From self-evaluation to school improvement: the importance of effective staff development

Report to CfBT Education Trust

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Executive summary

Our key research question was:

> What practical steps can schools take to ensure that self-evaluation of their practice and performance leads, through the effective development of their staff, to genuine improvement?

We analysed the self evaluation forms (SEFs) and school improvement plans of 38 schools in England, visiting nine as case studies over 20 months to track the staff development journeys that were intended to lead to planned improvement.

The connection between self-evaluation processes and improvement planning was at first made only loosely but strengthened over the course of the project. We found that the introduction of the SEF was having an effect on the quality of schools' self-evaluative processes in several ways, including:

- Encouraging a greater thoroughness and wide-ranging evaluation of the school's work
- Providing a better understanding of evaluation
- Involving more people in school self-evaluation
- Giving greater attention to the views of stakeholders.

Completing the SEF can make people realise the need to change the strategic direction of the school and rethink their improvement priorities, whilst the format of the SEF can reinforce the logic of the link between improvement plans and those for staff development and training. Our recommendations to Ofsted and senior leaders in schools for improvements to the SEF are below.

Recommendations to Ofsted for improvements to the SEF

1. More prompts requiring specific answers would be helpful to guide schools through the key issues in each section.

2. Having links between different sections of the SEF would clarify what kind of information is required where. For instance, in Section 4 (pupils' personal development and wellbeing) there is a tendency to report on what the school provides to support personal development and secure wellbeing rather than on the standards the pupils actually achieve in these areas.

3. The SEF and school development/improvement plan should be integrated into a single document.

4. The SEF should reinforce the logic of the link between improvement plans and those for staff development.

5. The format of the SEF should help schools prioritise and follow a simple, logical order. The current form is confusing in that it asks for priorities for development in Sections 3 to 6 but before these, Question 1e asks for an outline of the main

priorities in the school's development plan. At the end, Section 7 asks the school to judge the effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection and as a result of its self-evaluation.

6. The SEF should contain a section about staff development.

7. Inspectors need to be rigorous and fair in their judgements and not be swayed by a SEF that is well crafted.

8. Inspectors should judge a school's progress in meeting the priorities from the SEF following the judgement that is made about the school's capacity to improve.

Recommendations for senior leaders in schools:

1. Self-evaluation should be carried out for the school's benefit rather than just for the purposes of inspection.

2. The SEF should be the outcome of ongoing self-evaluation processes across the school community.

3. School leaders should ensure that the SEF is completed in an efficient and planned way.

4. The SEF should be concisely written and evaluative rather than descriptive.

5. SEFs should be shared with all staff to give the big picture of the school so that they are clear about priorities.

Staff development and school improvement

We found strong leadership a consistent ingredient in activities regarded as having a positive impact on teaching quality and/or student outcomes and much similarity in the case study schools between the approaches adopted towards launching and sustaining staff development.

A crucial factor in creating a successful launch for school improvement initiatives and programmes was winning hearts and minds. This involved convincing staff that the proposed changes were both desirable and possible. Strategies used involved:

- sharing data
- individual accountability
- targeting the right people
- raising morale, and
- meeting needs.

We found that sustaining momentum and achieving success were more likely when:

- there was active support of the school's leadership team
- the change or initiative connected to other current school developments

- staff learning strategies included: a) lesson observation with developmental feedback; and b) modelling teaching with subsequent time for reflective discussion
- staff were enabled to gain a fuller picture of the context in which they were working.

Evaluating the impact of continuing professional development (CPD) was found to be the weakest link in the 'logical chain' or the training and development cycle. How outcomes had been improved and the quality of teaching and learning enhanced were not made clear in our case study schools. In part this was because CPD was conceived conventionally in terms of activities to be engaged in (inputs) rather than as the actual development of knowledge and expertise (outcomes).

The question 'what will happen as a result of this staff development activity, including any changes effected in staff thinking and pupil progress?' was rarely asked.

Staff development is not definable as a course, a programme of training or study, or even as a set of learning experiences. Rather, learning is the upshot or outcome that may result from any or all of these development activities and from the individual's reflection on day-to-day experience of doing the job.

We believe a change in emphasis is required from external agencies, including Ofsted, to encourage a mature approach to thinking about and understanding the quality of the development of school staff. Judging the quality of schools' arrangements for promoting staff development may encourage the perception of it as *input*: something that schools provide rather than the learning of their workforce. Staff development needs to be regarded as the change, development and improvement of practice for the benefit of learners and not merely as a series of courses and other occasions or events. Utilising a broader definition of staff development, such as that advocated in this report, we believe will assist this growth in maturity.

Other suggestions and recommendations in relation to staff development and school improvement emerging from our research are shown below.

1. The leadership and management of staff development need to be effective
2. Staff need a clear, shared understanding of professional development
3. The school needs to develop a learning-centred culture
4. Effective performance management helps to identify staff learning needs
5. The goal, and the reasons for it, must be clear and ultimately should make a difference to pupils
6. The quickest, most effective and best value for money forms of staff development should be chosen based on what will suit individuals
7. Staff development that involves discussing, coaching, mentoring, observing and training others is highly effective
8. Time needs to be made for reflection and development
9. Staff development should be focussed on outcomes not just provision. Its impact needs to be evaluated
10. Learning and development should be shared, acknowledged and celebrated for improvement to be sustained.

The case studies provide examples of schools' journeys from SEF to improvement (Sef2Si). Examples of school improvement initiatives are documented (in the Appendix) and include:

- Improving teaching and raising standards in maths
- Making students more independent learners
- Improving pupil behaviour
- Literacy across the curriculum
- Introducing French into the primary school curriculum.

The research report shows ways in which schools can improve and assist staff to become better at what they do but also, importantly, how they become more effective in evaluating the impact of their interventions on student outcomes. In other words to become better at ascertaining whether real improvements have occurred in the quality of teaching and learning provided by the school.

The research also reminds us that the factors influencing school improvement are multiple and often highly complex and that schools should move towards a more personalised approach to staff development and learning; in the same way that there is talk of personalising learning for pupils there must be the equivalent notion for the school workforce.

In conclusion, we have suggestions for three areas for further research:

> i) We wish to use our broad definition of staff development to enquire whether the school workforce would benefit from asking a series of questions about their learning as a result of the opportunities made available.
>
> ii) With the introduction of new legislation about performance management and the introduction of a set of teacher standards (TDA, 2007b) and the integrated qualifications framework for staff across all children's services, it would also be timely to carry out further research into the difference that performance review can make to people development.
>
> iii) The exploration of non-disruptive forms of staff development requires investigation and in particular, schools' use of the five training or INSET days.

Chapter 1: The Project

Background

School self-evaluation is not new – it has been established practice in some schools - but it was placed at the heart of England's latest inspection framework in September 2005 as part of The New Relationship with Schools (NRwS) (DfES/Ofsted 2005). For the first time all schools are expected to use the same system – the online self-evaluation form or SEF - for recording the analysis of precisely where strengths and weaknesses lie and the implications for change; to identify the key priorities and plan the action needed to bring about improvement.

The SEF asks leaders to evaluate their schools under seven headings:

1. Characteristics of the school
2. Views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders
3. Achievement and standards
4. Personal development and well-being
5. The quality of provision
6. Leadership and management
7. Overall effectiveness and efficiency.

School leaders can edit, save and submit their online interactive SEFs as many times as they wish via the secure password system until told that they are to be inspected: they have just two or three days' notice. There is much guidance on how to write the SEF (Ofsted, 2005; 2007) and RAISEonline (which stands for Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School self-Evaluation) gives detailed statistical information for school leaders to use in their self-evaluation. They are asked to grade their school on a four point scale (Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate) on each of these aspects:

- Learners' achievement and standards in their work
- Learners' personal development and well-being
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Quality of the curriculum and other activities
- Quality of care, guidance and support for learners
- Effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management
- Overall effectiveness
- Capacity to make further improvement
- Improvement since the last inspection (Ofsted, 2007).

Inspectors either confirm or challenge the grades the schools give themselves, based on what is found during the inspection. Getting the SEF right is therefore a high stakes matter.

Aims and rationale

A great deal is now known about the features of effective staff development (e.g. Ofsted, 2006b; TDA, 2007a) and there are an increasing number of resources available, many of

them on-line. We wanted to explore *how* school self-evaluation leads to school improvement through the training and development of all staff so we investigated this question:

> What practical steps can schools take to ensure that self-evaluation of their practice and performance leads, through the effective development of their staff, to genuine improvement?

On the journey from self-evaluation to school improvement – from Sef2Si - we wanted to identify what schools do that works, how people help each other, how obstacles are overcome, and what can be done to ensure even greater improvement. Our longitudinal study over 20 months has investigated how staff learning leads to personal and school improvement: for instance, we have looked at what needs to go right from the very start and what can go wrong.

With the new found emphasis on school self-evaluation, the SEF (self-evaluation form) provides headteachers, governors and others with a potentially strong basis for school improvement. However, despite the growing literature and support materials on school self-evaluation (e.g. Ofsted, 2005, 2006a, 2006c; MacBeath, 2006; NCSL, 2005), the issue which appears to be neglected is how schools, once they have identified their areas for development, can actually move forward and make progress. The role of continuing development of staff is crucial in helping to address most of the priorities identified in the SEF to bring about improvement, enhance the quality of the learning experience, and generally make things better for pupils.

Methodology

The journey from self-evaluation (SEF) to school improvement (SI) was tracked in 38 schools - 13 secondary, 22 primary and three special – over 20 months from January 2006 to August 2007. We chose schools which we knew (either from our own experience or from recommendations) had interesting practice in the development of their staff. Thus, they were not typical or average schools but those in which we thought we were likely to see successful and innovative journeys. Half of the schools were in challenging circumstances in that over 35 percent of their pupils were eligible for free school meals because we considered that staff development that leads to improvement in such contexts is crucial. The schools were in 22 different local authorities (LAs) across England and included London boroughs, shire counties, metropolitan districts and unitary authorities. The schools ranged in size from a three class primary to a very large comprehensive of over 1750 students. Many were successful but one was deemed by Ofsted to require Special Measures.

We began the project by undertaking a detailed analysis of the project schools' self-evaluation forms and improvement plans. About a quarter of the secondary, primary and special schools were then chosen as case studies, to look at the journey from SEF to SI in greater detail. The case studies - three secondary, five primary and one special school - were from nine different local authorities and ranged in size from a small village primary to a very large urban comprehensive. Five of the case study schools were in challenging circumstances (one secondary, three primaries and the special school), one of the others required special measures and another was on the local authority list of underachieving schools.

The nine case study schools were visited three times (every two terms) in addition to contact via telephone, post and email. The 21 on-site visits enabled us to gain insights from a range of people. For instance, during one visit to a two-form entry primary school, eight adults were interviewed: they included teaching assistants, teachers (one who was newly qualified) as well as the headteacher and deputy. Two 11 year old pupils were also interviewed to gain their insight into the impact of staff development.

In addition, professional development leaders from seven local authorities were interviewed to enhance the data and test emerging hypotheses. Issues arising from the project were also discussed with a CfBT inspection forum. The project's schools were brought together through the Sef2Si virtual learning environment and face-to-face to discuss issues at a seminar in June 2006 and at a conference one year later. As well as providing us with more data, schools benefited from sharing up to date resources, discussing and hearing from researchers and policy advisers such as Professor Louise Stoll from the Institute of Education, Anne Jasman from the General Teaching Council (England), Alison Atkinson from the Training and Development Agency, and Hilary Bourdillon from Teachers TV.

Report structure

This report details the main research findings of the Sef2Si project. It begins by investigating how schools were approaching the completion of the self evaluation form and considers the impact this was having. The next two chapters consider staff development drawing on the research to outline our key findings in relation to how schools were attempting to achieve their SEF identified priorities through providing high quality staff development and creating opportunities for staff learning. Chapter 3 focuses on the actual processes of implementation – how exactly were these factors put into practice to realize school improvement? It describes the key strategies and events that appeared to affect success when providing staff development opportunities and when sustaining their momentum. It also deals with ways in which our case study schools attempted to monitor progress and evaluate the impact of staff development. Chapter 4 continues this theme and provides an overview making reference to ten key factors that require consideration if the journey from self-evaluation to school improvement is to be achieved. Examples of actual Sef2Si journeys from some of our case study schools are given in the Appendix. The final chapter draws together our main conclusions and makes some recommendations.

Chapter 2: The impact of the introduction of the SEF

Ofsted introduced the Self Evaluation Form, the SEF, as an integral component in the inspection of all schools from September 2005. We conducted our first set of interviews in our nine case study schools in the spring term 2006 and we undertook further visits in the autumn term 2006 and the summer term 2007. We were therefore able to discuss initial responses to the SEF requirements with senior members of staff in these schools and to track their subsequent experiences of completing and using it, in several cases in the context of a Section 5 inspection.

We were interested in finding answers to two questions in particular. The first was to do with the effect of the introduction of the SEF on the quality of the schools' self-evaluative processes. We wanted to discover if senior staff believed that the obligation to use the SEF format for recording the outcomes of self-evaluation had brought about improvements in the way they tackled the business of judging the quality of their schools' performance and practices. Did they, for example, feel that the SEF had the potential to produce sharper judgements on the basis of a better range of evidence than they would otherwise have employed?

The second question concerned the effect of the introduction of the SEF on the quality of the schools' improvement planning. We wanted to find out if they felt that producing a SEF in the prescribed format had helped them to identify more clearly and precisely the key improvements and developments required. We wanted to know if using the SEF had assisted them in constructing practical plans for effecting these changes. Through our contact with these schools over a period of five terms, we wanted to discover whether the plans actually produced the desired improvements as or more effectively than would otherwise have been the case.

The effect of the SEF on the quality of schools' self-evaluative processes

We found that the introduction of the SEF was having an effect on the quality of schools' self-evaluative processes in several ways, including:

- Encouraging a greater thoroughness and wide-ranging evaluation of the school's work
- Providing a better understanding of evaluation
- Involving more people in school self-evaluation
- Giving greater attention to the views of stakeholders.

We now examine each in turn before considering the effect the introduction of the SEF had on the quality of schools' improvement planning.

i) Greater thoroughness

Our research found that SEFs varied considerably in quality, accuracy and potential to make a difference. This we suggest largely depends on the quality of the leadership of the school. As a LA adviser said:

> In many schools, the SEF is not seen as valuable or important; a good proportion of forms are not updated e.g. some don't have the most recent results. Weak

> schools are problematic, they have no processes in place and headteachers try to keep the form/process to themselves; they don't share and are reluctant to go back and rewrite their SEF. Well-led schools understand the importance of the SEF.

The process of completing the SEF should ensure that school leaders are clear about priorities for improvement. However, as another local authority adviser told us 'the SEF is a tool and a tool is only as good as the person using it'.

