

*The teaching of English in the national curriculum: a study
of selected schools in Gibraltar*

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by

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Summary of Thesis submitted for PhD degree

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on

*The teaching of English in the national curriculum: a study
of selected schools in Gibraltar*

This study examines the implementation of national curriculum English in three schools in Gibraltar. The schools in question, St Paul's First School, Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School and Bayside Comprehensive School together encompass the full national curriculum age-range.

To set the above in context, the study first traces the development of English as a subject since 1904 and the advent of the national curriculum. Furthermore, it provides a historical perspective through the examination of the forging of links between the Gibraltar and English systems of education. It then goes on to trace the evolution of English teaching on the Rock leading to the decision to adopt the national curriculum there.

The main body of research deals with the strategies for implementation of the English Orders employed by the three schools which form the basis of this study. Significantly different approaches were observed with St Paul's School being more advanced in its strategies, something that can be attributed to the decision by the school to pilot the national curriculum two years before it was required of them.

Bishop Fitzgerald School whilst displaying features of good practice, was found to be working to an out-dated syllabus. Bayside School, for its part was found to be basing teaching in years 8 and 9 on the GCSE syllabuses for years 10 and 11.

The study highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the English programmes adopted by the three schools and concludes that they are in a

fair position to react to changes in the English Orders once the current moratorium on changes draws to a close in the year 2000.

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world

Ludwig Wittgenstein

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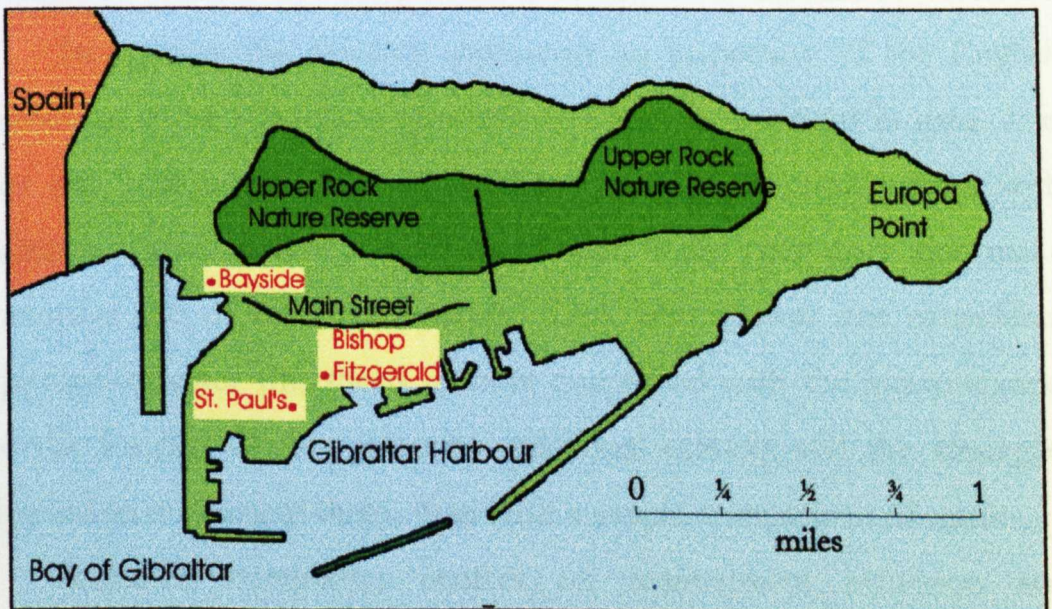
SECTION A: BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

0:1 The parameters of the research

The main purpose of this research is to examine the way English provision under the national curriculum is being provided in a cross-section of schools in Gibraltar. The research was carried out over a three-year period between October 1995 and July 1998.

Gibraltar is a British colony situated on the southernmost tip of Spain. Though small in size, with a total area of less than 3 square miles, the Rock has approximately thirty thousand inhabitants. The education system, for reasons to be explained in Chapter 2:1, is based upon that followed in England and Wales, and the official language of tuition is English. The vast majority of the population, however, is also Spanish speaking. The government of Gibraltar runs twelve schools and a college of further education.



Map of Gibraltar showing location of schools selected for study

Six of these schools are first schools, four are middle schools and there are only two secondary schools. In addition to these, a small number of private institutions exist, though they do not cater for any significant number of students.

Three schools were selected for this study: St Paul's First School, Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School and Bayside Comprehensive School. The selection was carried out on the basis that together the schools cover the full spectrum of the national curriculum, which in Gibraltar is from 4 to 16. There exists no specific reason for the selection of these schools as opposed to others, other than the personal relationship between the researcher and certain members of staff at the schools in question, which has facilitated access to information.

The study does not pretend to be a full-scale survey of the way in which the English Orders are being interpreted throughout schools on the Rock and the conclusions drawn apply to the specific schools examined. They are based, however, on the description in microcosm of a scenario which is not untypical of the situation in the rest of Gibraltar.

In essence, the research represents an inspection of the English provision at the schools in question at a specific moment in time. It is for this reason that the study draws widely on comparisons with perceived good practice in England and Wales, but does not make extensive use of statistical analysis. Such analysis was not considered appropriate since this thesis is more concerned with the interpretation of the English Orders given by individual schools and the strategies devised to implement them, than with a simple comparison of results.

Research hereinafter centres on main-stream provision and though, for the purpose of completeness, special needs provision is discussed, this is not developed to any great degree since this topic would require a separate study if it were adequately to be examined.

It should be borne in mind that though first and middle schools in Gibraltar are co-educational, secondary schools are not. Bayside School is the only government-funded boys' secondary school which exists on the Rock. There is also a small private school run by the Jewish community but this is attended by just nine Jewish boys. It can be said therefore that the conclusions drawn regarding Bayside School are indicative of the situation affecting the provision for the vast majority of secondary school age boys in Gibraltar.

0:2 Background research methodology

'Social science' has been defined as the '...scientific study of human society and social relationships' (The Concise Oxford Dictionary 1976:1087). It is clear that education falls within the parameters of this definition and, as such, it could be considered useful to examine the instruments of research selected for this study against some of the paradigms of educational research methodology.

Cohen and Manion (1994:7) maintain that the form of research undertaken is determined by which of two views of social reality the researcher subscribes to: 'positivist' or 'anti-positivist'. The former approach is based on a view of the social world the authors describe as '...hard, real and external to the individual' (Cohen and Manion 1994:7). The 'anti-positivist' concept is built around a perception of the social world comprising a much softer, personal and humanly-created environment. Cohen and Manion argue that where a researcher subscribes to the 'positivist' view, the social world would be likened to the natural world and seen as an '...external and objective reality'. The research would be directed at analysing the relationships and regularities between selected factors and would be largely quantitative. The field of

study becomes much wider when the researcher adopts an ‘anti-positivist’ perspective that centres on the importance of the subjective experience of individuals:

The principle concern is with an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself. The approach now takes on a qualitative as well as a quantitative aspect.

(Cohen and Manion 1994:8)

It seems logical that in undertaking a study of the implementation of the national curriculum English Orders in three selected schools in Gibraltar, this researcher should adopt at least some features of an ‘anti-positivist’ approach. It is clear that the instructions given to all schools in Gibraltar have been largely the same. The curriculum they are asked to introduce is also identical. The main aim of this study, however, is to evaluate the different approaches to the national curriculum English programme adopted by each school. The study is concerned with quantitative aspects, since it will aim to evaluate if all the requirements of the English Orders document are being met. It will also, however, attempt to examine the way each of the three schools, as well as certain individuals within them, have modified old practices, interpreted official documents and created an environment that will facilitate the advancement of this curricular innovation. In this regard the study is certainly concerned with qualitative as well as quantitative features and an ‘anti-positivist’ approach would appear to offer the best chances for success.

Notwithstanding this, however, it should be considered that this study aims at providing an overview of how the selected schools are implementing the English Orders. The researcher therefore has to ensure that the presentation of the views and strategies adopted by

individual teachers do not obscure or unbalance the description of the overall picture regarding how each of the schools is implementing the national curriculum. For this reason, many of the views expressed by individual teachers have not been included in the main text of the study as they could be considered to cloud the main argument being presented. The relevance and contribution of these views to the study is reflected, however, through their inclusion in the appendices. The full results of the various questionnaires are attached as appendices B1-B4.

Furthermore, this study has relied heavily on the views of many interested parties expressed via interview. The numbers involved make it impractical to include full transcripts of all the interviews conducted for this study. However, a sample interview is included as appendix A. A list of all the interviews conducted is contained in Section 3 of the bibliography and full transcripts have been deposited with the Gibraltar Department of Education where they are kept in file TC-1-10.

0:3 Historical research

It can be argued that we are all products of our past in so far as our personal background, as well as our educational heritage, will help shape our views of the world around us. This in turn will influence the way we react to changes in education today. For this reason, though this study is concerned with the particular ways three Gibraltar schools have managed the introduction of the national curriculum English Orders, it can be seen as desirable to view these strategies and events against the historical background of the development of the Gibraltar system of education. This requirement for historical research poses its own particular issues that arise from the intrinsic nature of this form of

study. The problems are apparent from an examination of the definition of historical research as provided by two educationists:

The act of historical research involves the identification and limitation of a problem or an area of study; sometimes the formulation of an hypothesis (or set of questions); the collection, organisation, verification, validation, analysis and selection of data; testing the hypothesis (or answering the questions) where appropriate; and writing a research report.

(Cohen and Manion 1994:45)

This study is not concerned with the formulation of an hypothesis. The main issues, therefore, revolve around the collection and selection of relevant historical data. In effecting this, a central aim has been to provide the form of historical background that would enable the presentation of national curriculum implementation in the selected schools to be presented against the backdrop of the issues that are considered important in Gibraltar. The territory, though British, is not a part of mainland England and is indeed very different in essence. For this reason it can be seen as essential to examine the peculiar political and educational relationship between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar as well as the many and varied influences that have forged the evolution of the Gibraltarians as a people. These issues have undoubtedly had a bearing on how Gibraltarians are approaching the adaptation and adoption of the England and Wales English Orders document, and can therefore be considered relevant to this study. Examining the past can enhance understanding of the present and allow the prediction of likely outcomes for the future.

Of particular importance in this part of the study was the collection of reliable data. The tools of the historical researcher can generally be divided into two categories, 'primary sources' and 'secondary sources' of information. Cohen and Manion have defined

the former as any item that can be considered original to the problem under study. These can be physical remains of the period, like buildings, furniture or coins. However they also maintain that anything ‘...intentionally or unintentionally, capable of transmitting a first-hand account of an event’ can be considered a ‘primary source’ (Cohen and Manion 1994:50). These include the oral testimony of actual participants in the events being described, as well as official and other documents, records, letters and contemporaneous newspaper reports. Secondary sources of information on the other hand comprise encyclopedias and books on the subject, as well as anything that does not bear a direct physical relationship with the event being studied.

The definition of historical research, reproduced above, drew attention to the need to validate and verify any data gathered. It can be argued that reliance upon secondary sources of information increases the risk of subjectivity on the part of the authors of the works being used. This, in turn, could affect the accuracy of the picture being portrayed. That does not mean, of course, that primary sources of information are, necessarily, going to be free from bias. Nevertheless, Cohen and Manion point to the importance of validating any information uncovered if the research is to be of value (Cohen and Manion 1994:52). This is a problem that a researcher must consider and the only realistic solution would appear to lie in collecting data from as many primary sources as possible in order to create as full a picture of events as practicable. For these reasons, all the Gibraltar files available in the Public Record Office at Kew were scrutinised, as were the records contained in the Gibraltar Government archives. Additional secondary evidence was obtained from studies on similar topics, though this served rather to confirm the picture emerging from the personal accounts of the participants in the events themselves as contained in the various files uncovered. It should be borne in mind that the style of historical

research undertaken in this study has been largely quantitative. The purpose has been to give an account of what occurred in Gibraltar's historical and educational past, rather than attempt to justify, agree or disagree with the manner the events unfolded. This is because the main purpose of the historical section of this study is to provide the information that will place the main body of research into a proper context rather than debate past events.

Chapters 1 and 2, therefore, trace the development of English as a subject, the links between the British and Gibraltar systems of education and the adoption of an adapted form of the English national curriculum on the Rock. Towards these ends further information was obtained via interviews with the former and current Directors of Education in Gibraltar, and with key personnel in the education support services, including the Principal Educational Psychologist and the government's Senior Education Adviser.

0:4 Selecting a research methodology

Most educational research falls into two broad categories, 'descriptive research' and 'experimental research'. In the former the researcher would be examining what is already there, as well as studying the reasons which might account for the current situation. In experimental research, on the other hand, a principal aim would often be to alter the current situation via the use of controlled experiments.

Since the stated aim of this study is to examine the manner of implementation of the English orders in a cross-section of Gibraltar schools, descriptive research is preferred to experimental research. The initial desire is not to alter current practice at the school, but to define it. This does not mean, of course, that the schools being studied will not

choose to change the way they implement the curriculum, in the future, as a result of the findings of this study. The primary objective, however, is to study what is happening at present.

An issue that needed to be addressed was the establishment of a time-scale for this study that would enable the above aims to be carried out. Cohen and Manion maintain that much educational research of this nature adopts one of three approaches: 'longitudinal', 'cross-sectional' and 'trend or prediction studies'. The 'longitudinal' study, as the name suggests, is conducted over an extended period and often plots changes and developments that occur during that time. A 'cross-sectional' study, on the other hand, produces a '...snapshot of a population at a particular point in time' (Cohen and Manion 1994:68). The 'trend study' records data over long periods to plot patterns of change in the past with a view to predicting likely developments in the future.

It seems logical that the 'cross-sectional' method would be the most appropriate for this study of current practice in defined schools. Certainly, schools have always been subjected to changes, but the number and scope of these would appear to have multiplied since the advent of the national curriculum. The January 1992 edition of *The Career Teacher*, the official publication of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), highlighted the issue. It quoted the then education minister, Tim Eggart, as admitting that the government had produced no fewer than 162 separate official documents on the national curriculum in the five year period between 1987-1992. (Career Teacher 1992:1). This situation has continued through the 1990s with numerous changes to the composition of the national curriculum, which have been followed by the recent literacy initiatives. It would seem fair to say, therefore, that 'change' has been one of the few constants in schools in the 1990s.

Bearing this in mind, it would appear unlikely that a longitudinal approach would meet the stated aims of this study. This is because it would prove practically impossible to determine an end date when national curriculum implementation could be considered complete. The dynamic nature of any curriculum precludes this.

A trend study could be carried out, but this might serve to determine how each of the schools was reacting to change in general and not exclusively to the implementation of the English Orders. This methodological approach can also be seen as inappropriate in this case given the many changes in the composition of the staffs in the schools being studied, particularly in Bishop Fitzgerald School. As will be discussed in Chapter 8:1, many of the teachers implementing the national curriculum there today are new to the school and were, therefore, not involved in initial efforts at coming to grips with the new curriculum requirements. For these reasons a trend study would not seem desirable in this case.

The cross-sectional approach, on the other hand, allows an assessment of efforts at implementation of the English Orders at a defined point in time. This allows for the examination of current procedures that this study will attempt to achieve. The efforts of the individual schools will be judged against the literature on the introduction of innovation. The yardstick used will be the strategies that the schools have already put in place and their effectiveness in delivering the requirements of the English orders document.

0:5 Case studies

Given that this study examines how three Gibraltar schools are implementing the English Orders, it effectively comprises three

individual case studies. Judith Bell describes the purpose of this form of research in the following terms:

The researcher identifies an 'instance', which could be the introduction of a new syllabus, the way a school adapts to a new role, or any innovation or stage of development in an institution – and observes, questions, studies. Each organisation has its common and its unique features. The case-study researcher aims to identify such features and to show how they affect the implementation of systems and influence the way an organisation functions.

(Bell 1987:7)

In essence the approach involves a study of the many factors that contribute to a situation and an examination of their interrelationship. As such it relies heavily upon observation and the gathering and selective classification of information on the part of the researcher. These features of the case study approach have led to criticism from some educationists who consider that there is a danger of distortion in the final picture presented through possible bias, either on the part of the researcher, or of some of the subjects chosen for interview:

Case study observations are less reactive than other methods of gathering data. In surveys and experiments that rely on verbal responses to structured questions, bias can be introduced in the data researchers are attempting to study.

(Cohen and Manion 1994:110)

The issue, again, is one of validating the process. Cronbach (1986:438) argues that the key issue is what the data collected indicates, and whether or not the researcher has measured what he set out to measure. This attitude allows for the widest interpretation of the term validation, which Cronbach expresses in the following terms:

For some writers, *to validate* means to demonstrate the worth of, but I intend to stress the openness of the process – i.e., *to validate* is *to investigate*.

(Cronbach 1971:443)

This study is setting out to measure the approaches to implementation of the English Orders by three Gibraltar schools. It is not, however, proposing a direct qualitative comparison of these, since each school is concerned with the implementation of a different part of the English curriculum to children of varying ages. This restricts the direct relatability of the conclusions if an attempt is made to apply them to the three schools studied. Such relatability would need to be sought further afield, as will be argued below. The key issue, then, remains the validation of the data and the avoidance of creating a false picture of current practice in the schools being described.

This study has attempted to overcome the dangers of bias through the use of overlapping forms of enquiry that sought to elicit largely the same information from people who would be likely to have very different perspectives on the same issues within each school. The rationale behind the interviews and questionnaires used will be described later in this chapter.

There are those, however, who would question the validity of case studies as a form of research at all, on the grounds that the findings are only really relevant to the particular school studied. It can be argued, nevertheless, that this is a narrow view, given that the subject matter of the case studies is not dissimilar to that to be found in other schools. As such, at least some of the features of the experiences of a particular school may be considered relevant to another school in a similar situation. Michael Bassey maintains that it is not the case study itself that gives it its value, but how it can be related to other schools:

The key issue in the dissemination of a case study about classroom or school practice is whether other practitioners can relate the context of the case to their own situation. A case study cannot predict, but it may suggest. Relatability rather than generalisability is the methodological stance needed.

(Bassey 1996:1)

It can be argued that the findings of this study are certainly relatable, particularly within the confines of the Gibraltar education system. To begin with, since three case studies have been undertaken, the results reflect the product of three different approaches to English teaching in the national curriculum. It should be recalled that the Gibraltar education system is small and that only 12 schools exist on the Rock. All schools that deal with the same age-group are organised in largely the same manner and there are no significant differences in pupil populations. The reduced size of Gibraltar means that most catchment areas comprise a mixture of children from all the social classes. The only significant difference occurs at secondary level, where one of the comprehensive schools caters exclusively for boys, whereas the other caters only for girls. All the schools also come under the same central authority, the Gibraltar Department of Education. This means that they are subject to the same central demands and requirements. For these reasons, it can be argued that the relatability element of this study is strong, since individual Gibraltar schools will be able to identify approaches and strategies employed by schools in this study and apply them directly to their own scenario.

Additionally, it should be considered that the absence in Gibraltar of institutions of higher education has meant that very little educational research has been carried out. Many of the Rock's schools, therefore, have had very little feedback, if any, on their practices. It is hoped that this study can place the efforts of each Gibraltar school against the

wider background of the approaches to the same challenges adopted by other schools in very similar circumstances. In this sense, this study could be seen to meet the criteria used by Bassey to evaluate the worth of an item of research. He argues that if case studies

...are carried out systematically and critically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research.

(Bassey 1981:86)

0:6 Data collection

Largely the same methods were used for the collection of data in each of the three schools that form the basis of this study. These comprised mainly interviews, an analysis of documents, classroom observation and staff questionnaires.

As with all research tools, the interview has its advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, interviews allow for greater depth of response to be obtained than through the use of methods like the questionnaire. During an interview an insight can be obtained into individual interviewees' knowledge of a subject, their preferences and attitudes. The main dangers, however, lie in the introduction of bias into the process as well as the problem of data validation.

Eliciting the required information also requires a methodical approach and educational observer Harry F. Wolcott believes this is particularly true in school research where familiarity with a wide range of issues is often taken for granted:

We often presume to 'know' what is supposed to be happening and consequently may never ask the kinds of questions we would ordinarily ask in any other research setting.

(Wolcott 1990:128)

Conversely, it could be argued, that the interviewee often presumes knowledge of how a particular method or technique works at classroom level when the interviewer is a practising teacher. This highlights the importance of supplementary questioning in order to obtain as full a picture as required. This would not be possible in simple questionnaires. The elements of human interaction that are implied in all interview situations can be considered a great strength of the technique. This is particularly so where the interviewer is attempting to obtain an insight into the mind of a key player tasked with the implementation of a new educational initiative. Subsequent conclusions can be drawn not only from what is said, but also from what is not. The interview in this way becomes an effective instrument for measuring attitudes to change.

The main problems with the technique once more relate to validation, given the dangers of bias. Cohen and Manion suggest a possible solution in the comparison of an interview with another measure that has already been shown to be valid. This process provides what they term a 'convergent validity' which is real and measurable:

If the two measures agree, it can be assumed that the validity of the interviews is comparable with the proven validity of the other measure.

(Cohen and Manion 1994:281)

In this study, an attempt has been made to validate the data collected by interview in a number of ways. Firstly, 'convergent interviews' were conducted where possible. These involved checking the factual content of an interview by asking more than one person at the

Establishing the size of the sample has always been considered of primary importance when conducting a survey. It can be argued that this issue lies at the heart of the validation of the process, since the sample selected is meant to represent the views of the whole. Some educationists see this in turn as determining the conclusions that can be drawn from any data collected:

A sample size of thirty is held by many to be the minimum number of cases if researchers plan to use some form of statistical analysis on their data.

(Cohen and Manion 1994:89)

None of the schools selected for this study has anywhere near thirty English teachers. This is one reason why statistical analysis of data was not considered appropriate to this investigation. It can be argued, nevertheless, that the questionnaire process undertaken is valid because of the high level of participation of the English teachers in percentage terms. The surveys conducted at Bishop Fitzgerald School, Bayside School and among the members of the Gibraltar National Curriculum Working Group for English, all received a 100% response. The lowest response came from St Paul's School where twelve out of a possible fifteen teachers of English (80%), completed the questionnaire. Even though the samples are small, it could be argued that there exists a high degree of validity in the process because the views expressed constitute practically the complete picture.

Additionally, Cohen and Manion (1994:99) argue that the other issue vital to the validity of a survey is whether the respondents completed the questionnaires accurately. Fullan (1991:80) argues that the concept of 'shared meaning' is central to any attempts to introduce innovation in schools. By this he means that everyone asked to introduce change should have a clearly defined view of what the

school, the same question. A close examination of school documents, including syllabuses, was also undertaken. This allowed an evaluation to be made of how the views expressed in interview reflected in official school policy. At the same time, the process confirmed, or otherwise, the data collected in the interviews themselves. The third method of validation comprised a combination of classroom observation and the study of records of work. These served to reveal if the interview data were mirrored in classroom practice. It is clear, nevertheless, that not all of the information obtained in an interview is readily verifiable. Wolcott, nevertheless, maintains that such data should still be presented in the interests of painting as full a picture as possible of the situation we are trying to describe:

We are better off reminding readers that our data sources are limited, and that our informants have not necessarily gotten things right either, than implying that we would never dream of reporting an unchecked fact or unverified claim.

(Wolcott 1990:130)

This point is considered of importance to this study, given that what is proposed is to provide an overview of how the selected schools are tackling the implementation of the English Orders. In essence, the issue becomes one of balance and the primacy of presenting as undistorted a picture as possible of what is going on. This, necessarily, will require some form of editorial awareness on the part of the researcher and the danger of subjectivity cannot be done away with altogether.

The other major form of data collection used in this study was the questionnaire. Individual surveys were carried out in each of the three schools studied, as well as among the members of the Gibraltar National Curriculum Working Group for English.

required change constitutes. This concept could equally be applied to the conducting of surveys. If the results are going to be truly representative of the views of the teaching staff in general, then these teachers must have a shared, consistent view regarding the information that each part of the questionnaire is seeking.

Efforts were made to establish this shared meaning for all the surveys conducted in this study. For the Bishop Fitzgerald School, Bayside School and the English working group questionnaires, the researcher took the teachers involved through the survey, question by question, noting down their replies and providing any clarification required. It might be felt that this approach could inhibit the answers given, but it should be noted that the researcher was a peer of the teachers surveyed, and that he did not form part of the management of any school. It is unlikely, therefore, that the interviewees should consider him a threat in any way. Furthermore, full anonymity was assured for all teachers and no names were recorded on the completed survey forms. It did not prove possible, however, to conduct the survey at St Paul's School in this manner. Efforts were made, nevertheless, to ensure a degree of 'shared meaning' of the survey. This took the shape of an address by the researcher to a staff meeting at the school where the aims of the survey were explained and the wording of the questions clarified.

The surveys conducted in this study comprised a blend of open-ended and multiple choice questions. The former sought to elicit mainly quantitative information that established the degree of familiarity with the English Orders of individual teachers as well as classroom practices. Intermingled with these questions were open-ended questions that could be seen as more qualitative in nature. These sought to measure teacher attitudes to the processes that they described and also revealed their preferences and values. In the collation of this data, it was felt that

individual views on the issues broached, whilst relevant to the study, would not permit the desired overview of how the schools in this study were approaching implementation of the English Orders. For this reason they have been omitted from the main body of text in this study. The full results of the questionnaires are, nevertheless, included in the appendices. In these, each open-ended survey question is followed by a list of individual answers obtained, and a breakdown of the most frequent responses.

0:7 Researching St Paul's School

A lengthy interview was conducted with the headteacher to place the school's English provision within the wider context of the institution's general philosophy. Of particular interest here was the aim to obtain an overview of her interpretation of the National Curriculum Orders and to see how she had gone about translating these into practice.

Also dealt with in this interview were the changes to the teaching of English which were made as a consequence of the adoption of the national curriculum, as well as resource implications and the use of the 'Ginn' English scheme. The interview went on to examine efforts at standardisation both within the school and at inter-school level. It explored the way in which the language curriculum is assessed at St Paul's and what information about individual pupils is passed on to parents and to the schools which the pupils feed into. The curricular provision for the reception year, which lies outside the boundaries of the national curriculum and for which the school has much greater autonomy, was also discussed as was the school's decision to pilot the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs).

Convergent validity was attempted by broaching similar issues in a separate interview with the Head of Language at St Paul's. This served the dual purpose of confirming that the headteacher's intended philosophy of implementation had been assimilated by those below her, and of dealing in greater detail with the measures taken to translate this philosophy into good practice.

To provide a greater degree of validity to the process, a detailed examination was carried out of all policy documents that relate to the teaching of English at the school, with particular emphasis on the syllabus, and the teachers' records of work. These last represent the practical implementation of the policies outlined in the above interviews. Their study therefore provided the opportunity to gauge the degree to which the school strategies were being implemented. In order to determine how what appeared on the record of work related to actual activity in the classroom, a limited period of observation was carried out. This consisted of four complete two-hour afternoon sessions. Each session was spent with a different teacher working with a separate year group at a distinct level. In all cases observed, the periods of time designated for particular activities were broadly adhered to and scheduled tasks were carried out.

An overview of the special needs language provision at the school was obtained through a formal interview with the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. An interview was also conducted with a peripatetic teacher employed by the Department of Education who spends some time each week working at St Paul's and at Bayside Schools.

A questionnaire was also circulated among all the teaching complement at St Paul's School¹ (see appendix B1). This was completed

¹ Results of all opinion surveys carried out as part of this research are included as Appendix B.

anonymously and teachers were urged by the researcher to be totally frank in their replies, since no records would be kept regarding who had voiced whatever opinion. In addition to tackling special needs, the questionnaire examined the teaching experience and training in English of those charged with delivering the language curriculum. It sought to assess the teachers' readiness to adapt to the demands of the national curriculum English programme and asked for their views on resourcing, assessment and reporting both to parents and to middle schools.

It should be noted that St Paul's School piloted the national curriculum in Gibraltar two years before the Gibraltar Government decided that it was to adopt the system for all schools on the Rock. As a consequence, the procedures in place for national curriculum implementation are more advanced than those for other schools in Gibraltar. This is evident in St Paul's language syllabus, and in the records of work available. For this reason it will be found that Section B of this thesis, dealing with St Paul's School, is considerably more lengthy and detailed than those covering the other two schools which form a part of this study.

0:8 Researching Bishop Fitzgerald School

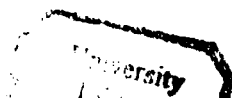
As was the case with St Paul's School, a lengthy interview was conducted with the headteacher at Bishop Fitzgerald School to place the language provision there in the wider context of the school's philosophy to the national curriculum. This interview covered topics very similar to those covered in the interview with the headteacher of St Paul's School, exploring changes to language teaching brought about as a consequence of the adoption of the national curriculum. It also dealt with resourcing implications, standardisation at school and inter-school

level, assessment of the curriculum and reporting both to parents and to the secondary schools into which the pupils feed. The headteacher's likes and dislikes of the English Orders were also discussed.

A slight complication occurred regarding interviewing the Head of Language at this school. During the period of research, the present writer was appointed to the post. The previous incumbent had held the post for only two years before being promoted from the school to take up an advisory position within the Department of Education. Interviews were thus conducted with the previous two holders of the Head of Language post at the school. The first holder of the post had held this position between 1980 and 1993. The interview with him centred on the differences in the language teaching brought about by the adoption of the national curriculum. It discussed how the school had interpreted the English Orders and the drawing up and up-dating of the school's English syllabus. The current situation was discussed with the incumbent who held the post for just two years. In both these interviews assessment, reporting, standardisation, school procedures and resources featured prominently. The peculiarities of the situation made it impossible to validate the data gathered by the interviews of the former Heads of Language at the school by convergent comparisons. Attempts at improved validity were made, therefore, through a comparison with practice as reflected in the various policy and school documents of the time.

In the interests of completeness, and since this researcher is now the current Head of Language at Bishop Fitzgerald School, a short section has been included in this research which outlines the direction which language development at the school could take.

The English syllabus at the school was studied, as were the records of work, and once more a limited period of observation was carried out comprising six, two-hour sessions. These observation periods were



spent with different teachers and covered all four year groups in the school.

At the time this research was being carried out, a Special Needs Co-ordinator had just been appointed to the school and was due to take up the post in September 1998. The deputy headteacher, however, provided a synopsis of provision in this area at Bishop Fitzgerald School and a similar survey to that conducted among teachers at St Paul's was carried out dealing with largely the same topics as those summarised in the 'Researching St Paul's' section of this chapter.

Additionally, a questionnaire was circulated among all the teachers of English at the school to determine the way each individual was interpreting the English Orders (see appendix B2). This survey dealt with largely the same topics as that already described with regard to St Paul's School.

0:9 Researching Bayside Comprehensive School

Research at Bayside School required a rather different approach to that adopted for the other two schools in this study. To begin with, Bayside is a much larger school, with 890 pupils on roll in May 1997 as opposed to 373 at Bishop Fitzgerald and 288 at St Paul's. One consequence of the difference in size is that the headteacher is less directly involved in the day-to-day running of individual departments than in the other two schools studied. More of the responsibility falls directly on the Head of English.

Another important difference is that English teachers at Bayside are not required to keep formal records of work, so no documentary evidence exists regarding what pupils may or may not have covered.

A third significant factor is that the school-leaving age in Gibraltar is 15 as opposed to 16 in England and Wales. This means that a number of students who opt to leave school at the age of 15 do not finish their national curriculum programmes. For those who decide on this option at the end of year 9, a specially devised language course, which lies outside the national curriculum, has had to be devised for their last year in school.

The above-mentioned issues necessitated a new approach and the research at Bayside therefore centred to a greater degree on the Head of the English Department and on the ten teachers of English, each of whom was interviewed separately. The interview with the Head of English was very wide-ranging and sought to establish departmental policy. Topics broached included how the department adapted to the need to implement the national curriculum, the system of ability grouping for language, the use to which middle school reports are put and the resourcing implications of the national curriculum. Also discussed were: policy on achieving standardisation across parallel teaching groups, links with the girls' comprehensive school, the preparation of staff for national curriculum implementation and the system for reporting to parents. At the time of research, a new course was being put into place to cater for low-ability students in the mainstream and this was discussed, as well as provision for the one-year course boys (those who opt to leave at 15 years of age). The interview finally examined the role of literature in English teaching and the forms of assessment in language.

As mentioned earlier, all ten teachers of English at Bayside School were interviewed individually to make up for the lack of formal records of work. The format of each of these interviews was the same so that an overall picture could be gauged from the results (see appendix B3). Since some of the topics touched upon could be potentially

embarrassing to those being interviewed, anonymity was once again assured. The interviews sought to establish the professional qualifications in English held by those who are teaching the subject. They also probed into the familiarity or otherwise of the teachers with the English Orders, with individuals being asked if they had actually read the Orders and, if so, how long previously they had done so.

Other topics covered included changes to teaching style and content following the adoption of the national curriculum, the use to which the school's English syllabus for years 8 and 9 is put and the degree of influence of the external examining boards' syllabuses in determining what is taught. The interviews finally dealt with forms of assessment, standardisation of marking, individual records in 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing', reporting, the one-year course and catering for different abilities.

In an attempt to gauge the degree of success achieved by the school in delivering the English curriculum, GCSE examination results were examined and an interview was conducted with the chief moderator of the examining board with which Bayside School deals, the Southern Examining Group (SEG).

An additional interview was required with the Head of Special Needs to establish the policy for receiving remediation as well as for ascertaining the numbers involved, and the nature of the course content. The information gathered was supplemented by that gleaned from the peripatetic teacher who, as mentioned earlier, spends part of his week at Bayside School.

The final area of research at Bayside dealt with the boys involved in the one-year course. The teacher with direct responsibility for this group is the Careers and Social Education Co-ordinator (Senior Teacher), who was interviewed on the aims of the course, the language

provision made and how this differs from that envisaged in the national curriculum.

0:10 National Curriculum Working Group

Also relevant to the way English is taught in schools in Gibraltar is the work of the National Curriculum Working Group for English. The work of this committee was considered by means of an examination of the group's terms of reference, together with a study of all minutes of meetings held since the formation of the group. This was coupled with an interview with the group chairman, and a questionnaire completed by all the group's members. The study of the minutes revealed a lack of co-operation on the part of some of the group's members and the questionnaire sought to establish how useful a body it was considered by its members in achieving the specific objectives laid down by the terms of reference. It also sought to establish the degree of ownership of ideas on the part of the group members and to consider possible improvements.

0:11 Thesis overview

This study will now explore the development of the subject of English and the advent of the national curriculum and examine these against the backdrop of the maturing educational links between the systems in Gibraltar and England and Wales. Though Gibraltar has a totally separate identity and is under no legal or other obligation to follow educational developments in the UK, it has always chosen to do so for reasons which will be considered in Chapter 2. It could be thought of as essential, therefore, to discuss these issues first. Otherwise the

examination of practice in Gibraltar schools would be devoid of context.

This study will then consider current practice in St Paul's School, Bishop Fitzgerald School and Bayside School in that order. Though no particular links exist between these Gibraltar schools as opposed to others on the Rock, they collectively cover the full range of the national curriculum from reception to year 11. The order of presentation of the findings pertaining to each of the three schools reflects the natural progression a child following the national curriculum in Gibraltar might have starting in first school and finishing with GCSE.

A separate section in this study is dedicated to the examination of practice in English teaching at each of the three schools in turn. The final chapter in each of these sections considers the conclusions that can be drawn regarding the school discussed, against the background of the most recent Gibraltar Department of Education inspections which took place in 1993/94. Additionally, the final chapter of the study considers the overall conclusions that can be drawn from the research in the light of an examination of current thinking on the management of educational change. This attempts to place the findings of this research in the wider context of general developments in education in England and Wales.

There are advantages to researching a standardised system of education in a small territory like Gibraltar that only boasts 12 schools. An overview will clearly be easier to achieve than if the research centred on a much larger system like that in place in England and Wales. Notwithstanding this, the family links that interweave the entire local population and the unavoidable physical closeness of everyone, determined by the very limited surface area of the Rock, create peculiar problems which can inhibit education development. These issues also have a bearing on the conducting of education research and

consequently on any conclusions drawn. The final chapter of this thesis, therefore, examines these limitations to enable due weight to be given to the overall findings of this research.

CHAPTER 1

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT SINCE 1904 AND THE ADVENT OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

1:1 A historical perspective of the national curriculum

A central aim of the national curriculum, when it was first conceived in the late 1980s, was to raise the standards of education in England and Wales. That such a step was considered necessary was reflected in the words of the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher:

We were concerned about the lack of knowledge displayed by many children about our country and society, and our history and culture.

(Thatcher 1993:278)

Though no-one in educational circles would argue against raising standards, there was far from unanimity on whether or not this could be achieved by a national curriculum, as well as on the fundamental issue of what such a curriculum should comprise.

It is clear, however, that most countries in the early 1980s did have some form of national curriculum and that this influenced government thinking at the time. In a speech to the North of England Conference in January 1987, the Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, argued that standards in education were not high enough and he complained of a lack of agreement on the curriculum for 14-16 year olds and said there was confusion over curricular balance and the working out of objectives. Furthermore, he claimed that those weaknesses did not exist in the West European countries that followed national syllabuses (Lawton 1989:40-41). In his memoirs, it is clear that

Baker looked to those countries with education systems that were proving more successful than that of England and Wales and attributed their success to following a national curriculum:

We began to make comparisons with other countries particularly Germany and France. In West Germany, nine out of ten sixteen year olds got a Hauptschule certificate covering maths, German, a foreign language and two other subjects. The equivalent in England was the GCSE Grade 4, and only four out of ten English school leavers achieved this standard.

(Baker 1993:165)

It is interesting to note, nevertheless, that the idea of a national curriculum was not a new concept devised by the Thatcher government: a previous Tory administration headed by Arthur Balfour between 1902 and 1905 had responded to public demands for educational reform by setting up state secondary schools. In 1904 the Board of Education issued regulations which laid out the syllabus for pupils up to the ages of sixteen or seventeen who attended these schools. There was a close correlation between that curriculum and the national curriculum proposals of 1987:

1904	1987
English	English
Mathematics	Mathematics
Science	Science
History	History
Geography	Geography
Foreign Language	Modern Foreign Language
Drawing	Art
Physical Exercise	Physical Education
Manual Work/Housewifery	Technology
	Music

(Aldrich 1988:22)

It has even been suggested that the lists appear copied, though with the exception of an elite few who attended grammar school and

studied French, German or Spanish, the foreign language in 1904 would have been Latin, which was prominent in the curriculum then, and the 1987 version has music added as a compulsory subject (Aldrich 1988:22). Even so, there are enough similarities to indicate that the 1987 curriculum is not a totally new concept. A possible explanation for this is offered by Denis Lawton who defines conservative ideology as basically backward-looking:

The Conservative tends to look back to a golden age ('a better yesterday') whereas left-wing politicians look forward to a better future. Conservatives tend to condemn the latter as utopianism, whilst describing their own reluctance to embrace idealistic visions as pragmatism or common sense.

(Lawton 1994:3)

A close reading of Margaret Thatcher's memoirs suggests that she possessed this so-called 'conservative characteristic' as she argues for a national curriculum on the grounds that she felt too many teachers in the late 1970s were '...less competent and more ideological than their predecessors' (Thatcher 1993:590). She also voiced her distrust of 'child-centred' teaching techniques and what she saw as the then current emphasis on imaginative engagement as opposed to learning facts.

Be that as it may, the 1987 national curriculum did not only resemble the curriculum of 1904. There was an even closer match with that of 1935, as the following list of subjects attests:

Except with the previous permission of the board, adequate provision must be made for instruction in the English Language and Literature, at least one language other than English, geography, history, mathematics, science, drawing, singing, manual instruction in the case of boys, domestic subjects in the case of girls, physical exercises and for organised games.

(Gordon and Lawton 1978:28)

When the then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, first announced government plans for a national curriculum in a television interview on ITV's *Weekend World* in December 1986, he criticised the comprehensive system as being 'seriously flawed' and argued for the central imposition of a national curriculum to improve standards generally and at secondary level in particular. If we compare the outcome of the 1987 national curriculum to the curricula of 1904 and 1935, it would seem that the Secretary of State was returning to the old basic grammar school curriculum, although of course this would now not only apply at secondary level. What was of particular significance here was the shift from pupil-based to curriculum-based education, a move which was quite deliberate as can be seen from Margaret Thatcher's misgivings at the time concerning the 'lack of knowledge' possessed by pupils.

The need to legislate on the curriculum was also apparent. Until the passing into law in 1988 of the Education Reform Bill, which introduced the national curriculum, the major Education Act in place was that of 1944. This act contained the serious flaw that it did not mention the word 'curriculum', and that there was

...no statutory requirement for the inclusion of any subject in the school timetable, except that of religious education.

(Aldrich and Leighton 1985:55)

In the early and middle years of the twentieth century, the attitude towards the role the curriculum should play in education was very different to that in the late 1980s. This can be deduced from the words of the Board of Education in 1937, which warned that for younger pupils dividing experiences into time-tabled subjects would at best be an 'artificial business', and that all in all it was not possible

...to lay down any rule as to the exact number of the subjects which should be taken in an individual school.

(Board of Education 1937:39)

Furthermore, right up to the late 1970s, control of the curriculum was firmly in the hands of educators with no significant input from central government. As two educational observers noted:

The Secretary of State was responsible for the broad thrust of policy and the provision of resources. The curriculum was still a secret garden into which only educationists were permitted entry.

(Emerson and Goddard 1989:2)

A speech by then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, at Ruskin College, Oxford in October 1976 widened the education debate to encompass more of those bodies of people he considered as having a stake in education. These included parents, teachers, learned and professional bodies, representatives of higher education and industry as well as the central government. The timing of this speech had followed several years of general, growing unease about progressive methods of teaching in schools that had control over their own curricula. Public concerns led to the Department of Education and Science (DES), setting up an Assessment of Performance Unit in 1974 as a way of providing evidence on standards. The general doubts on education were not dispelled, however, and one educationist noted that by 1976 '...arguments about the curriculum being too important to be left to teachers came from the political left as well as the right (Lawton 1989:36). When Callaghan delivered his Oxford speech, therefore, he called for a raising of educational standards in the light of the increasing complexity of modern life. He also advocated a core curriculum saying that education should equip children for life and that the tools used to bring this about should include basic literacy and numeracy. Callaghan

also noted a need for technological training that would lead to practical applications in industry rather than academic study.

The speech was considered of great importance because it challenged the monopoly on the curriculum enjoyed by the educational establishment for so long. In so doing it initiated what was known as the 'Great Debate' into the future of education which prompted much wider discussion of the roles of education and the curriculum than hitherto.

The gradual nature of the move towards more central control of the curriculum was evident from the Green Paper *Education in Schools* published by the DES in 1977. This document reaffirmed the Secretary of State's responsibility for the curriculum. It was followed that same year by efforts to get Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to report on their curricular policies but one observer notes the results were disappointing. The DES concluded that many LEAs had no satisfactory policy on curriculum (Lawton 1989:37).

The first Thatcher administration came to power in 1979 and saw a period of widespread unemployment which was particularly rampant among the young. Emerson and Goddard maintain that the government took the view that this problem was partly due to a lack of basic skills in the work-force. This, they claim, highlighted general criticisms of the education system:

Unemployment was the fault not of the Government but of the unemployed themselves – and by implication the education system which had failed to equip young people with the appropriate knowledge and skills. Thus Government attention was directed increasingly to the education service.

(Emerson and Goddard 1989:3)

Reform of the curriculum was therefore likely, though Denis Lawton maintains that the advent of the Thatcher government did not

represent a complete change of policy in education, but rather the continuing development of a process of emerging centralism that was already there (Lawton 1989:37).

This process continued through the 1980s with the tone set by the January 1980 DES document: *A Framework for the School Curriculum*. This advocated a subject-based core curriculum and even attached time allocations, though this initiative was criticised by teachers for being too bureaucratic.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, HMI were themselves actively involved in the development of a common curriculum. This led to a pilot scheme involving forty-one schools which, Lawton reports, received a good deal of national support from teachers. The scheme was seen as a form of curricular appraisal in action but Lawton feels those at the DES did not give it due weight:

This work was not always taken into consideration by the DES:...when required to brief Ministers, DES civil servants tended to prefer the bureaucratic style of their own 1980-81 documents rather than the professionalism of HMI.

(Lawton 1989:38)

It is clear, nevertheless, that the moves towards a core curriculum were continuing and this resulted in a major government policy document published in 1985 as a White Paper, *Better Schools*. The document stated the central aim was to raise standards in schools and it announced the government would take the lead in four linked initiatives:

- pursuing broad agreement on the objectives of the curriculum;
- introducing reformed examinations together with records of achievement;

- improving teaching quality in all its aspects;
- harnessing the energies of parents and others in a reformed system of school government.

(DES 1985:90)

It is clear from these aims that the curriculum was no longer to be considered the sole domain of the education establishment. The government was expecting to play a leading role in defining a core curriculum though it fell short of dictating what it should comprise. Lawton (1989:40) argues that this paper was another attempt to prod LEAs into action favouring which more central control of the curriculum would be inevitable.

In 1986 the conservative government which was seeking a third term of office, finally took the plunge, announcing plans for a national curriculum. It argued in the 1987 Conservative Party election manifesto that it was

vital to ensure that all pupils between the ages of five to sixteen study a basic range of subjects - including maths, English and science.

(Conservative Party 1987:18)

The government went on to outline plans for published syllabuses which set attainment levels so that pupils could be assessed at key stages of their education to monitor progress. In so doing, government was exercising central control over the curriculum in a way that no previous administration had done. This development was criticised by some educationists who argued that reducing the curriculum simply to a list of subjects disregarded the work of those who sought to redefine it in wider terms. An important development, however, was that the place of English in the curriculum as one of the three major areas of study was now enshrined in law, and this enhanced the status of the subject.

The problems were not to occur as a result of the notion of a national curriculum, which enjoyed considerable support across the educational spectrum, but rather in the definition of what this curriculum should comprise. Many educationists saw the national curriculum as full of possibilities, with one commentator going so far as to describe it as

potentially the greatest single planned change in the curriculum since state education began 120 years ago.

(Watkins 1989:1)

It was Margaret Thatcher's simplistic approach to a very complex issue which laid the foundation for much of the controversy which was to follow:

I wanted the DES to concentrate on establishing a basic syllabus for English, Mathematics and Science with simple tests to show what people knew. It always seemed to me that a small committee of good teachers ought to be able to pool their experience and write down a list of the topics and sources to be covered without too much difficulty.

(Thatcher 1993:593)

Such an approach totally ignored the fact that the English system of education is something that has been evolving through the years and that there are many valuable lessons to be learnt from the past. As a result Margaret Thatcher found herself in disagreement with the educational establishment which she saw as wanting to over-complicate matters:

For them the new national curriculum would be expected to give legitimacy and universal application to the changes which had been made over the last twenty years or so in the content and methods of teaching.

(Thatcher 1993:594)

Yet it was just these methods, which Margaret Thatcher had described as placing the emphasis on 'imaginative engagement rather than learning facts', that she was trying to reform. Additionally she found that Kenneth Baker had a different philosophy and was keen in the reform process to take as many teachers and HMI along with the government as possible. Margaret Thatcher lamented the reality that the simplicity of her scheme had been lost and that the influence of HMI and the teachers' unions was manifest.

It has been argued earlier in this chapter that the introduction of a national curriculum was primarily a move towards centralisation. Lawton (1994:92) underlines the fact that the 1988 Education Reform Act, which introduced it, gave the Secretary of State for Education over four hundred new powers, more than those enjoyed by any other member of the cabinet. The fact that the conservatives should have felt the need to take direct control of education shows the deep distrust they felt regarding what was going on at the time, a situation which had been brewing through the 1960s and 1970s. Comprehensive schools introduced by a labour government, as well as extreme cases such as the William Tyndale School, where teachers allowed pupils to choose whether or not to learn to read, created unease among conservatives about falling standards and the role schools were playing in this:

...by 1979, many Conservatives had gained the impression that schools were chaotic and teachers were lax, or worse still - militant egalitarians who used the classroom for subversive political activities.

(Lawton 1994:47)

The resulting 'great debate' on education, initiated by James Callaghan in 1976, and described above, failed fully to clarify educational issues. When Margaret Thatcher was first elected Prime Minister in 1979, therefore, the doubts and suspicions remained.

Kenneth Baker had taken over the education portfolio in 1986 and soon felt the need for reform. In his speeches, Baker made comparisons with educational standards in other countries, such as Germany, and held the opinion that the system in Britain was failing. His solution also centred round a nationally-imposed curriculum:

No-one had yet grasped the nettle of a major legislative overhaul. While Keith Joseph had planted many of the seeds of what would become elements of the Education Reform Bill, I realised that the scale of the problem could only be tackled by a coherent national programme, and time was not on our side.

(Baker 1993:164)

In his memoirs Kenneth Baker goes on to acknowledge that he was conscious that to carry out his plans he would have to overcome considerable opposition. This would involve driving his plans through his department, convincing the Prime Minister and other colleagues that it should be adopted in the form he wanted and then steering the legislation through parliament despite any obstacles that the 'vested education interests', as he called them, might place in its way.

Baker shared the Prime Minister's suspicions regarding the teaching profession and its motives and it is not surprising, therefore, that deciding the content of the curriculum has proved as controversial as it has.

Another major factor which contributed to problems in establishing the national curriculum was the extreme politicisation of education in general. This inevitably followed from moves to centralise the curriculum, since the content of education, and not simply policy, was now in the hands of politicians. Their decisions would be taken from a political standpoint and in their rejection of the views of the

profession for having ‘suspicious motives’, they were alienating themselves from the mainstream of educational thinking.

This was increasingly apparent in the way the national curriculum developed. Central to Kenneth Baker’s plans was an entitlement curriculum for all pupils aged between five and sixteen, with the professed intention of raising standards in schools for everyone. Before he could bring his plans to fruition, Baker was appointed Conservative Party Chairman and was succeeded as Education Secretary by John McGregor in 1989. The following year, despite advice to the contrary from the National Curriculum Council (NCC), McGregor decided to relax the regulations on foundation subjects:

...all pupils would be required to follow the three core subjects (English, maths and science) to 16, together with a modern language and technology (the extended core), but for the rest of the foundation subjects there should be ‘flexibility’.

(Lawton 1994:71)

The move was carried out against the advice of educationists and constituted a watering-down of an entitlement curriculum for all.

Kenneth Clark, the next Secretary of State for Education, introduced league tables of schools. The idea behind this measure was to allow parents to make an informed choice of school, but in practice it created demand for certain schools at the expense of others. This would hardly promote the ideal of an equitable, entitlement curriculum for all, and it is a clear example of a change of direction in policy decided not on educational grounds, but rather on account of the political desire to give parents more of a say regarding where their children attended school. These elements of selection were also embodied in subsequent moves such as the ‘parents’ charter’ in 1991 and plans for open enrolment. It seems clear that the future of education in England and

Wales was decided according to a political agenda. Coupled to such measures as appraisal for accountability, teachers felt increasingly threatened and alienated from the process of defining the highly desirable aim of a national curriculum for all pupils.

1:2 English in the national curriculum

If a political agenda has played a significant part in the development of the national curriculum in general, nowhere has this been so manifest as in the subject of English. The reasons for this can be found through an examination of events earlier this century, but it is also to do with characteristics of the subject itself. As Protherough and King point out:

Arguments about how children should speak and write, what they should read, or what knowledge of language they should have, are really arguments about how education should shape young people's views of the world. Controlling English is seen as one way of controlling society.

(Protherough and King 1995:4)

This is so because language and expression cannot be separated from thought. Webb argues that thought is only possible in and because of language. It is language itself which gives shape to the thought and the two must come together:

For language is a symbolic means by which we 'mean', and it is to that which language is both ordinarily and in any specialist contexts directed. There is little point in producing utterances (in speech or in writing) which have the 'correct' linguistic shape if that language does not stand the tests, first of meaning, but secondly and vitally, of sense.

(Webb 1994:102)

This point has long been understood by the examining boards which allocate marks for content as well as for expression. It is an element of the subject, however, which leaves it exposed to attacks from those with aims which are other than purely linguistic. The potential within the boundaries of a nationally-imposed curriculum to influence the way entire future generations can think is thus very real. It is precisely this attribute which exposes English to politicisation. Professor Brian Cox, who played such a prominent role in drawing up the English curriculum, acknowledges this:

...a National Curriculum in English is intimately involved with questions about our national identity, indeed with the whole future ethos of British society. The teaching of English ... affects the individual and social identity of us all.

(Cox 1990:2)

The dilemma lies in the fact that English should have a subject-matter. To attempt to teach it simply as a set of rules governing language would be very artificial, not to mention extremely difficult to sustain when faced with the practicality of the classroom. This was a position affirmed as early as 1941 when the Board of Education recommended that

...training in English needs a subject-matter and a motive, and we regard it as essential that part at least of the subject-matter and the motive should derive from a source other than a self-contained study of English.

(Board of Education 1941:95)

What the Board of Education did not do was to define what the subject matter should be and thus the subject was left exposed to those who wanted to promote particular values or ideas.

It was indicated earlier that the use of English for political ends is not a new development. An illustration of this point can be found in the

Newbolt Report (1921). Newbolt advocated the use of English as a means of unifying the nation which was in serious difficulty in the aftermath of the First World War. He saw the potential for using the subject to re-establish a sense of national identity employing the tools of standard English and the study of literature to achieve these aims. The purely educational and linguistic objectives were to play a role subservient to wider political ones. It can be argued that this situation has been repeated in the 1990s, with the government attempting to use English in the national curriculum to halt what it saw as a decline in standards in society. Evidence of this can be found in the disillusionment of Urszula Clark, one of a team commissioned by the NCC to evaluate the implementation of the English Order. Clark explained that, as the project progressed, it became increasingly clear that the spirit and content of the English curriculum was viewed at ministerial level as ‘...at best suspect and at worst responsible for society’s ills’ (Clark 1994:33). She went on to explain that since the 1950s teaching had moved in the direction of those who might define it as about creating independence, whereas learning was about engaging in knowledge:

The government of the 1980s and 90s appeared to blame this approach for a breakdown in cultural transmission and intellectual discipline that had led to a corresponding breakdown in law and order. The 1989 English Order had not gone far enough towards repairing this breakdown.

(Clark 1994:35)

Clark outlined how the NCC research concluded that clarification of particular points could be achieved by publishing support materials, rather than changing the Order itself. This advice, she claimed, was ignored by a government which had just been re-elected in 1992 and felt it had a mandate to revise the English Order:

English (the subject) was to be brought back to its association with English (the nationality) to take its place in re-establishing the teaching of cultural transmission and, by implication, a return to unity and order. Whatever teachers or the profession said, it seemed, was not going to sway the government from this purpose.

(Clark 1994:35-36)

Seen in this context, the government's reasoning in following the centralisation path is both clear and logical, but the fact remains that the underlying reasons for doing so were political and not educational. This has created a deep malaise in those who value education in its own right and do not like to see it used as a political pawn.

1:3 The development of English as a subject

This thesis is primarily concerned with the implementation of English as a subject within the national curriculum framework adopted in Gibraltar. It is important, however, not to make the same mistake as the English government and take too narrow a view of the topic, but rather to consider it in the context of developments since English first became a separate school subject in England and Wales at the turn of the century.

The first steps in this direction were taken in 1904 when the Board of Education issued a directive requiring all state secondary schools to offer courses in English literature and language. Before this, English had been taught like the classics, with an emphasis on grammar. Even if the new regulations constituted a move away from this, the struggle for dominance between language, literature and grammar was to continue throughout the century. In 1906 'The English Association' was set up for the promotion of English as a subject in its own right. This

association, which grew rapidly from 300 members in 1907 to 7,000 members twenty years later, was to have considerable influence on the thinking about English in schools.

Ball (1985) cites the 1910s and 1920s as the period when the conflict to define the subject of English really began. He claims this struggle was fought on two fronts. The first of these was between English and the classics, with the former trying to assert itself as a subject in its own right; the second was an internal dispute between those who saw the subject as purely a matter of grammar and those who favoured a central role for literature and pupil expression. Ironically, these issues remain unresolved even today, as is clear from the problems experienced within national curriculum English in defining a literary canon, in the debate regarding subject-matter in language teaching, and in the issue of how much, and in what way, grammar should be taught.

By 1910 the shift away from pure grammar teaching, which was entirely subject-centred, to a more child-centred approach was evident in circular 753 issued by the Board of Education that year on the subject of 'The Teaching of English in Secondary Schools'. Significantly the influence of The English Association was very noticeable here, since representatives from it had helped with the drafting of the circular:

Grammar should not bulk largely in the regular school teaching of English, and it should not be isolated from composition and literature and made into an abstract exercise.

(Board of Education 1910:11)

English as a subject was beginning to make progress, but it only became fully established several years later in 1918 when, following the formation a year earlier of the 'Secondary School Examinations Council', English was incorporated as a subject in the modern studies

group of advanced courses. Progress in the development of the subject was slow, however, particularly at secondary level, and Ball (1985:61) suggests this was due to the continued importance of the classics at university level and in the public schools right through the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. He also offers social reasons for this slow pace of development, affirming that English literature was more readily accepted as a subject for girls; and since single-sex schools were the norm, boys tended to be isolated from developments in English teaching. An additional problem was that it was generally believed that any teacher could teach English, a situation which encouraged the use of staff whose interests lay elsewhere:

While the widespread practice of using non-specialists for English teaching continued, both the credibility and the progress of English was inhibited.

