of literature and the theoretical framework

A theoretical framework does not necessarily neatly compartmentalise one concept with each key question arising from the review of literature – neither later, when the final research questions are articulated in Chapter 4. It has been possible however, to make an attempt to usefully align the literature review to the conceptual tools, albeit with an important reminder that by their very nature, conceptual tools do not exist in a vacuum. The technologies of the self, for example, are innately linked to discourse i.e. how we shape ourselves in response to discourse. There is much overlap.

**Table 1: Key questions arising from the review of literature**

Questions
1. How do school leaders enact policy in a coastal area of deprivation when under intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime?
2. How do school leaders within the case study schools perceive tensions between policy and context?
3. Is it possible to identify micropolitical acts of resistance amongst school leaders in the case study schools?

In summary then, disciplinary technologies, especially the tool of surveillance, has been considered in relation to how school leaders are governed through policy and the school inspection regime. Self-governance, or the technologies of the self enables further understanding of the practices undertaken by school leaders in response to particular elements of disciplinary power. The reproducibility of school leaders' enactment of policy and the potentially decontextualized nature of this, is explored through Benjamin's concept of 'fading of aura'. These three conceptual tools aid an understanding of the impact of the school inspection regime on how school leaders in two case study schools enact policy, within the context of a coastal area of deprivation.

## Chapter 4 Methodology

### 4.1. Ontological, epistemological and methodological positioning

I have demonstrated that the theoretical perspective for this study draws largely from Foucault and Benjamin, and takes a broadly, post-structuralist stance. Alvesson (2002) presents five themes of postmodernism rather than post-structuralism in a compelling way that aligns with this research. While there has been much discussion given to the distinctions, overlap and indeed interchangeability between postmodernism and poststructuralism (e.g. Sarup, 1993) with Alvesson himself suggesting poststructuralism as “synonymous” (2002, p.150) with postmodernism, I have rejected the use of the term postmodernism here, in favour of poststructuralism, to align broadly with the literature in the field for which the term poststructuralism is more dominant. Dillon (2010) defines poststructuralism as “attempting to dismantle the binary structure of language and the binary linguistic codes and meanings which embed all knowledge” (p.434). A poststructuralist approach has enabled my understanding of 'reality' to be continually reconfigured to question what I know, observe, speak and think. Foucault tells us “Power produces. It produces reality” (Foucault, 1991a, p.194). He understands therefore, “*all* truth as linguistic and power produced” (Prado, 2010, p.103). This has raised questions for this research in terms of how to view school leaders’ enactment of policy, taken under the disciplinary gaze of the school inspection regime. How might phrases from a speech entitled 'The role freedom and autonomy has played in school improvement' given by the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, for example, including “‘good’ schools”, “curricula and school systems that have been proven to work”, “the capacity to improve” and “meticulous behaviour systems” (Gibb, speech, 2

November 2016) be understood and enacted by school leaders? That is to ask, how might we seek to understand how power is working within the language that produces our reality? To *know*, is to accept here then, that we may not know yet, which in turn, places some uncertainty over research positioned in this way. Importantly though, it is the unpacking of what was thought 'known', to reveal "how meanings and knowledge are produced, legitimized and used" (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2011, p. 28) that is significant for poststructuralist research. That "the production of knowledge is also a claim for power" (Ball, 2013b, p.13) is epistemologically, not unproblematic. To take a broadly poststructural stance, anticipates some epistemological looseness. It is important therefore, to establish both an ontological and epistemological stance for the research.

Pring (2015) warns of the dangers of divisions between competing philosophical positioning in educational research (ibid. p.59). These create "two sorts of researchers" working within quantitative and qualitative paradigms negotiating "the respective languages of each" (ibid.). This said, my ontological positioning or "assumptions which concern the very essence of the phenomena" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p.1) will be considered first. Ontology is concerned with the way the existence of the world is understood, or "the study of being" (Crotty, 1998, p.10). Fundamentally, my understanding of 'being', or 'reality', lies beyond myself i.e. is external to me (Burrell and Morgan, ibid. p.1) or, more helpfully, imposes "itself on individual consciousness from without" (ibid.). If reality is understood from "the truth or falsity of statements which give account of it" (Pring, 2015, p.93), and to return to Foucault - if power produces reality (Foucault, 1991a, p.194), my

ontology must therefore, lie within realism. More precisely this would be critical realism (Bhaskar, 2011), or what Blaikie calls, social realism (2010). The link between this form of realism and that of post-structuralism is maintained, while entrenched in some uncertainty – see 4.2. Using Blaikie’s set of assumptions, which I found very helpful, it might be better to say the form of critical realism that lies between that of a subtle realist, and an idealist ontological assumption (ibid. p. 95). This ontology is however, interlinked to further epistemological assumptions.

Social constructionism has an emphasis on meaning being “constructed through culture and language” (Gibson, in Swain, 2017 p. 62). Crotty suggests however, that for social constructionism, “There is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it” (1998, p.8). Alvesson (2002, p.112) makes a useful distinction between neopositivistic and romantic epistemologies and while the implication of this in terms of interviewing will be explored further, it is important to note that I align with the ‘romantic’ epistemology that seeks to explore the inner world or experienced social reality (ibid. p.108-9), rather than “a context-free truth about reality” as in neopositivism (ibid. p.108). While this usefully aligns to my tacit understanding of sense making from my professional contexts, this raises some tensions between the ontological positioning within critical realism that I outlined in the previous paragraph, having stated above that reality could exist beyond our own individual consciousness. Links between realism and social constructionism can exist however. For example, Crotty states, “To say that meaningful reality is socially constructed is not to say that it is not real” (1998, p. 63). He is critical of those who contrast constructionism and realism, insisting that

they are “wide of the mark” (ibid. p. 64). Foucault’s theorising on power and Benjamin’s conceptualisation of the fading of aura suggest that phenomena exist beyond an individual’s recognition of its existence. Yet I also recognise that reality can be “the product of one’s mind” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p.1) and therefore the ontological and epistemological framework offers some flexibility.

From the ontological position of the research being critical realism, and the epistemological position being social constructionism, the research paradigm moves away from interpretivism, although the lines between this and social constructionism are blurred at times (Gibson in Swain, 2017). The stance is instead towards the schools of critical theory, poststructuralism and postmodernism. There is a simultaneous emphasis in language, subjectivity and meaning (Grogan and Simmons, cited in Briggs, 2012, p.31) and this is aligned with distrust of research seeking to identify truth and objectivity (ibid.). This said, both Ball (e.g. 2013b) and Foucault (e.g.1988) are clear that it is not important to be specific here: "I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am" (1988, p9). Although this view provides the researcher scope for greater flexibility and creativity in the construction of their methodological and theoretical frameworks more generally in their work, for this research project I am located specifically as a poststructuralist from a critical perspective. Crotty opines, poststructuralism “offers its mild invitation to demystify the experience of reality” (1998, p.204). This positioning was useful to the research as the area of focus aligns both a concern to 'demystify' the power that produces reality in terms of binary understanding of 'good' schools etc. derived from the school inspection regime and education policy (the poststructuralist) and its impact on a potentially

vulnerable group i.e. those living in a coastal area of deprivation (the critical). Therefore, while a poststructuralist positioning shaped the methodological considerations for the research, it is also informed by a critical educational research paradigm (Cohen, 2011) or rather, what Crotty (1998) describes as critical inquiry - the Marxist heritage (p112). In following a post-Marxist tradition, taking the perspective of the most vulnerable in society was central to the research. The inclusion of Benjamin's concept relating to the 'fading of aura' is usefully located within this critical educational research paradigm. While Benjamin was not officially a member of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt am Main (Crotty, p.127), his association with the Institute and school of critical theorists links his work to the purpose of continuing the Marxist tradition in the twentieth century.

Ball described Foucault's approach to knowledge and 'truth' as beginning "with "the unconscious structures of thought" and the organising discourses which operate at an archaeological (rules and regularities) ... level of knowledge" (2013b, p.5). By taking a poststructuralist perspective it is possible to begin to "uncover the ways in which the very thinking of what is possible... is foreclosed by certain habitual and violent presumptions" (Butler, 1999, p.viii). I have intended purposefully to open up what Butler describes as "the field of possibility" in this research. It is from within this space that I have tried to identify policy actors who have recognised the 'cracked' (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). This might be, for example, a school leader recognising that the enactment of education policy prompted by the school inspection regime causes a tension or struggle within themselves, or indeed, that this recognition prompts an act of resistance. Ball, Maguire and

Braun (2012) identify potential problems researching resistance beyond 'refusal' of specific policies, 'role distancing' citing Goffman or 'policy buffering', all of which were identified in their work (p.149). The authors state, "perhaps we need to look for resistance in different places?" (p.150). While the authors do not outline where these "different places" might be, the research undertaken for my Institution Focussed Study had considered micropolitics within a 'failing' institution. Examining micropolitical tensions articulated by leaders then, had offered opportunity for some explicit concern, reluctance and refusal of specific policy direction taken within the college. I anticipated that other institutions i.e. schools, that have had similarly negative experiences of the school inspection regime, might be places of resistance.

During an initial visit to the primary school participating in the research prior to the main fieldwork commencing, the then headteacher, Deborah explained that the context was "special" and made demands on her leadership that stood sometimes in the way of school improvement. I was struck by her concern to serve the local community in spite of - against even - the response that was demanded by the school inspection regime: an act of resistance. It was an emotional and tearful meeting as earlier in the day she had told the staff that she was required to leave despite significant improvements made in relation to floor targets. At the secondary school, the headteacher, Teresa, again outgoing, said that in terms of addressing the community and the school inspection regime "They are not *always* mutually exclusive" (n.b. italics added to show emphasis of speech) although her intonation implied that mostly they were. The tensions between serving the community and the school inspection regime were apparent,

and both outgoing headteachers aligning with the subsequent data collection, identified the 'cracked'. This opened 'a field of possibility' to view alternative enactments of policy that were different to the preferred or anticipated response required by the school inspection regime. This was perceived in the research as an 'act of resistance', whether due to a tension between serving the school or wider community or indeed if this was to serve another purpose clearly requiring an analysis of the micropolitical tensions present e.g. to preserve a work/life balance etc. The ethical concerns in relation to this approach are detailed in the next section. Within the current education reform and the strengthening of the school inspection regime and increased academisation programme, I was therefore interested to see how individual school leaders and teachers responded to the particular contextual setting of the schools in relation to this.

Drawing from a critical perspective, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), or as Wodak and Meyer (2016, p.3) entitle 'critical discourse studies' (CDS), has been useful to inform the research. This has been developed in the reading and analysis of the policy texts given by 'discourse figures' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 254), in preparation for entering the fieldwork phase of the research. The term Critical Discourse Analysis provides something of an overarching term for "uncovering the socially constructed context in which words are spoken or written" (Perryman in Briggs, Coleman & Morrison, 2012, p.312). Much of Chapter 1 has drawn from CDA in establishing how school leadership, improvement, inspection and inequality has been understood, in terms of text and discourse, in relation to specific policy texts from government and the school inspection regime. Wodak and Meyer (ibid.) usefully suggest that "Dominant ideologies appear as 'neutral',

linked to assumptions that remain largely unchallenged” (p.9). It has been important therefore to maintain a link with CDA/CDS throughout the research. This has first offered a means to view the assumptions that pertain to school leadership, improvement, inspection and inequality, and second, to identify the impact of this in the accounts given by the policy actors in this research. Discourse is present in the interview situation (Alvesson, 2002, p. 117) so therefore, this has implications for the ‘meaning’ generated (ibid. p. 131), at least “meanings that are stable over time and space and that people ascribe to phenomena” (ibid.). This in turn, may call for challenging or even rejecting what is said by the interviewee (ibid. p.132). Poststructuralists, or postmodernists in the case of Alvesson, therefore emphasize the “micro-situation” and the view that meaning is “unstable, temporal and constituted within discourse” (ibid. p.132) and this is a premise underpinning the methodology presented here.

#### 4.2. A summary of my research positioning

**Table 2: A summary of my research positioning**

<b>Assumptions made</b>	<b>Research positioning</b>	<b>The construction of reality</b>
<b>Ontology</b>	Critical, or Social Realism More precisely, Subtle Realist/ Idealist	Reality is external to myself
<b>Epistemology</b>	Social constructionism	Reality is socially constructed, however, the account we may give of ourselves may be determined by reality external to ourselves
<b>Research Paradigm</b>	Critical theory/ post-structuralism/ postmodernism	Understanding the ways that reality has been produced through power

I have been explicit at the end of each preceding chapter regarding how existing literature and theory has informed and developed the key questions pertinent to this research. What follows is my consolidation of those questions into a manageable doctoral research project. These important issues will be readdressed in the subsequent sections.

#### 4.3. Main research aim

To understand how intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime influences the ways that school leaders in two case study schools enact policy within a coastal area of deprivation.

#### 4.4. Main research questions

Main research question:

How do school leaders enact policy in a coastal area of deprivation when under intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime?

Subsidiary research questions:

1. How do school leaders within the case study schools perceive tensions between policy and context?
2. Is it possible to identify micropolitical acts of resistance amongst school leaders in the case study schools?

#### 4.5. Method of data collection

The anthropologist R.M. Dillely defines context usefully in terms of interpretation and connection. He argues that:

“...this sense of frame highlights the act of drawing a line, of excluding as much as including things—of connecting and disconnecting—within a set of limits. This process of inclusion and exclusion is a process of power...contexts are sets of relations and not self-evident things in themselves” (Dilley, 2002, unpagued).

Unlike Thrupp’s study of four disadvantaged schools (1999) in different areas, my research is located within one coastal area of deprivation. I have made decisions about which schools within the same coastal town are included, and which are not: I have drawn a line and seek to make connections and disconnections (Dilley, *ibid.*). While mindful of the observation of Ball, Maguire & Braun (2012) that “Research texts in education policy rarely convey any sense of the built environment” (p.20), there are many environmental and cultural factors that I would have liked to share in order to provide rich contextual insight to the case study, but have omitted in order to ensure anonymity of the case study town. I have aimed to provide school context wherever possible, alongside some wider context where appropriate, recognising that “Policy creates context, but context also precedes policy” (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.19).

Two schools were selected within one seaside town to form an embedded single case study (Yin, 2014, p.50) located within a coastal area of deprivation (The English Indices of Deprivation, 2015, Department for Communities and Local Government). Each school therefore constituted a unit of analysis (Yin, 2014, p.50). The case study design serves the purpose of using the specific to “understand something else” (Stake, 1995, p.3). This is what Stake (*ibid.*) defines as an ‘instrumental case study’. The distinction between this and what Stake defines as the ‘intrinsic case study’ where the case itself is of primary interest e.g. the case here being school leaders within a school (*ibid.*), was important to frame the use of case study as method. That the two units of analysis (i.e. the schools)

were selected from different age groups and stages was a deliberate part of the research strategy. The study is therefore focused less on a specific school type and the ways education policy is enacted in response to the school inspection regime, but rather how this impacts on school leaders, understood in relation to a coastal area of deprivation. This is then, the unifying 'context' that binds the two "embedded units of analysis" within the single case design (Yin, 2014, p.50). This provided what Stake describes as the opportunity to "appreciate the uniqueness and complexity" of the case and "its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts" (1995, p.16).

Yin describes identifying the boundaries of the case prior to the research being undertaken as locating "a concrete manifestation of the abstraction" (2014, p.33) and this proved useful for defining the single case study design for this research. This echoes Stake (1995, p.2) drawing on ethnographer, Louis Smith defining "the case as "a bounded system" drawing attention to it as an object rather than a process". The single case study design was 'bounded' (Yin, 2014, p.33) therefore by the schools, school leaders and policy, as expressed by school leaders in relationship to the school inspection regime. This was operationalized in the field by not seeking to impose a response to a specific policy without policy actors raising the policy themselves in the first instance, for example. Also, I did not refer to events in the town, or to news items occurring while undertaking the research unless the policy actor did. The case was also bounded by time. By this a frame was set to constrain what can be viewed as part of the research method i.e. the "concrete", by what occurred within an estimated time period from March 2014 to December 2016. This therefore also bounded policy texts that emerge

beyond this period as beyond the single case study design. In the thesis, however, I have sought to discuss more recent iteration from the school inspection regime or government, by way of illustration of current themes and developments.

#### 4.6. Ethics and other concerns

I have followed the guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) alongside UCL research documents such as the UCL Code of Conduct for Research (July 2013), UCL Statement of Research Integrity (May 2015) and the UCL Institute of Education's Research Ethics Guidelines (Pdf, last accessed 27/05/2017) and The Research Ethics Guidebook (<http://ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/Sampling-16> last accessed 27/05/2017). Following the ethical review with my supervisors and feedback on my formal thesis proposal by Dr Annette Braun and Dr Guy Roberts-Holmes, I particularly considered the issues of power, identified in section (e) below. The key principles guiding ethical consideration focus on the importance of respect, for example, for the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research and academic freedom (BERA, 2011, p. 4). This research has aimed to maintain all guidelines presented in the above documentation, throughout the research process. Israel and Hay (2006, p.5) state "by caring about ethics and by acting on that concern we promote the integrity of research". I have outlined some of the more complex areas in some detail below to illustrate some of the sensitivities involved in this research: access, sampling, relationships, anonymity, power, integrity and validity.

(a) Access: The critical perspective taken provides an underlying purpose for the research, yet gaining access was not unproblematic. Having selected the case study town to be the one I had grown up in was largely due the significant deprivation evidenced (The English Indices of Deprivation, 2015, Department for Communities and Local Government). While I had few contacts remaining within the town, I was interested to examine school leadership factors within such a coastal context. Having been an ex-pupil certainly made initial access easier and therefore I was able to meet with both of the head teachers of the two schools that formed part of the case study design prior to the main data collection phase taking place. Both were willing for me to undertake research at their schools although the research was re-negotiated with the secondary school following the change of headteacher. Commencing research in the primary school was more problematic due to a series of sensitive changes to staffing and other issues exacerbated by those explored in this study. The first primary school headteacher I had met with in 2015 was replaced following a third 'requires improvement' inspection placing the school into an uncertain future. The school inspection regime is described in its documentation as having a "general duty to promote improvement" (Ofsted, Monitoring inspection visits and support for schools which require improvement in order to become good or outstanding, p10, September 2014) and therefore the implications of "challenge and support" being provided by the school inspection regime and the subsequent judgement of 'requires improvement' placed the school at the time of the research in an uncertain future. The research looked initially unlikely to commence at this site, this being a considerably sensitive time for the school, but eventually access was re-negotiated prior to the main fieldwork. A new 'gatekeeper' (Robson, 2016, p.398)

was appointed by the new headteacher after email correspondence, and therefore research was able to be planned at the primary school.

Having both a secondary and primary school was important to the research as I wanted to have an overarching understanding of the specific coastal context for the town, including the impact of deprivation. While this determined that both schools would have both different and shared policy concerns, it also allowed the impact of the school inspection regime on local context to be examined from different perspectives. Both schools had recent or ongoing experience of the school inspection regime and while by the start of the field work one of the schools had moved to a 'good' judgment, this allowed a further contrast that was useful to the study.

(b) Sampling: I have used non-probability, purposive sampling i.e. a specific group has been targeted to ensure that I was able to hear accounts from those that had experience of the recent school inspections in a leadership role, and there has been no attempt to generalise (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011, p.155). The specific approach can be more appropriately described as theoretical sampling (e.g. Silverman, 2014, p.62; Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011, p. 158); a strategy, rather than procedure (Charmaz, 2006, p.107). I cannot claim that I added until nothing new was being discovered as in grounded theory (Blaikie, 2010, p.179). This is small scale research and has been made manageable, while recognising that the project could have continued indefinitely. The sample consisted of seventeen interviews with those involved as school leaders in some way, in the two case study schools. Six interview were held at the primary school

and the remainder at the secondary school. Many were part of the senior leadership team, and most had been in post at the time of the last school inspection, but not all. In the main, arrangements were made through the headteacher or an assigned member of staff who acted as gatekeeper.