Senior staff in all the case study schools expressed the view that the SEF had encouraged the evaluation of a wider range of aspects of their work than they would otherwise have undertaken, and in some cases cited that as a particular benefit. The majority stated that they felt they knew their schools better as a result of completing the SEF and in several cases that assertion was supported by specific examples.

The leadership team in a large secondary school felt, for example, that the SEF had prompted them to shine a light into some neglected corners. It had obliged them to seek evidence for some hitherto unsupported assumptions about the impact of what they were doing. Also they felt reassured when previously unconsidered evidence had confirmed their impression of strong performance.

The head of a large subject team found departmental self-evaluation along the lines set out in the SEF very useful. It gave teachers the opportunity to appreciate what the school and the department did well, which was especially motivating as a counterweight to the experience of being in special measures.

The other side of this coin is that the senior staff in some of our case study schools thought that completing and maintaining the SEF as thoroughly as they felt they had to proved very time consuming. This view came across particularly strongly from our first set of interviews. There was a risk, expressed in more than half of the case study schools, of the SEF becoming an all-consuming, unduly pre-occupying exercise, because of the fear of omitting something crucial that would be seized upon and exposed during inspection.

Certainly, all but one of our project schools found completing the initial SEF time-consuming and onerous. In most schools the temptation was for their initial SEF to be overly descriptive in order to ensure that nothing of any significance was left out. In some primary schools this had involved the expense of securing release from class duties for senior staff. The headteacher of one primary school with a particularly high turnover of pupils described the pressure she felt to be constantly revisiting and updating of the SEF. Others believed it important that every example of good practice was described in the SEF because the inspection would be too short for it to emerge and be given credit otherwise.

The SEF asked questions that some school leaders had not considered before. Although beneficial, this sometimes resulted in schools feeling overwhelmed by all that they had to improve. For instance, one school had 76 priorities, thereby, in our view, weakening capacity to improve anything.

People found the questions repetitive and they wasted time trying to decide what to include where. However, two-thirds of schools in our study found updating the SEF easier because they timetable the review of sections of the SEF at different times of the year to fit in with other planning processes. They are also more familiar with the form. However, about a third of schools find updating the SEF very time-consuming. These were generally schools in challenging circumstances and/or with high senior staff turnover or absence. One deputy used the phrase 'painting the Forth Bridge' to describe the process of feeling that as soon as one section is finished, another needs attention.

ii) Better understanding of evaluation

We found in our later visits that the perception of the SEF as yet another externally imposed requirement, implying a distraction from the core business of the school, had been modified in most cases. We found evidence in all our case study schools of a strengthened capacity for self-evaluation, although significant challenges remained. In all cases the first version of the SEF had been amended substantially and in most it had become shorter. The length of SEFs varied considerably, although none was as concise as the 25 pages Ofsted (2006a) recommends. We found that short SEFs tended to become even shorter or remain at around the same length, whereas those that were originally lengthy became even longer. We found no correlation between the size of school and the length of the completed form. The shorter SEFs were generally the most evaluative.

Senior staff in most of our case study schools indicated that having to commit commentary to the SEF had encouraged them to become more considered in their use of data and other forms of evidence to support their judgements about performance. The need for evidence had helped these schools move from a subjective and impressionistic evaluation of their own performance to a more systematic and rigorous approach to assessing the quality of their practice; and anxiety over the analysis and use of 'data' was diminishing.

The senior staff we interviewed in all but one of our case study schools said they had learnt to be more selective about what to include in the SEF. Although several pointed out that it was still necessary to include some descriptive material, effort in all these schools was being directed towards paring down the content of the SEF to its evaluative core. They anticipated that further work on it would be mostly in the form of revisions rather than creating a wholly new version.

Senior staff in four of the case study schools said they had found it particularly useful to compare the contents of their SEF with those of other schools through an established network or via training events they had attended. They felt that seeing other schools' SEFs had suggested useful approaches to self-evaluation and had helped them to make theirs more genuinely evaluative. This benefit is, of course, largely a direct result of the obligation placed on all schools to produce a SEF to a common format.

Most of our case study schools were engaged in the process of creating a sequence of self-evaluative activities, timetabled at different times of the year, through which they could update different sections of the SEF. In one primary school, for example, a different section of the SEF is examined and revised every half term and the outcomes presented to the governing body. In this and other schools the cycle of updating is being

scheduled to fit in with key management processes and events in the annual calendar: the receipt of test and examination results; the outcomes of the performance review cycle; local authority annual reviews, etc.

The need to cite evidence in the SEF in support of judgements about the quality of teaching and learning has led to greater emphasis on lesson observation in most of our case study schools. In three of them (two secondary and one primary) the incidence of lesson observation had increased significantly and senior staff employed Ofsted inspection criteria to grade the quality of what they observed. In these schools the observations did not always give rise to developmental feedback on performance or to targeted support. Instead they simply contributed to an evidence base for the eventual information of inspectors; in these cases the opportunity for self-evaluation to provide a firm basis for improvement was lost. In one school, all teachers were observed (with grades) ten times a year. Although this monitoring was meant to be developmental, the high turnover of staff suggests that the stress it caused possibly outweighed the benefits.

We encountered relatively few references in our case study schools to what are sometimes described as 'gaming strategies': self-evaluation as a presentational device to deceive inspectors into making unduly generous judgements. Although the view was sometimes expressed that a school could probably engineer a more positive report than it deserved as a result of a well-written SEF, this was not a pre-occupation of those we interviewed. The headteacher of one school claimed to have used particular phrases of which inspectors would approve of and to have employed a positive rather than a neutral or negative tone. On the other hand, another said she had deliberately down-graded some aspects of the school's performance for fear that the inspectors would dig deeper and try to prove her wrong. These and similar remarks were made during our first set of interviews and may have reflected unfamiliarity with the new inspection framework.

iii) Involving more people in school self-evaluation

Like Ofsted (2006c) we found that effective self-evaluation was taking place where the whole school community was involved. Although the SEFs in our case study schools were completed in very different ways, the process in all but one of them entailed an extension of involvement in school self-evaluation further than would otherwise have been the case. In these schools the overview of school performance was no longer seen as the preserve of the senior leadership team but an issue for the whole staff. This was partly on account of the realisation that inspectors would be likely to test knowledge of the school's performance among the staff and governors; but it was also acknowledged that schools benefit when an appreciation of the big picture of current performance and future challenges is widely shared.

The secondary schools among our case studies gave their heads of department versions of the SEF to complete from their own perspectives and submit to the leadership team. In one, a training day for the whole staff was used to give provisional feedback on the key emerging issues for improvement that the leadership team had identified, and the staff were asked to vote on the priority they would give to each of them. Contributions from all staff were important in gathering evidence for the SEF, but writing by committee was problematic. Also, voting on priorities was seen by some schools as necessary preliminary actions to be considered by SLTs and governing bodies who would then make decisions about ways of moving forward with selected priorities.

The leadership team in one primary school used INSET days and staff meetings to go through the SEF a section at a time. In their view, everyone learnt a lot about the school from those sessions: as a result the staff understood more clearly where improvement priorities came from, and they became more aware of the importance of gathering evidence to support judgements. In this school, tackling the SEF had demonstrated the need to delegate greater responsibility and accountability for standards and quality to subject leaders.

In another primary school, the staff had been asked to place items of evidence (or their sources) pertaining to specific sections of the SEF in a 'suggestion box'. In this school, as in most others in our sample, the leadership team saw their responsibility increasingly as managing the evidence and refining the issues provided by a much wider group of the staff.

Similarly, a newly appointed headteacher in another primary school developed the draft of a new SEF, starting from scratch. This had to be done quickly and her method was to post on the staff notice board a large sheet of paper for each SEF section, and to invite the staff to suggest sources of evidence to support self-evaluative judgements. She then followed up the suggested sources and created the draft SEF, using the information gained.

Our case study schools differed with respect to the degree of access to the outcomes of self-evaluation that they encouraged among their staff. In one primary school the SEF was posted on its open access website but in a few schools only members of the senior leadership team had access to the final version of the SEF.

Over the course of the project which spanned two academic years, people began to appreciate the self-evaluation process. One deputy believed that the SEF had become the driving force in actually making things happen in the school noting that 'People have good ideas but the SEF makes it happen, turns it into an imperative'. He gave the example of the school's governors: 'The governors hadn't had a tradition of coming into the school, but the SEF started that process'. In several schools, handling the SEF had resulted in governors participating far more actively in the school's self-evaluation than hitherto. This in turn led to their greater involvement in other aspects of the leadership of the schools.

iv) Greater attention to the views of stakeholders

All the case study schools had begun a more systematic collection of the views of parents, pupils and other stakeholders. Although pressures from other sources have for some time urged schools to become more responsive to feedback from those they serve, the senior staff we interviewed cited the SEF as the chief influence. The inclusion of a range of stakeholders in the process of self-evaluation had encouraged our case study schools to view their practice through different lenses and had challenged complacency and self-satisfaction where they were felt to exist. An examination of SEFs from all of our survey schools indicated, however, that many were at a very early level of sophistication in their responses to Section 2: the views of learners, parents and other stakeholders.

The effect of the SEF on school improvement planning

We wanted to investigate whether the introduction of a SEF in a common format had helped to achieve greater clarity of thinking in our case study schools about what they most needed to improve and how they could best go about achieving that. We wanted to find out if the SEF had helped to simplify and focus these schools' internal discussions about how and in what respects they needed to develop.

Not surprisingly we found different answers in different schools. Nevertheless, in general, the connection between self-evaluation and improvement planning was at first made only loosely in most of the schools but strengthened over the course of the project.

One secondary school, for example, had been used to working with a Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) in association with the local authority. The first draft of the SEF had suggested that the school should have different priorities from those already identified in the RAP, and this was highly challenging. Nevertheless the leadership team saw clearly that their school's self-evaluation would have to determine a single set of priorities for them to pursue; they saw the logic, as they put it, of 'working from one piece of paper rather than two'.

In another secondary school, the priorities for development listed in the various SEF sections differed from those listed as priorities in their pre-existing staff development plan. While the two lists were not actually contradictory, there was not the kind of consonance that might have been expected. The headteacher was particularly conscious of this disconnection: he said he thought there was still too much opportunistic staff development activity, and that in future the staff development plan must emanate more directly from the SEF, which should determine the key priorities in the school's improvement plan.

Nine months into the project the staff development plan in this school had been brought into line with the five priorities identified in the SEF. Four of the five priorities were concerned with improving aspects of students' learning and had given rise to a set of initiatives deliberately designed to boost staff expertise in promoting those aspects. Although these initiatives may have been introduced anyway, the SEF process had provided clear evidence from a range of complementary sources to demonstrate and crystallize what the training and development needs were.

A similar story prevailed elsewhere. During the course of the project senior leaders in primary schools increasingly recognised the logic of deriving their school improvement priorities and their plans to tackle them from the outcomes of the self-evaluation they had recorded in the SEF. Because of its role in informing school inspection, the SEF was increasingly being seen as the driving force in making things happen, turning good ideas into imperatives for improvement.

One primary school headteacher welcomed the introduction of the SEF because it provided a great deal of help with pinpointing improvement priorities. She particularly applauded the focus on ECM outcomes (Section 4 in particular) because she felt that would help to reduce the obsession in many schools in recent years with attainment and progress in the core subjects to the exclusion of all else, rendering school improvement virtually synonymous with maximising the numbers achieving Level 4+ in English, mathematics and science.

We are aware that our case study schools are unlikely to be representative of all schools and the necessary link between self-evaluation and improvement planning is unlikely to have been made explicitly in many. Across the 38 schools whose SEFs we studied, the number of priorities identified in response to Question 1e varied between four and 76. Some were very specific (for example, 'develop pupils' questioning skills') but others were general and lacked precision (for example, 'improve teaching and learning'). In very few cases were the issues identified as priorities in the SEF clearly reflected in improvement plans or translated directly into plans for the development of the staff.

As a local authority adviser said, 'The SEF and Improvement Plan have to be part of the same document, not just linked'. This would help facilitate the journey from Sef2Si – from school evaluation to school improvement. Completing the SEF can make people realise that they need to change the strategic direction of the school and rethink their improvement priorities. One school was planning to focus on several things such as assessment for learning but had to change direction as a result of the Year 6 test results. When the school's 'value added' score was analysed it showed that some children had made very poor progress especially in mathematics. This came as a great shock to staff so the school changed direction and prioritised improving teaching and learning in mathematics.

In schools that were unused to self-evaluation, the process associated with completing the form consumed a great deal of resources and school leaders wondered what else they could be achieving in the time. Some schools were becoming overly concerned with having evidence for their judgements, gathering reams in case inspectors wanted to see it. So there is greater accountability but whether it is 'intelligent' is a matter of debate. A few schools were spending funds on commissioning companies and consultants, for example, to survey parents and pupils, and produce impressive graphs from an analysis of the results. This did not seem a good use of time and money.

The new relationship (Ofsted, 2005) promised to reduce bureaucracy and the burden on teachers, because too often the long period of notice given for inspection led to unnecessary over-preparation by schools. However, we found that the new short notice (two or three days) inspection regime meant that staff in schools which were due an inspection were constantly on amber if not red alert. David Bell, the (then) chief inspector of schools, said:

> The relationship between inspection and self-evaluation has been two-way: schools have learned from an inspectorial approach to monitoring and evaluation, and inspectors have learned from the increasingly sophisticated insights schools have of themselves. (NCSL, 2006, p11)

A consequence of the SEF's relationship with inspection and of the 'inspectorial approach' was the rise in the number of observations of teaching being carried out, leading to not only a grading of lessons but even a grading of teachers on Ofsted's four-point scale. One school started grading lessons for the first time as a result of erroneously believing that this was needed as evidence for the section entitled 'How good is the quality of teaching and learning?'.

Conclusion

At the very heart of the SEF is a tension: are schools self-evaluating or self-inspecting? In an earlier study of inspection, it was argued that schools were becoming self-

inspecting rather than self-evaluating (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000), and MacBeath sees the two not as complementary but as crucially different (see Figure 2.1). The term 'self-evaluation' suggests that the school does it for itself and yet the SEF is now the basis of inspection. Although self-evaluation is internal to the school it is not private to it. So, with the present levels of accountability in English schools and the high stakes inspection system just how honest should schools be?

Figure 2.1: Self-inspection and self-evaluation (MacBeath, 2006, p67)

Self-inspection	*Self-evaluation*
Top down Is a one off event Provides a snapshot Is time consuming Is more about accountability than improvement Applies a rigid framework Uses a set of predetermined criteria Creates resistance Can detract from learning and teaching Encourages playing safe Demands consensus	Bottom up Is continuous and embedded in the nature of teachers' and headteacher's work Is a moving picture Is time saving Is more about improvement than accountability Is flexible and spontaneous Uses, adapts and creates relevant criteria Engages and involves people Improves learning and teaching Takes risks and celebrates difference

We conclude this chapter with a concern we have about the extent to which inspectors test the validity of judgements contained in the SEF. The headteacher of a school whose SEF was judged as accurate by Ofsted said that she deliberately used phrases 'that Ofsted would like' and used a positive tone throughout. A local authority adviser believes:

> In the current short inspection system, especially with a less than rigorous team, schools can definitely get rosier Ofsted reports as a result of a well written SEF that *bigs up* the school.