(Ball 1985:61)

Two groups then emerged which were to have a major impact on English teaching in the 1950s and 1960s. These were the 'Cambridge School of English', with F.R. Leavis as one of the main supporters, and the 'Progressive Movement'. From these groups were to emerge two models of English teaching which were to compete with the advocates of grammar for predominance in English teaching. The Cambridge School represented a shift towards literature in English teaching, whereas the progressive movement favoured self-expression, individuality and the role of play in the teaching of English. Neither group was to establish total dominance and by the start of the second world war in 1939, the Progressive Movement was making headway against grammar in the elementary schools, and the Cambridge School was gaining favour in secondary schools.

The issues at the centre of the current debate regarding what English teaching should comprise are well represented in the work of Brumfit (1995). He examines pupil requirements from their education in English and concludes that anybody who is moving through the school system will have to develop:

- some awareness of their cultural inheritance in language and literature through the years;
- an understanding, as they grow and mature, of this inheritance and what it means to them, and how they relate to it;
- an ability to function effectively with spoken and written language and to understand both of them for normal activities as a citizen; and
- a critical perspective on the whole process.

(Brumfit 1995:27)

In effect, what Brumfit is advocating is a middle-of-the-road approach to English teaching which takes on board the Cambridge School's ideas for heritage, the Progressive Movement's views on language for life, with the addition of a critical perspective to the process. What seems clear, however, is that the issues at the heart of the English debate remain much the same as they have done for much of the twentieth century. Certainly the process would appear to have evolved and current debate centres on finding the right balance between these elements; yet the basic ingredients have emerged largely as a consequence of the Cambridge and Progressive models of English teaching.

Another influential group, established in 1947, was the 'London Association for the Teaching of English', or LATE as it was known. This emerged from the London Day Training College, which continues today as the University of London Institute of Education. The group was concerned with the reform of grammar teaching and was later

associated with the spread of comprehensive education, with a school discussion group formed within its ranks as early as 1957. This London group developed the role of language teaching rather than literature and they formed the basis of the 'English as Language' model of the 1960s.

By 1963, LATE had been swallowed up following the founding of the 'National Association for the Teaching of English' (NATE). Though originally an initiative of Leavis's followers, NATE developed a linguistic model of English grounded on the distinction described by James Britton as '...distinguishing sharply between using the mother tongue and studying it' (Britton 1973:14). This emphasis on the functional use of language continued into the late 1970s, though the advocates of the Cambridge School were not totally overcome and criticisms were voiced by a number of people including Whitehead, Abbs, Mathieson and Hoggart.

Clearly the struggle for dominance regarding what was taught continued, as did another basic problem which has dogged English since it first became established as a subject at the turn of the century: the use of non-specialists to teach it. By the time *A Language for Life* (1975), otherwise known as the *Bullock Report*, was published, a third of those teaching English at secondary level had what was described as 'no discernible qualification' in the subject. This was particularly serious because educational reform took place, which saw the spread of comprehensive schools, and anxiety was created in the public and in the conservative party regarding so-called dangerous, progressive teaching methods. Ball (1985:74) indicates that the scale of these changes was exaggerated by the media and a picture grew in the public imagination which did not match the changes which occurred in practice. It was a public perception Margaret Thatcher was only too happy to use to her advantage:

In Education, however, the Conservatives were trusted because although people thought we would spend less than Labour on schools they rightly understood that we were interested in standards -academic and non-academic- parental choice and value for money; and they knew that Labour's 'loony Left' had a hidden agenda of social engineering and sexual liberation.

(Thatcher 1993:563)

Once again the characteristics of English, outlined earlier in this chapter, left it exposed to concerns about standards. In the early 1970s, so-called 'progressive techniques' were linked to falling reading levels and to an increase in illiteracy among secondary school leavers. It was these concerns which led Margaret Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education, to set up the Bullock inquiry in 1972 to look at all aspects of the teaching of English, including reading, writing and speech. The 1975 *Bullock Report* emphasised the need to develop language skills, concluding that

...language competence grows incrementally, through an interaction of writing, talk, reading, and experience, and the best teaching deliberately influences the nature and quality of this growth.

(DES 1995:515)

It also, however, defended the role of literature, and in particular the model subscribed to by the Cambridge Group, with an emphasis on 'personal and moral growth' and on literature's 'civilising power'. The teaching of grammar was rejected as a theme in its own right, with the point being made that competence in language comes not through exercises divorced from context, but rather through 'purposeful use'. In many ways the report brought together the various influences which had nurtured the development of the subject through the century. Coming as it did just prior to the 'Great Debate' on education, initiated

in 1976, it formed the basis for much of the public discussion on what English should comprise and the role it should take in the curriculum of the 1980s and beyond.

What occurred at this time, however, was a subtle change of great consequence. Whereas in the past the debate about what English should comprise had taken place among educationists, events in the late 1970s had opened up the discussion to politicians and to the public in general. As two educationists have noted:

English is a subject about which everybody has an opinion, from the heir to the throne downwards, unlike Physics or German, say.

(Protherough and King 1995:5)

Given that politicians' priorities were not always purely educational, this was to have a detrimental effect on teacher morale.

This chapter has already discussed how politicians can introduce a political agenda to the debate of what English should comprise, but Protherough and King also underline that in recent years English has been further subjected to pressures from different groups with their own vested interests. These include the promotion of ethnic minorities, literacy for industry and the preparation of students to exploit information technology (Protherough and King 1995:5). Added to a government that was prepared to centralise the curriculum, it is hardly surprising that teachers should feel that they are no longer in control.

These feelings were aggravated by the government's handling of the Cox Report of 1989. The Cox curriculum, which was to be converted into the 1990 mandatory Order, gradually gained favour among teachers because it did not attempt to over-simplify the subject, but rather took account of the development of good practice over the preceding twenty to thirty years. Protherough and King (1995:11) claim

that there were three main strengths in this curriculum which led it to gain in popularity. The first was that it was based on the principle that language development meant combining speaking, reading and writing in equal measure, and that the learner had to understand through practice the relationship between language choice, purpose and audience. The second strength was that in preserving English teachers' professional experience, it made it possible for the best practice of recent years to be preserved. The final major advantage of the Cox curriculum was that drama, media studies, information technology and knowledge about language were seen as integral parts of the English curriculum.

Research carried out by Thomson and Davies (1991) backs the belief that English teachers were supportive of Cox. They found that a number of teachers had not bothered to read the Cox report, but that those who had, were, as a rule, approving. Their main conclusions were that teachers were not opposed to the national curriculum generally, or the English proposals specifically. They added:

The speed and manner of introduction was strongly criticised but considerable support was expressed for both the content and the provision of a structure or framework within which to operate.

(Thomson and Davies 1991:228)

This evidence is supported by the findings of a report commissioned from the University of Warwick by the NCC to evaluate the implementation of English in the national curriculum at Key Stages 1, 2, and 3. Ironically the period of research was from 1991 to 1993, yet the government did not even await its findings before announcing a review of the English curriculum; this was despite the fact that the government had commissioned the study itself. Over half the teachers who responded to a national survey said they 'welcomed and valued' the

English Order; however ‘...50% pointed out that they were experiencing difficulty in implementing the curriculum because of lack of both resources and time’ (Warwick Report 1993:12).

The Cox curriculum therefore, though not considered perfect, did reflect what many teachers saw as the main issues in English teaching, and as such a majority of these teachers was willing to put in a great deal of effort to make it work. Unfortunately, the curriculum did not comply with Margaret Thatcher’s simplistic notion of ‘a basic syllabus for English ... with simple tests’ (Thatcher 1993:593). Her suspicions of the motives of the education profession fuelled her fears that Cox might have ‘got it wrong’, since his curriculum was gaining popularity among the profession. The result, following the Conservative election victory of 1992, was the further review of the English Order, despite the evidence collected by the NCC and detailed earlier in this chapter, that what was really required was the clarification of particular points by publishing support materials and not a change of the Order itself (Clark 1994:36).

The resulting reforms received a very hostile reception from the teaching profession because they attempted to streamline the English Order, disregarding the complex nature of the subject. As Protherough and King have noted, ‘...the consultation process recorded widespread alarm at the blatant narrowing of what was meant by English’ (Protherough and King 1995:12).

The hostility was such that a number of those involved with the NCC’s research resigned over the proposals, with one of them, Joan Clancy, complaining that the revised version of the curriculum had been

...constructed for tests, as if the Highway Code had been narrowed down to instructions on the three-point turn.

(Clancy 1993)

This hostility, which came at a time of low teacher morale and the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) boycott of 1993, continued until the announcement of the Dearing review. This comprised a study commissioned by then Education Secretary, John Patten, in April 1993 to review the ‘...structure, manageability and assessment arrangements’ of the national curriculum (SCAA 1995:1). In contrast to the manner of introduction of the government’s reforms of the English Orders following their election victory in 1992, Sir Ron Dearing preceded his review with widespread consultation.

Draft proposals were published in the summer of 1994 and over fifty-eight thousand responses were received from individuals and organisations. Dearing claimed to take all these views into account in producing the final document (SCAA 1994b:1).

The review was widely perceived to be a response to a general recognition that the curriculum was overloaded, a belief shared by Sir Ron Dearing himself:

The architects of the first subject curricula designed what for them, as subject specialists for the most part, was an ideal and comprehensive curriculum for each subject. Not until this was put into practice in classrooms did it become obvious that the combined weight of all the subject curricula was simply too great to be manageable.

(SCAA 1994b:1)

Dearing claimed the central issues to be considered were involved with structure, design and content of the national curriculum rather than principle (SCAA 1994b:1). This was reflected in the final report that he presented to the government in December 1993. Both the tone of the recommendations, as well as the manner that the review was conducted, indicated a desire to return to teachers a greater say in the development of the curriculum. One observer claimed the key goals achieved through

the review were stability, allowing teachers much greater choice in deciding what was taught and providing schools with the basics for a broad and balanced curriculum by also allowing them discretion to provide for their pupils' needs (Hofkins 1994:1).

The revised English Orders that followed from this report came into force in August 1995 and stressed the need to interrelate the different requirements so that skills became an essential and integral part of the curriculum. The main content of the English Orders that emerged post-Dearing will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters when the various requirements will be considered against the implementation strategies adopted by the three Gibraltar schools that form the basis of this study. It is important to note, however, that the review was accompanied by a five-year moratorium on changes designed to give schools the time to transform the curriculum into practice. This allowed for a period of relative stability that many might consider essential for schools adequately to introduce an innovation of this magnitude.

1:4 Chapter Overview

This chapter has argued that the national curriculum in England and Wales developed from a process of emerging centralism that had its roots in the 1960s and 1970s. It was not simply the work of the Thatcher administration.

The concept of a national curriculum enjoyed widespread support, though it can be argued that the root of the controversy surrounding its implementation was the simplistic approach adopted by Margaret Thatcher. She envisaged a national curriculum that comprised a basic syllabus with simple tests to show what people knew. This attitude

served to alienate the education establishment from the development of the process.

The English curriculum, for its part, was viewed as suspect by the government which sought to reform it along lines that went beyond the boundaries of purely linguistic aims. English was seen as a tool to be used to re-establish the teaching of cultural transmission. This failed to take full account of the evolution of a subject which through the 20th century had develop a blend of major influences comprising largely those who viewed English as cultural heritage and those who favoured a model based upon expression and the use of language for life.

The Cox report took due account of the complexity of the subject and its evolution, but it was reviewed by the Thatcher administration because it did not conform to the simplistic notion of a basic syllabus for English. This served further to alienate the teaching profession, a situation which was only improved following the Dearing Review which raised morale through a rationalisation of the curriculum and a recognition of the professional role teachers should play in determining delivery of the various Order documents.

This study will now examine the development of English as a subject in Gibraltar, against the backdrop of a study of the forging of educational links between England and Wales and the Rock. This information can be considered essential to an understanding of the education scenario in Gibraltar today. It will provide the context in which to view the main subject of this study: the manner of implementation of the English Orders in three Gibraltar schools.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH IN GIBRALTAR: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2:1 The development of ties between the Gibraltarian and English systems of education

When British and Dutch forces invaded Gibraltar in 1704 it is extremely unlikely that they had the education of the civilian population in mind. Yet this was the start of a British influence which was to pervade all walks of life on the Rock and persist down to the present day. Gibraltar is a tiny peninsula with an area of just 2¾ square miles. As a fortress overlooking the thin strip of water which separates Europe from Africa, and constituting the only entrance into the Mediterranean Sea, Gibraltar has always been considered of strategic military importance. To control Gibraltar was to control the movement of ships through the straits and there is little doubt that therein lay the attraction for the British forces in 1704 - a period when Britain was still a great power with substantial colonies.

The eighteenth century saw two attempts by Spanish forces to recapture Gibraltar which they had ceded in perpetuity to Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, signed in 1713. These included the Great Siege (1779-1783), when the town was laid to ruin and there were serious epidemics which accounted for the death of substantial numbers of the population. The inhabitants of Gibraltar at that time could broadly be divided into two sections: the mainly Protestant English-speaking sector, which comprised the military garrison and its entourage; and the Roman Catholic, Spanish-speaking civilian population which had little in common with the former group.

Owing to the pressures of living in a fortress and having to fight off two sieges, there was little time or interest in setting up a system of education in Gibraltar during the eighteenth century. It was not until the relative stability which followed the Great Siege that thoughts began to turn in that direction.

The first formal education was provided in 1802 when two garrison schools were opened to cater for the soldiers' children. A limited number of civilian children were admitted to these schools on the insistence of the then governor, General George Don, but there was military opposition to this and the schools closed in 1828 to be replaced by purely military schools which no civilian children could attend. Ironically it was one of the clauses of the Treaty of Utrecht, granting to the civilian inhabitants of Gibraltar freedom of religious worship, which was to provide the catalyst for general education on the Rock. A number of religious denominations, which saw the education of the poor as part of their role in bringing people to God, set up schools in Gibraltar, each with the aim of promoting its own religious persuasion. Prominent among these were the Irish Christian Brothers who set up a mission in Gibraltar in November 1835 and opened a school in February 1836 at 'Gunners' Parade'. In the atmosphere of rivalry that existed between these schools, the use of English as a subject was considered a great inducement in the struggle to attract pupils. This is borne out by a letter sent by the Roman Catholic Vicar-Apostolic and Elders to a Brother O'Flaherty dated 15 October 1836. The letter demonstrates a determination to counteract the Methodist influence on Catholic children in Gibraltar and notes that, as regards the teaching of English:

It has been bait held out by the Methodists to attract Catholic children to their schools.

(Vicar-Apostolic 1836:233)

The reason for the importance attached to English at the time has been outlined by Traverso (1980). He emphasises that knowledge of English was considered very useful because

...an opportunity to learn English was a 'sine qua non' for those who wished to enter a good job in Gibraltar or perhaps to venture abroad.

(Traverso 1980:15)

The pattern for educational provision for the nineteenth century was established, however, with the religious rivalry continuing and resulting in a number of new schools. One of these was the free school for girls established by the Loreto nuns in 1845. This school had been set up in response to a Methodist initiative in 1842 which had again drawn Roman Catholic girls with its provision of single-sex education, which was attractive at the time. Significant, too, is the fact that since responsibility for Gibraltar lay with the British, the educational provision was from the outset based on the lines of that provided in England at the time. A colonial inspector of schools was appointed in 1880 to regulate the education provided in the various institutions. The foundation of the link between the English and Gibraltar systems of education was then institutionalised with the adoption of the English code:

The Education Code adopted in 1880 by the Government for the administration of the schools in Gibraltar was the English Elementary Code of 1870, and the inspector soon made it clear that it was to be rigorously applied.

(Traverso 1980:53)

One of the problems encountered immediately was that the code required that education be conducted in English. This presented great

difficulties to the local children who normally spoke Spanish, but the solution found was the adaptation of the English code to the local situation, with Spanish being used to explain English terms, particularly in the lower standards. This system of modifying the English model to suit conditions in Gibraltar was, and still continues to be, the basis for educational provision on the Rock. In practical terms it manifested itself with the Christian Brothers introducing a Spanish-English vocabulary at the threshold of education. They also translated some English texts into Spanish and later introduced bilingual readers (Traverso 1980:54). All of this had the effect not only of teaching the children English, but also how to read in Spanish. In this way, the seeds were sown for future efforts to make the civilian population bilingual.

At the turn of the century, by which time state secondary schools were being introduced in England, the links between the two systems of education were being further strengthened. The Board of Education in London was now taking an active interest in what was happening in the colonies and requested details on wide-ranging issues, including the curriculum. This resulted in the Inspector of Schools, G. F. Cornwell, compiling a twenty-two page report entitled *The System of Education in Gibraltar* and dated March 1902. As a consequence, eight years later, the British government opened its first school for civilians in Gibraltar - an evening school in the dockyard for apprentices. Education in Gibraltar was growing closer and closer to that in Britain, and the move was quite deliberate:

The school had been granted to the Dockyard by the Admiralty in order that the Gibraltar apprentices might enjoy the same educational facilities as obtained in England.

(Traverso 1980:76)

These educational links grew stronger still in the first two decades of the twentieth century with Gibraltarian children taking English examinations. There are reports that pupils attending the convent schools in 1904 were being prepared for the Sheffield local examinations. They were also sitting for music examinations of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music Associated Board in London. The most important advance in this respect, however, was that announced in the *Gibraltar Gazette* of 24 May 1916, stating that Gibraltar had been sanctioned as a centre for holding 'local' examinations of the University of Cambridge (*Gibraltar Gazette* 1916:4). It is noteworthy that Gibraltar had been accepted as a 'local' centre, as if the Rock were situated somewhere in mainland Britain. The consequences of this were far-reaching: it was to validate the standard of education provided in Gibraltar, raising its status and paving the way for Gibraltarians who so wished, to continue their studies in universities and colleges in the United Kingdom. Even today, the current Director of Education in Gibraltar, Leslie Lester, cites this as the most important and desirable reason for maintaining Gibraltar's educational association with England (Lester I/V 1996:1)¹.

In the years following the first world war, public pressure for education resulted in a petition calling for free education at all levels and more government control of schools. The British government responded by sending in education advisors from the United Kingdom. One of their proposals, which was accepted, was that selected teachers be sent to attend courses in England. In this way the use of Britain for higher education for Gibraltarians was established.

¹ The abbreviation I/V after a name hereafter indicates inclusion in a list of interview transcripts given in section 3 of the bibliography.

2:2 The evolution of the role of English in the Gibraltarian system

The year 1921 saw the establishment in Gibraltar of a Board of Education chaired by the colonial secretary who advised the Governor. It is clear that the systems put in place thereafter were increasingly British, but it must not be forgotten that the civilian population was still largely Spanish-speaking. Some novel procedures were introduced to raise the status of English. As the annual report for 1926 from the Colonial Secretary, Hubert Young, to the Colonial Office in London notes:

The first examination in English for Assistant Teachers, under the scheme approved by the Board of Education in June 1925, was carried out in July 1926. Thirty one candidates (10 male and 21 female) presented themselves for examination and of these 24 were successful, four of whom obtained honours.

(Blue Book and Annual Report 1926:7)

The examination referred to became an annual event and consisted of written and oral tests and translation from Spanish into English. In order to encourage teachers to improve their English, there were cash incentives which consisted of £7 10s for those who achieved 75% of the possible marks, and £5 for those who scored over 50%. The evidence is that whereas Spanish was still considered to be the mother tongue, the desirability of a knowledge of English and the opportunities afforded by Gibraltar's political situation and geographical position, were being noted:

...it is beyond question that it is to the advantage of everyone to have some knowledge of a language other than their mother tongue and it is generally considered that the ultimate aim in Gibraltar should be to encourage the equal

development of English and Spanish or in effect to make the population bilingual.

(Language Teaching Memorandum 1930:3)

The above comment from the Inspector of Schools in October 1930 signals a logical and desirable aim for language development in Gibraltar. As has already been seen in the preceding chapter, however, English as a subject in the curriculum is often exposed to politicisation and this was to manifest itself in Gibraltar also. The debate centred, and in fact still centres, on deciding the appropriate relative positions of English and Spanish in the curriculum. It is not conducted simply by considering the educational value these languages carry, but against a background which sees Spain wanting to recover Gibraltar and the civilian population of the Rock wanting to remain British.

In the late 1920s, one Humphrey Bowman was brought to Gibraltar to inspect government-aided elementary schools. He submitted two reports to the Under Secretary of State at the Colonial Office in 1930 and 1936. Bowman recognised the potential for the development of Spanish as well as English in the curriculum, and recommended formal Spanish language teaching to the lower age groups. Correspondence between Colonel Alex E. Beattie in Gibraltar, and A. J. Dawe at the Colonial Office on 15 March 1935, strongly implies that political considerations led to this recommendation of Bowman being rejected:

It is true that Bowman was of opinion that more attention might be paid to the teaching of Spanish in the lower standards with a view to giving the children an opportunity of acquiring some knowledge of literary Spanish. After considerable discussion, however, both by the Board of Education and the Executive Council it was felt that it would have been unwise to give effect to this recommendation and matters have been left as they were.

(Teaching of English in Gibraltar Schools 1935)

Though the reasons why the move was felt to be 'unwise' are not given, the letter also states that the official position on English had not changed since the *Language Teaching Memorandum* of 1930. This document, while affirming the ultimate aim of making the civilian population bilingual, stresses both the need and demand for instruction in English on the grounds that it was '...justified by the commercial situation' (*Language Teaching Memorandum* 1930:3). It recommended a continuance of the situation by which teaching was to be carried out in English where at all possible. Despite Bowman, it was clear that Spanish would not be afforded an equal status to English in the curriculum of Gibraltar schools.

The way English was to be taught changed as a result of the Bowman reports, however, since various other of his recommendations were accepted. These included one which drew the distinction between teaching English to children born in England, for whom the language was the mother tongue, and teaching it in Gibraltar, where for many it was not. Again the need to adapt English methods to the local situation was the crucial principle being applied:

I am convinced that a radical change in the choice of English readers is necessary, and that for Gibraltar children, whose mother tongue is not English, to use books - and those not always up to date or produced on modern methods - written for children in English schools, is fundamentally wrong.

(*Bowman* 1936:13)

Three years after Bowman's second report, the second world war broke out and this clearly had a major effect on the education of children Europe-wide. For Gibraltar children the effects were more significant than for many, owing to two main factors. First, practically the entire civilian population was evacuated, with most people going to

Britain, Madeira or Jamaica. This meant that special arrangements had to be made for Gibraltarian children to continue to receive some form of education in their new bases. Another more important development was that the war heightened sensibilities to issues of nationality and sovereignty, since these were under threat from the German war effort. As was seen with *The Newbolt Report* (1921) in England, the subject of English soon had a political importance attached to it, extending beyond its educational value. The following extract from a report on the educational facilities for Gibraltar evacuees in the United Kingdom, compiled by the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, illustrates this point:

The Gibraltar Government and the Secretary of State attach great importance not only to progress in the English language, but also to the acquisition of English atmosphere and traditions. The education authorities appreciate this need.

(*Evacuees* 1941:2)

Special arrangements were made to tackle these problems with the aid of officers of the London County Council. Moreover the new importance attached to English in the curriculum for Gibraltarian children was to survive the war years. When the opportunity to review the system of education in Gibraltar was taken prior to repatriation in 1944, the link between English and Englishness was given prominence and strengthened.

The above-mentioned review was published as *The Clifford Report* (1943). It was ordered by Governor Sir Noel Mason MacFarlane, and entrusted to a committee. This comprised several prominent Gibraltarians, among them two magistrates, together with the Financial Secretary, and the Colonial Secretary, G. M. Clifford, who was the chairman. Their report recommended a total restructuring of education in Gibraltar, including the appointment of a Director of Education and

the formation of a Department of Education (*Clifford Report* 1943:23). It was also very clear that an English education was being considered as a vehicle for strengthening the links between Gibraltar and Britain. This was stated categorically at the end of the report which declared that the aim was for each pupil to face life with

...a sound education and the means of continuing his mental development after leaving school. A parallel purpose has been to ensure that the future generation shall be British in something more than name and shall share equally with other members of the great family of British people all that the English language, culture and tradition have to offer them; so, only, will new and responsible leaders emerge.

(*Clifford Report* 1943:26)

This aim of creating thoroughly 'British' people in the colony was the over-riding one, as can be seen in another part of the report in which the Irish Christian Brothers were at once praised for the education they provided at the private Line Wall school, but criticised for failing to provide '...training in British ideals and citizenship' (*Clifford Report* 1943:9). English was seen as the means of achieving the desired end in proposals such as number XI, which created a direct link between the language and this political objective:

(XI) Emphasis throughout the whole of school life (certainly from the age of seven, if not earlier) should be on the English language and the Imperial connection.

(*Clifford Report* 1943:8)

This theme, which permeated the entire document, was prompted by the committee's fear that a process of osmosis with Spain would occur. Time and again, the committee stressed that the emphasis on the importance of the English language could not be overstated, since it felt that Spanish influence had grown 'very deep roots', which were

refreshed by inter-marriage. This state of affairs, and the defects of previous educational policy, were blamed for the fact that

...the Spanish language and Spanish mental processes still dominate the intellectual life of the community.

(Clifford Report 1943:10)

The report went on to outline the linguistic limitations in the English used by Gibraltarians, and to quote the decennial census of 1931 which revealed that one third of the population over five years of age could speak only Spanish. For these reasons the development of English language in schools was seen as a top priority, but only to achieve the wider political aims outlined above.

It is apparent that many Gibraltarians had severe problems with English in the 1940s. The Rock's community was nowhere near achieving what the Inspector of Schools in 1930 had called the 'ultimate aim' of making the population bilingual. The seriousness of the situation was described by Albert R. Isola, one of the members of the Clifford Committee, in appendix 'B' to the report. He affirmed that in 1943, 26% of the Gibraltar population was illiterate. He further noted:

The position pre-war was an indulgence in filthy language, an entire absence of the use of the English language once the child left school (easily explainable if parents could not speak English, how would the family get on together?).

(Post-War Plans 1943:2)

His proposed solution was novel, and no doubt reflected his personal background. The idea was to send all pupils above the age of ten to boarding school in the United Kingdom, a notion quickly discarded as being impractical. Instead, the Clifford Committee opted to strengthen the ties between the Gibraltar and English systems of education and this was reflected in a number of its proposals. These

included recruiting a Director of Education for Gibraltar from the United Kingdom; sending pupils of exceptional ability to university in Britain; and training teachers in England, as well as sending them on regular refresher courses thereafter (*Clifford Report* 1943:23 and 26).

It should be noted that the population of Gibraltar was undergoing important political change at this time. The evolution of the Gibraltarians as a people in their own right was gaining recognition in some official quarters. At the same time there was a social struggle for greater self-government, resulting in a limited Legislative Council being granted to Gibraltar at the end of 1948 (Garcia 1994:61). This situation was significant. However much the Colonial Office wanted to develop English in order to foster the 'Britishness' of the civilian population, Gibraltarians now had their own voice and limited self-government. For the plan to be successful, the Rock's representatives had to be willing participants. In practice there were few problems in persuading the Gibraltar government to accept that *The Clifford Report*, with the stated aim of making Gibraltarians British in more than name, was the desirable route to follow. In a pamphlet published on 8 April 1944, the Gibraltar government 'welcomed and accepted' the recommendations of the Clifford Committee as providing an educational system

...which is in close accord with present-day thought, which will safeguard Catholic principles and which will provide equality of opportunity from Infant School to University.

(*Clifford Report Reaction* 1944:VI)

That the Gibraltarians wanted to develop their ties with Britain is clear from this reaction, but additionally the use of English to achieve this aim was supported in the same document:

The Government fully endorses the emphasis placed by the committee on the importance of English as the medium of instruction. The optimum point at which the child should begin to receive instruction through the medium of English will need to be worked out in practice.

(*Clifford Report Reaction* 1944:III)

The scene was set for the continuance of the debate on the role Spanish should play in the curriculum, but the over-riding principle had been established that English was to take precedence. This was a reflection of the political desire of the population to remain British. There were those who thought that the population of Gibraltar comprised Spaniards living under a British system. This is clearly not the case, as can be gauged from the following remarks from the then Gibraltar governor, Sir Kenneth Anderson, taken from the foreword to a book entitled *The Gibraltarian*, published in 1951:

Although the ties with Spain are close and Spanish is spoken by everyone today, with English as a second language to a wide and increasing extent, it is very clear that the Gibraltarian is certainly not a Spaniard. He has naturally developed characteristics of his own derived from his forebears and it is not too much to say that the Gibraltarian race is unique, and very proud of its British citizenship.

(Howes 1951:III)

Anderson was perceptive in that he recognised the basic characteristics of the Gibraltarian that make him stand out, not only from the Spaniard, but also from the average person in the United Kingdom. Pride in the British heritage is very manifest and the widespread use of Spanish did not then, and indeed does not today, reflect any desire by Gibraltarians to strengthen links with Spain. In educational terms, however, the significance of the acceptance of English as the language of instruction was very great. It was not only in keeping with the political aspirations of the people, but it also

established a form of balance between English and Spanish which persists to this day. Even now Gibraltar conducts its official business in English, but much of the social intercourse takes place in Spanish. Moreover the place of English in the curriculum for Gibraltarian schools had been defined very early, as had been the principle of the desirability of forging ever closer educational links with the United Kingdom. These two factors were to set the direction for the development of the education system in Gibraltar leading to the adoption of the English national curriculum in 1991.

In the latter half of the 1940s, and following the implementation of the Clifford Committee's recommendations, the first results of the policy of making English more prominent were noted. The Education Department was set up and H. W. Howes was brought over from England to be Gibraltar's first Director of Education. He introduced a series of annual reports on education in Gibraltar, from which it is clear that the provision on the Rock was being provided on the lines of the 1944 Education Act of the United Kingdom. Howes was very aware of the need to adapt the UK system to suit local Gibraltarian needs (*Education Department Report* 1946:5), but the general framework of the education structure was the same. In the report for 1949, Howes observed:

The language of many homes is Spanish, but much more English is spoken in homes than prior to 1940, when the population was evacuated to England, Jamaica etc.

(*Education Department Report* 1950:3)

This progress was also reflected in the classroom, where English literature as well as language was being introduced, backed up by the expansion of school libraries. By 1952 W. A. Grace, who had replaced Howes as Director of Education, was reporting that:

Results on the whole have been satisfactory and by the time the Junior School stage has been reached pupils can read, write and speak simple English. To encourage a taste for good English Literature, the best text-books obtainable after the War were supplied.

(Education Department Report 1952:3)

Clearly progress was being made on the linguistic front. There had also been advances in higher education. From eight students following degree courses and five receiving teacher training in Britain in 1949, the figure had jumped to fifty-seven Gibraltarians pursuing higher education courses in the United Kingdom by 1952 (*Education Department Report 1953:9*). These graduates would then return to Gibraltar, many of them as teachers. Having trained in England, their style of teaching would largely match the current English method, so allowing Gibraltar to continue to grow educationally ever closer to the mother country.

The next moves which served further to institutionalise the Gibraltar-United Kingdom links followed the visit to the Rock in 1952 of W. H. Ingrams. Brought to Gibraltar by the British government to conduct an enquiry into administrative arrangements on the Rock, Ingrams included in his report a number of recommendations on education. The most important of these was a suggestion that a special link be established between Gibraltar and one of the larger local education authorities in England; Ingrams had the London County Council in mind for this purpose (*Ingrams Recommendations 1952:149*). Though not taken up at the time, the proposal found favour with the then Governor, Sir Kenneth Anderson, who noted in a letter to the Colonial Office on 6 March 1952 that a similar link had recently been established between the Falkland Islands and the Dorset Education Committee. The suggestion was seen as desirable and indeed some

twenty years later, in 1974, just such a link was established between Gibraltar and the Essex Local Education Authority.

Ingrams also made recommendations on the position of the Director of Education who, he said, should continue to be recruited in the UK, and also spend some time each year in England:

A month of this might be leave and a month spent as the Ministry of Education advises to keep him in touch with developments here. Inspection on the home scale by the Ministry of Education should do much to equalise standards and practice while a Gibraltar Education Committee will ensure such modifications as local conditions demand.

(Ingrams Recommendations 1952:149)

In both the above recommendations, England is seen as providing the professional advice and direction needed by the education service in Gibraltar. Without it, the Rock would be operating in a vacuum which, given its small size, would be decidedly undesirable.

Ingrams did make one suggestion, nevertheless, that would have given Gibraltar more educational independence. This was that a small-scale polytechnic institution be set up to improve adult educational facilities, among other things. The concept was rejected though, since the Director of Education felt there was no demand for such an institution. Furthermore he believed that even if the demand were to be there, the number of students would be so small and so varied as to make the project uneconomic to operate (Quoted by Acting Governor in a letter to Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 12 April 1952 contained in *Ingrams Recommendations 1952*). What could have been a cross-roads, with Gibraltar branching out into higher education on its own, did not materialise. This left the United Kingdom as the continuing base for higher education for Gibraltarians and ensured that

educational provision on the Rock would continue to meet the entry needs of the UK universities.

As if to highlight the importance of Gibraltar students being provided with an education that would enable them access into higher education in the UK without problems, the summer of 1952 also saw the introduction of the University of Cambridge General Certificate of Education Examination. The Director of Education heralded this move with the following comments:

Amongst other advantages to Gibraltar the change-over will bring the Grammar Schools more into line with similar schools in the United Kingdom. Gibraltar students look to the United Kingdom for courses of study in Universities and places of higher education.

(Education Department Report 1953:7)

Keeping Gibraltar schools parallel to their UK counterparts was seen as advantageous and it should also be noted that the Rock was operating a tri-partite system of grammar, secondary modern and technical schools, as was the case in England.

To enable closer ties to flourish, the Colonial Office regularly sent out education advisors and HMI to Gibraltar in the late 1950s. These visits had the effect of keeping Gibraltar schools in touch with the main-stream of education in England and they also provided some guarantees on standards, since inspection as well as advice was provided:

In 1957, we had two official visitors from England. Miss E. Dawes H.M.I., spent two weeks assessing Junior and Infant Schools and in discussions with teachers, whilst later in the year Miss F. J. Gwilliam, O.B.E., Assistant Educational Advisor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, spent a week in renewing her contacts with the schools and their teachers.

(Education Department Triennial Report 1955-1957:3)

In almost every educational sphere, the UK model provided the basis for courses and, invariably, all the professional qualifications sought on the Rock were from English institutions. By 1960, the Department of Education reported that it was acting as an agency for no fewer than twenty-three external examinations, and these were all for UK-based establishments (*Education Department Triennial Report 1958-1960:6*). Topics were as broad as GCEs from the Universities of London and Cambridge; City and Guilds of London Examinations; and tests of the London School of Accountancy, the Institute of Book-Keepers, the Institute of Certified Grocers, and the Council of Legal Education.

By 1963 it was not just the secondary schools that had been brought into line with their English counterparts, but the primary schools too. The organisation of primary education in Gibraltar followed the pattern of education in England and Wales, with the curriculum being broadly the same (*Education Department Triennial Report 1961-1963:11*). It was thus not simply a case of the grammar schools following the UK structure because of examination requirements, but rather the complete and deliberate alignment of the Gibraltar and English systems of education. As always, this situation was qualified with the proviso that any necessary changes be made to meet local conditions.

English remained central to the curriculum, though by this time political references on the value of the subject in forging closer ties with Britain had been dropped from Education Department reports. A study commissioned in 1965 by the Gibraltar Government, to recommend on the form secondary education should take, came up with several proposals. English was the only subject in the curriculum which received a specific mention. The report recommended the setting up of

a Curriculum Council to consider seven issues periodically. Among these was: 'The teaching of the English Language, and Teaching Aids' (*Secondary Education Report* 1965:8). That English should have been the one area felt to merit individual attention, emphasises the continuing importance attached to this subject.

Two particularly momentous changes occurred in the 1970s and both provide further evidence of the way in which the Gibraltar system of education has followed the UK model. In 1972 secondary comprehensive schools were introduced, in keeping with similar moves in England. There was also the creation, two years later, of the educational link with the Essex Local Education Authority, mentioned earlier. In 1975 a visit by P. Collister, Education Adviser to the Overseas Development Ministry, marked the identification of the need for uniformity in curricular provision for Gibraltar middle schools. Collister noted that, as in the UK, headteachers and teachers retained curricular choice, but that they were distanced from curricular guidance available in Britain through the Schools Council and the DES, in the form of HM Inspectorate visits and courses, local authority inspectors and advisers, and the provision of local in-service training. These factors, Collister maintained, helped establish a common denominator of opinion without interfering with the teacher's right to teach what he chose within the limitations imposed by external examinations:

In consequence, there is a need for some degree of curricular cohesion of the four middle schools; for example, one has mixed ability grouping, all teach French but allocation of time and the age group concerned vary from school to school, and the place of science is differently regarded in all four. Yet the children all go on to the same schools.

(Education Department Triennial Report 1974-1976)

The need for a national curriculum for Gibraltar is apparent from this argument, but this is heightened by Collister's last remark. Gibraltar, being so small, today has only two single-sex secondary schools. As a consequence, all the boys from the various middle schools have, since the advent of comprehensive education in 1972, been feeding into the same comprehensive school, and the same has been the case for the girls. The desirability that they should all have been taught the same course content on entry into secondary level is evident, since otherwise time would be lost in establishing precisely what individual pupils did, or did not know. Clearly the smaller the education system, the easier the task of introducing some form of curricular uniformity. For this reason the benefits of the national curriculum, when it was mooted in England and Wales in the late 1980s, were quickly embraced on the Rock.

The period of the late 1970s and early 1980s in many ways saw the growing sophistication of the education service in Gibraltar. This growth in complexity to some degree came about because of the increasing links with Essex which was providing the external input into the local advisory service that was envisaged when it was first set up. The Gibraltar Department of Education archives for this period reveal visits from various specialist education staff, including a county education psychologist and an inspector for special and remedial education. An Essex adviser, Brian Mellor, was appointed Director of Education, and more attention began to be given to particular refinements of the local education provision. One form in which this manifested itself was in the setting up of Curriculum Development/Co-ordination Committees in 1981 in eleven separate subject areas. The function of the committees was

...to review its particular parts of the total curriculum, especially in relation to subject content and associated teaching techniques, with the aim of preparing advice/information for all schools concerned.

(Education Department Biennial Report 1980-1982:23)

The prominent position of English in schools was confirmed with a course for teachers in November 1984 which considered *Language and the Curriculum*. In an opening contribution, Michael Flores stressed the importance of literacy for life, and he set the tone for the course by looking at the significance of English in the whole educational experience of children:

For the educator the most important thing about language is that it is essential for learning.

(Department of Education Gibraltar, Unpublished Report 1984:4)

Whereas in the preceding decades English had been seen as a tool which could promote British ideals and a British way of life, it was now being considered as a key to unlocking the secrets of the remainder of the curriculum. In this respect its importance once more transcended its content and the subject became a concern for all teachers and not just the language specialists.

Perhaps the most interesting contribution to this course was provided by Paddy Alcantara who described *A Language Programme at First School Level*. This was based upon her work at St Paul's First School (a school studied later in this thesis). She highlighted one of the problems that had been created by the move in the 1930s to make the population bilingual:

An important factor which affects language in Gibraltar is parental confusion about language. Bilingual parents may themselves have learned imperfectly both languages, and thus provide poor models of both for their children.

(Department of Education Gibraltar, Unpublished Report 1984:33)

Alcantara's conclusion was that a number of children in Gibraltar reach school linguistically disadvantaged if previous child/adult dialogue has been ineffective or non-existent. And she proposed a whole-school language programme to overcome this problem. The programme centred around a number of basic skills, which included stressing the importance of listening and talking which could be encouraged by the use of 'open questioning' from teachers. The St Paul's programme presented 'talk' as a separate subject in the time-table, with a teacher in charge withdrawing groups of individuals and the class teacher also taking general lessons in the subject area. Also of interest was the fact that St Paul's had already divided all language resources into three levels which covered the entire spectrum of the school. In 1984, well before the introduction of the national curriculum, St Paul's was already making efforts at standardisation in teaching English, with teachers crossing class boundaries. It was proposing a whole-school approach and also trying to define levels. A national curriculum would serve better to define objectives and standardise the course content across the wider school boundaries as opposed to class ones. Notwithstanding this, the direction of the development was largely the same as that embarked upon by St Paul's First School in 1984 and, as such, the national curriculum was to find favour with teachers there.

2:3 The advent of the national curriculum in Gibraltar

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate how the links between the educational systems of Gibraltar and those of England and Wales were forged historically and were developed and strengthened for political as well as educational reasons. By the late 1980s, when the Tory government introduced a national curriculum in England and Wales, Gibraltar was, as a matter of course, closely monitoring educational developments there with a view to their possible application on the Rock. It did not follow automatically, however, that changes made in England would be adopted in Gibraltar, and therefore the advent of a national curriculum in England and Wales posed some basic questions on the future direction of the Gibraltar education service.

An important consideration was the highly-charged political air that surrounded the introduction of the national curriculum in England and Wales. It is widely accepted that the national curriculum was a move by the British government to take direct control of the curriculum. It was also accompanied by feelings of mistrust in the teaching profession, as well as by calls for greater teacher accountability. All of this, coupled with the extensive demands placed on teachers to assimilate major and on-going changes, understandably led to poor morale and did not constitute the ideal background against which to embark upon so significant a development as the formulation and introduction of a national curriculum. Certainly though, the problems could largely be said to have been of the government's own making, since it was the political agenda which caused most of the controversy, rather than the concept of a national curriculum itself.

For once Gibraltar's distance from the United Kingdom educational scene was to work in its favour. The political scenario which surrounded the national curriculum in England and Wales simply did

not apply in Gibraltar. Yet the question remained whether or not adopting the national curriculum on the Rock was desirable, and in deciding this, whether or not it would be possible to adopt the national curriculum without the political agenda that accompanied it in the UK.

From the process that led to the decision to adopt the national curriculum in Gibraltar, it was clear from the start that there was one very fundamental difference from the UK. This was that the issue was being considered by educationists and not by politicians, and that the criteria used in arriving at a decision were similarly educational and not political. A process of consultation preceded the decision to adopt the national curriculum and this involved not merely the headteachers and the advisory service, but also all teachers in Gibraltar, who were invited to express their views by means of a questionnaire. The Education Department recorded an almost 100% return from this survey and some 92% of the teachers expressed themselves in favour of adopting the national curriculum on the Rock. The Director of Education at the time, Julio Alcantara, highlighted the fact that most teachers in Gibraltar were in favour of the move, unlike their counterparts in the UK, and he attributed this difference to the fact that teachers in Gibraltar did not feel threatened by the proposed changes. This allowed the merits of a national curriculum to be examined coldly and logically, something which could not happen in the UK because of the way in which it was introduced (Alcantara I/V 1996:2). As to the Gibraltar Government's position, Alcantara recalled:

There had been a change of government in Gibraltar in 1988, and we put it to the new minister that a major political decision was required at that stage. The minister was happy to be guided by the professionals on this and he had no strong opinions on the subject so long as we kept to the then current budget.

(Alcantara I/V 1996:2)

There was no real pressure, therefore, to adopt the national curriculum in Gibraltar, though interviews with the then Education Adviser, Leslie Lester (now Director of Education), and Julio Alcantara, reveal a political dimension which certainly affected the attitude they adopted to it. Alcantara described the educational system as a 'reflection of our Britishness', and expressed the opinion that Gibraltar had to move in the same direction as the UK because of the political and cultural links that exist (Alcantara I/V 1996:1). Lester similarly spoke about considering Gibraltar's position once it heard about the national curriculum against the background of '...a willingness to maintain the English style of education' (Lester I/V 1996:1). In essence their words reflect the feelings of the community at large which feels great pride in its British institutions, because they reflect the popular opposition to Spain's desires to recover the sovereignty of Gibraltar.

Additionally, the current political relationship between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom has served, if anything, to intensify the desire on the part of the Rock's community to strengthen its links with the mother country. Since the current Labour government came to power in Britain in 1997 the general feeling among Gibraltarians is that the UK is attempting to push Gibraltar into accepting some form of deal with Spain which would mean initial joint sovereignty of the territory leading, eventually, to a Spanish Gibraltar. This feeling has spread as a consequence of the refusal of the British Government to undertake a strong defence of the Rock in the European Union (EU) that Gibraltar joined with Britain in 1973. It should be noted that though Gibraltar has its own legislative body and is fully responsible for all domestic issues, Britain retains responsibility and control for overseas relations and defence. Since Spain's accession to the EU in 1982, she has fought a political battle to have Gibraltar excluded from every possible

community agreement. Spain has used her power of veto to achieve this and Britain has often given in to this harassment of Gibraltar so as not to be seen, by her community allies, to be the stumbling block in the advancement of European legislation. One example of this was the exclusion of Gibraltar from the EU 'Open Skies' directive for air liberalisation at Spain's insistence. Britain agreed to this despite strong protest from Gibraltar as a consequence of strong pressure from her European allies who were keen to see the measure go through (Gibraltar Chronicle 1998:9).

That there is probable justification for the fears of the Gibraltarians can be gauged from the opinion of a former governor of the Rock, General Sir William Jackson. Jackson was governor when Spain joined the European Union and his assessment of the current situation was expressed in a letter sent to British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook on 21 September 1998 and published in the Gibraltar press. Jackson berated the British Government for not having rejected Spain's latest proposals for joint sovereignty of Gibraltar despite being asked to do so by all the political parties on the Rock and by a petition signed by two-thirds of the Gibraltar electorate. And he concluded:

I hope that my assessment of FCO Gibraltar policy is wrong, and that New Labour is not intent on forcing the Gibraltarians into the Spanish realm against their wishes. It is not surprising after suffering political and economic harassment since the Queen's visit in 1954 that they are virulently anti-Spanish and will remain so for several generations.

(Gibraltar Chronicle 1998:8)

Whereas it might be thought that this scenario would lead to anti-British feeling on the Rock, this has not been the case. One probable reason for this is that the Gibraltar community considers that in its

'Britishness' lies the only realistic hope of avoiding a future Spanish Gibraltar.

The implications for the Rock's education system stem from the fact that the popular desire to strengthen links with Britain is more manifest than ever. This will, no doubt, prove as important a factor in the future, when considering whether or not Gibraltar wishes to adopt the current England and Wales literacy project initiative, as it did in the past in influencing the decision to adopt the national curriculum.

The reality of the close ties that developed between the Gibraltar and English systems of education, was also a factor that pushed the Rock towards adopting the national curriculum. Lester highlighted the links with the examination boards in the UK. He felt Gibraltar is too small to offer public examinations as a centre in its own right, since these would then have no external currency (Lester I/V 1996:1). This theme was developed by Alcantara who highlighted the value of the system to Gibraltar, since it meant that the Rock's students did not have any problems of access into higher education in the UK. This was in contrast to those from elsewhere who might apply holding a baccalaureat qualification, for example (Alcantara I/V 1996:1).

Regardless of these factors which inclined Gibraltar towards an acceptance of the national curriculum, the question remained unanswered as to whether or not it was possible to do this without taking account of the political assumptions which accompanied the move in England. The answer to this issue lay in the manner in which the Gibraltar system of education had evolved since the nineteenth century, when the English Elementary Code of 1870 was adopted in Gibraltar with certain modifications to cater for local conditions. The adaptation of the English system to meet the Rock's needs has proved the basis for educational provision in Gibraltar as already illustrated earlier in this chapter. When the issue of possible acceptance of the

national curriculum came to be considered, the Education Adviser and the Director of Education never contemplated the idea of adopting it piecemeal, but immediately understood that it would need to be modified to suit the local conditions. Gibraltar's position as a territory which passes its own legislation meant, of course, that there was no legal impediment to their doing so.

Alcantara highlighted two modifications to the national curriculum which were decided upon by the Department of Education from the beginning. The first of these was to carry everything out one year behind the UK. This was intended to provide some form of buffer against the constant changes that were occurring in England, and the only exceptions were demands placed by the UK examining boards which clearly had to be met when they were made (Alcantara I/V 1996:2). Alcantara felt, in retrospect, that this was a sound decision, but it was not considered so by everyone. The chairperson of the Gibraltar National Curriculum Working Group for English, Charles Durante, expressed the opinion that while following examination syllabuses, Gibraltar could have stood back for longer while the process evolved in the UK. He argued that it was not really necessary to have experienced the turmoil of constant changes, and that the result was that the original meaning, purpose and philosophy of the national curriculum were lost to some extent (Durante I/V 1996:3). This assertion was rejected by Alcantara who pointed out that the national curriculum is dynamic, and hence one could never really say that it is 'finished' at any point. He maintained that if Gibraltar had delayed implementation by a number of years, the change would have been too drastic and the Department would have found itself unable to carry it out (Alcantara I/V 1996:4). The current Director of Education, Leslie Lester, shares this view and also expressed the opinion that the fact that the teachers lived through the many changes involved in the development of the curriculum

proved a great in-service experience in its own right. He claimed that teachers matured professionally through the process, and that overall it was good for the profession (Lester I/V 1996:3).

The second major modification of the UK model, decided at the outset, was that Gibraltar was not going to take on the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs). Alcantara explained that he perceived the move in Britain as part of a Tory obsession with control and accountability - a way of checking up on whether or not teachers were doing what they said they were. As Director he expressed himself satisfied at the time with the system of feedback already in place in Gibraltar schools. This comprised analysis of a random sample of pupils in primary schools by the Educational Psychologist from the Department of Education, in conjunction with the headteachers. He felt there would have been no point in introducing a political set of tests which would have angered the profession because of the increased work-load, and would have provided no more information than they had already (Alcantara I/V 1996:2).

It is clear from the position to national curriculum implementation adopted by Alcantara, that the Gibraltar Department of Education was much more sensitive to the need to introduce changes without provoking a negative reaction from the teaching profession, than was the case with the British government. The fact that the curriculum did not carry an attached political agenda, and that the debate on implementation was carried out with widespread consultation and using educational criteria, increased the chances of acceptance and success of the national curriculum in Gibraltar.

Leslie Lester expressed the belief that the curriculum is today still not being adequately monitored. Whilst undecided on whether SATs should or should not be introduced on the Rock, he is very clear that even if they were, the results would be for internal consumption only

and that no league tables would be published (Lester I/V 1996:3). His stand on the issue illustrates a rejection of the politics which has dogged the implementation of the national curriculum in the UK. There is also an appreciation of the desirability of de-politicising the curriculum, apparent even in the manner in which it was formalised. When interviewed, Julio Alcantara highlighted that the national curriculum was introduced in Gibraltar using educational regulations via the official gazette, and not by an Act of Parliament as in the UK. He felt that the Department of Education had no right to dictate to the community and that regulations would be easier to amend than an ordinance. He also pointed to the fact that the Department did not define the detail as to the subject content, and quite deliberately allowed the freedom to amend UK documents, which is what is happening in practice. Alcantara stressed that it was never his intention to introduce a curriculum '...carved in tablets of stone' (Alcantara I/V 1996:3).

This situation contrasts sharply with the way the national curriculum was introduced in Britain. The rejection in Gibraltar of a prescriptive curriculum recognised the professionalism of teachers and demonstrated a willingness to take advantage of good practice that had evolved over the years. The emphasis was clearly on developing a curriculum along with the teachers and not despite them, and it is understandable that implementation on the Rock was nothing like as controversial or problematic as it was in the United Kingdom.

So what were the advantages of adopting the national curriculum in Gibraltar? Alcantara highlighted the fact that it maintained Gibraltar's links with the British system, and that this is what the community wishes. He also expressed satisfaction at the fact that science is now being taught in first schools, which was not the case before (Alcantara I/V 1996:4). For his part Lester defined the main benefits as deriving from improved continuity, progression and breadth. He emphasised

that Gibraltar now had a curriculum which was independent of headteachers, and that this helped with standardisation. A further major advantage for Lester was that the Department could monitor progress by comparing with schools in UK, and this would make up in part for the geographical distance between the two territories (Lester I/V 1996:2).

Neither the former nor the current Director of Education saw any major disadvantages in adopting the national curriculum and this was due in great measure to the way the system has been implemented in Gibraltar. The fact that the Department is free to accept, reject or modify the content of the national curriculum means in practice that education is still in the control of educationists and not politicians who, if the UK experience is anything to go by, are not above introducing changes for purely political reasons.

The national curriculum has been recognised by educationists as providing great opportunities for the development of a system that will best meet the educational requirements of future generations of children. For it to do so, it must take account of the lessons of the past, defining and retaining good practice, but it must also be flexible enough to adapt to changing needs in a critical manner. It is the belief in Gibraltar today that the de-politicisation of the curriculum on the Rock provides the most favourable climate for the maximising of these opportunities.

2:4 Chapter overview

Gibraltar has been British since 1704 though efforts to develop a system of education on the Rock did not really materialise until the period of relative stability that followed the end of the Great Siege in 1783.

Religion was a major influence in early attempts to provide a general education for the civilian population. A number of religious denominations, intent on promoting their own religious interests, used the promise of education to attract young people. Since most of the population at that time was Spanish-speaking, the subject of English, in particular, was considered a considerable enticement.

With the passage of time, and given that Britain enjoyed overall responsibility for the colony, the style of education provided came to be based upon that in England. This situation was formalised with the adoption of the English Education Code in 1880. Links between the Gibraltar and English systems of education steadily developed and strengthened from this point, with Gibraltar schools not only teaching in the English manner but also entering their pupils for examinations of various British examining boards. When the need arose for higher education, it became established that this would be provided for Gibraltarian students at English universities and colleges.

Efforts in the 1930s to encourage an equal treatment of English and Spanish in the curriculum of Gibraltar schools were quickly abandoned. Spanish claims for sovereignty over Gibraltar were strongly opposed by the civilian population who sought refuge in a strengthening of its British institutions. English, therefore, became the language of instruction in the Gibraltar curriculum and Spanish has never been afforded equal status to it. Furthermore, through the century, the adaptation of English methods to suit local needs became the crucial principle at the heart of Gibraltar education policy. It is a principal that is still applied today.

The second world war served to strengthen the political identity and Britishness of the people of Gibraltar. This was reflected in the work of the Clifford committee in 1943 which determined the direction in which education would develop once the civilian population of

Gibraltar returned home from war-time evacuation. The status of English was raised in an attempt to promote the British way of life and the Gibraltar government was pleased to go down that path because it reflected the popular rejection of Spain's continuing sovereignty claim.

Greater Gibraltarian self-government in the post-war years did not affect the developing links between the Gibraltar and English systems of education. An Englishman was appointed Gibraltar's first Director of Education and there were regular visits from United Kingdom education officials to provide professional advice and direction.

By tradition, educational initiatives in England have always been considered and, where necessary, adapted to the local situation. This principal^{ty} was applied to plans for a national curriculum. Unlike in England and Wales, however, its adoption was preceded by a period of widespread consultation with the whole teaching profession on the Rock. Indeed the final decision to implement a national curriculum in Gibraltar was taken by educationists and not politicians. It is argued that this approach made the transition to a national curriculum much less controversial than it proved in England and Wales.

This thesis will now consider the way national curriculum English is being implemented on the Rock. It will do so through the analysis of practice in three schools which together encompass the full age range, which in Gibraltar is from 4 to 16. The following chapter introduces St Paul's First School, Gibraltar and examines the methods of English teaching employed in the reception year.

SECTION B: ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

CHAPTER 3

ENGLISH AND THE RECEPTION YEAR AT ST PAUL'S FIRST SCHOOL, GIBRALTAR

3:1 Readiness for schooling

The first school selected for this study was St Paul's First School, situated in Varyl Begg Estate, one of many housing estates in Gibraltar. The school is well established and has significantly expanded its intake in recent years after a population shift which followed widespread housing development in the surrounding area. The school has acquired a justifiable reputation for being innovative. The headteacher, Mrs Tere Beiso, chose to pilot the national curriculum two years before it was officially adopted in Gibraltar. St Paul's has also been piloting the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs), since 1993. This is despite the fact that these are not at present compulsory in Gibraltar. The cutting-edge of educational leadership provided by the school's head is illustrated by the following comment:

If you react positively to major innovation like the national curriculum, you are in a better position to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by change.

(Beiso I/V 1996:2)

The attitude which fuelled the headteacher's desire to adopt the national curriculum early also aroused considerable opposition from staff members at the time. Mrs Beiso affirms that they took a great deal of convincing and coaxing, but that the value of the exercise was appreciated later on since the teachers experienced fewer problems in adapting to the national curriculum, once it became compulsory, than some teachers from other schools (Beiso I/V 1996:2). This would

appear to be borne out by the findings of a questionnaire circulated among all the teachers at St Paul's as part of this research. Twelve out of a possible 15 teachers completed the questionnaire, representing 80% of the total teaching staff. Of these, 8 teachers felt very well prepared to cope with national curriculum English and the remaining 4 stated they were fairly well prepared (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:3).

One immediate challenge faced by teachers of English is the linguistic state of many of the children when they begin to attend school for the first time. There are clear cultural differences between Gibraltar on the one hand and England and Wales on the other: the evidence is that in Gibraltar a significant number of pupils arrive at the start of their schooling with a very limited command of the English language. The teacher in charge of language at St Paul's, Mrs Paddy Alcantara, highlights this as one major advantage in having reception year classes, since it is a very real problem which needs to be addressed (Alcantara I/V 1996b:3). The scale of the problem, though, is hard to quantify. Beiso claims that non-English speakers upon first arrival at school are now in a minority, a situation which she says is in contrast to that existing 20 years ago (Beiso I/V 1996:3).