That I had experienced something of a similar situation in relation to the inspection regime, while potentially fraught with issues of bias that I was anxious to avoid, for example, a close relationship between the researcher and setting (Robson, 2016, p.171), also enabled an increased sensitivity. I requested that the school headteachers referred me to school leaders that had experience of the school inspection regime. This then left the potential school leaders to be selected by the headteacher, which while they might have been selected in relation to biases of the headteacher, were not biased in relation to the researcher.

(c) Relationships: entered a relationship (Silverman, 2014) with the policy actors in this research and as such, have been aware of the ethical responsibilities of this. While growing up in the case study town, and attending the schools involved in the research has been useful to develop an initial rapport with the policy actors, I sensed a range of differing responses to the relationships that were formed during the interviews. These ranged from demonstrating towards me cautiousness, a relief at being given the opportunity to articulate what was 'cracked' in the day to day lives of a school, and also some moments of sadness, anger and joy. I have not tried to be the 'expert', but rather what Blaikie (2010, p.52) calls, a 'dialogic facilitator', reducing the "authorial influence" to enable the

voices of the policy actors to be expressed. Some of my research questions, for example particularly the second and third research questions, suggest that as the researcher I was looking for impact from surveillance, tensions between policy and context, and acts of resistance. While I was keen to examine the field of possibility that Butler referred to above (p.79), it was essential to ensure that the relationship between policy actor and researcher was not complicit in some way in promoting specific responses to be elicited. This is to return to the purposive nature of the research sampling and so while I was aware that the case study schools had been selected because of intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime, my motives, as Blaikie (2010, p. 46) puts it, were more to satisfy my own curiosity (personal) and seek insight in response to current intellectual puzzles (academic). Blaikie also refers to the social contribution of research, and certainly, this was a key motivation in ensuring that the relationships formed in this research did not produce manipulated, or forced responses. The responsibility of this weighed heavily at times in the data collection phase, as I heard fascinating accounts that teetered on the boundaries of phenomena that would be significant here. I have maintained appropriate neutrality in this respect throughout the data collection.

(d) Anonymity: I have aimed to ensure anonymity has been maintained, particularly due to the sensitive nature of the research. This has involved the use of pseudonyms for the school: the secondary school is referred to as the Sandside Secondary Academy and the primary school is referred to as the Shoreside Primary Academy throughout this research, and names of policy actors attached to their roles, have been replaced by pseudonyms too. Aspects

of data, inspection reports or other pertinent features that might potentially compromise the anonymity of either school has been avoided, even though this has at times meant that useful, contextual information has been excluded.

(e) Power: Power relations, whether in terms of micro-political tensions that proved a key concept for an earlier study looking at an institution deemed to be 'inadequate' by Ofsted (IFS, 2014) or macro workings of power in its widest sense, formed the basis for this research and are central to my methodological and theoretical approach. Introducing notions of power particularly at a micro level produce ethical issues that require sensitive approaches to be taken. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) remind us that simple "methodological issues can turn out to be ethical and political/micro-political minefields" (p.166), therefore setting out to undertake research that was, by its very nature problematic, necessitated greater levels of care.

Going into the field required some consideration of how I, the researcher, might be viewed. Unlike the earlier study referred to above where I was an insider researcher, this research required access to schools and staff that were unknown to me. Although I had attended both schools growing up in the local area and elements of both schools' buildings were somewhat familiar, the staff were not known to me. There were others schools in the town that could have been selected instead but this research offered an opportunity to revisit my own educational settings with a researcher's gaze, albeit a novice researcher's gaze. Each headteacher that I had negotiated the research with had however, been aware of my link to the school as a pupil, and this made the initial access to the

schools at sensitive times in their histories, more possible. This also helped build a connection both in terms of trust and rapport during the data collection phase, but also because I might be more sensitive to the phenomena, especially in relation to the coastal area of deprivation. This was overtly expressed as "an ex-pupil request to undertake research" in the emails sent by the secondary school secretary to staff who were to be participating, for example. There was also an inward connection on my part, that was not expressed, but 'felt'. I had experience of teaching in secondary schools before working in higher education but more importantly had experienced the disciplinary gaze from the school inspection regime and knew of the implications of that. There were many times that I needed to return to my experience of this when interpreting the data and yet, of course, this raises the issues of bias that have already been discussed. However, Mabry (2008) locates the main purpose of research as being able to elicit "deep understanding of particular instances of phenomena" (p.214). The schools had been chosen because of their scope to provide a heightened site for the particular phenomena being explored and this, alongside sensitivity produced from my own history, would prove fruitful for the research questions.

(f) Integrity: Using the abductive research strategy poses particular issues of integrity that have been of significance in the research. Blaikie identifies the abductive research strategy (2010, p. 89) as "constructing theories that are derived from social actors' language, meanings and accounts in the context of everyday activities". This process is achieved through observing themes and patterns in the research participants' responses, i.e. the accounts given "when social life is disrupted" (ibid. p. 90). This is the first stage (ibid.), which is then

followed by the generation of technical concepts – the second stage, before “refinement and further elaboration” in the third and final stage (ibid.). It is within the second stage that integrity becomes significant. When analysing the transcripts produced from the interviews, it has been important that sensitivity is taken in the ‘sense making’ between the policy actors’ accounts and the conceptualisation derived from the accounts by myself; the researcher. Blaikie suggests that the participants “need to be able to recognize themselves and others in the researchers’ account” (ibid.). While I have not provided the policy actors with an opportunity to view my study and its findings prior to examination, largely because of the issues pertaining to sensitivity between one policy actor reading the responses of others, I have been aware of the responsibility in interpreting the accounts. This has been understood by O’Connell (in Swain, 2017, p.164) as “interpretive authority” and is linked to notions of power, i.e. “the power to analyse and represent people and their lives” (ibid.). Bassey (in Briggs, Coleman and Morrison, 2013, p.168) offers a useful set of tests of probity that have informed the trustworthiness of the conceptualisation process used in the research by way of maintaining integrity in this phase of the data interpretation. Each of the eight tests of trustworthiness have been followed throughout the research alongside due care in responding to the four tests of respect of persons.

(g) Validity: The interviews aimed to offer a “rich account” (Alvesson, 2002, p.108) from the policy actor, while recognising some of the complexity that epistemological positioning implicit in using the interview as a research tool produces. Earlier I referred to the ‘romantic’ epistemological position outlined by Alvesson (2002) and more substantially summarised as a tradition by Brinkman

(2018, p.586). To seek out “a more ‘genuine’ human interaction” (Alvesson, 2002, p.108) is not to lose recognition of the discourse that constructs subjects (ibid. p.114) and produces “situated accounts” (ibid.). There has been a need, therefore, to be cautious about aligning similar interview articulations as evidence of “high validity” (ibid. p.120) as these will be potentially subject to the same discourse, or what Alvesson defines as Big Discourse. Potter and Hepburn refer to the role of the interviewer also constructing interview questions that are constrained by “‘sedimentations’ of earlier ‘theoretical’ notions” that “become part of people’s everyday conversational currency” (2005, p.292). These accounts may also be based on the “shifting perceptions and understandings of the interviewer” too (Alvesson, 2011, p.24). This proved a significant dilemma when constructing the research questions and when asking the questions that followed within the framing of the semi-structured interview. The interview schedule however, aimed to ensure that internal validity would promote findings that would accurately describe the phenomena of the research (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011, p.183) even though there was a continued recognition of the tensions that may be driven by discourse, researcher biography and research focus, or stake and interest, as Potter and Hepburn refer (2005, p.295). In this respect I have tried to use comparatively substantial sections from the transcripts in the next chapter. This enables greater contextual possibilities, as well as addressing some of the negotiation of text that has been referred to by Fontana and Frey (2000). The authors identify the potential of the interview as “negotiated accomplishment” producing a “negotiated text”. The accomplishment of meaning occurs at the intersection of the interaction of the interviewer and respondent (ibid. p.664).

Responses from policy actors have also been recognised however, as potential “displays of perspectives and moral forms which draw upon available cultural resources” (Silverman, 2014, p. 197). Contexts and data cannot be separated with “no strings attached” (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p.663). Awareness then, alongside a clear articulation of the complex relationship between interviewee and interviewer has been important throughout the research. Fine et al (2000, p.107-131) suggest that the voice of the social researcher should “punctuate all texts we produce” if it is our intention to “retreat from the stance of dispassion” and move closer towards social responsibility (ibid. p. 128).

Alvesson (2002) suggests that the researcher should be clear about our ambitions and claims (p.123). He suggests that empirical material may be treated as “ambiguous illustrations” rather than results, and this creates pressure “to develop really interesting theoretical ideas” (ibid.). This is what I have aimed to present here. This said, the work has continued to seek ways to increase forms of validity. So, for example, further validity has been achieved through researching two schools, rather than one, but both within similar contextual and historic experience of school inspection, albeit resulting in differing outcomes. Although the schools are different in terms of their pupils age ranges, the contextual and historic experience of school inspection formed some point of comparison. While this assisted the containment of phenomena to support construct validity (Yin, 2014, p.46-7), I have not suggested that this acts alongside other methods as triangulation. Blaikie has urged caution regarding ‘naïve’ approaches to triangulation (2010, p.220-1), and while I had suggested earlier in my research proposal that I would triangulate using elements of

observation and field notes, I continued the process of the field notebook partly to inform the data analysis as well as being a form of good practice. I have not attempted to triangulate using any alternative methods. I have been careful not to align interview findings with themes emerging from the policy texts themselves as this is to treat one set of phenomena as socially constructed (policy) and another set as offering a more defined sense of reality (Silverman, 2014, p.47). I was aware that for the head teachers and other leaders to be prepared to discuss delicate matters relating to their own leadership, it would be important that the integrity of the research was paramount.

#### 4.7. Thematic Analysis and Interpretation

The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. These were both theory and data driven themes (Robson, 2016, p.471). According to Bazeley (2013), while the use of thematic codes or categories offers a starting point for the researcher, it is analysis that enables “a comprehensive, contextualised, and integrated understanding of the theoretical model of what has been found” (p.191) and this has been something of a guiding principle for the interpretative direction undertaken here. Having reflected on the initial themes from my EdD Institution Focused Study on the micropolitics in a ‘failing’ college setting, which served as a pilot study to this research project, I used concepts initially such as: leadership and micropolitical tensions, seeing something ‘cracked’ and ‘performance has no room for caring’ (from the IFS), alongside fabrication for the school inspection regime, context and micropolitical tensions to initially build a variety of vocabularies for creating possible meanings out of the phenomena (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011, p.39). These formed a priori themes. Quickly

these shifted to acknowledge the voices in the research more carefully, while still maintaining a connection with the research questions. An inductive approach was taken to analyse the transcript data with care. By organising the data into categories relating to the emerging codes, following familiarisation, or immersion in the data, coding/recoding, and data assembly/reassembly was undertaken (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2010). What Blaikie (2010, p.89) defines as an abductive research strategy was employed as the main theory generating approach. This involved identifying themes and patterns produced in the interviews when, as Blaikie usefully offers, “social life is disrupted” (ibid. p.90). Using the language of the policy actors, I have sought to generate theoretical concepts. This is then furthered through reflection and reflexivity. It was during this phase of the data analysis and interpretation that theory was brought in to work on the data. Using concepts from Foucault and Benjamin, further interpretations were possible. I have tried to maintain full responses by the policy actors wherever possible. This is achieved through both the analysis and the findings examined in Chapter 5. While this study does not employ grounded theory (e.g. Charmaz, 2006, Strauss and Corbin, 1990), there is some acknowledgement of the theoretical generation derived from the data that aligns, in this respect. I have taken steps to review, particularise and describe the codes, concepts and themes that have led to the subsequent theorising derived from the data (Bazeley, 2013, p.251). I was conscious of the “double hermeneutic process involved in interpreting the words of those already interpreting the social world (Giddens, in Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011, p. 540). Appendix 3 (p.188) illustrates the coding themes. A coded transcript forms Appendix 4 (p.189).

Dissemination of the key findings will be shared through research publication, conferences and also through my teaching.

## **Chapter 5: Findings**

### 5.1. Introduction

The data from the interviews at both schools forming the case study was analysed and interpretations developed to enable a presentation of the research findings for this research alongside a discussion of the key areas that emerged. The schools were firstly, considered separately, to enable specific contextual phenomena to be identified before then being examined together, to provide more insight into the central themes that emerged in Seatown. The primary school, Shoreside Primary Academy is discussed in relation to the secondary school, Sandside Secondary Academy, and contextual similarities and distinctions are explored. Both schools have had recent experience of what Wilshaw described as “a spotlight on underperformance, even when this is uncomfortable for those involved” (Wilshaw, letter to schools outlining education inspection changes from September 2015, 7 July 2015). It is useful to remind the reader, at this point, that Shoreside Primary Academy was identified as ‘requires improvement’ (RI) throughout the research period, while Sandside Secondary Academy received the judgment of ‘good’ shortly before the data collection phase commenced, having been in a significant period of RI prior to this.

**Table 3: Policy actors involved in the research**

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role</b>
<b>Shoreside Primary Academy</b>		
1.	Jason	Assistant Principal
2.	Violet	Year Head (Year 4) relatively new to the school. Violet had started her teaching career at another school in Seatown
3.	Wayne	Year Head (Year 5) and relatively new to the school. Wayne had started his teaching career at another school in Seatown
	Phil	Year Head (Year 3) and had seen the most recent school inspections
5.	Bea	Year Head (Year 6) and relatively new to Shoreside
6.	Kath	Subject Coordinator (Maths) across the MAT. Kath had been at the school for over ten years
<p><i>Reference is made also to Deborah, the outgoing headteacher who I met at the start of the fieldwork; Brett and earlier Headteacher; Andrew, the current Executive Head of the MAT and Sarah, the current Headteacher</i></p>		
<b>Sandside Secondary Academy</b>		
7.	Teresa	Principal at the commencement of the fieldwork who subsequently left to lead another <i>failing</i> school within the MAT
8.	Suzanne	The new Principal after Teresa, who had worked outside education for a large part of her career and was promoted from a middle leader role at Sandside
9.	Robert	Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning, who had been an NQT at Rockside School (the pre-academy school name)
10.	Sylvia	Vice Principal for Student Wellbeing, who had experience of different leaders within the school
11.	Louise	Vice Principal for Sixth Form who had been at the school before academisation
12.	Steve	Achievement Director who had been to school in Seatown.
13.	Juliet	Achievement Director who had started her teaching career in Seatown ahead of the formation of the academy
14.	Alistair	Achievement Director overseeing multiple departments and relatively new to Sandside
15.	Paul	Curriculum Director who had lived in Seatown most of his life. Paul managed four year groups
16.	Imogen	Curriculum Director who had worked at the school since the 1980s and who was Head of Department

The voices documented in this section are as follows:

Shoreside Primary Academy – Assistant Principal, Jason; Year Heads, Violet, Wayne, Phil and Bea; Subject Coordinator, Kath. There are also references made to Deborah, the outgoing Headteacher who I met at the start of the fieldwork; Brett, an earlier Headteacher; Andrew, the current Executive Headteacher of the multi academy trust, and Sarah, the current Headteacher.

Sandside Secondary Academy – the outgoing Principal, Teresa; the current Principal, Suzanne; Vice-Principals, Robert, Sylvia and Louise; Achievement Directors, Steve, Juliet and Alistair; Curriculum Directors, Paul and Imogen.

Both schools are part of multi academy trusts (MAT). Currently, focused inspections and MAT reviews are undertaken by the school inspection regime and the Regional Schools Commissioners also monitor the MATs (Ehren and Perryman (2017, p.11). The secondary school is part of a large MAT who sponsor the school, and the primary school, an academy converter<sup>3</sup>, is part of a small MAT. The timing of the primary school becoming an academy converter broadly aligns with the Education and Adoption Act (2016) which made amendments to the earlier Education and Inspections Act (2006). Key adjustments of the legislation focused on “coasting schools”, the nature of a school being “eligible for intervention” and the subtle changing of “The Secretary of State may make an Academy order” to “The Secretary of State must make an Academy order” (HM Government 2016, last accessed 01/08/2018). The strengthening of the Act’s ‘power’ to intervene reflects the mantra of autonomy, accountability and responsibility discussed in Chapter 1 and serve as a useful example of neoliberal

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<sup>3</sup> Academy converter schools are schools that have selected to become an academy, rather than through forced academisation.

governance. This then, provides the context by which we might understand the distinction between the differing contexts for the academies.

The main areas for discussion will be as follows: Context: You can explain it, but not excuse it (5.2.), Surveillance of marks and marking: Always on a bit of a knife edge (5.3.), Reproduction: Consistent, consistent, consistent (5.4), Curriculum constraints: English and maths, English and maths, English and maths (5.5.), Instability: Up in the air (5.6.), Performativity: A feeling of anxiety (5.7.) and finally, Struggle and resistance: We will take the hit (5.8.). The main findings will then be considered in relation to the conceptual framework and examined in relation to the literature in Chapter 6 and 7. Seatown is amongst the most deprived area in the country and has high levels of unemployment and low levels of educational attainment alongside other social factors that often accompany deprivation (The English Indices of Deprivation, 2015, Department for Communities and Local Government). I have illustrated Seatown further through the observations of the policy actors in the research.

The term, policy actors, has been retained throughout this thesis, to describe social actors who are involved in the process of enacting policy in some way. There is much variance in the ways that different policy actors respond to policy, for example, the eight types of policy actors or policy positions identified by Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012, p.49) and this study aims to highlight this. There is also, however, an emergent sense of homogeneity for some policy actors placed within similar contexts responding to neoliberal policy and the school inspection regime. This is also examined.

## 5.2. Context: You can explain it, but not excuse it

In a coastal area of deprivation, with schools in the case study that have been under the 'vigilant eye' of the school inspection regime for some time, it is important to understand some of the challenges that the specific local context posed. Suzanne, the headteacher of Sandside Secondary Academy, the secondary school, explained that despite living only twenty miles away from the school, she had been unaware of the extent of the challenges she would face by taking up her headship in Seatown:

I thought if I wanted to work in a challenging school that I'd have to go to London and didn't really realise that twenty miles down the road I could work in the most deprived area in the UK, which was quite a surprise to me and I suppose a bit worrying to know that - if we are living that close.

This contrast was captured by Robert, too. Robert is a senior leader at

Sandside Secondary Academy:

There is a clear, stark difference between where I live in Citytown (*twenty miles away from Seatown, the site of Sandside Secondary Academy*), you know in terms of geographical difference. It's nothing, you know, it's not even a drop in the ocean, you know. It's absolutely tiny, yet the difference is stark. You know, there are high levels of deprivation here. I mean it is eye opening to drive in from where I live to Seatown... When I first took the position at Rockside School (*the pre-academy school name*), the Head at the time said 'look before you accept the job. I want you to take a drive to Shelltown (*two miles along the coast from Seatown*)... just so you fully understand the context'. There's literally burnt out house, burnt out house, house, house, burnt out house, house, you know, and you think... that's where a third of our cohort comes from and then you know it's quite shocking really and actually I think our staff take a lot of pride from that. It's a real communal, community kind of ethos here.