This echoes MacBeath's view that 'a SEF that meets all the criteria of brevity, wit and honesty relies not only on fine judgment but also political and presentational skills' (2006, p112). School self-evaluation needs to be more than a game that people play in order to 'pass' their inspection. It needs to be seen as an integral part of the school improvement process in which priorities will be identified and associated staff development needs acknowledged. Recommendations for improvements to the SEF are in Chapter 5.

In the following two chapters we describe how the case study schools, having identified their priorities for development, attempted to move forward and make progress by means of staff training and development activities. In each school we selected aspects of their practice that, as a result of self-evaluation, they had decided they wanted to develop or improve and had recorded in their SEFs. We followed the evolution of the staff development opportunities and programmes the schools had devised to tackle their priorities. We did this with a view to identifying the practical steps that all schools might consider adopting in order to ensure that self-evaluation leads, through the effective development of their staff, to genuine improvement.

Chapter 3: Putting priorities into practice

As a result of undertaking self-evaluation, the SEF is completed but the next crucial step is to address the areas identified as needing improvement; for as a LA adviser told us, 'Filling a form in doesn't help a school develop'. Thus, over 20 months we studied nine schools' journeys from school evaluation to school improvement. This chapter draws out threads that were common across all or most of the schools we studied and pays particular attention to the singular experience of individual schools. We have adopted a straightforward chronological structure for the analysis, describing the key strategies and events that appeared to affect success when providing staff development opportunities and launching improvement programmes, and when sustaining their momentum. Finally, we deal with ways in which the case study schools attempted to monitor the progress of their staff development activity and evaluate its impact. We begin, however, with a list of some of the obstacles that needed to be overcome.

Obstacles

Even though we were working with schools with a strong reputation for staff development, some had quicker, cheaper and more efficient journeys than others and reached better destinations. All had various obstacles to overcome. These included school leaders:

- Not knowing what was wrong and thus what they needed to do to get better
- Trying to improve one area when another was more pressing
- Making staff feel negative and 'got-at'
- Being too bogged down in the everyday life in school to be able to think strategically
- Knowing that they needed to improve something in general but not knowing by how much
- Not investing time and effort into doing things properly (such as the school who paid for a consultant to 'do' performance management training with all the staff in an hour after school at the end of term)
- Doing too many things, but none of them properly
- 'Throwing money at a problem' (usually in the form of buying in a consultant) in the hope that it'll get solved
- Spending a great deal of money buying in training when there was often expertise on the school staff
- Distributing money, time and other resources for staff development unfairly and without an adequate rationale
- Investing heavily in one member of staff, who then leaves the school
- Not setting a good example, such as not attending whole school training or returning to school before the end of a course
- Trying to meet too many people's needs, in a 'one-size fits all' way
- Not following things up, e.g. having a one-off input but nothing more to build on these initial efforts
- Not communicating or collaborating, e.g. a deputy head setting up some staff development properly which then gets sabotaged by the head who 'squeezes the time' for it.

Obstacles at the level of individual members of staff included:

- Wanting to give 100 percent to the pupils rather than investing in themselves
- Not understanding what a staff development activity was meant to achieve
- Not believing they needed to change
- Not being sufficiently reflective.

School improvement

A good deal of analysis of successful school improvement has been undertaken in recent years in the UK, producing considerable agreement about their common characteristics. Harris (2002), for example, demonstrates that effective school improvements focus closely on what happens in classrooms, often prescribing explicit models of teaching. As they develop, they sustain momentum, collecting systematic evaluative evidence about their impact, and mobilising change at school and section levels. Significant improvement, especially in schools judged previously to be failing, depends on cultural as well as structural change, a key component in which is the engagement of teachers and other staff in dialogue and development.

It was not the purpose of our study to contest this consensus, and indeed none of our findings contradicts the essential messages of the broad body of school improvement literature. Instead, through repeated contact with our nine case study schools over a prolonged period, we wanted to examine in detail the practicalities of implementing programmes and opportunities for the development of groups of staff. Our purpose was to identify and describe some of the key actions that, in these schools, were found to be effective in securing successful staff development; and by implication to recognise strategies that produced less successful outcomes. These have been outlined in the next chapter with reference to ten key factors for success. In this chapter we take the analysis a stage further by considering the staff development processes and strategies the case study schools were deploying in trying to move from self-evaluation to realizing their priorities identified in their SEFs and school improvement plans. What role did staff development play in how schools were putting their improvement initiatives into practice?

The training and development cycle

The most significant improvements appeared to come about where people went through all stages of the training and development cycle. The training and development cycle, or what Ofsted (2006b) describes as a *logical chain* of procedures, entails identifying and analyzing school and staff needs, planning to meet those needs, providing varied and relevant activities for all appropriate staff, monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of the development that resulted. Ofsted looked at the arrangements for the development of staff in a survey of 29 schools and found they were most effective in the schools where the senior managers fully understood the connections between each link in the chain and where they gave the development of the staff a central role in planning for improvement. The teachers and support staff in these schools took part in staff development that had been well chosen from a wide range of possible activities to meet their schools' and their own needs. These schools found that teaching and learning improved and standards rose.

The purpose of our study was not to challenge the accepted training and development cycle as a conceptual or descriptive device. Rather it was to investigate the *practical operation* of the logical chain or the training and development cycle over time in nine separate contexts and to identify and describe strategies that helped to produce more or less successful outcomes.

Leadership

Our study examines in detail what leaders in nine case studies did to ensure that their schools' self-evaluations led, through the effective development of their staff, to genuine improvement. High quality school leadership is well documented as a determining factor in the degree of effectiveness with which a school works. An important recent review of research, commissioned by the National College for School Leadership (Leithwood *et al*, 2006), makes a number of what it calls 'strong claims', including:

- School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning
- Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices
- The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work
- School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.

Our study provides material of relevance to each of these claims. In every case study we found strong leadership a consistent ingredient in activities regarded as having a positive impact on teaching quality and/or student outcomes. We found a good deal of similarity between the approaches the leaders in the different schools adopted towards launching and sustaining staff development; the key elements were very similar in all the schools but the details of their implementation varied. In every case, our interviews with staff confirmed the potential possessed by school leaders for exerting a decisive influence, positive or negative, over staff motivation and morale, which were in turn key factors in determining the success of development activities.

In every case study school, we selected aspects of their practice that, as a result of self-evaluation, they had decided they wanted to develop or improve and had recorded in the SEF. We followed the evolution of any staff development opportunities the schools had devised to tackle them. Some researchers point to the need for a close degree of 'fit' between the type of activity selected and the developmental needs of the school. Failing schools require a high level of external support to become moderately effective whereas, in the case of already effective schools, the stimulus for further and continuous improvement tends to come from within, although external support may contribute to its achievement. Although, as a result of an unfavourable inspection at the outset of the project, Ofsted had placed one of our case study schools in special measures, we selected our case study schools because our previous association with them suggested the likelihood of their demonstrating interesting and successful staff development practice. They tended therefore to be more rather than less effective, and consequently

much of the improvement methodology was self-generated and, except in the case of the school in special measures, involved little that was imposed from outside.

Launching the initiative

Winning hearts and minds at the outset emerged as a crucial factor in creating a successful launch for school improvement initiatives and programmes in all the case study schools. In practice this involved convincing all the staff concerned, or a significant proportion of them, that the proposed change was (a) desirable and (b) possible. Leaders adopted a variety of strategies to achieve these perceptions depending on the circumstances, but the essentials were consistent across the schools and involved sharing data, individual accountability, targeting the right people, raising morale and meeting needs.

i) Sharing informative performance data
Creating an open, honest, and coherent picture of how well the school operates was a consistent feature in the launch of improvement initiatives later judged to have achieved a measure of success. In one primary school the newly appointed headteacher used the school's analysis of results during the first training day at the start of the year to demonstrate to the whole staff the need for improvement in pupil performance in the core subjects. Citing dispassionate evidence in this way, and encouraging debate on its significance, allowed the entire staff to appreciate the measure of what needed to be done. Our interviews with staff who had been present confirmed the profound impact of this initial session; they had not been presented with this stark picture before, and it enabled them to start discussing in practical terms how they could remedy it, beginning with teaching and learning in mathematics.

At one of the case study secondary schools, an analysis of students' GCSE examination results suggested that their writing was letting them down in a number of subjects. The Head of English gained hard evidence of the state of affairs through a book trawl, which showed that some teachers needed greater understanding of literacy: students were not writing extended pieces; reading skills were not being developed; and marking was not formative enough. This intelligence, shared with fellow heads of department, provided a secure platform for a targeted improvement programme.

In another primary school, for example, routine emphasis was placed on the use of performance data. The assessment coordinator in this school trained colleagues in how to interrogate data, which was kept openly available on the school's intranet. Every teacher was expected to analyze the progress their children were making and each term they had an individual meeting with the headteacher to discuss the progress of each child in the class.

ii) Encouraging individual accountability
The headteachers and other leaders in several of the schools identified the acceptance of accountability by individual members of staff as a key to successful development and the likely achievement of improvement initiatives. In these cases the teachers were described as having been persuaded out of being simply philosophical about some children not making good progress. Open discussion of pupil performance had encouraged them to feel that the onus was on them to do something about it. This was a good way of winning hearts and minds.

In one primary school all the staff had a common performance objective to embed the use of curricular targets in literacy and numeracy. A particular emphasis was placed on those children who had been making least progress in comparison to their prior attainment. Teachers were asked to identify six children and they were able to work just with them for one hour a week while somebody else took the class. This was a deliberate strategy intended to empower and hold teachers accountable, rather than giving the group to another teacher or teaching assistant. The onus would be on the class teacher.

In a secondary school, self-evaluation suggested that the staff had got into the habit of relying on members of the senior leadership team to resolve behaviour problems. A programme was devised, beginning with a factual account of the situation being presented to the whole staff, to challenge this culture and get teachers to take responsibility for tackling all but the most serious incidents.

iii) Getting the right people involved

In one secondary school self-evaluation confirmed the need to increase students' independence as learners and to develop thinking skills that they could apply in different subjects and situations. This gave rise to a set of staff development initiatives, including a 'Leading in Learning' programme (see Appendix) which was launched to the whole staff at a training day. 'Ordinary' teachers contributed to the presentation, which included a video sequence shot at the school and a series of simple and enjoyable activities. This grassroots feel was influential in getting the project off to a good start. The presenters had credibility as competent classroom practitioners rather than managers, consultants or experts.

In this school the subsequent choice of the pilot group of 'leading thinkers' was critical. They were not 'the usual suspects' (enthusiasts who volunteer for everything) but teachers with a variety of lengths of experience. The selection was made with an eye on the influence that these teachers would have among their colleagues. Significantly, none of those selected refused the offer to become involved. The project's momentum was built by spreading it via the enthusiasm of key staff members.

iv) Raising morale

At one of the case study primary schools many staff felt anxious about the decision to begin teaching French, not only because of insecurity about their own proficiency but also because English was an additional language for the majority of pupils. Thus, a key aim for the staff development activity in preparation for the introduction of French was to ensure that high staff morale was quickly established. There were three staff meetings. The first launched the strategy. All teachers and teaching assistants completed an online assessment of their French skills and their level of confidence. As a result, it was decided to make a great deal of use of one of the native French speaking teaching assistants. At the second meeting the coordinator introduced the French schemes of work and good practice principles of teaching MFL. The third training session for all staff took place at **the National Centre for Languages** with a Primary Language Specialist.

v) Meeting needs

Further evidence of the importance of a successful launch was provided in some schools where, with hindsight, staff acknowledged that it had not been accomplished well. Some of those we interviewed were critical of events organized for the whole staff that had failed to meet sufficiently the needs and interests of different individuals and groups. They also criticized introductory sessions that employed over – technical vocabulary and

failed to connect with the practical tasks in hand. In one primary school, for example, it was discovered some weeks into the programme that, in spite of several whole staff meetings on the subject, there was still no consistency in the teachers' implementation of assessment for learning and that they were not clear about their lessons' learning objectives. The headteacher in this school acknowledged the need to rethink. Similarly, the deputy head of a secondary school regretted that a whole school improvement initiative, introduced in the recent past, had not worked well because its launch and first phase had involved only a cadre of selected staff, which had made its subsequent roll out very difficult.

Sustaining momentum and achieving success

Good planning and follow through are highly significant factors in the success of any initiative. We wanted to identify some effective strategies that enabled staff development initiatives and programmes, once launched, to be sustained and steered towards a successful conclusion. We discovered several factors associated with success across the case study schools. The first, unsurprisingly, was the importance of the programme being actively sponsored by the school's leadership team. Linked to that factor was the importance of the programme connecting to other current developments and management processes in the school, featuring prominently for example in teaching and learning reviews. Of all the strategies adopted to promote staff learning, we found that two were of particular significance in sustaining the momentum and increasing the chances of achieving success. These were: lesson observation with developmental feedback; and modelling teaching with subsequent time for reflective discussion. Finally, we found that the strategy of enabling staff to gain a fuller picture of the context in which they were working also helped to sustain the momentum of development programmes. It is to these five elements that we now turn.

i) Endorsement and involvement by the SLT
This is a well-documented factor in the success of most in-school initiatives and change programmes and we found it to be highly significant in all our case study schools. For example, the 'Leading in Learning' programme undertaken in one secondary school was a complex initiative, requiring a strong steer from the senior leadership team and the project manager to ensure that everything that was planned actually happened and to schedule (see Appendix). The project manager provided clear and persuasive leadership – he was a respected practitioner and wholly committed to the programme. Strong and persistent support, reiterated by the SLT at all public occasions with the whole staff, played an important part too.

A priority identified at another secondary school - to improve writing - needed a similar degree of senior staff ownership to support the Head of English in her work with other departmental heads, each of whom was responsible to a member of the senior leadership team. It was stipulated that the improving writing initiative was to be discussed during every official meeting between senior leader and head of department, including an estimate of progress made and ways of moving forward.

An important lesson about person dependency was learnt at one primary school where the mathematics subject leader left the school mid-way through leading an important staff development programme. A great deal had been invested in her and the school had to take rapid steps to compensate, one of which was to ensure that her line manager

was capable of maintaining the programme's momentum before a new post holder was recruited.

ii) Connecting to other work

We found that a key factor in the success of staff development activities in our case study schools was the extent to which they avoided isolation and were explicitly connected to other things going on in the school. The 'Leading in Learning' programme, for example, was deliberately linked to other key management processes within the school. Each departmental team was obliged to include the progress of the programme as a standing item on the agenda for its meetings. Reflection on their participation in the programme was expected to feature in every teacher's performance review: a high proportion of teachers had participation in the programme as one of their performance management objectives, which helped to invest it with a greater importance than it otherwise might have had.