The potential for bilingualism that exists in the community is in some ways a double-edged sword, because it serves to heighten the difficulties in acquiring the basic skills in English, particularly among below-average ability pupils. This is borne out by the work of the government's educational psychologist, Freddie Trinidad, who since 1986 has been collecting data which measures the state of readiness for school of all Gibraltar children at the age of four. Trinidad's research confirms that the knowledge of Spanish of pupils is a hindrance to their early studies of English though he qualifies this statement:

There is a degree of linguistic interference but I would call it an obstacle rather than a handicap. It is nevertheless an obstacle that is well worth negotiating. There is an intrinsic worth in having second codes, especially in average to above-average pupils. It is detrimental to below-average pupils who find inordinate difficulties with English.

(Trinidad I/V 1996:2)

This standpoint coincides with that of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) which, following the Dearing Review, highlighted the issue as one of eight key points schools should consider in teaching English:

The potential contribution of pupils' knowledge of other languages to their learning of English is recognised.

(SCAA 1995:5)

Trinidad nevertheless emphasised a number of factors which help in overcoming the problem of initial language interference. Perhaps the most important is the general good state of readiness for schooling of pupils in Gibraltar. This conclusion is drawn from the results of the Croydon Assessment which every pupil undertakes shortly after starting compulsory schooling. The Croydon score is determined using 19 probes to assess the state of pupils in three main areas, 'speech and communication', 'emotional /social', and 'perpetual/motor'. In addition, the child's response to learning situations is also measured.

In the teachers' notes that accompany the probes, Trinidad explains the purpose of the check list as being to assess each child's

intellectual and emotional readiness for an introduction to reading activity, and (b) identify those children whose development is delayed or deficient in these areas. There is strong evidence that these children are most at risk in the classroom.

(Trinidad I/V 1996:6)

In looking at the 1996 results, which included all pupils starting school in Gibraltar, Trinidad emphasised that deciding on the degree of readiness for schooling from these tests was, of necessity, subjective. Based on his experience, however, he predicted that pupils who score less than 10 from the possible 19 were going to have learning difficulties. In 1996 these constituted 2.2%. On the other hand 11.3% scored a maximum 19/19, with a further 15.1% scoring 18/19. Trinidad explained that these figures are a fair reflection of the normal results and indicate to him that many pupils in Gibraltar are ready to meet the challenges of school life from the very outset of their formal schooling (Trinidad I/V 1996:1).

Trinidad attributes the apparent good state of readiness of pupils for school to many factors. These include Gibraltar having a large middle class who have educational aspirations; the recent increase in children attending nursery; the prosperity of the community which allows education to be a priority; and an improved sense among the general public of the importance of play and good educational toys in the early years. He also stressed that recent Croydon figures indicate a clear trend of an increasing readiness of pupils with a bias for English at home, and that he finds language readiness to be as clear an indicator of general readiness as is possible (Trinidad I/V 1996:2).

Research in the United Kingdom confirms the value of starting children's educational experiences before the age of five. In a large-scale study which charted the relationship between pre-school experiences and attainment at 5 and 10 years of age, significant differences were noted in ability, attainment and behaviour between those who had attended pre-school groups and those who had not. The conclusions drawn from the study were that predominantly middle-class, small home-based playgroups, and children from nursery schools did particularly well (Osborn and Millbank 1987).

In Gibraltar, a large proportion of children attend playgroups or nursery schools, some from as early as the age of two. Though Gibraltar is a small community, there are 22 private nurseries registered with the Department of Education and also a further two run by the Government. These last two each cater for 60 children in the 3-4 age range and are free of charge. As a result, most children in Gibraltar have access to nursery education even before they commence their compulsory schooling at reception level.

This situation compares favourably to that in England and Wales where it is only recently that the value of nursery education has received more widespread recognition and is now being given a greater priority. As recently as 1993 an independent inquiry, the National Commission on Education (NCE), drew attention to the poor levels of pre-school education in England and Wales and set as a first goal for educators that nursery education should be available to all 3 and 4 year olds:

Much of what is provided is in the private sector and therefore depends on the parents' ability to pay. The United Kingdom has one of the lowest levels of publicly funded pre-school services in Europe.

(NCE 1993:6)

In the mid-1990s the last Conservative Government started to address the situation by introducing a voucher scheme to make nursery places accessible to more children. Though this scheme was abolished after the present Labour Government came to power in 1997, the drive towards widespread pre-school education gained momentum with the electoral promise that Labour would provide a free nursery place for all four year olds. The government delivered on this promise in March 1998 when the Education Secretary, David Blunkett, announced that from September 1998 four year olds would have access to free early

education places within maintained schools, playgroups or with private providers. Blunkett saw the move as a step towards achieving

...the long-standing objective of providing every parent with the opportunity of free early education which some have long taken for granted.

(DFEE Circular 154/1998:1)

Some observers, however, feel the scheme does not go far enough, since it only provides widespread nursery places once children are four years of age. The move serves as recognition, nevertheless, of the value of starting children's education before they embark on the national curriculum at the age of five. As outlined above, this notion enjoys widespread support in the community in Gibraltar. Not only does compulsory schooling on the Rock commence at the age of four, but a majority of children also attend nurseries even before that.

The picture that emerges in Gibraltar is therefore one in which most pupils starting school are in a state of readiness which will enable them to advance, though those pupils who are not exposed to English in their pre-school years will be at an obvious disadvantage. Regardless of the assessment of the headteacher of St Paul's School that non-English speakers upon first arrival at school are now in a minority, language, at first school level certainly, would indeed appear to be the key to unlocking the rest of the curriculum. The diversity in initial language skills constitutes a major obstacle for teachers of English, but this is helped in no small measure by the fact that compulsory schooling in Gibraltar starts one year earlier than in England and Wales. This allows teachers a full year with pupils before they begin to follow the national curriculum, and much valuable ground-work can be done in this time.

3:2 Language and the reception curriculum

For full benefit to be derived from the reception year, it is clear that an adequate programme of study would need to be devised to cater for an age-group that lies outside the national curriculum provision. This is particularly relevant to this study, given the importance of language acquisition in Gibraltar in allowing children to profit fully from their schooling. The reception curriculum would ideally need to cater for the particular local problem of those pupils arriving at school with no knowledge of English. At the same time, it would have to take account of the fact that the pupils are very young and might not respond to the same techniques that might be appropriate for older children.

A parallel can be drawn here with Northern Ireland which, like Gibraltar, has an earlier compulsory school age than England and Wales. In Northern Ireland special provision is made to cater for these pupils:

Given the earlier compulsory school age the national curriculum for the first year of primary school is designed to meet the developmental needs of 4-year olds, concentrating on learning through experience and emphasising play.

(NCE 1993:125)

In looking at the curriculum devised for St Paul's School, it is clear that the role of language was a key issue. The reception year is unique because individual headteachers have more freedom to decide on the content of what is covered than is the case once the pupils embark on the national curriculum proper. There is a lack of knowledge in first schools regarding what is being covered by the other schools in the

same age range, a fact that has been acknowledged and regretted (Beiso I/V 1996:2).

The issue of the apparent lack of communication between schools regarding how the curriculum is being tackled will be discussed later in this study when the role of the Gibraltar national curriculum working group for English is examined.

Language provision for reception pupils at St Paul's, however, is clearly not tackled in isolation. To begin with, the pupils work towards level one of the national curriculum. The evidence is that what is provided is not simply a watered-down version of the year 1 curriculum. Linguistic aims are interwoven with other defined objectives and a largely cross-curricular approach is adopted. The advisability of this approach is explained by Beiso, who views the reception year as a preparation for year 1. She highlights as the only possible disadvantage of the reception year that some pupils, in particular those who may not be five until the end of the year, can be a little immature and have problems coping at first. Beiso is adamant that all the pupils 'come round in the end' and she stresses the content of the reception scheme of work:

It provides help for them in social skills, in achieving independence and also with non-English speakers.

(Beiso I/V 1996:3)

This statement recognises the wider role of the reception programme of study in preparing the children for school and not simply embarking on the national curriculum language targets for year 1. Paddy Alcantara agrees with this line of thought, affirming that the year provides practice for pupils of national curriculum style and content before these things are really required of them, and that it also serves to acquaint the children with school values and expectations:

It provides the child with experience in socialisation as he or she finds out what it means to form part of the 'school family' unit. Pupils learn about such concepts as sharing and all these things can be ironed out so the subject content is more readily grasped in year 1.

(Alcantara I/V 1996b:3-4)

This philosophy serves to remove the pressure to achieve strictly defined subject objectives with a class in which some pupils might simply be too young to make such aims feasible.

3:3 The English syllabus and the reception year

So how exactly does St Paul's structure the English curriculum at reception level? In practice the English syllabus for the school does not differentiate between year groups, but rather traces a linguistic progression which takes the pupil from national curriculum level 1 to level 3 in the three areas of study: speaking and listening; reading; and writing. The programme of study for reception pupils draws on the English objectives leading towards level 1 and integrates these with the objectives for other areas of learning. It is interesting to note that the English syllabus does not simply contain a prescriptive list of what needs to be covered to achieve a given level in a particular area of study. It is a much more detailed document which sets out clearly the key features of national curriculum English. It also breaks down each attainment target into individual levels, listing the following in parallel columns: a level description, the appropriate programme of study, suggested activities and possible cross-curricular links, as well as the available resources (see Table 1).

Table 1: Tackling attainment targets in St Paul's syllabus

Attainment Target 1 - Speaking and Listening	
Level Descriptions	Programme of Study
Level 1	
Talk about matters of immediate interest.	Refer to Range Section A and D.
Listen to others and usually respond appropriately .	Refer to Key Skills Section A. Refer to Standard English and Language Study Section A.
Convey simple messages to a range of listeners speaking audibly.	Refer to Range Section B.
Begin to extend their ideas or accounts by providing some details.	Refer to Range Section C.
Curriculum Area/ Suggested Activity Resources	
Cross curricular. Retelling (e.g. a short story/ a personal event).	News, creative writing, (feelings about) R.E.
Cross curricular. Say what they like or dislike.	News, R.E. Stories, Science, activities.
Cross curricular. E.g. Conveying <u>simple</u> instructions to peers or teachers.	Via Drama, Science, Maths, activities, DT/IT, Assemblies.
Cross curricular. E.g. I like to read because... etc.	Reading sessions. Drama (David Waugh booklet for ideas) Sand and Water Play. Cooking Time, Wendy Home, Ginn Language Books, Big Book, Ginn Maths and Big Book Ginn Science.

The curriculum areas and suggested activities, as well as the resources available, are set out on a page parallel to the level descriptions and programmes of study. In this way the teacher is able to work across as well as down and see how the theory in the English Orders can translate into the practice in his/her classroom. The detail provided shows the syllabus to be very much a working document which can be of practical use to teachers in their everyday work. It is not a mere paperwork exercise that is published and subsequently left to gather dust on a shelf while the staff at the school continue to teach as they have always done. This practical focus provided by the St Paul's syllabus is very important since it draws together the various classes being taught in each age group. Without this type of document lying at the heart of the English teaching, a pupil could very well receive a substantially different education in comparison with a school-fellow in a parallel teaching group. Much would depend on the individual priorities of each of the teachers involved. At St Paul's, however, it can be affirmed that classes of the same age group receive largely the same education and there are several reasons why this is so.

One important factor was the decision by the headteacher to pilot the national curriculum before it became compulsory in Gibraltar. While unpopular with some of the staff at St Paul's at the time, there is little doubt that the extra time allowed the teachers to assimilate the national curriculum philosophy more fully than many colleagues from other schools. It also allowed them more time to iron out the practical difficulties involved in translating a list of objectives into a working framework that would achieve the desired aims. Much of this work was done during in-service sessions and programmed meetings and as can be gauged from the comments of the Head of Language, involved all teachers at the school. It was an approach which ensured the emergence of a syllabus that could be of practical use:

We also had our own weekly meetings where we would read each attainment target, expand upon it and discuss it. We would look at what it meant and also practical issues like how it could be implemented.

(Alcantara I/V 1996b:3)

Apart from using the same syllabus, standardisation across the class groups is achieved by teachers carrying out the same form of assessment and reporting. There is also a process of on-going moderation and parallel teachers meet each week to work together on their records of work. This ensures that everyone knows what the others are doing, and improves the opportunities for standardisation.

There are, of course, those who criticise the national curriculum precisely for being too much of a strait-jacket. Sir Ron Dearing responded to this during the last revision of the curriculum by cutting back on content and prescription to ‘...increase scope for teachers’ professional judgement’ (SCAA:1995:1).

Over-prescriptiveness does not, however, appear to be a major concern for the teachers at St Paul’s. Only one of the 12 teachers surveyed complained that the curriculum was ‘a bit too rigid at times’, whereas three of the others expressed a liking for a clear structure where ‘things are laid out for you’ (St Paul’s Questionnaire 1996:9-10).

An important contributing factor is undoubtedly that the English syllabus is not simply a document that was written by the teacher in charge of language in isolation. The input from the general staff ensures an ownership of ideas that improves the chances for on-going staff development and makes the syllabus a dynamic and useful document.

The syllabus itself starts with a summary of the key features of national curriculum English. This is expressed in succinct, clear language and provides a handy reference to the teacher to ensure he/she does not lose sight of the objectives through too great an immersion in the

practicalities of delivery. The summary provides a focus which the teacher can quickly refer to. As is manifest from the following extract covering ‘speaking and listening’, it is short enough to be of use on a day-to-day basis:

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Speaking and listening emphasised

Talk valued

Drama important

Children to learn conventions of discussion

Standard English important - subject - verb agreement at KS1

Clear diction and appropriate intonation at KS1

Vocabulary extension important - word games etc.

(St Paul’s English Syllabus 1996:1)

It must be borne in mind that the precise meaning of the above summary, and how it relates to activity in the classroom, is being tackled on an on-going basis at meetings and in-service sessions. Its inclusion at the start of the syllabus will help individual teachers to focus.

The English syllabus also provides help for teachers in assessing their attitudes and practices in relation to ‘speaking and listening’ objectives. This takes the form of a page entitled ‘Traffic Lights’. Here a list is provided of a range of activities designed to develop pupils’ ability to speak and listen and the teacher is invited to consider how often he/she engages in them with his/her pupils. A ‘green’ rating would indicate that the activity is done regularly, an ‘amber’ one that it is done sometimes and a ‘red’ that it is never done. The following activities are typical of those listed:

- Listening and responding to stories, rhymes, poems and songs - familiar and unfamiliar. These should include examples from different cultures and authors and from pupils’ own work.

- Securing responses to visual and aural stimuli, *e.g. pictures, television, radio, computer, telephone*, making use of audio and video recordings as appropriate.
- Discussion of their work with other pupils and the teacher.
(St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:2)

The above could again invite criticism as being too prescriptive, but in reality it provides guidance for the teachers rather than dictating what exactly they must do in the classroom. How a teacher approaches the activity is left to the individual, as is the subject matter in the form of story, picture, television or radio programme selected. This freedom allows the teacher to place the emphasis of the lesson wherever he/she feels it should fall. As discussed in Chapter 1:2, since the choice of content is so important in determining the outcome of a lesson and the learning that takes place, the scope exists for the teacher to exercise the 'professional judgement' advocated by Sir Ron Dearing.

Another section that is included before the national curriculum content is tackled once again emphasises the practical nature of the syllabus. This takes the form of suggestions to help teachers cope with different aspects of classroom management. The following three points are typical of those provided in this part of the syllabus:

- Make extensive use of open questions in your discussions with children and try to ensure that children take turns and do not dominate discussions by calling out.
- Look for opportunities to let talk lead to writing and other tangible products.
- If the class is excessively noisy when working it is just as effective to stop them to praise good work as it is to rebuke them for being disruptive.

(St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:3)

Such points would clearly seem to be unnecessary for experienced teachers, but they could be very helpful for newer teachers who might

be experiencing some problems with classroom management. Their inclusion in the syllabus means such teachers would have access to the advice without having to go through a process of asking for help; something they might feel embarrassed to do. It is interesting to note that five of the twelve teachers who filled in the questionnaire at St Paul's School have under five years' teaching experience (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:1). Teachers in this category could derive considerable benefit from the pointers provided. At the same time, the advice given could well serve to improve the standard of delivery of the English curriculum and this in itself justifies the inclusion of such a page in the syllabus.

The English Orders are introduced in the next stage of the syllabus. The information reproduced comes from the Department for Education's (DFE): *English in the National Curriculum*. It was found to be up-to-date and taken from the latest 'post-Dearing' document. Presentation is split up into the various programmes of study and only one programme is tackled at a time. In practice, what this means is that the teacher is first confronted with the 1½ page extract on 'Speaking and Listening at Key Stage 1'. Immediately after this, the attainment targets for levels 1, 2 and 3 are presented in turn. Each level description is accompanied by the appropriate programme of study, together with a suggested activity and list of available resources. In this way the theory in the DFE document is directly related to the practice in the classroom and the teacher is left in no doubt as to what is required.

As classroom teachers are often reluctant to read long documents, the breaking-up of the English Orders into short extracts which deal with one area of the subject at a time is helpful. The syllabus ensures the classroom teacher is not overburdened with information, some of which may not even be directly relevant. It provides a clear focus on the pertinent material from the national curriculum document and interprets

it in the kind of practical manner which will improve the chances of its being taught to all pupils. Standardisation across class groups is helped by this process and some progress is made towards achieving one of the central aims of the national curriculum, which is to provide one education for all.

Since the format of the English syllabus relates directly to national curriculum levels and is not divided into material for specific year groups, the content of the programmes of study will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

3:4 The reception year language record of work

An indication of what is covered in English during the reception year can be found in the extensive record of work which teachers involved at that level have to complete and submit to the headteacher each week. As already indicated in Chapter 3:3, teachers from each year produce their record of work together, on a weekly basis. This system has both advantages and disadvantages. It provides a formal, regular channel of communication between all the teachers involved with a particular year. These can then discuss not only what has been done the previous week, but also the activities for the coming one. Impressions on how the various classes have responded to aspects of the curriculum can be exchanged and the entire year becomes more of a cohesive unit. The disadvantage of the system is that what is produced is a collective document, and therefore no individual record exists for each teaching group.

All the documents at St Paul's gave the impression of being prepared with practicality in mind, and the record of work is no exception. The layout is standardised throughout the school, and an

individual record is kept for English/drama and reading. The entries for each week are listed under four headings: speaking and listening; reading; writing; and assessment. These subdivisions are useful because they serve as a constant reminder to teachers of the central philosophy upon which national curriculum English is based. They have their roots in the widespread acceptance of the principle that language development means combining 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing' in equal measure. This issue was highlighted by Professor George Cox when he devised the curriculum that was converted into the 1990 mandatory Order, and the situation remains unchanged today. *English in the National Curriculum* emphasises as a general requirement for English across all the key stages that:

In order to participate confidently in public, cultural and working life, pupils need to be able to speak, write and read standard English fluently and accurately.

(DFE 1995:2)

The layout of the record of work facilitates the achievement of a desirable balance between the different features of English. Teachers can see at a glance whether or not too much emphasis is being placed on one aspect of the subject at the cost of another. Also very useful is the inclusion of the section entitled 'assessment'. This is not simply used to record the results of assessments of individual pupils or classes. What is documented is what specific subject area has been assessed, the manner of the assessment and when it has taken place. This is a vital area of the curriculum and much assessment of necessity must be ongoing. The format at St Paul's serves to formalise the process and to remind the teacher of which areas have been adequately covered and which remain to be done.

The cross-curricular nature of the language provision for the reception year is very apparent from the record of work. Early activities include sharing books in the class library and memorising a line for the class assembly. Pupils are also exposed to poems that present mathematical concepts like the following one, entitled *In bed again*.

1 2 3 4!

Lost my temper,
slammed the door.

5 6 7 8!

Licked the gravy
from my plate.

9 10!

In bed again.

(St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:7)

Collectively, these activities serve the wider purpose of preparing the pupil for school life. Formal classroom activity is interspersed with concepts such as 'sharing' and language becomes the communicator: this is so whether the pupils are involved in English or indeed in science or some other area.

3:5 Speaking and listening

There is also a clear progression in the way language is introduced to pupils in this year. In 'speaking and listening', the first recorded activity is 'news'. This takes the initial form of oral work, with pupils encouraged to recount anything interesting they had done over the weekend. By the fifth week they are also discussing the class news and, by February in a given school year, this is extended to discussing local news, such as what is being shown at the cinema, birth/marriage

announcements and the like. What is useful about this approach is that the functional use of language is reinforced from the very start. The content is relevant to the pupils and they immediately have to think how they can use language to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

At the same time the linguistic experience of the children is also stretched through the use of audio and visual prompts. These include a *Language Through Song* tape and the Ginn Language discussion book.

The opportunity is also taken in 'speaking and listening' to promote the school rules and thus appraise the children of what is expected of them. This is done through a discussion of 'how we should behave and why?' and it is one more example of the socialising elements introduced in this part of the language curriculum for reception pupils (St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:27).

3:6 Reading

The functional use of language and the element of progression are also apparent in the way reading skills are tackled. Since the school uses the Ginn reading scheme, the first activity sees flash cards employed to introduce the children to basic words used in the first level of the scheme. These comprise the likes of 'look', 'in' and 'here'. At the same time, pupils are encouraged to read 'class news' with their teacher. In this way not only is the content, in the form of new words, provided for the children, but they are also shown how these words can be used to express what they want to say.

Phonics is also introduced from the first week, but a balance exists between teaching children sounds and acquainting them with some complete basic words via flash cards. The desirable role phonics should play in the introduction of reading is an issue which is of interest and

featured prominently in the Dearing review submitted to the English government in September 1994. This was preceded by a consultation exercise carried out on behalf of SCAA by Market and Opinion Research International (MORI). English received the largest number of responses for any one subject with 6681 replies. Many respondents felt Key Stages 1 and 2 overemphasised phonics but, despite this, Sir Ron Dearing stressed its importance in the teaching of reading:

Phonic knowledge is, however, an essential part of the curriculum for reading. In the Key Stage 1 programme of study, paragraphs 2a and 2b have been revised to clarify the place of phonics within a balanced and coherent programme. The Level 1 level description for Reading has been adjusted to show that both phonic knowledge and word recognition skills are needed to achieve this level.

(SCAA 1994:14)

Both are clearly being introduced in tandem at St Paul's and the school is in tune with Sir Ron Dearing's thinking on this issue. Furthermore, the position of St Paul's on the role of phonics in reading has been well established for a number of years:

It has always been done in Gibraltar and I would place it at the head of reading tuition. It is combined with a sight vocabulary as a precursor, but I would advocate a very intense phonic approach.

(Alcantara I/V 1996b:6)

Reading is also used to introduce reception pupils to grammatical concepts from as early as the fifth week of the school year. Here they are shown how the words they have been learning can be combined to construct sentences to make meaning. This early introduction to grammar is no coincidence and is in fact one of the changes that the school has brought about as a consequence of the introduction of the national curriculum. It forms part of a philosophy that tries to impart

more of a structure into English teaching than existed before. The approach has a mixed reception from staff at the school, with four teachers listing the issue as one of the virtues of the new curriculum and a further two listing it as one of their 'dislikes' (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:9-10). The head of language, Mrs Alcantara, views the early introduction of grammatical concepts as stunting creativity and questions whether or not pupils can really cope with it:

My feeling is that we expose them to some grammatical concepts too early. Take for example the full stop. My experience is that if you introduce this to 6-7 year olds, you very often end up with full stops at the end of every line, because they are not yet ready to understand the grammatical principle involved.

(Alcantara 1996b:1)

In reality, though it seems clear that for pupils to develop linguistic skills through their school lives, they must be made aware of the fact that rules exist in using language and that there are correct and incorrect ways of saying things. Possibly depending on the ability of the pupil, some very young children will be unable to understand the concepts presented at the early stages of schooling. Yet they will all become aware that such rules exist and that they govern the way language is used. This in itself justifies the inclusion of grammatical concepts from the outset. Children might well be more confused if, in the interests of creativity, they are allowed to use language as they please, only to be told a little later on that what was done before was in fact incorrect.

The pupils' basic vocabulary is also developed gradually using applied reading skills. This involves games such as word-bingo and word-snap, to give the children practice in recognising previously introduced words. A word bank is also built up and these words are

displayed around the walls of the classroom. This too serves for reinforcement.

By March in any school year, the children who have successfully learnt the sounds of letters are introduced to word-building, the activity which can make them independent readers. All the pupils tackle the Ginn reading course, which runs throughout the school, and the more able ones use *Heinemann Spirals* as reinforcement readers. The pupils are also grouped according to ability and each group advances at a different pace. To avoid labelling, groups are given names rather than numbers, so one class might use different species of insects or flowers. This reading structure is continued in identical form in years 1, 2, and 3. It is yet another example of the way in which the reception curriculum achieves the aim of preparing pupils for the start of the national curriculum proper in year 1.

A final interesting point concerning the way in which reading skills are tackled at the reception stage occurs near the end of the academic year. This involves the use of a book corner, with pupils being encouraged to choose books and think about which are their favourites and why (St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:27). The activity introduces pupils to the element of choice in reading and also encourages them to question and consider the quite complex notion of what makes a story good or enjoyable. This skill will be applicable to their written work where they are introduced to editing techniques and it complements work done in the area of 'conferencing' which will be discussed later in this chapter.

3:7 Writing

The content of the writing curriculum for reception pupils is closely linked to that of the other two areas of study, 'speaking and listening' and 'reading'. The initial stages concentrate on learning to use a pencil and to form the letters being introduced in the phonics scheme. Copying, tracing and the use of templates help familiarise the children with the art of writing. The work done also serves to lay the foundations for school life, since the pupils are taught how to write the date, their names and how to present a piece of work. By Christmas they are taught to apply their skills in a practical way through the writing of Christmas cards to friends and family. This simple activity, which involves little more than the pupil writing his/her name and copying the name of the recipient of the card, bridges the learning of letters and the functional use of written language. The work is relevant to the pupils and reinforces that done in 'speaking and listening' and 'reading'. The same is the case with the pupils' 'news' which develops from being purely oral to becoming a written activity.

The application of grammatical concepts in writing is introduced by the second term, even though the pupils have not yet officially embarked on the national curriculum. This takes the form of word-building with two letter words like 'as', 'at' and 'am' (St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:14). This activity introduces them to the use of phonics in spelling and creates a useful link between reading and writing skills. Formal hand-writing sessions are also included at intervals so that the process of preparing the pupils for school life in the reception class is continued.

Also of interest is the fact that children in the reception year are introduced to computer keyboard skills for the construction of phrases or sentences by the end of the second term. Nearly a third of the

respondents to the MORI poll referred to in Chapter 3:6 above, felt the English Orders gave insufficient emphasis to the value of information technology to English teaching. As a consequence, the Dearing review included references to the growing importance of this area in the teaching of English:

...references have been inserted which recognise the importance of computer-based sources in Reading and the use of word-processing in drafting and editing.

(SCAA 1994:15)

From the earliest stages of literacy, children at St Paul's are made aware of the possibilities of the computer as a tool for expressing their ideas in the same way as they do with a pencil. This widens their horizons and lays the foundations for the development of word-processing skills within the national curriculum.

Formal hand-writing lessons, which typically involve the pupil writing a letter, including the date, sentence and a name, are taught at intervals during the second term. This prepares them for more independent creative work towards the end of the academic year.

The record of work also documents the way different activities are planned for the various groups of pupils which comprise the class. This allows the teacher to cater for differences in ability among the children. As can be seen from the example that follows, the work, though largely the same, is graded in difficulty. The purpose is to stretch the more able pupils whilst at the same time preventing the less able from becoming disillusioned at being confronted with work that they cannot manage.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Own news. Collaborative writing, Co-operating to write a story. Writing own sentences.	Own news using word bank. Labelling a picture; e.g. Draw a house, put word window, door etc. Own sentence cards	News. Transcribe from blackboard No use of cards.

(St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:27)

By May of the school year, the more able pupils are using their various sources such as the word-bank and their word-building books in the writing of stories. These children, however, have already been provided with the basic tools by way of vocabulary and writing structures, which enable them to attempt to exercise their creativity. Whatever feelings some may harbour that reception children are too young to be exposed to some grammatical concepts, it can be argued that the pupils must be provided with the tools of the trade before they can be creative. To encourage these children to express their ideas, without first providing them with the means to do it, invites frustration and is rather like expecting a carpenter to build a table without either wood, or tools.

The creative element is important nevertheless. By the end of the reception year all the pupils are attempting creative writing, constructing sentences using familiar words and completing comprehension questions taken from the reading books. This part of the curriculum clearly has a substantial content and does not simply consist of preparation for the formal start of the national curriculum in year one.

3:8 Assessment

Together with the greater definition of what English as a subject should contain has come an increased need for better assessment, and the breaking-down of the subject into areas of study makes this assessment easier. Moreover, since the national curriculum implies a progression by a student through his/her school career, it is vital to ensure that one level is grasped before the next is embarked upon.

At St Paul's School, formal assessment in English takes place once a term throughout the school. The results of these assessments are not published in any form, but are used to highlight areas of strength and weakness and to ensure that the curriculum is being assimilated. The majority of assessment is on-going, however.

The format of the record of work, with a section each week dedicated specifically to assessment, focuses teachers on the need to ensure that their teaching is proving effective. In practice this translates into exercises designed to test if a pupil has understood the concepts presented in the various areas of study that week. Very often the exercises serve not only this purpose, but also provide practice and reinforcement of the teaching points for the child. The exercises are both oral and written, and they provide the teacher with the information to be able to chart the child's progress in the subject.

At reception level, within weeks of starting school, the children are also tested against the Croydon probes described earlier in this chapter. This provides valuable data for the Department of Education. Then, about a month before Christmas, the pupils are introduced to 'conferencing', which adds a further dimension to the forms and purposes of assessment at the school.

The system consists of pupils, with guidance from their teacher, selecting what they consider to be their best piece of work. They are

then asked individually to explain why they chose it, how they might change it and what could be done to improve it. As the headteacher, Mrs Beiso, explained:

The child is given targets arrived at through negotiation. This process develops the ability of pupils to be self-critical of their work. They also achieve a sense of appreciation of the work that they have done. The teacher explains to the pupil *why* the work is good, which provides guidelines for the pupil himself to improve upon the work next time round.

(Beiso I/V 1996:5)

At the end of each year the best three pieces of work in English are sent to the next year's teacher and this provides a concrete record which facilitates the charting of the progression of the child through the school. The system operates from reception till the pupil leaves at the end of year 3.

This system provides a curious mixture of concentration on both the strengths and weaknesses of a pupil at the same time. In starting from a piece of work which the child values, the exercise raises the self-esteem of the pupil. It also gets him to be analytical and question and define the qualities that make the work good. Underlying all this activity is the premise that the work can be improved in some way and this will encourage the students to stretch themselves and improve. Perhaps of most value of all is that the system is more concerned with formative than summative assessment, and this reflects the philosophy of the school expressed as follows by the Head of Language:

It is important to note however that we are more interested in the value of our teaching than in an over-emphasis on assessment.

(Alcantara I/V 1996b:1)

That this attitude can be adopted by teachers in Gibraltar is due in some measure to the way in which the national curriculum has been implemented on the Rock. In Britain, the late 1980s, which heralded the introduction of the national curriculum, saw a period of industrial unrest, with teachers' morale at a low ebb as a result of poor pay and public calls for accountability which were seen as questioning the professionalism of teachers generally. The link between accountability and assessment had been drawn as far back as 1977 in the DES paper, *Education in Schools: A Consultative Document*. Here it was stated that:

Growing recognition of the needs for schools to demonstrate their accountability to the society which they serve requires a coherent and soundly based means of assessment for the education system as a whole...

(DES 1977:16)

Linking assessment to the accountability of teachers had the effect of making teachers feel threatened by it and, as a consequence, the developmental features of testing were not fully taken advantage of. In Gibraltar no such links existed or exist. As outlined in Chapter 2:3, Julio Alcantara, the Director of Education when the national curriculum was adopted in Gibraltar, rejected SATs at the outset because he linked them with what he called a 'Tory obsession with control and accountability' (Alcantara I/V 1996:2). His successor, Leslie Lester, similarly rejected the use SATs are put to in England and Wales for compiling league tables of schools. Teachers in Gibraltar therefore have much less reason to feel threatened than their colleagues in England and Wales and this allows for greater use of formative forms of assessment. This is undoubtedly to the benefit of the pupils, since it places the emphasis on the learning that is actually taking place in the classroom. The process would also avoid unnecessary efforts on the part of teachers being channelled towards exaggerated attempts to prove they

are fulfilling their obligations, something which prompted the Chairman of SCAA and the HM Chief Inspector of Schools to circulate a letter to schools in 1994 in the following terms:

...even in English, mathematics and science, where teacher assessment is statutory at the end of the key stage, there is no need for the detailed records kept by many schools in relation to statements of attainment. There is no need for the use of elaborate tick-lists as a basis for assessment. Decisions about how to mark work and record progress are professional matters for schools to consider, in the context of the needs of their pupils.

(SCAA 1995:2)

The essential feature of education is undoubtedly the needs of the pupils, but in practice these have sometimes been pushed into a secondary position by the pressures placed on schools to perform by published league tables and the like. The lack of these pressures in Gibraltar is clearly allowing schools to approach the curriculum purely from educational grounds; and at St Paul's this is permitting an attitude which sees assessment as a formative tool. This will ultimately be of greater benefit to the pupil than if it were viewed as a purely summative one.

In January and February in any school year, the reception class children at St Paul's are assessed in single sounds and later in word-building using three letter words like 'cat', 'hat' and 'bag'. By March there are also assessments carried out on handwriting and presentation of work (St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:19). The school is thus in a good position to be able to gauge the state of readiness of pupils for year 1. Assessment in these areas is continued till the end of the reception year, but it is noteworthy that the process is geared towards individuals and not teaching groups. The record of work lists children who have become proficient at particular levels and others who

need to be reassessed at lower levels. This charting of individual pupils' progress is essential if the purpose of the assessment is to be formative.

At the end of the academic year, the conferencing exercise conducted before Christmas is repeated, but pupils this time select their best pieces of work to take with them into year 1. This helps bridge the gap between years and provides continuity in the curriculum.

3:9 A cross-curricular approach to language in the reception year

Language plays a very prominent role in the reception curriculum but the emphasis is placed on the development of skills which allow communication and the transmission of knowledge in all subjects. There is therefore an early emphasis on oral work and discussion, as well as the systematic building up of a child's vocabulary involving such techniques as the use of a word bank. The link between language and the ability to understand concepts and formulate thoughts is well established: '...if thinking can be said to be in anything at all then it would certainly seem to be in words' (Hirst 1974:70). It follows then that to make reception pupils as proficient as possible in language is to equip them in the best possible manner for their continued schooling. Given this link between language and the content of any subject area we might want to pursue, the cross-curricular approach which is adopted at reception level at St Paul's School is valuable. It is important to note, however, that this approach does not in any way cloud the linguistic content that is delivered to the pupils. The system in place includes clear guidelines for teachers and regular appraisal of what activity has been going on in the classroom so that progress can be monitored.

An examination of the amount of time dedicated to language as compared to other subject areas reveals that it does in fact command

the central role in the reception curriculum: from a total 12½ hours of schooling that reception pupils receive during morning sessions, 6½ are dedicated to language activity. This is without taking account of the language activity that undoubtedly takes place when the children are engaged in other areas, such as oral number.

The afternoon sessions are attended by half the teaching groups at a time in the early part of the year. This allows for more individual attention to be given and for young pupils to adapt to school life more gradually. Though only 2 hours from a total 7½ hours in afternoon sessions are dedicated directly to language, observations carried out indicate that this does not provide the full picture. In practice, when covering science, the teacher observed was at constant pains to reinforce language work done that morning with regard to a particular letter and sound. This involved drawing attention to it several times when it came up during the course of the science lesson.

In a territory where some pupils suffer linguistic interference from Spanish before they start school, the emphasis on language provided by the reception curriculum benefits pupils in two main ways. To begin with, it ensures that all the pupils starting the national curriculum programme in year 1 do so equipped with a level of language which will enable them to derive greater benefit than if they had embarked on the programme from the outset. Furthermore, by making a start on the content required for year 1 a full twelve months early, the pressures on both pupils and teachers to achieve a certain level are relieved. More time is available for reinforcement and for identifying and ironing out potential problems which might hinder a pupil's progress later on. The above constitute important benefits which pupils in Gibraltar enjoy as a consequence of starting their formal schooling at the age of four.

3:10 Chapter overview

Some pupils are non-English speakers when they first arrive at St Paul's First School. This constitutes the initial major challenge faced by teachers at the school and the situation is not helped by a degree of linguistic interference from Spanish. Notwithstanding this, research carried out by the Gibraltar Department of Education using the Croydon probes, concludes that most pupils are ready to meet the challenges of school life from the outset. This is attributed to education being highly valued in Gibraltar.

Since the reception year at St Paul's School lies outside the parameters of the national curriculum proper, the content of its programme of study is determined by the school. The year is considered a preparation for year 1, and though some of the linguistic aims of the year 1 curriculum are introduced, these are interwoven with other defined objectives. These include dealing with the language problem of initial non-English speakers and developing social and learning skills in all pupils.

The English syllabus at the school does not differentiate between year groups but traces a linguistic progression to national curriculum level 3. The reception syllabus draws from the objectives for level 1 and is a practical document which was drawn up with an input from all the teachers at the school. Much reception work is tackled in cross-curricular fashion.

Assessment throughout the school is on-going and formative and conferencing is used to promote continuity and develop editing skills in children.

This study will now discuss the approach to delivery of the English Orders in year 1 at St Paul's School.

CHAPTER 4

NATIONAL CURRICULUM ENGLISH IN YEAR 1 OF ST PAUL'S FIRST SCHOOL GIBRALTAR

4:1 Balancing the language curriculum

English should develop pupils' abilities to communicate effectively in speech and writing and to listen with understanding. It should also enable them to be enthusiastic, responsive and knowledgeable readers.

(DFE 1995:2)

This definition, included as it is at the start of the *General Requirements for English* section of the National Curriculum English Orders, underlines from the outset that English as a subject comprises the three key areas of study of 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing'. The three elements are presented as being of equal importance and, for the teacher of English, providing a balance between them constitutes a major challenge. Perhaps the most important difference between reception and year 1 at St Paul's School is that whereas in the former case the individual school had total control over the curriculum content, now this is to be dictated by the overall requirements of the national curriculum.

An important consideration in attempting to achieve a balance is that, unlike with some other subjects, the teacher of English can never really start from scratch. All pupils, whether they were to attend school or not, would have some exposure to the language by virtue of the society in which they live:

The English teacher is in certain important respects guiding a process which is there anyway, rather than providing access to a body of understanding which might be entirely avoided by learners if they did not go to school at all.

(Brumfit 1995:32)

In one way this makes the teacher's task more difficult, since all pupils will be at different levels of linguistic development. On the other hand he will be helped by the functional use of language, since all pupils will sense the need to develop it to communicate and advance thoughts and ideas.

The English Orders themselves provide little help with establishing a balance between elements of the subject. The Dearing Review sought among other things to show greater reliance on the professionalism of teachers. Thus it is left to individual schools to decide, not only on the materials chosen to put across the teaching points, but also on the desired balance between the various components of the course:

No priority or methodology is implied in the Orders. Decisions on the depth of treatment of aspects of subjects are for the professional judgement of teachers. The Orders should not be over-interpreted as requiring teaching to the same degree of detail in all aspects.

(SCAA 1995:2)

This study will now examine what is being taught to pupils in year 1 at St Paul's School in each of the three areas of study for language. It will attempt to assess whether or not all the requirements of the English Orders are being met and to discuss the balance between the various subject components at which the school has arrived.

4:2 Speaking and listening

Two central themes run through the items documented in the record of work, under the section entitled 'speaking and listening', throughout the entire academic year. The first of these is the use of news as a stimulus for oral work, and the second comprises cross-curricular discussions which involve the various subject areas in which the pupils are engaged.

It should be stressed here that despite the children encompassing the whole ability range, they all participate in the same oral activities and are not split into ability groups as is the case for the other two areas of study.

The use of news as an oral stimulus grows in complexity as the academic year progresses. To begin with, it merely involves a discussion of what the pupil had done at the weekend. This is effective since it is an activity in which all pupils can participate, at whatever level, and it is also familiar to them since a similar exercise was carried out in the reception year as described in Chapter 3:5. Within two weeks this discussion is widened to include school news with an input from both pupils and teacher. This format is continued until the start of the second term, in which local community news is introduced and the children are given the chance, in small groups, to tape-record their news to be played to the class (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:13). Central to this activity is that all pupils are encouraged to listen as well as to speak and to relate individual contributions to the overall discussion. The children are also introduced to new words systematically and a 'word tree' is displayed in the class to help them internalise the new vocabulary.

In this way the foundations for communication are laid, which some observers see as an essential role of first schools:

Teachers in first and middle schools have a key responsibility in promoting children's 'communicative competence': this is our ability to make and understand utterances appropriate to the circumstances in which they are made.

(Corson 1988:15)

Corson argues that this comprises an essential first step in achieving what he calls 'analytic competence', which is the ability to use language for thinking. The discussions on news at St Paul's School would appear to be a step in that direction.

'Analytic competence' would also appear to be promoted through the systematic oral discussion in all subject areas from religious education to science. This activity is listed in the record of work throughout the year and it manifests an awareness that the development of language skills is not simply the domain of the English teacher. Sir Ron Dearing recognised this and included references to it in documents for subject areas other than English:

A statement on the use of language appears in subjects other than English and modern foreign languages to indicate that teachers of those subjects should give attention to the quality of their pupils' language in both speech and writing. This reflects a central priority of the National Curriculum, which is to improve national standards of literacy.

(SCAA 1995:3)

A practical example of the way St Paul's School applies language learning in a cross-curricular manner can be found in the treatment of the topic of weather. From the very beginning of year 1, the pupils engage in discussions of this most British of topics and the teacher introduces a weather chart on which the pupils record changes throughout the year. This activity combines speaking and listening skills with the conducting of an experiment and recording data in science. It also serves to create links between oral activity, through the discussions;

written activity, through the actual recording of the changes; and reading activity, since pupils will have to read from the chart when they return to the exercise after a period of time. The importance of integrating language skills in this way is highlighted through the inclusion of a paragraph at the beginning of each of the programmes of study in the English Orders:

Pupils' abilities should be developed within an integrated programme of speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils should be given opportunities that interrelate the requirements of the Range, Key Skills, and Standard English and Language Study sections.

(DFE 1995:4)

Further integration of skills occurs through the use of the technique of reading to the children to provide a stimulus for oral work. This is later combined with drama which introduces role-play and the need to apply language to the interpretation of a character. The reading material used to elicit an oral response is varied. It starts, during the first term, with simple narrative tales such as *The Three Little Pigs*, and then moves on to poetry and drama scripts later in the year. In the third term, the children are asked to listen to and discuss the meaning of riddles (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:17). This work will stretch the more able, since it introduces them to the concept of words having a meaning that goes beyond the literal. The exercise is also integrated with the other areas of study, since the pupils go on to write their own riddles and later read these out to the class for their peers to respond to orally.

On other occasions the oral work leads to drama. A poem on the relative benefits of being a town or a country child sees the pupils discussing the topic and then choosing and acting out one of the roles (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:20).

As the year progresses, there is a clear development in the sophistication of the oral activities engaged in. Evidence of this is found in the treatment of the news topic. By the third term, the children are being exposed to television, radio and newspaper reports of incidents. The forms of language used in these varied media will differ from one to the other, even though the topic covered might be the same. The activity also shows pupils how the same incident can be seen in a distinct way by different people and how language can be used to express these views. This will help pupils develop both their communicative and analytic competence as they form their own opinions on the incident, after consideration of the opinions of others.

The above is a synthesis of the work done in year 1 to meet the requirements for 'speaking and listening': but are these aims achieved? All the pupils are working towards national curriculum level 1 and some towards level 2. Level 1 requires pupils to listen to others and respond, to talk about matters of immediate interest and to begin to extend their ideas by providing some detail. In level 2, the children are required to show more confidence in talking and listening and to display a growing vocabulary. They are also asked to manifest an awareness that some situations require a more formal vocabulary and tone of voice.

All these targets could be met through the activities outlined above. The children are repeatedly exposed to situations which require them to listen and talk. These grow in complexity as the year develops, allowing the more able to respond with increasing sophistication. The introduction of new words through the use of the word tree, together with the discussion of new words in the stories read as oral stimuli, provide the means for children to widen their vocabularies. Similarly, by exposing the class to different media such as the written press, radio and television, they meet varied forms of language which include formal and informal situations. The use of role-play in drama also allows pupils

to participate in situations in which different forms of language are required. The oral activity done in year 1 therefore more than adequately meets the needs of this level of the national curriculum.

It seems clear that much emphasis is placed on the development of oral skills at St Paul's School. This seems a logical path to pursue, since the alternative path to acquiring language skills, through reading, is inhibited by the necessity to master basic mechanical skills. All children will learn to speak before they can learn to read and, as a consequence, pupils in the initial stages of their schooling will have a standard of oral development that goes far beyond their reading level. The early challenge for pupils in reading is to be able to decipher the words on the page, rather than be stretched by the concepts those words convey. This view is supported by Corson who argues that for pupils

reading material never matches their well-developed language ability in the sense that what they are able to read is limited by the mechanical skills of reading that they have been able to acquire. Their oral language use at this stage is far more advanced than the language of the books in which they are taught to read.

(Corson 1988:20)

This argument can be extended to written work, which also requires pupils to master basic skills before they can begin to communicate their ideas effectively. These include holding a pencil, learning to form letters and numbers, and how to group letters to form words, and words to form sentences. Whilst these basic skills are imparted, oral work remains the logical medium to develop the ability of the pupils to form and express ideas and, as such, the emphasis placed on it in the St Paul's syllabus for year 1 is justified.

4:3 Reading

Reading, meanwhile, needs to be considered on two levels. The first, outlined above, is the transmission of a mechanical skill which will enable pupils to decipher the written word. There is, however, a wider definition of what it means to read, illustrated through the examples of Brumfit who talks about ‘reading’ the weather from looking at the sky, or ‘reading’ a map or a person’s palm:

This is a wide view of reading as collecting and interpreting information, and it is well represented in the National Curriculum.

(Brumfit 1995:37)

To reach this level of reading requires previous mastery of the former level of grasping the mechanical skills, but one important implication in all of this, even at first-school level, is that reading must be cross-curricular, since many subjects rely on the skill for the transmission of the subject matter in their respective areas. It would be a mistake to concentrate solely on mechanical skills without making children aware of the uses of reading in accessing knowledge. To do so would be to separate the exercise from its function and, given the difficulty of the task, the pupil could decide that it is not worth the effort. A close reading of the English Orders suggests that this view is endorsed by Sir Ron Dearing since, even at level 1, pupils are required not only to decipher the words on the page, but also to respond to them:

Level 1

Pupils recognise familiar words in simple texts. They use their knowledge of letters and sound-symbol relationships in order to read words and to establish meaning when reading aloud. In these activities they sometimes require support. They express their response to poems, stories and non-fiction by identifying aspects they like.

(DFE 1995:28)

As indicated in Chapter 3:6, the mechanics of reading are partly taught using the Ginn Language Scheme. The pupils advance through the graded readers in their ability groups, with classroom activity involving reading aloud in a small group which typically comprises five or six children. Each child is required not only to read a page or two aloud, but also to follow what the others are reading, which serves as good preparation for the skill of silent reading. The books themselves tend to be very repetitive, with only a small number of new words introduced in each book. The following extract, which reproduces the text of two pages from book 1, level 4, illustrates this:

Page 10

Tom said, "Look, Ben, here's Ted."

"Hello, Ben," said Ted.

"Do you want to see the sea lion?"

"No! I like the parrot.

It can say hello."

"The sea lion can swim," said Ted.

"And it can play with a ball.

Come and see it, Ben"

Page 11

"Here's the sea lion, Ben," said Ted.

"It can play with a ball."

"It can! It can!" said Ben.

"Come here, Dad.

This sea lion can play with a ball."

Dad said, "Yes, it can, Ben.

Sea lions like to play with a ball."

(Ginn Reading 360 Level 4 Book 1 1983:10-11)

New words are repeated very often from page to page. The teacher will therefore be aware of which pupils have or have not learnt these words, regardless of the fact that individual pupils will not be asked to read every page aloud. Grouping the pupils for the reading activity also has the advantage that the groups form the ideal setting for discussing the stories read. This links the mechanics of reading with the element of response required to achieve level 1 of this attainment target.

It should be noted that whereas all pupils read aloud in class on most days, though not every day, the school relies heavily on parental help in achieving progress. Each pupil is given the reader he/she is working on to take home and prepare a set number of pages. Curriculum demands mean that the time spent in school on this area is limited, and this complements former preparation done at home. For children of average to low ability, family background would appear to play a part in determining the rate at which individuals advance with their reading. At parents' evenings held near the start of the academic year, the school indicates how parents can help their children progress. Preparing their reading with them nightly is presented as essential. Pupils, therefore, who come from a background where this daily help in preparing reading at home actually materialises, are going to be at a clear advantage over those who do not. This can have an important effect on the overall progress of a pupil in all subject areas, particularly if we consider the following statement from the Head of Language at St Paul's on how the school decides on the ability group a pupil is to be placed in, and hence the rate at which the pupil is likely to advance:

We group pupils by ability and base ourselves largely on how the pupils do with their reading and the Ginn levels.

(Alcantara I/V 1996b:1)

Phonics and flash cards are also extensively used in year 1 in helping pupils master the mechanics of reading. The importance St Paul's School places on phonics in the teaching of reading, and how this coincides with the philosophy outlined in the English Orders, has already been described in some detail in Chapter 3:6. In 1995, the school introduced a new phonics scheme called *The Phonics Handbook*, written by Sue Lloyd. This book is supported by video material and includes word games and graded word lists which are compiled into little booklets at St Paul's and distributed to the pupils in the same groups as for the reading books. The activity is described as word-building, and it emphasises the phonic approach, encouraging pupils to break up words into sounds. These sounds are learnt and reinforced with the use of the booklets given to the individual pupils.

sp-	
sp-o-t	spot
sp-i-n	spin
sp-oo-n	spoon
sp-a-m	spam
sp-e-ll	spell
sp-a	spa
sp-i-t	spit
sp-ee-ch	speech
sp-ea-k	speak
sp-e-n-d	spend

(St Paul's Word-building list 1996:16)

Whereas the sounds are introduced in class, it is left to parents to reinforce the work done at home in much the same way as with the Ginn readers. Pupils who come from a background where this parental interest is not forthcoming will therefore again be at a disadvantage.

The flash cards described earlier in this section, and which are used to widen pupils' vocabularies, also serve as a link between reading and speech and the St Paul's syllabus places great emphasis on making reading functional from the start. Level 1 suggested reading activities at the school include recognising words in the building, visiting a shop to read labels and notices, and also walking round the estate in which the school is situated, to read traffic signs (St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:23). These activities establish a link between written words and the meaning they are intended to convey, which is the second requirement in the English Orders for a student to reach level 1 in reading (DFE 1995:28).

The first requirement, to recognise familiar words in simple texts, and 'use their knowledge of letters and sound-symbol relationships in order to read words', is covered using the Ginn readers and the phonics approach. Level 1, however, also requires a response to 'poems, stories and non-fiction' and all the pupils are exposed to these forms of the written word through the use of varied texts read to them as oral stimuli as described in the 'speaking and listening' section of this chapter.

Some of the pupils in year 1 are also working towards level 2. Here the demands are considerably greater since they are required to show an ability to use varied strategies in establishing the meaning of what they read:

Level 2

Pupils' reading of simple texts shows understanding and is generally accurate. They express opinions about major events or ideas in stories, poems and non-fiction. They use more than one strategy, such as phonic, graphic, syntactic and contextual, in reading unfamiliar words and establishing meaning.

(DFE 1995:28)

The degree to which these various strategies are taught at St Paul's cannot be quantified and will almost certainly vary from teacher to teacher. The record of work does not outline how and when this teaching takes place, but evidence does exist that the teachers are conscious of the need. The English syllabus offers concrete suggestions to meet this reading requirement which involve other areas of the curriculum, as well as the integration of skills, particularly oral ones:

Talk about characters, their actions and appearance. Discuss behaviour and outcomes depending on curricular activity. Cross curricular.

Use a picture to help make sense of a text. Recognise that 'once' is often followed by 'upon a time'. Use initial letters to help with recognising words. Cross curricular.

(St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:26)

It should be recalled that the English syllabus referred to above was compiled following a large amount of in-service activity and that the interpretation of the English Orders that they contain represents a consensus view arrived at through discussion involving all the teachers at the school. As such, there is a much greater chance that the activities listed are taught than if this 'ownership of ideas' did not exist.

The potential for pupils at St Paul's to reach level 2 in reading, whilst in year 1, does appear to exist from the range of activities covered.

4:4 Writing

It is however in writing that the general requirements of the English Orders for Key Stage 1 seem to make the most demands. This is a view that would seem to have widespread support in the teaching profession,

since it was a matter highlighted by a large number of respondents in the consultation exercise in 1994 which preceded the Dearing Review:

In Key Stage 1, there was a widespread perception that the higher expectations of performance at levels 1 to 3, in particular in writing, would lead to an undue emphasis on the teaching of particular aspects of English, with consequent effects on the manageability of the curriculum.

(SCAA 1994b:7)

In effect, the concerns being voiced echo the debate on the content of the English curriculum which has been taking place throughout the century and has been described in Chapter 1:3. What place should skills have, in relation to knowledge and understanding? Supporters of the Leavis concept of English through a model of literary heritage would argue one way, whereas those who favour the approach of the 'Progressive Movement', with an emphasis on the functional use of language, would argue another. The Dearing Review identified, as a central concern, the importance of ensuring a high expectation of pupil achievement and said this was '...necessary for raising standards of literacy' (SCAA 1994b:7). To achieve this, a blend was sought which aimed at striking a balance between skills and knowledge, something which many felt was missing prior to the Dearing Review, as emerged during the consultation procedure:

About a third of respondents felt that there was generally too much emphasis on skills at the expense of knowledge and understanding. As a result, the revised section on General Requirements for English Key Stages 1-4 now establishes a framework of skills, knowledge and understanding in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

(SCAA 1994b:14)

The requirements for writing, even at the lowest levels, are certainly considerable. At level 1, pupils are asked to communicate

meaning through their writing, using simple words and phrases. They are also required to show an awareness, either in reading or writing, of how full stops are used. On the purely mechanical side, they have to produce letters which are usually clearly shaped and orientated (DFE 1995:30).

The St Paul's record of work documents efforts to deliver all of the above requirements in a variety of activities. Many of the tasks undergone fulfil more than one function, as can be seen from the very first week in which letter formation finds pupils learning how to form a lower and upper case 'a'. The whole class is taught the mechanics of drawing the letter and given practice in it, but pupils are also shown the letter used in a sentence (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:1). In this way the physical skill required in drawing the letter is never divorced from the use that that letter can have, in a sentence, to convey meaning. This creates an important link between the letter and its practical purpose from the beginning, and helps bridge the gap between skills and function. It is also worth noting that the pupils start with the first letter of the alphabet and work their way through the remaining 25 letters in the following weeks. This is not a new activity but a reinforcement of what had already been covered in reception. Progress is likely to be faster than if the children were starting their education in year 1: this illustrates one form in which the extra year serves as a useful preparation for the start of the national curriculum programme proper, at the age of five.

This chapter has already examined how the Ginn scheme is used in the teaching of reading. It is however also used extensively in writing and this creates a desirable link between the two activities. As with the reading, Ginn written work is done with each class split into various ability groups. The work carried out helps the teacher establish whether or not individual pupils have understood their reading and not just

learnt it mechanically, an important function since understanding is a reading requirement to achieve level 1 in that area of study. The Ginn scheme itself does not cater for written comprehension exercises and thus St Paul's School modified it to meet their requirements:

We found the need to introduce comprehension cards to supplement the scheme for the lower Ginn levels. Ginn had nothing by way of questions and answers. We introduced these cards which first of all required one word answers from pupils and later full sentences.

(Alcantara I/V 1996b:1)

The integration of skills, which the English Orders sees as important enough to merit a paragraph at the start of each programme of study, is also found in other areas of the 'writing' work covered in year 1. The oral news activity is recorded in the form of labelled drawings from the second or third week of the academic year. This is later developed, as the year unfolds, into pupils producing written accounts of their news in full sentences. There is also evidence of the linking of writing skills with knowledge and understanding, with cross-curricular topics used extensively. This is done largely through the medium of creative writing. The record of work for the week ending 13 October 1995 notes the creative writing activity of 'listing landmarks/sights that the children see on their way to school (linked with Geography)'. The following week the activity was linked with another subject: 'reporting from granny's talk on her experiences as a child in Gibraltar (linked with History)' (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:4-5). Even at the stage at which the pupils are merely compiling lists of words rather than writing sentences, the fundamental function of writing to convey meaning is established and this goes some way towards achieving the stated desirable balance implied in the

English Orders between skills and knowledge and understanding (SCAA 1994b:14).