Seatown presents a landscape for the research where the high level of deprivation is 'felt' by those policy actors articulated here, working within the schools. Bea, a middle leader at Shoreside Primary Academy, described the school context by considering the support from home for the pupils:

In terms of being here I think we have unique challenges that perhaps other schools don't have in that we have to make up quite a lot for sometimes what children (*hesitantly*) don't get at home. Sometimes the support is not as strong

as you would have in other schools because families perhaps aren't as well equipped to do some of the things that other schools can do.

Juliet, from Sandside Secondary Academy also concurred by citing the generational issues that have impacted on the school pupils:

You're in third/fourth generations now of children coming from homes with no aspiration. No aspirations for university, um, unemployment, poverty and that plays a massive hindrance because unfortunately you don't always get your support from a parent. You have also parents that have had negative experiences of school and education themselves so you find yourself battling their resentment towards school as well as their child's, so it's very difficult. A lot of parents don't know how to hold a mature ... succinct conversation with you. They will often rant, rave, not listen.

For a study of school inspection within the 'no excuses' culture perpetuated by Ofsted through Wilshaw, the context articulated above is significant. The tension between context and inspection was therefore central to the research. Teresa was the first Headteacher at Sandside Secondary Academy who I interviewed, shortly before she moved to another academy within the MAT that had sponsored Sandside. She was then subsequently replaced by Suzanne. When asked about the contextual factors at Sandside Secondary Academy, Teresa succinctly stated that "It's not about making excuses for them. You can explain it, but not excuse it". The opportunity to 'explain' the context was central to most of the policy actors interviewed. In both case study schools there was a repeated theme that focused on the lack of understanding shown by the school inspection regime regarding the specific social context of Seatown described above. Juliet, from Sandside Secondary Academy, explained the tensions apparent in what she viewed as "two official people who come from their affluent backgrounds" who "just burst in like that":

Juliet: When we found out we hadn't made the good it very much knocked morale, it really did. (*referring to the earlier inspection visit at Sandside that was RI, before their subsequent judgment of good*).

Aly: I can see that that's affected you...

Juliet: Yeah, because it is so hard. This is not an easy environment to work in, ...um, I am actually leaving at Christmas, (*are you?*) yeah, I want to pursue a family. I can't do it while I'm here because the demand is so great. Because we're working with the most unique, disaffected children, um, so yeah. It does bother me and then to do all that hard work and for two people to come in who upon feedback clearly didn't understand the context of our school and didn't understand the social kind of deprivation and the context of Seatown and particularly Shelltown (*a neighbouring village of significant deprivation*). It was, it was horrible, it was horrible. You know, some/ two official people who come from their affluent backgrounds can just burst in that like that. (*clicks her fingers*) Terrible. So... we went through the phases, through the anger, through the resentment and our head at the time was very good and she said, 'well we have to dust ourselves off. This is not a true reflection.'

Kath, a middle leader from Shoreside Primary Academy identified similar tensions, seeing these as related to the lack of understanding of contextual factors of the school and local area shown by the school inspection regime:

Well, ah, I think there's a little bit at the moment of 'let's jump through the hoops'... you've got places like here where we are... deprived, lots of children that come here have a really hard time and they get given everything by everybody... you know, erm, clubs and booster groups and one to ones and help and just an ear to listen sometimes because that's what might be needed. Erm, when I look at other schools' books for marking, my God, our's are up there with the best of them, not you know, not down there with nothing marked... Some of the time I think they haven't always got the fullest of pictures and then I wonder how fair their judgment is on certain areas.

Kath continued:

I think they'd done their homework. I wonder how much they, they'd read the contextual stuff, investigated it, researched it and come in with a prior thought wave as in, well this is going to be what it's like because, this is their outcome in the league tables. And that's not always the case.

Violet too, a middle leader at Shoreside Primary Academy also showed a similar lack of confidence in the awareness of the local context shown by the school inspection regime. Violet explained how the low levels of literacy among parents sometimes caused issues with home/school communication, feeling that the school inspection regime was unaware of the impact:

I... I... wouldn't be convinced that they understand quite what the area is and quite how much that impacts on how much support the children get. They're... even

things like reading...I mean in schools like somewhere like Citytown where my friends live, parents, they read to them all the time, libraries, they go to plays... and some of my children, their parents might hear them read but they don't know if they're reading it right because they can't read it themselves so it's that sort of, I'm not sure Ofsted always fully understand quite how difficult that can be or how...how much support that doesn't give the children because everything they're getting is in their six hours at school.

While policy actors remained sceptical about the extent to which the contextual factors of the school were understood by the school inspection regime, there was a marked difference between the two inspections at Sandside Secondary Academy. Teresa (Sandside Secondary Academy), told of the first inspection:

It was the worst experience I've ever had in my life and whenever I talk to anyone about it no one has had an Ofsted experience like it. It was preordained without a doubt. It was done in the most horrible way ever.

By contrast, the second visit from the school inspection regime included a tour of Shelltown on the morning of the school inspection. Suzanne (Sandside Secondary Academy) explained how the inspection team was so positive that senior leaders had to request that they “stop giving such nice feedback to teachers”. Significantly, Suzanne described the important differences between being a school on the cusp of RI or good:

So, on both occasions we considered the schools good, cuspish good, so it could all go wrong but you know we considered that we were good but you know nothing significantly different. And an Ofsted team that came in the first time it felt determined to prove we were RI and an Ofsted that came in the second time felt determined to prove we were good to such an extent that at one point we actually asked them to stop giving such nice feedback to our teachers because it wasn't helping us because teachers we were working with to continue to develop were told their lessons were really good and all our internal processes would say that their lessons were ... a bit wobbly and we wanted to carry on working with them... I think what was difficult was to work with a process where it felt like you could present exactly the same set of information and same picture and people's judgement was being swayed by their preconceptions when they came in... So, it was almost like all that pre-work before Ofsted comes in and what they check - there is a decision made before they arrive and then when they arrive you're either trying to overturn that decision or confirm that decision. I think what was maybe interesting for us in the process is that once you've been RI you then have the HMI working<sup>4</sup>. So then I suppose one of my questions would be, if the HMI

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<sup>4</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) are employed by Ofsted to lead a range of inspection and improvement activity. Ofsted inspectors are contracted by Ofsted and commonly undertake less complex inspections. From September 2015, all Ofsted inspectors are directly employed HMIs (House of Commons Library, Briefing Paper, 15 June 2017)

said you're ready to inspect, then it's kind of understandable that the Ofsted team will come in and say 'well he said you're ready, so I expect to find you good'...

The role of the HMI in the support process between inspections and the subsequent determination by the school inspection regime to 'prove' the school was 'good' parallels my own experience documented in Chapter 1. This important distinction between a judgment of RI or 'good' is made by the school inspection regime for those schools described by Suzanne as "cuspish good". The result of this outcome necessitates distinctive differences for the school. Throughout the course of the interviews, a stark contrast unfolded in the different approaches taken to address Seatown indicating the intensity of the disciplinary gaze from the school inspection regime when a school is not yet good. This will be discussed in the following sections. It is important to state here that a coastal context provides additional challenges for most school leaders serving seaside towns due to issues relating to transport networks, nearness to other educational providers such as further education colleges and universities, and other coastal matters that were usefully considered in Ovenden-Hope & Passy (2015) discussed on page 23. A senior leader at Sandside Secondary Academy, Louise articulates the isolated context of Seatown usefully:

...that end of the train line mentality, the lack of opportunities, high amount of unemployment... it's just that complete lack of aspirations, that lack of desire to get out of the area or even have the tools to get out of the area...

One of the additional difficulties related to filling staff vacancies: "It suddenly dawned on me how difficult recruitment is here" (Teresa, Sandside Secondary Academy). Additionally, however, both schools had been under increased surveillance from the school inspection regime that might have furthered difficulties in recruitment. Currently, 79% of school posts are reported, in the

NAHT school recruitment survey (National Association of Head Teachers, 2016), to be “difficult to recruit for”, of which 17% “were unable to be recruited for at all” (p. 2). Of particular relevance to the case study schools is the report’s findings that when aligning respondents’ experience with the school’s judgment from the school inspection regime found that “those with the lowest Ofsted ratings struggled the most to recruit across all roles” (ibid. p.4). The report continues, “Arguably, these are the schools that most need to recruit good teachers to drive school improvement. A punitive accountability regime makes roles in ‘requires improvement’ and ‘inadequate’ schools unforgiving and pressurised” (ibid.). In Seatown, the outcome between an inspection grade two or grade three has resulted therefore, in very different outcomes. Suzanne (Sandside Secondary Academy) explained above, that in her view, both inspection visits the school was ‘cuspish good’, and yet the issues of recruitment are pertinent here, alongside the impact of being a coastal town. While most of the policy actors expressed concern about the lack of understanding of the specific contextual matters shown by the school inspection regime, one voice stood alone. Wayne, a middle leader at Shoreside Primary Academy, seemingly unconcerned about the contextual oversight, saw, or at least attempted to see the school inspection regime as a positive experience:

Well it's (*Ofsted*) very big. I try not to think about it. You just try and do your job as best you can. You are governed by the national curriculum, the teaching standards, and you make sure you implement those to the highest standards and then Ofsted will come and say yep, or actually you might need to tweak a few things and improve on that. I see personally, I see Ofsted as just making sure you can do the job correctly. I try not to see it as a negative process....You don't know what life would be like without Ofsted.

His reference to being ‘governed’ by the national curriculum and the teaching standards might indicate however, the extent to which the disciplinary technology

has worked on him sufficiently to achieve acceptance, indeed, compliance. Phrases such as, “I try not to see it as a negative process” and “You don’t know what life would be like without Ofsted” again indicates the potential effectiveness of the school inspection regime and governance of the neoliberal subject. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

### 5.3. The surveillance of marks and marking: Always on a bit of a knife edge

In 5.2. there was focus on the significance of context impacting on the daily practice in schools by policy actors, an observation by school leaders of the disregard for context shown by the school inspection regime, and a stark contrast emerging between the implications of a ‘good’ and ‘requires improvement’ inspection outcome. This section considers the ways in which the data driven outcomes and the translation of policy to inform practice ahead of an inspection visit impacts for the policy actors at the case study schools. The impact of this on Kath’s daily practice at Shoreside Primary Academy is evident:

...by giving each teacher their own analysis sheet to fill in... because in year six it's like a permanent attachment, isn't it? So, every few weeks even the kids have got it in their books for each individual child so they're in the back of the maths book, the back of the English book. There's their grids - the 'kid grids' - points grids, so they can see what they do really well and what they need to work on in order to get another point or twenty (*laughs*). Things like that. But it means that everybody is involved. So, although it is pressure on the data, it really is, we have got to get that up. And if we don't then we're just shooting ourselves in the foot really. ... So, in that sense everybody's got a sense of what the grades are.

This aligns with Imogen, an experienced middle leader at the secondary school, Sandside Secondary Academy, who was concerned about the focus on grades and targets:

You're very much focused on what you have to do to get the kids' target grades, and sometimes you feel you are just teaching for the exam and don't get time to do the nice things in teaching because you have so much syllabus to get through. Locally, we are still competing with the other school... The children themselves think more about the grades than “Oh, I've made this much progress since I've

been here” ... We just don't have the curriculum time to diversify as much as we'd like to...

Page (2017b, p.27) identified that while more recently trained teachers may be accustomed to this way of working, some of the longer serving teachers were required to accept this with nostalgia, or leave the profession. Imogen too, went on to demonstrate something of this nostalgia, referring here particularly to the impersonal nature of the inspection itself:

Before that, they would come in and see what behaviour was like, the teaching. You would get personal feedback and there was a sense of pride and wanting to impress these people. There are two aspects: we know we have an Ofsted coming up and what are the criteria? Make sure everyone knows what they are doing. But when we get the call, that's when it's awful. When I started teaching, we didn't get observed very often, but new teachers today get observed very regularly (NQTs etc.). Whereas for me, having not been used to so many inspections, it gives a sense of panic.... Younger teachers are more used to performing and have more energy.

This contrasts somewhat with Kath (Shoreside Primary Academy) who, while also being an experienced teacher/leader, accepted the role of data and school inspection with energy and commitment. Throughout the interview, however, she was sceptical of the value of the relentless focus the school inspection regime had placed on the school. This is captured here as Kath described the effect of the intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime as making her feel as if she is “always on a bit of a knife edge”:

It gives you less time for the actual teaching side of things because you're so busy filling in bits of paper for the powers that be that I sometimes sit there and think, well, I could be doing that and that. Having said that I understand that you're always going to come across the bit where you have to prove what the children are doing, what we're teaching, you have that and I haven't found a way of getting round that so... The feelings you still get when they're coming are still as terrible (*laughing*) because you know, you want to put your best across and show what these kids can do and what we do... so to have them come in you're always on a bit of a knife edge, thinking well, I want to show everybody at the best. Obviously.

The sense of being “always on a bit of a knife edge” is compounded through a lack of clarity regarding what exactly the school inspection regime is demanding. While the opacity in policy texts considered in the next section is felt by staff in both schools, there are two distinct approaches taken that appear to align with the confidence that the school judgments from the school inspection regime have afforded.

Due to data accountability, a lack of understanding of the social context shown by the school inspection regime and lack of clarity occurring at the judgment phase of inspection for ‘cuspish’ school, both schools in the case study have found ways to show a strengthened approach in response to directives from the school inspection regime. Phil, a middle leader at Shoreside Primary Academy, captured some of the resultant tensions of this in a discussion on making improvements in marking across the school in response to findings at the previous inspection visit:

For me personally, it’s useful as a teacher to know you’re doing marking and it’s going to be responded to. Because for ten years now, I’ve marked things and no one’s going to read it. You just do it because you have to, but now, you know every day, pupils are walking in and the first thing they look at is their book. And they know to respond to their marking. And it’s nice to know that the marking is actually being used... rather than just ticking a box. My personal opinion is, it would be very, very useful if it was just English and Maths. Or maybe science, being a core subject. But we are doing it for every single thing in our book. And that is just painstaking, it is. Even handwriting we do. You know, WWW, which is what went well. And an EBI, which is even better if. And yet, we are marking everything, which is just a bit too much.

Phil described a compulsive drive to mark that was perpetuated through the school in response to the school inspection regime. This would enable the school to ‘show’ at the next inspection that they had responded to previous inspection feedback. There is an emphasis here on marking to demonstrate, or ‘show’ to

both school pupil and inspector that the work has been checked. This, then produces data required by the school inspection regime and others who require evidence of children's progress and the school's progress as further "judgments, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change" (Ball, 2008, p. 57). While Phil recognises the potential benefits of some marking, the second part of his response demonstrated his recognition that the school marking policy is not unproblematic. In an effort to secure consistency across the school, all departments are required to enact the marking policy texts from different governmental, inspection and school sources, in a certain way and this causes some tensions. Lack of clarity in marking policies became a recurring theme. Bea, for example, was keen to emphasise the uncertainty of the marking policy, and this aligned to other policy actors at both schools, but particularly for those at Shoreside Primary Academy.

If you were to speak to most teachers not just in this school...I think most people think across the country there is definitely a conflict between what Ofsted want, what teachers want and what the government wants. I think it's...the conflict is ridiculous, I mean, erm, there's a lot that we do here that causes a lot of disagreement so for example, our marking has been an issue that has caused a lot of contention at the time because we we've been praised for our marking and it does move the children on and everyone who has looked at it has said that it does but then Ofsted has released saying that it doesn't expect to see any marking in the books at all... but in terms of what our school wants, what we do, that's a conflict already and I think in terms of work life balance as times it's a bit... (*Aly Can you explain what that feels like?*) Sometimes it feels like you're doing a lot of work that possibly you could be putting into something else so hours and hours of marking you could be spending planning more exciting lessons for the children or preparing something more exciting for the children or doing something with the wow factor than spending hours on marking but there is a belief that if Ofsted turn up they're going to expect to see fantastically marked books. So, there is a conflict there. I think.

Under the school inspection regime teachers (and leaders) are required to play a game "according to a closely presented set of rules" (Perryman, 2006, p.158). Most of the policy actors interviewed across both schools were unclear regarding what was expected, aligning with the "fuzzy norms" (Courtney, 2016). In the

school inspection regime's own resource, Ofsted Inspection Myths (August 2016), it states "... Ofsted does not expect to see any specific frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback; these are for the school to decide through its assessment policy." A few months later, Sean Harford, the national director for education at Ofsted stated, "I remain concerned that we continue to see some inspection reporting which gives the impression that more detailed or more elaborate marking is required, or indeed that it is effective in promoting pupils' achievement." (https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/inspectors-are-still-looking-detailed-marking-despite-pleas-not, last accessed 10/7/2017). Shoreside Primary Academy was therefore reluctant to relinquish its own marking policy that had been generated in response to earlier comments from the school inspection regime that marking was not sufficient, and yet school leaders were aware that there were potentially damaging costs to the quality of experience for both staff and pupils and were uncertain whether this was still a requirement.

Translation of policy (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.45) at the "requires improvement" school, Shoreside Primary Academy is in marked contrast to that at Sandside Secondary Academy. The staff at Sandside Secondary Academy also recognised the policy opacity, yet the headteacher, Suzanne takes a pupil and staff focused approach:

...Ofsted, to be fair, published their myths, you know: we don't expect this, and we're not looking for this, and there isn't an agreed timescale on, on how often books should be marked. But the feeling out there is, it's all about how good your books are, what the feedback is from students... And we're going to do some work, we're starting it now - we're going into next year with it on how much marking actually has an impact, to look at staff wellbeing. So, if staff are spending as long marking the books as the children spend writing the task then actually is that... having an impact? Fine if we've got to work that hard, that's not a problem but actually when the child writes 'yes I'll remember my full stops next time', has

that actually had an impact on their learning or not? What is it that has an impact on their learning, and what is the nature of feedback that actually they need and are we just writing loads of it that doesn't necessarily help. We've done lots of bits on that... I think much of that is driven by this expectation that if it's not there then I will be judged negatively if someone comes and looks at books in my classroom.

The confidence with which Sandside's headteacher is prepared to promote certain responses to policy enactment concurs to some extent with one of the middle leaders in the same school, Alistair, who articulated the dilemma relating to marking further:

It's taken me some years to realise that... what actually good marking looks like because I trained in an era where good marking was, you mark pretty much every bit of work, and now we don't have to mark every bit of work but it's taken me some years to get out of that. ... So that is something that I think, if you've trained with it, it's very hard to lose that view... But then it does put you in a difficult position certainly as head of department when your head teacher's telling you one thing but then the press (*referring to the recent articles about marking related to the Ofsted Inspection Myths*) are saying something different. So how do I hold a member of staff accountable if the school is saying they want this level of marking and then the schools minister is saying that actually you don't need to mark that much, and a staff member who wants to kick up a fuss about it could.

Other examples of uncertainty were identified throughout the research. These related to, for example, the revised levels of attainment: "I mean, the last couple of years some of this data I'm not sure it's all as effective as it's supposed to be because everyone's floundering around about what it looks like. So what does a 6B look like?" (Kath). Alongside deciphering policy texts to suggest ways to enact policy as a school leader, both schools had received recent reports from the school inspection regime suggesting that there was a need to be consistent to ensure good practice across the whole school. This is explained below.

#### 5.4. Reproduction: Consistent, consistent, consistent

In 5.3. there was focus on the data driven outcomes and the uncertainty involved in translating policy for the policy actors, particularly those under the more relentless gaze of the school inspection regime. Both schools told of forms of data accountability, whether in relation to achievement, administration or policy that is replicated across all departments or sections of the school to ensure consistent standards of performance and practices for inspection. At Sandside Secondary Academy, Steve, one of the middle leaders identified consistency as of high importance and something that the school did very well.

Er, the school has moved a massive amount with regards to being consistent, I think. And actually, something I'd say compared to the other schools that I've worked in, erm, actually consistency here is so high ... and actually the little things are tackled really well.