Some teachers submitted work resulting from the programme, through the Teacher Learning Academy, for accreditation by the GTC (see next chapter). The programme leaders saw it as an important element in a broad strategy to change the culture of teaching and learning in the school. They wanted to use it to promote more discussion about professional issues among the staff, and to encourage greater openness in evaluating and sharing their practice.

In other case study schools staff development activity benefited from strategic planning at senior level, with clear goals, budgets and time scales. In one primary school, for example, an external consultant was contracted to train the senior leadership team in the monitoring skills they needed to check the progress of a programme to improve pupils' performance in mathematics. In some, participation and support for a programme was extended to parents and governors, such as offering them a school-based ICT programme and providing evening sessions for parents on how children perform mathematical calculations.

iii) Lesson observation and feedback

These were found to be significant ingredients in every initiative or programme deemed successful, and were the development activities most commonly praised and singled out as effective in interviews with staff at all levels. Comments ranged from appreciation of developmental feedback from a respected colleague to the view that it was better to have a colleague than an inspector identify weaknesses.

At a primary school tasked with effecting rapid improvement in teaching quality, the new headteacher observed every teacher's mathematics lesson within the first two weeks of the start of the programme. Employing criteria derived from the Ofsted inspection framework, each teacher completed before the observation an initial self-evaluation of teaching and learning in mathematics using a 4-point scale. Most rated the quality of teaching and learning at point 3 on the scale (satisfactory), which in most cases coincided with the head's view following observation. The head gave individual feedback, which identified strengths and areas for development.

This round of lesson observations pinpointed weaknesses across the board in mental/oral mathematics, challenge for able pupils, pace of lessons and passive learning. Lesson observation, to a consistent schedule and completed early in the

initiative, was important in giving the headteacher a secure basis of evidence from which to indicate areas for improvement. The teachers welcomed the feedback they received: they were unused to receiving highly specific developmental commentary on their work.

At another primary school as part of an initiative to develop subject leadership, the headteacher undertook joint lesson observations first with leaders of English, mathematics and ICT and then with the leaders of the other subjects. The aims were to improve the subject leaders' knowledge of how their subjects were taught and to develop their skills in making judgements about teaching and learning. Feeding back effectively after lesson observation was recognised as promoting an agreed understanding among the staff of what constitutes excellent teaching and learning.

In many schools, the impact of staff development was measured through classroom observations that focused on the area in which staff had been trained. Feedback was collated by the staff development coordinator to plan next steps. A fairly inexperienced teacher said:

> The chance to see other people teaching has been very valuable. We have used a set of proper criteria for observations, and this has helped to confirm the fact that I am a good teacher.

Although in very different circumstances, a similar pattern was adopted in the case study school in special measures where the SLT, with support from external consultants, undertook and coached middle leaders in standardised observations to the Ofsted model. In turn, the middle leaders observed teaching alongside post holders within their departments. According to the headteacher, good practice has been disseminated and leadership distributed effectively.

Collaborative teaching, in which two teachers observe each other's practice, featured in a number of school improvement programmes. At a special school, for example, pairs of colleagues observe and reflect on their work with pupils with particular learning difficulties. At a secondary school, the 'Leading in Learning' programme involved, during the course of a school year, all 120 teachers helping to plan, observing and filming a colleague's lesson. We found, however that establishing a series of mutual observations achieved little unless connected to a broader programme with specific purposes that were clearly understood by the participants.

In another primary school, lesson planning and mutual observation took place between two teachers and a subject leader. The deputy headteacher regarded it as a source of very good development for staff as they witnessed the subject leader feeding back on a lesson they have observed. However, experience in this school underlined the importance of adequate preparation and training in observation and feedback: the lack of such training was reflected in the comments made in some of the interviews we held with the staff taking part.

iv) Modelling and discussing

Observing good and interesting practice and then reflecting on it featured prominently in the staff development activity we followed in several of the case study schools. In one primary school all the teachers, in pairs, observed the head teaching a daily mathematics lesson. Each visit was followed by a debriefing session. This was a key

component in the new headteacher's programme to establish a common understanding among the staff of quality in teaching and learning.

The Head of English at one secondary school tailored support for literacy to individual departments, such as planning literacy opportunities in the science schemes of work and teaching them through both subjects. Through meetings and team teaching, she showed the ICT and mathematics departments how to structure writing frames to assist students with coursework. She also helped the music department build opportunities for extended writing into their lessons.

Another secondary school used its seven Advanced Skills Teachers systematically to provide packages of support over periods of six weeks. These involved working alongside individual teachers on lesson planning and behaviour management through modelling and team teaching. The packages were available to support all teachers, although they were supplied mainly to those who, following observation, were thought to require specific assistance. According to those interviewed, the impact of the programme had been very positive; it was recognized as developmental and was beginning to be applied to support teaching staff other than those with acknowledged difficulties.

Modelling lessons played an important part in the staff development work of the Advanced Skills Teacher in one of the primary case study schools. This teacher supported the teachers of each year group in turn with assessment for learning (AfL), which was one of the main priorities for improvement for the school, and with problem solving. She also regularly substituted for colleagues to enable them to engage in peer observation and reflection. Another part of her work was to conduct action research on pupils' problem solving strategies and disseminate the findings among her colleagues. In this variety of ways, this school's AST was used as an adaptable resource to support the development of her colleagues.

v) Looking beyond immediate experience

A consistent feature of successful staff development activity in all the case study schools was that they involved the individuals concerned thinking about and engaging with practice beyond their immediate experience. Although the school initiatives focused on improving the quality of classroom practice they were not narrowly restricted in their scope; they all offered opportunities for teachers to develop a sense of how their work fitted into a broader picture of how the school operated and of how it could contribute to the school's improvement overall.

A good example was the pattern of 'learning walks' established at one primary school, which took place in two stages over the course of half a term. In the first stage the headteacher visited every classroom over two mornings, with a focus on observing active and independent learning in mathematics among the pupils. The head fed back her impressions to each teacher and 'published' on the staffroom notice board her overall findings, along with what had been agreed with each teacher would be the next steps. In the second stage, each of the teachers undertook a learning walk in the same way as the headteacher had done, gave feedback and presented their findings and agreed next steps on the staff notice board. By the end of the half term, every teacher had visited every other teacher's classroom, engaged in discussion and committed ideas to paper. The headteacher felt that this strategy for developing in every member of staff a sense of the 'bigger picture' of how the school worked was an essential element in

helping to establish a common understanding of quality in teaching and learning, a view confirmed in interviews with several of those who had taken part.

In another primary school the teachers employed regular staff meetings to share and reflect on their experience of how they used ICT in subject teaching: what had been successful, what had been challenging and how they could move forward. Each teacher maintained a portfolio of evidence about how they used ICT, which they shared to exchange ideas and solve problems. The school holds three folders of examples of effective and interesting practice in the use of ICT, to which the staff contribute.

As part of an initiative to improve transition, the literacy consultant at a junior school observed Year 2 numeracy lessons at the neighbouring infants school in order to identify systems and good practice to be built on when the children first enter the school.

The 'Leading in Learning' initiative at one secondary school enabled every teacher, many for the first time, to observe and discuss lessons in a subject other than their own. The leaders of this initiative thought this an important ingredient making for success, a view confirmed in interviews with several of the teachers who had taken part.

At another secondary school one of the PE teachers undertook action research, submitted for Chartered London Teacher (CLT) accreditation, on the role of sport as a way of raising self-esteem among boys. He identified 12 Year 9 students who behaved well in PE but were disruptive in all other subjects. He appointed them as activity leaders to organise inter-tutor group six-a-side football competitions at break time. They were responsible for the design, organisation, advertising and promotion of the activities as well as the refereeing and day-to-day running of the competitions. This involved the students talking to individual tutor groups as well as announcing fixtures and results in year group assemblies. The activity leaders were placed on monitoring cards in order to evaluate behaviour and progress in their normal lessons. This proved a powerful form of professional development for the teacher-researcher and made a direct contribution to achieving improvement with high priority for the school as a whole.

Evaluating the impact of staff development

In its 2006 survey of staff development arrangements, Ofsted (2006b) found that few of the 29 schools visited by inspectors successfully evaluated the impact of CPD – the last link in their 'logical chain' - on the quality of teaching and on pupils' achievement; nor did they have effective methods for assessing the value for money of their staff development activities. Evaluation was the weakest link in the training and development cycle and, with some minor qualification, we found that our case study schools conformed to this judgement.

The senior staff we interviewed in all the case study schools recognised the importance of evaluating staff development programmes. 'Time is too precious to waste on things that won't make a difference' was a typical comment. The practicalities of effective evaluation and assessing value for money were found difficult in all the case study schools. Because they were not a random selection of schools and had been chosen on grounds of their interesting approaches to staff development, it is probably safe to infer that the evaluation of the impact of staff development activities is weaker in schools generally than in our case studies.

i) Evaluating the impact of courses

Attempts were made in all the schools to gather evaluations of the quality of courses attended by individual members of staff. This typically involved describing the course briefly on an evaluation form and rating its overall quality, with a senior member of staff responsible for following up on low scores and making representations to the course provider. In this way an informal understanding would be built up of the quality of different training providers and the value for money their products represented. As noted earlier, some external courses were seen as prohibitively expensive.

In some schools teachers would be asked to complete a form explaining their request to attend a training event and what impact they hoped it would have on their teaching and on their students' performance. In some an individual's immediate feedback would be followed up in a meeting with a line manager some weeks later to discuss the nature and quality of the impact of the course. However in interviews doubts were frequently expressed about the efficacy of such methods. Although one headteacher commented that her staff were very good at evaluating training and would let her know if anything wasn't useful and another cited the school's outstanding inspection report as proof of the impact of its investment in staff development, leaders in most schools emphasised the difficultly of measuring the impact of staff development and arriving at a true representation of its effect on the school, especially in terms of improved outcomes.

Most of the case study schools had a system for enabling, and in some cases obliging, the dissemination of learning among colleagues. In the primary schools it was usually done in time set aside for the purpose in staff meetings. This was widely recognized as inadequate and senior staff in all the schools acknowledged the difficulty of ensuring the transfer of knowledge and expertise among the staff. The most successful examples we encountered involved the use of training days when groups of staff led sessions for their colleagues. These tended to work well because sufficient time had been allocated and the teachers were trusted and respected colleagues rather than unknown quantities from outside. But training or INSET days were not always well used and rarely evaluated.

ii) Evaluating the impact of in-house staff development

The school improvement initiatives whose progress we followed often had a variety of associated staff development components, involving activities of different types over the course of an extended period. Unlike in the schools surveyed in 2006 by Ofsted, we found a generally clear identification at the planning stage of the in-house staff development activities' intended outcomes. The chief reason for this is that the initiatives we followed had arisen from a process of self–evaluation and recorded as part of each school's SEF. That meant that the desired outcomes were virtually implicit in the design of the programmes and any related staff development linked to these.

We also found in most of the case study schools a clear sense of how the outcomes of particular activities that formed part of the school improvement programme would be assessed and how the extent to which they were being met would be gauged. The methods included using classroom observation to look for improvements in lesson organisation and students' responses of specific kinds; interviewing children; looking at lesson plans; and surveying pupils' work. Sometimes small-scale evaluations of this kind were performed highly effectively, such as when the four members of a primary school's senior leadership team looked at work in mathematics produced by selected pupils in each class. The focus was on the quality of the teachers' written responses, particularly

the clarity with which they indicated the next steps for learning. The main findings were shared at a staff meeting and used to agree and plan the next stage of the initiative.

The impact on individuals' self esteem was vital. As a teaching assistant said, 'all the CPD at this school has built me up as a person, not just helped me do my job better'. In another school an experienced member of staff said, 'I've developed rapidly as a result of working here'. The impact of learning sometimes had downsides as one nursery nurse wryly found. A consequence of having had training in rectal diazepam for children having epileptic fits meant that now she had to constantly be on call when the emergency alarm rang!

iii) Low impact staff development

People found it hard to identify staff development which had little or no impact, which did not provide value for money or which was a waste of time. As one school leader said, 'I'm a great believer in CPD – whether it's good or bad, it does make you think differently'. A third of our case study schools had encouraged many middle managers to enrol onto the *Leading from the Middle* programme but found its impact variable depending heavily on the quality of the tutors. Other factors that made a difference included the stage that individuals were at; whether they liked coaching or being coached; whether they were reflective; and whether they felt comfortable with what people called 'the management-speak' in NCSL programmes. One deputy, emphasising the importance of reflection, noted:

> NCSL programmes can slip because they rely on good levels of commitment. People should see the reflection that the programmes require as a welcome break from the daily drudgery.

One secondary school administrator had been on an assertiveness training course which hadn't helped but the school-based training that was set up for her did have a positive impact.

However, we found a weaker sense of how the impact of staff development activities would be evaluated overall and of how their value for money would be assessed. The experience of one secondary school was particularly instructive, and is worth describing in detail.

This school's improvement project whose progress we tracked had clearly articulated aims:

- To improve classroom practice in promoting independent learning among students through developing the confidence of teachers in using effective strategies
- To promote a shift in the prevailing culture among teachers – to achieve greater openness in their attitude towards discussing and sharing teaching approaches and encourage the students to regard teachers as learners
- To improve the performance of students as independent learners.

However, little was done at the outset to plan how the project's leaders could gauge its effectiveness and no external evaluation was envisaged. Attempts to judge the effectiveness of the initiative at its conclusion in relation to its aims were as follows:

1. A request for a free text email response (optional) to the Project Manager, supplemented by informal conversations. All the responses received were positive, for example:
    - I try to bring in one of the thinking skills as often as possible
    - It gave me the opportunity to step off the treadmill and think about how I teach
    - I have seen a rapid improvement in the evaluative skills of my Year 10 students. I would generally not expect them all to reach this level until later in the year
2. Departmental teams were encouraged to share perceptions gained through the project, but this did not happen in all cases and the results were not collated
3. The project manager interviewed some students whose teachers had been involved, but found it difficult to get information that was both useful and reliable.

We posed questions about the cost of the project and about how the school planned to determine the return it was getting from the investment of time, energy and money. The answers were generally uncertain, other than that the school's four permanently employed cover supervisors had stood in for the teachers, and a few hundred pounds had been spent on video equipment. Some heads of department thought that the project had brought benefits to teachers generally – the opportunity to see another subject taught; making explicit the teaching of specific skills; and encouraging reluctant colleagues to engage in discussion of their practice. However, other than the video sequences being used as a resource in the school's virtual teaching and learning environment, there was no strategy for sustaining or building on the learning gained through the project.