By November, structural concepts are being introduced to all the class, again through the medium of creative writing. This involves sequencing a story with the various stages provided for the pupils to then put in order (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:3). The period before Christmas sees increasingly more complex work being introduced. Again an integration of skills is apparent in activities like the reading and discussion of a poem on autumn being followed by looking at descriptive words and finally compiling lists of adjectives for use in creative writing (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:8-9). The record of work details more complicated phonic knowledge also being introduced around this time. This comprises the like of the medial 'u' or 'ee' sounds to which the class is introduced through word-building, whilst simultaneously being taught how to use the words in sentences to retain the functional perspective.

It is interesting to note how drama is often used to reinforce work done in all three areas of language study; 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing', as well as work done in other subjects. The record of work dated 26 January 1996 listed the following:

Drama - A journey. Ask children to dramatise a journey by bus. What will they see/ smell/ hear etc.? What landmarks will they pass? Linked with geography, language.

(St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:14)

Another activity a few weeks later involved certain children showing others round a supposed variety of homes which were for sale. They were asked to be persuasive in trying to promote the features of each home and to think of ways of describing them. The record of work underlines the importance for the teacher to '...stress descriptive

language used for selling houses' (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:16). In this way the drama activity is used to supplement the work done on adjectives described earlier in this chapter. The content of the drama lesson is clearly intended to reinforce other work already done by the pupils and it is particularly useful since it is done in such a way as will integrate the various skills used in language, as well as present it as a medium for the communication of ideas.

4:5 Treatment of grammatical concepts

One of the reasons why many of the respondents to the consultation procedure in England and Wales, which preceded the Dearing Review, expressed concern on the degree of difficulty in the English orders for writing, was the emphasis given to the full stop. Sir Ron Dearing acknowledged this and, as a consequence of the concern, clarified his views on what is necessary to meet this requirement:

In response to these concerns, the Level 1 level description for writing has been revised to indicate how the awareness of full stops may be shown. This description, nevertheless, retains the important requirement that 7 year olds at level 1 should begin to show awareness, in either their reading or their writing, of how full stops are used.

(SCAA 1994b:15)

St Paul's School, Gibraltar, starts to introduce this grammatical concept to year 1 pupils approximately half way through the academic year. It is done in staggered form, with the pupils in the top ability group tackling it first through a discussion of the use of the full stop in the Ginn readers. The work done includes noting that full stops are followed by capital letters. The development of awareness on the use of the full stop in reading is later developed with the pupils being

encouraged to use them in their own writing in the weeks that follow. The work is extended in successive weeks to cover all the ability groups (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:17-22). It is interesting to note that the use of the full stop is not the only grammatical concept to which the year 1 pupils at St Paul's are exposed. The record of work shows that all the pupils are also taught the concept of present and past tense using the verb 'to be', with the top two ability groups later developing this topic to include a number of frequently used verbs. All the pupils are also taught the plurals of nouns (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:17-32). These activities go beyond even the level 2 descriptions for writing which only the more able in the year would be working towards:

Level 2

Pupils' writing communicates meaning in both narrative and non-narrative forms, using appropriate and interesting vocabulary, and showing some awareness of the reader. Ideas are developed in a sequence of sentences, sometimes demarcated by capital letters and full stops. Simple, monosyllabic words are usually spelt correctly, and where there are inaccuracies the alternative is phonetically plausible. In handwriting, letters are accurately formed and consistent in size.

(DFE 1995:30)

There is no evidence to indicate the degree to which the grammatical concepts presented to pupils in year 1 at St Paul's are assimilated. The programme of teaching nevertheless reflects an ambitious attempt to stretch all the pupils and provide the opportunity, particularly for the more able, to maximise their potential.

The level 2 description for writing contains three main requirements. The first is the ability to write in narrative and non-narrative forms and to be conscious of the reader when doing so. The

extensive work done in creative writing would meet the narrative requirement, whereas the writing up of pupils' news and the cross-curricular links with other subjects like history and geography would ensure ample opportunities to indulge in non-narrative writing. There is no evidence in the record of work as to whether or not pupils are taught to consider the person who is likely to be reading their work when actually writing. This could however simply be a teaching point and hence not included in the record of what work has actually been done.

The second requirement for level 2 in writing, centres mainly on the ability to construct sentences and, where applicable, to develop these in a sequence. The exercises carried out in relation to structure in creative writing, detailed earlier in section 4 of this chapter, would enable pupils to meet this target.

Level 2 finally requires children to shape their letters in an accurate and consistent way. Here again, the year 1 pupils are given ample practice throughout the year not only through their letter formation lessons, which revise the whole alphabet, but also through the practical application of this knowledge in the written exercises that accompany most of their work across the subject spectrum. Once again, the teaching carried out would enable those pupils with the ability so to do, to reach level 2 in writing whilst in year 1.

To help with delivery, the English syllabus at St Paul's also has a section which encourages teachers to consider ways of improving the standard of written work of the pupils in their care. This section is subdivided under the following two headings: *Assessing Your Classroom as an Environment for Writing* and *Signs of Success to Look for During Key Stage 1*. The former of these two sections provides a list of no fewer than twenty-one elements which could facilitate writing for the pupils. The following seven are typical of the items listed:

- (a) Are quiet writing areas available?
- (b) Are vocabulary lists available?
- (c) How often are children involved in writing?
- (d) Does quality vary according to the task?
- (e) Does quality vary if the whole class is involved rather than groups?
- (f) Do you have time to help children?
- (g) What are children learning when they write?

(St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:32)

The above implies a recognition that the standard of written work of pupils is not only dependent on the efforts and abilities of the children. The teacher is encouraged to take an active role in the promotion of writing and in keeping with the supportive nature of the English syllabus, practical help on how to translate this into good classroom practice is provided. The list also encourages the teacher to be self-critical and assess his/her own performance on an on-going basis. This helps safeguard against the promulgation of bad practices through a teacher simply following a routine.

The second section, *Signs of Success to Look for During Key Stage 1*, is similarly practical. First of all, it lists general signs that will indicate a pupil is experiencing some success in writing. This is followed by a number of features of emergent writers, as well as points directly related to drafting. The following reproduces only some of the items in each of these three sections, though they are representative of the remainder:

GENERAL

- children wanting to write more and choosing to write more frequently;
- improvement in the quality of the writing;
- showing a sense of ownership of what they produce.

FEATURES OF BEGINNING/EMERGENT WRITERS

(Non-chronological stages)

- uses scribbles to communicate;
- scribbles from left to right;
- uses single letters to represent words and/ or initial consonants to represent words.

MORE DIRECTLY RELATED TO DRAFTING

- not being satisfied with first efforts: willingness to change any aspect;
- increased confidence in talking about their writing and in contributing helpful suggestions on others' writing.

(St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:33)

These elements are indicative of success, but the syllabus then goes on to suggest ways in which the teacher can encourage those pupils felt to be under-performing. The sub-divisions here are *Encouraging Writing*, *Drafting* and *Handwriting*. Again the list that follows represents the type of suggestions made:

ENCOURAGING WRITING

- offer a range of writing activities to children;
- provide 'audiences' for children's writing and let them know whom they are writing for.

DRAFTING

- consider carefully which types of work benefit from drafting;
- encourage children to help and advise each other during drafting.

HANDWRITING

- try to make exercises meaningful and avoid teaching shapes which bear no relation to letters;
- consider teaching joined script as soon as children seem ready to use it. Apart from meeting NC requirements this may well help to improve children's spelling.

(St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:34-35)

The practicality of the syllabus as a working document is once more apparent, but this section also provides evidence of the ambitious nature of the English provision at St Paul's School. Cursive writing was dropped from the level 2 description in the English Orders following the Dearing Review. Nevertheless teachers at St Paul's are encouraged to consider teaching it 'as soon as children seem ready to use it' (St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:35). The attitude adopted would appear to be that the National Curriculum document need not necessarily inhibit teaching of elements of the subject that teachers consider desirable at a given time. This implies a trust, on the part of the school management, in the professional judgement of teachers. It also conforms with the spirit of the Dearing Review which sought to provide the framework for a broad but balanced curriculum whilst recognising that '...it is to the profession that we look to carry the task forward' (SCAA 1994b:II).

4:6 Assessment

Trust in the professionalism of teachers acquires particular importance when the central role which the revised national curriculum places on them in the vital area of assessment is considered. The English Orders themselves do not detail how assessments should be carried out. As can be seen from the following extract from a letter sent in November 1994 to all schools in England and Wales by Sir Ron Dearing and the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, the system revolves round the judgement of individual teachers:

...in moving away from the detail of statements of attainment to level descriptions, we are looking to teachers to make a rounded judgement on which description best fits the overall performance of the individual child...it is, therefore,

very much a matter for the teacher to decide which description best matches their overall performance.

(SCAA 1995:12)

This approach places a considerable burden of responsibility on the teacher. Some critics have found this unacceptable and consider it a major flaw of the English Orders, arguing for the need for guidance on the grounds that assessment governs not only how a subject will be tested, but also how it will be taught:

What is surrealistic...is to give no indication at all of an assessment philosophy. Pupils will study - and teachers will teach - in line with how they expect to be judged.

(Cashdan 1994:409)

Such an argument implies not only that teachers should not be trusted to carry out objective assessments of the pupils in their care, but also that the process of testing is more important than the content of what is taught. It suggests that teaching for examinations is the only kind of approach teachers will be prepared to adopt, and this devalues the content of a curriculum which has as a central aim, not to facilitate testing, but rather to raise literacy levels.

The key lies perhaps in the consideration of what a curriculum is and should be. Protherough argues that it should not pretend to be a syllabus, and as such should refrain from providing detail on methodology and day-to-day content for lessons. The professionalism of the teacher is central to his argument, since he maintains that

such areas should be the professional concern of the teachers charged to 'deliver' the curriculum. Nor should its framework be dictated by the need for testing; the curriculum should drive its assessment, not the other way round.

(Protherough and King 1995:30)

If the central concern in teaching is the educational advancement of the pupil, and few would argue against that, then the content of what is taught must logically take precedence over the convenience of assessment procedures. It can be argued that this was one of the major flaws of the system through the 1950s, '60s and '70s when the rigours of the 'eleven plus' examination at primary level, and the 'O' level in secondary school, encouraged teaching to carry pupils over these specific examination hurdles. In reality, the revised English Orders do provide some guidance for teachers in carrying out assessments by specifying through the level descriptions what skills and knowledge pupils should display at various stages. The main aim of these descriptions is specifically to guide assessment:

The essential function of the level descriptions is to assist in the making of summative judgements about pupils' performance. For those subjects which have statutory teacher assessment, they are the basis for judging pupils' levels of attainment at the end of a key stage.

(SCAA 1995:2)

The approach recognises the essential role of the teacher as the link between the pupil and the curriculum. This trust in the professionalism of the teacher is vital in allowing the emphasis on teaching rather than assessment. It should be recalled that in Gibraltar there is no legal requirement for statutory testing of pupils at the end of each key stage. St Paul's School does use the SATs, but this is at the school's own initiative. The process is separated from the pressures which accompany these tests in England and Wales, since there are no published results and no league tables of schools. The headteacher at St Paul's, Mrs Tere Beiso, points out that this fact takes the pressure off teachers when it comes to assessment and allows for formative elements of the process to predominate (Beiso I/V 1996:6).

The use the school makes of SATs will be examined in detail in the next chapter which deals with year 2, but it is important to note the underlying philosophy that assessment should not only be summative but also formative. This filters down to all years and will be of significance in promoting literacy through the identification of areas of weakness of particular pupils for subsequent remediation. This is not to say that there is no need for summative assessment; and this is carried out to ensure pupils are advancing satisfactorily and to facilitate reporting to parents; however, opportunities to advance the education of the individual are missed if this is the only purpose of assessment.

In practice, assessment at St Paul's would appear to provide a balance between formative and summative styles. All the teachers who completed the questionnaires at the school affirmed, without any reservations, that remediation followed assessment (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:5). This issue was highlighted again in considering personal likes of the national curriculum English programme, with one teacher stating the best thing about the English provision is its

...focus on what is to be taught and assessment to reveal progress so constructive steps are taken to ensure teaching is effective. Targets and programmes of study are very welcome and assessment essential and helpful.

(St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:9)

This attitude recognises the potential role of assessment in leading to improvements in the standard of pupils' work. This research would argue that this is only possible because the system in operation in Gibraltar distances individual pupil assessments from judgements on the merits of the school in general, something which becomes inevitable when results are published and league tables of schools drawn up.

Assessment in year 1 at St Paul's is carried out on both a formal and informal on-going basis in the following areas:

This is in phonics and in creative writing where formal assessment of at least three pieces a year is carried out for each pupil and later moderated by the year teachers. There is also assessment in reading, both mechanical and understanding and these are carried out orally. Listening and speaking skills though assessed are not recorded regularly.

(Beiso I/V 1996:5)

It is interesting to note that the school system allows for moderation of formal assessment of written work. Coupled to the weekly meetings, in which teachers in a particular year group review what they have covered and write up their record of work, this will help promote standardisation across the teaching groups. It will identify if one particular class has not grasped some specific element of the course adequately.

Less encouraging, however, is the fact that there are no regular formal records kept in 'speaking and listening'. This is unfortunate since it can have the unintentional effect of sending to teachers the message that this aspect of the language curriculum is somehow less important than that pertaining to writing, in which assessments are formally recorded. In a way it would seem to indicate just how difficult it is for teachers, brought up in an era in which written work dominated the language curriculum, to internalise the concept that 'speaking and listening' and 'reading' skills are equally important.

This study has already highlighted how sections of the English syllabus at St Paul's School are designed specifically to help the teacher with delivery of the language curriculum. Help is also provided with the carrying out of summative assessments. This takes the form of a book entitled *Literacy Assessment, Key Stage 1*, published by Scholastic Books, which consists of a series of exercises in all three areas of 'speaking and

listening', 'reading' and 'writing'. They are designed to identify if individual pupils have grasped specific skills:

This in turn helps a teacher decide whether a particular pupil has grasped all the skills required for a certain national curriculum level. It helps us to achieve standardisation in our assessment of pupils.

(Alcantara I/V 1996b:2)

These summative assessments are important because they form the basis of the reports to parents which will be described in Chapter 6:6. The presentation of the exercises in *Literacy Assessment, Key Stage 1* is clear and precise, with extensive teacher notes indicating what specific skill is being tested and how results can be evaluated. The Head of Language underlines how the tests promote standardisation and this is an essential feature if subsequent reporting to parents is to be fair and as accurate as possible. The following exercise illustrates the practical nature of the book and how it helps a teacher focus on particular features whilst carrying out an assessment.

Speaking and Listening

Demonstrates the child's oral language development

If possible, base your records on authentic examples of oral language performance in the classroom.

Alternatively, ask the child to talk about something of importance to him or her.

Giving a talk 1

Specific impromptu performance

Topic _____

The child:
gives details and or background information

provides information in a logical order

responds logically to questions/prompts

uses conventional
grammar and forms

speaks clearly and uses
expression when speaking

makes eye contact and uses
gestures when speaking
(Wray, David. *et al* 1995:159)

Beside each of the assessment pointers provided in the column on the right, the teacher is invited to fill in a box for each child indicating if he/she is strong, adequate or weak in that particular area. These assessments can then be used together with the national curriculum level descriptions to make as accurate a judgement as possible on the stage of development at which individual pupils are. Since all the teachers involved in assessing pupils in a particular year use the same tests and apply the same criteria in judging the level at which a pupil has arrived, the system is fairer than if each teacher were to devise his or her own test and then compare results with a teacher who had used a different way of testing for the same linguistic features.

4:7 Chapter overview

There is widespread use of news as a stimulus for oral activity in year 1 at St Paul's School. The general linguistic programme is ambitious in nature. Attempts are made to develop analytic as well as communicative competence through the development of cross-curricular themes and debate of topics ranging from religion to science. Drama and role-play are also extensively used to promote the use of language as a medium for the communication of ideas. Activities covered in all three

attainment targets are designed to allow those pupils who have the ability to do so, to achieve national curriculum level 2 in English.

Phonics and word-building are widely used in the teaching of reading and pupils are required to respond to text and not simply master the mechanics. The Ginn reading scheme is extensively used and links exist with the other attainment targets, particularly writing.

Grammatical concepts covered go beyond those required for level 2 for writing and include teaching verb tense and the early introduction of cursive writing. Considerable guidance for teachers is provided in the language syllabus that promotes shared meaning of the curriculum and improves the chances for uniformity of delivery. Assessment is once more mostly formative in nature, though summative assessments are carried out for the purposes of reporting.

This study will now examine the teaching of the English Orders in year 2 at St Paul's School. This will include discussion of the use made of the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs), which the school is currently piloting.

CHAPTER 5

NATIONAL CURRICULUM ENGLISH IN YEAR 2 OF ST PAUL'S FIRST SCHOOL GIBRALTAR

5:1 Introduction

English provision in year 2 at St Paul's School continues to a great degree from where it left off at the end of the previous academic year. In year 1 the majority of pupils work towards level 1 in the language attainment targets with the most able working towards level 2. Continuity is provided by the English syllabus and by the fact that the pupils move up in their language ability groups. The work done during the year is aimed at reaching level 2 for the majority with a small number of the most able aspiring to level 3 particularly in some of the attainment targets.

5:2 Speaking and listening

The record of work illustrates that most of the tasks that are undertaken to meet the requirements in 'speaking and listening' during year 2 at St Paul's School are cross-curricular and drama-based. News as an oral activity does not appear until the second term, though there is evidence that it is being done in written form from the beginning of the school year (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:1). This shift in emphasis towards the development of oral work through drama can be seen as an attempt to widen the range of oral activity as stipulated in the English Orders:

Pupils should be given opportunities to participate in a wide range of drama activities, including role-play, and in the performance of scripted and unscripted plays. Pupils should be encouraged to develop both their communication skills and their ability to evaluate language use. In responding to drama, they should be given opportunities to consider significant features of their own and others' performances.

(DFE 1995:17)

The drama activities covered appear to have been devised to ensure that during the course of the year the pupils are involved in the full range of situations outlined by the English Orders. Early lessons involved improvisation and unscripted plays linked to work in history and covering the themes of a 'Victorian day' and the 'gunpowder plot' (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:1-2). Later, over a number of weeks, the pupils worked with a script using 'Tusk Tusk', a play by David McKee (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:4-8). Both the above activities offered opportunities for role-play. There is also evidence of many sessions involving the chance for improvisation and for responding to the performance of others. These included lessons on 'making your partner laugh!' and 'being ship-wrecked' (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:9 and 19).

Significantly, the guidance provided to teachers in the school's language syllabus does not advocate the use of drama in this way until working towards 'level 3' in 'speaking and listening' (St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:14). The vast majority in year 2 would not be working towards this level at all, but rather towards level 2. How the pupils cope with this situation cannot be assessed, since no evidence is available regarding individual responses of pupils. As the headteacher explained: 'Listening and speaking skills, though assessed, are not recorded regularly' (Beiso I/V 1996:5). This would appear to be a weak area in the school's procedures. If 'speaking and listening' is to be given a

similar weighting to ‘reading’ and ‘writing’, as the English Orders maintain should be the case, then it can be argued that similar formal assessments in all three areas are desirable. To fail to provide these in ‘speaking and listening’, whilst doing so in the other areas, could be construed as what Peter Brown describes as one of the basic dangers of testing ‘...that the tests will focus on what is easiest to test, not what is most appropriate to test’ (Brown 1995:81).

The influence that what is tested can have upon what is actually taught, as argued in previous chapters, constitutes an additional danger in St Paul’s not carrying out regular formal assessments in ‘speaking and listening’. The worth of this area of the language curriculum can be devalued, consciously or unconsciously, in the minds of teachers who might concentrate more on aspects of the subject that they know will be tested and for which they will be more easily accountable.

This apart, and bearing in mind that some pupils, albeit a small number, will be working towards national curriculum level 3 during year 2, the English Orders stipulate some additional requirements for the attainment of that level:

Level 3

Pupils talk and listen confidently in different contexts, exploring and communicating ideas. In discussion, they show understanding of the main points. Through relevant comments and questions, they show they have listened carefully. They begin to adapt what they say to the needs of the listener, varying the use of vocabulary and the level of detail. They are beginning to be aware of standard English and when it is used.

(DFE 1995:26)

The new elements that need to be introduced to aspire to this level can really be summarised in four points. The first requirement is for a

widening of the contexts in which oral language is presented. Pupils are also asked to develop, to a much greater degree than for level 2, their ability to be active listeners and to demonstrate understanding of what they have heard. The third requirement is to demonstrate a sensitivity of audience needs and to use a varied vocabulary; and lastly, to start to show awareness of the use of standard English.

These requirements are very demanding, but they can certainly be met through the medium of drama. The use of role play and the cross-curricular links with history provide ample opportunity for the children to be exposed to language in different contexts. The opportunities for improvisation require pupils to listen to one another, as well as to speak, or else responses would be nonsensical. The concept of the audience is inherent in drama, particularly when it comes to acting out sketches or participating in plays. As for an introduction to standard English, this would be assured by the use of scripted plays like those described earlier in this chapter. The potential for the most able to reach level 3 in 'speaking and listening', whilst in year 2, therefore exists.

A point must be made at this stage, however, regarding the use of standard English and its relevance to education in Gibraltar. This is an issue of considerable importance in the UK, with some educationists seeing it as essential for pupils if they are to be able to participate in society when they grow up:

...democracy depends upon individuals being able to participate fully in the language of their community, and ... access to written (and in many people's views spoken) standard English is necessary for full participation.

(Brumfit 1995:32)

Much of this debate centres on the role of standard English relative to regional dialects, or to Welsh in Wales. In Gibraltar, though, the problem does not really arise owing in great measure to the

historical strong links forged between the Gibraltar and English systems of education and described in Chapter 2. English is the language of instruction in Gibraltar, and Spanish is kept largely separate within the curriculum and is taught as a subject in its own right. English is also the formal language of business on the Rock and hence the form of language that is used is 'standard English'. For pupils in Gibraltar schools, therefore, this issue does not have the relevance it has for their counterparts in England and Wales.

5:3 Reading

The reading programme in year 2 is very much a continuation of the previous year's work. This is done in ability groups, with each group following on from the Ginn reader used at the end of the preceding school year. Individual records about pupils are kept and often noted on the record of work, and this is also the case with the phonics programme which is recorded in parallel (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:1-28). Comprehension cards are used to test for understanding and use is also made of games like 'wordsearch' with the intention of reinforcing newly learnt vocabulary (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:11).

One area in which there is no evidence of work being done is in introducing the pupils to the works of what the English Orders call 'significant authors'. No particular authors are specified, but it is clear from the wording that what is meant is some of the classic writers of children's English literature:

Pupils working at levels 1, 2 and 3 should be given access to significant authors and works from the English literary heritage, by means appropriate to their age and maturity.

(DFE 1995:19)

St Paul's School year 2 record of work does not record any texts being covered in reading, other than those which form part of the Ginn scheme. The English syllabus, however, notes under the resources column in level 2 of the reading attainment target the use of '...fiction and non-fiction literature' (St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:26). This would suggest that this requirement has certainly been noted, though the evidence would point to it not being met during the year in which this study was carried out.

5:4 Writing

The natural position of standard English in the language curriculum in Gibraltar is reflected by the strong grammatical content of the St Paul's School year 2 language curriculum. The sections of the English Orders which deal with standard English list a host of grammatical features that students should be taught during the course of their national curriculum language programme. These are classed under four headings: 'discourse structure', 'phrase, clause and sentence structure', 'words' and 'punctuation' (DFE 1995:24). Most of these are not intended to be covered until Key Stages 3 and 4, but the section which covers Key Stage 1 outlines the need for pupils to be taught

the vocabulary, grammar and structures of written standard English, including subject - verb agreement, and the use of the verb 'to be' in past and present tenses.

(DFE 1995:10)

As outlined in the previous chapter, the pupils at St Paul's are taught this whilst in year 1, and though the work is reinforced during year 2, much of what is done during this year is geared towards level 3.

The standard of writing demanded of students to reach this level is considerably more sophisticated than for the preceding one. For level 2, pupils are asked to display appropriate vocabulary, to sequence sentences and have some idea regarding the use of full stops and capital letters. They are also required to attempt to spell correctly and to form letters properly (DFE 1995:30). As can be seen from the following level 3 description for writing, pupils working towards this standard are required to display a much greater knowledge of the rudiments of grammar:

Level 3

Pupils' writing is often organised, imaginative and clear. The main features of different forms of writing are used appropriately, beginning to be adapted to different readers. Sequences of sentences extend ideas logically and words are chosen for variety and interest. The basic grammatical structure of sentences is usually correct. Spelling is usually accurate, including that of common polysyllabic words. Punctuation to mark sentences - full stops, capital letters and question marks - is used accurately. Handwriting is joined and legible.

(DFE 1995:30)

As will be evident from the following analysis, much of the year 2 'writing' work at St Paul's is clearly pitched at pushing towards level 3, even though the majority of the children do not reach this level until the following school year. This is not really surprising when one considers the ambitious approach to language adopted throughout the school. This was illustrated in Chapter 4:5 in which mention was made of year 1 teachers being encouraged to introduce cursive writing two years before the English Orders required it of them.

To help structure the language content for year 2, the 'writing' section of the record of work was sub-divided into seven areas: spelling;

phonics; punctuation; grammar; handwriting; creative writing and drama.

In spelling, the work covered throughout the year centred on a list, provided by the government's educational psychologist, of the 100 most frequently used words (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:1-28). The list was broken up into groups of words for pupils to learn and the record of work documents regular testing by way of quizzes.

As mentioned in the reading section of this chapter, the phonics programme runs parallel to the Ginn reading programme. This includes the use of 'word-building' lists as described for reception and year 1. Here, once again, a link is provided between reading and writing, with the students being encouraged to use their knowledge of phonics to help them with spelling. This is a requirement for pupils to reach level 2 in writing.

The work done in punctuation, however, provides the first evidence that the pupils are being pushed to cover concepts not required until level 3. The first term concentrates on the use of the full-stop and the capital letter, which is a level 2 requirement and can be seen as reinforcement of work done in year 1. By February, however, the pupils are introduced to the use of question marks, a specific level 3 requirement (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:15). All pupils are taught the use of this item of punctuation and the task is linked in the record of work to 'story' and 'news'. This displays a consciousness of the need to present grammatical concepts in meaningful writing situations so students are immediately aware of their practical purpose. It is a philosophy which dates back to the *Bullock Report* of 1975 and is still widely accepted today:

Competence in language comes above all through its purposeful use, not through the working of exercises divorced from context.

(DES 1975:528)

This does not mean that there is no place for grammatical concepts to be taught in the first place, but rather that the link should always exist between the rule of writing and its practical application in some form of imaginative or informative writing. There is evidence to support that this happens in the year 2 record of work. The pupils are taught many of the rules of writing they would need to enable them to aspire to the level 3 requirement that the basic grammatical structure of the sentences that they write is usually correct (DFE 1995:30). Topics covered are varied and include the use of connectives such as 'but', 'so' and 'later'; the addition of '-ed' to root words to form the past tense, and the use of adjectives for comparisons (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:2, 10 and 16). These concepts are never taught in isolation, but are spread throughout the year and always presented in tandem with creative writing. This forges a link between the grammatical concepts which enable pupils to express their ideas correctly, and the imaginative element required to attain level 3 in writing.

The whole programme of study presented in year 2 contains numerous examples of different aspects of the language curriculum being inter-related. Drama, whilst forming the core of the 'speaking and listening' work done during the year, is on occasions linked specifically to creative writing. Oral work on 'smugglers' led to a story on the same topic (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:18). Similar links were evident with the ever-present 'news' topic which developed into a written activity to follow oral presentation as from the second term (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:12-28).

Information technology and language learning were also combined with the use of software programmes to help with a variety of aspects of the subject. These included Microsoft's *Creative Writer*, to help pupils with their stories, spelling games to reinforce work done with phonics, and a database of available books to widen their horizons (St Paul's Year 2 Record of Work 1995/96:24). This work also served the purpose of meeting the common requirement in the English programmes of study that

pupils should be given opportunities, where appropriate, to develop and apply their information technology (IT) capability in their study of English.

(DFE 1995:1)

Significantly, the way computer skills are integrated into the overall linguistic programme of study emphasises the value of this technology as an aid to language work. The computer is being used to help students with work they would be doing anyway and the exercises are not contrived.

5:5 Standard Assessment Tasks

General assessment of the language curriculum for year 2 pupils at St Paul's School, Gibraltar, follows the same lines as for the preceding two years. Additionally, an important form of assessment that takes place in this year involves the use of the England and Wales, Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs). These tests are being piloted by St Paul's School on a voluntary basis, since they are not a legal requirement in Gibraltar. This has the advantage of divorcing the process from the controversy that has accompanied SATs since they were first introduced in the UK. The crucial difference lies in the perception of what is being

tested and for what purpose. Educationist Peter Brown argues that this is an issue that has not been satisfactorily resolved in England and Wales and is to blame for many of the problems that dog assessment there:

That assessment continues to be so controversial an issue perhaps has something to do with the fact that there has never been a clear enough definition about the reasons why we assess and for whom we assess. Part of the problem surely lies in the fact that the tests are seen as capable of doing so many things by so many interested parties.

(Brown 1995:84)

The crucial words here are ‘interested parties’, and it is precisely the fact that the SATs are considered suitable for widely differing aims, that makes their usage problematic. For politicians they are seen as a process which makes teachers accountable, whilst for parents they provide information about successful and apparently less successful schools, which many will use in deciding to which school to send their child. These uses of the tests serve to cloud what some educationists would see as their primary function, that of advancing pupils’ education. Brown argues that assessment should reflect the curriculum and not direct it (Brown 1995:84). If this is the case, then the tests become summative and formative tools whose main role is in helping teachers make a judgement on what pupils know and can do and to use this information to plan the next stage of a pupil’s development.

When the staff of St Paul’s School decided to pilot the SATs, they did so without any pressure at all from the Gibraltar Department of Education. Indeed, as seen in Chapter 2:3, the Director of Education at the time saw the UK tests as politically motivated, linked to calls in the UK for teacher accountability, and generally unnecessary (Alcantara I/V 1996:2). St Paul’s headteacher, however, recognised the potential value

of the tests as a 'diagnostic tool' and she feels today that it is a view which has been vindicated:

What SATs have done is to make teachers very aware of what is meant by the statements of attainment and of national curriculum expectations. It is a process which has also evaluated our schemes of work. Some weak areas identified after assessment have now been made teaching points. We do not teach for the SATs, but I feel that we provide better national curriculum application because of SATs.

(Beiso I/V 1996:6)

No mention is made in this statement about checking up on teachers or evaluating the school relative to another school. The emphasis is entirely on the formative aspects of testing as a means of making subsequent teaching more efficient. This attitude is reflected in a practical way after the results are collated. No marks are published and these are not even forwarded to the Department of Education. Indeed, the majority of the uses to which the SATs results are put are internal to the school, as the following list attests:

- For comfortable grouping of pupils in year 3.
- For reporting, but not on levels. Simply to confirm a teacher assessment.
- To decide on the 'average, above or below' rating for the report to parents.
- Individual results of pupils are passed on to middle schools they will attend for their information.

(Beiso I/V 1996:6)

The grouping of pupils referred to above pertains to the ability groups in which the students are placed for the purpose of reading, word-building and other activities. The SATs are being used in this case to confirm that individual children have been correctly placed, since they will have been in their groups for some time.

It is significant that St Paul's School steers clear of using SATs results to decide what level a pupil has achieved. The test results merely confirm, or contradict, a teacher's own assessment regarding the level attained. This conforms with the guidance provided to teachers by SCAA in the handbook which accompanies the tests and which is evident from the excerpt below:

It is important to note that these tasks focus on one reading and one or two writing performances. By contrast, when arriving at the judgement of the level to be awarded through teacher assessment at the end of the key stage, the child's performance across a range of reading material and a range of writing activities should be considered.

(SCAA 1996:3)

As described in Chapter 4:6, St Paul's School uses *Literacy Assessment at Key Stage 1* by David Wray and Mary Sullivan. This book contains a number of activities designed to test specific skills required for the national curriculum levels. These allow teachers to decide which of the level descriptions best fit individual pupils. When presenting the revised national curriculum, Sir Ron Dearing stressed that for subjects like English, which have statutory teacher assessment in England and Wales, the level descriptions should be '...the basis for judging pupil's levels of attainment at the end of a key stage' (SCAA 1995:2). It is only proper then that St Paul's School should use the SATs to confirm the level of attainment of pupils already decided upon through a wider process of assessment. Despite the fact that the school is under no legal requirement in Gibraltar to make this assessment of pupils, it is a process which conforms with the spirit of the national curriculum and will be useful in monitoring its implementation.

Also significant, though possibly less desirable, is the way St Paul's School uses the SATs results to decide on the 'average', 'above' or

'below' rating for the report to parents. The same reasoning that makes the SATs unsuitable as the sole form of deciding upon levels achieved by individuals could be applied to this issue. Clearly the school would be looking to provide a summative assessment that would be comparable across classroom barriers and, ideally, also from year to year. SATs results could provide an indication of the level achieved by a student on a particular day, but it could be argued that the national curriculum level attained by a student, and assessed as described above, would form a more accurate judgement of the individual's overall development. The SATs result should then only serve to confirm the teacher's assessment in the same way that it does when the teacher decides which level a student has reached. Provided that there is an end to the constant changes in the national curriculum, the level descriptions could provide the perfect tool for deciding if a student falls into an average, above or below, category. The results would not only be comparable between classes and years, but also between schools. Parents would thus obtain a clearer picture of what is meant when their son or daughter is described as 'average'.

This chapter has already described the fact that St Paul's School does not record regular assessments in 'speaking and listening'. This is also the case when it comes to their application of the SATs. Reading, creative writing, handwriting, spelling and comprehension are tested, but as the headteacher explained:

There is also an optional 'speaking and listening' element, but we haven't seen any of these to know what they comprise.

(Beiso I/V 1996:6)

It is unclear whether or not the school has attempted to obtain the 'speaking and listening' element, but that it is desirable can be argued on the grounds that it will formalise assessment procedures in this area.

This would in turn serve to reinforce the value of 'speaking and listening' both among teachers and also among pupils, who will see oral work afforded the same importance as 'writing' and 'reading' in what are the first formal examinations they undergo.

These issues aside, it is clear that the SATs exercise at St Paul's School is largely a positive and worthwhile experience. This is most probably due not only to the fact that the process in Gibraltar is divorced from the issue of the accountability of teachers, but also to the sensitivity with which implementation at St Paul's School is handled. Mrs Beiso pointed out that she was very aware of the need to ensure that the use of SATs did not substantially increase the work-load for her staff and this was borne in mind in working out the procedures for testing. In reading, for example, which Mrs Beiso explained as being very time-consuming, the assessments are carried out by the headteacher and deputy. Again, where levels need to be assessed in groups, the head and deputy provide support (Beiso I/V 1996:6). The benefits of this policy are evident not only in that they will elicit a more positive response from the teachers to the issue of testing, but also that the assessments will be carried out in a more relaxed atmosphere than if this sort of support were not forthcoming. This latter point is likely, in turn, to lead to results which better reflect the abilities of those tested, since the atmosphere in which the tests are conducted can very easily affect the outcome.

In some ways, the use of SATs at St Paul's School in Gibraltar, reflects the value which the process could have to teachers in England and Wales, if only the exercise could be separated from the political issues which accompany it there. It is clear from the following comment by Mrs Beiso that SATs can be a very effective diagnostic tool which can uncover tangible areas of weakness for subsequent correction through teaching:

We have identified the need to improve editing and punctuation skills, as well as a requirement to give spelling greater emphasis. These are all things which are now being addressed in our teaching. What has really happened is that prior to the SATs, we never truly analysed our strengths and weaknesses, but the tests are now making us really scrutinise our curriculum.

(Beiso I/V 1996:7)

If anything, the fact that testing is not a statutory requirement in Gibraltar increases the value of the exercise. St Paul's School has a process that will serve to moderate the teacher assessments taking place. Any glaring anomalies between the two would be re-examined, and the final outcome is likely to be better assessment which will ultimately benefit everyone concerned.

5:6 St Paul's School SATs results, 1995

Certain issues emerge from an examination of the St Paul's School SATs results for 1995. The evidence exists to suggest that the tests themselves, and the information they provide about areas of strength and weakness, are more important to the school than lists of results. The school does not have a set form for teachers to record the performance of their individual classes and no whole-school results are collated. The year in which this study was carried out had been a three-form entry year for the school, and a separate results sheet was filed for each of the classes involved. All three of the sheets were hand-written. One contained the mathematics and English SATs results on the same unruled sheet of paper, which made it difficult to work out the level each child had attained. A second recorded the full English results,

whereas the third only included marks for attainment targets 3 and 4, writing and spelling.

It could be argued that St Paul's School could derive even greater benefit from the use of the SATs if the staff were to develop a more efficient system of storing the data that they collect down the years. Though time-consuming, long-term trends would become apparent and the value of the tests as a diagnostic tool would be heightened, since a picture would emerge of the whole school's performance in the language curriculum, and not just that of each particular year.

A chart of the 1995 results is reproduced below (Table 2), alongside a similar one for what was then Humberside County Council. A detailed statistical comparison of these results is not really appropriate, since the St Paul's School sample is so small that minor differences could prove significant in percentage terms. The Humberside figures relate to a sample comprising 11,898 pupils, whereas the figures for St Paul's are based on the results of just 60 pupils for attainment targets 3 and 4, and 40 pupils for attainment targets 2 and 5. In general terms, though, it would appear that St Paul's School in 1995 achieved results that were comparable to those for that area of the north-east of England.

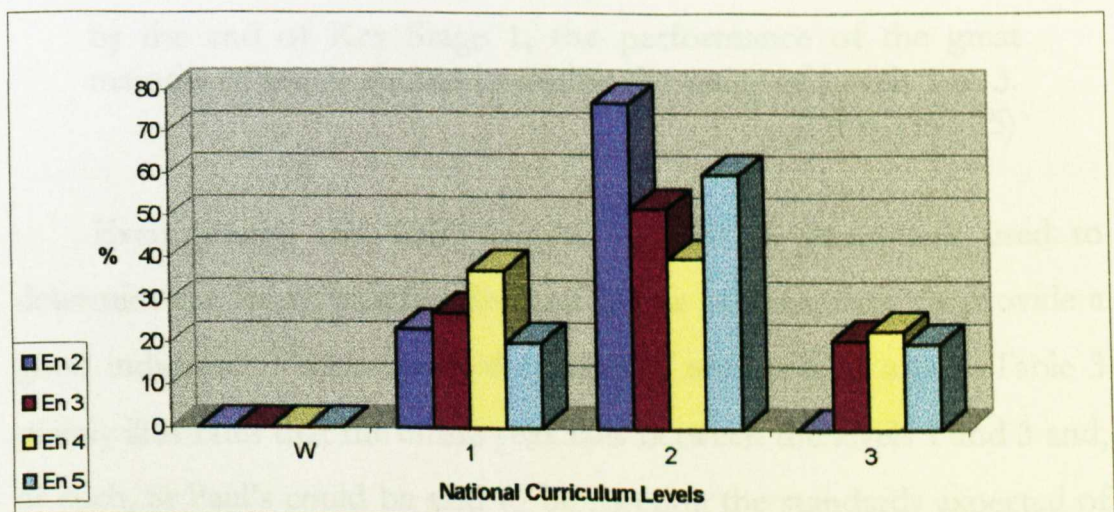
Table 2: A comparison of 1995 SATs results for English between St Paul's School, Gibraltar and Humberside.

Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) Results Key Stage 1 for 1995								
St Paul's School				Humberside				
	%			%				
	W	1	2	3	W	1	2	3
En 2	0	23	77	0	2	23	46	29
En 3	0	27	52	21	2	21	64	13
En 4	0	37	40	23	2	31	45	22
En 5	0	20	60	20	1	21	63	15

Key: W - working towards level 1 En 2 - reading
 1 - level 1 attained En 3 - writing
 2 - level 2 attained En 4 - spelling
 3 - level 3 attained En 5 - handwriting

The results for St Paul's School become clearer when viewed in the form of a bar-chart (Table 3). The diagnostic use of the SATs becomes apparent since it is evident from this chart that the most able pupils at St Paul's in 1995 under-performed in reading. None of the children reached level 3 in that area, whereas 29% of those tested in Humberside in the same year achieved this standard.

Table 3: St Paul's School SATs Results 1995.



As an identical percentage of students at St Paul's and in Humberside (23%), achieved level 1 in reading, the problem clearly lay in that the most able pupils at St Paul's in 1995 failed to reach the level expected of them. A detailed study of the test might reveal why this was so, and the school could then take appropriate action to remedy the situation at the start of Key Stage 2.

The weakest area at St Paul's in 1995 was in 'En 4': spelling: 37% of pupils in the year failed to progress beyond level 1 in that area. The figure however compares with the Humberside equivalent of 31%, which suggests that though this is an apparent area of weakness, it is not an unduly serious one.

Most positive were the results of the abler pupils of the year at St Paul's School, in all areas except reading. Table 2 indicates above average numbers achieving level 3 when compared to Humberside, with the biggest difference coming in writing, with 21% of the St Paul's children making the grade.

Overall, the performance of the pupils at St Paul's could be deemed to be satisfactory and within the expectations outlined in the English Orders. These state that

by the end of Key Stage 1, the performance of the great majority of pupils should be within the range of Levels 1 to 3.
(DFE 1995:25)

Even though the SATs results are not in themselves used to determine the levels which individual pupils achieve, they do provide a good indicator of what levels the majority are likely to attain. Table 3 plainly illustrates that the entire year falls between the levels 1 and 3 and, as such, St Paul's could be said to be meeting the standards expected of it at the end of Key Stage 1. Additionally, large numbers achieved levels 2 and 3 in the areas tested (77% in reading; 73% in writing; 63% in

spelling and 80% in handwriting). These results would appear to reflect the ambitious approach to language teaching adopted at the school as outlined in Chapter 3, 4 and 5, since many of the level 3 requirements for language are introduced to classes before the English Orders require it.

5:7 Chapter overview

Much of the English provision in year 2 at St Paul's School is geared towards allowing the majority of pupils to achieve level 2 in each of the attainment targets, with the most able aspiring to level 3.

A widening of the range of oral work undertaken is apparent in this year. Much of the delivery involves the use of drama and is cross-curricular in nature.

The organisation of reading at the school allows for continuity by dividing pupils into ability groups in each class. This permits each group to pick up at the exact point it left off the previous year. Though there is no evidence of year 2 teachers tackling works by 'significant authors' as required by the English Orders, inclusion of this requirement in the school's English syllabus indicates St Paul's is aware of the need.

There is a strong grammatical content in the delivery of writing to year 2. Grammatical points are often presented in tandem with creative writing to demonstrate the relationship between the rules of writing and their practical application. Much of this work was found to be pitched at pupils aspiring to level 3, which would be a minority in the year. All pupils were also introduced to the use of word processors.

No legal requirement exists for schools in Gibraltar to take the SATs. St Paul's School chooses to because it views them as a formative tool which can identify areas of weakness in pupils for subsequent

address. Results are not published. They are used to confirm teachers' own assessments of pupils and to aid grouping of pupils for year 3. The head and deputy-headteachers help with the practical side of administering the tests.

The next chapter of this study looks at English provision in year 3 at St Paul's School. It also examines the issue of reporting to parents and provides a brief overview of special needs provision.

CHAPTER 6

NATIONAL CURRICULUM ENGLISH IN YEAR 3 OF ST PAUL'S FIRST SCHOOL GIBRALTAR

6:1 The organisational challenge

The organisational problems for teachers involved in delivering the English curriculum grow in parallel with the progress of students through the various Key Stages in the national curriculum. There are two reasons why this is so, and these relate to the nature of the subject and to the way children learn. The English Orders in their present state have evolved from the Cox curriculum of 1989. Educationists identified as a key principle of this curriculum that language development combines speaking, reading and writing in equal measure. Also included was a crucial concept which made the language curriculum 'learner centred':

Development in any individual mode required the learner to understand through practice the relationship between language choice, purpose and audience.

(Protherough and King 1995:11)

This element of practice implies revisiting areas of the curriculum with the intention of making pupils more proficient in them. Progress in the subject would therefore not be strictly linear. While a pupil could be introduced to a situation in 'speaking and listening' say, which required the learning of new skills, he would also need to practise, apply and improve the skills to which he had been introduced on an earlier occasion.

Providing situations in the classroom which will allow the necessary practice in skills already imparted is one challenge for the

teacher. It is made much more difficult, however, by the fact that not all pupils develop at the same rate. The range of attainment was already evident at the end of Key Stage 1, where pupils' achievements in language spanned three national curriculum levels. In Key Stage 2, the expected range of attainment widens to encompass levels 2 to 5, and this is even greater in Key Stage 3 where the range is from 3 to 7 (DFE 1995:25).

For the year 3 teachers at St Paul's School, the levels at which pupils in their classes will be working will be wider than for any other year in the school. This presents an organisational challenge which is met in part by the division of classes into ability groups; but it also requires skills in classroom management for the teacher to be able to cater for all the pupils in parallel.

The practical nature of the documents at St Paul's School has been stressed in preceding chapters, and this is evident again at this stage. The English syllabus contains a section on Key Stage 2 which not only outlines the requirements of the teaching programme, but also gives guidelines on how these can be met (St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:44-58). The layout for this section is identical to that for Key Stage 1. The level 4 description is broken up into areas in the three attainment targets and is presented in parallel to the relevant excerpts from the programmes of study. Beside these two columns, a further two translate the English Orders into suggested activities and then outline the available resources to facilitate the teaching. The value of the English syllabus is heightened by the widening range of levels towards which children in the class are working. This clear document at the heart of the English curriculum at St Paul's School facilitates classroom management for the teacher who has, readily at hand, a guide to which to refer whilst moving from group to group.

This thesis will now examine how the range of ability in the year 3 classroom at St Paul's School is catered for in each of the three attainment targets for language.

6:2 Speaking and listening

Activities in this area, during the first term, once more centre upon the use of drama. These include improvisation and role play to encourage children to listen to one another and to use speech appropriate for varying situations. There is also considerable work done on giving instructions (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:1-5). These exercises are all suitable for pupils working towards level 3 in 'speaking and listening' and are really a direct continuation of the work done in this area in year 2. It should be recalled that the majority of pupils in the class had not yet achieved this level and, in the case of those who had, the revisiting of skills already acquired provides them with the practice envisaged by the national curriculum and which is necessary for progress.

Once more, as in year 2, the oral activities involve the whole class regardless of whether or not the work being done is aimed at acquiring a level higher than that towards which some individuals will be working. In all probability the differentiation will take place in the responses to the activities which will clearly not be as sophisticated or as advanced in those working towards the lower levels. An examination of the levels themselves demonstrates how 'speaking and listening' lends itself to the use of the same activity with children aspiring to different levels. One requirement for level 1 is for pupils to talk about matters that interest them, to listen to others and generally to respond appropriately. For level 2 they need to begin to show confidence in talking and listening,

particularly when the topic interests them. By level 3, the pupils are required to speak and listen across a range of contexts (DFE 1995:26). In each case it is the growing sophistication of the response on the part of the students that will determine whether they meet the requirement for one level or another. It is appropriate, therefore, for the teachers at St Paul's to use the same oral activities with students working at different levels.

The start of the second term sees the introduction of level 4 requirements in 'speaking and listening' and the pupils are again asked to demonstrate a growing sophistication in their responses:

Level 4

Pupils talk and listen with confidence in an increasing range of contexts. Their talk is adapted to the purpose: developing ideas thoughtfully, describing events and conveying their opinions clearly. In discussion, they listen carefully, making contributions and asking questions that are responsive to others' ideas and views. They use appropriately some of the features of standard English vocabulary and grammar.

(DFE 1995:26)

The ways these requirements are met by St Paul's School is of particular interest, because they provide an insight into the philosophy which drives the school's interpretation of the English Orders. The first level 4 requirement in 'speaking and listening' listed in the English syllabus is for the '...writing and performance of scripted drama' (St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:47). Strictly speaking, this is not really required in order to meet the criteria for the attainment of level 4 which is reproduced above. A close examination of the Orders themselves, however, reveals the following requirement under the range of 'speaking and listening' activities in the Key Stage 2 Programme of Study:

Pupils should be given opportunities to participate in a wide range of drama activities, including improvisation, role-play, and the writing and performance of scripted drama.

(DFE 1995:11)

It is clearly this need which the St Paul's School syllabus is aiming to meet. This suggests a language programme based on the wider requirements of the English Orders, and not restricted to meeting the criteria of the level descriptions which are central to its assessment. Here, then, is an example of the curriculum determining what is being taught at St Paul's School rather than being driven purely by assessment procedures.

The bulk of the 'listening and speaking' work in year 3 is nevertheless based upon the level 4 description, and particular emphasis is placed upon the ability of pupils to justify their opinions and take on board those of others. Also prominent is work on imparting some of the features of standard English vocabulary and grammar. Much of what is done transcends the boundaries of pure oral work, and links with reading activities abound.

One exercise introduces pupils to the works of Beatrix Potter. The stories lead to a discussion on why the characters wear clothes despite being animals and why they are portrayed as 'human' in their actions and attitudes (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:29). The pupils are required to form opinions based upon what they hear and to be responsive to others' ideas and views. They are then required to justify their personal standpoints to the rest of the group. This is a clear requirement for pupils aspiring to attain level 4.

On another occasion, the poems of A. A. Milne are used as a stimulus, as is Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:1 and 22).

Other forms of stimuli are also used, including pupils being invited to listen and react to different styles of music (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:27). In this way the range of contexts that level 4 requires pupils to encounter is widened, thus allowing the most able in the class to attain the desired standard.

The level 4 description is somewhat vague on the issue of standard English. The requirement is for pupils to use appropriately '...some of the features of standard English vocabulary and grammar' (DFE 1995:26). Just what these should be is open to interpretation so, in keeping with the practical nature of the St Paul's School English syllabus, more specific guidance is provided for teachers in the form reproduced below:

Discussion of more imaginative and adventurous choice of words. Consideration of groups of words, e.g. word families or the range of words relevant to a topic. Language used in drama, role-play and word games.

(St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:47)

It should be recalled that the English syllabus was drawn up with an input from all staff members at St Paul's School. This enabled the school to work at the interpretation of elements of the English Orders, as is illustrated by the above example. That St Paul's School should have taken a view on issues that are open to interpretation, rather than leaving the task to individual teachers, could be seen as a strength. In this way there will be in what is taught a consistency which will aid the achievement of standardisation. Given Gibraltar's small size, it might be deemed desirable if a similar consensus of opinion could be achieved among all first, middle and secondary schools, since the better defined the curriculum is, the greater the chance of meeting the challenge of providing 'one curriculum for all'.

Several activities appear in the year 3 record of work designed to meet the school-defined, standard English requirement for level 4. The following two examples are typical of these. In January there was a game on 'synonyms', with the pupils asked to think of different words that could be used to express the same thing. So as not to distance this exercise from the practical usage of the words learnt, the activity was linked to creative writing, with the children encouraged to use their newly-acquired vocabulary (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:13).

In March an exercise was undertaken based upon the recognition of initials and ending sounds. This work was linked to the issuing and following of instructions (a level 3 requirement being revisited). The pupils were asked to perform certain acts if their surnames started with a particular letter, or if the word used finished in a certain sound (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:19). This activity once more illustrates how one oral task can meet a number of criteria across different levels. It underlines the suitability of undertaking the same oral exercises with the whole class, despite the fact that individuals will be at varying levels of attainment.

6:3 Reading

Much of the work done in reading in year 3 was also geared towards those aspiring to achieve level 4 in this attainment target. This places the emphasis on the degree of understanding and response, rather than simply on the mechanical act of reading:

Level 4

In responding to a range of texts, pupils show understanding of significant ideas, themes, events and characters, beginning to use inference and deduction. They refer to the text when explaining their views. They locate and use ideas and information.

(DFE 1995:28)

The range of texts is important for pupils aspiring to achieve this level, and the record of work confirmed the use of a variety of authors and genre. Significantly, they included the kind of authors and works which could be considered a significant part of the 'English literary heritage' and which were not covered in year 2, as noted in Chapter 5. The stories of Beatrix Potter, the poems of A. A. Milne and classic tales like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* all fall under this category. It should be noted that these works were all used as stimuli for oral activity as described earlier in this chapter. There they met the criteria for providing the range of contexts for discussion necessary to achieve level 4 in 'speaking and listening'. At the same time, however, they allowed for a discussion on the plot, characters and ideas contained in the literary works, which would have enabled the most able to attain the same level for 'reading'. This is yet another example of the way in which the various elements of the language curriculum are inter-related at St Paul's School.

It should not be forgotten, nevertheless, that the class also contained a majority of pupils who were not working towards level 4 in 'reading'. The record of work documents activities aimed at aiding a response at a lower level, which included simply understanding the text. One example of this occurred when the class was introduced to the stories of Beatrix Potter. The discussion on why the animals use clothes and are portrayed as humans allowed the scope for the pupils to use

inference and deduction, as required for level 4. The class also went on to discuss the vocabulary used in the stories (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:30). This would have helped the less able in the group understand what the stories meant at the simplest level, with the additional bonus of developing the vocabulary of the entire group. The work was pursued the following week with story work which incorporated some of the 'new' vocabulary, and linked the activity to writing (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:31). In this way the work done in reading was developed to achieve additional progress, both in 'speaking and listening' and 'writing'.

Help was also forthcoming with the mechanics of reading. Year 3 saw a continuation of the on-going Ginn reading scheme, with pupils progressing in their ability groups, and of the use of 'word-building' lists. Moreover, there were sessions on how to follow punctuation in reading (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:12). This work centred on the full stop, comma and question mark, all of which had been tackled lower in the school. Their repetition will have provided the necessary reinforcement for the majority through practice, whilst reintroducing the concept to the least able who might not have understood it fully on the first occasion.

In widening the range of texts covered during year 3 at St Paul's School, the record of work also noted the use of newspapers. This would be a natural progression for pupils accustomed, since the reception year, to talking and writing about their own items of personal news. The activity was linked to writing, in which the children were invited to compose their own versions of the newspaper articles which had been read and discussed (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:11 and 21). By this means, not only would each pupil have the chance to respond to a very different style of prose to that found in a

story book, but the teacher could also assess how much each individual had understood of what had been read.

6:4 Writing

Despite the intention of the English Orders that 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing' should enjoy a degree of equality in the language curriculum, the greatest demands are made in the last of these attainment targets. This is understandable when we consider that the one attainment target for 'writing' incorporates the attainment targets for 'spelling' and 'handwriting' of earlier versions of the national curriculum. For Key Stage 2, the key skills required are extremely demanding. Pupils need to write in varying degrees of formality, and to show an ability to adapt tone, style, format, and choice of vocabulary where appropriate. They also need to learn to plan, draft, revise, proofread and present pieces of work. In punctuation, inverted commas and the possessive apostrophe must be taught together with word groups and prefixes and suffixes in spelling. The pupils' handwriting is to include practice in different forms like print, fast script for notes and a neat hand for finished, presented work. Their study of standard English also needs to be extended to include many grammatical concepts like verb tenses, and the use of adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and paragraphing (DFE 1995:15-16). It is clear that the demands of this stage are too extensive to be covered in the one year at St Paul's School. The pupils nevertheless have three additional years in middle school in which to complete this key stage. The St Paul's record of work shows, however, that a considerable effort is made to, at the very least, introduce the pupils to as many of these concepts as is possible.

This is immediately evident when the range of forms of writing tackled by year 3 pupils is examined. Activities encompass the purely creative, with stories like 'Adventure to the Moon', factual reporting involving writing up a visit to the museum, and personal writing in which the children are asked to write about any bad habits they might have (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:15, 2 and 3). The range of writing also features the composition of personal letters, one being to Santa Claus in the approach to Christmas; recording recipes; and the re-writing of newspaper reports (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:8, 9 and 11). The great variety of these tasks ensures that the pupils are exposed to writing for different purposes and allows the teacher to highlight the varying degrees of formality of language required for each activity.

Similar evidence exists that the requirement for pupils to be taught how to improve an item of work through drafting is also being met. From the beginning of the academic year, the record of work notes that pieces of creative writing are to be redrafted (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:2). This would imply attempting to improve the whole essay, but later in the year specific components of pieces of writing are targeted. One example of this was where the children were required to consider how to start, in a different way, a story they had already written. The teacher provided and discussed alternative methods to achieve this before the pupils applied the concepts to their own essays (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:16).

Additionally, the system of 'conferencing', described in Chapter 3:8, is also used with pupils in year 3. This provides fresh opportunities for drafting and improving pieces of work. Given that the children will have been carrying out the activity since the reception year, many are likely to have become quite proficient at it by this stage.

With regard to the stipulations outlined above for punctuation and spelling, it is clear that St Paul's School does not shy away from tackling the more difficult concepts whilst at the same time regularly revising simpler notions like the use of the full stop and the comma. The year 3 record of work documents that the use of the full stop is tackled no fewer than ten times in the academic year (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 17, 18, 22 and 27). This will more than adequately provide the practice for all in the class to grasp the concept in so far as each individual is able to, depending on ability. The more difficult notions are introduced to some of the pupils in tandem.