This shows the impetus that Teresa had referred to:

We've done an awful lot to improve consistency across the academy so there's been a huge drive on making sure that marking is consistent. That there are processes and protocols and systems in place to ensure that, you know, work is monitored at all times.

It was evident from the policy actors at Sandside Secondary Academy that this 'drive' had resulted in each aspect of the school's functioning being subjected to clear data accountability practices. A focus on consistency requires school leaders to be accountable for the standards that are reproduced. The policy actors at Shoreside Primary Academy also shared the focus on aiming to achieve consistent practice. Violet, a middle leader from Shoreside Primary Academy, articulated the ways in which inconsistency emerged during the school's last inspection:

That first year I was teaching year six and I was head of curriculum, creative curriculum then so, erm, let's think. Yeah, they sort of came round and looked at classes - teaching and learning I think, erm, our year group came out pretty well but there was inconsistency. A lot of it is based on inconsistency - pockets of really good practice and pockets of not quite so good and... ... I was with the Assistant Head, the SENCO, the literacy leader and the Maths leader and so I

was working with a lot of strong teachers who were leading things, erm, ... so my perspective was that actually things were quite good but then things started to filter out about some inconsistencies and some excellent practice and some not so good practice and that's when I started to think actually, maybe what I'm seeing is not the bigger picture.

Violet went on to demonstrate the implication of this for Shoreside Primary Academy. In the next example, Violet spoke of the new significance consistency was to have for the school, echoing the earlier 'drive' taken by Sandside Secondary Academy:

I think Ofsted have picked up... the big thing for us is...and Andrew and Sarah (*executive heads*), is consistency. You know there is lots of good practice but it needs to be consistent. There are lots of good displays but they need to be consistent. All we've heard is consistent, consistent, consistent. Erm, which obviously has fed off the Ofsted report saying there is lots of inconsistencies... but it has generally sort of improved, been improving standards and I think some people are like, why do we always have to do things?...certain things on the wall that they have to have the same, and the same design, and I can see their point...

Jason, one of the Assistant Heads at Shoreside Primary Academy concurs. Jason was emphatic about the requirement to be consistent. The example illustrates the importance Jason gave to consistency as a central premise for school improvement:

I wanted to get a common theme - a look to everything. I know it sounds, er, almost superficial you know, making sure we had the school badge in the right place, the Trust in the right place and that it was consistent across every form. Whether it is a behaviour incident form, whether it was a behaviour contract form, a management plan, er, er, there was an intervention form. Whatever it was it needed to look the same. For doing that it acts as a bedrock for the school - consistency - and if we've got consistency in look we would then have a, I'd have a better place to build consistency in process and reactions...

This aligns with Benjamin's concept of reproducibility, or display value. Jason demonstrated the perceived importance of the "look to everything" and "needing to look the same". For Benjamin, cultic value or the sense of place, context, is lost when aiming for reproducibility. Some of the policy actors were critical of the need to be consistent. Bea went further demonstrating how, while there may be

some sound reasons to be consistent, this is not without some frustration. Bea questions whether the sameness of the classrooms and approaches to pedagogy etc. is a positive factor for morale:

Bea: ...This was a big buzzword for us - consistency, because you've got some areas that are great and some areas that weren't quite so crack hot so it was a question of how are you going to get everything right across the school... Then you've got the classrooms where they're all supposed to have the same things in them even down to the table layouts, so all the classrooms are the same... But you've got to still keep a happy little band going at the same time, whether that's kids or staff. Because as soon as morale hits the skids, then it happens to everybody and I do wonder well if that's the case, are we motivating those children enough to want to learn?

Importantly here, consistency and sameness merge. Bea and Violet described the potential benefits of consistency and yet demonstrate the potential negative impact of this for the children. In 5.2. the policy actors told of the ways that the school has to “make up quite a lot for sometimes what children (*hesitantly*) don't get at home” (Bea, Shoreside Primary Academy). Standardisation as uniformity, replication and reproduction of the same types of visual displays, approaches to lessons etc. may produce a blandness that as Bea questions, “are we motivating those children enough to want to learn?”.

#### 5.5. Curriculum constraints: English and Maths, English and Maths, English and Maths

The notion of standardisation discussed in 5.4. is located in other relentless approaches taken towards meeting the demands of the school inspection regime. A repeated theme in the primary school particularly, related to a dominance of curriculum time allocated to English and Maths in all its “many different guises”.

This tension can be seen in the following response from Violet:

Yeah, I think the main battle is... is...the SATS and league tables... and English and Maths. And we have to do...There are a lot of things I would do as a teacher but I think you know, the kids would be really engaged in that or that would be

fantastic but we've got to teach this much English and Maths to get our SATS results because erm, I mean, our data last year was abysmal and if it's that bad again we're stuffed with Ofsted because you can't be 'good' with bad data so the pressure is massively on...English and Maths, English and Maths. All those skills there's... I mean it comes in so many different guises so there is a Maths lesson every day, but you also have reading, GPS (Aly *which is?*)... Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling. So we do a discrete grammar session, we do spelling sessions...they have different names, they're not called English and Maths...but you probably do at least three or four hours a day in some form of English and Maths...

What followed was an emotional outpouring regarding the way that this focus on English and Maths was largely “at the expense of other subjects”.

I don't like it. ...But you cannot be a good school - you cannot - without the English and Maths results and with, - I've got kids...I've got one in my class at the moment. he's got an EHCP (*Education, Health and Care Plan*)<sup>5</sup>, erm, because his Maths and English are poor but he really loves the sort of practical things and that sort of stuff and he doesn't get as much of that as he should do because it's a lot of English and Maths, English and Maths, English and Maths...and you know, until league tables and data and accountability from that way has gone then...cos here, you...you don't... you don't get the recognition in Ofsted and league tables and stuff, for all the other stuff you do...

In 5.4. I referred to the significance of consistency and sameness in relation to Bea's observation that “we have to make up quite a lot for sometimes what children (*hesitantly*) don't get at home”. Violet's example again needs to be located within this context. The pupil is denied access to a curriculum which he might enjoy and find success within here, because the school must focus on the performance measures that will count most in future school inspection outcomes. This example is indicative of the tensions that the staff at both case study schools expressed. Priorities for policy activity for both schools was dependent on the priorities of the school inspection regime. Kath, who had a lead role for Maths at Shoreside Primary Academy spoke of the English and Maths focus in a slightly different way:

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<sup>5</sup> An Education, health and care plan is for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through educational needs support (Gov.uk. Children with special educational needs and disabilities)

Well, the trouble we have, is not so much in the first term or the last term but particularly the middle term, a lot of the term is with Maths and English focus, so even if you're doing a topic in RE it will link to something that you've got to cover in English or Maths. I mean in Science and Maths you can link those together really easily. So, there's always something that is English or Maths based. So, that we can practice. We can practice the things that they're going to be tested on because at the end of the day, they've got a couple of days, a couple of papers, to show what they're made of and in actual fact although our data - it wasn't good last year - but once it was analysed, the number of children that were only one mark or two marks, because it was a sliding scale. So, you know, a couple of marks away from where they're supposed to be was so close. So, you think well if you could have just, pushed them a little bit harder, maybe we could've tipped the scale with those sort of kids.

Kath described the strategy of seeking opportunities in foundation subjects to optimise test scores at Shoreside Primary Academy. This echoed the heavy emphasis being placed on English and Maths, often at the expense of a broader curriculum, that Violet had spoken of. As a result of the curriculum priorities, marking and administrative time, policy actors spoke of the different ways in which this affected their daily practice. Below, Bea described the impact on the lessons themselves:

So sometimes it would be planning more interesting lessons. So much as we do our best to make sure that we've got a weeks' lessons done and it's all as interesting as it can be there are sometimes those extra wow lessons that you, that need a lot more preparation so things like, theme days. If we wanted to do an evacuation day for example, in year six, that sort of thing would take a lot of planning and a lot of time to organise...sometimes if we weren't busy doing the marking side of things or more of the admin things we would have time to plan those amazing days that the children are going to remember... It's not to say it doesn't happen but if we had more time there is so much more that I know I would love to do with year six, but it's just finding the time to get it prepared and get it done...yeah, so definitely the things like that, the themed days...

At Sandside Secondary Academy Teresa spoke forcefully about her feelings on the constraints imposed on the school curriculum:

It's appalling [laughs]. It's absolutely appalling what they're doing with the curriculum now. Now I understand about raising standards and you know no one wants standards raised more than I do for children that deserve it and you know anyone else in my position working in a school like this would be exactly the same. But what they're proposing, or is going through parliament now... is shocking because what it's proposing is a curriculum that is fit for the 19th Century. It's not fit now. It's a one size fits all model which doesn't take into account any differentiation.

Teresa continued to express her concern at the EBacc<sup>6</sup> initiative:

So, you know all those lovely really creative very valuable subjects that students do to give them a broad and balanced curriculum, that's not there. So, the government's definition of a broad and balanced curriculum in my mind is not a broad and balanced curriculum. It's a limited curriculum where children will fail okay there's no two ways about it.

The implications of the curriculum pressures determined by the school inspection regime will be examined further in Chapter 6 but useful to stress here that if “everything they're (*the children*) getting is in their six hours at school”, as Violet explained in 5.2., the ramifications of this in a coastal area of deprivation – Seatown, are more acutely felt than in a more affluent area. Neoliberal policy tools impact more heavily here.

#### 5.6. Instability: Up in the air

In addition to the curriculum constraints discussed in 5.5., both schools had periods of instability as both direct and indirect results of the encounters with the school inspection regime. This placed additional pressures on the existing staff as well as parents and children, especially at Shoreside Primary Academy. When first approaching Shoreside Primary Academy to arrange the research, the then headteacher, Deborah, had met with me during the week that she had found her post as headteacher was untenable due to judgments from the school inspection regime. Earlier that day she had told the staff that she was leaving. In an emotional outpouring, Deborah had told me that the Seatown context was “special” and made demands on her leadership that stood in the way of school improvement. She spoke of the ways that she had placed her community –

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<sup>6</sup> The English Baccalaureate is a school performance measure that requires five subjects including a grade 5 or above in English and Maths alongside a grade C in science, a language and geography or history. (Department of Education, 2017)

children and parents, first. Placing the social context ahead of the school data provoked decisions from the school inspection regime and the governing body that were not only costly to Deborah, but also to her staff, and potentially, to the children too. I have made reference to this meeting to provide background to the discussions that follow. Kath recognised the time dilemmas that Deborah had faced:

She made some changes, but I think it takes more than eighteen months to get into place and see any of the effects it's going to have, before you make more changes but of course after that time, if you end up as a 'need to improve' again, you've had it. So it means that everybody here was up in the air, so then, you've got a mass exodus of staff ...

Schools under intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime are afforded little time to make lasting improvements, with re-inspections occurring within twenty four months. The period immediately following an RI inspection is likely to be destabilising in itself as several of the policy actors indicated. Kath continued, showing the impact on staffing:

People need some sort of stability and to know what's going to happen. We didn't know who was taking over. We didn't know (0.6) if we were even going to have a head. We didn't know anything. Um, so I think people thought, it happened when Brett (*an earlier Headteacher of Shoreside*) went because, of course, I think the staff really thought he had a vision and thought 'now he's gone where are we left?'. So, a few went when he went, and then when Deborah went, you know, another load left.

The impact of leadership change stemming from the school inspection regime is also captured by Violet:

There was a lot of turnover of staff. I think obviously... Deborah... left. Erm... Whether people left just because of the Ofsted, because of Deborah leaving or just because of chance that they had to be leaving that year...I don't know but yeah, I think there was a lot of staff who had been here a long time and it was 'aw...we're not good again' and we've had a lot of heads... a lot of headteachers here... and I think that unsettles parents as well because they're not sure if someone puts in all these things and they're not sure they're going to be here for the rest of the time while their children are here or if they've got a number of children they get used to one head and then another one comes and they've got to get used to another head...

Kath noted the ways that external policy demands require rapid change at the same time that the school was responding to internal demands necessitated by unstable leadership within the school. A succession of four heads during a five year period necessitates some uncertainty for staff, as well as for pupils and parents. Within Shoreside Primary Academy there are many accompanying challenges due to the social context within which it is placed. The school inspection regime has found the school to be RI over the last ten years and this has resulted in the continuation of new school leaders arriving at the school, to take on the responsibility to move the school to the judgment of good or better. This places greater responsibility on the middle leaders who have sought to offer the children some stability through this period of change. Kath identified this need for stability, this time for the children:

Our children, again, I'm saying it as if it's all the kids here, and it is not, but there is a percentage who need the stability. They need the same old face in the classroom and they need to know what's going to happen and they need to know that they can come to you if there's a problem or whatever that might be whether it's school or home, Whatever. So as soon as you have got stuff up in the air, you've then got this sort of unsettling bubbling, from some of the children. So that's not particularly fantastic.

The ways in which the staff were trying to offer stability for the children resulted in particular demands being put on their daily practices by both internal and external policy, and internal leadership factors. This was in an attempt to remove the “unsettling bubbling” that Kath refers to. If this is undertaken daily because of the intense pressure felt by staff, this places further demands on staff if they feel a sense of even greater responsibility to address policy and its various iterations as identified earlier. This dilemma aligns with claims made by other authors, including Coe (2009) who advocate an empirical approach to school

improvement and effectiveness, yet identify that some improvement strategies have the potential to cause harm (ibid. p. 376). The examples from earlier sections such as curriculum constraints (5.5.), consistency and sameness (5.4.) might serve as useful empirical examples. A change of leadership through 'restructuring' might be seen to be synonymous with improvement, yet both Kath and Violet referred to the challenges that the school faced when a leadership approach that attempted to embrace the context of Seatown was rejected. At Sandside Secondary Academy, Teresa indicated the process of gradual, rather than immediate change:

Well it was just becoming apparent that there were more and more staff that seemed to be on the positive side so when I did briefings in the morning, it first started off and it was, you didn't always get the nods, you didn't always get the 'mm, okay' or the laughs or anything like that. What you did get was, um ... a little bit of ... a little bit of standoffish - only a little bit you know, erm, but ... Yeah, it sort of started to turn around and you saw just less sense of moaning. I'm quite intuitive and you can tell when people haven't bought in, and you could just see that there were less and less of those types of people and they were gone. I mean a lot of them had gone, erm, and you know it was a realisation that actually, this is the regime. This is how it's going to be and it's actually, buy in or bye bye, erm. And at the end of the first year there was a member of staff who gave a speech which wasn't particularly complimentary about anything erm, and er, he left and that was possibly the last negative speech we've had. Subsequent to that it's all been quite positive and quite jolly but I can't say that there wasn't that positivity already. I can't claim credit for something that I didn't put in place. What I'm saying is, it was beginning to turn and it's got better and better and you've got...in terms of detractors now.....well I think there's two ... and I know exactly who they are (laughs).

### 5.7. Performativity: A feeling of anxiety

In addition to the instability felt by policy actors as articulated in 5.6., Sylvia, a senior leader at Sandside Secondary Academy told of the effects of the high stakes accountability from the school inspection regime at the time of inspection:

A lot of worry, an awful lot of worry. Professional pride comes into it and that goes with the change really and I think it was different. With the academy when that came in (*referring to the earlier academisation*) there was definitely fear of characters and a fear of loss of job and there was also a fear that those people would've lost their jobs whether they were good or not, were you liked or were you not liked, did your face fit, did it not fit. So, there was definitely that.

The nature of performance for the school inspection regime (e.g. Perryman, 2006; Clapham, 2015) and its links to performativity suggest that the policy actor remains conscious of the disciplinary gaze, long after the visit itself has finished. In the research sites that form this case study, the disciplinary gaze from the school inspection regime is intensified by other forms of disciplinary technology stemming from an anticipation of future encounters with the school inspection regime. This type of disciplinary technology might be a 'learning walk', 'climate walk', peer or other lesson observation, or a simulated school inspection visit undertaken by either senior staff or external inspectors, often termed a Mocksted inspection, by schools. In the case of this research, both schools were used to a combination of these disciplinary technologies. Juliet demonstrated the impact of this:

There was a time when, um, I felt the senior team above got quite big and understandably they all have their roles and responsibilities and everybody wants to do that as well as they possibly can but unfortunately some of the times that could be quite overpowering and that could make you almost feel like you're still in that zone. But I think that was more so because it had come so soon after and I understand, everyone has a job to do and I get that and I think I understand that they want to do that well but actually on the scale of what it was it did... still feel like you, like you were continuously being judged. But it's not so much now because that team has scaled back. They've listened to staff voice and said 'actually this is too much. We need to, on top of dealing with what we need to with everyday... You don't need that piling pressure from top'.

Juliet describes a leadership drive that while initially retaining the pressure of the disciplinary gaze, as if from the school inspection regime, has adjusted in response to staff feedback. At Sandside Secondary Academy, while having previously responded to inspection demands that force certain types of policy enactment, there has more recently been an assured approach to doing what they feel is right for the school, while mindful of the school inspection regime. Teresa captures this change of direction usefully here, "It makes you feel bloody

minded and you think, right, sod it, we're gonna do what's right for the kids". Some of the 'bloody mindedness' has been manifest in the loosening of compliance to the school inspection regime that started to emerge in the accounts from senior staff at Sandside Academy that are discussed in the next section.

At Shoreside Primary Academy however, there still remained a foreboding presence of the school inspection regime that can be demonstrated by Bea's leadership approach following the school's experience of their recent no notice inspection that had arisen in relation to a child protection matter:

But last year, especially after the no notice (*inspection*). I know that in the planning meetings with my team last year I was like 'Right, if an Ofsted inspector was to turn up next week are we happy with this plan?' And it did adapt the way that perhaps we were thinking about lessons... Whether it was in a negative way... I don't know. But it was a thought we did have...and I know after the no notice...all of a sudden, it felt like there was more pressure to make sure the books were all completely marked up to date all of the time and that the children were responding to all of their comments all the time, and I know that some teachers in my own year team were staying up ridiculous hours at night to make sure those books are completely up to date all the time after that no notice, just in case they appeared to do a full on inspection...

The impact of the threat of an inspection visit appeared to weigh heavily on Bea:

And I think after the no notice there was a feeling of anxiety I would say across the school. Just in case, because we definitely couldn't afford to get anything less than good and I think as a school because of how hard we had worked as a team for the past...for that year, anything less than a good would have absolutely destroyed everybody because we had just worked so hard. And I think that's what is part of the fear when Ofsted turn up, is you've got a team like ours that do work incredibly hard and we're quite a supportive team for each other...This is a lovely place to work...a lovely school to be in and I think when an Ofsted inspection or any inspection comes along...you want to be part of the team. You want to ensure that what you do, positively effects everyone else as well and you're not the person who's going to be delivering something terrible for everybody else and yeah, I mean even visitors that we've had in, that are not Ofsted...There is definitely a feeling that everybody wants to do it for everybody else as well. Which I suppose is a bit of added pressure at the same time as Ofsted but...we're a very close knit team here...