In many ways this was a highly successful initiative; the school had managed to complete a complex project involving all of its 120 teachers. Positive, if generalized, feedback from teachers showed that it had probably helped to improve practice, but it was unclear in what respects or to what extent. There was no systematic attempt to gauge the impact on the degree of independence demonstrated by students. As a result, the project leaders knew they had done something significant but they did not know exactly how or in what ways it was significant; and they were not sure what to do next to build on its success. How outcomes had been improved and the quality of teaching and learning enhanced was not made clear.

Conclusion: Is staff development an input or an outcome?

Our discussions with people at all levels in the case study schools suggest that a key obstacle to a better appreciation of the impact of staff development lies in the way that it is conventionally defined. In most cases school staff think of staff development as activities to be engaged in rather than as the actual development of their knowledge and expertise, which may (or may not) result from their participation in such activities. They conceive of staff development in terms of inputs and not as the changes effected in their thinking and practice. There is little reference to *outcomes* – what will happen as a result of this staff development activity?

This misconception is encouraged by some of the 'official' definitions of development offered to school staff. The recent guidance from the TDA (2007a) for example begins with the following:

> Continuing professional development (CPD) consists of reflective activity designed to improve an individual's attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills. It supports individual needs and improves professional practice. There are many possible sources of CPD ……. Some forms of CPD may encompass elements from more than one of these sources.

In our view staff development itself is not one activity, or set of activities. It is not definable as a course, a series of courses, a programme of training or study, or even as a set of learning experiences. Rather, staff development is the upshot or outcome that may result from any or all of these activities and from the individual's reflection on day-to-day experience of doing the job.

Most people would agree that the strength of a profession resides in the capacity of its members to challenge, test and develop the knowledge and understanding on which its practice is based. Most accept that a world class education system requires teachers and other practitioners who think about what they are doing; who reflect on its quality; who experiment with new approaches and gauge their success; and who develop new ways of working as a result.

In response, a good deal of attention has been paid in recent years to judging the quality of schools' arrangements for promoting the development of their staff. This is both understandable and worthwhile, but it may not be the best starting point because it encourages the perception of staff development as *input*: something that schools provide rather than the learning of individuals. During the course of our research we found it interesting to begin interviews with teachers and support staff by asking how they thought their practice had developed while they had been at their current school. We found this a useful first question because it encouraged people to think about what they had got better at rather than about the activities that they had been involved in. Our follow–up questions asked about how they knew they had developed, which moved the discussion on to how the school had supported them.

We believe that this example illustrates the kind of change in emphasis required from external agencies, including Ofsted, to encourage a mature approach to thinking about and understanding the quality of the development of school staff. In schools the professional standards framework can provide the basis for a vocabulary for such conversations and the new structure of teaching and learning reviews (performance management) provides the opportunity for them to take place. Without that understanding, staff development will continue to be regarded merely as a series of courses and other occasions or events, rather than as the change, development and improvement of practice for the benefit of learners.

Utilising a broader definition of staff development, such as that advocated in the next chapter, will assist this growth in maturity. In Chapter 4 we consider further the key factors that need to be in place to ensure that staff development leads to school improvement.

Chapter 4: Key factors to ensure that staff development leads to school improvement

For staff development to ensure that the journey leads from self-evaluation to improvement, it seems from our research that ten factors are important in using the outcomes of self-evaluation accurately to identify staff development needs and in efficiently organising appropriate opportunities (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Ten factors for success

1. The leadership and management of staff development needs to be effective
2. People need a clear shared understanding of staff development
3. The school needs to develop a learning-centred culture
4. Individuals' development should be linked to the analysis of needs through performance management and career development as well as self-evaluation and school improvement
5. The goal, and the reasons for it, must be clear and ultimately should make a difference to pupils
6. The quickest, most effective and best value for money forms of PD should be chosen based on what will suit individuals
7. Staff development that involves discussing, coaching, mentoring, observing and developing others is highly effective
8. Time needs to be made for staff development
9. Staff development should be monitored and its impact needs to be evaluated
10. Learning and development should be shared, acknowledged and celebrated for improvement to be sustained.

These ten factors making for success are explored with further illustrations from our research.

1. *The leadership and management of staff development need to be effective*

Staff development does not just happen. It has to be managed and led, and done so effectively ensuring it has a positive impact and represents good value for money. We, like others (e.g. Goodall *et al*., 2005; Hustler *et al*., 2003; Ofsted, 2006b), found that the status, knowledge and approach of CPD leaders affected the chance of staff development being taken seriously and leading to school improvement. For they have the power to make a significant difference to their colleagues and thereby raise pupil achievement, but they also risk wasting a great deal of time and money.

Here are descriptions of two of the project schools' staff development leaders:

> K is the deputy head of a comprehensive. Not only is he highly respected as an established teacher and school leader but his work in the induction of new teachers and staff development has a national reputation through his running of courses, appearing on Teachers TV, lecturing at the local university and publishing of books. He sets a good example in being a lifelong learner through for instance completing a doctorate while working and reading books and the educational press to keep up to date. As deputy, he takes an important role in the SEF, performance management, managing the budget and school improvement.
>
> M is the full-time Training School and CPD Manager. Young and with a background in project management rather than teaching, he successfully manages the training school budget and organises the development of all staff, from the bespoke to whole school INSET days. He is very good at keeping track of who's done what and offers a menu of development activities that take account of the expertise and experience of adults in the school and community, money, time and resources.

More often, however, the staff development leader role was subsumed under the title head, deputy or assistant head.

Leaders with a clear strategy developed simple procedures to help ensure that staff development worked. Application and evaluation forms carried subliminal messages about the priority and importance given to staff development and the need for it to be planned to have an impact on pupils.

2. *People need a clear shared understanding of staff development*

We found that staff development is understood with varying degrees of sophistication by people in different schools. Schools in which people had a broad and deep understanding of what staff development means seemed to make more rapid improvement than where development was synonymous with 'a day off going on a course'. Individuals showed this understanding when we asked them questions such as 'What staff development has been most beneficial?'. Some people only spoke of courses that they had attended but others said such things as 'learning from how x handles things has been the best training'. School policies for staff development often had strong statements, such as:

> Learning from each other…learning from what works.
>
> Effective and focused Continuing Professional Learning and Development has a central role to play in securing and sustaining whole school improvement.
>
> CPD is an entitlement and responsibility for all staff and supports them to maximise their effectiveness and develop their career potential.

The definitions used were often broader than the TDA's view of professional development as 'reflective activity designed to improve an individual's attributes,

knowledge, understanding and skills' (2007a). Some were closer to our own view or definition which is that staff development is:

> an ongoing process encompassing all formal and informal learning experiences that enable all staff in schools, individually and with others, to think about what they are doing, enhance their knowledge and skills and improve ways of working so that pupil learning and well-being are enhanced as a result. It should achieve a balance between individual, group, school and national needs; encourage a commitment to professional and personal growth; and increase resilience, self-confidence, job satisfaction and enthusiasm for working with children and colleagues. (Bubb and Earley, 2007, p4)

As discussed in the last chapter, school staff often have a limited view of staff development, thinking of it mainly as activities to be engaged in rather than as the actual development of their knowledge and expertise which results from such participation. Staff development is seen predominantly in terms of *inputs* and not as the changes related to their thinking and practice.

Understandings of staff development were also aided by the school's staff development policy which was not just a piece of paper but living practice – policies were real and not simply something devised mainly for Ofsted and put on the shelf until the time it was needed!

3. *The school needs to develop a learning-centred culture*

Most of the schools we studied had developed a learning-centred culture where adult learning was valued as highly as pupil learning. Indeed, the very fact that their leaders agreed to take part in our research was indicative of the kind of places they were. Many of the schools had 'Investors in People' status, a quality kitemark of organizations that look after their staff. The staffrooms we visited were happy places, buzzing with conversations about children's learning. A teaching assistant in a special school said, 'I love working here – the staff, the kids, everything. Everyone is great; there's a culture of everyone learning together and passing skills on'.

This emphasis on learning was made explicit in a primary school where the deputy carried out an audit of all the adults' talents, skills and hobbies. The results were impressive and were shared in an assembly so that the pupils could see not only how talented the adults were but also how they were life-long learners.

Many schools had useful resources to support adult learning including shelves in the staffroom for publications; the storing of resources and links to handy websites on the school intranet; and reminders on noticeboards about interesting TV programmes and events. Some schools had rooms for staff learning. A secondary school had turned the attic of an old part of the Victorian building into a staff development suite, consisting of an office/meeting room, a training room with computers for about 12 people and a staff library/conversation room. These rooms were quaint but comfortable and much used by staff for their own development and for events offered to other schools.

Staffing structures in many schools reflected a learning-centred culture. In a primary school two people had been encouraged to work towards higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) status and were put in charge of leading and managing the other classroom

assistants. They trained and observed their teams giving feedback in a developmental way.

Several of our schools had a policy of encouraging people to achieve Advanced Skills Teacher status and to work with other staff in the school. One primary school decided to fund an AST from their own budget rather than through the local authority so that they could use her entirely for themselves. A secondary school with a staff of 120 had a team of eight ASTs who were used to develop other individuals in six-week intensive programmes. People either opted for this intensive support to improve their teaching or were nominated because their teaching was graded only satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Schools seized opportunities to develop individuals. For instance, a midday supervisor in a special school enjoyed being with the children and used to stay on after her shift if any help was needed. She was offered a job as a teaching assistant and after a few years the headteacher supported her in applying for and gaining funding for a NVQ (level 3) teaching assistant course at the local further education college. It was hard work as her own schooling had been badly affected by being a young carer but she had much help from staff at school. She received an Achievements Award at a ceremony at the Town Hall and is now studying for a NVQ3 in childcare. The school is supporting her ambition to become a nursery nurse.

4. *Individuals' development should be linked to the analysis of needs through performance management and career development as well as self-evaluation and school improvement*

Schools that made successful journeys to improvement had integrated systems so that staff development linked naturally with performance management and self-evaluation for all adults. One school leader said:

> You can't separate them can you? It's all about raising attainment through the quality of teaching and learning. How do you make sure your staff are 'up to it'? You do this through appropriate training. You identify what your priorities are and where you need to put the training because you've done the self-evaluation and put it in your SEF.

In many of our London schools, all the teachers were registered on the Chartered London Teacher status scheme so its standards and structure were becoming fundamental to school-wide performance management and staff development.

In some schools performance management contributed strongly to keeping a school improvement project on track because individuals' targets were closely related to the overall goal. Gaining people's 'buy-in' was vital to improvement (only individuals can learn and change) and they wanted to feel listened to, valued and have their needs met. The Training and Development Agency has argued that school staff are too rarely engaged in a systematic analysis of their needs, and that both they and their schools too rarely assess the type of staff development that is likely to be most effective in meeting identified needs (TDA, 2007a). Collating everyone's needs was important to identify areas of commonality and get the whole picture. One primary school headteacher used a free online audit service which enabled him to see the big picture of staff areas for development. He found common areas of need around ICT and so set up training sessions in using Microsoft Word and PowerPoint at three different levels. In teaching

French, he found that only one teaching assistant and two teachers felt confident so he used them to train and support others.

All schools in our project had PM systems for teachers, although some invested more time and attention in it than others. For instance, one school said that each PM review was planned well and took at least an hour. Not all schools had established systems for the PM of support staff. However, it was working well in this secondary school:

> The performance management of the 70 support staff is led by the headteacher's personal assistant who is so passionate about raising the status of support staff that she has become leader of the local support staff training hub. She ensures that induction and PM reviews are rigorous (not just a paper exercise) through training reviewers. She encourages people to do formal qualifications such as NVQ2 and 3 so that there is recognition that they've moved forward. Even though the school does not have any more HLTA posts, four people are applying for HLTA status because it seems exciting and a way to raise their status. One of the four had previously been a very negative person, which the school thinks shows that PM and staff development have made a difference.

Some schools were using PM well to develop individuals' careers. A woman who started off working in the office of a primary school had become the bursar and a member of the senior leadership team. The school supported her in doing the NCSL certificate and diploma in school business management. She is now undertaking a MBA in this field.

A few schools used the National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants (NAPTA) Professional Development Review, which is a computer-based self-assessment tool that highlights teaching assistants' strengths and any areas that they feel would benefit from development. A nursery nurse in a special school found it very useful: 'It made me look at what I'd done and where I should go next'.

5. *The goal, and the reasons for it, must be clear and ultimately should make a difference to pupils*

It was clear from our research that hearts and minds had to be won if everyone – students and staff alike - were to work towards their own and collective goals leading to school improvement. Time and money were precious resources and so, as one school leader said, 'staff need to see the point of any training'.

The goals for staff development related directly or indirectly to pupils. As a learning support assistant said, 'If anything I can learn can benefit the children, I'll do it'. Another TA in a special school said, 'When you see individual children develop - like walk when they've been wheelchair-bound - it's amazing'. This focus on what staff development was for was fundamental, especially to the success of school-wide initiatives. One primary school gave its pupils an online questionnaire to see how they felt about the school. The lowest satisfaction response was to the question 'Do other children behave well?'. Only 45 percent answered positively, which came as a surprise. As a result, the staff allocated one training day to staff development on managing behaviour.

Leaders often thought carefully about how to launch and implement new ways to improve the school. Some chose well-known speakers to inspire staff on training days, others went for the headteacher's frank explaining of the need for change and one chose

'ordinary' respected teachers to lead an initiative to achieve a bottom-up rather than top-down feel.

Maintaining momentum was difficult. One deputy of a school in special measures said that reiterating key messages about what needed to be better was vital: 'We just keep repeating the sales talk to chivvy or the bottom line is jfdi – just flipping do it!'. Another member of staff said, 'It's important for school leaders to walk the talk, doing what everyone is expected to do is strong persuasion'. However, another school's staff development leader set a poor example by spending much of the budget on himself and had a reputation for leaving external courses and events half way through.

One primary school in a very deprived area where over a quarter of pupils had refugee status devoted one of their training days to having their personalities analysed. This might seem a little superfluous but the headteacher decided on this as a strategy for school improvement because 'relationships between people who are very stressed are so important'. It started with everyone reading the headteacher's 20 page profile. 'They saw me in a different way and understood why I do things and how to handle me'. The results helped people pinpoint their learning preferences so that they're in a better position to select learning experiences that suit them.

Giving people some element of choice in staff development was seen as important by some schools with one headteacher saying that 'staff need to feel they can influence what is provided and take responsibility for it having an impact – it's not something that's 'done to you'. For instance, all the teachers in a small primary were given three half-days to enhance their professional development in any way they chose, such as working with other staff in school, visiting colleagues in other schools, courses or self-directed learning. If they wanted to go out for a whole day, they could choose to use their PPA time and/or negotiate with the head to cover them. All staff had to complete an evaluation sheet focusing on the impact of how they had spent the time.