In November the top ability group was taught the use of speech marks, while the others underwent reinforcement work on the full stop (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:8-9). The use of speech marks would clearly be too complex a notion for all at this stage, so the staggered introduction of this item of punctuation can be considered desirable. The same principle was applied towards the end of the year when the top ability group was instructed in the use of the possessive apostrophe (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:28). Once more, the language programme manifested the desire to drive the most able to as high a level of attainment as possible.

The spelling requirements were as comprehensively covered. Topics included looking at the use of suffixes like 'ed' or 'ing', together with tackling words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings, like 'their' and 'there' (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:3 and 24). As the year progressed, the pupils were also taught a number of spelling strategies. Included here was the doubling of a consonant before adding 'ed' or 'ing', and the formation of the plural of certain words changing 'y' to 'ies' (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:18 and 26).

Arguably the most ambitious part of the writing programme pertained to the use of standard English, and to the presenting of the grammatical concepts required. Here too, St Paul's would appear to rise to the challenge. There is evidence that the year 3 pupils, during the year this study was conducted, were introduced to the use of the past and future tenses (St Paul's Year 3 record of Work 1995/96:7 and 13). This was in addition to the present tense used for much of the work done in the school to this point. There were also lessons aimed at helping pupils avoid mixing the past and present tenses in the same sentence (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:11).

The use of adjectives and adverbs was linked to descriptive forms of creative writing. Pupils were presented with and encouraged to think up their own connective words, like 'but', 'because' and 'so', and comparatives and superlatives including 'big, bigger, and biggest', were also taught (St Paul's Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:27, 13 and 14).

Paragraphing is the one area mentioned in the summary of Key Stage 2 required skills presented earlier in this chapter, for which no evidence of coverage exists. The likely explanation of this is that despite falling within Key Stage 2, it is not a level 4 writing requirement. It is the level 5 description that states: 'simple and complex sentences are organised into paragraphs' (DFE 1995:30). Since the most able children at St Paul's School would be working towards level 4, whereas many would be working at lower levels, this places paragraphing outside the ambit of the first school.

Nevertheless, the most gifted students at St Paul's School are being introduced to practically all the requirements for writing at Key Stage 2 while in year 3. This is yet another manifestation of the ambitious nature of the language programme provided. The evidence points to the fact that pupils at the top end of the ability range at the school are being stretched during the course of their English lessons.

6:5 Assessment

The assessment procedures for year 3 pupils do not really vary to any great degree from those carried out in earlier years, though a couple of summative assessments are carried out which allow for information to be passed on to the middle schools into which the children would be feeding. The tests involved are the 'Young's test' which indicates the pupils' reading ages, and the NFER 'Progress in English 8' test. The perceived value attached to these tests by the English teachers in Gibraltar is evident from the minutes of a meeting of the National Curriculum Working Group (NCWG) for English held on 10 February 1994:

Whereas there is no statutory requirement to use these tests (the NFER for example), it was agreed that they do have a diagnostic value and can help place children when transferring from First to Middle School.

(National Curriculum Working Group for English 1994:1)

Significantly, the results of these tests are not the only information St Paul's School provides to the middle schools. For each individual, the best piece of creative writing, the SATs results and a copy of the final report to parents are also passed on (Alcantara I/V 1996b:4). Collectively they provide a better profile of the achievements of the child.

6:6 Reporting to parents

One area of the language curriculum at St Paul's School that has not yet been discussed is the issue of reporting pupils' progress to parents. The school produces a written report for each pupil, covering all subjects,

once a year. St Paul's headteacher considers that there are benefits in the exercise both for parents and for the school:

I am sure parents appreciate the formal approach with a written, rather than an oral report. It is after all a safeguard. There is a record of the assessment which can be consulted in future by both parents and teachers.

(Beiso I/V 1996:4)

This comment underlines the importance St Paul's attaches to the reports. If they are a written record of assessment which the school must defend if called upon to do so, then it is clear that a great deal of effort will go into ensuring that they are as accurate as possible. The procedures involved in filling in the reports would appear to confirm that this is indeed the case.

The format of the reports themselves does not originate from St Paul's School. They are rather the product of meetings of the NCWG for English which date back to 1993, when the outline of what is used today was decided upon. Whilst national curriculum based, the reports do not link the grades of individual students to national curriculum levels. The idea was considered by the working group at the time but was '...discarded as too cumbersome' (National Curriculum Working Group for English 1993:2).

The English report consists of three sections all included on the one sheet. The first of these deals with attainment, and five areas are reported upon: speaking and listening; reading; writing; handwriting and spelling. These areas correspond to the attainment targets for English before the Dearing Review incorporated the last three into the one attainment target. It could be argued that the reports should have followed suit and hence have been kept more in line with the English Orders themselves. The counter-argument, however, is that skills like spelling, and in particular handwriting, are quite different from the

standard of written work a child achieves. The latter skill is a motor one and it seems logical that if this is to be reported upon at all, it should be done separately from other areas of the subject.

For each of the areas, teachers are required to tick a box indicating if the pupil being reported upon is 'very good', 'above average', 'average', 'below average' or 'finds great difficulty' in completing required tasks. This part of the report finds favour with the headteacher of St Paul's School, though she expressed reservations on the need for the 'very good' and 'finds great difficulty' categories which were added to the format of the reports in 1995 (Beiso I/V 1996:4). In effect, having a 'very good' category beyond that for 'above average' could be construed as implying that 'above average' is not really very good, and this could prove confusing to parents.

The second section of the report deals with personal and study skills and here again teachers are required to tick a number of boxes. These record assessments on attentiveness, behaviour in class, ability to work with others, participation in class activities, presentation of work and organisational skills. The range of levels available to teachers making the assessments is narrower than for the attainment section and consists solely of 'very good', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'unsatisfactory'.

The report is completed with a section in which the teacher can expand on the above in the form of comments.

Of greatest interest in this system of reporting to parents, is the way St Paul's school implements it. It should be borne in mind that since the format originated from the NCWG for English, it is used by all first and middle schools in Gibraltar. The aim is to achieve a degree of standardisation which could facilitate national curriculum implementation. This it can be argued is most desirable, particularly in a territory as small as Gibraltar. To help achieve this aim, the NCWG produced and circulated guidelines for teachers who would be filling in

the reports. These all related to possible topics which might require explanation in the report's 'comments' section. There were seven suggested areas in all, and the following three are representative of all of them:

- (a) Any weakness needing special attention;
 - (b) Parent input to help pupil;
 - (d) Attitude, whether positive or negative;
- (*National Curriculum Working Group for English*, Undated:1)

One possible drawback in these guidelines, particularly considering the stated aim of promoting standardisation, is that they are open to interpretation. A positive or negative attitude, to take one example, could be reported on in any number of ways, from specific illustrations of the type of behaviour meant, to suggested strategies for improvement. St Paul's School, in keeping with the approach adopted to all the national curriculum documents, therefore took the guidance process one step further. To begin with, the headteacher produced her own set of guidelines with the stated intention of '...helping the teachers approach the task in a consistent manner' (Beiso I/V 1996:5). The emphasis of this document is once more on practicality. Examples of appropriate comments made by teachers at the school in the previous year's reports are reproduced, together with explanatory notes on why they can be considered laudable. The attention of teachers is also drawn to possible pitfalls, such as making general comments which mean very little:

Global comments which could fit any subject eg: 'The child has done well in this subject and shows great enthusiasm' should be avoided, unless qualified by further explanatory comments on the child's attainment/work he has covered in that particular subject area.

(St Paul's School, Gibraltar, Unpublished Typescript 1996:1)

This document helps the teachers focus in the way the headteacher would like, but an element of ownership of ideas is also included since the participation of all was sought in a number of meetings.

We have held agreement trials to help standardise grading. Each year group did a lot of work on this in a number of staff meetings. Agreement was also reached on the interpretation of the guidelines sheets.

(Beiso I/V 1996:5)

The final sentence of this quotation from the headteacher's interview would appear to hold the key, since policy documents will not be effective unless consistency of interpretation can be assured. By holding meetings to deal with interpretation, St Paul's School greatly improves the chances for standardisation, which will be appreciated by parents as their children progress through the school and are reported upon, in the same manner, by a number of different teachers.

6:7 Special needs

As discussed in Introduction:1, this research deals mainly with an examination of the implementation of the English Orders for pupils in the main stream. It would be incomplete, however, if no mention were made of the strategies which St Paul's school has in place to cater for pupils with special needs, particularly at the lower end of the ability range.

Provision at the school is based upon the 1994 UK Code of Practice. The Special Needs Co-ordinator, Isabella Lenane, explained that the school was implementing a strategy that comprised five stages:

- (1) The pupil is kept in class and the classroom teacher is solely responsible for meeting his/her needs.
- (2) The Special Needs Co-ordinator is involved and individual educational plans are drawn up.
- (3) Outside agencies are involved. These could be anything from the speech therapist to social services.
- (4) Information is collated that a student is to have an educational statement made about him/her.
- (5) The child is statemented.

(Lenane I/V 1997:1)

The emphasis at St Paul's School is clearly on tackling the problems in the classroom. No pupils are withdrawn from the reception year, and there is a limited degree of withdrawal of children in years 1, 2 and 3. Lenane justified this situation by pointing to the fact that pupils in all classes at St Paul's school are grouped according to ability and that this means the teacher is constantly focused on special needs (Lenane I/V 1997:1). The evidence points, however, to very limited help being provided outside the mainstream for those who require it. As the following comment by the Special Needs Co-ordinator suggests, the reason may not be purely educational:

The language groups of withdrawn pupils typically number 6 children. A teacher is timetabled to take these groups, but it is done depending to a large degree on teacher availability.

(Lenane I/V 1997:1)

In reality, the degree of help which withdrawn pupils receive comprises an hour a week, in a small group, for pupils in year 1, and thirty minutes a week for pupils in years 2 and 3. The work done is all language related and concentrates on 'speaking and listening' skills aimed at encouraging the pupils to speak English and on 'reading' skills like phonics and word-building (Lenane I/V 1997:2).

The only other pupils withdrawn from the mainstream are those selected by the peripatetic teacher who attends St Paul's school one

afternoon per week to deliver a programme to those students whose specific needs he has defined previously. In the 1996-97 academic year only three pupils were benefiting from this arrangement.

It would seem unlikely that the defined special needs of children at St Paul's School could be adequately met through half an hour of remediation a week in groups of six pupils. This provision contrasts sharply with that for the opposite end of the ability range. The evidence, outlined earlier in this chapter, points to this latter group of pupils being fully stretched to achieve as high a level of attainment as possible.

6:8 Chapter overview

Transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 takes place in the final year of First School in Gibraltar. This poses a challenge for teachers who must cope with pupils working at an ever-widening range of national curriculum levels in the same classroom. Notwithstanding this, an effort is made in all the attainment targets to provide an introduction to as many of the activities required of pupils working towards national curriculum level 4 as possible.

Activities used to cover speaking and listening were generally found to be suitable for children working at a variety of levels. Differentiation occurred in the responses. Furthermore, the introduction of scripted drama in this year indicates the St Paul's School syllabus is based upon the requirements of the English Orders in their fullest sense, and not just on the level descriptions.

An emphasis on understanding and response marks the approach to the teaching of reading. A variety of genre are used and the more able pupils tackle 'inference' and 'deduction'. There is extensive use made of works by 'significant authors'. This had been lacking in year 2.

In writing the children are introduced to numerous level 4 requirements, including paragraphing, formal writing and drafting. Evidence also exists of regular use of activities pitched at lower levels to provide required reinforcement through practice. The top of the ability range is stretched through an ambitious programme.

Some summative assessment is carried out for transition to middle school. Examinations include Young's reading test and the NFER standardised test, *Progress in English 8*.

Reports to parents are standardised for all first and middle schools in Gibraltar. Though each child's achievements in the three attainment targets are reported, no assessment by national curriculum levels is carried out. St Paul's School provides its own guidelines to teachers for filling in reports which ensures shared meaning of the process and consistency in application.

Special Needs provision at the school is based upon the 1994 UK Code of Practice. This places an emphasis on tackling the problems of individuals in the classroom, where possible. Little priority to special needs would appear to be given at St Paul's School.

This study will now consider the main conclusions that can be drawn from this research regarding St Paul's School's approach to implementation of the English Orders.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN FROM LANGUAGE PROVISION AT ST PAUL'S FIRST SCHOOL, GIBRALTAR

7:1 Putting conclusions in context

In looking at what conclusions can be drawn from this research into the implementation of the English Orders at St Paul's School, Gibraltar, it is useful to view the results against those obtained during an inspection carried out in 1994. That inspection was instigated at the initiative of the Gibraltar Department of Education and was carried out by the Gibraltar Government's two education advisers. The inspection included all schools on the Rock, and the aims were to ascertain the degree of implementation of the national curriculum and to determine the effects the changes were having on children's learning experiences (St Paul's First School Inspection Report 1994:2). The limitations in time and the size of the inspection team led to only the core subjects being examined and it should be recalled that the period under review predated the Dearing Report and the changes to the English Orders which followed it.

7:2 St Paul's School English syllabus

The inspection report praised the English syllabus at St Paul's School as fulfilling most of the criteria listed by the inspectors as inherent in good schemes of work. It did, however, recommend a change of focus in any later revision of the syllabus:

The scheme of work for English offers guidance for teachers on how to meet the requirements of the attainment targets. It includes details of the resources available to meet the different attainment targets and there is evidence of planning for progression. In any subsequent revision of the scheme resulting from changes to the Order, the focus of planning should shift to the programmes of study.

(St Paul's First School Inspection Report 1994:4)

It is clear from this research that the advice of the inspecting team was taken. Following the publication of the Dearing Report, a review of the English syllabus was carried out at the school. All references to the national curriculum in the St Paul's School's English syllabus were found to be taken from the latest post-Dearing version of the English Orders.

Furthermore, this research has found evidence to suggest that the teaching of language at the school is indeed driven by the programmes of study, as advocated by the Department of Education inspectors. One example of this has been detailed in Chapter 6:2, which points to St Paul's School's inclusion of 'the writing and performance of scripted drama' in the syllabus's suggested activities leading towards level 4 in 'speaking and listening' (St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:47). Whilst not a level 4 requirement, this activity does form part of those listed under the Key Stage 2 programme of study in the English Orders (DFE 1995:11). This illustrates the way the national curriculum programmes of study, not simply the level descriptions, drive the teaching of English at St Paul's School.

Additionally, the layout of the St Paul's School English syllabus is such that all the suggested activities are related to specific areas of the programmes of study. The relevant excerpts from the programmes of study, taken directly from the English Orders, precede the breakdown of activities into levels. Each level description is then broken down and

presented in four parallel columns. These list the teaching point, show where it relates to the programme of study, suggest an activity or curriculum area where the point can be met and inform the teacher of available resources. In this way, even though the work is divided into levels which will enable the teacher to pitch activities to the ability groups being taught, the wider programme of study will always be at the heart of the content. The above would certainly suggest that St Paul's School took on board the advice of the inspecting team in making the programmes of study the focal points of the English syllabus.

A further point that emerged from the 1994 inspection was a call for the policy on handwriting to be included in any subsequent revision of the scheme (St Paul's First School Inspection Report 1994:5). The school once more took the advice on board and added the following to the English syllabus:

Handwriting

- (a) Consider teaching joined script as soon as children seem ready to use it. Apart from meeting NC requirements this may well help to improve children's spelling.
- (b) Try to make exercises meaningful and avoid teaching shapes which bear no relation to letters.
- (c) Make use of line guides when children use plain paper. They will achieve more pleasing results and will consequently gain greater satisfaction than they would if lines 'wandered' on the page.

(St Paul's English Syllabus 1996:35)

The above has been reproduced, not only because it demonstrates how St Paul's School has taken the comments of the 1994 inspection to heart, but also because it reflects the school's attitude to national curriculum implementation. Point (a) illustrates the ambitious nature of the school. There is no question of holding pupils back at any stage and teachers are indeed encouraged to move to cursive writing as soon as

they consider the pupil is ready to cope. The evidence presented in Chapter 4:5 demonstrates this happening with some students in year 1, despite the fact that, following the Dearing Review, cursive writing was dropped from the level 2 description in the English Orders.

St Paul's School also shows trust in the professionalism of staff members by placing on the classroom teacher the responsibility of deciding when a pupil is ready to start using cursive writing. This was an issue which emerged in the Dearing Review, which reduced curricular content and prescription in the national curriculum to allow an increased scope for teachers' professional judgement (SCAA 1995:1).

Points (b) and (c) in the handwriting guidelines represent the practical nature of the St Paul's School English syllabus. Attention is drawn to possible pitfalls, and advice is given which will help inexperienced teachers implement the policy and prove a source of reference for more experienced teachers.

The approach also increases the chances for standardisation in implementing the syllabus, since it includes what amount to teaching points. This could draw criticism as being too prescriptive, but in reality this is not the perception of the teachers at St Paul's School, of whom 84% considered the way national curriculum English was being implemented as positive, with only one teacher (representing 8% of those polled) criticising it as being somewhat too rigid at times (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:9).

Perhaps the factor which makes the English syllabus such an important document is that it has not been imposed by the school administration, but rather developed with the combined input of all the teaching staff. The 1994 inspection noted favourably the participation of staff in drawing up policy documents (St Paul's First School Inspection Report 1994:3) and this was confirmed by the teacher in charge of English. She described the regular meetings to consider

individual attainment targets, interpret them and discuss the practicalities of implementation (Alcantara I/V 1996b:3). This has promoted, among the St Paul's School staff, the desirable ownership of the English syllabus. It improves the chances for implementation and consequently for standardisation across the teaching groups also.

7:3 Speaking and listening

There is clear evidence that a great deal of effort is put into this area in providing the wide range of linguistic situations envisaged by the national curriculum. This range was praised in the 1994 inspection report, which saw it as instrumental in developing competence and confidence in 'speaking and listening' (St Paul's First School Inspection Report 1994:5). The common theme, which would appear to run through the oral work covered, is the promotion of the functional use of language.

From the very first discussions of 'news', where the reception children were encouraged to relate what they had done over the weekend, the emphasis was on language as a medium of communicating ideas. This continued throughout the school, with oral activities not restricted to the pupils' own interests, but being used to impart information such as the school rules (St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:27). Oral activity was not restricted to English, since St Paul's school also took the opportunity to link language study to the content of other subjects. Hence, a discussion about what the children could see on their way to school linked language to geography, whilst maintaining the emphasis on communication (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:4).

The extensive use of drama also served to widen the linguistic situations to which the pupils were exposed. Through role-play, they were required to consider and use forms of language which they might not otherwise have done. Similarly, improvisation promoted good listening, as well as good speaking, since the pupils needed to be reactive in their conversations.

The evidence therefore suggests that during the period of this research, 'speaking and listening' was thoroughly covered at St Paul's School. The one major weakness would appear to be assessment of this attainment target. By the headteacher's own admission, formal assessments in 'speaking and listening' are not recorded, as is the case with 'reading' and 'writing' (Beiso I/V 1996:5). Whilst not strictly necessary in order to comply with the English Orders as they stand in Gibraltar, it can certainly be argued that such assessment is desirable.

Traditionally, oral work was not considered of equal importance with written work. For this reason examinations like the GCE 'O' level made no attempt to assess oral achievements. Though the situation slowly changed through the advent of such examinations as the GCSE, it was not until the Cox curriculum of 1989 that 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing' came to be considered of equal importance. Even today, whereas Cox's views enjoy support among the teaching profession (Protherough and King 1995:11), there are many parents, educated in a different era, who fail to attach much importance to oral activity. By failing to carry out formal assessments of 'speaking and listening' as are undergone for both 'reading' and 'writing', St Paul's School could be considered to promote indirectly the notion that this area of language is less important than the other two. This might serve, in turn, to undermine efforts to develop a widespread understanding of the status which 'speaking and listening' enjoys in the language curriculum.

7:4 Reading

One point that comes across very clearly in the way in which the teaching of reading is approached at St Paul's School, is the prominence given to phonics. The teacher in charge of English placed phonics at the 'head of reading tuition' (Alcantara I/V 1996b:6). She further emphasised that it was combined with a sight vocabulary and had enjoyed this position of prominence since well before the advent of the national curriculum. Confirmation of this can be found in the various records of work which not only document regular use of word-building lists, but also point to the introduction of new words using flash cards to ensure that the pupils build up a sight vocabulary at the same time (St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:1).

When Sir Ron Dearing carried out his review of the English Orders, he recognised the importance of the link between phonic knowledge and word recognition skills and described it as an 'essential' part of the reading curriculum, even including it in the level 1 description (SCAA 1994:14). In a sense, therefore, the national curriculum served to validate a process which was already well established at St Paul's School.

At the heart of the teaching of reading at St Paul's School is the Ginn Language Scheme. Significantly, the school adapted this scheme so that it met the requirements for national curriculum reading. This entailed introducing comprehension cards to supplement the readers, a move carried out to ensure not only mastery of mechanical skills, but also the promotion of understanding (Alcantara I/V 1996b:1). In this way the school met one requirement of the English Orders, which even at level 1 necessitates a response to text and not simply a recognition of familiar words (DFE 1995:28). Evident from this is not only the thoroughness with which St Paul's School has worked at interpreting

the English Orders, but also the willingness to change previous working practices.

This study has already emphasised the practical nature of language tuition at St Paul's School, and in particular the promotion of the functional use of language across the attainment targets. This is evident again in 'reading' through the widespread use of varied texts as stimuli for oral activity and drama. The children are encouraged to make the effort to master the mechanics of reading to gain access to a world of books, presented tantalisingly in front of them during class activities. The link between learning to read and the uses to which this activity can be put is important, since the former requires great effort on the part of pupils and the latter demonstrates in a practical manner why such effort is worthwhile.

This research has also found evidence to confirm that pupils are exposed to a wide range of texts, including newspapers, poetry, prose and plays. The texts would appear more than adequately to meet the requirements of the national curriculum, even regarding the exposure of children to works and authors which could be considered a significant part of the 'English literary heritage' (DFE 1995:19). Whereas there was no evidence of this last group of texts being covered in year 2, 'established authors' of this kind were used extensively in year 3.

Possibly the only unfortunate aspect in the way reading is taught at St Paul's School is the reliance on parental support for reinforcement. The school rightly recognises the vital role parents can play in promoting and advancing 'reading' activity through regular practice with their children. Curriculum demands on time inevitably limit how long each individual child can be heard reading in school. Where parental help at home is not forthcoming, the system unfortunately places children at an obvious disadvantage. The issue, however, centres on the perceived value of education in each home, and there seems little the

school can do about this, other than encourage greater participation of all parents in the education of their children.

Overall, St Paul's School would appear to be both thorough and successful in meeting the 'reading' requirements of the national curriculum. Their success in this area has been recognised by the 1994 inspection where, significantly, no improvements were recommended in this attainment target.

7:5 Writing

In the consultation report which preceded the review of the English Orders, Sir Ron Dearing made the point that to improve standards of literacy, it is first necessary to raise pupils' expectations (SCAA 1994b:7). St Paul's School would appear to share this view, since there is abundant evidence, contained in the curricular content of all four years at the school, of a desire to stretch all pupils to achieve as high a level of attainment as they are able.

This is particularly apparent in 'writing' and can be seen from the reception year. Pupils who have not even embarked on the national curriculum proper are introduced to grammatical concepts such as the use of phonics in spelling two-letter words, and taught basic computer keyboard skills (St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:14 and 19). Year 1 students are also taught the use of the full stop, before the national curriculum requires it. Additional, more advanced concepts like verb tenses are introduced (St Paul's Year 1 record of Work 1995/96:17).

That St Paul's School is able to adopt this approach is probably due to the strategy employed, which sees students grouped by ability within the classroom. All the records of work regularly list a number of

parallel columns which outline tasks designed to cater for these groups. The crucial issue, however, is that St Paul's School makes provision to cater for the educational needs of the children as individuals. The less able pupils in the class are not allowed to hold back the more able. Similarly, lessons are not pitched at the middle of the ability range, which would leave the less-able children unable to cope, while failing to exploit the potential of the brighter pupils.

The language curricular content at the school also demonstrates a sensitivity to the need to achieve a desirable balance between skills and knowledge and understanding, as advocated in the Dearing Review (SCAA 1994b:14). This thinking is very much in keeping with the functional approach to language adopted by St Paul's School. From the earliest moments, writing skills, which start with the formation of letters and with pupils being taught how to write their name, are linked to practical activities. Initially this can be something as simple as the children copying their names on to Christmas cards to send to their friends (St Paul's Reception Record of Work 1995/96:10).

The philosophy runs throughout the school. As the pupils' knowledge grows, there is a clear integration of skills which serves to reinforce the various concepts, while at the same time emphasising their functional use. One example of this is the activity in year 1, in which a poem on autumn is discussed and read, leading to an examination of descriptive words. This in turn leads to the compiling of lists of adjectives and finally to the demonstration of their practical use through a piece of creative writing (St Paul's Year 1 Record of Work 1995/96:8-9). A statement on the desirability of integrating skills in the language curriculum is included before the programmes of study for each key stage. St Paul's School again appears to have taken this comment to heart in planning its implementation of the English Orders.

There is also evidence of the way in which the school utilises varied strategies to meet the requirements of the national curriculum. One example of this is the use of ‘conferencing’, described in Chapter 3:8, to teach drafting skills. Children are often reticent to revisit a piece of completed work. The way the exercise is introduced, however, links improving the piece of work to moving on to the next year of schooling. Pupils will, in all probability, want to impress the new teacher and are therefore more likely to entertain efforts to help improve the work they take with them as an illustration of their individual achievements. It is a clever strategy which once more has at its core giving prominence to the functional use of any exercise or skill.

The range of writing activities at St Paul’s School is also wide as envisaged in the English Orders. One example in year 3 saw the children writing letters, recipes, newspaper reports and stories in just a four week period (St Paul’s Year 3 Record of Work 1995/96:8, 9 and 11). Though not an exhaustive list of the forms of writing tackled at the school, this example does serve to illustrate the way in which the children were required to learn to write for different audiences and to use varied styles.

In general terms, the evidence once more points to St Paul’s School paying careful attention to the requirements of the national curriculum. These, however, are also integrated with their own desires to push each individual student to as high a level of attainment as possible and to retain a functional approach to language teaching. The degree of success was noted in the 1994 inspection report which praised what it saw as the school’s good practice in this area. It noted the opportunities offered to students to write in different contexts; the teaching of strategies to develop pupils’ writing; the evidence available of the teaching of grammar and of keyboard skills on the computer (St Paul’s First School Inspection report 1994:8).

7:6 Assessment

The prominence given to formative modes of assessment is possibly the most significant feature of the school's approach to this area of the curriculum. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the school's decision to pilot the SATs. The value of the tests as diagnostic tools is stressed by both the headteacher (Beiso I/V 1996:6), and the teacher with responsibility for English (Alcantara I/V 1996b:5). The results are not even passed on to the Department of Education and information gathered about curricular strengths and weaknesses translates directly to teaching points to improve the standard of education which the school offers its pupils.

Separated from mainland Britain both geographically and as regards legal requirements, St Paul's School shows the SATs' true potential. It could be argued that if it were possible to set aside the political considerations in England and Wales that have led to these tests being used to compile league tables of schools, the whole system of education there would benefit. There seems little point in elaborating a system which will indicate what is being done wrongly, unless steps follow to remedy the situation. While links remain between the tests and the accountability of teachers, it seems unlikely that the positive potential of the SATs will be realised in England and Wales.

It is not exclusively in the use of SATs, nevertheless, that St Paul's School demonstrates a commitment to formative modes of assessment. The record of work contains a section which deals with assessment alongside the work covered. This focuses teachers on gauging the pupils' grasp of the teaching points tackled and consequently allows them to target any extra help at those who require it. There is also

evidence that this system works in practice. All the teachers who completed the questionnaire at St Paul's School claimed that remediation invariably follows assessment (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:4). The unanimity demonstrated in the reply is important because it suggests not only that this forms part of a school policy, but also that all the teachers at the school implement it.

St Paul's School has also made a great effort to achieve in the teaching staff a desirable ownership of the school's assessment procedures. Two points, which are probably responsible for this state of affairs, stand out. The first is the participation of all members of staff in interpreting the English Orders and also in deciding how aspects of it can be assessed. Equally important, however, is the trust in the professionalism of the staff which the school manifests through its attitude to testing. The teachers do not feel threatened by assessment since the emphasis is on identifying areas of weakness in the teaching of determined groups of pupils. This distances the procedures from the issue of accountability and increases the chances of a positive response from the staff.

7:7 General conclusions

The evidence presented in these chapters points to St Paul's School being well advanced and successful in its implementation of the English Orders. A major reason why this is so stems from the leadership displayed by the headteacher, Mrs Beiso, and more specifically from her attitude to change demonstrated in the following comment from her interview: 'I am an innovator. I like to take things on that I see the value of' (Beiso I/V 1996:5).

As a consequence, St Paul's School adopted the national curriculum two years before the Gibraltar Department of Education required it of her. It also chose to pilot SATs when the general opinion among the teaching profession in England and Wales was strongly against these tests because of their links in that context with teacher accountability. Both these decisions at St Paul's have been proved visionary and in the best long-term interests of the school.

By choosing to implement the national curriculum before it was required, St Paul's School in effect bought itself time in which to experiment and devise successful strategies for implementation. This research clearly indicates that this time was wisely used. The practical and thorough nature of all the documents, in particular the English syllabus, bear testimony to the work that must have preceded their elaboration. The extra time also allowed the school to involve all the teachers in the process. In this way, not only was a standardised interpretation of each part of the Orders achieved, but the school was also able to benefit from a high degree of ownership of the final product, a fact which greatly improves the chances for implementation.

The headteacher's decision to pilot the SATs was also very significant. She clearly displayed an ability to separate the educational value of the exercise from the unfortunate political overtones which accompanied the process in England and Wales at the time, and indeed still do today. As a result, St Paul's School now benefits from a formative tool which facilitates the identification of areas of weakness which can subsequently be addressed in the teaching.

St Paul's School today is consequently well advanced in the implementation of the English Orders. Whereas, according to the headteacher, all the staff at the school took a great deal of convincing to agree to implement the national curriculum early (Beiso I/V 1996:2), the vast majority now view the move favourably. Of those polled in the

questionnaire, 84% feel the advent of national curriculum English has been a positive development (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:9). The fact that most teachers can feel comfortable with the approach of St Paul's School's to the English Orders suggests a considerable degree of success achieved in its implementation.

7:8 Chapter overview

St Paul's syllabus can be considered the central document that promotes a consistent implementation of the English Orders at the school. It was found to be comprehensive, up-to-date and practical. The school advocates an ambitious approach to national curriculum implementation with teachers encouraged to introduce many activities before they are required to by the English Orders document. The syllabus relies on teachers' professional judgement as to when it is best to tackle the more testing elements of the curriculum with each group of pupils.

Work in 'speaking and listening' covers a wide range of activities and promotes the functional use of language in communication. There are no formal assessments in this attainment target, however, which could be seen as promoting indirectly the notion that this area of language is less important than 'reading' and 'writing'.

Great prominence is given to phonics in the teaching of reading. The Ginn language scheme is widely used with an emphasis on the promotion of understanding. A lot of importance is placed on parental support in the teaching of reading. Where this is not forthcoming, it places some pupils at an obvious disadvantage.

The ambitious nature of the language provision at the school is particularly noticeable in 'writing'. A lot of the work is done in groups

within each class so that pupils can advance at their own pace. Attempts are also made to balance the teaching of skills with knowledge and understanding.

Much of the assessment at St Paul's School is formative, with the diagnosis of areas of weakness being followed by teaching to address the problems identified. The SATs are also used mainly for formative purposes.

A great deal of the apparent success in implementation of the English Orders at St Paul's School can be attributed to the strong leadership qualities displayed by a very innovative headteacher.

This study will now focus on Bishop Fitzgerald School. The next chapter introduces the school and examines its transition to national curriculum English.

SECTION C: BISHOP FITZGERALD SCHOOL

CHAPTER 8

TRANSITION TO NATIONAL CURRICULUM ENGLISH AT BISHOP FITZGERALD MIDDLE SCHOOL, GIBRALTAR

8:1 Staff turnover

Bishop Fitzgerald School is one of the larger middle schools in Gibraltar. With a pupil population of 373 boys and girls in 1997, the school boasts the services of 22 teachers and 3 ancillary staff members. Situated barely $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from St Paul's School, Bishop Fitzgerald serves largely the same catchment area as that institution. As a consequence, most of St Paul's students continue their education at Bishop Fitzgerald School once they reach year 4.

Whereas the advent of the national curriculum was undoubtedly the single most momentous change to affect Bishop Fitzgerald School in the 1990s, it was by no means the only one. The school was also affected by a very large turnover of staff, which included most of the senior management team. In 1989 the former headteacher of Bishop Fitzgerald School, Charlie Pizarro, retired and his deputy, Robert Beiso, was appointed headteacher of another middle school in Gibraltar. In the years that followed, a number of teachers, who had been on the staff at Bishop Fitzgerald School for many years, took up appointments at St Joseph's Middle School, the institution now led by their former deputy head. This signalled the end of a long period of staff continuity at Bishop Fitzgerald School. The current situation is one in which no fewer than 9 of the 22 teachers who today work at Bishop Fitzgerald School took up their appointments there after 1990. The additional difficulties that this situation created for a school required to adapt to

major curricular innovation were noted by the new headteacher, Antonia Gladstone:

It was not the ideal scenario into which to introduce such radical change as the implementation of a national curriculum, but it was a challenge the new management team had to take on.

(Gladstone I/V 1998:2)

In addition to the change of head and deputy-headteachers, the post of Head of Language at the school changed hands twice in 1993 and 1997. This undoubtedly created particular problems for the implementation of the English Orders.

Furthermore, the philosophy adopted by the headteacher placed great emphasis on assessment procedures in the curriculum, as will be examined in subsequent chapters. This was to have a bearing on the style of implementation of the English Orders adopted at the school and it was fuelled by Antonia Gladstone's view that:

In general what you assess you teach and the national curriculum has given much greater importance to the issue of assessment.

(Gladstone I/V 1998:1)

Fullan (1991:76) has observed that the headteacher is the person most likely to be able to shape the organisational conditions necessary for the implementation of any innovation. As a result, Gladstone's views took on particular significance since, as will be discussed later on, they were the foundations upon which the new curriculum was constructed at Bishop Fitzgerald School.

8:2 English teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald School in 1990-91

As intimated above, the period of the 1980s was one of considerable stability at Bishop Fitzgerald School and this was particularly evident with regard to the provision for English teaching. When the national curriculum was adopted at the school, the Head of Language at the time was George Parody. He had held this post since 1980 and had been largely responsible for the evolution of the school's language syllabus through that decade. His approach, even in the early years, was based upon an examination of the various components of English teaching and he sought to define the English curriculum at Bishop Fitzgerald based upon what was generally considered 'good practice' in England and Wales at the time (Parody I/V 1998:1). Parody is adamant that this approach greatly facilitated the transition to national curriculum English when the time came:

I have always felt that the English Orders were really based on 'good practice' and working on that premise it was logical that much of what would be proposed was already being done in some form at the school. The balance of components and the emphasis given to defined areas might change, but the basic content would already be there.

(Parody I/V 1998:1)

Perhaps the most significant step taken by George Parody, in so far as it was to affect the development of English teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald, was the decision to use the full Ginn 360 language package as the core for the language provision at the school. This occurred in 1983 and, to help with implementation, Parody was given partial sabbatical leave consisting of half the morning's teaching time per day. During this time he would help the language teachers at the school by giving sample lessons to demonstrate, among other things, the handling

and teaching of discussions, poetry writing, cloze procedure, and developmental writing involving drafting (Parody I/V 1998:2). Whereas Ginn was to provide the core, Parody recognised weaknesses in certain areas of that language course and he therefore supplemented it with additional work for creative writing and for the teaching of oral skills. In the 1986/87 school year Parody introduced 'Oracy' into the school. This is a course that specifically concentrates on oral skills and it was used in parallel to the Ginn 360 core.

It should be borne in mind that even though the advent of the national curriculum and the English Orders was still some time away, education circles in England and Wales were already debating what English teaching should comprise. It is clear that Parody was following developments in the education media and that these had a bearing on how English was to be taught at Bishop Fitzgerald School:

There was already considerable discussion in education circles, from as early as 1982, on the value of speaking and listening to English and hence I incorporated these elements into my syllabus.

(Parody I/V 1998:1)

It is no surprise, therefore, given that the language programme at Bishop Fitzgerald School had developed in tandem with the UK debate on what English teaching should comprise, that Parody felt that adopting the national curriculum when the time came was not such a major step:

I looked at the literature on the national curriculum debate in UK and felt that the topics being discussed with regard to inclusion in the English Orders were already being done at Bishop Fitzgerald in some shape or form.

(Parody I/V 1998:2)

Few major changes were made to language teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald School, therefore, once the national curriculum was adopted in Gibraltar in 1991. The headteacher, Antonia Gladstone, noted that the general profile of speaking was raised at the school and assessment procedures changed, as will be discussed later in this thesis (Gladstone I/V 1998:1). This apart it was also decided then that setting the children more strictly would facilitate the teaching of English. Prior to 1991, pupils had been divided into eight ability bands, with the first containing the children adjudged to have greatest ability and the eighth those with least. These eight bands were divided into four classes, though there was an element of mixed ability arrangement, since set 1 worked with set 5, 2 with 6, 3 with 7 and 4 with 8. This was the case for years 4 to 6, though in year 7 streaming was tighter, with sets 1 and 2 working together, 3 and 4 and so on. Gladstone changed this system in September 1991, replacing it with four straightforward ability bands beginning from year 4.

The other major exercise that was carried out at the time was the updating of the Bishop Fitzgerald School language syllabus, a task carried out in 1992 by George Parody. Gladstone noted that this exercise related the demands of the national curriculum to the then current practice at the school (Gladstone I/V 1998:1). As such, the language syllabus did not so much seek to interpret the English Orders, but rather use the national curriculum document as a yardstick against which to measure the value of what the school was already doing. This is implied in the introduction to the syllabus where Parody notes that though the core of the document was written in the early 1980s:

I feel that the original document is still a valuable guide for the teacher of English despite its imperfections and omissions.

(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:1)

This thesis will now examine that document in some detail. It is of particular importance given that, for reasons that will be discussed in due course, the syllabus has not been updated since that time.

8:3 The Bishop Fitzgerald School English syllabus, 1992

The syllabus consists of a 19 page document with separate sections on each of the attainment targets for English. At the time ‘spelling’ and ‘handwriting and presentation’ had not yet been incorporated into the attainment target for ‘writing’ and therefore they are treated separately in the Bishop Fitzgerald syllabus. Towards the end of the document there is an assessment calendar and two short sections on record keeping and general policy. The syllabus also contains a 12 page appendix on the teaching of ‘speaking and listening’. This is a topic pack taken directly from the May 1991 edition of *Junior Education* magazine.

8:4 Attainment target 1: speaking and listening

This section of the Bishop Fitzgerald syllabus starts by reproducing the definition of ‘speaking and listening’ as provided at the start of the segment on this attainment target in the 1989 version of the English Orders for England and Wales. From the beginning, the importance of assessing ‘speaking and listening’ and not just teaching it, is given prominence. The syllabus advocates continuous assessment in this area throughout the year and affirms that this must form part of a formal process. This is presented as the reasoning behind the introduction by the school of the ‘Oracy’ scheme, a development which had taken place

five years before this syllabus was written (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:2).

The Bishop Fitzgerald syllabus is very detailed and not only presents the rationale behind the 'Oracy' scheme, but also clear instructions for teachers on how it should be used. The stated purpose is to tackle speaking and listening together and this is done by means of a series of tapes and books which permit students to undergo a form of listening comprehension, with multiple choice answers. There are also a number of related follow-up exercises that permit the speaking elements to be covered. The activities listed range from free discussion, to storytelling, group cloze procedure, group sequencing, and role play (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:2).

The importance given to a standardised approach by teachers using this course is apparent from the fact that a full page of the syllabus, out of a total of 19, is dedicated to this purpose. Instructions issued not only cover the course itself, with a sequence provided for the teacher to follow, but also related classroom management issues as is evident from the following extract:

The pupils then listen to the recording. Take care how you seat your children:

- (a) Are some of them too far away?
- (b) Do you have someone with a hearing problem?
- (c) Check the quality of the tape beforehand in case the cassette player's heads need cleaning.
- (d) With some smaller classes it might be possible to gather the children round the cassette player.

(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:2)

The syllabus outlines exactly what the teacher and the pupils should be doing at each stage of the 'Oracy' lesson. It also provides instructions governing marking the work, recording the results, how long should be spent on each activity and advice on the composition of

groups for discussion work (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:3). Such detail could be considered excessive and failing to take regard of the professionalism of the English teacher in deciding how best to use the course. The national curriculum seeks to promote standardisation of content, but it is clear from the words of George Parody that he was looking to achieve a degree of uniformity in approach as a way of guaranteeing the delivery of the content:

It was very important to provide a skeleton for the teachers to work to because we must recall that some were not English specialists and this made the English syllabus all the more relevant.

(Parody I/V 1998:2)

Instructions and advice to teachers are therefore to be found throughout the Bishop Fitzgerald English syllabus.

The remainder of the syllabus' section on 'speaking and listening' deals with the assessment of two individual talks which students should deliver in the autumn term and approaching the end of the school year. It is stipulated that the talks should be of two minutes duration and the only attempt at differentiation included in this part of the syllabus is advice on relevant topics for different ability groups. There is no progression in the exercise and hence year 4 students would still be carrying out the same form of two-minute talk when they reached year 7. The grading of these talks is linked to the other oral activity carried out at Bishop Fitzgerald School, since teachers are instructed to grade the pupils' performances using the same criteria and scale as provided for the marking of the speaking elements of the 'Oracy' course (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:5).

The syllabus is very clear as to the purposes of the oral activity carried out and expresses this in the following terms:

The whole object is to provide the vehicle by which a formal assessment can be made on an individual basis... Above all it will provide a framework on which to write your reports which will, for the first time, be based on concrete evidence gathered over the year.

(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:5-6)

Significantly, given that the Bishop Fitzgerald syllabus was written in 1992, the above assessments are put into a wider context which allow for due weight to be given to the overall performance of students in normal classroom activity:

By far the most important assessment guide is the continuous interaction which goes on in the classroom between teacher and pupil, and pupil and pupil. Thus what is recorded should be juxtaposed with the teacher's continuous assessment based on many other activities apart from English. In the majority of cases I presume the formal assessment will merely confirm your observations of the child during the year.

(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:6)

This view was endorsed by Sir Ron Dearing three years later when he highlighted that, in assessing the level of a pupil, teachers should: 'use their knowledge of a pupil's work...across a range of contexts' (SCAA 1995:2).

The point has already been made that though this version of the Bishop Fitzgerald Language syllabus was written in 1992, it has not been updated since. The question must be considered, therefore, whether the above meets the needs for the teaching of 'speaking and listening' at the school in 1998. It is clear that whereas in some ways it can be argued that it does, the syllabus is nevertheless an undeveloped document and does not take account of the considerable evolution of the English Orders that occurred through the 1990s and which included the Dearing Review of 1995. Since the syllabus was written considerable progress has been made in developing the capacity for the national curriculum to

provide a more defined framework for English teaching. It could be argued that the Bishop Fitzgerald School syllabus is general in the guidelines it produces and is particularly weak in defining progression in the subject area and to a lesser degree differentiation to take account for varying ability in pupils. Joey Britto, who succeeded George Parody as Head of Language at Bishop Fitzgerald School, recognised these weaknesses of the English syllabus, though he was promoted out of the school before he was able to address them:

The scheme included some national curriculum jargon and was split into the attainment targets but there were no programmes of study or anything of that kind.

(Britto I/V 1998:1)

It is clear, therefore, that the Bishop Fitzgerald English syllabus is badly outdated and it can be argued that the need to bring the document more in line with the current English Orders should constitute a priority for the school's language department.

8:5 Drama

The teaching of drama is one area of the language curriculum that is not covered at all by the Bishop Fitzgerald School English syllabus. The document merely draws attention to the fact that the school had problems with space and facilities and had not therefore developed this curricular area as George Parody would have liked. As a consequence, the syllabus merely voices the hope that this aspect of English will be tackled in a more systematic and organised way in the future (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:6). It should be pointed out that since the syllabus was written, Bishop Fitzgerald School has moved to new, more spacious premises. The time would therefore appear ripe to revisit

the whole question of the role drama should play in the teaching of English at the school.

8:6 Attainment target 2: reading

This chapter has already discussed how George Parody decided to use the Ginn 360 reading scheme as the core for the language work done at Bishop Fitzgerald School. This is reflected by the length of the section of the English syllabus that is dedicated to this attainment target. Nine pages, which amount to just under half the entire document, detail the use of this reading scheme.

The emphasis from the start is on reading with understanding, and the value of this approach is underlined by a relevant quotation from the 1989 English Orders to that effect. The English syllabus advocates the use of ‘Clard’ resources, which comprise a large number of activities designed to demonstrate what children have assimilated at each level. This forms part of the Ginn 360 scheme. These activities form the yardstick against which the success of the reading is gauged:

Successful completion demonstrates whether or not a child is actually reading with understanding or is merely ‘barking at print’.

(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:6)

It is clear from the syllabus that the ‘Clard’ activities are very wide-ranging indeed. Under word recognition skills, the ability to follow instructions is tested, and there is work on visual discrimination, with an emphasis on word patterns, word and sentence matching and phonics (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:7). Interestingly, given that phonics could be considered to be at the heart of the reading strategy at

St Paul's First School, it merely forms one more approach at Bishop Fitzgerald and is not given particular emphasis.

A similar variety of activities are used to test for comprehension. These range from the simplest requirement to draw rather than write the answer, through matching pictures and sentences, completing sentences, and deciding if answers already provided are true or false. At the more advanced levels, there are multiple-choice questions and a range of open-ended questions that require a more creative and detailed written response (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:8-9). It is clear that the Ginn 360 course, when used in this way, provides ample opportunities for integrating work in all three attainment targets of 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing'.

As was the case with 'speaking and listening', the syllabus provides very detailed and clear instructions to teachers on the use of the 'Clard' resources. These are listed over two full pages of the document and start by stressing the importance of '...understanding as opposed to speed in finishing a book' (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:11). This point is repeated several times in this section of the syllabus. To allay teachers' fears regarding whether they may or may not have covered enough material with their groups, the syllabus states that average children would normally be expected to complete one level of the course per academic year. There is no pressure on teachers to achieve this, however, since this comment is qualified with an accompanying statement on the importance of allowing the children enough time to work through the material at their own pace (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:12).

One important aspect of this reading course is that the children are expected to progress as individuals and the clear intention is that the teacher should form several small groups of pupils of similar ability. Whereas an occasional lesson might be delivered to the whole class, the

majority of Ginn 360 work would be undertaken by the pupils in their reduced groups. There is no question then of the more able pupils being held back by the less able, nor indeed of slower children being moved on to higher levels before successfully completing previous work covered. Given the administrative problems that this approach implies, great importance is given in the language syllabus to making the children independent learners. They are required to become capable, not only of completing some of the tasks alone, but also of marking exercises like, for example, multiple choice comprehensions. The syllabus suggests that once the reading scheme is properly introduced, most children will be able to progress independently, with the teacher simply providing supervision and occasional guidance. In this way more teacher time is freed for reading with the lower ability groups who would find it harder to progress alone:

Usually you find that once groups are comfortable with the scheme, they are quite capable of reading the stories and tackling most activities successfully. With a weaker group, reading the story with them enables you to stress and discuss certain areas which in the course of their normal reading they could have missed.

(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:12)

There seems little doubt that the Ginn 360 scheme does allow for a wide range of reading activities to be covered. A great deal would appear to rely, however, on the ability of the teacher to manage successfully a class in which the pupils are working at different levels and on diverse tasks.

Furthermore, despite the varied content of the course, it could be argued that Ginn 360 does not, on its own, cover the full range of reading activities as required in the current English Orders. This is so even if consideration is given only to the reading requirements for Key

Stage 2 that simply caters for three of the four years at Bishop Fitzgerald School. No provision is made to expose the pupils to the wider variety of reading materials described in the English Orders in the following terms:

Pupils should read and use a wide range of sources of information, including those not specifically designed for children. The range of non-fiction should include IT-based reference materials, newspapers, encyclopaedias, dictionaries and thesauruses.

(DFE 1995:13)

Not one of these issues is mentioned in any part of the language syllabus for Bishop Fitzgerald School, which could be interpreted as providing further evidence that this document is outdated.

8:7 Reading for the less able pupils

Whereas the Ginn 360 scheme is intended to cater for the reading requirements for the majority of pupils at Bishop Fitzgerald School, alternative provision is also made in the language syllabus for the less able. This takes the form of a modular published scheme under the name of 'Sharp Eye'. The inclusion of this course in the language provision at Bishop Fitzgerald is justified in the syllabus through the use of a quotation from the Cox Report:

It is a guiding principle of the National Curriculum that: 'pupils with special educational needs should, as far as possible, have the opportunity to experience the full range of the English Curriculum' – The Cox Report.

(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:13)

The 'Sharp Eye' course is presented over two pages of the syllabus and consists of starter books, black-line masters, special files and theme

books. The starter books are intended to provide a basis for group discussion and initiate reading and writing. After using these, the black-line masters are used to reinforce the skills and concepts already introduced and this is further consolidated via the 'special file' where these same skills are applied to a range of new concepts. Theme books then allow for the pupil to continue to learn about the topic that has been covered (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:14-15). In contrast to the section of the syllabus dealing with Ginn 360, little guidance is provided for the teacher on the use of this course other than the instruction that it is only to be used with the lowest ability set. The inclusion of this course, however, constitutes a clear attempt to provide differentiation in reading provision at the school to a much greater degree than was done for 'speaking and listening'.

8:8 Library

The final part of the reading component of the Bishop Fitzgerald language syllabus comprises a short section on the use of the library. This highlights the importance of this area as a resource centre where pupils can use books for a variety of purposes ranging from research for projects to reading for pleasure. The syllabus states that each class has been allocated one library period per week and that this should be used by the teacher to promote reading for any purpose he/she sees fit (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:13). Little other information is provided here other than the opening hours of the facility. Unfortunately the times provided are once more out of date and do not reflect the situation today.

8:9 Attainment target 3: writing

Surprisingly, perhaps, less than one page of the syllabus is dedicated to this attainment target. The advocated approach again relies heavily upon the use of a published scheme, in this case 'Reasons for Writing' which forms part of the Ginn language resources. Nevertheless, the focus for the content to be covered in 'writing' is made clear from the start with a quotation from what, in 1992, were the current English Orders. Writing requirements for students are defined in terms of their being able to display

...a growing ability to construct and convey meaning in written language matching style to audience and purpose.
(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:15)

These skills remain central to the post-Dearing version of the English Orders. There is a marked contrast, however, in the treatment of the topic provided in the 1995 English Orders document and the Bishop Fitzgerald English syllabus. The English Orders detail exactly what is meant by the statement through the definition of the range of purposes for writing, as well as the key skills to be taught to ensure pupils can perform the tasks asked of them. The following extract from the Key Stage 2 provisions illustrates the form of detailed guidance provided:

They should be taught to use the characteristics of different kinds of writing, *eg argument, commentary, narrative, dialogue*. The forms in which they write should include imaginative writing, *eg stories, poems, dialogues, drama scripts, diaries*; and non-fiction, *eg reports, instructions, explanations, notes, letters*. They should be taught to use features of layout and presentation.

(DFE 1995:15)

Similar detail is provided in defining the skills to be taught which should include, planning, drafting, revising, proofreading and presenting work (DFE 1995:15). The Bishop Fitzgerald syllabus, for its part, simply provides the following statement:

Through a structured progression of teaching units, *Reasons for Writing* teaches children to write fluently and appropriately by developing their skills of effective writing for a variety of audiences and purposes.

(Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:16)

The teacher using this syllabus is left none the wiser regarding what the range of skills and purposes should comprise. The document lists which of the 'Reasons for Writing' textbooks should be used with which year group, but this is the only guidance provided and it can be argued this provision is inadequate for the following reasons. Teachers are wont to work at a different pace and this could be seen as inevitable, given that the classes at Bishop Fitzgerald School are streamed and that, logically, a top set will assimilate concepts at a faster rate than a bottom one. If all the classes within a year are working with the same textbook, as the school's syllabus advocates, it is likely that some will not finish the book during the course of the academic year. This is all the more probable if we consider that 'Reasons for Writing' is not meant to be the core of the language provision at the school but intended to supplement the work done in Ginn 360. Even allowing for the fact that the 'Reasons for Writing' course is comprehensive and covers most of the forms of writing advocated by the English Orders, it is likely that some classes will not have the time to cover the full range. Since the syllabus does not define for teachers what skills and forms of writing they should teach, they would be none the wiser at the end of the academic year as to where their teaching had fallen short of national curriculum requirements in this attainment target. It can be argued,

therefore, that the Bishop Fitzgerald English syllabus does not provide suitable guidance for teachers in this area of the curriculum.

The above constitutes the majority of the section dedicated to writing in the Bishop Fitzgerald English syllabus. A short additional paragraph is included, nevertheless, on assessing this attainment target. Here, teachers are instructed that this should comprise two formal tests per term. The syllabus offers no indication of what form these tests should take, though it states that they should be marked on a scale of A-E until such time as ‘...marking by national curriculum levels is introduced’ (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:16). Interviews with teachers who were at the school in the early 1990s revealed that these were straightforward creative writing tests. They continued to be assessed, using the scale laid down in the syllabus, until George Parody’s successor, Joey Britto, introduced an alternative marking scheme in 1994. This was based upon that used for marking the SATs in England and Wales. The new scheme will be discussed in greater detail later in this study.

8:10 Spelling, handwriting and presentation

As indicated in Chapter 8:3, since these aspects of English were not yet incorporated into the attainment target for writing at the time the Bishop Fitzgerald syllabus was produced, they are treated separately in this document.

There are no instructions on the teaching of spelling and teachers are asked to provide each pupil with a notebook containing the most frequently misspelt words in the school. As the children progress through each year they are required to add to these lists the words that they misspell, thereby building up a source of reference which is

relevant to their individual needs (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:16).

With regard to handwriting, again no detailed guidance is provided, though teachers are told to ensure that what the pupils write is legible and that they should be encouraged to join their writing as soon as possible (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:16).

8:11 Testing schedule, record keeping and general policy

The final sections of the Bishop Fitzgerald English syllabus are designed to provide a point of reference for teachers on key areas which will promote the standardisation of approach which George Parody saw as essential. Unfortunately, the information contained was once again found to be well out of date.

This is particularly so with regard to the sub-sections on testing and record keeping. The former of these lists the tests to be used with each year at the school, as well as providing dates for the assessments to be carried out (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:17). Though many of the examinations are still used, several of the dates for taking them have been changed, and there exist both additions and omissions to the content of the timetable which render it obsolete.

This is again the case with regard to the instructions on record keeping, though to a lesser degree, since fewer changes have been made in this area. The main changes have come about in English writing, where fewer assessments are carried out today than were advocated in the 1992 syllabus. The manner and frequency of keeping speaking records has also undergone significant changes.

It is interesting to note that the Bishop Fitzgerald 1992 English syllabus offers no guidance regarding the marking of day-to-day work.

Teachers are not instructed to use any particular scale in grading exercises. Neither are they required to record any marks whatsoever, other than those that relate to the formal whole year assessments. It can be argued that this is a shortcoming of this document, since it encourages teachers to devise their own systems of marking which do not compare with one another and which can prove confusing to children as they advance through the school and are taught by different people. The effect of this omission will be discussed in subsequent chapters when this study examines the manner of English teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald School today.

The syllabus concludes with instructions on the issue and care of both textbooks and exercise books and invites any teacher who requires further information to approach George Parody directly (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:19). That this offer remains in place five years after Parody has left Bishop Fitzgerald School is a final reminder of how dated the syllabus document is.

8:12 The syllabus in use

Given that the 1992 language syllabus is still an active document at Bishop Fitzgerald School today, it is necessary to consider the use to which it is currently being put and assess its value in directing the delivery of the English Orders as we approach the year 2000.

The first point to be considered is the large turnover of staff at the school since 1990, detailed in Chapter 8:1. As part of this research, all 14 teachers of English at the school were interviewed individually. Five of these teachers (36%) were not even aware that the school had an English syllabus. Of the remainder, only 1 teacher (7%) claimed to be perfectly familiar with the syllabus whereas five (36%) said they were

very familiar with it. One teacher (7%) chose 'fairly familiar' to describe his knowledge of the syllabus, and the final 2 teachers (14%) said they were not very familiar with the English syllabus at all (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:2).

The above results are particularly disturbing when considered against the apparent lack of knowledge of some of these teachers regarding the content of the English Orders themselves. Six of the 14 teachers (43%) admitted they had never read the English Orders. Furthermore, only five of the remaining teachers who had read this national curriculum document had done so after the Dearing Review was carried out (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:1). This situation merely serves to increase the importance of the school's English syllabus as a document that can provide much needed direction for the teachers. As George Parody observed, deciding what should be taught, and in what ways, is far from straightforward when dealing with a subject as complex and varied as English:

English teaching seems to change a lot more than either of the other two core subjects, mathematics and science. It is also the hardest of the three to define. A structure is essential therefore and since all teachers are not prepared to read the English Orders, a school document which interprets it for them is a must.