Bea evidenced enhanced pressure to ensure that the school was ready to be judged by the school inspection regime, and indeed, any other type of inspection

with which the school might experience as preparation for a full inspection. Her references to “staying up ridiculous hours at night”, “a feeling of anxiety” and the threat that a less than good judgment from the school inspection regime would have “absolutely destroyed everybody”, indicated the pressures that the short notice inspection places on leaders and their teams, especially to ensure that “you’re not the person who’s going to be delivering something terrible for everybody else”. Something of the pressure is indicated here as Bea went on to explain how she had felt as leader and teacher when faced with a no-notice inspection:

I think when they first got here it was panic...when they first got here, no one was expecting them to turn up obviously and just knowing that they were at the front door...we didn't know why...we didn't know what for. It was horrible. That sinking feeling in the morning when you think, oh God and you suddenly start questioning everything you were about to do that day that normally, you would just go with it. But across the whole school I think everyone was like 'I'd better change this', 'go and print this off', 'do this differently' which was bizarre because we're all normally quite happy with what we do. We're all very much, you know, we'll give it a go, if it doesn't work it's not the end of the world, we can look at it again...in a different way. That morning was awful, cos I think everyone just thought 'Oh my gosh' like 'I need to redo some of this' and I found myself even actually on that day...I had a lesson planned, it was good to go...the resources were there but knowing Ofsted were stood at the door I thought 'Right, I need to change this' and started changing a lesson that I'd already planned and knew was a good lesson, so yeah...

Bea's comments seem far from her earlier extract where she and her team prepared for a potential visit from the school inspection regime. The self-doubt and sense of panic suggested something of the 'fear' that is derived from the power wielded by the school inspection regime. While these feelings are shared by staff at Sandside Secondary Academy too, the headteacher, Suzanne, expressed something of the freedom that moving from 'RI' to 'good' has offered:

I think that's where, when we talked about where is the freedom of it that... that, actually I can say 'well we're a good school, so we're making this decision and it's not exactly the decision that you might want to hear us make but we're making this for very good reasons that we can describe to you'. When you're an RI school, you probably don't feel like you've got that flexibility to do that, you've got

to pull out every sense that you can out of it but yeah, so when the Progress 8<sup>7</sup> first came in, the feeling was we would have to make sure every child studied three EBacc subjects ... because that's the best way we get results but now we're saying 'okay, so they might get Gs or Us in one of those EBacc subjects, actually is that the best outcome for them? Is that the best way to engage them in school?' Actually, maybe, we can make some different decisions here. So just because three free choice subjects count, doesn't mean they can't study four. Whereas the first time they came out we were kinda trying to work out what that would look like. At the same time, you're trying to judge what everyone will do nationally. So the Progress 8 is measured against what everyone does this year but we don't know what everyone's gonna do this year, so you're kind of in that unknown of, you might make a decision and go down a certain route and find other schools don't do that and you're winning or you're losing and sadly it feels a winning or a losing because it's all proportional.

The notion of pulling out “every sense that you can out of it” becomes manifest in the more confident and assured approach that was articulated in earlier sections, for example the response to the marking policy (5.3.) and the decisions taken in relation to exam entries that will be discussed in the next section. This aligned to a sense shown by several of the staff interviewed that Sandside Secondary Academy was now ‘winning’. Paul, a middle leader at Sandside Secondary Academy demonstrated an assured style when articulating how the possibility of a visit from the school inspection

felt:

Yeah. I think... (describes some of the business initiatives etc.) ...the school is close...if not, is almost on point and doing more than what Ofsted would expect. So yes, it's stressful in the fact that someone's going to come in a bit like a health inspector to a restaurant and inspect but really, it isn't, because it's what you do every day....

This aligns with the earlier example of compliance shown by Wayne, a middle leader at Shoreside Primary Academy in 5. 2.. Robert, speaking from his position as a senior leader, appeared by contrast, to reconcile the demands of the school inspection regime towards a pragmatic approach to daily practice. Having spoken

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<sup>7</sup> Progress 8 is an accountability measure for secondary schools. Gov.uk Secondary accountability measures (including Progress 8 and Attainment 8)

to an HMI, he suggested the demands of being 'outstanding' all of the time were simply unachievable:

It's the peaks and troughs that come with the kind of Ofsted framework from jumping from... You know, trying to continually chase outstanding. But it's this unachievable kind of goal to sustain. You know, you are talking about an athlete peaking for 195 days of the year. It's impossible. Well it's not even 195 days. Let's say on average maybe an average classroom teacher teaches four periods a day. An actual probably they'll teach more than that. That's them performing at their absolute optimum - the 100m final at the Olympics, four periods a day five days a week over... It's impossible [laughs]. You know, what you would get is burn out and you'd get a huge, hugely high kind of absence rate because the staff just can't sustain it. So that's why good is a realistic achievable goal and a realistic achievable standard to try and strive towards. So, you know, very much now it's about maintaining that level of good and if we can get there I'll feel morally, I'll be able to rest easy...

This aligns with James and Oplatka's notion of "the good enough school" (2015).

Suzanne also told of her approach to finding a place in between the demands of school inspection and the data management in the ways she approached a form of dual reporting:

So, I think you have to be very careful to suggest. It's not that you don't tell the truth, it's just that the perception of what you're describing has to be different.

Suzanne, Richard and Paul spoke with a clarity about what the school inspection regime demands. There is a contrast between these voices and those from Shoreside Primary Academy, who are not yet deemed 'good' by the school inspection regime. Bea captures this state of not knowing what is being demanded of leaders and teachers by stating:

I think it's just in your head. You kind of picture what you think an Ofsted inspector would want to see and to be fair I don't even know really where that comes from. It's just, and, while I was training it was just the constant 'Ofsted might come along. This is what Ofsted need to see. They need...you need to be good or outstanding'...and it's just that constant, I don't know. You don't even really know what outstanding is going to look like... but you somehow want to be there. It's a very odd set-up I think.

### 5.8. Struggle and resistance: We will take the hit

The previous section illustrated some of the ways that feelings of anxiety were prompted by the school inspection regime. This section demonstrates some of the ways in which some school leaders found a place of resistance. Ball and Olmedo (2013), drawing from Foucault, suggest that by the social (or policy) actor recognising that something with the way in which they are governed, is not right – seeing something ‘cracked’, is the beginning of ‘caring for themselves’. The policy actors “think in terms of what they do not want to be, and do not want to *become*” (ibid. p.86). This, Ball and Olmedo suggest, is “the terrain of struggle, the terrain of resistance” (ibid. p.85). Amongst the policy actors interviewed for this research at Shoreside Primary Academy were many examples of seeing something ‘cracked’:

Kath: There are a few bits where I think ... what was the point? How does that benefit us, the kids? What's the point on that? And sometimes it is just to have the data on that piece of paper that we show to Ofsted... It's hoop jumping. That's all it is. It's hoop jumping. And at the point, especially if you've jumped the hoop four times in different ways and you tend to think, right, well, I've jumped enough hoops now (laughing). Can I go back and see my kids? Do you know what I mean? And sometimes it is, just, just for Ofsted. Or the political party we're in at the time.

Similarly, Violet too, recognised the “struggle” and related this to the matter of context. I have maintained the conversation here to recognise the emotional outpouring that developed here:

You know, we employ learning mentors for kids who've... that they've had violence at home or whatever's happened - they're not in a place to come in and do English and Maths. But there's no recognition of the fact that this child wouldn't even stay in class and now they're staying every single day. They do all day in class - there's no league table for that. So it's... You know, you always get a bit squashed by the system because they... there's no recognition of that kind of influence on it and I think, so you're always going to struggle... particularly in certain areas, quite a lot in *Seatown* in general, but in certain areas particularly there are kids who are not in the right place to come in and learn... and they...just... there's no recognition of that. Of the value added of... that we've got that child to a place where they come into school and be in lessons and they can socialise with other kids - they're not violent any more...

Aly: You feel passionate about that don't you. I can see...

Violet” Yeah. It drives me mad because we have to do all like...don't get me wrong you know English and Maths are really important but not to me at the expense of other subjects where some kids who find English and Maths really hard actually do really well and at the expense of those children that we...we do so much for but will never score on any league table...but there's no box for that. There's no form where you submit that to Ofsted and say 'But, this child, this child, this child...I've done this with'...There's no sort of story...These are the numbers... numbers are not good enough. Out you go. So it's really hard for us to go - you've got to push the English and Maths...push, push the English and Maths because we've just had a *Peer to Peer* review and you know, you have to put your data as requires improvement because the data we've got is terrible but if you looked at various things around that and you listen to the story around that. They've done really well...but there's no space for that.

The interaction I had with Violet, above, was a significant moment in the fieldwork. Violet's comments align with others at Shoreside Primary Academy who recognised the 'cracked' and therefore were starting to open up “spaces of doubt” (Ball and Olmedo, 2013, p.93). At Sandside Secondary Academy there were examples, not only of spaces of doubt, but also of “ways of exploring the possibilities and impossibilities of transgression” (ibid. p.94). Suzanne, the headteacher, for example, indicated a very assured approach to ensuring that changes in policy regarding which grade is recorded worked for the pupils within her school. The first example illustrates a criticism of the policy that is largely derived from issues of context:

...the government policy went... and said, 'well you can only sit it (*GCSE Maths*) once'. So, any child whatever their background will always have a bad day and the fact that you could only sit that exam once will always disadvantage the person who had the bad day... so, so, there is an issue that says you only get one try at it which you don't get when you pass your driving test or anything of that nature... I said I don't wanna play on our disadvantaged card but actually the reality is that by the end of Year 11, our children might well have changed school two or three times, they may well not be living with the same parent they were living with at the beginning of the year, something may well have come up in the family...

Here, Suzanne demonstrated how she moved from a criticism of the policy to an act of resistance against the policy:

And in fact, this year we have entered some students early for their maths and we will take the hit on our results... so it's your first grade that counts so last year

we didn't enter any children early and there was absolutely no doubt that the biggest losers were our lowest ability students on entry.... So, this year, forget the performance measures - we're entering them at Christmas. They kind of got Gs and Fs. Now we're working on getting them Es and Ds and we'll take the hit and I'll produce two sets of data that says actually this is what happened when we let them have that opportunity. Last year we didn't do it, too many of them left with Us, 'cause we try to push them to a high standard on their first exam and they couldn't actually cope with all of that pressure on the day.

Lack of trust in the school inspection regime emerged in this example at Sandside

Secondary Academy, illustrated by Sylvia, a senior leader:

Their (*staff*) jobs are on the line - yes. You know, there was a vice principal who was slated during one of the Ofsted inspections and I know she definitely felt like her job was on the line and she also felt that she couldn't go for a job anywhere else while she had an Ofsted report that slated the area that she was responsible for. And that could be okay if you trusted the inspection system itself. That's my problem with all this. I don't necessarily have a problem with accountability or jumping through the hoops if you then trusted the outcome at the end of it.

Suzanne was keen to indicate that she will enact policy to serve the local community, even where this is against the preferred policy response:

So, we've just seen this constant change of what is allowed to count and not count and in what combination and they then drive your curriculum decisions and then you might want to review that curriculum decision for the next year which is what we're currently doing now but sometimes they haven't stayed the same long enough for you to be able to do that or you're busy working towards the next measure while you're still trying to finish off the old measure. So, one of the comments last summer was how many schools fell into a bit of a downturn in their five A\* to C because they were so focused on Progress 8 because that was the new thing coming in and they just kind of took their eye off the ball a little bit...based on what I've seen of them (*Sandside* pupils) so far it would raise big questions as to whether they can achieve that qualification.

It is clear that once the school was judged good by the school inspection regime, rather than RI, a space whereby a certain freedom was afforded, opened. As Suzanne suggested, "I think because we haven't got that pressure of the inspectors could be in any day it gives us a little bit of space to ... try things out and move things around". This sense of freedom allowed Suzanne to be able to experiment. This freedom is identified as being wholly pupil focused and related

to the school context as can be seen in the following example, again from Suzanne:

I think yeah, you can experiment, so, so, English have reviewed the whole way they deliver in English ... So, if I look at our data in Years 7, 8 and 9, it's been shocking ... because actually they've started from scratch. They've stripped the whole lot out and said right we're gonna start this again and we'll catch up but if Ofsted had arrived in January to do a full inspection we'd have had real issues with our data but I've been able to say 'It's okay, do it. We're really aware of what's happening, we know where it is. I want to see it improving, I want to hear what that story is. I want to know it's having an impact ... And I think you just have that little bit of breathing space. All the stuff on employability couldn't have touched if we were in the middle of an Ofsted cycle.

The freedom that Suzanne expressed is not necessarily experienced by all staff.

One of the middle leaders of Sandside Secondary Academy, Steve, explained how he experienced the school inspection regime following their judgment of good:

... in the local area other places have had no notice inspections. You know, we always get warned that this could happen with regards to this area and safeguarding. Erm, which isn't necessarily a bad thing that you're in a high state of alert but at the same time it does create additional stress and pressure for you to make sure you are... we don't have the freedom to explore and try new things because actually if you were to try new things and somebody was to come in and observe that, once again that's a snapshot. You try new things because you want to see what you can learn from that. I think people are worried about new things because they think someone will come in and make a snap judgment on what you see and I know it is difficult to make a judgment on general diet because unless Ofsted are going to come in literally every week and over a period of time I know it's going to be difficult.... But people don't take risks. They play very safe and...

When asked to expand on this, Steve referred to the contrast between his previous school in Citytown and Sandside:

So, at the school I was in at Citytown because generally, to a certain extent, you could give them a textbook and generally they would learn from it, so you were very much more a facilitator, and so you set up a task and you could kind of sort of sit back. At the same time, you could try new things because actually you could bounce back to the thing you were doing before because actually that would work, and so you could break your time up and so activity days... We had one each term effectively where you could try something new. It's more challenging to try something new here. I think, because of the students. If you - it takes a lot more embedding of processes here and just much longer to ensure that students are aware, and so that is a much longer process than it was in Citytown.

It is noticeable that the sense of being allowed to take risks now, spoken of by Suzanne, is not shared therefore, by Steve. That people don't take risks' and 'play safe' has implications for the teachers and pupils in the classrooms. Suzanne clearly senses freedom in her decision making but Steve did not indicate this, aligning more with his contemporaries at the primary school, who were still judged RI. Teaching and learning without a climate for innovation furthers the notion of standardization cited earlier (5.4., 5.5.).

The impact of policy changes on the lives on school leaders in the case study is relevant to consider in relation to 'the approved and authorized exercise of power' (Gillies, 2013). It was interesting to note that Suzanne's leadership role embraced that of interlocutor, or policy mediator (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005) for the new policy initiatives and the ways that these should be enacted. Suzanne, while situated within the dominant discourse, was visibly more confident about the way that power could be exercised, even though it is important to be mindful here that there may be many constraining elements that she may be unaware of, for example, the language that defines what a good leader might be, the way that data is read etc. However, while assuming a dual responsibility to the social context and school data, it is significant that Suzanne is prepared to 'take a hit' in relation to the data, where that is in the interest of Seatown.

## **Chapter 6 : Discussion**

### 6.1. Introduction

Wilshaw's annual report emphasised that "All of our evidence shows that it is good leadership that makes the biggest difference to school standards" (1<sup>st</sup> December 2015), school leaders have had additional pressure to address attainment alongside other performance measures across their schools. In particular, school leaders have been given the responsibility to ensure that the gaps in educational attainment between pupils with different contextual backgrounds e.g. economic, ethnicity, gender etc. are closed. Dorling (2015) and Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) have intentionally observed however, that the most equal educational achievement correlates to the most equal countries. Gibb, the School Standards Minister, gave a speech on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 outlining the government's role in creating a 'level playing field' and yet there is no evidence to suggest that the economic wealth of the UK has been more evenly distributed (e.g. Dorling, 2017, p.124). Nevertheless, there is an expectation that all schools are required to close gaps to ensure that they are judged 'good' or better. Previous iteration of policy had enabled schools to remain at a grade three judgment: satisfactory, for long periods in their school inspection history. Currently those schools with a grade three judgment of 'requires improvement' experience a relentless pressure to improve, stemming from the school inspection regime and government policy.

The nature of what it is exactly that is required by leaders to produce a good or better school is tightly bound to the discourse of the school inspection regime, governmental policy texts and decontextualized aspects of the school

improvement and effectiveness literature. By considering Butler's characterisation of performativity as "first and foremost that characteristic of linguistic utterances that in the moment of making the utterance makes something happen or brings some phenomenon into being" (2015, p.28), we might make a useful connection between the discourse of school inspection; 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' etc. and the ways that these terms are understood by school leaders. This is particularly noticeable when we consider the interpellation of successful leaders, 'hailed', to use Althusser's terminology, as examples to all school leaders regarding the ways in which they are deemed to have addressed the aspects of social inequality within their schools, even if this might have been achieved by spurious, even harmful actions (e.g. Machin & Veroit, 2011; Wrigley, 2013). This landscape frames the following discussion of the findings in more detail and responds to the research questions. Here the research questions are re-stated ahead of the discussion:

The main research question was: How do school leaders enact policy in a coastal area of deprivation when under intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime?

The subsidiary research questions were:

1. How do school leaders within the case study schools perceive tensions between policy and context?
2. Is it possible to identify micropolitical acts of resistance amongst school leaders in the case study schools?

In relation to this, four broad thematic areas for discussion emerge from the findings: surveillance and the panoptic metaphor; the hyper-enactment of neoliberal policy; education in the age of neoliberal reproduction; and the micropolitics of resistance. These will be considered in the next four sections.

## 6.2. Surveillance: a case for the panoptic metaphor to be maintained

In this section, there will first be a discussion about the concept of post-fabrication/post-panopticism, and then an illustration of the extent to which the data in my research aligns with these concepts. I will then articulate my own positioning in relation to this debate. The literature review suggested a case for the term post-fabrication to replace fabrication (Clapham, 2015), and post-panopticism to replace the panoptic metaphor (e.g. Courtney 2016; Page, 2017a, Page 2017b). Clapham (2015) considers the more recent approaches made by the school inspection regime towards the short notice inspection. This, he suggests, results in teachers being in a constant state of inspection readiness. This removes the possibility of fabrication for inspection and with high stakes inspections, Clapham argues, the ways of working within a school cannot be left to chance (ibid. p. 625). Clapham identifies the inspection readiness present in the day to day conditions brought about by this high stake inspection climate as the conditions of post-fabrication (ibid.). This is not conducive to creativity or risk-taking in Clapham's study and the school was found to promote "identikit inspection ready lessons" (ibid. p. 625).

Page (2017a/2017b) however, advocates post-panopticism, being keen to point out that the impact of short notice inspections creates a strong sense of the future

presence of the school inspection regime for teachers and leaders. Page argues that fabrication is no longer valid as each day the “panoptic uncertainty” of the past (2017b, p.4) is replaced by continuous and visible surveillance (ibid. p.4). Clapham and Page agree that instead of fabrications, or performance, “in order to escape the regime” as Perryman (2006, p. 155) had earlier opined, these become instead, routine practices regardless of where the school might be in relation to the school inspection cycle. Courtney also views fabrications as becoming “continuously destabilised” (2016, p.634) and therefore meaning that the compliance that characterised panopticism (ibid. p.633) flounders, due to the repeated changes in the ways schools are inspected. Perryman et al (2017b) have also evidenced the post-panoptic in their recent re-examination of earlier data produced on policy enactments that has been referred to within other sections of this thesis. The authors conclude that “the veneers of success to demonstrate to the inspectors are likely to be present all the time, and teachers will be rehearsed, trained and inculcated in Ofsted-friendly ‘effectiveness’ in a permanent way” (ibid. p. 161). There is then, substantial argument for fabrications to be deemed irrelevant under the current school inspection regime, and for the panoptic metaphor to give way to that of post-panopticism. I will now indicate the extent to which my research supports this argument, before then articulating my own position in this respect.

There was evidence of the replication of inspection readiness that Clapham observed, pervading the everyday for leaders at Sandside Secondary Academy. Paul suggested that because the school was now “almost on point and doing more than what Ofsted would expect”, while it could be perceived as “stressful”,

“it isn’t, because it’s what you do every day”. Both schools indicated a sense of being under constant surveillance from the school inspection regime, and some staff spoke of their own internal mechanisms functioning in similar ways. Louise at Sandside Secondary Academy spoke of the “expectations within the classroom and just the relentless chasing and not letting anything go”. This allowed “not just Ofsted, but any visitor” to be able to walk into the school “and you’re probably 99% certain that you’re gonna see what you want to see”.