6. *The quickest, most effective and best value for money forms of PD should be chosen based on what will suit individuals*

We were impressed with the range of ways that people in the schools were developing. Many had a very broad menu - perhaps more than is typical – which could be categorised into four overlapping groups, as below.

- *Individual* – thinking; reading books, periodicals and the educational press; self study; watching programmes including those on Teachers TV; keeping a learning log or reflective diary.

- *Within school* – talking to other staff (peers and those with expertise); coaching/mentoring; training days; staff/team meetings; being observed; discussing a lesson; observing someone (a teacher, an assistant, a football coach, a learning mentor, anyone) teach; collaborative planning; team teaching; listening to pupils' views; observing some learners; seeing the world through the eyes of a pupil; action research groups; trying things out and doing things differently; taking on a new role; training others.

- *Cross-school networks* – formal and informal networks; visiting other schools, similar to or different from yours; reading and talking to others on the *TES* online

staffroom; working with people, such as ASTs, from other schools; networks of local schools or ones set up for a specific project; developing people from other schools.

- *Other external expertise* – for example one day events, courses leading to a qualification or status (foundation degrees, MAs, NVQs); blended learning programmes that involve some external expertise and school-based activity (NCSL programmes such as NPQH, LftM; London Gifted and Talented networks; conferences; working with or seeking advice from consultants, local authorities, universities, government agencies or subject associations.

One primary school used free online audits (freeonlinesurveys.com) to gauge how teachers and support staff felt about different types of development. It was quick and easy for people to do and the data were analysed simply, as can be seen in Figure 4.2. The findings from the audits were used to provide more of the types of development which people felt most useful and thus provided good value for money.

Figure 4.2: Which kind of development is most useful?

	Teachers (n=19)	*Support staff (n=18)*
Most useful	Lesson observations	1:1 coaching
	School-based training	School-based training
	1:1 coaching	Lesson observations
	External INSET	External INSET
Least useful	Reading and web research	Reading and web research

Figure 4.3 shows how the headteacher checked how people were feeling about the new and unusual direction the school was moving in: developing themselves by training staff from other schools.

Figure 4.3: What do you think of the school's commitment to working with other schools, using school staff as trainers?

	Teachers (19)	*Support staff (18)*
Great	13	12
A good idea	6	2
Quite a good idea	-	4
Not a good idea	-	-
Terrible idea	-	-

7. *Staff development that involves discussing, coaching, mentoring, observing and developing others is highly effective*

Staff development that involves discussing, coaching, mentoring, observing and training others was highly effective. The commitment and professionalism of staff who led in-house staff development sessions seemed to be greatly valued in all schools. Indeed, staff who planned and presented training enjoyed a means of development in its own right. In many schools, there was a culture of developing each other and benefiting from doing so. In one training school with large numbers of GTP, PGCE and NQTs the coaching culture was so strong that hardly anyone mentioned it: it had become implicit in

all they do. It used its eight ASTs to develop individuals whose teaching needs to be better through a six week programme of support which includes planning, modeling, observation, team teaching and discussion. For instance, a drama teacher requested support with a Year 8 class so an AST worked with her to raise their self esteem and improve group dynamics. Because the support is developmental and not punitive even successful experienced teachers request support to help them make their teaching even better and pupils more independent, interested and engaged.

There was a great deal of lesson observation happening in all the case study schools. Where it made a difference, it was a platform for discussing specific learning and teaching. People learned a great deal from seeing different strategies used in practice. One teacher said the discussions about her lessons boosted her so that there was a snowball effect: recognition and success bred even greater success.

Three of the nine case study schools used their staff to train people in other organizations. For instance, eight teachers from a secondary school ran a bespoke programme of middle leader development in a local special school. It was felt that they met the special school teachers' needs in a more effective way than a national programme such as *Leading from the Middle*. The secondary school was also involved in contributing staff to lead some of the 60 sessions offered as part of the borough-wide training day for all schools because of its potential to develop individuals. A tight supportive structure was given to help them, such as input, followed by workshop activities, and then discussion and action planning.

A very successful primary school in challenging circumstances, marketed itself as a training provider for aspects in which it felt it had something special to share. The income earned paid for treats for pupils and staff but the main benefit came, from the rationale that 'training others helps you be a better teacher and leader' (headteacher).

In contrast, one school bought two days' of staff training from an outside provider when there were highly experienced people working in the school who could have done this as well. It was very expensive, in money and time. Had the school used its own expertise, needs may have been met in a more bespoke fashion at a greatly reduced cost.

8. *Time needs to be made for staff development*

Workload was a widespread concern in all the schools and some staff felt that they were suffering from initiative fatigue. One school tackled this by training staff to use computers and programmes more efficiently, in order to improve their worklife balance. The headteacher said, 'If you're trained, you will do things more quickly and with less stress'.

The statutory ten percent time for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) which became statutory in September 2005, although beneficial, seems to have had a detrimental effect on time for staff development. Headteachers were more reluctant to let people out of the classroom because of the increased disruption to pupil learning and behaviour. Some secondary schools in particular either restricted or placed an embargo on staff development that required time out of lessons. Restrictions included rules such as no more than two teachers being out of school for a day for staff development. Local authority advisers noticed a drop in bookings for courses because of this, seeing schools as more likely to ask for sessions to be run in their own buildings as twilights or INSET days instead of sending people out on courses.

It was interesting to see how school leaders were 'boxing clever' to make best use of time for staff development and thinking creatively about activities that did not disrupt pupil learning or add to other adults' workload. Several schools in the project remodelled their workforce, distributing leadership and responsibilities across more people. This gave more opportunity for career progression and on the job development. For instance, a new post of lead teaching assistant was formed in a primary school and this had a powerful effect on the person's development and self esteem:

> I've been given more responsibility which I like – I look after supply teachers when they come to the school and cover classes and take a low achieving maths group.

In another primary school an additional teacher with a high level of experience and skills was based in each two class year group. She or he planned with the two class-assigned teachers, covering their PPA and CPD time, and supporting their practice by modelling, team teaching, etc.

Schools involved with initial teacher education and nursery nurse courses found that having trainees on placements was valuable development for the people they worked with as well as freeing up time for more staff development. Portfolio systems helped people use time for staff development well. In one comprehensive which has training school status, portfolios were working well because people got into good habits during their training; all staff (including support staff) were expected to keep them, bring them to meetings and use them.

Schools were creative in finding time for staff development. Often this came about by saving time on meetings for administrative purposes. For instance, a primary school cut its meetings to a minimum by making more use of the online diary which all staff have access to and which is on the staffroom's large plasma screen.

A secondary school has a series of staff development sessions between 8:30 and 10:00am every fortnight. All staff are free to attend as students arrive at 10:00am, instead of 9:00am. In the hour that teaching is lost, learning isn't because students have to complete e-learning tasks prepared by each department. Students without a computer at home, complete the tasks in the school's computer suite either from 9:00-10:00am or after school. Staff feedback was very positive. They felt supported in their development; they found it beneficial because it is not a one off session but continuous; they thought that mornings were a better time for learning than twilights.

A special school runs staff development for 45 minutes on Thursday mornings before pupils arrive. This training is mandatory for all staff and it includes outside presenters. The tight time limit meant that much was covered and time was used well in that people were receptive to learning because they were fresh. A few staff felt that they would have preferred to use that time for the classroom ('I want to be getting on with my work'), didn't concentrate as they were thinking of the day ahead, and resented the one size fits all mandatory aspect. Most staff appreciated that all learning was relevant to some degree, even if the training was about a disability which no-one in their class had.

One secondary school's senior leadership team of 11 people have moved from meeting on Wednesdays after school to having 'thinking dinners' and occasional residentials from

Friday after school to Saturday lunchtime. They got so much done and were refreshed. They leave school promptly, go home to change, and convene at a venue with meeting room and meal. They ensure that there are 'substantial issues on the agenda rather than trivia' and feel that it is important to develop camaraderie.

It was interesting to see how schools used the five INSET days. Most schools held them on the first or last days of a term or half-term. However, the timing was not always conducive to learning as people were either tired if it was held at the end of a term, or they wanted to spend time on preparation if it was arranged for the start of a term. It also meant that outside trainers were hard to book and expensive. A networked learning community of six primaries held a joint training day on a date – a Wednesday - when they could get a large high quality venue and inspirational speakers at low prices. In one local authority all the local secondary schools shared an INSET day, organising 60 workshops across nine school sites. As well as being able to choose activities that were more personalized, it proved to be very good development for workshop leaders.

By and large, it was felt that whole school training days were the least effective form of staff development so some schools replaced them with half days, twilight and weekend sessions. A secondary school used to have ten half-days rather than five whole days training but it affected pupil attendance so their new model is to start the school day at 8.15am and end at 2.30pm and have:

- 1 whole school INSET day on thinking skills;
- 12 after school sessions of one and half hours (2.30-4.00pm);
- 1 INSET day with staff from all the local secondary schools, involving 60 workshops across nine school sites so that individuals could choose sessions met their needs.

Another school found it effective to put two INSET days together either side of a half-term holiday for intensive learning. A TA said, 'It was great being able to immerse oneself in it'.

9. *Staff development should be monitored and its impact needs to be evaluated*

Life in all the schools in our project was very busy so monitoring that staff development had happened was very important. One deputy said, 'Like with kids, you're chivvying them along using a lot of carrot and occasionally some stick'. A few schools made use of computer systems to help the monitoring process. For instance, CPD coordinators used systems that sent automated reminders to staff.

In line with other research and inspection studies into impact and evaluation (e.g. Goodall *et al*., 2005; Ofsted, 2006b), few schools had efficient and effective ways of measuring impact. There were lots of comments such as 'we just know that things are better' but the impact of staff development and learning was rarely evaluated against: a) the intended impact, and, b) any unplanned gains. That is not to say that staff development was having no impact - far from it. But impact was seen in a range of ways, which relate to people's understanding of what staff development was. For instance, there were numerous examples of staff development which had stimulated people to think about what they were doing and improved their commitment to working with children and colleagues. One teacher said of a workshop on behaviour at the Chartered London Teacher conference:

> I wrote hardly anything but I got loads out of it. The mix of people was stimulating: primary, secondary, special. It's so nice to hear about other schools and realise that everyone has similar problems.

In another school a TA attended a course where she was treated like a profoundly disabled child in a wheelchair. It was a powerful experience which enhanced her understanding of how much disabled children were missing - and her commitment to help them.

One headteacher felt strongly about the deluge of fliers advertising over-priced courses (ones costing £200- £400 a day), such as those run by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and profit-making organizations: 'They want money up front but there seems to be little monitoring of quality'. A staff development leader in another school felt the need for real world pragmatism, saying: 'Sometimes I'm pretty sure that some CPD that an individual requests will be a waste of money but I agree to it to keep them happy, which is an important consideration'.

10. *Learning and development should be shared, acknowledged and celebrated for improvement to be sustained*

For sustainability and impact, schools found it important to disseminate and log information and resources. As the headteacher of a small school said:

> Staff need to take responsibility for other people's development – organising a staff meeting, ensuring subject knowledge is disseminated, feeding back effectively after a lesson observation - to have an impact on teaching and learning.

But finding time and systems to do so was difficult. Many schools had a regular slot in staff meetings for sharing information from courses attended but this was not always seen to be a good use of time. School staff spend much time in meetings but rarely use them well for the purposes of development and learning. Where time is precious, it needs to be used well and some of our case study schools were trying 'to work smarter rather than harder' in relation to staff development.

One school expected staff to write blogs about their development on a section of the website. These were very effective in helping staff reflect on their learning and discuss it online, as well as in person. Where dissemination was successful:

- people knew who to ask for advice
- there was greater awareness of resources
- staff saw themselves as experts
- the status of staff development was raised and adult learning becomes infectious.

Recognition and celebration of learning were also important. For instance, support staff were delighted with the certificates they received as a result of undergoing training with many keeping immaculate portfolios. One TA said:

> My own education was poor: I got suspended and expelled and missed three months' schooling. I only got two Grade C GCSEs. But I look at my peers and I'm

> proud of my achievements and a lot of that's down to working at this school. Achieving HLTA status has really raised my status.

Staff bulletins often mentioned individuals' achievements. In one secondary school, 37 teachers were awarded Chartered London Teacher status through their submissions against 12 standards and professional reflection (DfES, 2007). Two of our case study schools acknowledged and celebrated teachers' learning through the GTC(E) Teacher Learning Academy (TLA). This offers professional recognition for teachers' learning by addressing each of six core dimensions:

1) Engagement with a knowledge base
2) Assessing peer and coaching support
3) Planning a change activity
4) Carrying out the activity
5) Evaluating
6) Disseminating.

Teachers worked on projects individually and collaboratively. They were assessed by another teacher in the school, who had been trained by the GTC.

Many schools found it hard to sustain the improvement made as a result of staff development. This was because of staff turnover and needing to move on to address another priority. One primary with a high turnover of staff addressed this issue by having a rolling programme of induction to the school where new individuals were brought up to speed on developments that established staff had developed.

The headteacher of a secondary school with an ageing senior leadership team could see the need for leadership and management succession planning. The school had some very strong middle leaders who might seek promotion elsewhere so some associate assistant headship posts were created in order to retain them. They were not to be paid on the leadership scale but given a £2000 honorarium and offered a place on the NCSL's *Leadership Pathways* programme.

The above ten factors appeared to be crucial in the successful journey from identifying priorities for improvement via self-evaluation to their actual realisation. The final chapter summarises our main findings and suggestions in relation to school self-evaluation, effective staff development and the likelihood of achieving actual improvement. It also offers suggestions for further research.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Our key research question was:

> What practical steps can schools take to ensure that self-evaluation of their practice and performance leads, through the effective development of their staff, to genuine improvement?

So what can we say in conclusion? What did we find to be the key factors in the journey from identifying priorities for improvement via self-evaluation to their actual realisation?

Self evaluation and the SEF

We found that the introduction of the SEF was having an effect on the quality of schools' self-evaluative processes in several ways, including:

- Encouraging a greater thoroughness and wide-ranging evaluation of the school's work
- Providing a better understanding of evaluation
- Involving more people in school self-evaluation
- Giving greater attention to the views of stakeholders.

Completing the SEF can make people realise the need to change the strategic direction of the school and rethink their improvement priorities. The format of the SEF can reinforce the logic of the link between improvement plans and those for staff development and training.

The connection between self-evaluation processes and improvement planning was at first made only loosely in most of the case study schools but strengthened over the course of the project.