(Parody I/V 1998:5)

The evidence presented above would suggest that the Bishop Fitzgerald English syllabus fails to provide this required direction and indeed 50% of the teachers of English admit they do not follow the document at all (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:2). As a result it is logical to conclude that much of what is taught is likely to be disjointed and this is borne out by Joey Britto who noted a lack of

purpose in the English teaching when he became Head of Language in 1993:

Lessons then were essentially self-contained units and there was no progression or continuity. The content of the lessons depended largely on the individual teachers involved. As a result I would say the school was not very advanced in the implementation of the English orders when I started there.

(Britto I/V 1998:1)

Britto's response to this situation when he became Head of Language at Bishop Fitzgerald School was to embark upon a major rewriting of the English syllabus. This resulted in a 37 page document which dealt with all forms of English teaching at Key Stage 2. The syllabus attempted to provide a detailed structure for teachers to follow and the rationale behind the move was explained by Britto in the following manner:

I thought that some teachers would welcome practical ideas for lessons and hence included these in the document. It was a response to a situation in which teachers sometimes asked me for guidelines regarding what to teach and how to teach it.

(Britto I/V 1998:5)

Unfortunately Britto was promoted out of the school before he had an opportunity to complete and implement his syllabus. The effect this would have had on the teaching of English at the school will remain unknown. An apparent drawback of Britto's syllabus, nevertheless, is that it was drawn up without any involvement from the teachers who would be required to implement it. It was also a lengthy document. It can be argued that teachers who had already proved unwilling to read the English Orders would have been unlikely to be

prepared to invest the time and effort required to translate into practice a syllabus which they had played no part in drawing up.

8:13 Chapter overview

An immediate problem in introducing a national curriculum at Bishop Fitzgerald School was the lack of managerial stability that existed during the initial period of implementation. New head and deputy-headteachers were appointed and the post of Head of Language also changed hands twice in 1993 and 1997.

George Parody, Head of Language during the 1980s, approached national curriculum implementation from the premise that it was based upon good practice and that, therefore, most of the topics included in the English Orders would already be taught at the school in some shape or form. The only major changes to English teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald School, that followed the decision to adopt the national curriculum, were the raising of the profile of speaking and the alteration of assessment procedures.

English provision was directed by a 19-page syllabus produced in 1992. The syllabus advocates continuous assessment in 'speaking and listening'. Much of the work is covered using the 'Oracy' course. The syllabus dictates procedures for teachers to follow to promote uniformity of delivery. It fails, however, to provide for progression or differentiation in this attainment target.

'Ginn 360' is used as the core for all language work. The syllabus emphasises the importance of understanding in reading and stipulates that all work should be carried out in reduced groups within each class so pupils can advance at their own pace. The 'Sharp Eye' course is used with slower readers.

Less than one page of the Bishop Fitzgerald syllabus is dedicated to the teaching of writing. No guidance is provided on the range of skills or styles of writing to be taught. There are also no guidelines to teachers covering spelling or handwriting. The final section of the syllabus, that comprises policy statements and an assessment calendar, is very out-of-date. Ironically the syllabus has never been replaced and is still an active document. In practice many teachers at the school today are unaware of its existence and most do not use it at all.

This study will now discuss the current procedures in use at Bishop Fitzgerald School for delivery of the English Orders.

CHAPTER 9

ENGLISH TEACHING AT BISHOP FITZGERALD SCHOOL IN 1998

9:1 Introduction

Examining the teaching of English at Bishop Fitzgerald School today was a more complicated task than for St Paul's School. The reason for this is to be found in the manner of organisation of the teaching groups in both schools. At St Paul's School, though setting occurs within each class, given that the children work largely in small ability groups, all classes encompass the full ability range and are taught in parallel to one another. This situation permits teachers of children in the same academic year to produce their record of work together. The various classes also progress at largely the same rate.

The system of streaming in place at Bishop Fitzgerald School, described in Chapter 8:2, where each year is divided into four ability sets, makes the adoption of this system impossible. Since no parallel teaching groups exist in any year at Bishop Fitzgerald School, teachers must produce their records of work alone and no valid comparisons of their content can be drawn. For this reason this study has not examined the records of work in the same detail as those for St Paul's School, where they were indicative of the work done in each particular year. Instead the research has been undergone through the examination of the teachers' records in tandem with individual interviews. The latter sought to reveal the approach being adopted by every teacher to each aspect of English teaching.

9:2 Speaking and listening

This area of the language curriculum is of particular interest, since it was highlighted by both the former Head of Language, George Parody, and the headteacher, Antonia Gladstone, as seeing the greatest changes in approach following the adoption of the national curriculum. Parody had introduced the 'oracy' scheme to cater for the perceived growing importance of speaking and listening; and Gladstone affirmed that the biggest modifications to the curriculum came about as a consequence of the raising of the profile of speaking generally (Gladstone I/V 1998:1). Questions were raised, however, regarding whether the priority given to this language area at administrative level, was reflected in general classroom practice. Joey Britto, the Head of Language between 1993-1996, was of the opinion that it was not:

The staff, I feel, did not give 'speaking and listening' a very high priority. Lessons taught tended to concentrate very much on written work.

(Britto I/V 1998:1)

It is clear, nevertheless, that the 'Oracy' programme was being followed in the mid 1990s since Britto reported that he would receive results from each year group and discuss these with the appropriate year co-ordinator if any problems were apparent (Britto I/V 1998:3).

So what is the situation at the start of the 1998/99 academic year? The individual interviews conducted with the teachers of English at Bishop Fitzgerald School and the records of work suggest that the 'Oracy' programme is still being followed. It is clear, however, that implementation is nowhere nearly as standardised as Parody required in the 1992 language syllabus. All the year 4 teachers grade the listening elements out of five or six, as advocated by the 'Oracy' course. There is

disparity, nonetheless, when it comes to grading the speaking components. Three of the four teachers use the same marking scale as for the 'listening' section, whereas the other teacher claims to award marks on a scale of 1-10 (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:4-5).

This situation is repeated higher up the school. In year 5, three teachers grade the speaking components of 'Oracy' out of 7, with the fourth awarding a mark out of 8 and adding a comment. In year 6, one teacher awarded marks out of 8, one out of 9 and the final two teachers graded out of 10. The situation in year 7 is a little different in so far as the four sets are shared by two teachers who each take two groups. One of these teachers used the scale of 1-9 and the second did not grade the speaking elements of 'Oracy' at all (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:5-6).

The divergence is even more pronounced with regard to the other 'speaking' requirement contained in the 1992 language syllabus - that all pupils be graded on two talks per year. These talks were to be graded as per the 'Oracy' criteria and scale (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:5).

In year 4, two of the teachers concerned were following these guidelines, though the frequency of the talks was different, with one teacher grading up to two talks per term and the other one. The remaining two teachers in the year did not grade any oral activity outside the 'Oracy' programme (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:4-5).

In year 5, two of the teachers adhered to the requirement to grade two talks in the year, though the system of assessment varied greatly. One of these teachers awarded a single general impression mark out of 10, whereas the other gave each pupil separate marks on a scale of 1-8 for effort and attainment. A third teacher in the year did not grade individual talks at all but awarded the occasional mark out of 7 for performance in group discussion. It was the final teacher in the year,

however, who had the most elaborate procedure. In the first term each student's performance was evaluated during the course of a general discussion which might be cross-curricular. The teacher focused on fluency, tone, clarity, vocabulary, and listening skills. A comment was written on each child, but no grades were awarded on this occasion. In the second term this teacher used a scale of A-C to grade pupils' performances in delivering a prepared talk. No assessments were carried out in the third term (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:5).

In year 6, no two teachers applied the same system. The first required each student to deliver one talk per term and graded these out of 8, based upon preparation and delivery. A comment on each student was also added to facilitate end-of-year reporting. A second teacher varied the oral assessments carried out according to the ability of the set being taught. For the lower-ability students, these would comprise an individual talk to the class each term. For the more able groups, the assessments would take the form of an individual talk during the first term, performance in a debate during the second, and a role-play situation in the third. All these activities were graded on a scale of A to D. A third year 6 teacher simply graded a prepared talk each term out of 10, and the final teacher chose to mark a similar activity out of 9, whilst adding an assessment of an oral book review at some point in the academic year. This too was graded out of 9, with the emphasis on the use of varied intonation, clarity and good content (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:5).

The two year 7 teachers also displayed dramatic differences in approach. One assessed individual talks each term on the scale of 1-9. The subject of these talks would ordinarily be based upon some aspect of a book they had read. The second teacher varied the oral assessments each term to cover individual speeches, pair work and group work. The scale for marking these was from 1-20. Additionally, this teacher carried

out a separate assessment on delivery of a speech taken from a book. Here marks out of 10 were awarded for each of nine categories that ranged from the use of gesture and tone of voice to holding an audience. To heighten awareness of the various elements involved, the pupils in the class were required to grade the performances of their classmates in this activity and the marks were compared at the end with those awarded by the teacher (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:6).

It is clear from the above that the instructions for the assessment of oral activity contained in the 1992 language syllabus are not being comprehensively carried out. The reasons for this might well be found in the recent high turnover of staff at Bishop Fitzgerald School, described in Chapter 8:1. This led to the situation where 36% of the teachers of English at the school today were found to be unaware of the existence of a language syllabus (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:2). The effect on the pupils, however, is arguably of greater significance than the reasons behind the current situation.

Whereas it is possible to argue in favour of the approach adopted by each teacher to oral activity at the school, the sum of the approaches produces a very confusing scenario for both pupils and their parents. Depending on the classes a child is in as he/she progresses through the school, similar activities may be graded very differently. One year a talk might be marked out of 8, the next out of 10, then on a scale of A to D, and finally out of 20. This would make it very difficult for the pupil concerned to be able to gauge progress and understand what the marks mean when compared to one another. The situation would be further complicated when a friend progressing through the school in a different combination of classes might have been assessed totally differently. The need for standardisation of approach in the work done, and the manner in which it is marked, is therefore very apparent. This would not only increase the understanding of the pupils regarding what is required of

them, but would also facilitate the monitoring process of the curriculum by the school administration.

9:3 Reading

As with the former attainment target, the approaches adopted to the teaching of reading were found to be varied. It should be recalled that George Parody made a conscious decision to use the Ginn 360 scheme as the core for language tuition at Bishop Fitzgerald School. This led to the very detailed instructions for use contained in the 1992 English syllabus which were described in Chapter 8:6. In the years that followed Parody's departure from the school, however, the central role of Ginn 360 to the teaching of English was increasingly undermined, though officially nothing changed since the syllabus has not been updated. Parody's successor as Head of Language, Joey Britto, nevertheless initiated a shift in emphasis based upon his perception that many teachers were not spending sufficient time on teaching the pupils how to read (Britto I/V 1998:2). In practice this led to the use of additional materials that did not fall under the Ginn umbrella and encouraged teachers to widen their approach to reading. Britto was prepared to resource this initiative and thus the position enjoyed by Ginn at the heart of English teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald School slowly began to change. In essence, Britto found the Ginn course rather restrictive:

There was very little flexibility... There was no great choice of reading materials available. I attempted to tackle this by buying class libraries which consisted of a selection of books of which there were several copies of some of them. These were used for cloze procedure, shared reading and teaching basic reading skills... As a staff there was general agreement that group reading was fast becoming unmanageable. We bought more readers so shared reading could be done.

(Britto I/V 1998:2)

It is interesting to note that Britto perceived a general desire for change on the part of the staff at the school and this was no doubt helped by the attitude to Ginn adopted by the headteacher, Antonia Gladstone. She too felt that the course was insufficient on its own:

I would like it to provide greater breadth in English content as well as more reading material at levels parallel to those a given student may be at, for the purpose of reinforcement. I feel that Ginn progresses a bit fast for some children. It needs to be complemented with other things and of course this is the way it is used in Bishop Fitzgerald.

(Gladstone I/V 1998:2)

The situation could prove somewhat confusing for the individual teachers, however, since the position adopted by the administration had not been formalised in the school's English syllabus. In practice this situation encouraged differences in emphasis at classroom level which were once more evident through an examination of the reading records of each teacher of English at the school.

In year 4, each teacher kept separate records for Ginn reading and for supplementary and mechanical reading. Even within the Ginn work, however, there were clear differences in approach. Two of the teachers claimed to divide their sets into two groups, whereas the other two preferred to work with the whole class together. Three of the four teachers recorded the pages read by the group, though only one of these

made any attempt to grade individual performances and this only towards the end of the year when notes on fluency were made for the purposes of reporting to parents. The fourth teacher did not even record what pages had been read but did note down the grades given to follow-up written work. This teacher claimed that the pages read could be worked out from the subsequent written activity (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:6).

For mechanical reading, two of the year 4 teachers carried out this activity with the whole class, whereas a third teacher divided the set into three groups and the remaining teacher worked with the class divided into four or five groups. There were also differences in the frequency for this form of reading that varied from once to three times a week. All the teachers recorded the pages read by the various groups or classes, but none of them graded pupils' performances. Two of the teachers, nevertheless, made a note on problems experienced by individuals with particular words for subsequent testing the next day (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:6).

One year 5 teacher kept no records for Ginn at all, though the other three recorded the pages each set had read. The only grades awarded to pupils were for related written work. One of these teachers, furthermore, devised a system whereby notes on the individual strengths and weaknesses in reading of each individual in the class, would be taken and updated several times a term. These would serve as a record of progression that would be used at parent 'open days' and for end of year reporting (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:7).

Far greater variety was apparent in the approach of the year 5 teachers to their mechanical reading. One teacher did not record whole class reading but kept lists of which books were being taken by each pupil from the school library and required written book-reports to ascertain if they had been read. This same teacher held termly book

auctions to encourage the children to exchange reading material they had enjoyed. A second teacher claimed to vary the amount of mechanical reading carried out, depending on the ability of the set being taken. Top sets would read as a class, whereas lower sets would be divided into two groups for 3-4 reading sessions per week. Records were kept of what was read and when, though no grades were awarded for performance. The third year 5 teacher merely recorded pages read when this activity was carried out, though it was the final teacher who kept the most comprehensive records. This person kept a daily record of individual grades based upon his listening to each child read while the rest of the class was engaged in written activity. Each pupil would be assessed 3-4 times a week and the scale of grades used ranged from 'reasonable' to 'very good' (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:7).

One of the year 6 teachers did not differentiate between Ginn reading and supplementary reading keeping just one record for both. This recorded dates and pages read. The other three year 6 teachers kept separate Ginn records. Two of these simply recorded the pages read, but the third teacher also kept a check on which individuals had read aloud to ensure everyone did so at least once every week. This teacher also made notes on the problems experienced by individuals. The mechanical reading records in this year all comprised notes on pages read with no grades of any kind being awarded (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:7-8).

The two year 7 teachers of English recorded the pages read in Ginn and the frequency each individual read out loud. Neither teacher assessed the reading performances, though follow-up written material was graded and these marks kept. All mechanical reading in year 7 was done as a whole set and again this work was not graded, though the pages read were noted (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:8).

The above evidence clearly indicates the great variety of approaches adopted to the teaching of reading at Bishop Fitzgerald School, as well as demonstrating considerable movement away from the instructions to teachers contained in the 1992 English syllabus. In Chapter 8:6 it was seen how George Parody required the teaching of Ginn reading work to be undertaken in small groups within each set. This was crucial to a course that envisaged pupils progressing at their own rate. The reality in 1998 is that not all the teachers of English at Bishop Fitzgerald School are carrying out their teaching of Ginn in this way. This raises doubts about the suitability of the materials for whole-class teaching.

Questions must also be raised about whether the full range of reading activities included for Key Stage 2 in the English Orders document is being covered. In truth it is not possible to ascertain. It is fair to say that the Ginn reading materials cover a variety of authors, styles and genres. No evidence exists, however, that the teachers in widening their approach are including the use of ‘...IT-based reference materials, newspapers, encyclopaedias’ (DFE 1995:13).

Furthermore, there is no evidence regarding what degree of teaching of mechanical skills is taking place at Bishop Fitzgerald School. In reality it is left to the individual teacher to decide what to do, how to do it and when to do it, with little guidance being provided.

It is also likely, given the wide differences of approach adopted by individual teachers, that the experiences of pupils at the school will vary considerably from class to class. All of this, it could be argued, stems from the failure to have at the heart of the teaching programme an updated syllabus which would serve better to define the subject requirements for the individual teacher.

9:4 Writing

In many respects, Bishop Fitzgerald School could be considered traditional in so far as it has always enjoyed a good reputation in Gibraltar for providing a solid education for its students. In language this historically meant a great deal of emphasis on written work and the legacy of this school of thought is still evident today. When Joey Britto was appointed Head of Language at the school, he noted a lack of balance between the teaching of the attainment targets:

Written work took precedence over other areas because it was easier to do and because this was the traditional way at Bishop Fitzgerald. It was the way things had been done at the school for years.

(Britto I/V 1998:2)

Britto also voiced some concern about what he saw as an over-reliance on the traditional published schemes and the Ginn 360 programme of which his predecessor, George Parody, had been such an enthusiastic advocate:

There was a lot of traditional reading of a passage and answering questions. In my opinion the Ginn 360 scheme was being over-used when I arrived and I introduced other books which were more modern in an effort to widen the range of books used. I was keen on the use of these new books and more formal teaching, 'chalk and talk'. I felt there was a general over-reliance on text books and a reluctance to deliver lessons which did not involve exercises in a book.

(Britto I/V 1998:2)

In the light of the above, Britto was to attempt to change the emphasis of the teaching of writing by moving away from the use of the Ginn 360 course. The records of work of the individual teachers for the 1997/98 academic year indicate that Ginn today accounts for only one

English session from five in any given week. Unfortunately, Britto's changes were never formalised in the school's English syllabus since he was promoted out of the school before he was able to update this document. As a result, it was left to the individual teachers to interpret the curricular content as they saw fit and changes in emphasis and approach were once more apparent as was the case with 'speaking and listening' and 'reading'.

The records of work of each teacher of English for 1997/98 indicate that a wide range of books is indeed being used for the teaching of writing. These include traditional comprehension-style books such as 'Complete English', books that cover grammatical concepts such as 'Mainline English' and more modern courses like the 'Oxford English Programme'. No pattern is apparent in the use of these books and what work is covered would appear to rely on the personal choice of each teacher. This, of course, raises issues of balance in the language curriculum that will be considered later in this chapter.

If there is a great deal of variety in the books used to teach writing, this is also reflected in the way the teachers mark the work given. In year 4, only one teacher awarded grades for most pieces of written work. A scale of 1-12 was used and the same criteria applied for awarding the marks as for formal creative writing assessments. The other three teachers in year 4 confined themselves to comments, though each used a different scale. One teacher utilised a range from 'very poor work' to 'excellent', a second from 'you must try harder' to 'very good' and the third teacher used from 'poor' to 'excellent'. Two of these teachers also pointed out areas of weakness in the work through written comments (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:8).

There was even less consistency among the year 5 teachers. One graded all pieces of written work out of 10, but occasionally marked out of 17 or 20 if he felt it suited the exercise. A second teacher only graded

comprehension exercises out of 10 and simply wrote comments on other work. A scale of A-E (+ or -) was used by a third teacher for all written work, though these marks were not recorded because it was considered too cumbersome. The final year 5 teacher opted to use comments ranging from 'could do better' to 'very good'. This teacher claimed to have given up awarding marks to exercises because he felt these did not relate to anything when the time came to complete the reports (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:8-9).

A similar scenario emerged in year 6. Three of the four teachers graded work, but all used different scales. One used 1-10, another A-C (+ or -) and the third A-D. One of these teachers also noted down weaknesses in the work submitted by pupils. The remaining year 6 teacher used a system of comments ranging from 'poor work' to 'excellent' and also wrote suggestions for improvements at each stage of production of the written work, including drafts (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:9).

In year 7, one of the teachers graded all pieces of work on the scale of A-E (+ or -) and the other limited himself to comments from 'poor' to 'excellent' (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:9).

As can be seen from the above, there is a similar lack of standardisation in the approach to the teaching and marking of writing as was apparent with regard to the other two attainment targets for language. Again it can be argued that the outcome can be very confusing to pupils who might be unsure of what the marks they are awarded from year to year represent. The desirability of the introduction of a common system for grading work is evident. In establishing the criteria for the awarding of marks, a system could be introduced which would better relate performance in everyday classroom activity to the reporting process at the end of each academic year. Furthermore, pupils would benefit from improved continuity as they progress through the

school and the task of monitoring the curriculum would also be made easier.

9:5 Assessment

It has already been argued in this chapter that the lack of an updated English syllabus has produced a situation in which individual teachers decide for themselves what they should be teaching and the desirable balance between the elements of the subject. This creates the danger that the English provision could be somewhat disjointed. The tool that is used at Bishop Fitzgerald School to prevent this being so is assessment. Through common testing, the teaching of English is given a sense of direction and the various classes are drawn together. That this move is deliberate can be gauged from the attitude adopted by the headteacher, Antonia Gladstone, who believes tests greatly influence what goes on in the classroom on a daily basis:

In general what you assess you teach and the national curriculum has given much greater importance to the issue of assessment. Prior to the national curriculum assessment used to be more ad-hoc.

(Gladstone I/V 1998:1)

It can be argued that this is so, though educationists have drawn attention to the dangers of an over-reliance on assessment that can lead to a narrowing of the language curriculum to the detriment of the pupils. Protherough (1995:30) maintains that it is the curriculum that should drive assessment or else the situation can arise where teachers will provide

...an overemphasis on those goals that can be measured and those results or skills that can be tested.

(Protherough and King 1995:6)

Assessment takes on a wider function at Bishop Fitzgerald than is normally the case at most schools because to some degree it is performing the traditional role of the syllabus in directing the teaching. It is significant that, together with raising the profile of 'speaking and listening', Gladstone specified assessment as the area of English teaching that had changed most with the advent of the national curriculum. She was also very clear as to the purposes of the testing carried out at the school:

The national curriculum defined attainment targets and we wanted our tests to be brought more into line with these. We also wanted our assessment procedures to relate to the categories in the locally standardised middle school report forms.

(Gladstone I/V 1998:1)

Towards these ends Bishop Fitzgerald School introduced standardised tests for all year groups in 1995 in conjunction with the Department of Education. These took the form of the NFER 'Progress in English' tests and they are still in use today. Gladstone used the results of these tests as a means of evaluating the school-devised examinations through a comparison of results. The school tests were modified as a consequence and brought more directly into line with the English Orders (Gladstone I/V 1998:1).

In essence, testing at Bishop Fitzgerald School is carried out for each of the three attainment targets. For 'speaking and listening' the 'Oracy' course is used and though most classes also record the results of individual talks by pupils these do not form part of the formal assessment in this attainment target. One problem with using 'Oracy'

for this form of testing is that the criteria for the award of marks, and indeed the possible number of marks to be awarded, varies from year to year. It is not easy for parents to compare the results of their children, therefore, as they progress through the school. On the more positive side, the course tests 'speaking' and 'listening' separately so a clear picture emerges regarding the strengths and weaknesses of individuals. Furthermore, the 'speaking' exercises involve students in activities across the range advocated in the Key Stage 2 programme of study, with the only notable omission being the requirement to write and perform scripted drama. Other than that, the children are required to speak to the group, to form part of discussions and to improvise and participate in role-play situations.

As has already been seen in Chapter 9:2, not all the teachers adhere to the marking scheme for the 'speaking' elements of 'Oracy'; and whereas Joey Britto reported that as Head of Language he received results from the year co-ordinators (Britto I/V 1998:3), this practice has been discontinued. It can be argued, therefore, that the procedures for assessment for this attainment target would benefit from a more systematic approach.

In 'reading', the use throughout the school since 1995 of the NFER 'Progress in English' standardised tests, provide a helpful reference point. The marks achieved by pupils are not only comparable from year to year, but provide the potential for more widespread monitoring to be carried out by the Department of Education. At present, a number of middle schools in Gibraltar use these tests. Since the territory is so small, and only seven middle schools exist on the Rock, it might be considered desirable if the Department of Education were to require all the schools to sit these examinations. The results would then provide much valuable data on strengths and weaknesses of

individual schools that could be very detailed, given that the tests themselves are diagnostic in nature.

It is interesting to note that the widespread use of these tests at Bishop Fitzgerald School followed anxiety expressed by teachers regarding the purposes of assessment. Britto explained these concerns in the following terms:

Children who on assessment were found to be underachieving tended to be dropped one ability group as a way of addressing the problem. The teaching in the groups did not really change as a result of assessment.

(Britto I/V 1998:4)

Britto explained that the situation led to calls by a number of teachers at Bishop Fitzgerald School for the introduction of diagnostic tests which could be followed by teaching to correct identified areas of weakness (Britto I/V 1998:4). The NFER tests are divided into sections that test understanding in reading, as well as various other linguistic skills using cloze procedure, multiple choice and a number of short passages. They are accompanied by copious teacher notes explaining exactly what each question tests and can therefore be used to meet the needs expressed by the teachers for diagnostic tests. Additionally, since the examinations are standardised, they allow for adjustments to be made for the age of pupils in years and completed months. Given that 100 can be considered an 'average' mark, the results which the school obtains from these tests readily translates to a tick in the end of year report, which uses the same format as for first schools as was described in Chapter 6:6.

The school combines the use of these tests with its own more traditional papers, which rely more heavily on complete answers to comprehension questions and also include sections to test the ability of children to write grammatically correct sentences. The internal tests

have normally been given to the students before Christmas in any given year, with the NFER tests being used in the summer term. This procedure was reversed in the 1997/98 academic year, however, since it was felt that better use could be made of the diagnostic properties of the NFER tests if they were given to the pupils earlier in the year.

Separate procedures are in place at Bishop Fitzgerald School specifically for the testing of creative writing, even though other features of writing are clearly assessed in the above arrangements for 'reading'. The creative writing tests date back to the 1992 syllabus when George Parody was Head of Language, but a significant modification was carried out by Joey Britto in 1994 when he introduced a marking scheme based upon that used for the UK SATs. Britto's motivation in doing this was a desire to relate assessment once more to everyday classroom practice and to create the conditions that would encourage the pupils to progress by exposing specific areas of weakness:

It was important to provide a marking scheme which included the skills the teachers needed to look for. This hopefully helped the teachers to focus their lessons on these features.

(Britto I/V 1998:2)

The marking scheme comprises a six-page document. The first two pages issue instructions to teachers for recording the marks they award. They also list two titles per term for each of the four years in the school. In years 4 and 5, the titles require straightforward narrative responses, but the range of writing is expanded for years 6 and 7, with pupils given the choice of writing letters of explanation or complaint to a number of people (Bishop Fitzgerald Creative Writing Marking Scheme 1994:1-2).

The areas for which marks are to be awarded are detailed over two pages and are subdivided under the headings of 'grammar', 'style' and 'purpose and organisation'. The instructions for teachers are detailed

and clear and are linked to a series of levels that range from 1-6. The scheme does not indicate, however, if these are national curriculum levels. The following extract from the 'grammar' section is indicative of the detailed guidance provided for teachers:

Level 5

Increased effectiveness in writing skills is evident when:

- on the first full page of writing there are no more than two lapses in the punctuation of sentences or in the correct use of commas in the introduction and conclusion of direct speech;
- punctuation is used to convey the differences in character 'voices' when using dialogue;
- at least two thirds of all punctuation in direct speech is correctly used;
- words with complex regular patterns are usually correctly spelt.

5 marks

(Bishop Fitzgerald Creative Writing Marking Scheme 1994:3)

At the end of this section of the marking scheme there are guidelines provided which relate the marks awarded to the categories contained in the end-of-year reports. A mark within the range of 6-12 would be considered 'average' for a year 5 child, whereas by year 6 the 'average' pupil is expected to achieve between 9-16 marks. These indicators are of considerable practical use since they provide a point of reference for teachers and promote standardisation in marking and reporting which will ultimately benefit the pupils. The guidelines also encourage continuity, since they are subdivided by year, indicating the degrees by which the children might be expected to advance through the school (Bishop Fitzgerald Creative Writing Marking Scheme 1994:4).

The final page of the scheme comprises a summary of the criteria for awarding marks where the three areas of 'grammar', 'style' and 'purpose and organisation' are placed side by side. This allows the

teacher to gain an overview of the merit of the piece being marked and to be as accurate as possible in the assessment (Bishop Fitzgerald Creative Writing Marking Scheme 1994:5).

In addition to the above assessment procedures, Bishop Fitzgerald School is required by the Department of Education to set an examination for the year 7 pupils in the weeks prior to their move from middle to secondary education. This is primarily to facilitate continuity. The NFER DE test is used for this purpose and this comprises a reading examination which is similar in nature to the 'Progress in English' examinations conducted throughout the school. All the middle schools in Gibraltar must use this test and this initiative allows for the results of individual schools to be compared. The Department of Education, however, does not publish details of the results obtained by individual schools, though a Gibraltar average figure is provided which allows each school to measure its performance against a local yardstick. In 1998 the middle school average was 99, whereas Bishop Fitzgerald School performed slightly better than this achieving a mark of 99.3.¹ This is an improvement on the 1997 figures where Bishop Fitzgerald scored 97 against the Gibraltar mean of 98. These are the sole figures available, since the system has only been in place for two years. Whereas the results can be influenced by many factors such as the catchment area of pupils or the abilities of the students in a given year, useful data is nevertheless gathered. Over time, patterns can become apparent and in the absence of the widespread use of SATs, some feedback can be provided to schools which are normally outside the ambit of public examinations.

¹ Data provided by the Department of Education, Gibraltar.

9:6 SATs

The point has been made in Chapter 5:5 that the use of SATs is not compulsory in Gibraltar. This study has already examined how St Paul's First School embraced the benefits they provide as a diagnostic tool and has therefore voluntarily piloted their usage. The SATs are not used at Bishop Fitzgerald School at present, though it seems likely that they might be in the immediate future. The headteacher, Antonia Gladstone, recognises the role these tests can play in improving the teaching that takes place:

I would like to have them (SATs) implemented, but need the co-operation of the staff for this. I should point out that I feel they would be useful only as a diagnostic tool and I am against publishing results or using them to compile league tables.

(Gladstone I/V 1998:5)

This statement is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it states categorically that the purpose of using the SATs would be to improve the standards of teaching and not to install a vehicle of accountability of teachers. Secondly, this is reiterated by the recognition that the co-operation of the teachers is required for the system to work. These two factors make the possible introduction of SATs at Bishop Fitzgerald School more likely to be acceptable to all concerned and less likely to prove controversial.

9:7 Monitoring

One area of English teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald School that has clearly proved problematic has been that of monitoring what is being taught. It can be argued that checking on what occurs in the classroom

is all the more necessary, given the lack of an updated syllabus at the school. The headteacher is clear as to the importance of carrying this out since she argues that the process allows teachers who are doing a good job to feel that their efforts are being recognised and appreciated. Furthermore, she argues that it increases the chances of all children receiving 'a fair deal' (Gladstone I/V 1998:6). The problem experienced at Bishop Fitzgerald School, however, is that the headteacher claims to be the only person prepared to carry out this function when she feels it should also be a proper role for the Head of Language:

Put simply, staff just don't want to monitor one another. Last year, for example, the heads of language and mathematics were given time to monitor but invariably they ended up providing support to teachers rather than evaluating their performance. Most of the monitoring is therefore carried out by me.

(Gladstone I/V 1998:6)

Joey Britto, Head of Language when the above exercise was carried out, claimed monitoring other teachers was a difficult thing to do because many were uncomfortable at having adults in the class with them. As a consequence, much of the monitoring that he performed was via an examination of the teachers' records of work which did not necessarily reflect adequately what was occurring in the classrooms (Britto I/V 1998:3). It can be argued, nevertheless, that the Head of Language should be in a more informed position to enable him to monitor the conduct of English lessons than the headteacher and that, for this reason, he should play a more prominent role. That this has not happened is evident from this overview of the situation provided by Joey Britto:

The monitoring that was carried out was largely formal assessment of pupils' progress as opposed to looking at what teaching was actually taking place.

(Britto I/V 1998:4)

In practice, the significance of the fact that Bishop Fitzgerald School's English syllabus is totally out of date should not be underestimated. It can be maintained that if the English curriculum were to be better defined for teachers through the production of an updated syllabus, then the Head of Language would have a valid yardstick against which to measure the performance of individual teachers. As things stand at present, it would be very difficult to question what a teacher is doing in the class when there is no official school document by which to judge it.

9:8 Reporting

Bishop Fitzgerald School is required to use the standardised report forms produced for first and middle schools by the National Curriculum Working Group for English and described in Chapter 6:6. There were mixed opinions on the degree of change required of teachers when the current report format was introduced in 1993. Nine of the fourteen teachers of English had started their careers before this date. Of these, 5 teachers (56%), claimed to have had to make major adjustments to their style of reporting. The remaining 4 teachers (44%), felt the changes required of them had been minimal (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:11). Significantly, three of the five teachers who had felt obliged to change their manner of reporting singled out as the major variation a perceived need to be positive in the comments they wrote about each pupil. One felt that this factor made the reports unbalanced, whereas a

second teacher claimed the system had already led to difficulties with parents:

I have to be positive even with underachievers. This can lead to confusion. Some parents do not always get the message and feel their children are doing better than they are. This has led to some problems in the past.

(Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:11)

In practice, the manner of compilation of these reports would benefit from clearer guidance from the NCWG for English since what has happened in the absence of this is that individual schools have decided upon their own interpretation of the report format. This, in effect, somewhat negates the benefits of using a common format for all first and middle schools in Gibraltar. Chapter 6:6 described how St Paul's First School held meetings and produced guidelines for teachers at the school to adopt a standardised approach to reporting. The same was the case at Bishop Fitzgerald School, though the final result saw significant differences in the criteria decided upon for filling in the forms. One major change can be seen in the attainment tick-boxes in which teachers decide on a rating ranging from 'very good' to 'finds great difficulty' for each of the areas of speaking and listening, reading, writing, handwriting and spelling. Whereas at St Paul's the teachers base these ticks on the overall performance of the child through the year, a very different system is implemented at Bishop Fitzgerald School. There it is the pupils' performances in the end of year examinations that determine where the ticks will go. The overall standards achieved by each pupil are outlined in the 'written comments' section of the report. The completed reports are identical in appearance, yet it is clear that the information included varies quite significantly. This example indicates how the report format can be confusing for parents, particularly bearing

in mind that most pupils at St Paul's School continue their education at Bishop Fitzgerald School.

The desirability for clearer guidelines from the NCWG for English is apparent from the above, but nevertheless it is laudable that the schools in this study have made efforts at standardisation, if only within their own institutions. At Bishop Fitzgerald School these guidelines are very thorough and were the consequence of in-service discussion of the issues that helped ensure ownership of the process among the teachers at the school. Written notes are provided for each part of the process. These clarify what the school means by what would otherwise be such vague terms as 'good' or 'satisfactory'. The following extract on 'behaviour in class' is representative of the detailed guidance provided:

<u>Behaviour in class</u>	
Very good	is always on task
Good	is usually on task
Satisfactory	needs supervision to be kept on task
Unsatisfactory	is never on task

(Bishop Fitzgerald School, Gibraltar, Unpublished Typescript 1995:1)

Perhaps the one criticism that might be levelled at this process is that parents do not receive a copy of the teacher's guidelines with their children's reports. This means that whereas there will certainly be consistency among the teachers at Bishop Fitzgerald School in completing the reports, the parents who read them are in effect unaware of what interpretation the school has given to certain terms, since they have not been informed.

This issue apart, it seems likely that the procedures for reporting at the school achieve the stated aims of the headteacher - to provide continuity in the information provided as children progress through

Bishop Fitzgerald, and to ensure a level of consistency over the years (Gladstone I/V 1998:5).

9:9 Special needs

In order to describe as full a picture as possible of English teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald School, the policy for dealing with those students with defined 'special needs' merits examination. This is the case even though, strictly speaking, 'special needs' do not fall within the parameters of this research that deals primarily with mainstream provision.

Development of this area has possibly been somewhat hampered by the fact that no special needs co-ordinator existed at Bishop Fitzgerald School before September 1998. Whereas a new post has just been advertised and filled, responsibility for 'special needs' has traditionally been the responsibility of the school's deputy-headteacher. Ernest Povedano, the current deputy-headteacher, feels that he will continue to play a prominent role in this area given that the new co-ordinator post is a relatively junior one commanding a salary of just main professional grade (MPG) +1 scale point (Povedano I/V 1998:1).

From Easter 1998, the school introduced a system for 'special needs' provision based on the 1994 UK Code of Practice. This is similar to that in place at St Paul's First School, described in Chapter 6:7. In essence, it consists of a staged response to 'special needs' which involves identifying particular problems and attempting to solve these within the mainstream via a personal programme, drawn up by the 'special needs' co-ordinator in conjunction with the classroom teacher. If this fails, the pupil can be withdrawn from classes for extra help and after that outside agencies, such as the educational psychologist or social

services, are involved. Ultimately, the system could lead to a pupil with very severe problems being statemented.

Those students identified as likely to benefit from being withdrawn receive all their English tuition during the week in a much smaller group than would be possible in the mainstream. In the 1997/98 academic year, seven pupils were withdrawn for English from year 4, twelve from year 5, twelve from year 6 and five from year 7 (Povedano I/V 1998:1). The small teacher-pupil ratio means that the possibilities for advancement of these children are much improved. Furthermore, the school is very conscious of the desirability of providing these children with individual attention, as can be gauged from the following comment from the deputy-headteacher:

There is no limit placed on the numbers that can be withdrawn, but in practice I find that having too many students negates the purpose of the exercise since you cannot dedicate the attention to individuals that they need.

(Povedano I/V 1998:1-2)

Povedano feels that eight pupils is the desirable maximum for a 'special needs' class, though this figure occasionally has to be surpassed when the needs of children in a particular year require it (Povedano I/V 1998:2). At present two teachers provide the tuition in this area. This could be considered advantageous in so far as it improves the chances for continuity in the subject-matter and also allows the pupils concerned to build a relationship with the person teaching them. It can be argued that this is an important consideration given the low self-esteem often experienced by children who are withdrawn from mainstream classes. These individuals are more likely to work better for a teacher who has managed to gain their confidence.

At Bishop Fitzgerald School the decision on which children require extra help away from the mainstream is based upon a

combination of the pupil records and the results of a number of tests. In year 4, the school relies on the first school teachers' recommendations and the results of the Young's reading test which the pupils sit in the months prior to their arrival at Bishop Fitzgerald. During the first few weeks of middle school, however, the children are given an NFER non-verbal IQ test as well as the 'Daniel and Daick's' test that provides a reading age for the children. These examinations serve to confirm or otherwise, the first school diagnosis (Povedano I/V 1998:1). For the remaining years, the students who are withdrawn tend to be the same ones. Movement back to the mainstream is possible, but since these are children with general difficulties and not those with problems in some particular aspect of the subject, they normally remain withdrawn throughout their time at the school (Povedano I/V 1998:2).

Overall, it can be argued that Bishop Fitzgerald School is providing considerable resources to cater for those students with 'special needs'. Though the lack, until very recently, of a special needs co-ordinator could be interpreted by some as indicating this area was given a low priority by the school administration, this is clearly not the case. In real terms, significant teacher time is already allotted to 'special needs' and the situation can only improve with the appointment of a co-ordinator to direct provision.

9:10 Chapter overview

The 'Oracy' programme is still currently used to cover the national curriculum requirements in speaking and listening. However, teachers are not using this course in the manner directed in the English syllabus. Particularly wide discrepancies exist in the scales used for marking

Oracy work that can prove very confusing to pupils as they progress through the school.

Though Ginn still officially forms the core for language provision at Bishop Fitzgerald, its privileged position has increasingly been undermined since George Parody's departure from the school. His successor introduced wider reading strategies that are used to varying degrees throughout the school. The result is that there exists no standardised approach to the teaching of reading at the school today. Furthermore, when using Ginn, some teachers are failing to divide their classes into small groups as envisaged by the syllabus. This raises question marks over the suitability of these materials for whole-class teaching. There is also no evidence of the full range of reading required by the English Orders, being covered.

Many new course books for writing have been introduced at the school since 1993. Their use appears haphazard, nevertheless, and no provision is made to ensure the range of activities stipulated by the national curriculum, is taught. The grading of work is not standardised and a large variety of different methods are in use.

Assessment is used to draw classes together and tests often appear to perform the traditional role of a syllabus in directing the teaching that takes place. The NFER *Progress in English* standardised tests are used with each year at Bishop Fitzgerald School. They are valued for their diagnostic features and provide a focus for the teaching that takes place. There is also regular testing of creative writing, with a standardised marking scheme drawn up along the lines of that used in England and Wales for marking the SATs.

Little monitoring of the English provision is carried out. This is confined to a limited effort by the headteacher. In reporting, the school follows the guidelines provided by the Gibraltar Department of Education. A school interpretation of these guidelines has been arrived

at so there is consistency in the manner that teachers report on the pupils at the school.

Special Needs provision is based upon the UK 1994 Code of Practice but significantly larger numbers of pupils are withdrawn, and for longer periods, than was the case at St Paul's School.

This study will now consider the conclusions that can be drawn from the manner of implementation of the English Orders at Bishop Fitzgerald School. Since this researcher is the current incumbent of the Head of Language post, a short section has been added which outlines a vision for the future development of language provision at the school.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN FROM LANGUAGE PROVISION AT BISHOP FITZGERALD MIDDLE SCHOOL, GIBRALTAR

10:1 The Bishop Fitzgerald English teaching inspection, 1994

An inspection of the teaching of English at Bishop Fitzgerald School was carried out by the Gibraltar Department of Education in 1994 as had been the case for St Paul's School. The investigating team comprised the then General Education Advisor and his assistant. Their overall aim was to provide the government with advice on the degree of implementation of the national curriculum (Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection Report 1994:2). The research involved 37 hours of lesson observation together with a series of interviews with school personnel and an inspection of school syllabuses and policy documents. Given that the two inspectors were required to examine provision in the three core subjects at all the schools in Gibraltar in the space of a few months, they limited their observations to classes in years 4 and 7. The results they obtained are nevertheless interesting, since they reflect the situation at the school immediately prior to the Dearing review of the English curriculum. This makes it possible to establish the changes put in place at Bishop Fitzgerald School as a consequence of that review.

10:2 Speaking and listening

One area that the inspectors singled out for comment was the school's approach to 'speaking and listening'. Whilst acknowledging that they had observed some instances of very good work in this field, they

nevertheless felt that it could be given greater prominence in English lessons at Bishop Fitzgerald School:

In many situations where the work suited discussion among the children in groups, it was done as individual, quiet work... In general, there was an over-emphasis on quiet classrooms.

(Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection Report 1994:5)

The above confirmed the observations of the Head of Language at the school, Joey Britto, who felt 'speaking and listening' was not given a very high priority in lessons (Britto I/V 1998:1). The evidence collected for this research would suggest that the situation has probably not changed significantly between 1994-1998. Of the nine teachers of English at the school who were on the staff before the advent of the national curriculum, only two (22%) claimed to cover more oral work now than they did in the 1980s (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:1-2). Furthermore, a number of teachers were found not to be fulfilling even the minimum requirements for 'oral assessment', as stipulated in the school's English syllabus.

Two of the teachers in year 4 did not get their pupils to perform the individual talks to their class as required. In year 5, two teachers did not carry out the 'speaking' activities contained within the 'Oracy' programme. A third teacher in this year did not conduct any form of oral assessment of any kind during one of the terms. One of the year 6 teachers also omitted the speaking elements of 'Oracy' and the same was the case with one of the year 7 teachers (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:4-6). It is interesting to note that the 1994 inspection recommended that the 'Oracy' programme be developed further by examining the speaking objective in some detail (Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection Report 1994:5). The evidence would suggest that this has not happened. Furthermore, it should be

considered that the above situation reflects the response to formal assessment in 'speaking and listening' at Bishop Fitzgerald School. If some of the teachers did not consider it an important enough area to assess systematically as required by the English syllabus, then it is likely that this component of the language curriculum would receive a low priority in everyday lessons when placed alongside 'reading' and 'writing'.

10:3 Drama

The 1994 inspection report recommended that drama be given proper emphasis in any new scheme of work, noting that George Parody had identified this area as requiring attention in the 1992 English syllabus (Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection Report 1994:5). No indications have been found to suggest that any work has been done in introducing elements of drama in the English curriculum at Bishop Fitzgerald School. Besides, the evidence presented above suggests the need to raise the profile of 'speaking' at the school. It could be contended that drama provides the ideal vehicle for bringing this about. This view was endorsed by Professor George Cox in 1989 when, in presenting proposals for the English Orders, he drew attention to the ability of drama to provide varied contexts for language work:

Drama quickly reveals to children the effectiveness of language, building up their language resources and allowing them to develop an awareness of a whole range of linguistic choices and registers.

(DES 1989:21)

It is a fact that drama can encompass the widest forms of oral communication, including gesture and facial expression, as well as the

use of the voice. Owing to the practical nature of the subject, it emphasises usage and provides opportunities for pupils to practise 'speaking' in a wide range of situations and for different purposes. It could therefore be argued that it has a role to play at Bishop Fitzgerald School in developing the promotion of 'speaking' to the desired level. Introducing drama to the school's language curriculum might therefore be considered overdue and a priority once the English syllabus is updated.

10:4 Reading

The 1994 inspection report noted that the time allotted to reading at Bishop Fitzgerald School was irregular and varied a great deal as teachers tended to fit the activity in around other tasks. They therefore recommended that firmer guidelines should be included in the English syllabus, detailing how often reading with the different ability groups should take place (Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection report 1994:5). This research has already noted that the English syllabus has not been up-dated since 1992 and the wider implications of this will be discussed later in this chapter. It is clear, however, that this recommendation of the inspectors was ignored. The consequence of this action is that the amounts of reading done by individual classes at Bishop Fitzgerald School today continues to vary a great deal, depending on the teachers involved. A detailed examination of the differences in approach to reading and the time dedicated to this activity has already been described in Chapter 9:3. It should be noted, however, that the prominent position of the Ginn 360 reading scheme has been slowly and systematically undermined since Joey Britto took over as Head of Language at Bishop Fitzgerald School in 1993 (Britto I/V

1998:2). As a result, Ginn activity only accounts for one out of every five English sessions at the school today. Since the English syllabus has still not been updated, it can be argued that it is even less useful today in guiding the teaching of reading than it was in 1994, when the use of Ginn was more widespread.

No evidence exists that the range of media in reading at Bishop Fitzgerald School has been widened to encompass the use of information technology (IT) or the use of newspapers as advocated in the English Orders document (DFE 1995:11). Nor indeed is there any indication of the children being exposed to varied forms of writing other than those contained in the Ginn reading course. Educationist Florence Davies argues that all pupils should be exposed to the full range of genres because their reading in the national curriculum will then meet a number of 'key objectives' which she defines in the following terms:

To ensure that all pupils have the opportunity, at every stage of their schooling, to read the genres which satisfy their own individual and personal needs; and to ensure that all pupils are also introduced, progressively through their schooling, to a wider range of genres than they would if relying on their own selections.

(Davies 1990:63)

The benefits of widening the student's horizons in reading are readily apparent, since it is unlikely, in the case of many individuals, that they will be exposed to this range of genres once they leave school. The approach nevertheless implies a systematic programme which will deliver the objectives as the child advances through the education system. It seems clear that for pupils at Bishop Fitzgerald School to aspire to this breadth of reading, a much better defined programme will need to be put in place and formalised through a policy statement in the

English syllabus. The move by Britto away from using Ginn to introducing alternative reading material through the introduction of class libraries (Britto I/V 1998:1) can be considered insufficient. Providing a variety of genres for students in the classroom does not necessarily imply that they will be read, particularly if their use is determined by the element of personal choice. It can be argued, therefore, that what is required is a much more structured and defined programme which, taking account of the reading abilities of individuals, will gradually introduce all pupils to as wide a range of genres as is possible.

10:5 Writing

In examining the approach to the teaching of writing at Bishop Fitzgerald School, the 1994 inspection acknowledged that the pupils were being exposed to a variety of writing tasks. They pointed to evidence of good 'traditional practice', whilst calling for an examination of the position writing enjoyed in the language programme in the light of the then current curricular demands (Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection Report 1994:6). It is clear that the inspectors perceived a tendency to depend excessively on published courses that led to the following recommendation:

Care should be taken not to rely exclusively on published schemes since publishing houses do not respond quickly enough to changes in the National Curriculum Orders.

(Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection Report 1994:9)

It is clear that this recommendation was heeded by Joey Britto at the time since he initiated the move away from a Ginn-dominated curriculum and introduced alternative textbooks as described in Chapter

9:4. The problem remained, however, that since this move was not accompanied by the updating of the English syllabus, the subsequent teaching was likely, if anything, to be more disjointed than before. In truth it could be considered that the exclusive use of a published course abdicated responsibility for curricular balance to its authors. Where more than one course was in use at the same time, however, the teacher was faced with the need to select those aspects of each course that he wished to use. This swung back to the individual teacher the balance of responsibility for ensuring the desired course content was taught.

In effect, the whole concept of a national curriculum revolves around the principle of providing a framework which defines the subject content and allows for planned progression. It can be considered a proper role for a school's language department to ensure that the benefits of this framework are enjoyed through the proper planning of course content. This research would contend that this is only possible through the medium of a relevant, practical and up-to-date syllabus.

10:6 The English syllabus

Ironically, perhaps, seven of the eight teachers of English at Bishop Fitzgerald School (88%) commenting on what they liked in the national curriculum, singled out that it provided a framework to follow. This, they maintained, afforded greater consistency to their English teaching (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:12). It would appear from this research that, in reality, the benefits of this framework are being lost in the absence of a properly structured syllabus that will translate the English Orders into good classroom practice. The fact that eight of the fourteen English teachers (57%) consider the school's English syllabus

'of no practical use' underlines the extent of the problem (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:2). In truth, the syllabus is playing a very minor role in determining how English is taught at Bishop Fitzgerald School. This is a major problem underlined by the fact that both the former Heads of Language, George Parody and Joey Britto, are in agreement on the importance of a syllabus to ensure progression (Parody I/V 1998:5; Britto I/V 1998:5).

A number of factors combine at Bishop Fitzgerald School that, it can be argued, make the updating of the language syllabus an absolute priority. To begin with, 46% of the teachers of English have not read the English Orders and, of those that have, 25% did so prior to the Dearing Review (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:1). In the light of this, the language syllabus takes on greater significance since it constitutes a link between the Orders document and actual practice in the classroom. Given the large turnover of staff at the school since 1992, 36% of the English teachers were not even aware that a syllabus exists (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:2). Furthermore, the syllabus was last updated in 1992 and does not consequently reflect the current position of English teaching in the national curriculum. It can therefore be said to be inadequate to meet the needs of the school in 1998.

The importance of a syllabus, and what this document should comprise, had already been alluded to by the Department of Education inspectors in 1994. They termed it 'an essential document' and stated that, in embracing the requirements of the key stages it covered, whilst reflecting the principles of school policy, the syllabus should be concerned with '...details of knowledge, skills and processes to be taught; with methodology, differentiation, continuity and progression' (Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection Report 1994:3).

The inspectors went on to highlight in detail twelve elements that they felt were essential to a syllabus and noted that in 1994 the Bishop Fitzgerald English syllabus fell short of these requirements. They therefore affirmed that the list should be used to make modifications once the Dearing recommendations were published (Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection Report 1994:3).

Three years after Dearing, the syllabus has still not been updated and if it was considered to be inadequate by the inspectors in 1994, it is likely to be even more so today.

10:7 Assessment

In his interim report, *The National Tests and Teacher Assessment*, Sir Ron Dearing made the following comment on the proper role of teacher assessment stating that it lies:

...at the heart of the learning process in that new learning must be matched to what a pupil already knows and can do. It is the teacher in his/her classroom who, day in and day out, undertakes this vitally important task of formative assessment.

(Dearing 1993:8)

This statement implies two important points. Firstly, it defines assessment in terms of a tool that is part of a wider process of structured learning. This being the case, assessment will also always be driven by what is taught and will not have its own independent identity.

This philosophy has significant implications for assessment at Bishop Fitzgerald School. It has already been seen how the language curriculum has not been properly defined and that considerable differences in interpretation of the English Orders exist among the teachers at the school. This raises the issue of how the common

assessment procedures currently in place can adequately test the different learning experiences of the various classes. This study has already indicated how the headteacher considers that the testing procedures have a significant influence in determining what is taught (Gladstone I/V 1998:1). The degree of truth behind this assertion cannot be quantified, but if this is indeed the case, then the language curriculum can be seen to be defined in very narrow terms. To have classroom practice dictated by a limited number of assessment procedures is to lose the potential breadth contained in the English Orders. Furthermore, it has been seen that in certain areas, the testing arrangements tend to be identical from year to year. This is the case with the speeches pupils deliver to the class and with the creative writing tests, even though different criteria are used for grading these through the school. The tests in place at Bishop Fitzgerald School today are unlikely, therefore, to ensure progression in the teaching if used to direct the curriculum.

A positive element of the testing procedures at Bishop Fitzgerald, nevertheless, is that the three attainment targets are assessed separately. It could be argued that until such time as the English curriculum is better defined and the syllabus updated, it will not be possible to introduce adequate testing procedures. Only then will a coherent programme of study be in place that will clearly define progression in the subject. That would then be the time to devise adequate ways of testing for pupils' progress.

It should be recalled that Bishop Fitzgerald School also uses standardised tests, particularly the 'Progress in English' examinations which are given to each year in the school. A strong case exists for the continuance of this arrangement. The tests are diagnostic and provide information that can lead to teaching that more accurately targets areas of weakness in particular classes. Additionally, they provide a common

yardstick against which to measure the performance of year groups and of individuals against the school norm. Furthermore, if the Department of Education were to require all middle schools in Gibraltar to use these tests, more valuable data could be collected allowing the school to gauge its performance relative to the Gibraltar average. It could be considered important that the tests be supplemented by additional procedures which assess the full range of the language curriculum, once this has been established at school level. In this way a safeguard would exist against the 'Progress in English' tests directing what is taught at Bishop Fitzgerald School.

It should be noted that the 1994 inspection recommended the appointment of the deputy-headteacher as a whole-school assessment co-ordinator. The responsibilities of this role were defined as ensuring

...that assessment procedures fit the purpose for which they are intended, that the assessments are valid and reliable and that the teachers are conversant with modern approaches to assessment.

(Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School Inspection report 1994:8)

This recommendation was not implemented, but it could be argued that the relevance of a senior staff member carrying out this role today is as great as ever. At a time when a major overhaul of the language curriculum is imminent, and when assessment procedures in English will need to be revisited in the light of this initiative, the assessment co-ordinator could provide a safeguard against improper testing procedures being introduced. In addition, since this person would be detached from the process of developing the syllabus and the testing programmes, he would be in a better position to provide dispassionate advice and guidance.

10:8 The future development of the language department at Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School, Gibraltar

Since this researcher is the current incumbent of the Head of Language post at Bishop Fitzgerald School, he is clearly in a position in which he can influence future changes in the English curriculum. In the interests of wholeness, this section of the thesis examines a view for the immediate development of the school's language department.

It is evident from the opinions expressed in Chapters 8 and 9 that the updating of the English syllabus to bring it more into line with the post-Dearing English Orders is considered an absolute priority. It can be argued that any attempts to tackle other issues like assessment, curricular balance or monitoring, would be impractical without first properly defining what should be taught at each stage at Bishop Fitzgerald School. It is considered of the utmost importance, notwithstanding this, to involve all the teachers in the elaboration of the new syllabus. This will serve to make the teachers more aware of the content of the finished article. In giving them an overview of the English provision at the school, they will be able to relate how the activities in their classrooms tie in to the wider whole-school picture of English teaching. The process should also secure the desirable element of ownership of the syllabus that will improve the chances for successful implementation.

The school's administration has agreed that two days of in-service training in November 1998 will be dedicated to the purpose of updating the English syllabus. Activities during these days will be directed by the Head of Language. In preparation for these sessions, the Head of Language will break down the requirements of the English Orders into the separate attainment targets, covering each year at the school individually. Care will be taken to allow for the full range of ability in

the student population. In this way the Head of Language will seek to tackle the apparent lack of familiarity of many teachers regarding the content of the English Orders which was apparent in Chapter 8:12. With a breakdown of the requirements in front of them, and armed with the knowledge of the resources at their disposal, the teachers in each year will be required to draw up detailed programmes of study to cover the necessary content. The whole process will be monitored by the Head of Language.

At the same time a questionnaire will be distributed among the teachers to sound out opinions on preferred systems for grading, recording marks and general record keeping. This process of consultation will be followed by the issuing of a policy statement which will be included in the syllabus and which all teachers will then be required to follow.

It is clear that this initiative will not only bring English teaching at Bishop Fitzgerald School more into line with the English Orders, but will also allow for better continuity from year to year. Monitoring what is taught will also be easier to accomplish, since the syllabus will provide a clear model against which to measure what is being taught in each classroom.

It is not considered advisable to tackle too many issues at one time since teachers will need a period to internalise the required changes that will follow implementation of the new syllabus. For this reason, though it is considered that assessment, among other topics, also needs to be revisited, it is not proposed to do this in the 1998/99 academic year.