To address the issue of school data observed from afar by the school inspection regime, as well as other forms of disciplinary technology, the curriculum offer, particularly at Shoreside Secondary Academy, had become largely restricted to the subjects that were deemed to matter most: English and maths. This strategy reduced time for foundation subjects, that even when these subjects were taught might be required, as Kath indicated, to be used to “link to something that you’ve got to cover in English and maths”. This sense of restricted curriculum also emerges in the government’s policymaking, as Teresa (Sandside Secondary Academy) articulated: “So you know all those lovely really creative very valuable subjects that students do to give them a broad and balanced curriculum, that’s not there”. This impacts too on restrictions to delivering innovative and creative classroom practices that leaders felt, for example, when Bea (Shoreside Primary Academy) spoke of not having time for “those extra wow lessons”. Steve at Sandside Secondary Academy perceived a lack of risk taking, regardless of whether the inspectors were present or not: “But people don’t take risks. They play very safe”.

Courtney (2016) suggests that panoptic performativity relies on everyone knowing the rules of the game in order to play it (p.634). Fabrication ceases to be possible because of the frequent changes to the school inspection framework producing destabilisation. Compliance is then both more desired and less possible (ibid, p. 633). I argue that this type of destabilisation is an important tactic of neoliberalism, rather than a feature of post-fabrication or post-panopticism. Ball (2003) spoke of stability as elusive in performativity, “purposes are made contradictory, motivations become blurred and self-worth is uncertain” (p.220). The tactics of destabilisation are seen in my research at Shoreside Primary Academy:

...sometimes with all these changes of assessment. Changes for this, changes for that. Changes in the way they're graded. Changes of the stepping-stones, because they're no longer levelled and that sort of thing... (Kath)

The lack of clarity also shows in Alistair's comments about behaviour management at Sandside Secondary Academy:

I think there's an element of ambiguity in that, and we find even with the new administration, the new style of Ofsted, what does that actually mean? It's the practical applications... because again, what I can judge as dealing with behaviour is not what somebody else might do...I think it is very, very, almost immoral.

Fabrication is identified by Ball as a product of performativity and refers to our capacity to be accountable (2003, p.224), i.e. our “transformational and disciplinary impact” (ibid.). Fabrications are both “resistance and capitulation” (ibid. p. 225). The resistance can be demonstrated by Suzanne, the headteacher at Sandside Secondary Academy:

So, when I am constantly being asked for data, either from the DFE (*Department for Education*), or I've got an inspection, I'm going to talk at the higher end, because I need to, to make sure that I'm getting, erm, the requirements I need for that judgement. Doesn't help me at a school level to then be able to identify those students in there who are vulnerable to any changes on the borderline who I need to be working with you. So, you end up with this kind of almost like a dual reporting system going on. What am I saying about my school if someone comes in, and what I am saying about my school internally...

The perpetual state of being disciplined results in the need for sustained fabrications – fabrication with endurance. The findings suggest that we are not beyond fabrication, neither has fabrication become destabilised as Courtney has opined (2016), but instead, policy actors are required to operate in inauthentic ways during their daily and every day practice. While Clapham (2015) argues for post-fabrication on the grounds that the inspection regime does not inspect a fabricated version of events, because what they see is what happens daily, this loses the sense that to fabricate is to be inauthentic. Fabrication is part of Butler’s enacted fantasy and this highlights the unreal – the inauthentic. We allow ourselves, then, to become the ideal neoliberal subject through fabrication – making more of ourselves than we are. This may be produced as an individual or organisation, or both, as seen here with Suzanne earlier. The capitulation is captured here by Bea at Shoreside Primary Academy:

...the potential of an Ofsted was scaring a lot of people and you could sense it every time we were being told what had to be done. Everyone was kind of panicking thinking, this is for Ofsted, this is for Ofsted...

The desperation of policy actors demonstrated here suggests a lack of conviction in the everyday practices of the staff. These daily practices appeared not to be viewed as good enough by the staff and therefore Bea shows a collective surrendering to the school inspection regime.

The participants in the research under the scrutiny from the regime have not, however, strengthened the case to abandon the panoptic metaphor. If we take first, Shoreside Primary Academy, leaders are not only trying to work out how they can perform the school in the way that the school inspection regime will deem acceptable, but they are also looking to themselves, to see how they can be more than they are. The school leaders are transforming to something beyond

themselves. They are trying to become the best neoliberal subject they can be. For Shoreside Primary Academy there is a sense that the fabrications, or performances are still maintained, and therefore the panoptic metaphor must still be applied and still has relevance. Sandside Secondary Academy is a school that has managed to escape the regime, however temporarily. There is still, however, a strong sense that the performance continues and members of staff, in the main, are still under surveillance even if this is coming from both external and internal disciplinary technologies. Fabrication is still required.

Foucault tells us that it is not just from the watchtower that surveillance takes place. It is at all levels within which the panoptic surveillance enters our certain way of being.

One doesn't have here a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over the others. It's a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised. (Foucault, 1980, p. 156).

If a school leader, or policy actor deviates from being what a neoliberal subject is required to do, there is some form of external or internal mechanism to provide correction. Forms of panoptic surveillance machinery prevail. I return, finally, to Foucault's explanation of surveillance that forms the basis for the panoptic in Perryman's (2006, 2009) work. First, I will consider the notion of panopticism in relation to the seventeenth century town – "the panoptic establishment" (1991a, p.205), closed to contain the plague. The process of surveillance for the town's inhabitants is described by Foucault as "the great review of the living and the dead" (1991a, p.196). The surveillance from the intendants and syndics (ibid. p.196) i.e. the administrators and officials, captures "Everything that may be observed..." (ibid.). Foucault argues that of concern here is,

...the penetration of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power; not masks that were put on and taken off, but the assignment to each individual of his 'true' name, his 'true' place, his 'true' body, his 'true' disease. (ibid. p.198).

Surveillance in schools may well use “multiple levels and multiple parties” (Page, 2017b, p.999) and be more ‘liquid’ in nature, aligning not with a case for the panoptic metaphor to be disregarded, but more to indicate the ways in which “the penetration of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life” might be more fully realised. Foucault tells us that power is able to punish through “the infinitely minute web of panoptic techniques” (1991a, p.224).

Foucault’s second example of panopticism uses the Bentham prison design, and I maintain that this clarifies its appropriateness for being used as a metaphor within the revised approach taken by the school inspection regime. Inducing in the inmate (or school leader or teacher) “a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1991a, p.201) is the main principle of the prison design. If school leaders and teachers find that the short notice inspections, learning walks and data tools etc. maintain a “constant regime of inspection readiness”, the panoptic metaphor remains relevant to research into the impact of the school inspection regime. As Foucault states,

Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up” (Foucault, 1991a, p.202).

Foucault stresses that the panoptic metaphor is principally one that is concerned with architecture – a politics of space (Foucault, 1980). Crucially, the economic cost of surveillance is reduced by panoptic discipline.

An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. (Foucault, 1980, p.155).

I argue therefore that the disciplinary gaze on the two schools that have formed the case study within this research provide further examples of panoptic performativity. The internal mechanisms or “capillary functioning of power” (Foucault, 1991a, p. 198) that have been intensified by recent changes to the school inspection regime function more closely to the panoptic design than previous iterations have. In the next section I will demonstrate that this intensification of the school inspection regime produces, what I call, hyper-enactment of policy.

### 6.3. ‘Floundering’ in the hyper-enactment of opaque neoliberal policy

The term ‘policy enactment’ (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2015) was identified in the literature review and used throughout the thesis to describe the process of realising policy “alongside and against contextual factors” (p. 487). Ball et al (2012) describe the space where policy is enacted in different ways as a potential place for the micropolitics of resistance to be located. This was identified in the field work and will be discussed in section 6.5. That context is a mediating factor impacting on policy enactment (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012) was discussed in the literature review and there is much literature demonstrating tensions that exist between the conflicting priorities of neoliberal policy and educational leadership (e.g. Gewirtz, 2002; Ozga, 2000). Leaders and other staff involved in realising policy in schools find themselves with value conflicts and ethical dilemmas (Gewirtz, 2002). If neoliberal policy plays a role in reproducing inequality (Ozga, 2000), then we might consider further, the ways that this impacts on policy enactment for school leaders. I want to suggest an alternative way to view policy

enactment within the intensified panoptic gaze that was considered in the previous section.

In this section, discussion centres on the ways policy is enacted by policy actors specifically under such heightened scrutiny from the school inspection regime. Whereas much recent literature has suggested that all schools are under continued scrutiny from the disciplinary technology that includes the school inspection regime and its pseudo concomitant forms, for example, learning walks, Mocksted, data from afar etc. (e.g. Grek & Lundgren, 2015; Clapham, 2015; Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2016; Page, 2017b), my view, based on the field work, is that there is still a marked distinction between what Page describes as simulated surveillance, which might be experienced by all schools, and that experienced by those schools that are deemed not yet good by the school inspection regime. Such tools of simulation in schools that are not yet good are charged with an urgency that creates further instability and uncertainty. In this sense, partitioning of surveillance for all schools and those schools deemed not yet 'good' appears relevant and necessary. This was, of course, the foundation of Perryman's work (2006) that focussed on schools in special measures. Currently, schools that are not deemed good or outstanding garner the similarly intense panoptic gaze.

An example of what emerges in schools that are deemed not yet 'good' can be seen at Shoreside Primary Academy. The leaders showed a relentless adherence to the policy demands of the school inspection regime, government etc. which contrasts, to a certain extent, with that of Sandside Secondary

Academy. A similarly relentless process of compliance had been adopted earlier by Sandside and appeared to be understood as now, sufficiently embedded into the ways the school worked – at least for the senior leaders, Teresa and Suzanne. At Shoreside, consistent practice across the school for paperwork, classrooms and lessons was commonly understood by the school leaders interviewed as what was required by the school inspection regime. However, policy was adhered to, to such an extent that policy actors felt unable to move from one iteration of policy text to another through fear of what the school inspection regime might, or might not deem appropriate at their next visit. To protect against this, instead the excessive nature of policy activity requires a new term to better describe this type of policy enactment. I propose the term ‘hyper-enactment of policy’ to describe the excessive response to enacting policy prompted or influenced by the school inspection regime.

An example of the hyper-enactment of policy was seen in the approaches to marking. At Shoreside Primary Academy, policy actors were unwilling to relinquish the intense marking approach from earlier iteration of policy texts. Bea referred to the “more exciting lessons” for the children, or “something with the wow factor” that might have been possible if the intensive focus on realising the policy texts on marking was not taking up so much time. This was echoed by other policy actors at the school. The enacted chronology of recent policy iteration caused tension in relation to work load, to the time taken away from more ‘exciting’ lessons and activities, and also instilled a sense of “floundering”. This has implications for the educational experience of the pupils at Shoreside Primary Academy that will be addressed in subsequent sections.

This pressure to enact policy straddling both past and more recent iterations of what might be deemed 'good' by the school inspection regime at Shoreside Primary Academy aligns with features of neoliberalism. Linking to earlier discussions in this chapter (6.2), a lack of clarity from the school inspection regime and government policy texts: a type of policy opacity, might be viewed as an example of a tactic of destabilisation (e.g. Ball, 2008, Shore and Wright, 1999), or "fuzzy norms" (Courtney, 2016) that is typical of neoliberalism. This ensures that the neoliberal subject is agile, and flexible, rather than predictable and secure, and importantly, easier to govern. At Shoreside Primary Academy, this resulted in the enactment of policy taking on a more serious, energetic manner. Past and present policy iteration become concomitant with each other at Shoreside Primary Academy, ensuring that any shift in policy direction can be accommodated. In this respect, while the disciplinary gaze of the supervisory figure of Foucault's panoptic prison design is maintained by the school inspection regime, school leaders at Shoreside Primary Academy are required to turn their gaze outwards too, towards the possibility of new 'rules' for the performance they must maintain. The hyper-enactment of policy requires the subject to maintain a vigilant eye on the school inspection regime and other disciplinary technologies, to ensure they are alert to new policy iteration.

Ball describes performativity as "making a spectacle of ourselves. We become transparent, but empty. Unrecognisable to ourselves" (Ball, 2008, p.56). The transparency required to mark pupils' work meticulously and complete administrative tasks, often related to producing data, replaced for Bea (Shoreside Primary Academy), "those amazing days that the children are going to

remember". The pupil and teacher are both neoliberal subjects and as Ball states, "the point is that we make ourselves calculable, rather than memorable. Experience is nothing, productivity is everything" (Ball, 2008, p56). A theme in the research related to the curriculum constraints and demonstrates the "calculable, rather than memorable". "English and maths, English and maths, English and maths" was what Violet (Shoreside Primary Academy) told of that comes "in so many different guises". To work towards a judgment of 'good' was to produce 'good' data. The school inspection regime, or its pseudo concomitants, might be present in the school at any time. This therefore creates a turbulent environment for those schools that are under greatest scrutiny from the school inspection regime. An urgent need to respond to the possibility of policy change with some accuracy and rapidity is therefore apparent, creating the conditions for hyper-enactment of policy.

I want to stress here, however, that while hyper-enactment was acutely experienced at Shoreside Primary Academy, it was also evident amongst all but the two headteachers at Sandside Secondary Academy. While there was greater confidence and conviction about how to enact policy by these two senior members of staff, this was not enjoyed by the wider leadership team. This, I suggest, is produced by the intensified gaze from the school inspection regime and its revised practices, alongside the resulting institutional practices, such as learning walks, more regular observational practices and continued focus on the data. Juliet (Sandside Secondary Academy) amongst others described attempts to maintain and develop the school's existing mode of performance that would ensure a strong outcome at future inspections: "...hopefully the strategies we've

got in place will sustain what we've got to sustain but, I think it's going to be a bit of a wait and see". It is this 'future' association that Page is keen to stress (2017b, p.5). The relentless gaze remains present and here, Sylvia (Sandside Secondary Academy) refers to the impact on leadership that inspection had created, beyond the 'good' judgment:

...has it changed directly because of Ofsted or has it changed directly because of the leadership of the school with regards to Ofsted?... There is more fear in the leadership in place now, so you could argue that my leadership style has changed because of a fear of the leadership... I suppose, what I had to learn then, was to put a poker face on in front of the staff. I don't think my style has changed directly because of Ofsted. I think my style has perhaps changed more because of the leadership that's come in and the accountability for the leadership.

A residual then, long after inspection, of fear serves to perpetuate the climate for policy enactment. Reference to "jumping through hoops" (Sylvia, Sandside Secondary Academy) continued due to the requirement to be consistent across the school. In 5.7. the impact of the disciplinary gaze created a feeling of anxiety. Sylvia concurring, "A lot of worry, an awful lot of worry". Imogen, also from Sandside Secondary Academy aligned by confessing, "...it gives a sense of panic". While hyper-enactment of policy might be most easily observed then in my research in an RI school (Shoreside Primary Academy), it also occurs in the school that has been subsequently deemed good (Sandside Secondary Academy).

In the literature review, adjusting practice for the benefit of the school inspection regime or its simulated 'other', and therefore, to produce "unnatural" lessons for performative purposes, clearly became problematic in classrooms where teaching practices were adjusted or enhanced, less for the benefit of those being taught but rather for the school inspection regime. In this respect, we might expect

that performative practice involves heightened actions, a demonstrated showing, or other adjustment deployed by the policy actor. This can be understood by considering the ways school leaders hyper-enact policy resulting in the embodiment of the school inspection regime in their daily practice. While Shoreside Primary Academy demonstrated a more compliant approach to policy enactment that suggests a considerable loss of autonomy for almost all of the policy actors interviewed, similar views were offered by staff at Sandside Secondary Academy too, with the exception of the two headteachers.

The literature also provided examples of how autonomy had been conceptualised. Cribb and Gewirtz's three dimensions of autonomy-control (2007) have relevance when applied to the policy actors at Sandside Secondary Academy. At Shoreside Primary Academy however, the notion of "to whose autonomy is in question?" (ibid. p.204-5) appears to look out-moded and irrelevant for a school that has been under the disciplinary gaze so relentlessly. Autonomy at Shoreside Primary Academy appears to have been eroded long ago. This aligns more with Higham and Earley's (2013) typological description of 'constrained schools' similarly having little opportunity for autonomy. These schools were "neutral on school autonomy, but critical of the aims and constraints of policy and negative about the potential impacts" (ibid. p.712). Perryman's (2006) observation concurs in that schools in 'special measures' have no room to do their own thing. The hyper-enactment of policy demands that policy actors are required to be 'automaton-like' in the ways that they must be able to receive new 'code' or policy directive to enact for the purpose of the school inspection

regime. In this way, automaton replaces autonomy. This will be pursued in the final section of this chapter.

Crucially, I argue here for a distinction to be made between enactment and hyper-enactment of policy. The hyper-enactment of policy being an excessive response to enacting policy prompted or influenced by the school inspection regime or its internal and external concomitants. While Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) lead us towards a theorising of policy enactment, I am suggesting that an external factor – the school inspection regime, pervades the two schools in my research to such an extent that this new term, hyper-enactment, is required. This can work alongside and against the dimensions offered by Ball, Maguire and Braun. In the next section, I will examine the ways in which both the intense gaze from the school inspection regime and its concomitants produces a strong requirement to reproduce consistency within hyper-enactment of policy.

#### 6.4. Education in the age of neoliberal reproduction

In the first two sections of this chapter, I have considered the ways in which the school inspection regime has forced a way of working for schools. This involves an increased panoptic disciplinary technology – internal surveillance and scrutiny of data from afar, alongside fear of the regime itself. I have demonstrated the ways in which this produces a hyper-enactment of policy – an excessive response to enacting policy, brought about by the intensification of the gaze on policy actors from the school inspection regime and its concomitants. In this section, I will examine the requirement to reproduce consistency within and across departments and schools as part of neoliberal education policy and the extent to

which this disregards context. I will introduce the central issues relating to context, restate Benjamin's ideas, and then demonstrate how the data can be more usefully understood in relation to the theory.

Most of the policy actors shared a view that the school inspection regime lacked understanding of the contextual challenges facing their schools. Some believed that the preferred ways to enact policy for the school inspection regime threatened the best interests of the school pupils within the social context of a coastal area of deprivation. At Shoreside Primary Academy, however, policy actors were concerned as to whether the school inspection regime was sufficiently aware of the contextual factors the school faced. This was particularly concerning to policy actors because of the recent centralising of data in their school's mission, developed in preparation for future school inspection visits and the increased trend towards data accountability. If the real problems lie perhaps more deeply in social context, the school inspection regime had already demonstrated that without good or better data, then the school would remain RI. The theoretical ideas of Benjamin are useful to employ when considering the nature of context in inspection.

In the theoretical chapter I indicated how Benjamin's essay, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' (2008) identified a distinction between the display value and cultic value of a work of art. Cultic value was highly regarded by Benjamin, as this was the placement of the artefact in the cultural context for which it was designed, i.e. the Wagnerian opera at Bayreuth, or the ceiling frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. In the age of mechanical reproduction to which

Benjamin refers, there emerges an issue in creating multiple recordings of the Wagnerian opera to be played beyond the context for which it was intended, or indeed reproductions of the ceiling frescoes for what Benjamin describes as display value. Display displaces context and this results in “a fading of aura” (ibid. p.9) and genuineness is lost. From my research, I want to align Benjamin’s work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction to education in an age of neoliberal reproduction.