Recommendations to Ofsted for improvements to the SEF

1. More prompts requiring specific answers would be helpful to guide schools through the key issues in each section.
2. Having links between different sections of the SEF would clarify what kind of information is required where. For instance, in Section 4 (pupils' personal development and wellbeing) there is a tendency to report on what the school provides to support personal development and secure wellbeing rather than on the standards the pupils actually achieve in these areas.
3. The SEF and school development/improvement plan should be integrated into a single document.
4. The SEF should reinforce the logic of the link between improvement plans and those for staff development.
5. The format of the SEF should help schools prioritise and follow a simple, logical order. The current form is confusing in that it asks for priorities for development in Sections 3 to 6 but before these, Question 1e asks for an outline of the main priorities in the school's development plan. At the end, Section 7 asks the school to judge the effectiveness of steps taken to

promote improvement since the last inspection and as a result of its self-evaluation.

6. The SEF should contain a section about staff development.
7. Inspectors need to be rigorous and fair in their judgements and not be swayed by a SEF that is well crafted
8. Inspectors should judge a school's progress in meeting the priorities from the SEF following the judgement that is made about the school's capacity to improve.

Recommendations for senior leaders in schools:

1. Self-evaluation should be carried out for the school's benefit rather than just for the purposes of inspection.
2. The SEF should be the outcome of ongoing self-evaluation processes across the school community.
3. School leaders should ensure that the SEF is completed in an efficient and planned way.
4. The SEF should be concisely written and evaluative rather than descriptive.
5. SEFs should be shared with all staff to give the big picture of the school so that they are clear about priorities.

Staff development and school improvement

A crucial factor in creating a successful launch for school improvement initiatives and programmes was winning hearts and minds. This involved convincing staff that the proposed change was (a) desirable and (b) possible. Strategies used involved:

- sharing data
- individual accountability
- targeting the right people
- raising morale, and
- meeting needs.

We found that sustaining momentum and achieving success were more likely when the following were found:

- there was active support of the school's leadership team
- the initiative connected to other current school developments.
- staff learning strategies included a) lesson observation with developmental feedback; and b) modelling teaching with subsequent time for reflective discussion
- staff were enabled to gain a fuller picture of the context in which they were working.

Evaluating the impact of staff development was found to be the weakest link in the training and development cycle; how outcomes had been improved and the quality of teaching and learning enhanced in our case study schools were not made clear. In part this was because CPD is usually conceived in terms of activities to be engaged in (inputs) rather than as the actual development of knowledge and expertise (outcomes). The question: 'what will happen as a result of this staff development activity, including

changes effected in thinking and pupil progress?' was rarely asked. Development is the upshot or outcome that may result from any opportunity and from the individual's reflection on day-to-day experience of doing the job.

We believe a change in emphasis is required from external agencies, including Ofsted, to encourage a mature approach to thinking about and understanding the quality of the professional development of school staff. Judging the quality of schools' arrangements for promoting the professional development may not be the best starting point because it encourages the perception of staff development as *input*: something that schools provide rather than the learning of the school's workforce. Staff learning needs to be regarded as the change, development and improvement of practice for the ultimate benefit of pupils and not merely as a series of courses and other occasions or events.

Figure 5.1 summarises the main findings in relation to effective staff development and the likelihood of achieving actual improvement.

Figure 5.1: Main findings – staff development and school improvement

1. The leadership and management of staff development need to be effective
2. People need a clear, shared understanding of staff development
3. The school needs to develop a learning-centred culture
4. Effective performance management helps to identify staff learning needs
5. The goal, and the reasons for it, must be clear and ultimately should make a difference to pupils
6. The quickest, most effective and best value for money forms of PD should be chosen based on what will suit individuals
7. Staff development that involves discussing, coaching, mentoring, observing and training others is highly effective
8. Time needs to be made for reflection and development
9. Staff development should be monitored and its impact needs to be evaluated
10. Learning and development should be shared, acknowledged and celebrated for improvement to be sustained.

Managing change is never straightforward and, of course, not all change is improvement (Bubb and Earley, 2004). However, school improvement is brought about through the organisation's human resources – its people – staff and students. Capacity building and change management processes to enable schools to become learning-centred communities are central to the role of leaders, as are organising opportunities to meet the learning needs of staff, as identified through performance management (and other processes) and linked to individual and school improvement plans. No longer is staff development coordination about collating all the thousands of fliers and booking courses: the role is expanding to cover many of the core functions within a school. Indeed, some now prefer to use the term staff development or CPD *leader* rather than coordinator.

Much has been written about what constitutes effective staff development or continuing professional development (e.g. Bolam and Weindling, 2006; Cordingley *et al*, 2006; TDA, 2007a) but the factors influencing school improvement are multiple and highly complex. For staff development to ensure that the journey leads from self-evaluation to school improvement, it seems from our research that the factors identified in this report

are important in using the outcomes of self-evaluation accurately to identify staff development needs and in efficiently organising opportunities. In this way genuine school improvement is not guaranteed but its chance of being realised, we believe, is considerably enhanced.

Although the bottom line of all staff development is 'How does this improve learning opportunities for our pupils and result in enhanced outcomes?', we must not underestimate the importance of how engaged or motivated staff are in the learning process, how collaborative or reflective they became through the process or how much they enjoyed the development activities. As one of the school leaders said:

> CPD doesn't work if staff can't see the purpose. Time is too precious to waste on things which won't make a difference. But people have different expectations and learning styles – just like the children. So you need a range of opportunities which hopefully will meet the needs of the school and individuals but over a longer time frame. Some CPD is short term/needs led and other is deeper, trying to move practice forward and/or changing perceptions and expectations.

Our project has provided examples of ways in which schools can assist staff to become better at what they do but also, importantly, to become more effective in evaluating the impact of their interventions on student achievement and wellbeing. In other words to become better at ascertaining whether real improvements have occurred in the quality of teaching and learning provided by the school. Student and staff voices are vital here and for enhancing learning; many organisations are effectively engaging students' and staffs' expertise in the process, through enquiry-based learning communities. Talking to the pupils themselves about the quality of teaching and learning – how they learn, what they need to help them learn, what staff might need to know to help them learn more effectively and what they like about learning and teaching – is vital but are these not the same questions we should also be asking of the school's workforce – its teachers and support staff? Schools should move towards a more personalised approach to staff development and learning; in the same way that there is talk of personalising learning for pupils there must be the equivalent notion for the school workforce.

Further research

Ensuring that staff development has an impact on individuals and then on pupils in order to improve their wellbeing and achievement is often perceived as difficult and would benefit from further research. Guskey's (2002) model of the evaluation of staff development has been adapted to include seven levels:

1. How you felt about the activity while doing it
2. Whether you learned or improved something
3. What organisational support is needed to help you
4. What you implement as a result of the staff development activity
5. What impact this has on pupils
6. Whether there is an impact on other staff, and in turn, their pupils
7. Whether this has an impact on staff and pupils in other schools (Bubb, 2007, p53).

However, as a result of this project we have refined this further by returning to the definition of staff development as:

> an ongoing process encompassing all formal and informal learning experiences that enable all staff in schools, individually and with others, to think about what they are doing, enhance their knowledge and skills and improve ways of working so that pupil learning and wellbeing are enhanced as a result. It should achieve a balance between individual, group, school and national needs; encourage a commitment to professional and personal growth; and increase resilience, self-confidence, job satisfaction and enthusiasm for working with children and colleagues. (Bubb and Earley, 2007, p4)

Thus, people could benefit from asking, as a result of the staff development opportunities made available, whether they have:

1. thought more deeply about what they are doing?
2. enhanced their knowledge?
3. developed skills?
4. improved ways of working?
5. shown a greater commitment to professional and personal growth?
6. become more resilient?
7. gained greater self-confidence?
8. increased job satisfaction?
9. shown more enthusiasm for working with children?
10. shown more enthusiasm for working with colleagues?
11. increased any colleague's learning?
12. enhanced any colleague's wellbeing?
13. enhanced pupil wellbeing?
14. increased pupil learning?
15. increased other schools' staff learning in order to improve things for their pupils?

It would be valuable to research if and how school staff are addressing these questions.

In addition, two other areas warrant further enquiry.

i) With the introduction of new legislation about performance management and the introduction of a set of teacher standards (TDA, 2007b) and the integrated qualifications framework for staff across all children's services, it would also be timely to carry out further research into the difference that performance reviews can make to people development.

ii) The exploration of non-disruptive forms of staff development requires investigation and in particular, schools' use of the five training or INSET days.

and finally…

Most people would agree that the strength of a profession resides in the capacity of its members to challenge, test and develop the knowledge and understanding on which its practice is based. Most accept that a world class education system requires a school workforce who think about what they are doing; who reflect on its quality; who experiment with new approaches and gauge their success; and who develop new ways of working as a result. We hope that as our school system moves towards becoming 'world class' our research report *'From self-evaluation to school improvement: the importance of effective staff development'* will provide useful information for both policy makers and practitioners.

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Appendix: The journey from self-evaluation to school improvement: some examples

Our case studies are drawn upon to provide examples of schools' journeys from SEF to improvement (Sef2Si).

Example 1: Primary School

Context: Rural, 150 pupils, eight percent free school meals.

What they wanted to achieve: To have secured observable improvements in practice in all classes in the teaching of mathematics. By the end of the year these improvements would have translated into better performance by pupils, demonstrated in tests and internal school monitoring.

Why? Poor value added results in all the core subjects. The school was identified by the LA as coasting.

How?
The strategy that the new headteacher devised included sharing the data at the first INSET day of the year showing that the school was underachieving. She then developed staff through lesson observation and performance review; modelling good practice; learning walks and also through work scrutiny.

a. Lesson observation and performance review

In the first two weeks of the term the new head observed every teacher's mathematics lesson. Employing criteria derived from the Ofsted inspection framework, each teacher completed before the observation an initial self-evaluation of teaching and learning in mathematics using a 4-point scale. Most rated the quality of teaching and learning at point 3 on the scale (satisfactory), which in most cases coincided with the head's view following observation. The head gave individual feedback, which identified strengths and areas for development.

The round of lesson observations pinpointed weaknesses across the board in mental/oral mathematics, challenge for able pupils, pace of lessons and passive learning. These were virtually identical to the weaknesses identified in the last Ofsted inspection in 2001. Lesson observation, to a consistent schedule and completed early in the term, was important in giving the head a secure basis of evidence from which to indicate areas for improvement. The teachers welcomed the feedback they received: they were unused to getting developmental commentary on their work.

b. Modelling

During the first half of the term all the teachers, in pairs, observed the head teaching a daily mathematics lesson. Each visit was followed by a debriefing session.

c. Learning walks – getting the big picture

These took place in two stages during the second half of the term. In the first stage the head visited every classroom over two mornings, with a focus on observing active and independent learning in mathematics among the pupils. The head fed back her impressions to each teacher and 'published' on the staffroom notice board her overall

findings, along with what had been agreed would be the next steps. In the second stage, each teacher undertook a learning walk in the same way as the head, gave feedback and presented their findings and next steps on the staff notice board. By the end of the term, every teacher had visited every other teacher's classroom, engaged in discussion and committed ideas to paper. The head felt this was an essential strategy for developing in every member of staff a sense of the "bigger picture" of how the school worked.

d. Work scrutiny

This took place in the second week in November. The four current members of the senior leadership team looked at work in mathematics by selected pupils in each class. The focus was on the quality of the teachers' written responses, particularly the clarity with which they indicated the next steps for learning. The main findings were shared at a staff meeting.

Did it work?

Staff felt that they had learned a lot and developed professionally, saying,

> 'I have a better understanding of data and how to use it'
> 'The School Improvement Plan is no longer a mystery'
> 'Assessment now focuses more on the next steps that need to be taken'
> 'I now know that I can contribute to the success of the school'.

Ofsted inspectors wrote:

> Leaders at all levels understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and just what needs to be done next to improve further…Recent improvements to teaching and the use of data to track pupils' achievement mean progress in lessons, whilst varied, is satisfactory overall and sometimes better.

There were improvements in the Key Stage 1 results taking the school above the national comparative data for the first time in three years. There were similar results in Key Stage 2 in Maths and Science. However, one wonders why the focus was on mathematics as historically writing across the school was weaker than in other areas. The headteacher said, 'Teachers' subject knowledge and confidence in teaching writing needs further development and needs longer to embed into school practice'.

Key factors in the implementation of the programme included:

- Clear evidence-based big picture of the underachievement of pupils by the new headteacher, which won staff hearts and minds
- Clear goal
- Self-review preceded observation of all staff teaching mathematics
- Debriefing sessions encouraged talk about teaching and learning and individual developmental feedback was given. Common issues were identified and shared
- Observation in pairs with an agreed focus to allow comparison of impressions and judgements in subsequent discussion
- Rotating senior leadership team membership distributed responsibility
- Main findings and progress reported frankly and to promote discussion
- Impact was evaluated through work scrutiny and observations.

Example 2: Primary School

Context: Inner city, 346 pupils, 40 percent free school meals

What they wanted to achieve: Raising standards in mathematics

Why? Test results showed that many pupils were under achieving and that the school was not adding value.

How?

1. Clear goals and success criteria

Everybody had a common target for performance management which was 'to embed the use of curricular targets in literacy and numeracy'. It was clear from the outset that the impact must be improved progress by children, with a particular emphasis on those children currently underachieving. Teachers were asked to identify six children who had been making least progress in comparison to their prior attainment. They were able to work just with them for one hour a week while somebody else took the class. This was a deliberate strategy intended to empower and hold teachers accountable - rather than giving the group to another teacher or teaching assistant. The onus would be on the class teacher. From the outset everyone knew how they would be collecting evidence of impact. It would be through interviewing children; looking at plans and pupils' work; lesson observation; and pupil progress.

2. Data analysis

The assessment coordinator trained team leaders who then trained teachers to show them how to use and interrogate data, and the information was kept on the intranet. Every teacher had to analyse the progress their children were making themselves. Each term they had an individual meeting with the headteacher where they went through the progress each child in the class was making. With hindsight, the head thinks that this was a key to success because it emphasised individual teachers' accountability. Before, teachers were simply philosophical about some children not making progress but now they feel that the onus is on them to do something about it. This was a good way of winning hearts and minds. People realised that something needed to be done, especially because they knew that Ofsted was coming (a stick!).

3. Training

Many staff meetings and INSET days focused on mathematical teaching and learning strategies.

4. Planning

The LA maths consultant planned maths lessons with each year group. Teachers gained much more confidence and found this very useful, especially the ones who were least effective and/or inexperienced. People got more ideas about different lesson structures, pupils using whiteboards, assessment for learning techniques etc but also realised that they had to be accountable for sticking to plans - some teachers had been going their own way. However, a negative consequence was that other subjects suffered from being planned with little thought because so much time was being spent on maths. Although the consultant proved to be a valuable investment there was initial suspicion because he was an outsider.

5. AST modelling, team teaching and observing

The school's own well-respected Advanced Skills Teacher worked alongside people in their classroom modelling lessons, team teaching, discussing and carrying out observations in a very supportive developmental way. It had a high level of impact.

6. Training for the leadership team in management and monitoring skills

The school paid for an external consultant to train the leadership team in management and monitoring skills. This improved their skills and levels of confidence.