10:9 Chapter overview

A 1994 inspection of the core subjects at Bishop Fitzgerald School noted that 'speaking and listening' needed to be given greater prominence in English lessons. The findings of his study indicate that the situation has probably not changed significantly since then. A number of teachers are not even meeting the minimum requirements for oral assessment as stipulated in the school's English syllabus. Additionally no work has been done to introduce elements of drama into language teaching, despite a recommendation to that effect in the 1994 inspection. Drama can be considered a useful vehicle with which to raise the profile of 'speaking and listening'.

The degree of prominence given to the teaching of reading at the school varies a great deal from teacher to teacher. It is noted that the central role the Ginn 360 reading scheme enjoyed in the past has been undermined. Ginn activity today accounts for only one out of every five English lessons. There is also no evidence of a widening of the range of materials used for reading to incorporate newspapers and make use of information technology.

Though new course books were introduced which significantly changed the way writing is tackled at Bishop Fitzgerald School, the situation has never been formalised through an updating of the English syllabus. As a consequence English provision at the school is very disjointed with individual teachers deciding for themselves what should be taught and to what extent. The English syllabus is out-of-date and a majority of the teachers at the school consider it of no practical use in guiding the language curriculum. The syllabus does not reflect the current requirements of the English Orders and updating it should be considered a priority.

Some of the assessment procedures, particularly in 'speaking and listening' discourage progression. Additionally, the tendency for tests to determine classroom practice could inhibit delivery of the potential breadth of the English Orders. More positively, each attainment target is assessed separately and the widespread use of standardised tests allows for the identification of areas of weakness.

As the current Head of Language at Bishop Fitzgerald School, this researcher considers the updating of the English syllabus to be the top priority in a bid to direct the development of the English provision at the school. This would serve to provide a framework that would improve standardisation and promote curricular balance. In compiling this new syllabus, the active involvement of all English teachers at the school is considered essential.

This study will now consider the implementation of national curriculum English in a third Gibraltar school, Bayside Comprehensive. The following chapter will examine the characteristics of this school and provide some recent historical perspective to enable a better understanding of the current situation that will be described in subsequent chapters.

SECTION D: BAYSIDE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 11

ENGLISH AT BAYSIDE SCHOOL: BACKGROUND AND RECENT HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

11:1 The origins of Bayside School

Bayside School came into being in 1972. It owes its existence to a political decision to adopt 'comprehensive education' in Gibraltar following the publication of the Secondary Education Report (1965). This report had been commissioned by the Department of Education to recommend on the form secondary education on the Rock should take. In practical terms, three schools, the Gibraltar Grammar School, St Jago's Secondary Modern School, and Lourdes Secondary Modern School, were amalgamated to become the sole secondary boys' school in Gibraltar. Named Bayside because of its location, the school provided for the first time in Gibraltar, the possibility of educating under the same roof, secondary pupils of all abilities.

Social developments, linked particularly to the changing job scenario, have meant fluctuations in the number of pupils attending Bayside School. In recent years, the figure has hovered around the 900 pupil mark. Being the only boys' secondary school, with the exception of the tiny private Jewish school referred to earlier, Bayside has the peculiar burden of responsibility for the education of the entire male population of Gibraltar. For this reason, it can be argued that an effective school is crucial for the future well-being of the community.

The general school philosophy places great importance on external examination results, as these represent a tangible manner in which the school can be held accountable by the community it serves. This

attitude predates the national curriculum, as can be seen from official school documents that will be discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, the importance of the influence of the GCSE examining boards to general implementation of the English Orders at Bayside School was heightened by the position adopted by the Gibraltar Director of Education in 1989. As described in Chapter 2:3, GCSE examination requirements were the only exception made regarding a decision to carry out all changes pertaining to national curriculum implementation one year behind England and Wales. This decision served to underline the central importance of public examinations in Bayside School's manner of introducing the national curriculum. The subsequent development of the influence of the GCSE examination on the approach to delivery of the English Orders at Bayside School will be discussed in the following chapters.

11:2 The staff at Bayside School

Bayside School has a teaching complement of 64 staff, of whom 10 are involved in the teaching of English. Significantly, though, only the current head of the English Department, Martin Gonzalez, has a full English time-table. All the others spend part of their week involved in teaching in other subject areas. The English teaching staff is in the main well qualified, with eight of the ten having pursued their own studies of English to first degree level. The remaining two had reached 'O' and 'A' level standard respectively (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:1). These latter two teachers played a very minor role in the English Department in the year this research was carried out. Between them, they taught a total of three English classes, all of them in the lower forms. It can be said, therefore, that all the examination groups at Bayside, be it for GCSE or

'A' level, are being taught by staff who hold an appropriate qualification in English.

11:3 Grouping policy in years 8 and 9

The composition of the English groups is decided upon even before the students arrive at Bayside and is the work of a panel of teachers from the school. The importance attached to English is reflected in the composition of the panel which is made up of the heads of the English and mathematics departments, the Special Needs Co-ordinator and the year 8 Year Tutor. Though the national curriculum core subjects in Gibraltar comprise English, mathematics, science and Spanish, the heads of the last two subject areas are not consulted in the grouping process.

The panel considers the interim reports from the middle schools and couples these with any information provided to the Year Tutor, at a personal level, during a series of visits undertaken to all the feeder schools when the boys to be grouped are in the closing stages of year 7. The pupils are divided into two, very broad, ability bands, though certain boys are also referred to the Special Needs Department and exceptionally to the Special Unit. Sufficient flexibility exists in the process, however, to ensure that the needs of each individual in English can be catered for. This is evident since English and mathematics are considered separately for the purposes of banding:

It is possible for a boy to be in an upper band for English and a lower band for mathematics or vice versa. Distribution of pupils into these bands is flexible and we work towards having a larger upper band than lower band so the teacher-pupil ratio is improved for the lower ability children.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:1)

In practice, typical upper bands in year 8 comprise between 27 and 30 boys, whereas the lower bands range between 20 and 23 pupils. The Head of English is empowered to make decisions on the placing of individuals in particular groups, but he does not enjoy the authority to refine the system by introducing more bands. This is dictated by the school administration, since it has major time-tabling implications (Gonzalez I/V 1997:2). As a consequence, the English teaching groups in years 8 and 9 at Bayside School, though not mixed ability, nevertheless contain students of widely differing levels of language development. Catering for a wide range of needs and abilities in the same teaching group constitutes one of the major challenges for the teachers of English at Bayside School.

In deciding in which English band to place a pupil, the panel considers the reading age and the middle school report, as well as any additional information that might be included in the pupil's school record (Gonzalez I/V 1997:2). Interestingly, the current Head of English at Bayside has more faith in the professional judgement of teachers when it comes to describing the achievements in language of individual pupils, than he does in standardised reports. Using subsequent personal knowledge of the pupils, he accepts that the information in the middle school reports is largely accurate. Nevertheless, he feels that the clearest insight into what a student is like is not to be gained from a form, but from the personal comments of the teacher in the middle school:

This, I find, gives the most honest assessment which portrays what a child is like and is more use to me than an elaborate tick-list which then becomes impossible to interpret.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:2)

11:4 The years 8 and 9 English syllabus, 1989

In looking at the English syllabus for years 8 and 9, it is important to consider how it was drawn up and by whom. Of necessity, any syllabus must be a dynamic document, and this is particularly so when one considers the multitude of changes in the composition of the English Orders as the process of evolution has continued through the 1990s.

The first major modification of the English syllabuses at Bayside School, which was motivated by the national curriculum, came about in February 1989. It comprised extensive modernisation to incorporate the features of the then proposed English Orders. This work was carried out, during in-service sessions, by all the members of the English Department at Bayside. Prior to this, in September 1988, Kevin Dobson, Head of English at the time, produced a policy document which gave an overview of the proposed changes that would follow the adoption of the national curriculum. This document concentrated specifically on years 8 and 9 and explained the rationale behind the changes and how they related to current practice in the school. The intention was to direct the content of the emerging syllabus since the Head of English was very specific as to what this had to contain:

How different this scheme of work is from that of past years, or how different it may be from any that may be developed in the future (because of the intended changes in the new Education Reform Act and the National Curriculum) is to be found only in the stress that is given to the four modes: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

(Bayside School Unpublished Typescript 1988:1)

The introduction to this policy document also highlighted the concept that learning English is a 'cumulative' process requiring

exposure and practice of its component parts, rather than linear progression (Bayside School Unpublished Typescript 1988:1). It can be said, therefore, that the Head of English at Bayside School was, in 1988, in tune with the thinking that formed the basis of the Cox Curriculum in 1989 which was to be adopted as the English Orders.

The remainder of this policy document went on to highlight in considerable detail what the years 8 and 9 syllabus needed to contain in each of the four listed areas of 'speaking', 'listening', 'reading' and 'writing'. Apparent here, however, was the influence on the lower-school syllabus of the GCSE examinations:

The importance of oral work in the GCSE (by a separate grade being given for it) means that in lower forms a fair proportion of our contact time ought to be devoted to the acquiring of skills in speaking not only to teachers but speaking to peers as well. Since ultimately the pupil will be tested in three situations, practice must be offered in both years 1 and 2.

(Bayside School Unpublished Typescript 1988:1)

The years 1 and 2 referred to in the above quotation were re-named years 8 and 9 following the adoption of the national curriculum. What is significant, however, is that in drawing up the syllabus for the lower school, teachers were being asked to consider the examination requirements of these pupils in later years. Though the national curriculum had yet to be introduced in Gibraltar, official sanction was given to the view that lower school teaching must reflect the future assessment procedures that the students would undergo. In this way, it could be argued, the curriculum at this stage was being driven by its assessment, at least partially, rather than the other way round.

11:5 The legacy of the years 8 and 9 English syllabus, 1989

The effect of this policy is still evident today. Not one of the ten teachers of English at Bayside School, in the year this study was carried out, claimed to base the English teaching in years 8 and 9 exclusively on the national curriculum Orders. Three of them (30%) stated that they based what they taught in the lower school entirely on the GCSE examination syllabuses. Six of the others (60%) claimed to model their teaching on a blend of the GCSE requirements and those of the English Orders. The tenth teacher proved to be the most resistant to change, claiming to rely upon personal experience to decide what needs the lower school boys had in the subject. Furthermore, he professed to teach almost exclusively to this formula. The sole concession this teacher made to national curriculum requirements at this level, was to include work on Shakespeare (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:3).

A possible justification for this practice was offered by the Head of English who stressed the fact that the GCSE examination and the national curriculum are inextricably linked:

GCSE is primarily a formal assessment of the national curriculum at Key Stage 4 in the same way as the SATs are in the earlier stages. The reality of the situation is that national curriculum English activities are so wide that we are really doing them in years 8 and 9 anyway. National curriculum English is all one document from 5 to 16; what we are really talking about is refining skills.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:6)

Whereas the above is certainly true, the timing of the introduction of these skills could certainly be considered important. Progress in the national curriculum is not expected to be linear and pupils need constantly to practise skills and hence become more proficient in their use. Nevertheless, it is the Key Stages that provide a framework for

advancement, so individual pupils can progress to the end of Key Stage 4. By basing teaching at Key Stage 3 on the testing requirements for Key Stage 4, the teachers are in essence abandoning the framework and working back from what is the ultimate goal. Paradoxically, 50% of the Bayside English teachers stated that one of the main advantages of the national curriculum was that it better defined the subject and identified stages for progression (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:10-11). It would appear, from the evidence presented above, that the benefits of the defined structure are being at least partially lost in the lower school at Bayside.

Ironically, the structure of the English Orders can be said to encourage the practice of basing teaching at Key Stage 3 on GCSE assessment procedures. The requirements for Key Stages 3 and 4 are presented together as if there were only the one Key Stage and not two. The only minor distinction is the following stipulation in the attainment target for reading:

In Key Stage 3, as a minimum, pupils should be introduced to works published before 1900, including a play by Shakespeare.

(DFE 1995:20)

Furthermore, the Order document clearly states that the level descriptions apply only as far as the end of Key Stage 3 (DFE 1995:25). They, nevertheless, cater for students achieving an extremely high level of language proficiency, as the following level 7 'writing' description attests. It should be borne in mind that the English Orders also include a level 8, as well as an additional description, above this level, for students of exceptional ability:

Level 7

Pupils' writing is confident and shows appropriate choices of style in a range of forms. In narrative writing, characters and settings are developed and, in non-fiction, ideas are organised and coherent. Grammatical features and vocabulary are accurately and effectively used. Spelling is correct, including that of complex irregular words. Work is legible and attractively presented. Paragraphing and correct punctuation are used to make the sequence of events or ideas coherent and clear to the reader.

(DFE 1995:31)

The introduction to the level descriptions explains that most children should, at the end of Key Stage 3, fall between the range of levels 3-7 (DFE 1995:25). It is undoubtedly true to say, however, that a majority will fail to achieve level 7, even at the end of Key Stage 4. This is evident from an examination of the GCSE results in English Language for Bayside School. In the summer 1995 examination, 41% of the students entered were awarded grades A-C, whereas 59% achieved grades D-G (Bayside School, Gibraltar, Unpublished Typescript 1995:1). The Key Stage 3 level descriptions can be said, therefore, to cater adequately for the vast majority of students at Key Stage 4. It is not so surprising, when seen in this light, that the teachers should use the GCSE syllabus as a basis for teaching in years 8 and 9.

It should also be borne in mind that since the SATs are not compulsory in Gibraltar, and they are not used by Bayside School, there is no formal assessment at the end of Key Stage 3. This can have an important effect on what is taught at this stage because teachers will be aware that they will be judged not on how their students do at the end of year 9, but rather on how they do two years later when they take the GCSE examination. How the pressures of public examinations can affect what is taught has been well documented by educationists:

When the market calls on teachers and institutions to produce quantifiable results, it usually means good *examination* results. Sound teaching practices are often sacrificed in an anxious attempt to 'cover' the examination syllabus, and to keep ahead of the competition.

(Prodomou 1995:14)

There is undoubtedly a degree of competition between the two comprehensive schools in Gibraltar as regards public examination results and this is fuelled by the local press who publish comparative tables on an annual basis. In the absence of formal assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, it is not really surprising that some teachers choose to use years 8 and 9 to familiarise their students with GCSE procedures.

An additional possible reason for the use of the GCSE syllabus in the lower school can be found in the almost incessant changes to the English Orders since they were first conceived. The complexity and length of the documents, coupled to the fact that they seemed to be subjected to modification almost as soon as they were published, appeared to make some teachers reticent to invest time in reading them. A small-scale study conducted in English schools in 1990 found, among other things, that many teachers showed little knowledge of the content of the English requirements of the national curriculum. It came to the conclusion that:

Documents should be short, practical and to the point. If too much is given to read then the response of some will be not to read any of it.

(Thompson and Davies 1991:228)

A similar reaction would appear to have occurred among the English teachers at Bayside School. Five of them (50%) admitted never having read the English Orders. Of the remainder, three (30%) had only read the document once, that being five years ago for two of the

teachers concerned and six years ago for the third. The other two members of the English Department (20%) had read the Orders on more than one occasion and were indeed familiar with the current post-Dearing document (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:1).

With 80% of the department at the school not really familiar with the English Orders, the tendency to use the GCSE syllabuses as the basis for teaching in the lower school is understandable.

The above findings also place greater importance on the year 8 and 9 English syllabus. The Head of English clearly needs to ensure that the syllabus contains the required aspects of the subject since it takes on the characteristics of a bridge between the English Orders and those teachers who are unfamiliar with its content.

11:6 The years 8 and 9 English syllabus, 1990

If the 1989 version of the English syllabus at Bayside School was significant in that it gave official sanction to the practice of basing lower school teaching on GCSE procedures, the one produced in 1990 was no less important. It came about as a consequence of a series of in-service sessions held in the spring of 1990 and involving all members of the English department. The work comprised developing what had been begun in the 1989 version of the syllabus. This was to be refined better to meet the needs of the English Orders. The importance of the syllabus that emerged was that it was to remain unaltered for a period of seven years until February 1997, despite considerable changes to the English Orders in the interim. Consequently, this syllabus can be said to have directed lower school English teaching at Bayside School through the 1990s up until the Dearing Review. For this reason it merits detailed consideration.

The main difference between the new syllabus and its predecessor was that the work which had previously been set out in the areas of 'speaking', 'listening', 'reading' and 'writing', was now additionally divided into levels. In this way the document sought to define a link between the English Orders and classroom practice. This is illustrated by the following extract from one of the levels in the 'speaking and listening' section:

LEVEL 3	ACTIVITIES
(a) Relate events which convey meaning to pupils /teacher.	Tell a (1) ...story with a beginning middle, end. (2) ...series of related incidents. (3) ...step by step experiment.
(b) Convey a simple message.	(1) Via telephone. (2) Chinese whispers. (3) Messages to other teachers /pupils.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:1)

The practicality of the revised syllabus is very evident. By presenting the work in levels, the teacher was left in no doubt as to what constituted progress in each subject area. Moreover, since the levels used were those defined in the then current English Orders, this allowed for a more structured approach to the teaching. In this way the 1990 English syllabus was allowing for a proper implementation of the English Orders even where the individual teacher might not have read the Order document itself.

A close examination of this syllabus reveals that it is a much more comprehensive document than that produced in 1989. This is not only due to the sub-division of the work into levels, but also because of the inclusion of a number of features designed to draw together all the language-related activity of time-tabled subjects other than English.

Separate sections within the syllabus were devoted to library and drama. Year 8 and 9 pupils were time-tabled to receive one lesson a week of approximately forty minutes duration, in each of these areas. In the case of the library, the lesson was taken by a teacher with responsibility for running this facility at Bayside, whereas the drama lesson was sometimes taken by the same teacher who taught a class English and sometimes not. The content of these sections of the English syllabus make it clear that the work done was intended to complement the main English teaching, for which the time-table allowed four periods a week.

11:7 The library syllabus

The library syllabus was structured to provide the pupils with instruction in two main areas. The first of these was in understanding the layout and organisation of the library. Coupled to this was the inculcation of research skills to enable pupils to find, unaided, what information they might require. Hence there were lessons on fiction and non-fiction books, on the Dewey classification system and on using the index and contents sections of reference works. There was also a series of lessons dedicated to project work to allow the pupils to apply the skills they were taught (Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:5).

The other main area tackled by the library mini-syllabus was study skills with particular emphasis on reading. The following extract is representative of the approach adopted:

Lessons 5-8

Reading aloud: Voice projection, following punctuation, deciding on correct intonation. Preparing passages for reading. Use of the pause. Each pupil to prepare a passage to be read aloud to the class and recorded. Later these to be played back and the results analysed.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:5)

This work was complemented by sessions on poetry skills, on scan-reading and on deducing implied meaning as opposed to that stated directly. Traditional literature-related skills like character and plot analysis were also included (Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:5-6). In effect the pupils were being taught the tools that would enable them to derive greater benefit from their English lessons.

Separate syllabuses were provided for the lower and the upper band groups. The references above relate to that for the upper band pupils. The work undergone by the slower children was similar, but certain features like those relating to literature analysis skills were omitted and others, like information retrieval skills, simplified. Greater time was also allowed for project work and for practising what had been learnt. Additionally, a greater number of lessons were included in which pupils were required to read aloud (Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:6). In these ways, both library syllabuses attempted to tailor programmes to meet more individual needs. It must be borne in mind, however, that given the wide range of abilities even within the two bands, the courses were unlikely to meet the needs of all the children.

11:8 The drama syllabus

One of the most interesting features of the drama section of the 1990 English syllabus was that it drew attention to the possibilities for cross-

curricular activity that would serve to reinforce general language skills. The drama syllabus began by outlining references to this subject in the Orders for English, science, technology and history and in the then proposals for modern foreign languages (Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:23). It included excerpts from the documents concerned, and advice on what should be covered. The syllabus stopped short, nevertheless, of providing information on resources that might be used to meet the stated aims. The following two excerpts from the subsection on drama in history demonstrate the typical fashion in which the syllabus responded to cross-curricular references to drama. The first part is a reproduction of the relevant section in the history Orders. The second excerpt shows an interpretation for the drama teacher which was meant to provide the basis for teachers to plan individual lessons:

Drama in the Statutory Order for History

Pupils should be taught about the ...leisure and culture of men, women and children in the past.

Pupils should have opportunities to develop awareness of different ways of representing past events: eg... plays.

Pupils should be encouraged to ask questions about the past. They should have opportunities to communicate awareness and understanding of history orally, visually and in writing: eg. act out an episode from the past through drama or dance.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:24)

History

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- make connections between different features of a past society: eg how plays in ancient Greece reflected the religious beliefs and way of life of Greek people.
- develop awareness of different ways of representing past events: eg representing everyday life in Tudor times -plays and pageants-.
- present results orally, visually and in writing using a range of techniques: eg taking part in an historical drama.

Tudor and Stuart times

Pupils should be taught about scientific and cultural achievements, music and drama including Shakespeare.

Ancient Greece

Pupils should be taught about the arts and how drama reflected Greek society.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:25)

Whereas some direction is given regarding what period in history the pupils should consider in their work on 'leisure and culture in the past', there is no real indication as to what work teachers should undertake to cover this. Similarly, there is no list of suggested lessons, nor of available texts which might prove useful to the teacher. Also potentially problematic is that the syllabus presupposes the drama teachers possessing a great deal of knowledge about Tudor and Stuart times and about ancient Greece. Given that these teachers are in the main language specialists, it is unlikely that they would possess this knowledge. It could be argued therefore that the syllabus needed to provide much more detail on the body of knowledge it was requiring teachers to impart. The other subjects which contained references to drama, and which were listed above, received similar treatment in this sub-section of the English syllabus.

What was possibly the greatest failing of this attempt at developing cross-curricular links with subject areas other than English, was that the drama teacher did not liaise with the other subjects concerned either in planning or delivery. No instructions were issued to drama teachers to consult those involved in the other subject areas and there was not even a requirement for the teachers of drama to liaise among themselves to ensure standardisation among parallel classes. In practice, therefore, the cross-curricular links did not materialise, since teachers in those other related subject areas would, at best, simply have duplicated some of the work done in the drama lesson. Such work would have been independent of that envisaged in the drama mini-syllabus.

The drama syllabus intended that all the above work be covered during year 8. A separate section dealt with drama for year 9 and it is clear, from the introduction to this, that in 1990 this area had not yet been developed properly:

Unfortunately, due to a lack of basic resources, it is impossible to provide concrete materials for a Year 9 drama course. Once more we will have to rely on the ingenuity of the teachers involved.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:22)

Implied in this statement is that once the necessary resources became available, the syllabus would be up-dated. It was not until February 1997, however, that the English syllabus was updated again. Moreover, drama and library studies, though still time-tabled subjects at Bayside School in 1997, no longer formed an integral part of the English syllabus. For much of the 1990s, therefore, it can be said that little guidance was offered for the teachers taking the drama lessons in year 9.

What the year 9 drama syllabus in 1990 did provide, was a list of aims of the course. Many of these were vague, however, and likely to be of little practical use to the teachers in determining what should be taught:

Activities should promote:

1. Greater efficiency in the use of oral communication.
2. Greater personal self-confidence.
3. Enjoyment of self-expression.
4. Experimentation with a variety of drama exercises.
5. Development of critical analysis.
6. Co-operation with fellow pupils.
7. The satisfaction of basic GCSE requirements.
8. The practical adaptation of literature.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:22)

No explanation was offered regarding precisely what was meant by 'experimentation with a variety of drama exercises'. Similarly the teacher reading the syllabus was left none the wiser as to which 'basic GCSE requirements' were being alluded to in aim 7. Furthermore, the year 9 students would not be involved in GCSE for another year, yet teachers were being asked to bear these examinations in mind in determining what to teach in the lower school. This was a further indication of the assessment procedures at Key Stage 4 influencing what was taught at Key Stage 3.

This impression was strengthened yet further by the final part of the 1990 year 9 drama syllabus which comprised a list of possible oral activities divided into three lists under the headings 'individual exercises', 'pair work' and 'group work' (Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:22). GCSE oral assessments in English language were carried out in these three forms so it would appear that the syllabus was aiming to provide the GCSE oral practice envisaged by the Head of

English in the introduction to the 1989 English syllabus and referred to earlier in this chapter (11:4).

11:9 Spelling and handwriting

The final section of the 1990 syllabus dealt with 'spelling and handwriting' that were then presented separately from the main attainment target for 'writing'. The guidance provided here was detailed so that the syllabus was indeed a link between the English Orders and classroom practice. Constant reference was made to the Order document to explain the requirements for pupils at the various levels. What made the syllabus particularly useful was the inclusion of resource material that could be used to put across the teaching points. There was also advice about which groups particular work would be suitable for:

In the upper band of Year 8 work on word families can be implemented to strengthen spellings of related words that sometimes have change of stress or sound in pronunciation: e.g. history - historical; manager - managerial. Work for this level can be found in Pictorial and Practical Bk 2 (P14).

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1990:17)

This practical approach would be welcomed by the teachers and increase the chances of the syllabus being followed.

11:10 The legacy of the years 8 and 9 English syllabus, 1990

When this research was carried out at Bayside, the 1997 version of the English syllabus had just been produced and the English teachers were yet to assimilate the changes. When asked to comment on the value of the English syllabus at the school, therefore, the opinions voiced

referred to the 1990 version of this document. Six of the ten teachers involved (60%) thought the syllabus was 'fairly practical', whilst three (30%) considered it to be 'not very practical' and one teacher (10%) affirmed it was 'of no practical use'. When questioned as to how closely they followed the syllabus in their teaching, five of the ten teachers (50%) said they did not follow it very closely, with one claiming not to follow it at all. The remaining five teachers (50%) said they followed the syllabus 'fairly closely', but not one claimed to follow it 'very closely' or 'to the letter' (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:3-4). These results would appear to confirm the widespread use of the GCSE examination syllabuses in determining what is taught in years 8 and 9 at Bayside School. The combination of the lack of detailed knowledge of many of Bayside School's English teachers on the content of the English Orders and the affirmation that they followed the lower school English syllabus 'fairly closely' at best, makes this the only logical alternative. This situation is unfortunate in that it constitutes a break in the defined progression of the subject during Key Stage 3, and some of the opportunities to be gained from using the English Orders as a framework to follow are lost.

11:11 Chapter overview

The success of students at GCSE examinations is considered of central importance at Bayside School, and is a major influence on the attitude adopted to national curriculum implementation.

English classes in years 8 and 9 are streamed. A broad two-band system is operated, with students initially placed according to middle school reports and recommendations.

The English syllabus at Bayside School has been updated several times since the advent of the national curriculum in England and Wales. In the 1989 version of the school syllabus, the attainment targets were presented separately and teachers were asked to consider GCSE requirements in planning their teaching in the lower school. The effects of this policy are still evident today. None of the school's English teachers claim to base their teaching in years 8 and 9 exclusively on national curriculum requirements. Furthermore, only 20% of the English teachers at the school were found to be familiar with the content of the current English Orders, which clearly made reliance on the GCSE syllabuses greater.

The Bayside English syllabus was reviewed again in 1990. In addition to the sections on the attainment targets, the work was divided into levels. This encouraged more consistent progression and a shared meaning of the language curriculum. Separate sections of the syllabus dealt with the 'library lesson', where study skills were taught, and with drama. Detailed guidance was also provided for the teaching of spelling and handwriting. This study has revealed, however, that only half the English teachers at Bayside School follow the syllabus 'fairly closely' at best. The remainder bases all teaching in the subject, from year 8 through to year 11, almost exclusively on the GCSE syllabuses.

The following chapter will examine the current situation regarding the teaching of English at Bayside School. It will also examine new initiatives being launched to cater for the lower ability students.

CHAPTER 12

ENGLISH AT BAYSIDE SCHOOL: THE CURRENT SITUATION

12:1 The Bayside School English syllabus, 1997

The year 1997 was significant at Bayside School since it witnessed the first major exercise to update the school's English syllabus since 1990. As such, the opportunity existed to redirect departmental policy in the light of the Dearing Review of 1995. The significance of the new syllabus lay in that, in all probability, it would determine the focus of English teaching at Bayside School until the end of the moratorium on changes to the national curriculum in the year 2000.

The first immediate difference between this syllabus and its forerunners was that the end result was a more comprehensive document. This now not only provides a lower school syllabus, but also sets out English departmental policy in every area, from the movement of pupils in the ability bands to the entry requirements for following 'A' level literature courses.

Unfortunately, the majority of the English teachers at Bayside School were not involved in producing the syllabus since, while this was being done, many were involved in a variety of in-service activities in the other departments in which they also teach. Therefore, the 1997 syllabus was produced by just three teachers: the Head of English, his assistant and the teacher in charge of the library (Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:25). This clearly allowed the head of department to direct the content of the syllabus more easily than if a greater number of teachers had been involved. Unfortunately, the danger also exists that

many of the teachers will fail to relate to the new document and this lack of ownership could prove significant when one considers the reluctance of teachers to read lengthy documents as demonstrated in Chapter 11:5.

After an introduction which explains how pupils are placed in ability groups, the syllabus lists what are considered the aims and objectives of English provision at Bayside School. These comprise just three points that are taken directly from the English Orders. The first two are taken from the 'General Requirements for English: Key Stages 1-4' and define what the subject should comprise. The third aim draws from the statement that heads each Programme of Study in the English Orders to the effect that the linguistic development of pupils should occur in an integrated programme of speaking and listening, reading and writing (Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:4). By omitting all detail and centring on just three points, the syllabus provides a focus on what the school is trying to achieve in language. By its brevity, the chances that these points will be noted and heeded by the teachers using the syllabus are increased.

The statement of aims is followed by the syllabus for years 8 and 9 and it is significant to note that the link between GCSE and what is taught in the lower school is if anything strengthened through the inclusion of the following statement:

Emphasis

The format of the GCSE language and literature examinations in Year 11 has a direct bearing on the 'thrust' of our teaching in Years 8 and 9. The emphasis on certain activities will therefore vary as years go by depending on the requirements of GCSE examinations in English.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:7)

This statement clearly demonstrates the influence of the public examinations in determining what is taught in the lower school. The pressures on the school to achieve 'good' results is apparent since the teachers of English are asked to change their teaching activities not to accommodate changes in the English Orders, but in the GCSE examinations.

The 1997 years 8 and 9 syllabus is also no longer set out in levels. The reason for this was explained by the Head of English as being the existence of a range of abilities even within the streamed groups. This, together with the nature of the subject, made it necessary for teachers to pitch their lessons within a band of levels with a typical year 9 upper band lesson, aimed at levels 5-7:

The subject is not content based, so what you are doing is teaching certain skills and revisiting them regularly. Essay-writing, directed writing, comprehension would be tackled in middle school and again at secondary level. What varies is the level of response to the activities. It makes sense therefore to pitch lessons to various levels.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:8)

The new years 8 and 9 syllabus reflects this school of thought and therefore limits itself to setting out lists of activities in the three attainment targets of 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing'. Before each of these lists the syllabus draws the attention of the teacher to a number of points that should be followed so a degree of standardisation across class groups can be achieved. The following are representative of the form of instructions issued:

- Teachers should ensure that pupils are exposed to varied forms of language and can select which form is appropriate to each activity.
- Adequate and regular records of pupils' achievements in oral work should be kept.
- Work in reading should concentrate not only on the mechanical ability to read but also on understanding. As such written work may at times be required for assessment purposes.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:5)

In the main, there is a very practical slant to the document which is designed to be teacher-friendly, with an absence of jargon and clear presentation so it can be referred to easily on a day-to-day basis. The section on writing provides a good illustration of the practicality of the syllabus since it not only lists the forms of writing in which pupils should engage, but also the grammatical points that need to be taught and practised. At the same time, clear instructions as to the subject requirements for these two years are provided, so that the syllabus fulfils the function of ensuring a degree of standardisation across the teaching groups. The following excerpts from the 'writing' section illustrate the blend provided between these various features of the years 8 and 9 syllabus. It should be noted that the lists are not complete and are merely intended as examples that are typical of the whole:

Writing

Pupils should be exposed to different forms of writing which are both creative and directed. Elements of grammar to be covered can be included in all activities.

- Story writing: To include narrative, descriptive and factual writing.
- Letter writing: Both formal and informal letters should be covered. Invitation cards can also be included.

Grammatical points and elements of presentation

- Capital letters

- Full stops and commas
- Speech marks
- Paragraphs
- Sentence structure
- Origins of English language
- Spelling tests
- Handwriting
- Word-processing

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:6)

As can be seen from the above, the syllabus is very clear on what must be taught. Teachers are instructed to cover 'formal' and 'informal' letters. The suggestion that 'invitation cards can also be included' offers additional ideas for teachers who may be wishing to stretch particular pupils in this form of writing. The inclusion of the grammatical points in list form then makes it easy for teachers to ensure that they are covering them with their teaching groups. This can be done by ticking the activities when covered, or simply by periodic reference to the list to see if any of the features have not yet been covered or require reinforcement.

It is interesting to note how the layout of the syllabus promotes standardisation across the teaching groups. This is particularly important, given that no records are kept by individual teachers regarding what they have taught each of the classes in their care. The Head of English therefore has no way of knowing whether or not individual classes are being well catered for. In every case there is a reliance on the teachers' professionalism to be familiar with what they should be teaching different groups and to carry this work out.

There is clearly no easy, effective answer to monitoring the teaching that goes on, particularly given that the Head of English invariably has a very heavy teaching work-load. In the year in which this study was carried out, he had six non-contact periods out of a weekly

timetable of 40 periods (Gonzalez I/V 1997:1). This is well below the level of non-contact time enjoyed by senior managers at the school. The Head of English is also adamant that trust in the professionalism of staff is essential since no-one accompanies the teacher in the classroom on a day-to-day basis:

If we were to introduce something like the individual records of work that we had in the past, it is only too easy to have these contain whatever you want them to... It is not possible for me to check up on what each person is doing all the time. I just don't have the time... At the end of the day, I have to rely on the professionalism of those around me and base myself on what they tell me.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:1-3)

All the above increases the importance of the English syllabus in providing a central document to direct the teaching in year 8 and 9 and to ensure coverage of the breadth of the subject as required by the English Orders. Yet, as illustrated in Chapter 11:10, the English teachers at Bayside do not follow the syllabus very closely in their teaching. The historical reasons for this have already been discussed at some length, but it can be argued that with a newly updated practical document now available, redressing this situation should be a matter of some urgency. The syllabus provides the only real opportunity to achieve standardisation across the teaching groups since too many teachers are unfamiliar with the English Order documents.

12:2 Shakespeare in years 8 and 9 at Bayside School

One of the main ways in which year 8 and 9 teaching has changed in Bayside School, as a consequence of the national curriculum, is in the increased emphasis given to literature and in particular Shakespeare. In

affirming the above, the Head of English claimed this was clear from the use the books were receiving (Gonzalez I/V 1997:1). He was less convinced as to the value of the exercise, since he felt the national curriculum had not resolved a basic incongruity in determining a literary canon for Key Stages 3 and 4:

Teachers are supposed to cover works of fiction by two major authors pre-1900. They are also supposed to do Shakespeare. On the other hand there is the drive for basic standards in literacy, with a large group of pupils having been identified as leaving school without achieving a basic standard. How do you bridge the gap between these two aims? It is not properly thought out.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:8)

In reality, the issue highlights the fact that the national curriculum has not resolved the struggle for dominance in the language curriculum between language, literature and grammar which has raged for most of this century and been described in Chapter 1:3. It does show at a practical level, however, that these apparent contradictions of purpose confuse the teacher at the chalk-face. This can be dangerous since, given the incomplete knowledge many teachers appear to have regarding what the curriculum actually contains, they can develop a negative attitude towards the entire document.

This shortcoming of the national curriculum has not gone unnoticed in England and Wales, but it would appear that the problem is made all the harder to resolve as a consequence of having to balance educational needs there with a political agenda. Alastair West, a member of the SCAA English advisory group which made recommendations to Sir Ron Dearing on the subject of the revised English Orders, felt the literary canon was one of five areas in which the review 'foundered'. And he had no doubts as to the reasons for this:

The changes made to the subject group's recommendations indicate the persistence of political correctness in determining the shape of the curriculum and a failure of political will to acknowledge present and future social realities in this country.

(West 1994:20)

It would appear that the language curriculum is attempting to be all things to all people. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the debate on the value of teaching Shakespeare to all students at Key Stages 3 and 4. Compelling arguments are presented by both advocates and opponents of the concept. Open University lecturer Bob Allen argues the desirability of opening up the life experience of pupils and he quotes the following answer by one of his students to the question 'why do Shakespeare?'

He has something relevant to say about nearly every aspect of life. You can find your own level with Shakespeare.

(Allen 1991:56)

For Allen the answer lies in practical drama work, with a focus on informed personal response. This he feels can open up the experience of Shakespeare by placing the student at the centre of the process (Allen 1991:48).

There are others who question the relevance of the exercise altogether, particularly given that the national curriculum makes Shakespeare compulsory for all students:

It seems startlingly obvious to me that most of the 14 to 16 year old population will find Shakespeare in the original incomprehensible. And if not in the original...then I am not sure that its value is all that great anyway.

(Cashdan 1994:409)

At the heart of the debate would appear to be the conflict between theory regarding what it might be desirable to teach children, and their likely response in practice. Still it cannot be forgotten that the national curriculum makes Shakespeare compulsory for all. At Bayside, the Head of English clearly believes that the result is an imposition by people who do not face the practicality of a daily routine in the classroom. It is interesting to note that the Bayside solution to the problem never seemed to contemplate exposing all children to the original texts and this reflects the common sense approach of teachers who are daily faced with large numbers of pupils who are barely literate:

I would like someone to show me how they would tackle Shakespeare with remedials. In practice we devise strategies to work round these requirements using simplified texts, videos etc.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:8)

These strategies are clearly laid out in the Bayside School years 8 and 9 English syllabus. There teachers are instructed to teach Shakespeare to all groups but the lower ability classes are invited to use 'animated tales of Shakespeare' which present the plays in cartoon format with simplified language and excerpts of the original text. These books each have accompanying videos. The upper ability classes are given the choice of using this same material or to draw from a stock of unabridged texts. Full length videos of many plays are also made available for teachers to use with either upper or lower band classes as they see fit (Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:7).

Interestingly enough, in common with the educational debate in England and Wales, English teachers at Bayside School are similarly divided as to the value of the national curriculum requirements for literature in the lower school, especially with regard to Shakespeare.

Half the teachers included the issue, without any form of prompting, in their lists of main likes and dislikes of the English orders. Of these teachers, 40% liked the idea that works of literature have been made more accessible to a wider group of children. The remaining 60%, however, were critical of the process, feeling that many children could not cope with Shakespeare and that time spent teaching it was to the detriment of language work (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:10-12).

12:3 Bayside English syllabus guidance for teaching in years 10 and 11

Yet another manifestation of the practical nature of the 1997 English syllabus at Bayside School is the fact that a section has been included on years 10 and 11. This had not been considered necessary in the past since students in these years would be following GCSE courses. The section, however, provides a checklist of course requirements, and draws the attention of teachers to where these are different from what they were in the past.

Of greatest use to the teacher is the fact that the material is presented over just two pages for the language course and a further two for that concerning literature. The whole course content is thus summarised in a way that the teacher can easily refer to and tick off as each requirement is met. Furthermore, the lists contain page references that pertain to the SEG/GCSE syllabus document itself, so the teachers can quickly locate the regulations governing any aspect of the course that they may wish to. As can be seen from the following excerpt on the requirements for the language coursework folder, what results is a totally practical blend of instructions to the teachers regarding the

marking of the work, deadlines and a list of the compulsory components stipulated by the examining boards:

Coursework 20% (10% writing 10% reading)

1. 5 Pieces
 - personal – fiction
 - personal – non-fiction
 - Shakespeare play
 - pre 1900 author } one poetry
 - post 1900 author } one prose (p5)
2. No max or min: about 2000 words
3. At least one handwritten piece (p15)
4. Coursework to be submitted to SEG by 30 April
5. (a) mark each essay out of 25
(b) mark complete folder out of 25

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:9)

The value of this sort of list should be gauged against the regular changes that the GCSE syllabuses have been subjected to from year to year. The above reflects the position for students who began their two-year courses in September 1996. It should be noted that the majority of the English teachers at Bayside would have a year 10 class starting this syllabus and a year 11 one which was working on the previous year's syllabus. It would be very easy therefore for the teacher to confuse the requirements for one year with another, with potentially disastrous results for the students involved. The Bayside language syllabus provides a safeguard against this happening since it not only lays out the current requirements, clearly and succinctly, but also includes a list of the main changes to the syllabus to focus the teachers' attention further (Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:10).

It would be essential, however, that the Bayside syllabus be reviewed on an annual basis and not left unchanged for seven years as was the case with the 1990 version. Otherwise, the very features that make the years 10 and 11 section so useful as a clear reference point for

teachers would have the opposite effect, if any of the information contained were allowed to become out of date.

12:4 The Bayside School one-year course

One of the most significant ways in which the implementation of the national curriculum in Gibraltar differs from that in England and Wales, comes about as a result of the school-leaving age on the Rock being fifteen as opposed to sixteen in UK. Consequently, a proportion of the Bayside School population leave their studies without ever completing the full national curriculum programme and the legal situation in Gibraltar is such that they are permitted to do this. The practical implications of this situation are that some students do not follow a GCSE course in English since this leads up to examination at the age of sixteen. An alternative has therefore long been provided at the school under the title of 'the one-year course'.

The Bayside English Syllabus has a section dedicated to this course, but the information it supplies teachers is rather limited. To begin with, the entire section of the syllabus is contained in just three-quarters of a side of A4 paper. There is no statement of aims, merely the remark that the course is 'non-examinable'. What the syllabus does contain is a list of books and other resources that the teacher taking these groups might find useful. The lack of a properly structured course is very apparent and can be deduced from the following statement:

Teaching one-year course students can be difficult! Motivation is often a problem and so the teacher needs to be flexible in his/her methods. Consequently, it is not always possible to follow a syllabus to the letter but rather allowances need to be made for the character and 'chemistry' of particular groups.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:13)

The syllabus also notes the fact that the one-year course is run by the Senior Teacher (Pastoral) at the school, who is currently John Jones. He has responsibility for co-ordinating the work done by different departments that deal with this group of students, but it is clear that he is far from satisfied with the current provision. John Jones voiced major reservations about the lack of course content:

Not enough thought goes into planning the course for the students. In many ways it is not concrete enough and lip service is paid to the idea. The teachers use a book, but this is not used selectively enough.

(Jones I/V 1997:2)

Jones also spoke of the need for meetings to improve the planning and implementation of the course, which he said never seemed to take place. He claimed the low priority the school gave to the course was epitomised by the choice of teachers entrusted to deliver it. In the year this research was carried out, only one of the three teachers taking English for one-year course students was a subject specialist. And it is clear from the words of the course co-ordinator that this is no coincidence:

The course is traditionally entrusted to teachers who have a few periods to spare upon completion of the time-table for the two-year course boys as opposed to teachers who want to take the group and feel for that kind of student.

(Jones I/V 1997:2)

The picture that emerges, therefore, is of a poorly thought out course taught by whoever might be available and involving pupils who are described by the English syllabus as potentially difficult. This is an impression that seems to be widespread among the English teachers at Bayside. In a survey that sought to determine the views of all the members of the English Department with the exception of the Head of English, six teachers (67%) claimed the language programme for one-year course students was totally inadequate. The remaining three (33%) claimed to have no knowledge of the course upon which to form an opinion. One teacher went so far as to claim that the course did not exist at all (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:9-10).

The Head of English for his part is only too aware of the limitations of the language provision for one-year course students and admits that this is far from structured:

The one-year course provision largely depends on the teacher who is taking it. This is an extremely difficult group to teach because of low motivation, poor discipline and attitude problems. The teacher, therefore, has a pretty hopeless situation to start with.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:10)

Gonzalez explained that the English curriculum offered to one-year course students is broadly based on the national curriculum. However, he emphasised that since these students leave school a year before the GCSE examination, they cannot be bound by the entitlement factor of the national curriculum which ends with this examination (Gonzalez I/V 1997:10).

Notwithstanding this, there is practically unanimous dissatisfaction, either directly stated or implied, with the current English provision for one-year course students at Bayside School. Most of the parties involved, however, appear to agree with what is required to

remedy the situation. All nine of the English teachers surveyed identified the need for a practical course, with the emphasis on carrying out everyday activities like answering the phone, filling in a form, or reading instructions. Additionally, two of these teachers (22%) called for some form of certificate or record that would lend validity to the work being done and provide some form of information for prospective employers (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:9-10).

The Senior Teacher (Pastoral) also saw a solution along similar lines and referred to the relative greater success of the mathematics one-year course at the school in which students work towards a Cambridge Certificate which is awarded at low, intermediate or high level:

The maths course works well because the students feel they are working to achieve something concrete. What is needed for the English course is some form of certificate that these students can work towards. In my experience, for this sort of pupil the course must be divided into steps which are short, interesting, relevant and provide a sense of achievement in the short term.

(Jones I/V 1997:3)

12:5 The advent of the SEG 'Certificate of Achievement' at Bayside School

The problems faced with the one-year course at Bayside School are symptomatic of a wider difficulty. This results from the fact that despite the intention that the GCSE examination cater for the entire school population, it has not achieved this in practice. Proof of this was provided to teachers at Bayside School during an in-service session in January 1997 conducted by John Commerford, the Regional Director, Teacher Support Services for London, the South East and overseas, of the Southern Examining Group/Associate Examining Board

(SEG/AEB). Commerford stated that the number of entries for English at GCSE in England and Wales in 1996 totalled some 600,000. He claimed, however, that a further 50,000 children, amounting to 10% of the pupil population, were not entered. The SEG/EAB interpreted these figures as proving the need for an alternative form of assessment below GCSE and as a consequence introduced the 'Certificate of Achievement' (Gonzalez I/V 1997:7).

The Head of English at Bayside School embraced the thinking that led to this new course because he had long considered that the GCSE programme was too demanding to cater for all students. He pointed out that the figures for boys not being entered for GCSE English in Gibraltar was not as high as the UK only because many of the boys concerned leave school at fifteen after following the one-year course (Gonzalez I/V 1997:7). The Certificate of Achievement will now provide an alternative for the traditional one-year course boys. It will also do so in a way that will ensure some concrete form of return for the students as envisaged by the Senior Teacher (Pastoral) in Chapter 12:4.

The importance of the new course to Bayside School, however, transcends the effect it might have on students who up till now have followed the one-year course. Gonzalez highlighted the potential solution to a problem which the school has had with lower ability pupils on the GCSE courses. Gonzalez explained that Bayside School does not offer remediation for children in years 10 and 11. As a result, the pupil who was withdrawn from mainstream English classes in years 8 and 9, to receive help in the Special Needs Department, simply went straight into an academic GCSE course at the start of year 10. This created problems since these pupils generally could not cope. As the new course is geared at students who function at around national curriculum level 3,

Gonzalez felt it will meet the very real needs of these pupils (Gonzalez I/V 1997:7). The Head of English also pointed to the status that the course will enjoy because it is not internal to the school:

It is important that the course will work towards the award of a certificate validated by the same board as the GCSE. This will give it a currency.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:7)

For the reasons stated above, Bayside School started operating the course in September 1997. It came too late to be included in the school's English syllabus, but it is being run in parallel with the GCSE courses and used with the lowest ability groups in year 10. The first students following the course are due to be examined in summer 1999. The advent of this course had little effect on the numbers opting to follow the one-year course in 1997, but it will be interesting to note if this situation changes in the coming years once the Certificate of Achievement becomes more firmly established.

12:6 Policy features of the Bayside English syllabus

As already mentioned in Chapter 12:1, a significant difference between the 1997 Bayside English syllabus and its predecessors is the inclusion of statements of policy which clearly spell out for teachers what is expected of them in the various aspects of their job. Several of these policy documents are included in a section at the end of the syllabus following pages on the year 12 repeat class and the 'A' level literature course, which will not be discussed since they fall outside the parameters of this study.

This final section of the syllabus starts with a note on resources. This is divided into four parts under the headings of 'textbooks',

‘support materials’, ‘purchase of stock’ and ‘books in use’. In the first of these, the departmental policy on the issue of books to students is recorded, as are the reasons for it. The paragraph also lists procedures for teachers wanting to borrow books as well as noting where they are stored (Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:16). The information provided is strictly practical and would serve not only to acquaint new teachers with procedures, but also as a point of reference for all teachers working in the department. Similar information is provided regarding the availability of ‘support materials’ and the ‘purchase of stock’.

Possibly the most useful sub-section is that which relates to the ‘books in use’. Here teachers are told which textbooks can be used with particular groups throughout the school (Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:17). Again, recording this information in writing is valuable since it would avoid the situation of teachers finding themselves without textbooks for a particular class because a colleague is using them with a class for which they are not really intended.

12:7 Marking and assessment

The English Department policy on marking and the assessment of work is the next section of the syllabus and this provides very detailed information and instructions for marking work, as well as for keeping records.

The basic marking policy involves teachers awarding any piece of work marks on a scale of 0-10 for both effort and attainment. A student would thus receive two marks for any piece of work. It is interesting to note that the syllabus states that this policy has been in place for a number of years (unspecified) and that no distinction is made for the awarding of marks for activities that relate to ‘speaking and listening’,

'reading' or 'writing'. Guidance is also provided regarding what the various marks on the scale mean and here the descriptions match those used on the general school reports to parents that are issued twice yearly. The purpose of the exercise is to achieve a degree of standardisation in marking and also to ensure that the English marks on reports are as accurate a reflection as possible of the work carried out during the year by a particular student. The syllabus explains these aims to teachers in the following terms:

Grades awarded for classwork and homework should correlate closely with the grade for English that appears on the students' annual reports. The system of grading is intended to be user friendly as it provides the teacher with a simple method of converting grades in his/her markbook into a grade to be included in the annual report.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:18)

The logic behind the policy is clear, yet the evidence exists that the stipulated procedures are not being followed by many of the English teachers at Bayside School. Research into the marking habits of all the teachers revealed that the policy of awarding separate effort and attainment marks to each piece of work on a scale of 0-10 is only being widely used with regard to written work and even there variations on the theme abound.

In years 8 and 9, eight of the ten teachers (80%) used the system required of them by the English syllabus when grading written work. A ninth teacher (10%), while still assessing effort and attainment separately, awarded marks between 0-20 for the reason that this scale was later used for the grading of coursework in years 10 and 11. The tenth teacher (10%) had devised a personal system. This comprised awarding a single mark for each piece of work, which would vary depending on the nature of the exercise. Short exercises or essay plans

would be graded out of 10, essays out of 25 and project work or extended diaries would be marked out of 50. Additionally two of the teachers (20%), who did follow the departmental policy when marking most lower school work, modified it when attempting 'coursework style pieces' and spelling exercises or dictation. In these cases marks were awarded out of 20 or 25. There was also considerable variation in the number of grades each individual student could expect to receive per week. Some teachers recorded one mark per student, some two and others three (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:7).

In years 10 and 11 there was an even greater variation brought about by the additional factor to be considered in the equation, that of the requirements of the GCSE examining boards. Half the teachers (50%) abandoned the school marking policy altogether and simply graded all written work out of 20 or 25 as per the GCSE syllabus stipulation for the marking of coursework. The remaining 50% continued to award effort and attainment marks out of 10 for the majority of pieces of work, only switching to the wider scale when grading items that might possibly be submitted as coursework (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:7).

In 'speaking and listening', not one of the ten teachers used separate grades for effort and attainment. Indeed an extract from a mark book, included in the Bayside School English syllabus as an illustration of the department's marking policy in action, contained one set of grades on an oral activity on Hamlet marked on a single scale of 0-10. The extract in question related to a year 9 class (Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:19).

In years 8 and 9, six of the teachers involved (60%) marked oral activity on a scale of 0-20 or 0-25. The different scale was a reflection of the changing GCSE syllabuses. GCSE oral marks for students taking

their examination in summer 1998 needed to be graded out of 25. When this research was being carried out, however, most of the teachers were also involved in teaching year 11 classes. These were following the older syllabus which required the awarding of oral marks on a scale of 0-20. The new GCSE scales were clearly being applied by some of the teachers in the lower school, whereas others were using the older version. The result was that there was no uniformity in the system of oral marks awarded in years 8 and 9. The situation was further complicated by the remaining four teachers. Three of these (30%) marked lower school orals out of 10, whereas the fourth (10%) devised a personal system using letters with a range of A-E. The only common ground between the teachers regarding the grading of orals in years 8 and 9 was that practically all of them recorded three marks for each student per year (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:5-6).

Most of the teachers used the scale of 0-20 or 0-25 for grading orals in years 10 and 11. The evidence is that the GCSE guidelines for grading orals were being more closely followed and there was only one notable exception to this. Here, the teacher who graded orals in the lower school using the A-E scale continued the practice, even though the grades were later converted to a number for GCSE purposes. All ten teachers (100%) recorded comments with their grades at this level as required by the GCSE syllabus. One of these (10%), however, devised his own categories for these comments which were very detailed and covered content, language, structure, delivery and presentation (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:5-6).

The attainment target in which the Bayside English teachers fared worst with regard to assessment was 'reading'. Five teachers (50%) kept no records whatsoever, either concerning when individuals in their classes had read, or how well they had done. Three of the others (30%)

simply recorded when the children read but awarded no grades of any kind to the activity. Among the two teachers who did grade reading, there was a wide discrepancy in the manner in which they did so. One of these (10%) recorded a mark for each student every two weeks from year 8-11. The scale used by this teacher was A-G. The final teacher had once more devised a more detailed personal system. This comprised awarding each pupil marks out of ten for assessed reading activity and at the same time recording a written comment on the child's performance. This teacher claimed to assess each pupil from year 8-11 in this way around 6-8 times a year. Notably not one teacher used the stated departmental policy of awarding separate effort and attainment marks in this area of the language curriculum (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:6).

The above evidence clearly demonstrates that despite a clear school policy for the marking of English at Bayside School, there is no coherence in the way this is implemented. There are two likely reasons why this is so. At lower school level, it seems clear that most teachers feel that the departmental policy only applies to written activity. It might prove helpful, therefore, if the English syllabus were to state categorically that the system should be used for grading work in all the attainment targets. Additionally, it could be argued that the need exists in years 10 and 11 better to define when the school's grading system should be used, as opposed to that for marking GCSE coursework. In the absence of clear guidance on this issue, it appears that teachers are simply devising personal systems based on a combination of GCSE and school policy.

The importance of clarifying these issues should not be underestimated. Standardised marking, as the Bayside English syllabus requires, would not only facilitate the filling in of reports to parents. It would also provide greater continuity for pupils as they progress

through the school and are taught by different English teachers. Clearly some form of monitoring is required even though the present situation makes this very difficult to achieve, since the obvious person for the task is the Head of English; and yet, as indicated in Chapter 12:1, his teaching load is so great as to make this impossible in practice.

12:8 Policy on reporting and 'discipline for learning'

It is also interesting to note that the majority of English teachers at Bayside do not feel that the English Orders have helped them in the writing of reports to parents. Only two of them (20%) had anything to say on this issue that could be termed positive. This was that the better definition of what English teaching should comprise facilitated the writing of more detailed and accurate comments pertaining to particular aspects of the subject. Seven of the teachers (70%) claimed the national curriculum programme had made no difference to the way they wrote their reports. The final person (10%) felt the national curriculum had had a negative effect on reporting, because he felt the levels of attainment on which he based his comments concentrated on what a student could do rather than could not do. This teacher felt it was not always appropriate to be positive (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:10).

Interestingly, it also emerged that school policy on the writing of reports was not being followed. This is one case where the procedures stipulated by the central school administration did not find favour with the Head of English since they represented a duplication of work. Teachers were required to write rough versions of the reports, present them to the Head of Department for approval and only then copy them on to the final form. The Head of English felt this system was time-consuming and needless:

The procedures currently in place are not being adhered to. In theory each teacher is supposed to clear his reports with me before copying them out. This is not happening in practice. I dislike the system anyway and have complained about it to the school's academic council.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:6)

The reluctance of teachers to engage in activity that is seen as unnecessary is implied by the above, but there seems to be little point in maintaining a policy unless it is to be implemented. Since this is clearly not the case here, the policy should either be modified or enforced.

The writing of school reports, however, is not the only form of contact between teachers and parents. Owing to this, and in keeping with its role as a reference work for teachers, the Bayside English syllabus also incorporates a section on liaising with parents. This is short and to the point and includes samples of the various letters that can be sent to parents to inform them that their son is failing to produce homeworks, GCSE coursework or whatever. The syllabus spells out when these letters should be used so that there is consistency among the English teachers (Bayside English Syllabus 1997:20-22). This is particularly important when one considers that the same parents may have more than one child in the school at any one time. If individual teachers were to apply their own criteria for using these letters, this could be a potential problem for the English Department.

The syllabus also promotes standardisation in a section which deals with 'rewards' as part of a whole-school disciplinary initiative which goes by the name of 'Discipline for Learning' (DFL). Among other features, the advent of DFL at Bayside in 1995-96 incorporated a drive to motivate pupils. This was to be done by recognising good work and rewarding it with departmental stamps that would be collected and finally exchanged for a range of items from pens to tracksuits. The

Bayside English syllabus spelt out the criteria for awarding these stamps in English lessons. In this way the syllabus was once more promoting a consistent approach among the English teachers which is particularly important to schemes of this kind which seek to establish a currency for the stamps awarded to pupils. DFL would be undermined if major discrepancies existed in the criteria adopted by teachers in rewarding pupils.