Display value, rather than cultic value is emphasized by this decontextualized approach to school improvement. For the school inspection regime, cultic value i.e. leading schools in relation to their context, becomes replaced by display value i.e. showing consistency or reproducibility. Display here, lies closely to the notion of fabrication, discussed earlier. The relationship between display and fabrication is useful here. Neoliberal education policy, the school inspection regime and the discourse of educational achievement and disadvantage demand that schools, regardless of context, reproduce high standards in relation to those elements that are to be tested.

Reproducibility, regardless of context, creates inauthentic responses in the curriculum decisions that leaders are required to make in order to hyper-enact policy demands. For Benjamin, by setting art “free from its cultic roots” (2008, p.15), “the light of its autonomy” (ibid.) is extinguished forever. If education is decontextualised here, then an application of Benjamin’s work might be to view educational reproduction as devoid of core, spirit or purpose. If we assume, for a moment, this to be so, then the implication of this, Benjamin tells us, is that rather

than immersion from the audience – here, pupils - it is more likely to result in distraction. “Distraction and immersion constitute opposites” (ibid. p. 33) and so if we are not immersed, then we are not contemplating. I suggest that this parallel has significance here.

In the research, there were examples of the social context – a coastal area of deprivation - not being well served by the school inspection regime when making a judgment. A particular example can be seen in the misrepresentation of the curriculum producing a sameness, or monotonous provision - English and maths at the expense of other curriculum subjects. Another example can be illustrated in the focus on ensuring consistency, or reproducibility to use Benjamin’s term, that made for safe, less exciting lessons etc. The data shows that education – the process of learning and teaching - becomes, like cultural artefacts, similarly less genuine, disregarding of context and the aura fades similarly. Harm may be done to pupils who need the most, not least innovative curriculum, lessons, resources etc. Rather than promoting engagement or immersion, this is likely to produce distractedness. Similarly, school leaders who require stability, trust and space if they are to manage to address the challenges that highly disadvantaged contexts provides, are left concerned and frustrated.

Violet (Shoreside Primary Academy) told of the lack of support from home sometimes being problematic by comparison to more affluent peers. “...their parents might hear them read but they don’t know if they are reading it right because they can’t read it themselves”. Violet’s perception was that for some children “everything they’re getting is in the six hours at school”. While Violet

spoke of the challenges involved in addressing the specific features of the school's context, it was senior leaders at Sandside Secondary Academy who were more likely to be critical of the tensions that emerged between context and policy. This was demonstrated by Teresa: "It's absolutely appalling what they're doing with the curriculum now... It's a one size fits all model which doesn't take into account any differentiation". Some of the policy actors questioned, in some case vehemently, the demands of the school inspection regime itself. This was largely due to the lack of understanding shown by the inspection team to the specific context of the school. This can be observed in Sylvia's remark: "I don't necessarily have a problem with accountability or jumping through the hoops if you then trusted the outcome at the end".

Senior leaders at Sandside Secondary Academy, having now become 'good', were the most sceptical. There was a strong sense that both recent inspections had been on the 'cusp' between a grade 3 and a grade 2. The radically different outcomes from this narrow divide – one which was "horrible", and one, by contrast, where the senior leaders asked for the inspectors to be less positive as it was interrupting the development of their own teachers, suggested to policy actors that there was a lack of trust in the school inspection regime. Also, in the second inspection, a tour of the area was in-built. Context was, in part, recognised.

To return to Violet's concern at Shoreside Primary Academy that some of the parents cannot tell whether a child is reading their book correctly or not, cited earlier, might be to question the appropriateness of placing schools in areas of

severe social deprivation, coastal or otherwise, into a 'requires improvement' status more than once. In Chapter 5, Violet provided an example of a child with the EHCP who struggled with maths and English but enjoyed the other subjects that had been pushed aside. This serves as a useful example in relation to the potential harm done to children. Wrigley (2013, p.37) observed that in order to turn around a school, some school leaders found that they were required to literally turn around towards the community and context. In Seatown however, I argue that school leaders were required to turn away from their context and instead place their gaze on the school inspection regime, government etc. to anticipate the newest policy texts, detect changes of direction amongst policy makers, before the policy makers themselves are in agreement. Aura, or genuineness is second place to the compliant hyper-enactment of policy for the school inspection regime. It's effect, might be to promote distractedness in the pupils most in need of seeking immersion.

In the final section of this chapter I will indicate moments in the field work that offered a glimpse of hope and optimism. This section will examine the extent to which policy actors worked with and against the demand for compliance.

#### 6.5. Micropolitical acts of resistance: the automaton continuum

In the earlier sections of this chapter, I have outlined an argument for retaining the panoptic metaphor. I have suggested that this produces a hyper-enactment of policy and this in turn leads to a decontextualised policy response. In this section, I want to discuss what emerged in the data in the smaller spaces, the micropolitical spaces within the hyper-enactment of policy. In Chapter 3, I defined

micropolitics as “the tensions apparent within professional, and sometimes personal relations within the organisation, influenced by power” drawing on my Institution Focused Study (2014, p.9). Micropolitics opens up the spaces between compliance and resistance. Within this study, the tensions generally emerge between leaders and the school inspection regime. There is some micropolitical activity also between leaders themselves, however. Discussion beyond the disciplinary technologies that seek to dominate, which were examined in earlier sections of this chapter will be prevalent here. I will focus on Foucault’s work on self-disciplinary technologies i.e. the technologies of the self and the how(s) of power, to further interrogate the data.

Perryman et al (2017a) examine the practices by which teachers work on themselves and others “and make themselves subjects of policy” (p. 746). Of relevance, are the demands made on teachers as policy subjects within the school. The internal ‘quality’ mechanisms such as observations and learning walks “become normalized and underpin the process of improvement” (ibid. p. 747). The data in my research shows examples of normalization of such mechanisms:

...and you’re working very hard with intervention, strategies...and they’re training you on this is what they’re looking for. ‘Here’s the Ofsted criteria’. ‘This is what Ofsted are saying’... and then we have our improvement plan which is continually referred to... I think it’s just the natural process. (Phil, Sandside Secondary Academy).

Juliet, also at Sandside, captures this normalization too: “I think again, we’re quite lucky where we try to adopt as much of an open-door policy as possible. I mean, I always teach with my door open. If anyone wants to come in...it makes both you and the kids feel at ease”. Later, Juliet went on to explain how the internal

mechanisms were “quite overpowering and... could make you almost feel like you’re in that (*Ofsted*) zone”. The leadership team at Sandside Secondary Academy listened to feedback from staff that said “it did still feel like you were continuously being judged” and recognised that “you don’t need that piling pressure from top”.

For Foucault, the technologies of the self formed an interest in his later works. He describes this interest as permitting,

...individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (1988, p. 18).

Importantly here, this territory of self-focus is entwined to technologies of production, signs, and power. Leaders in the case study schools are bound into these technologies through their subjectivities, and the technologies of the self offer a process of contemplation to take care of yourself (*ibid.* p. 22). This may manifest itself by acting “irresponsibly” (Ball and Olmedo, 2013) in order to act responsibly, thus producing resistance.

Within the research discussed in Chapter 5, there are examples of tensions emerging within the policy actors. These are often manifest as being indicative of domination i.e. policy actor as automaton, but sometimes, examples of freedom, or at least a sense of moving towards a more autonomous response. Micropolitical responses have been collated to indicate the range of responses to inform an understanding of compliance (automaton) – resistance (autonomous). Foucault reminds us that the word ‘auto’ means the same, “but it also conveys the notion of identity” (Foucault, 1988, p. 25). In demonstrating the responses of

neoliberal dominance in the forms of an automaton continuum, the positioning of policy actors is indicated. This suggests elements of a professional identity or way of being within the role of policy actor. The automaton shows unemotional, mechanical like responses to policy enactment or hyper-enactment. As in Ball and Olmedo's study, some policy actors demonstrate capacity to not comply fully with the school inspection regime and other modes of capillary functioning of power. Policy actors resist neoliberalism and that is to show responsibility. This evidences some commitment to resistance and a self-directed move towards a form of freedom.

While policy actors are not necessarily bound into one position within the continuum, the interview transcripts as whole documents, align with the contributions articulated below. This is to say that the transcripts for Julie, Teresa and Suzanne tend to articulate, regardless of the questions asked, a stronger sense of autonomy and fearlessness from the school inspection regime. I have included Deborah here too. Similarly, Wayne, Jason, Paul and Robert showed an adherence to the automaton like responses to policy demands throughout their interviews. The data has been analysed to form a table presented as a continuum relating to compliance and autonomy. This demonstrates the responses that emerged from the policy actors regarding the extent to which they were located within the hyper-enactment of policy. The following table shows some resistance, albeit within a tightly held framework under the gaze of the school inspection regime. Unsurprisingly, the more compliant school leaders are predominantly from Shoreside Primary Academy – the school that is still under an intensified gaze from the school inspection regime. The notion of the

automaton continuum is used here to show the distinction between those school leaders who show compliance with little critique of the school inspection regime against those who strive towards greater autonomy through resistance.

**Table 4: The automaton continuum: the micropolitics of resistance**

Compliance	Struggle - Seeing the 'cracked'	Struggle - Spaces of doubt	Acts of resistance
I try not to think about it... You don't know what life would be like without Ofsted. (Wayne, Shoreside)	But we are doing it (marking) for every single thing in our book. And that is just painstaking, it is. (Phil, Shoreside)	I've jumped enough hoops now... (Kath, Shoreside)	I am actually leaving at Christmas... I can't do it while I'm here because the demand is so great...(Juliet, Sandside)
...it's stressful in the fact that someone's going to come in... and inspect, but really it isn't, because it's what you do every day. (Paul, Sandside)	We don't have the freedom to explore and try new things ... But people don't take risks. They play very safe... (Steve, Sandside)	I... I... wouldn't be convinced that they understand quite what the area is and quite how much that impacts (Violet, Shoreside)	It makes you feel bloody minded and you think, right, sod it, we're gonna do what's right for the kids... (Teresa, Sandside)
Whatever it was it needed to look the same... consistency... (Jason, Shoreside)	... it feels like you're doing a lot of work that possibly you could be putting into something else...(Bea, Shoreside)	And that could be okay if you trusted the inspection system itself...(Sylvia, Sandside)	We'll take the hit and I'll produce two sets of data that says actually this is what happened when we let them have that opportunity. (Suzanne, Sandside)
If you take away the person monitoring and evaluating, where do we get to (Robert, Sandside)	There is such a lack of clarity so things like...funding...I'm gonna go on a rant now... (Louise, Sandside)	I don't genuinely see it (Ofsted) as making improvement in any school... Alistair (Sandside)	<i>Deborah spoke of the ways that she had placed her community – children and parents, first. This resulted in her post being untenable. (Shoreside)</i>

The table above is designed to demonstrate how the automaton continuum exists in the data between compliance; starting to question, or seeing the cracked; providing critique and opening up spaces of doubt; and finally to articulating acts of resistance. While many of the policy actors at both sites demonstrated

compliance with the school inspection regime, there were a number of policy actors at both schools whose interviews illuminated that they were not fully compliant. These articulations are more than “discontents, murmurings, indifference, disengagements” (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p.149). In many cases the utterance came from an emotionally turbulent place. Some policy actors at Sandside Secondary Academy, particularly the senior leaders found the space, to undertake micropolitical acts of resistance. This form of policy enactment was to protect pupils and staff from policy that was viewed as potentially unhelpful to staff or even harmful for the pupils given the contextual factors impacting the school. This is to resist hyper-enactment of policy.

The space where responses to policy may be evasive (Perryman, Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2011) was identified, for example, by Suzanne at Sandside Secondary Academy. Her decision to not follow the policy text that allowed only the first entry at GCSE to count (Gov.uk, news story, 30 September 2013) evaded the new regulations to benefit her pupils. This was not in an attempt for the school to get an advantage as Suzanne was aware that it might be costly. Instead, she was prepared to “take the hit” on the school’s results because “there was absolutely no doubt that the biggest losers were our low ability students on entry”. The conflict of purpose for school leaders in their decision making was identified in this example. These acts of resistance were most likely to be found amongst senior policy actors at Sandside Secondary Academy, for example, Suzanne and Teresa. Juliet too, showed that she was prepared to walk away from her job rather than suffer under the school inspection regime and its impact: “This is not a true

reflection”<sup>8</sup>. This last section offers some insight into what Ball, Maguire & Braun (2012) identify as a difficult to research area.

In this chapter, I have suggested that there is a compelling case to maintain the panoptic metaphor. The capillary functioning of power that Foucault describes seems more, not less in evidence in the internal and external mechanisms that schools are subject to. This produces a hyper-enactment of policy that exacerbates policy activity. Context becomes disregarded in an era of neoliberal education. Display displaces context. This produces policy actors who are required to be automaton-like. Some policy actors are able to respond in ways that enables them to move towards greater autonomy. In the final chapter I will offer a conclusion to this piece of research.

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<sup>8</sup> There are school leaders from Sandside Secondary Academy but these are male school leaders. By contrast, there are school leaders from Shoreside that I have located in ‘spaces of doubt’ and these are women. This study has not set out to consider gender, but the observation is noted and of interest.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### 7.1. Introduction

In drawing together this study in the final pages, it is useful to consider what has been undertaken here. This research was developed from professional concerns that related to my own experience of the inspection regime within a college setting. Building from my Institution Focused Study that examined the impact of the inspection regime on leadership within a college that I had been employed in as a middle leader, my doctoral research has set out to explore similar issues. During my time at the college, my concerns were particularly focused on the possibility that leaders, as a result of the carefully orchestrated leadership 'take-over', made decisions that were detrimental to particular groups of students, particularly those who were recruited as part of the college's previously 'inclusive' approach i.e. those students from lower socio-economic status backgrounds, specific ethnic groups etc. In my doctoral thesis, I have focused on schools, both primary and secondary. I have examined how intense scrutiny from the school inspection regime influences the ways school leaders enact policy within an area of coastal deprivation.

Earlier modules within the professional doctorate allowed an opportunity to develop interests in particular types of theoretical texts that have here been employed for this thesis: the writings of Foucault and Benjamin have sustained the overarching theoretical framework for this study. Foucault has already been used extensively by other researchers seeking to explain specific phenomena within recent educational settings, and particularly those searching for further understanding of neoliberalism within education. Ball and Perryman have

provided central contributions to a Foucauldian analysis of issues such as school inspection, neoliberalism and performativity. Contributions by Paige, Courtney and Clapham have also offered further insight into these issues. However, the work of Benjamin has been overlooked by educational researchers, until now. 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' has offered a valuable parallel to neoliberal schooling, influenced largely by the school inspection regime and government policy demands. From my own tacit knowledge, the notion of the loss of aura perfectly described what I had experienced as a middle leader i.e. the standardised, the consistent and the bland responses that are borne out of a struggle to meet the demands of the school inspection regime within an age of neoliberalism. I feel this too at the university where I currently work when required to respond in an aura-less way to the "You said, we did" section of each module on the virtual learning environment, for example. Benjamin has provided a useful theoretical frame to work alongside Foucault. In the next section I will demonstrate the main areas that this study is able to contribute to professional knowledge and the implications of this.

### 7.2. Contribution to professional knowledge and the implications of this

By drawing on discipline as a conceptual tool, I have interpreted the data and proposed the term *hyper-enactment of policy* to explain the enactment by school leaders to a chronology of policy iteration or other overly industrious responses to policy texts. This emerged in my research when school leaders at Shoreside Primary Academy demonstrated an unease with the demands made by the school inspection regime. Typically, this was from conflicting voices contributing to what was or was not required to satisfy the school inspection regime, and was

particularly noticeable in policies relating to marking. Both schools understood the conflicting messages received, but the school that had been deemed 'good', was more confident in questioning and challenging the school inspection regime and found some degree of autonomy in their response to policies on marking. This said, this was more notable amongst the senior leaders of Sandside Secondary Academy, and less observed amongst the middle leaders. I have contributed to the discussion regarding post-fabrication and post-panopticism and argue that the disciplinary gaze on schools that are not yet deemed good by the school inspection regime show the impact of panoptic performativity, rather than post-panopticism. Post-panopticism might be more usefully understood for schools that are not in the same position as Shoreside Primary Academy i.e. under the relentless gaze from the school inspection regime. The hyper-enactment of policy is therefore a product, or effect, of panoptic performativity.

I have applied Benjamin's work on the loss of aura to education in a neoliberal age. That school leaders are required to reproduce consistent standards in order to escape the school inspection regime has resulted in some lack of innovation and creativity in the schools, reducing the curriculum breadth too. The two schools within the coastal area of deprivation examined in this research indicate frustration and resentment about the constant need to be consistent, sometimes at the expense of a varied curriculum. I argue that Benjamin has offered a useful way to understand the emptiness felt by school leaders in the schools discussed here, as display value replaces cultic value, in education as in art. Education becomes aura-less. School leaders find themselves in a hyper-enactment of policy that lacks genuineness. Display displaces context.

I have also attempted to open up the difficult to research space that is located here as micropolitical acts of resistance. This is derived from application of Foucault's work on the technologies of the self. I have proposed the automaton continuum that demonstrates stages between compliance and resistance. First, compliance was found in both schools amongst school leaders who appeared resigned to the everyday experience of existence under the school inspection regime. Using the term 'cracked' from Ball and Olmedo (2013) served as a useful second stage to locate those school leaders in my research that started to question concerns about the demands being made by the school inspection regime. The third stage was for those voices in the research that offered criticism towards the school inspection regime, raising spaces of doubt. The fourth and final stage of the automaton continuum was for the location of those school leaders who demonstrated micropolitical acts of resistance. At Sandside Secondary Academy there were examples of policy enactment that were to protect pupils or staff against policy that was deemed by the school leaders as potentially unhelpful or even harmful. This school is part of a large MAT, and as acknowledged in the first chapter, may be constrained by the 80/20 principle identified by Hill et al (2012) regarding the extent to which a school may have scope to be flexible, and importantly here, responsive to local context. This said, it was at Sandside that the leaders spoke with some sense of resistance to protect *their* pupils. I have suggested that the automaton continuum demonstrates the stages from compliance to resistance.

This study has considered a coastal area of deprivation as a contextual phenomenon and this has been much omitted in education literature. While there

are some coastal towns that flourish all year round, there are many less favoured coastal towns in which the population suffer from factors such as poverty, high unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, poor health etc. The case study here provides a good example of the devastating implications such factors have on schools. Ovenden-Hope and Passy's report (2015) indicated a range of factors across a range of coastal secondary academies as identified in Chapter 1. The data, however, in my research, suggests that rather than changing the school culture to bring about school improvement, as advocated in Ovenden-Hope and Passy's report, there is a requirement to address the local context, not turn away from it. This can be evidenced in school leaders' concern for their context as they responded to the many and varied external and internal requirements to produce the good or better school. Some of the policy actors demonstrated that this pressure was not always conducive to serving the school and its wider community, for example, "English and Maths... in so many different guises" (Violet, Shoreside Primary Academy) to address the "main battle" of SATS and league tables. Curriculum priorities alongside marking and administration, removed time for "those extra wow lessons" that Bea, also at Shoreside, identified. Remembering Violet's urgency when she said that "everything they're getting is in their six hours at school", the role of school leaders in the hyper-enactment of policy has, concerningly, the capacity to disrupt the school experience for the most vulnerable in society. This, combined with the impact of difficulty in recruitment of teaching staff and school leaders, and contextual factors that are sometimes concomitant with what Louise at Sandside Secondary Academy described as "that end of the train line mentality... it's just that complete lack of aspiration...", is a justification for a sensitive response to

the specific challenges coastal areas of deprivation are facing. These coastal towns need a supportive approach from the school inspection regime.