7. Parents

Parents were told what their children's targets were and how they could help. Staff ran two evening sessions for them on how children learn calculations.

8. Teaching assistants

Teaching assistants had training from the local authority on maths and in particular how to question children in order to help them think and scaffold their understanding. They made new resources for maths. Then the local authority consultant observed teaching assistants working with the resources with children in lessons, and gave developmental feedback which boosted them.

Did it work?

Inspectors wrote:

> A comprehensive programme of development, training and monitoring is leading to consistency in lesson planning and teaching. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with much that is good…The school is now using a number of well selected resources and teaching strategies to tackle the gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding. For the current Year 6, the work seen in lessons and assessment information, indicate that pupils will meet the school's targets in mathematics.

Example 3: Secondary school

Context: Urban, 1750 students, 9 percent free school meals

What they wanted to achieve and why: The *Leading in Learning* project (summer term 2006 to summer term 2007) was designed to address the priorities arising from self-evaluation about making students more independent learners. The project's leaders saw it as an important element in a broad strategy to change the culture of teaching and learning in the school. They wanted to use it to promote more discussion about professional issues among the staff, and to encourage greater openness in evaluating and sharing their practice. The project aimed to:

- improve classroom practice in promoting independent learning among students through developing the confidence of teachers in using effective strategies
- promote a shift in the prevailing culture among teachers – to achieve greater openness in their attitude towards discussing and sharing teaching approaches; and to encourage the students to regard teachers as learners
- improve the performance of students as independent learners.

How?
The school decided to use the *Leading in Learning* materials developed by the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. This involves trios or pairs of teachers planning, teaching and observing lessons in different subjects with the same lesson objectives, associated with aspects of meta-cognition.

The project was planned to work like this:

Pilot: Two teams of three teachers from different departments worked together on an aspect of 'learning to learn'. They discussed it, prepared lessons, observed each other teach and gave feedback using video recordings.

Launch: The teams shared their experiences with the whole staff in early June.

Roll out: Each of the six then teamed up with two other teachers to repeat the process with other aspects of learning to learn. By November, 15 teachers (leading thinkers) had been involved in the project, representing all subject areas. They then worked with all the other members of staff. By June, all 120 teachers had taken part in the roll out of the project and had:
(a) planned a lesson concentrating on a specific thinking skill in collaboration with a teacher of a different subject from their own;
(b) taught the lesson and had key episodes in it filmed by their colleague; and
(c) discussed the lesson and reflected on what had been learnt.

Did it work?
Monitoring ensured that all the teachers carried out the trio/pair work and in January 2007 inspectors wrote this:

> Professional development is seen as a crucial tool in improving the way teachers teach and managers manage. The result is a workforce that strives to better itself: this can only be a good thing for the students.

Key factors in the successful implementation of the programme included:

1. *Good launch.* 'Ordinary' teachers contributed to the presentation, which included a video sequence shot at the school and a series of simple and enjoyable activities. This grassroots feel was influential in getting the project off to a good start. The presenters had credibility as competent classroom practitioners rather than managers, consultants or experts.
2. *Getting the right people involved.* The choice of the pilot group of 'leading thinkers' was crucial. They were not 'the usual suspects' (bright young things who volunteer for everything) but teachers with a variety of length of experience. The selection was made with an eye on the influence that these teachers would have among their colleagues. Significantly, none of those selected refused the offer to become involved. The project's momentum was built by spreading it via the enthusiasm of key staff members.
3. *Work across subjects.* The fact that the project enabled teachers, many for the first time, to observe lessons in a subject other than their own, was thought to be an important ingredient making for success. It stimulated a great deal of reflection and discussion.
4. *Connected to other things going on in the school.* The project was deliberately linked to key management processes within the school. Each departmental team was obliged to include the progress of the project as a standing item on the agenda for its meetings. Reflection on their participation in the project was expected to feature in every teacher's performance review. A high proportion of teachers had participation in the project as one of their performance management objectives – this has helped to invest it with a greater importance than it otherwise might have had. Some teachers submitted work resulting from the project for accreditation by the GTC through the Teacher Learning Academy.
5. *Endorsement and involvement from SLT.* Good planning and follow through are highly significant factors. This was a complex initiative and required a strong steer from the SLT and the project manager to ensure that everything that was planned actually happened and happened to schedule. The project manager provided clear and persuasive leadership – he was a respected practitioner and was wholly committed to the project. Strong and persistent support reiterated at all public occasions with the whole staff from the SLT was essential too.
6. *Autonomy in implementation.* Grassroots teachers with credibility among their colleagues were delegated responsibility for making the project happen as planned. They involved departmental teams in pairing up teachers and deciding the timetable for implementation.
7. *Flexibility.* Learning from the experience of the pilot stage, rather than an immediate full-scale roll out, and a willingness to amend the plan in the light of experience, and to deviate from the national strategy blueprint, were important. This flexibility was shown in the decision, on logistical grounds, to move from trios to pairs; and in the use of student debriefing sessions, sometimes filmed, to introduce an additional dimension of feedback.

However, little was done to plan how the leaders could gauge the project's effectiveness and there was no external evaluation or input into the project. Attempts to judge the effectiveness of the project in relation to its aims were as follows:

- Evaluation of the roll out was undertaken by means of a request for a free text email response (optional) to the Project Manager, supplemented by informal conversations. All the responses received were positive, for example:

  > I try to bring in one of the thinking skills as often as possible
  >
  > It gave me the opportunity to step off the treadmill and think about how I teach
  >
  > I have seen a rapid improvement in the evaluative skills of my Year 10 students. I would generally not expect them all to reach this level until later in the year.

- Departmental teams were encouraged to share perceptions gained through the project, but this did not happen in all cases and the results were not collated.
- The project manager interviewed some students whose teachers have been involved but found it difficult to get information that was both useful and reliable.

We posed questions about the cost of the project and about how the school planned to determine the return it was getting from the investment of time, energy and money. The answers were generally uncertain other than that the school's four permanently employed cover supervisors stood in for the teachers, and several hundred pounds was spent on video equipment. Some heads of department thought that the project had brought benefits to teachers generally – the opportunity to see another subject taught; making explicit the teaching of specific skills; encouraging reluctant colleagues to engage in discussion of their practice. However, other than the video sequences being used as a resource in the school's virtual teaching and learning environment, there was no strategy for sustaining or building on the learning gained through the project.

Although the school successfully implemented a complex project involving all 120 teachers, they did not consider thoroughly how to gauge its success. Positive, if generalized, feedback from teachers shows that it probably helped to improve practice somewhat but it was unclear in what respects or to what extent. There was no systematic attempt to gauge the impact on the degree of independence demonstrated by students. As a result, the school leaders knew they had done something significant but they did not know exactly how or in what ways it was significant; and they were not sure what to do next to build on its success.

Example 4: Secondary school

Context: Inner city, 1300 students, 40 percent free school meals

What they wanted to achieve: To improve the behaviour of some disruptive pupils in Year 9.

Why?

A hard core of boys in Year 9 were disrupting lessons, spoiling the learning of others and causing staff stress.

How?
Staff listed and discussed the Year 9 pupils who were disrupting their lessons. The PE department was surprised as these students behaved well in sport. One of the PE teachers did some action research on sport as a way of raising self-esteem with these boys for his Masters degree and Chartered London Teacher submission. Action research and practitioner enquiry can be a powerful form of staff development, as it was in this case, and can be used effectively for school improvement. He identified 12 Year 9 'sporty naughties' defined as students who behaved in PE but were disruptive in all other subjects. He appointed them as activity leaders to organise inter-tutor group six-a-side football competitions at break time. They were responsible for the design, organisation, advertising and promotion of the activities as well as the refereeing and day-to-day running of the competitions. This involved the students talking to individual tutor groups as well as announcing fixtures and results in year group assemblies. The activity leaders were placed on monitoring cards in order to evaluate behaviour and progress in their normal lessons.

Did it work?
It was very successful. Participation in the competitions was high, with large numbers of students involved, either directly in playing or in spectating. The atmosphere during break was greatly improved. The activity leaders showed improvements in their self-esteem scores and their behaviour in lessons improved too. The project gave strong messages about the benefit of exercise and positive behaviour strategies to other staff. The results of this project were disseminated across secondary and primary schools in the city, many of whom have set up similar projects.

Inspectors said of this school in general:

> Self-evaluation is well founded and used effectively to raise students' achievement. Leadership and learning are bound together in the sense that the adults in the college community are regarded as learners and every learner, including students, is expected to develop their capacity for leadership.

Example 5: Secondary school

Context: Urban, 1400 pupils, 19 percent free school meals. The schools was in special measures for the first year of the project.

What they wanted to achieve: Improvements in pupils' literacy across the curriculum.

Why?
Students' exam results were poor and one factor was that their writing was letting them down. Firstly, the Head of English gained hard evidence of the state of affairs through a book trawl. This showed that some teachers needed greater understanding of literacy because pupils were not writing extended pieces; reading skills were not being developed; and marking was not formative enough.

What they wanted to achieve

Improvements in literacy across the school which would be seen by:

- Improved consistency in pupil work across curriculum
- Increased evidence of formative assessment being used regularly by all staff across curriculum
- Increased evidence of improved and consistent delivery of reading and writing across all subjects leading to improved achievement
- Increased evidence of wider reading in Year 7 leading to improved levels in English and other subjects.

Why?
Students' exam results were poor and one factor was that their writing was letting them down. Firstly, the Head of English and literacy leader (LL) gained hard evidence of the state of affairs through a book trawl. This showed that some teachers needed greater understanding of literacy because pupils were not writing extended pieces; reading skills were not being developed; and marking was not formative enough. Her next step was to work with senior managers to devise a multiple strategy to improve literacy across the school. This was detailed in identifying costs and monitoring as well as activities.

How?
The LL drew up a literacy across the curriculum policy and action plan to be implemented across all subjects and expected middle and senior leaders to put things into practice and take ownership. She ran a training session for staff with a consultant at the September INSET day on what literacy is, which included formative assessment and questioning techniques. This raised the profile of the strategy but the LL was sanguine about its success as the group of staff had such a range of knowledge. So she decided on a more bespoke approach which involved her working with individual departments. This required her to be taken off timetable for a number of her own English lessons a week.

She tailored support to individual departments such as planning literacy opportunities in the science schemes of work. Resources were provided to support the new GCSE 'Science in the Media' focus, which was taught across Science and English. Through meetings and team teaching, she showed the ICT and Maths departments how to structure writing frames to help them assist students in their coursework. She helped the

music department build extended writing opportunities. In Geography, pupils were studying Mumbai so the literacy leader organised for them to correspond with pen-pals in Indian schools. The Y7 scheme of work linked with a new unit in Y7 English. Links were developed with the drama department through them both teaching *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The style in which this was done was important. The LL said:

> In meetings and when team teaching I act not as confident as I feel to get people to give me advice. This boosts them up and gives an opportunity for sharing ideas and getting subliminal messages across through discussing teaching and learning. The motivation of staff and pupils is essential.

The pupils were also used to help each other. Students in Year 12 were trained in a Paired Reading scheme to support underachieving Year 7 and 8 pupils. Book Boxes were supplied to all Y8 form tutors to encourage and extend pupils' private reading sessions.

<u>Did it work?</u>
Monitoring showed that everything went according to plan. Observations of lessons and pupil questionnaires showed that the strategy had had some impact but the LL felt that literacy was 'still a bit of an add-on. It looked as though things were happening but they weren't'. She understood the need to try to develop people at different levels and to sustain the changes while maintaining morale. Peer observing for development rather than summative judgements was felt to be important as it gives an opportunity for other staff to tell people how good they are. She found the newer teachers quick to pick things up and planned to make more use of them as agents for change.

Example 6: Primary school

Context: Inner city, 400 pupils (about a quarter with refugee status), 50 percent free schools meals

What they wanted to achieve: To start teaching French.

They set challenging targets for Summer 2008 (after two years):

> *Year 4* - 80% at level 2 for listening and speaking, 60% for reading and writing; and 30% at level 3 for listening and speaking, 15% for reading and writing.
> *Year 6* - 100% at level 2 for listening and speaking, 80% for reading and writing; 65% at level 3 for listening and speaking, 50% for reading and writing; and 15% at level 4.

Why?
It was decided to start teaching French not only in response to the national strategy of teaching modern foreign languages (MFL) in primary schools but also to fit in with the overall mission of this multicultural school which is to raise pupils' achievements, enrich their experiences and encourage positive attitudes towards the diversity of language and culture.

How?
The initiative was led by the MFL coordinator with the support of the headteacher. She needed to feel confident in her new role and have a clear understanding of the issues and her responsibilities so she spent time looking at resources, meeting with specialists, visiting specialist centres and exhibitions and attended a course for MFL leaders. She drew up a carefully considered detailed staged plan for the implementation of French.

Staff felt anxious about teaching French not only because of insecurity about their own proficiency but also because English was an additional language for the majority of pupils. Thus, a key aim was to ensure that high staff morale was quickly established. There were three staff meetings. The first launched the strategy. All teachers and teaching assistants completed an online assessment of their French skills and their level of confidence. As a result, it was decided to make a great deal of use of one of the native French speaking teaching assistants. At the second meeting the coordinator introduced the French schemes of work and good practice principles of teaching MFL. The third training session for all staff took place at *the National Centre for Languages* with a Primary Language Specialist.

This was followed by a social event, for continuously finding ways to create positive attitudes to ensure that French was a success was fundamental to the strategy. As well as high quality training in and outside school there were French themes for staff parties, a day trip to France and two teaching assistants and three teachers gained external funding to visit their linked school in Canada at half term. There were a series of assemblies to promote knowledge about France and a 'Vive la France!' whole school event to learn more about the country. French songs were incorporated into the weekly singing practice sessions.

The French lessons were planned and led by the headteacher and MFL coordinator in Key Stage 2 classes and carried on by the native French-speaking teaching assistant as he grew in confidence. A successful routine and frame for each lesson was established.

Did it work?
The school was visited by Ofsted inspectors as part of a HMI review of MFL in primary schools. The report said:

> Pupils have made good progress in speaking and listening in the short time they have been learning French. They show positive attitudes to the new language and are keen to show off what they can already say. Planning and teaching are good and the leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. Very careful thought has been given to the development and sustainability of this new curriculum area.

Key factors in the successful implementation of the programme included:

- Knowing exactly what they wanted to achieve and planning it well
- Distributing leadership
- Focusing on French being fun for staff and pupils
- Using external expertise
- Auditing staff skills and confidence
- Using technology for assessing and teaching
- High quality training at different levels that met needs
- Using a structured scheme and lesson framework
- Developing a teaching assistant to carry out many of the lessons
- Monitoring progress through observations and speaking to pupils and staff.

The coordinator has planned ways to meet the next year's priorities including making more use of the school's new virtual learning environment (VLE).