I have considered the significance of the *good/not good binary* employed by the school inspection regime, and noted that the decision to place a school on this cusp into 'requires improvement' can, in certain contexts of deprivation, cause potential harm. I have argued that the impact of this within an area of coastal deprivation is unhelpful as school leaders are required to turn away from their context in order to address the school inspection regime.

### 7.3. Limitations of the research

This doctoral research needed to be manageable and is therefore a small-scale project. I have looked at policy enactment from an overarching view within only two schools within the same specific context: a coastal area of deprivation. There would be value in replicating this study in further schools in coastal areas of deprivation to gain further insight into the issues. There would also be scope to consider a specific national level policy, or small group of policies across several coastal areas of deprivation. Within the framework for my doctoral research these options did not appear to be plausible, but could form future study areas.

I acknowledge that there are certain limitations within the study itself. The conceptualisation of leaders within the study has been an inclusive one. I have focused on the leaders themselves as policy actors without significance being placed on the particular roles undertaken. This leads perhaps, to a sense of leaders as a homogenous group. For this research, I have been particularly

concerned to allow the policy actors to discuss leadership, policy enactment, the school inspection regime etc. and this allows the heterogeneity to emerge through the data. Future study could allow a reworking of the data to enable alignment and deviation to be shown within, and across, specific leadership roles and responsibilities. Alternatively, policy enactment could have been examined by looking in detail at the possibilities and constraints that the MAT provides to each school.

The data was collected through a process of seventeen interviews. During the semi-structured interviews, I undertook my role with care and responsibility. Yet, I am aware that there is a double hermeneutic process at play (Giddens cited in Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2011, 540). The researcher is engaged in a process of interpretation from a policy actor interpreting their experiences. While I have aimed to analyse the data with integrity, I recognise that I have analysed perceptions from one moment, at a particular point in time, for the policy actor. I have analysed responses that are dependent on the time of the day, determined by the school pressures throughout the academic year, or other internal and external factors that may impact on the policy actor in a particular way. I have placed little emphasis on gender and yet acknowledge on page 163 that there is some alignment with male voices tending to be placed at the automaton end of the continuum and the female voices towards the autonomy end. This would be worthy of further exploration. I have made no attempts to triangulate the method used in terms of using additional research instruments, yet I acknowledge that schools are rich sources of data that extend far beyond the accounts of leaders being interviewed.

Similarly, the data and its analysis in this study offers one specific approach that I, the researcher, have taken. There are other ways to interpret this data and I acknowledge that working alone in this way, is not without its limitations. I acknowledge that in the process of coding, re-coding and synthesising the data, I am part of the social world that is being studied, not situated beyond (Alvesson, 2002, p. 171), and this requires a reflexive approach. I have been fortunate, however, to employ theory to understand and seek explanations for the data analysis. Drawing from both Foucault and Benjamin has enabled alternative interpretations to emerge in Chapter 6. This does not, however, compensate for the factors impeded by the “impossibility of detachment” (Blaikie, 2010, p.54).

#### 7.4. Relevance and significance of the research

This research was important to undertake in relation to literature because policy enactment as an academic territory in education is gathering momentum through the seminal work undertaken by Ball, Maguire and Braun. Looking at the micropolitics of resistance is a particularly underwritten area and not without its difficulties in the field (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012). The debate between Perryman (2006, 2009, 2017a, 2017b), Page (2016), Courtney (2016) and Clapham (2015) is interesting and relevant and therefore further insight from my research may be of interest in this respect.

Initially, my proposal for this research developed from my own concerns and frustrations with the work that I was required to undertake in my middle leader role within a college. I needed to gain some insight into the emptiness I felt when

leading staff development about consistency to achieve a standardised approach for the inspection regime. I felt that the requirements lacked genuineness in an attempt to address the inspection regime – staff were involved, myself included, in a pseudo hyper-enactment of policy. Additionally, I had deeper concerns relating to inequalities that appeared to be concomitant with this process. This study, while focused on schools, has attempted to provide insight into these two aspects of my earlier professional practice. This said, I now have a teaching role within higher education and so the arena for professional practice has changed. I can be mindful of the practices that occurred in my college role and within the research sites and alert to similar practices emerging within the academy. More importantly however, has been the scope within my teaching of modules on the BA (Hons.) Education degree such as Education and Society and Critical Approaches: Inequality and Education, and MA Education Leadership modules that have allowed me to examine the ways in which education reproduces inequalities.

#### 7.5. Dissemination

This doctoral research will be disseminated at conferences through presentations and also through journal articles. A summary report will be prepared for the main professional teaching and leadership unions. The ideas will also be shared within my teaching at the University of Brighton. Having given a keynote at the postgraduate conference at the Mauritius Institute of Education in April 2018, I will be undertaking a collaborative research project with a Mauritian academic on coastal areas of deprivation in Mauritius. (46,773 words)

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## Appendix 1: Research information and ethics sheet, July 2015



### **Educational leadership and the school inspection regime: an examination of impact in a coastal area of deprivation.**

Dear Colleague

This sheet summarises the research I am undertaking, your potential participation and the research ethics and commitment to confidentiality. Thank you for taking the time to read it.

**Research Project:** The project considers how school leaders respond to school inspection. Recurring themes in recent government speeches are of improving schools and addressing social inequality - a rigorous school inspection process is seen to be central to achieving this. In a pre-election speech the Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, locates closing "the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers" as one of the main priorities for the future (March 2015). I am interested in the ways school leaders respond to their local contexts while meeting the demands from Ofsted. The research site is in a coastal area of deprivation.

**Research Strategy:** This is case study research that considers schooling within one specific and unidentified town. A series of semi-structured interviews will take place at the principle research site - a secondary school, initially with the school's head teacher and subsequently with a range of other members of staff with a leadership role. Transcripts will be made from the interviews and partial transcripts will be shared with the participant. It is intended that a local primary school will be involved in the study too. Field notes will be kept while visiting the schools. I will undertake this research myself. I am currently a doctoral student at the Institute of Education UCL and grew up in this town and attended its local schools.

**Confidentiality:** The project will follow the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association. This section summarises several key points. Your participation in the research is voluntary. I would like to record the interviews with you and you are free to decline this or to turn off the recorder at any point. All recordings will be securely stored on a password-protected device and these will be destroyed after all of the data has been analysed. The access to raw data will be restricted to the researcher. You and the school will be assigned pseudonyms for the duration of the study. During the analysis and writing of the report, your name will not be included. While I may use quotes from your interview, they will never be attributed to you and will be used in a manner that protects your confidentiality.

**Outputs:** The research will be used to produce a doctoral level thesis. It is likely that some of the writing will be presented at academic conferences and/or published. Please refer to the section above regarding confidentiality.

**Contact:** If you have any queries please contact Aly Colman on xxxxxxxxxxxx or at: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

## **Appendix 2: Interview schedule**

### **Interview schedule for fieldwork**

**Aly Colman, June 2015**

#### **A. First impressions of the school context**

1. What were your first impressions of the town within which this school is situated, before you started in your role here? Can you describe the specific social context?
2. What were your first impressions of the school when you first visited it, before you started in your role?
3. How would you describe the ethos of the school when you first arrived?
4. I would like you to consider the culture of learning within the organisation including all factors that underpin teaching, learning and assessment. Describe your first impressions.
5. Can you describe initial working relationships with your team members/colleagues?
6. What were the key issues you wanted to address or tackle, and what aspects did you want to protect or maintain?

#### **B Your experience of education**

7. What were the aspects of your career prior to your role at this school that were particularly relevant to the demands you were facing on appointment here? Had you worked in a similar social context before?
8. How would you have defined your approaches to leadership at this point?
9. In terms of your engagement with education policy prior to this post, what were some of the key aspects that you most actively sought to engage with, or indeed, even resist?
10. Can you say something of your experience of Ofsted before your appointment here?

#### **C Leadership approach**

11. Please describe the overarching plan you had for the school and how you undertook this?
12. What were the aspects that proved particularly challenging to you?
13. Were there aspects of education policy that you particularly embraced, and that perhaps supported you in your leadership?
14. Please also identify any aspects that were more difficult to achieve, or that caused tensions between what you wanted to do and what you felt you needed to do because of education policy?

#### **D Ofsted - general perceptions**

15. Over the last few years the school has been under some scrutiny from Ofsted. Can you tell me something about this journey?
16. In what ways, if any, did your leadership approach change as a result of this?
17. In what ways, if any, did the members of staff change as a result of the scrutiny from Ofsted? This might be collectively, in terms of morale etc. or on a smaller scale e.g. individuals etc. Please can you give examples.
18. In what ways, if any, has the involvement of Ofsted improved the school? By this I mean, if Ofsted hadn't visited and you had been able to undertake your role

in the ways you wanted to - without considering Ofsted's demands, what would the school look like - and how is it different because of their recent presence?

19. What are the ways that you find synchronicity with Ofsted, and what are the ways there is a tension?

20. Has Ofsted impacted on your day-to-day relationships with colleagues before, during and after the visits?

21. At this point in the journey of the school, do you view Ofsted as having a key role in its improvement journey?

### **E Ofsted - specific examples of a school preparing for Ofsted**

22. Can you describe the preparation for an inspection visit? How did you lead the school to ensure that the most positive report would be achieved? You might want to describe the macro level approach e.g. preparing across the year, at all times and a micro level approach e.g. specific requests made to staff/pupils prior to the visit.

23. Are you able to describe any examples of tensions that have emerged between addressing the demands of education policy or for Ofsted and that of serving the community? What is the effect of this e.g. for you/ school/ community?

24. Finally, after an Ofsted visit, what have been the longer lasting changes to the school? Please give examples.

### Appendix 3: Data analysis coding

Data analysis coding	Overarching themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledging context (Ofsted, school leaders);</li> <li>• Decontextualised;</li> <li>• Impact on leaders, students, home etc.</li> </ul>	Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of data;</li> <li>• Lack of clarity in policy</li> </ul>	Surveillance of marks and marking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency/standardisation of policy/practice;</li> <li>• Arising tensions</li> </ul>	Consistency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on English and Maths</li> <li>• Lack of time for other subjects, 'wow' days etc.</li> </ul>	Curriculum constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership changes (arising from Ofsted);</li> <li>• Tensions and impact of leadership changes</li> </ul>	Instability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is what we do anyway/always;</li> <li>• Doing things differently because of Ofsted;</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> </ul>	Performativity, pressure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulating concerns about Ofsted;</li> <li>• Articulating concerns about policies;</li> <li>• Resisting Ofsted;</li> <li>• Resisting policy</li> </ul>	Struggle, resistance

#### Appendix 4: Transcript and coding (colour coding in text)

Steve, Sandside, Interview 7.

S (CONTEXT: SCHOOL) Yes so, preconceived ideas from when I was at school at the local secondary school was, this was quite a rough and ready school. There were issues where my school and the previous school... had, there were fights that broke out and that actually (*mentions neighbouring school*) was the school to go to and my parents sent me and I was I suppose, cherry picked to come here. I knew the current head through teaching her daughter and (CONTEXT: OFSTED) I'd heard a lot of things about the school - that the school had come a long way, erm, and it was working towards 'good' in Ofsted which it has never had and so actually I wanted to be part of that journey and basically support the school and go in the right direction. Erm, I had been teaching six years at that point erm, and was relatively stagnant in my previous post in the school and I'd reached head of house - position there and there wasn't anything else sort of to go for so this was a move sideways slash up. (CONTEXT: IMPACT?) Erm, and yeah, the impact I have here is pretty impressive, I think.

Aly How long have you been here?

S So I've been here now for four years and so yeah, I've been teaching for ten all together. Yes, so this is my fourth year here now.

Aly Ok, so can you say something about your experience of the journey since you've been here because I realise there has been Ofsted inspections in the time that you have been here.

S So, yes, certainly I've been involved in two Ofsted inspections, I've been involved in meetings as well as a senior middle leader. (CONSISTENCY: OFSTED/CONTEXT) Er, the school has moved a massive amount with regards to being consistent I think. And actually something I'd say compared to the other schools that I've worked in, erm, actually consistency here is so high and actually the little things are tackled really well and so the uniform and actually embeds the pastoral detention system. The pastoral care here is I think second to none and actually that is really engrained and I think all the teachers work hard and I think to understand the students' backgrounds which you don't necessarily have in other schools and academies because Pupil Premium being 56, 55% here, it is a difficult and challenging area, that I think yeah, generally the school comes together. (CONTEXT: SCHOOL/IMPACT ON LEADERS) There are elements where because I think it is a coastal town, I think it is hard to get good retention of staff and actually employment because your pool of people you can employ because your at the end of the road and the train track so to speak, it does effect but generally I think everyone is here for the welfare of the students.

Aly Does there, has there been things that you've had to do because of Ofsted and its involvement that you wouldn't perhaps have necessarily done?

S (ARTICULATING CONCERNS ABOUT OFSTED) I mean yeah, so there was, so in one of our Ofsted reports it was commented that we had an issue with smoking because as we're on a road and the general public walk down between the two elements of the school and they saw someone that was not uniformed but smoking as they walked past and in that Ofsted said, so we had to completely review the smoking policy with regards to students and sixth formers and it was just an unfair and unrealistic judgement and actually the general public are free to walk down the road and they made a judgement on the school from that element and I remember being in the meeting and them saying 'you have a smoking problem here' and me and the other achievement director,

because of the pastoral element were like 'no, I don't know what you're talking about' and it was because of the general public that walk between two elements of the school so that was one of the things and then also students - there were questions about whether the students were being unsafe. Erm and this was, they just so happened to find a student that was sitting on the stairs and they said 'oh, the corridors are very busy'. It is a very compact school and so they just waited but they twisted that to make out that the student felt unsafe in the academy. And that wasn't fair or justified as well. So we once again looked at how we can - we have separate staggered lunches here, I think we do everything we can to make our students feel safe and comfortable in this environment. We have three canteens and all of those things go to dispersing the amount of students. You can't change corridor size. You know, it's just not feasible.

Aly - do you know why they might have chosen those examples? (S: Erm!) Cos you almost described them waiting?

S (ARTICULATING CONCERNS ABOUT OFSTED) Yeah, and so yeah, I think with any school that's got a size of 1600 students you know, yes, once a student is sat on their own I understand why you would question that particular student but I think the context of why, it was weighted in the way that they wanted it to be it wasn't in the context of, this is an old building that wasn't designed for this amount of students unless you're actually going to completely alter corridor size, you can't do much about it - corridors are going to be busy and students are going to feel like that. I think there needs to be, that the context of the questions need to be within the context of the actual school. You can't put - every school can't be the same because of the make-up of the students that are actually in there and also the make-up of the building and that does contribute to student safety and well being, of course it does. Students aren't unsafe because of the size of the corridors, but it is busy. It is, you know, yeah, it needs to be taken in context.

Aly Now that Ofsted have moved away for a while, do they leave an influence or do you feel their presence?

S Erm, to a certain point yes. (DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY BECAUSE OF OFSTED) So with regards to, in the local area other places have had no notice inspections. You know, we always get warned that this could happen with regards to this area and safeguarding. Erm, **which isn't necessarily a bad thing that you're in a high state of alert but at the same time it does create additional stress and pressure for you to make sure you are... we don't have the freedom to explore and try new things because actually if you were to try new things and somebody was to come in and observe that, once again that's a snapshot. You try new things because you want to see what you can learn from that. I think people are worried about new things because they think someone will come in and make a snap judgement on what you see and I know it is difficult to make a judgement on general diet because unless Ofsted are going to come in literally every week and over a period of time I know it's going to be difficult, but actually the student's diet I think, actually is good. Certainly from my perspective and what I see as an achievement director going in and looking at lessons - the general diet is good. But people don't take risks. They play very safe and...** (Aly Does that feel very different to when you were in the school in Citytown?) (CONTEXT: SCHOOL/TOWN) Yes, very different. Very much so yes. So at the school I was in at Citytown because generally, to a certain extent, you could give them a textbook and generally they would learn from it so you were very much more a facilitator and so you set up a task and you could kind of sort of sit back. At the same time you could try new things because actually you could bounce back to the thing you were doing before because actually that would work and so you could break your time up and so activity days... We had one each term effectively where you could try something new. It's more challenging to try something new here. I

think, because of the students, if you - it takes a lot more embedding of processes here and just much longer to ensure that students are aware and so that is a much longer process than it was in Citytown.

Aly I mean, is there impact potentially as a teacher because you're not able to take the risks you would naturally?

S Yeah. I mean I feel I don't get the opportunity to work outside the classroom enough because ultimately and enrich the students because I'd say a vast majority here work slower than where I've worked previously and because the majority of the students work slower, you're then more conscious about your results and because you're conscious about your results, you don't take chances to explore new things. (ARTICULATING CONCERNS ABOUT POLICY/CONTEXT) You literally just make sure you are doing x to get the qualification and because of course we are judged so much by Ofsted by progress and attainment and because we are starting with lower ability students, Attainment 8... I hoped the Progress 8 was going to make a difference erm, because actually we should be one of the top performing schools. I think students make exceptional progress here but they still are not going to compete with the leafier suburbs and the grammar schools where Attainment 8 and ultimately the figures you report on there... You know, we can't deliver to students, er you know English Lang and Lit ok, to the same degree that they can. Maths being double counted, so that's being four qualifications. You know, not all of ours can do literature - they can't necessarily access it because if they're coming in at grade 2 from key stage two. And then you're looking at science. Well grammar schools can do a triple science so they've effectively covered their EBac like that and then their free subjects, they can have that much more and so their Progress 8 or Attainment 8 is going to be that much higher generally than what ours is because actually when you look at the EBac, you will struggle to get all our students through the EBac. (CONTEXT: SCHOOL/ARTICULATING CONCERNS ABOUT POLICY) We come from very different backgrounds with regards to students needing hands-on approachable subjects. You know they need something more vocational that they can relate to in real life. you know, trigonometry, unless they can actually see how that is going to contribute to how they are going to run a business or be employable, it's not something that is high enough on their radar. And employability should be what we're about and making students employable for the future. Rather than them just getting the best grades possible and that doesn't necessarily make them employable. Because you're not actually teaching them what they need. Here we have a big...a very high unemployment and so I think that's why I'm excited about what the new head is doing in that our sixth form has an employability route so students actually do some work experience with an employer and also get their... so you know we have those two avenues.

Aly. Yeah, I was just going to ask you about that sort of employability strand. Is there a tension between what you're trying to do with the other success targets?

S (ARTICULATING CONCERNS ABOUT POLICY/CONTEXT: SCHOOL) Yes, without a shadow of a doubt because... So with regards to how we set up our sixth form so, the subjects I teach - design engineer and construct - it is directly employable because it is about architecture, quantity surveying, to the built-in environment, so I have sixteen students that have stayed on from the level two qualification so it's pretty good retention. I had forty students in year eleven and actually I've kept sixteen of them and ten of those have got work placement with employers and so I'm really pleased that actually those students have an avenue and realistic employment route. It's opened up for them... instead of just going and working at a supermarket -not that there's anything wrong with that, but they actually have a career future and that is a big movement, a big shift for, for this academy and this area. That actually students are employable. And that's why I think the Sandside

way and the employability for life that we do here, is a great thing but of course it has a conflict of interest because while you're focusing on that, you're not doing so many qualifications because ultimately some students are only doing two A levels and then they're filling up the rest of their time with this employment route where actually, your traditional sixth form will be doing three, maybe four qualifications at A level and therefore actually yeah, performance tables aren't going to be so high because we're not going to get such a high point score but our students will be more employable because they have an employer that they have worked with. And most of them now are actually at this point in time, these employers are offering them sponsorship for their degree and paying everything else and you can't ask for anything more.