The inclusion of the guidelines in the English syllabus does not, of course, guarantee that they are being followed by all the teachers involved. The evidence already presented in this chapter indicates areas where departmental policy is being ignored. It is important, nevertheless, to state the policy clearly since it removes any doubt as to what the correct procedure is and can be used as a focal point in any future attempt at enforcement of policy directives.

12:9 Homework policy

The final section of the Bayside English syllabus, which tackled the departmental policy on homework, clearly stated that this was to be given to all groups in the school, regardless of ability. While not stipulating how much particular groups should be given, it did lay down one written homework a week as a minimum for all classes (Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:24). The section was detailed and also defined for teachers the nature of the homework tasks:

Homework will involve the following: the development of research skills; the setting of project and coursework tasks; the preparation of suitable oral subjects and collaborative tasks; the learning by heart of poems and extracts from plays; the use of computers and word processing skills (where possible); exercises in grammar, spelling and punctuation; a

variety of writing tasks including essay work as detailed elsewhere in this scheme of work; reading tasks; book reviews; work with video and audio equipment.

(Bayside School English Syllabus 1997:24)

As can be seen, the list of tasks is extremely comprehensive and it is not only useful as a point of reference for the teacher but also as a safeguard. The issue of accountability of teachers is an important one, particularly since the national curriculum introduced the issue of entitlement. Whereas the legal position in Gibraltar is different to that in England and Wales, as explained in Chapter 2:3, and the freedom to modify aspects of the national curriculum exists, the English Orders nonetheless lie at the heart of English provision on the Rock. Consequently, parents could from time to time question the validity of what individual teachers were teaching their sons. By having a document that clearly spells out the departmental policy on all aspects of English teaching, the teacher who follows the guidelines will always be able to justify his actions when this is required. This constitutes an important safeguard against any outside criticism of the teaching that might be unjustified.

12:10 Special needs

Once more, though this study is primarily concerned with mainstream provision, it is worthwhile to examine the structures in place at Bayside School to cater for students with special needs in English in order to gain as complete a picture as possible.

A separate 'special needs' department exists at the school, though there are clearly problems experienced in staffing it. In the 1996/97 school year, only the head of department had a full teaching load in this

area and the remaining lessons were taken up by an assortment of teachers who had a light time-table load. This was a similar situation to that experienced with regard to the one-year course as described in Chapter 12:4. The Head of Special Needs, Priscilla Mañasco, argued that, as a result of this, she felt the department did not fare very well as regards human resources, even if it was well catered for in the sense of materials. She further explained that the situation was aggravated by the seemingly haphazard way in which some of the teachers were deployed:

Some teachers do not even take a group for all the lessons that student has in a particular subject. This makes it very difficult for the student. I recall one group last year that had four different teachers involved in teaching five lessons of English a week to them.

(Mañasco I/V 1997:5)

The above situation would clearly make it very difficult for there to be any degree of continuity in the English provision provided for these students. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the groups concerned comprise children who are sent to this department precisely because they require additional help with their English. The situation as it exists is unlikely to facilitate meeting these children's needs.

Separate special needs provision is provided for English and mathematics, so a student can receive help in one of these subjects yet return to the mainstream for the other. It is also clear that most of the school's resources in special needs are targeted on the younger pupils. In 1996/97, from a total of fifty pupils who attended the Special Needs Department for English, 25 were year 8 boys, 14 year 9 boys and the remaining 11 boys were involved in the one-year course (Mañasco I/V 1997:2). Selection of these pupils was carried out on the basis of three factors. Consideration was first given to whether the student was withdrawn from the mainstream at middle school level. Alternatively,

mainstream teachers sent pupils who they felt could not cope in general classes and a small number of children arrived on the recommendation of the Educational Psychologist (Mañasco I/V 1997:1).

The language provision is again based on that for the national curriculum, but the legal situation in Gibraltar, which allows teachers to modify the contents of the English Orders when desirable, permits the application of some common sense when dealing with pupils who have great difficulty with language:

The work we do is certainly along the same lines as the national curriculum. We read once a week and the texts we do are the same as those contained in the SEG 'Certificate of Achievement' course. We do not, however, cover any Shakespeare or pre-20th century literature with these pupils because I do not see the point of doing over-complicated texts with them that they will be unable to handle.

(Mañasco I/V 1997:2)

Perhaps of greatest interest is the philosophy at the heart of the special needs provision at Bayside School. This was reflected in the words of the head of department who did not see improving the linguistic or numerical skills of the students as her primary role:

I feel that the most important role we fulfil is to raise the self-esteem of the children who come to us who invariably arrive with very low self-esteem after years of labelling. If we do not give them a lift in this way, they will not be receptive to learning.

(Mañasco I/V 1997:4)

This wider aim, if achieved, would most likely create the sort of conditions that would facilitate progress in English. It is unlikely, however, that the boys' self-esteem will be greatly enhanced, when faced with the situation of being taught the subject by as many as four different teachers in one week.

12:11 Chapter overview

The year 1997 saw the first attempt to refocus the school's English syllabus following the 1995 Dearing review. The new syllabus was considerably more comprehensive than was its predecessor, and included not only a lower-school programme of work, but also guidelines for GCSE delivery and a description of all English Department policies. The document again encourages teachers to consider GCSE examination requirements in planning their teaching in years 8 and 9. The syllabus is very practical and provides advice to teachers, as well as stipulating content, thereby providing for standardisation of approach.

No records of work are kept at Bayside School and lower-school teaching is not monitored to any significant degree. The Head of English relies on the professionalism of each teacher to deliver a balanced curriculum. Though all year 8 and 9 groups tackle Shakespeare, as is required by the English Orders, lower bands use 'animated tales of Shakespeare' and not full texts.

Bayside School runs a one-year course for year 10 students who opt to leave school at the age of 15. This is legally possible in Gibraltar and means some students do not complete the national curriculum programme that is designed to finish in year 11 when the student is 16. The Bayside School one-year course is widely felt to be inadequate for the needs of a group that is non-academic and poorly motivated.

A new two-year course for lower ability students is currently being introduced in year 10. Named the SEG 'Certificate of Achievement', it is designed for use with the bottom 10% of the ability range.

Current English Department policy directives on the grading of English work are not being uniformly applied at Bayside School. Furthermore, English teachers are disregarding the school policy of drafting reports to parents for the approval of the Head of English, prior to copying them out on the official forms.

A separate 'Special Needs' department exists at Bayside School. However, only year 8 and 9 pupils are withdrawn from classes to receive extra help with their English. All children return to the mainstream in year 10. Language provision in the Special Needs department is loosely based upon national curriculum requirements, though flexibility is shown in determining the course content and features of the full English Orders are omitted.

The following chapter of this study will discuss the conclusions that can be drawn from the English provision at Bayside School.

CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN FROM ENGLISH PROVISION AT BAYSIDE SCHOOL GIBRALTAR

13:1 The Bayside English teaching inspection, 1993

As was the case with both St Paul's and Bishop Fitzgerald Schools, an inspection of the English provision at Bayside School was carried out in 1993. The inspecting team once again comprised the then General Education Adviser and his assistant and the subsequent recommendations were based upon two, one-week periods of classroom observation, interviews with teachers and managers at the school, and study of all policy documents and syllabuses. Though English provision for all years was discussed in the various interviews, it was decided, given that the advisory team comprised only two persons, to limit observation of lessons to years 8 and 9 (Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:2).

13:2 The Bayside English syllabus and monitoring implementation

Given that the above inspection took place in 1993, the syllabus that was studied was that drawn up by the English Department in 1990. The inspection report, while praising this document for being detailed and offering practical advice to teachers, yet also recommended the immediate updating of the syllabus and the department's policy

document in line with the English Non-Statutory Guidance (NSG)¹. Furthermore, the report underlined the importance of keeping the syllabus up-to-date and of monitoring its implementation:

The scheme of work should be periodically reviewed to ensure matching with the Orders. There should be a mechanism for evaluating the impact of the scheme in practice i.e. ways of determining whether what is written in the schemes and teachers' records/forecasts of work is happening in practice. More monitoring and support by the Head of Department, the Curriculum Co-ordinator (lower school) and the Deputy Head (Academic) may be necessary.
(Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:3)

Several issues arise from this statement. To begin with, it is clear that the recommendation for periodic reviews of the syllabus went unheeded. After this report was published in late 1993, there were major changes to the English Orders resulting from the Dearing Review of 1995. Despite this event, no modifications were made to the Bayside English Syllabus until February 1997. By this time it is clear from the content of Chapter 11:6 – 11:10 that the Bayside English Syllabus was totally out of date and did not properly reflect the streamlined English Orders that emerged post-Dearing.

Also of interest is the call for monitoring the implementation of the syllabus at individual teacher level. The above quotation from the inspection report referred to 'teachers' records/forecasts of work' and the need to determine whether or not these reflected the reality of the teaching taking place. The comments of the Head of English at Bayside School, Martin Gonzalez, recorded in Chapter 12:1, bear testimony to the fact that he was very aware that teachers' records of work offer no guarantee that what is written down in them is actually being taught. As

¹ Since Gibraltar introduced the national curriculum via educational regulation and not by Act of Parliament, the term refers to what in England and Wales are the English Orders.

a consequence, Gonzalez was adamant that trust in the professionalism of teachers is essential (Gonzalez I/V 1997:3). This translated into dispensing with the records of work completely, though they were not replaced with anything at all, resulting in the current situation whereby no individual records exist of what each teacher is covering.

Whereas the inherent truth in the argument put forward by Gonzalez on the accuracy of the content of the record of work can be recognised, it can also be contended that the position fails to take account of the other benefits to be gained from written records. This is particularly so when these take the form of a forecast of work. Rather than a simple tool for accountability, the forecast of work becomes a way for individual teachers to ensure that a balance exists in their teaching and that all the attainment targets are being adequately tackled.

The 1993 inspection recommended the introduction of a weekly forecast of work to make it easier for supply teachers covering for absent colleagues and to help with the preparation of lessons and co-ordination across the year groups (Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:5). This was not implemented and very little co-ordination exists between individual teachers taking classes in any given year. Asked about how comparable the content of English teaching among parallel groups at Bayside School is, 60% of the English teachers claimed to have no way of knowing. The remaining 40% felt the content was fairly similar, though only one teacher claimed to discuss this issue with colleagues and no-one felt the content of English lessons was very similar (Bayside Questionnaire 1997:5). This evidence suggests that one of the basic goals of the national curriculum of achieving one education for all was not being achieved in the lower school at Bayside.

Also very significant is the fact that the implementation of the English curriculum in years 8 and 9 at Bayside School is not being

monitored at all. The situation for years 10 and 11 is different because the GCSE syllabus requirements for coursework and examinations provide a yardstick against which to measure whether or not individual teachers are fulfilling their obligations to the pupils in their care. That nothing similar exists in the lower school exposes these children to the risk of inadequate teaching going unnoticed and particular groups of pupils being put at a disadvantage through no fault of their own. The 1993 report called for the establishment of a monitoring procedure, but it has clearly not materialised (Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:3). One probable reason for this relates to the staffing levels in the department and to the work-load of the Head of English.

Whereas the head of department is the obvious person to whom to entrust the task of monitoring the performance of teachers under him, this is only possible in practice where the conditions exist to allow him to carry out this function. Gonzalez argued that he had too heavy a workload to be able to monitor all the English teachers in a large school like Bayside (Gonzalez I/V 1997:1). The evidence suggests that he was justified in feeling this way. The 1993 inspection report drew attention to the excessive workload not only of the Head of English but also of all the members of his department:

The teachers of English are very overloaded with work. This situation needs to be looked at to ascertain whether there is need for more English specialists or for a better distribution of non-contact time which takes into account the vast amounts of marking required of these teachers if the job is to be done properly.

(Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:4)

Since 1993, the situation has deteriorated in that three full-time English specialists left Bayside for other schools and, of the replacements, only one was given a full English timetable. This resulted

in heavier teaching loads for the remaining English teachers, including the head of department who, as described in Chapter 12:1, had less non-contact time the year this study was carried out than most senior managers at the school. If the workload was considered excessive by the inspectors in 1993, it is likely to be even more so today. This adds credence to Gonzalez's view that he did not have the time to monitor the teaching of colleagues in his department even if he wanted to. Interestingly, as quoted above, the 1993 inspection report also recommended that the Curriculum Co-ordinator (lower school) and the Deputy Head (Academic) should be involved in monitoring the work of the English teachers (Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:3). There is currently no evidence to suggest that either of the two people mentioned carry out this function. The result, in essence, is that the implementation of the English curriculum in years 8 and 9 at Bayside School is not being monitored to any meaningful extent. All in all, it is an area of the curriculum that appears to suffer from being considered a low priority by the school administration. This is implicit in the way the following additional recommendation of the inspection report was ignored:

When the new Orders are in place, it will be necessary to arrange for all teachers of English to attend KS 3 training in order to help them implement the changes better. A visit to UK schools by the Head of Department is also a worthwhile investment.

(Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:4)

Neither of these recommendations was adopted and it can be argued that the need is still as great as ever to implement some form of strategy that will ensure greater cohesion in the English teaching at Key Stage 3.

The need for monitoring the lower school curriculum increases when the above is considered in tandem with the evidence presented in Chapter 11:5. This outlined the influence on teachers of the GCSE syllabuses in determining what they teach students in years 8 and 9 at Bayside School. The danger always exists that, in teaching for an examination, the full breadth of the curriculum may not be covered. Additionally, the external pressures to coach students for a particular form of assessment are considered by some educationists potentially to inhibit learning among the less able. The latter will be less likely to be given the chance to develop personal learning styles that might maximise their potential for progress. In this scenario, testing becomes a form of straitjacket:

Anxiety about covering the examination syllabus means teachers are afraid to take risks with material not manifestly related to the examination; students may also become impatient with material which does not seem to be in the form of examination practice.

(Prodomou 1995:20)

It can be argued that the real dangers inherent in teaching for examinations make it essential for some form of monitoring of the year 8 and 9 English curriculum at Bayside School.

13:3 How well is Bayside School implementing the English Orders?

The preceding section of this chapter should not be interpreted as meaning that English is being badly taught at Bayside School. The evidence presented thus far is inconclusive on this point, but clear on the fact that implementation of the English Orders is not being

adequately monitored. Additional indications exist, nevertheless, which support that successful English teaching is taking place throughout Bayside School.

The classroom observations of the 1993 inspectors provide the first source of such information. Their report praised most teachers of English for providing good language models for pupils to emulate and for being hard-working and committed to those they taught. More significantly, the report noted the manifest competence of these teachers both as regards delivery of lessons and subject knowledge. It also underlined that "...there was evidence to suggest that all attainment targets were being addressed" (Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:4). The work done in 'Speaking and Listening' received a particular mention:

There were instances when very good oral work was being done. In a couple of classes, pupils had produced some good oral presentations in preparation for GCSE demands. Others had video recordings to supplement their presentation for evaluation by the teacher and the rest of the class.

(Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:4)

The above reflected the position in 1993, but it would appear that the situation today has, if anything, improved. This is the assessment of Bob Ainsley, chief moderator for English for 44 centres of the Southern Examining Group (SEG) including Bayside School. Ainsley has been dealing with Bayside School for six years and during that time has paid several visits to the school to evaluate the implementation of the English GCSE syllabus for the examining board he represents. When interviewed, Ainsley claimed that the work done in 'speaking and listening' at Bayside School was above the average when compared to similar schools in England and Wales with which he deals. His

assessment was that this component of the language curriculum is very important and a definite strength at Bayside:

One might have thought that potentially it might have been a problem because of the physical distance from England and the fact that two languages are widely spoken on the Rock. This has not been the case however. There are no problems with the work done in this area and the standard reached is actually very high.

(Ainsley I/V 1997:2)

If anything, these findings confirm the belief stated by Sir Ron Dearing in the review of the English Orders that pupils' knowledge of other languages provide a potential contribution to their learning of English (SCAA 1995:5).

Interestingly, Ainsley attributed this strength in 'speaking and listening' at Bayside School to what he called the 'close repartee' he observed between teachers and pupils. He claimed to have noted a warmth in the relationships and pupils, he felt, wanted to be there. This, Ainsley affirmed, was not always the case in the schools he visited and he was sure it was an important factor which contributed to the success achieved at Bayside with 'speaking and listening' (Ainsley I/V 1997:2).

In written work, however, the 1993 Bayside School inspection report had been a little more critical. It noted that pupils were set a variety of writing tasks but questioned whether or not they catered adequately for all pupils:

Teaching approaches were not very varied and gave the impression that they did not 'stretch' the pupils sufficiently.

(Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:4)

The situation would appear to have changed since then as Ainsley noted an improvement in the standard of the written work produced at

Bayside School over the last six years and claimed that this was particularly true of that produced by the most able boys:

Some of the assignments set for the top groups are downright scintillating and they have responded to the challenges because the work was clearly exciting for them to do.

(Ainsley I/V 1997:2)

Paradoxically, whereas in 1993 the impression was that students were not being 'stretched' sufficiently, Ainsley felt the school now produced far too much work and considered that the standard achieved, particularly by the able students, was 'as good as that from anywhere' (Ainsley I/V 1997:2).

Also significant was that Ainsley noted the wide range of work done in English at Bayside School, and the fact that the tasks submitted for moderation were always marked fairly and correctly (Ainsley I/V 1997:1).

The effectiveness of the English teaching is further reflected to some degree in the GCSE examination results, as the following table which records the percentage of passes in English language achieved between 1990 and 1997, attests:

Table 4: Percentage of GCSE passes in English language for Bayside School, Gibraltar compared to statistics for England and Wales.

Year of examination	% of grades A*-C Bayside School	% of grades A*-C England / Wales
1990	37	52
1991	44	53
1992	36	55
1993	62	57
1994	42	58
1995	41	57
1996	65	57
1997	42	56

The above figures show a considerable degree of fluctuation in the Bayside School results for GCSE English language. Clearly 1993 and 1996 were exceptional years but, setting these aside, the trend appears to be a move out of the high 30% bracket into the low 40% range. This would confirm the assessment by Bob Ainsley which is quoted above that the standard of work produced by Bayside school has been improving in the last six years (Ainsley I/V 1997:2). When compared to the figures which reflect the national average in England and Wales, it is clear that the school still has some way to go, though the exceptional years of 1993 and 1996 saw Bayside results well above the UK statistics. It should be borne in mind, however, that the figures for England and Wales were based on the results of both boys and girls.

Overall, the evidence exists to suggest that English is being effectively taught at Bayside School despite the obvious deficiencies in monitoring individual classes. Whereas the degree of efficacy is easier to determine at Key Stage 4, where the yardstick of the GCSE assessment can be used, Bob Ainsley has no doubts that English teaching throughout Bayside School is indeed sound:

I think Bayside School is delivering the English Orders extremely well. I don't feel the school could be doing En1 and 2 so well if it were not meeting the requirements of the national curriculum. Obviously one must bear in mind that it is a comprehensive school and that not every pupil can be brought up to a standard which will see them meeting all the requirements of the national curriculum.

(Ainsley I/V 1997:3)

It could be argued that since the advent of the national curriculum, the lowest ability pupils have been those least well catered for at the school, particularly in years 10 and 11. They have been, after all, either subjected to an inadequate one-year course in year 10, or made to follow a GCSE syllabus with which they could not cope. It would be unfair to lay all the blame for this situation on Bayside School, however, since this is a problem that is inherent in the English Orders themselves. It comes about as a consequence of what some consider excessive demands in some language areas like the requirement for all students to study Shakespeare (Cashdan 1994:409). Bayside School has, nevertheless, identified the problem and attempted to tackle it through the introduction of the 'Certificate of Achievement' course described in Chapter 12:5. It is still too early to gauge whether or not this will achieve the desired effect, but it is hoped this course will go some way towards catering for these students in a more meaningful way.

13:4 Information technology and English at Bayside School

One area in which little provision would appear to have been made is in the application of information technology, and more specifically word-processing, to aid presentation in English. In truth, the area is not given a great deal of importance in the post-Dearing English Order document. In the Key Skills section for 'reading' at Key Stages 3 and 4,

there is a reference to the potential use of IT as a source for material suitable for comparing and synthesising information drawn from different texts (SCAA 1995:21). This apart, the only other reference to IT in the English Orders occurs in the section on common requirements for English which precedes the individual Key Stage programmes of study:

Information technology

Pupils should be given opportunities, where appropriate, to develop and apply their information technology (IT) capability in their study of English.

(SCAA 1995:1)

The words 'where appropriate' are plainly open to interpretation, but the document is certainly clear on the desirability of allowing students access to IT for their English work.

At Bayside School such opportunities do not exist during English lessons for what would appear to be resourcing problems. The Head of English complained that the computer needs of his department had been largely ignored through the years:

My department does not have a single computer and this means that we need to rely on the Information Technology Department to cover such skills as word-processing, because we do not have the equipment to do it ourselves.

(Gonzalez I/V 1997:3)

The problem had already been noted in the 1993 inspection report. This had included an observation that the structured scheme of work for IT for years 8 and 9 catered for pupils' needs during IT lessons, but the report felt it important that pupils should have access to computers during some English lessons. It recommended that the English

Department be provided with its own equipment or be given greater access to the computers that already existed in the school:

There is a serious lack of IT equipment available for the exclusive use of the English Department. Arrangements must be made to use the existing hardware in order to enable access to word-processing and desk-top publishing programs... Any obstacles that are impeding progress in this area should be looked into and ways of overcoming these be found as a matter of priority.

(Bayside School Inspection Report 1993:3)

This recommendation was again disregarded and as such the situation today is no better than it was in 1993. In the interim, the importance of IT to society has hugely increased, as has the development of the role it plays in the daily lives of everyone. It could therefore be argued that even where the English Orders do not make the contribution of IT to English teaching a high priority, it is certainly desirable to develop an area which can but continue to grow in importance in the years to come.

13:5 Chapter overview

A Gibraltar Department of Education inspection of English provision at Bayside School was carried out in 1993, as had been the case with the other two schools described in this study. Calls in the subsequent report, for a regular updating of the school's English syllabus to be carried out, went unheeded. Four years elapsed before any modifications to the syllabus were made. The inspectors also called for the establishment for a monitoring procedure to regulate teaching, particularly in the lower school. This has so far failed to materialise.

The 1993 inspection noted the very heavy workload of English teachers at Bayside School. The situation today has worsened, with fewer full-time subject specialists available to cover the classes.

The evidence of this study suggests that though English teaching is not being effectively monitored, the subject is being taught well. Bob Ainsley, chief moderator for the Southern Examining Group (SEG), feels the work done at Bayside School in 'speaking and listening' is above the average when compared with similar schools in England and Wales. Ainsley also considers there has been an improvement in the standard of written work produced at the School in the last six years. GCSE coursework tasks were always found to be fairly and correctly marked. The number of GCSE English language pass grades achieved by pupils at Bayside School has also been improving. Over 40% now achieve between grades A and C.

Unfortunately, there continues to be no provision made for the teaching of English-related information technology skills, despite five years having elapsed since a recommendation to this effect was included in the 1993 inspection report.

The next chapter of this study examines the role of the Gibraltar National Curriculum Working Group for English. This body was set up to co-ordinate the efforts of the various schools in implementing the English Orders. The chapter also describes the role played by the Gibraltar Department of Education support services.

SECTION E: SUPPORT SERVICES AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 14

THE ROLE OF THE GIBRALTAR NATIONAL CURRICULUM WORKING GROUP FOR ENGLISH AND OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

14:1 The national curriculum working group for English

The National Curriculum Working Group for English (NCWGE), was constituted in 1990 as a consequence of the political decision in Gibraltar to adopt the national curriculum. The group replaced the curriculum working party that preceded it, and today includes participants from all levels of education on the Rock, from first schools to the College of Further Education.

The terms of reference for the group potentially allow it an important role in shaping the future development of national curriculum English in Gibraltar. The group is defined as a forum for the following:

- (a) To exchange ideas and useful practices.
- (b) To promote continuity and co-operation.
- (c) To advise on the planning, implementation and the evaluation of the national curriculum.
- (d) To advise on matters relating to assessment within the subject area.

(Department of Education, Gibraltar, Unpublished Document 1990:1)

Given the small number of schools in Gibraltar and the existence, in the national curriculum, of a framework which is common to all, the opportunities for co-operation are clear. Close links between the schools would ensure that, in Gibraltar at least, the national curriculum would achieve the aim of providing 'one education for all'. In practice,

however, this co-operation has not materialised and the NCWGE has never fulfilled its potential.

In some ways the problem may be seen as an inherited one, since at the inaugural meeting of the NCWGE, the chairman called for the committed involvement of all members if the work undertaken were to prove meaningful and productive. He also made the following assessment of the factors that had inhibited success in the Curriculum Working Party for English which had preceded the NCWGE:

He felt that there was an element of passive involvement among some members and that this had an adverse effect upon the group's work. He hoped that members would see their roles in the new group as active contributors and not passive onlookers.

(NCWGE Minutes 1990:1)

This call went largely unheeded, and a lack of co-operation between schools is clearly evident both from the minutes of meetings and from the words of the current chairman of the group, Charlie Durante. He described the problems which resulted on one occasion as a result of a request for each of the school representatives to bring copies of their own schemes of work for these to be pooled, discussed and used for the general benefit of all. Durante reports that what was an innocent request resulted in tremendous turmoil, with some headteachers instructing their representatives not to provide the requested schemes (Durante I/V 1995:2).

There are several possible reasons for this lack of co-operation. Durante feels that it stems from feelings of insecurity on the part of certain schools which almost lack confidence in what they are doing and are reluctant to put it under the microscope (Durante I/V 1995:2). Two further reasons were offered by the Senior Education Adviser at the Department of Education, Patsy Scott. She considered that there exists

an element of competition between schools, which makes them reticent to share information. Added to this is what she sees as a perception on the part of some of the middle schools that they are being dictated to by the secondary schools. Both these factors, Scott claims, manifest a lack of trust which inhibits the work that can be done by the group (Scott I/V 1997:2).

An additional factor that has emerged as part of this research is that a number of the participants in the NCWGE are prevented from active involvement in the group's activities by the headteachers of the schools which they represent. In a questionnaire completed anonymously by all twelve members of the NCWGE, 33% stated that they were under some constraint when it came to expressing any views which were not those of their headteacher (NCWGE Questionnaire 1995:2). Significantly, the most problematic age-range in this regard would appear to be the first schools, since three of the five representatives of these schools (60%), said they did not enjoy the freedom to express their own ideas at the NCWGE meetings. This being the case, it is hard to see how the work of the group can be productive, or how real co-operation can be promoted.

Despite all the above, the NCWGE nevertheless has an important part to play in the implementation and assessment of the English Orders in Gibraltar. A clear need exists to move away from the current situation, in which some representatives do not have the freedom to speak their mind, towards the development of greater 'ownership' of the group on the part of its members. As things stand as present, not one of the members of the group considers the NCWGE very useful. No fewer than 42% of the representatives stated that the group is not very useful, with 8% stating that it is not useful at all. The remaining 50% declared the work of the group 'fairly useful' (NCWGE Questionnaire 1995:1). These results indicate the dissatisfaction of a

large percentage of those involved with the process, but replies to subsequent questions that will be discussed below demonstrate an awareness of the real potential the group has to promote cohesion in the implementation of the English Orders in Gibraltar.

A total of nine of the group members (75%) stated that, even as it stands, the NCWGE is fairly successful as a forum for the exchange of ideas (NCWGE Questionnaire 1995:1). Asked to comment on how the work of the group could be improved, the majority of the representatives put forward suggestions on what could be done. The most common reply (42%) was that the group should split into smaller school-age groups in which more concrete results could be obtained (NCWGE Questionnaire 1995:4-5).

It is apparent from these replies that the teachers involved desire more practical and tangible results to emerge from participation in the group's activities. That a large percentage should call for the subdivision of the group by school levels, indicates a recognition that most is to be gained from working with colleagues who share the same problems and have similar needs. A desire for greater co-operation is also implied.

14:2 A possible way forward

So in what ways could the work of the NCWGE be made more efficient? One possible way would be to revisit the terms of reference of the group which were reproduced earlier in this chapter. Some success is already being achieved in the initial aim to exchange ideas and useful practices. However, little progress appears to have been made in any other area. A study of the minutes of NCWGE meetings reveals the drawing up of a common format of reports for first and middle schools as the only tangible result to emerge. This was confirmed by the group's

chairman, who stated that the desired co-operation between schools did not exist, that nothing concrete has been done in evaluating the national curriculum nor indeed on the issue of assessment in English (Durante I/V 1995:2).

A closer definition of the work that the NCWGE is trying to achieve would, it could be argued, be beneficial to all. This 'agenda' should not be imposed unilaterally by the Department of Education, because it would then run the risk of provoking the sort of negative reaction from headteachers which has already been described above.

The work of the group is effectively one of planning for staff development alongside institutional development and it would make sense to apply the principles which are central to this topic. The first requirement would then be for a process of definition and prioritisation of needs which Oldroyd and Hall see as the 'foundation stones' of effective staff development:

Needs identification is a process that should be handled sensitively, efficiently but not mechanically. It should be democratic and not imposed. It has to take account of the needs of individuals, groups, the whole school, as well as those arising from LEA and national policies.

(Oldroyd and Hall 1991:62)

The NCWGE experience in Gibraltar has already shown that progress is not possible without co-operation. This will not be forthcoming unless all the interested parties, from the headteachers to the Department of Education to the school representatives, are able to include their concerns in the group's agenda. In effect, a form of negotiation is required. The benefits of the process, however, would be an ownership of the process which would greatly improve the chances for success. Working in this manner would also contribute to achieving

a positive attitude to the process among the school representatives, for as Gough states:

It would seem important that teachers themselves identify issues which might be focused on and developed. This is more likely to engender awareness and commitment.

(Gough 1985:37)

Greater involvement by all concerned in the decisions regarding what work the group would undergo would also go some way towards reducing the lack of trust which the Senior Education Adviser had quoted as the main reason inhibiting the work done (Scott I/V 1997:2).

Additionally, the group would benefit considerably from a better definition of the agenda for meetings. At present, the NCWGE chairman includes any matters he may feel are relevant or topical in the week prior to the meeting. He also consults with the Education Advisers and draws up the agenda in this way. By his own admission, it is done largely on an ad-hoc basis and 'there is no long-term planning' involved (Durante I/V 1995:1). This could well be the reason why some headteachers do not allow the school representatives to contribute at meetings, since they have no prior notification of the topics to be discussed. If the work of the group were to be better defined as advocated above, each school could then form a view on the individual matters particular meetings would deal with. The school representative would then have greater freedom to participate, and more tangible results could be obtained.

Another benefit of a better definition of the work which the NCWGE is to cover is that the process could then be linked to target setting. Trethowan (1987:15) suggests that this sort of link is necessary, because the procedure is then concerned with achieving outcomes, and not simply recording what has already happened. The concerns

expressed by 33% of the school representatives that nothing ever comes of the NCWGE meetings could be met in this way (NCWGE Questionnaire 1995:4).

The Senior Education Adviser, Patsy Scott, is well aware of the need to improve the way the NCWGE functions. As a result, she withdrew the requirement for all the subject working groups to meet once a term during the academic year 1996/97. She merely asked that they convened meetings when there was an agenda to discuss. Her reasons for doing this were to return a sense of purpose to the sessions:

I want to avoid people attending and feeling that the work done is irrelevant. As a consequence of this, some of the groups have not met this year.

(Scott I/V 1997:2)

Whereas the English group met once during the year, it would appear that the strategy did not really pay off, since the termly meetings were reintroduced for the academic year 1997/98. Certainly, Scott accepted that ‘...there are problems related to the working of the group’ (Scott I/V 1997:2). These issues need to be addressed since all the parties are agreed on the potential value of the NCWGE in promoting curricular standardisation in Gibraltar and in helping individual schools in their implementation of the English Orders.

14:3 The role of the Education Department support services

The support team of the Gibraltar Department of Education was expanded in June 1996 and a process of redefinition of the duties of its members is still currently underway in 1998. Since Gibraltar is small, it is possible for the department to keep close links with all the schools and

in effect the team provide the common denominator which oversees national curriculum implementation.

The team comprises a Senior Education Adviser, three Education Advisers, a Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) and three peripatetic teachers. One of the advisers has specific responsibility for Special Needs. The peripatetic teachers come under the control of the PEP, though that situation is under review and the Senior Education Adviser maintains that they should and will come under the wing of the Education Adviser with responsibility for Special Needs (Scott I/V 1997:1). The peripatetic teachers are being mainly used for language support.

The psychologist's duties are currently changing substantially. In the past he had always played a key role in language teaching, which included the screening of pupils. Now, though the PEP still has some input, the bulk of the work in this area has been passed to the education advisers (Scott I/V 1997:1).

The team is there to provide support to all the schools on the Rock, and it is also responsible for carrying out school inspections. In practice, though, such inspections tend to be infrequent and lack any real depth, since they are carried out by a team which is very limited in size and has additional duties to perform at the same time. The last real inspections were carried out between 1991-1994 and comprised the then two education advisers attempting to assess the degree of success of all local schools in the implementation of the national curriculum core subjects. Some of these inspections have already been described in the course of this study.

Such inspections would appear to be less than fully adequate. The most they could realistically be expected to achieve is an overview of each school's policies and stated procedures. It is clear that a community the size of Gibraltar has limited resources and, because of

this, a degree of partnership between individual schools and the Department of Education is essential since co-operation and trust are required.

The Education Department support team, nevertheless, has an essential role to play, particularly when the manifest lack of co-operation between schools, described in the first section of this chapter, is considered. It is the one agency which has direct links with all the schools and it has the distinct advantage that it cannot be perceived by individual headteachers as being in competition with them. This places the team at the heart of national curriculum implementation in Gibraltar and on them falls the responsibility for monitoring and promoting standardisation from school to school.

14:4 Chapter overview

All Gibraltar schools are represented on the National Curriculum Working Group for English (NCWGE). The group is intended to promote continuity and co-operation between Gibraltar schools, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas. It is also required to advise on assessment of the English Orders as well as on planning and implementation procedures.

The NCWGE has never fulfilled its potential and very little co-operation between schools is manifest. The main stumbling block appears to be some headteachers who inhibit the active participation of their school representatives at group meetings. The only apparent success of the group would seem to be in promoting an exchange of ideas.

A possible way forward is through the establishment of a needs identification process to improve the degree of ownership of the

NCWGE members. A defined agenda for meetings would also permit schools to decide, beforehand, their position vis-à-vis the topics being discussed. The more active participation of the group's members should then become possible.

Schools can also count on support from the advisory team of the Gibraltar Department of Education. Though comprising a limited number of people, the team has responsibility for monitoring national curriculum implementation in Gibraltar schools. Furthermore, it has the duty to attempt to promote greater co-operation between all interested parties.

The final chapter of this study attempts to place the findings of this research in context by examining the data collected against the background of the theories of the introduction of innovation and the management of change. In so doing, it endeavours to evaluate the relative merits of the approaches adopted by each school in this study to the implementation of the English Orders.

CHAPTER 15

CONCLUSIONS

15:1 Setting the conclusions of this research into context

This study has been concerned with the implementation of national curriculum English in three schools in Gibraltar. In looking at some of the problems experienced, nevertheless, it is necessary to consider that the English Orders, even after the Dearing review, do not constitute a perfect document. It can be argued that in seeking to define what English should be taught, the national curriculum attempted a marriage of the various schools of thought regarding what the subject should comprise. The major influences here were supporters of the 'Cambridge Group' with their 'national heritage' notion of language, and those of the 'Progressive Movement' who favoured a model based on teaching self-expression. The influence of these two groups on the development of English as a subject in the curriculum has already been described in some detail in Chapter 1:3.

It can be argued that these two partners in the English curriculum are not compatible and the factor that makes this so can be traced to the very heart of the thinking that produced the national curriculum initially: the central imposition of one curriculum for all. These objectives were clearly laid out in the Conservative Party election manifesto of 1987 (Conservative Party 1987:18). Whereas the notion of equal opportunities is laudable, the supposition in providing the same curriculum for all is that everyone is equal and indeed has the same needs. This is clearly not the case, as can be seen from this comment by

David Eccles a former Conservative education minister in the 1950s and early 1960s:

We can give every man the vote, a pension and free medical treatment, but we cannot make him his neighbour's equal. Men are in fact staggeringly unequal, as everyone discovers in his home, in his school, his place of work, the income tax returns or the House of Commons.

(Eccles 1967:72-73)

It seems likely that the inclusion in the English Orders today of Shakespeare and pre-twentieth century authors is a result of the influence of the Cambridge Group. Yet this view of literature as heritage which should be passed on to future generations, while undoubtedly of value in the abstract, founders when applied to every pupil. Common sense could lead one to question the desirability of teaching Shakespeare to a child who has not learnt the basics of expression and is indeed incapable of reading Roald Dahl unaided, let alone Charles Dickens.

As described in Chapter 3:9, the philosopher of education Paul Hirst argues that the ability to form thoughts and develop these is only possible because of language (Hirst 1974:70). Thus, it could be maintained that, until a student has achieved sufficient mastery of language to express his/her ideas, there is little chance of gaining any appreciation or indeed understanding of the works of Shakespeare. It would seem to make sense, therefore, that language skills be taught before exposing children to works of the British literary heritage, and supposedly this is what the national curriculum does. The flaw in the argument is that because of innate differences in pupils, not all will achieve a suitable grasp of language to enable them to progress to study literary works with any real chance of success. The English Orders, nevertheless, in following the aim of providing 'one curriculum for all',

have embodied the notion of entitlement and hence it can be argued that parts of the curriculum are not really suited to all the students being taught it.

The above creates problems in implementation of the English Orders, particularly at secondary level where curricular demands are greatest. It is an issue in which logic dictates that changes will surely come about once the moratorium on modifications to the national curriculum ends in the year 2000.

The current impetus to teach literacy and the numbers of schools involved in the British government's pilot of 'The National Literacy Project' suggest a swing towards the Progressive Movement's model of English teaching which will equip a person for life. The summer of 1998 saw an eleven-fold increase in the number of holiday literacy schools in England and Wales from the previous year's pilot scheme. A total of 562 summer literacy schools were operated by the government in a drive to help pupils improve their language skills (DFEE Circular 147/1998:1). Furthermore, a change of even greater significance was announced by the Education Secretary, David Blunkett, in January 1998. Rather than merely modify the content of the national curriculum subjects, he reduced the statutory core for 5-11 year olds to English, mathematics, science, information technology and religious education. These changes took effect from September 1998 and were clearly intended as part of a drive to allow much greater emphasis to be given to literacy and numeracy skills:

For too long, too many primary school teachers have been prevented from giving literacy and numeracy the attention they deserve because the National Curriculum has lacked the very clear focus on the basics which is crucial in primary education. As a result literacy and numeracy have been too often subsumed into other subjects.

(DFEE Circular 006/1998:1)

In announcing the move, David Blunkett underlined that the measure would now permit schools to spend at least an hour a day on literacy (DFEE Circular 006/1998:1).

The above step is significant for two reasons. To begin with, it can be seen as a move away from an entitlement curriculum for all. At primary level, headteachers, though still bound by the statutory duty to provide a 'broad and balanced' curriculum, will be allowed much greater freedom to decide what this comprises. The implications for English teaching are to be found in the underlying recognition of the central importance of the subject to the education of every pupil. It is in this area, as well as in a limited number of other subjects, that the issue of entitlement will remain, and if anything be strengthened, through the better definition of what each pupil must be taught. This is likely to lead to further changes in the English Orders in the year 2000, since the current moves are described by Blunkett as:

...a key step towards a better focused National Curriculum for all schools from September 2000.

(DFEE Circular 006/1998:2)

It could be argued that this 'focus' is less likely to involve significant changes in content, but rather a more widespread expansion of the literacy initiatives that the DFEE is currently pursuing via summer schools and pilot schemes. An examination of the aims of the National Literacy Project (NLP) would seem to indicate that they are very much in tune with the wider educational objectives of the government that led to the reduction of the curriculum in primary schools:

- to improve standards of literacy in the participating primary schools in line with national expectations over a five year period;
- to provide specialist support to schools through teams of consultants in each LEA;
- through the national network, to develop detailed, practical guidance on teaching methods, and to disseminate these to the project schools;
- to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme in terms of the standards achieved and its effects on school improvement.

(DFEE 1997:1)

It is interesting to note that the third of these aims of the NLP suggests much greater central involvement, not only in the content of English teaching, but also in the methods to be employed in the classroom. A close examination of the course reveals a very detailed breakdown of what exactly needs to be taught, the sequence to be followed, termly objectives, and even lists of specific phonics and spelling work accompanied by a timetable of the year and term when they should be covered. Together, they constitute a detailed scheme of work that provides a much more rigid framework for teachers to follow than the English Orders document. In this sense the NLP could be seen as providing the desired 'focus' for the national curriculum, at least in so far as concerns the development of the English Orders with the stated objective of raising the levels of literacy in England and Wales.

The above scenario has clear implications for the educational authorities in Gibraltar that once again will need to decide whether or not to adopt this initiative in schools on the Rock. The concept of running a literacy project initiative already enjoys some support among the advisory team. Senior Education Adviser, Patsy Scott, considers that the development of the scheme in the United Kingdom requires closer

study, but she is attracted to the features of the project which encourage a more structured delivery of the English Orders:

It is useful to examine this sort of initiative closely because it spells out strategies and content and explores organisation procedure. All of this is very good. It also requires a standardisation of approach and could help the teacher cope with the management of learning structures and to provide a greater variety of these.

(Scott I/V 1997:3)

It is also likely that the literacy project will find favour with the Director of Education, Leslie Lester, since he has indicated a desire to examine the methods of English teaching in Gibraltar schools now that the national curriculum has defined the content (Lester I/V 1996:3).

Additionally, the inclination on the part of the Rock's community to strengthen its links with the mother country is probably stronger than ever because of the current political situation. It should be recalled that one main reason for Gibraltar deciding to adopt the national curriculum was the general population's wish to promote British institutions because they reflected the popular opposition to Spain's desires to recover the sovereignty of Gibraltar. The current general perception on the Rock that 'New Labour' is attempting to pressure Gibraltarians into some form of joint sovereignty deal with Spain has already been described in Chapter 2:3. A practical effect of this perception, however, has been a growth in the local population's determination to retain Gibraltar's British institutions as a means of counteracting this policy of osmosis. This will, no doubt, prove an important factor when considering whether or not Gibraltar wishes to adopt the England and Wales literacy project initiative. In all likelihood, however, no moves will be made in that direction for the time being. In keeping with established procedures, the Rock's Department of Education will want to see the

scheme unfold in England and Wales before deciding on the desirability of following such a course of action in Gibraltar.

15:2 Managing change

In effect, the way the schools that have formed the basis of this study are likely to react to future educational changes can probably be gauged from the ways they have implemented the national curriculum. In reality the central issue is how each school manages change. The approaches adopted by the three Gibraltar schools in the light of the current theories on educational change management merit examination.

15:3 The essence of change

An understanding of the essence of change is central to any examination of a system of implementation, because it can explain some of the reactions of teachers who ultimately are those charged with bringing the changes about. The first issue to be considered here is that change and progress are not necessarily synonymous. Schools as institutions are constantly bombarded with change and the evolution of the national curriculum is a prime example of this, as the shape and form of the Order documents have been constantly altered through the 1990s. It is little surprise, therefore, that teachers should question the need for changes each time these occur. The educational observer, Michael Fullan, considers it proper that the value of innovations in schools should not be taken for granted and argues that a number of important questions about the sources and consequences of change should always be asked:

What values are involved? Who will benefit from the change? How much of a priority is it? How achievable is it? Which areas of potential change are being neglected?

(Fullan 1991:27)

Marris (1975:166), in considering that all change requires loss, anxiety and struggle, argues that teachers must be allowed to assimilate and make sense of changes and also be allowed time for the impulse of rejection to play itself out. Implied in this statement is the fact that most teachers, faced with major change, will initially reject it because it questions the validity of what they are already doing and launches them into an unknown area that may or may not prove fruitful, but will certainly require a great deal of personal effort. This research has already noted this reaction among the teachers at St Paul's School, Gibraltar, with the headteacher commenting that she '...initially met with a lot of opposition from the staff' when she first decided to pilot the national curriculum in her school (Beiso I/V 1996:2). A probable reason for this is offered by Fullan who states that change is usually introduced in a way that takes no account of the subjective reality of teachers that he describes in the following terms:

At initial stages, teachers are more often concerned about how the change will affect them personally, in terms of their in-classroom and extra-classroom work, than about a description of the goals and supposed benefits of the program.

(Fullan 1991:35)

Underlying all these arguments is the implication that the teacher is a crucial factor in implementing change and that his/her needs must be taken into account if change is to happen at all. This has not always been the case with the national curriculum, since it could be argued that

it constituted an innovation generated through a mixture of political as well as educational motives. The arguments of how the national curriculum signalled a move towards centralisation of the curriculum have already been presented in Chapter 1:1. The dangers of the effects of politically motivated change have been noted by Fullan:

Politically motivated change is accompanied by greater commitment of leaders, the power of new ideas, and additional resources; but it also produces overload, unrealistic time-lines, uncoordinated demands, simplistic solutions, misdirected efforts, inconsistencies, and what it takes to bring about reform.

(Fullan 1991:27)

Most of the negative factors associated with this process affect the individual teacher and no doubt contribute to the considerable anxieties that often accompany change, as argued by Marris above. If these concerns are not addressed, however, there is a danger that change will not be implemented, for Fullan argues that all innovation is multidimensional and involves at least three components. These are the possible use of new or revised materials, the possible use of new teaching approaches and the possible alteration of beliefs (Fullan 1991:37). He states that the desired change has to occur along all three dimensions, if it is to have a chance of affecting the outcome of teaching. Clearly, if teachers are required in practice to alter their beliefs, then their reactions and needs are crucial to the ultimate successful implementation of any innovation. The process cannot occur without the dynamic involvement of the teacher, for as Day (1986:200) points out, the teacher develops (actively) he or she is not developed (passively).

Some critics of the way the national curriculum has been implemented in England and Wales argue that a principal drawback has

been the failure to take account of the legitimate role of teachers and educators in the development of the curriculum:

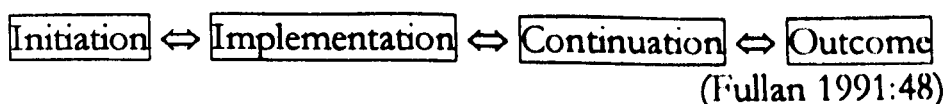
Reform has intensified teachers' work – adding on huge additional burdens to a job that is already excessively demanding. Second, it has been anti-intellectual. It has failed to call upon the professional wisdom of teachers.

(Hargreaves and Goodson 1995:4)

The scenario in Gibraltar is somewhat different is so far as the decision to adopt the national curriculum was taken following the consultation, via a questionnaire, of each and every teacher on the Rock. This process was described in Chapter 2:3. It can be said that teachers in Gibraltar approved the adoption of the national curriculum, given that over 90% of them voted in favour of this move. This does not necessarily imply, however, that the teachers were placed at the centre of the change process in the implementation plans of individual schools. To what degree this happened is so far as St Paul's, Bishop Fitzgerald and Bayside schools are concerned will be discussed later in this chapter.

15:4 Initiating change

Fullan underlines the fact that it is essential to consider change in schools as a process and not just an event (Fullan 1991:49). He advocates the division of this process into the following general stages:



Each of the stages is affected by numerous factors and the use of the arrows facing both directions is meant to indicate that progress will

not necessarily be linear and that a decision on implementation might have to be revisited, for example in the light of subsequent problems in practice. Given the necessity of teacher commitment in implementing any change, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, it seems logical that the best chances for success will lie where they are involved in the process of initiation as well as that of implementation. Only then will the desirable ownership of the process be assured. This view would appear to be borne out by that of Hargreaves, who lists the following as one of basic principles to be taken into account in planning educational change in this post-industrial age:

In any change effort, teachers and schools should know where they are going. And broadly speaking, they should be agreed on where they are headed. Purposes matter a lot in teaching. Yet teachers cannot be given a purpose: purposes must come from within.

(Hargreaves 1995:4)

It seems logical, therefore, that if teachers are to be involved in the process of initiation, they will need to develop a clear, coherent understanding of what the change is for, what it means and how it proceeds. Some consensus on these matters is clearly desirable among the teachers at any given school to improve the chances for success in implementation. Fullan considers this issue of 'collective meaning' as essential to any change process:

Solutions must come through the development of *shared meaning*. The interface between individual and collective meaning and action in everyday situations is where change stands or falls.

(Fullan 1991:5)

It is apparent from this research that, of the three schools studied, St Paul's School, Gibraltar, came closest to this model of change

management when implementing the national curriculum. The Head of Language, Paddy Alcantara, described how the school purposely sought 'shared meaning' of the national curriculum documents through discussion at weekly meetings and in-service sessions (Alcantara I/V 1996b:3). The teachers were no doubt helped by the headteacher's decision to implement the national curriculum two years before it was required of the school. This reduced the pressure on time and allowed the search for 'shared meaning' to be both thorough and complete by the time the other Gibraltar schools were beginning to look at implementing the national curriculum. The success of the approach was reflected in the views expressed by the teachers of St Paul's School, 84% of whom viewed the introduction of national curriculum English as a positive experience, with half of these stating that it was 'extremely positive' (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:7).

Ultimately, however, it could be argued that the successful introduction of the curriculum is largely due to the school's philosophy on change. The headteacher considered the possibilities afforded by major innovations like the national curriculum for the school's advancement as an institution. She felt an early positive reaction put St Paul's School in a better position to take advantage of these opportunities (Beiso I/V 1996:2). This philosophy was apparent in other decisions, like that to pilot the SATs even though the school was under no legal or other requirement to do so.

The general teaching staff at Bishop Fitzgerald School, on the other hand, was much less involved in the initiation of the process of transition to the national curriculum programme than their counterparts at St Paul's School had been. The headteacher, Antonia Gladstone, spoke of the initial lack of knowledge of teachers regarding the national curriculum and said the school tackled this problem via in-service

sessions in the early 1990s (Gladstone I/V 1998:4). However, it is apparent from the reaction of George Parody, the school's Head of Language at the time, that Bishop Fitzgerald School did not readily embrace the opportunities offered by change. He expressed the view that since the English Orders were based on 'good practice' it '...was logical that much of what would be proposed was already being done in some form at the school' (Parody I/V 1998:1). This comment constitutes a rejection of change. This was further emphasised by a statement in the introduction to the revised Bishop Fitzgerald School English syllabus in 1992 to the effect that Parody still considered the school's 1982 syllabus '...a valuable guide for the teacher of English despite its imperfections and omissions' (Bishop Fitzgerald English Syllabus 1992:1). In essence, it could be argued that the school was not looking for the opportunities for change in the national curriculum, but rather using the new documents to justify what it had already been doing.

This attitude to the national curriculum undoubtedly filtered down to the teachers since Parody noted that most were 'not very familiar with the national curriculum and relied on the Head of Language to interpret it for them' (Parody I/V 1998:3). This situation continues today with this research finding that 43% of the English teachers had never even read the English Orders document (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:1).

It can be argued that this approach has prevented the teachers from having the opportunity to develop 'shared meaning' of what the national curriculum English programme should comprise. This is a likely reason why this research has found that so much of the English teaching at the school today is disjointed and that there is little progression. In reality, the situation has changed little since Joey Britto

was Head of Language at Bishop Fitzgerald school between 1993-1996 and noted that ‘...lessons were essentially self-contained units and there was no progression or continuity’ (Britto I/V 1998:1).

Greater opportunities to develop ‘shared meaning’, of the national curriculum exist at Bayside School. Since the time of the publication of the English Department policy document of 1988, which preceded the national curriculum, teachers were asked to take account of the demands of the GCSE examination when planning their work in years 8 and 9 (Bayside School Unpublished Typescript 1988:1). The reasons for this policy have already been discussed in Chapter 11:4 and 11:5. It is true to say that the multiple changes that have been effected to the English Order document, as it has evolved, have been reflected by numerous alterations in the demands of the examining boards which prepare the GCSE examinations. As a consequence, Bayside English teachers have had constantly to revisit their teaching strategies in order to bring them into line with changing examination requirements. In practice, they have discussed and developed ‘shared meaning’ of what is required of them in each situation.

The results of this can be found in the 1997 Bayside English Department syllabus, which includes a section reminding teachers of the requirements of the various courses they teach, as well as the marking procedures to be followed in each case (Bayside English Syllabus 1997:8-12). It should be recalled that this research has found that most of the teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 at Bayside School is largely based upon the GCSE examination requirements. Bearing this in mind, it can be argued that a considerable degree of ‘shared meaning’ of the language curriculum ‘as taught’ has been achieved at the school. The drawback, of course, is that the teaching is not being based on the

English Orders document, so much as upon the procedures designed to assess it at the end of Key Stage 4.

The above situation should be considered in the light of the fact that this research has found that teaching in Years 8 and 9 is not being properly monitored. The philosophy of the school clearly places considerable emphasis on the professionalism of its teachers, since no records of work are kept and no-one can really state exactly what work has been covered by any particular class. The intrinsic value of records has been argued in Chapter 13:2. The danger in their rejection, it could be argued, lies in the fact that there exist no guarantees that the breadth of the language curriculum is being taught in every class. This could theoretically place some classes at a disadvantage when compared to others. Furthermore, discrepancies in implementation would serve to negate any advantages gained through 'shared meaning' of what English teaching should comprise. The system of implementation of the national curriculum adopted by Bayside School makes continuous 'shared meaning' very difficult to achieve because it must, of necessity, be based upon what all agree should be taught as opposed to an examination of what is being taught.

15:5 Implementation and continuation of change

Bearing in mind that implementing change is a process, Michael Fullan has identified a crucial factor to progress beyond the initiation stage. Once again 'shared meaning' is at the heart of the procedure:

The presence or absence of mechanisms to address the ongoing problem of meaning – at the beginning and as people try out ideas – is crucial for success, because it is at the individual level that change does or does not occur.

(Fullan 1991:45)

Constant interaction between teachers implementing an innovation is clearly required if 'shared meaning' is to be maintained. The approach implies a pooling of ideas and feedback on successful and less successful strategies and on pitfalls that become apparent during implementation. Essentially, the procedure can prevent individual teachers having constantly to reinvent the wheel and progress should logically be faster and involve more of the school. Additionally, when the proposed innovation is on the scale of the implementation of a national curriculum, it is clear that teachers will have to cope with changing demands as the project develops. For 'shared meaning' to be maintained in these circumstances, therefore, will require ongoing communication and debate involving all the teachers tasked with implementation. The research of Judith Little into six schools identified a collaborative approach as the catalyst for school improvement. She concluded that progress occurred when:

1. teachers engaged in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete talk about teaching practice;
2. teachers and administrators frequently observed and provided feedback to each other, developing a 'shared language' for teaching strategies and needs; and
3. teachers and administrators planned, designed, and evaluated teaching materials and practices together.

(Little 1982:325)

Most of the above conditions have been found to be in place at St Paul's School. Parallel teachers at the school meet on a weekly basis to produce their records of work together (Beiso I/V 19996:2). These meetings were found to concentrate not only on the work ahead, but also on what had been done in the previous seven days and the responses obtained to the various activities from the different classes.

Evidence was also found of parallel teachers exchanging pieces of work produced by students, for the purposes of comparison and moderation (Alcantara 1996b:2). Significantly, these meetings were totally practical in nature and did not involve senior members of staff. They would, however, arguably ensure constant 'shared meaning' of the components of the language curriculum. Perhaps the one area signalled by Little as beneficial for progress that was not apparent at St Paul's School was the practice of teachers observing one another in the classroom. There was no evidence of this happening at St Paul's School in any shape or form.

This scenario differed greatly from that at Bishop Fitzgerald School. Given that no real attempt was made at the initiation stage of national curriculum implementation to acquire 'shared meaning' of the English Orders, it is not very surprising that no formal procedures were in place to enable teachers to work together at defining their teaching on a regular basis. Interestingly, individual teachers appeared to sense the need for such contacts, given that 43% of those teaching English at Bishop Fitzgerald School claimed to hold constant informal discussion of course content and delivery with colleagues (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:4).

The situation regarding Bayside School has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. Continued discussion of course content and teaching methods did occur, but these revolved around the demands of the GCSE examining boards and did not really concern teaching at Key Stage 3.

15:6 The role of the headteacher

It could be argued that the headteacher performs a linking role between external demands for change, as with the introduction of a national

curriculum, and the teachers who are to implement it. Yet, as Fullan (1991:145) points out, headteachers are often more under pressure to maintain stability than to promote innovation. House and Lapin maintain that this situation is due to the constant demands on the headteacher to deal with everyday crises:

He responds to emergencies daily. He is always on call. All problems are seen as important. This global response to any and all concerns means he never has the time, energy, or inclination to develop or carry out a set of premeditated plans of his own.

(House and Lapin 1978:145)

These circumstances could hardly be described as ideal to promote the role of the headteacher as change agent. Nevertheless, given the desirability of acquiring 'shared meaning' for the implementation of change, it is unlikely that major innovation can be put in place without the active participation of the headteacher. This is recognised by some educational observers who maintain that:

The principal is the person most likely to be in a position to shape the organisational conditions necessary for success, such as the development of shared goals, collaborative work structures and climates.

(Fullan 1991:76)

Furthermore, it can be argued that the reaction of headteachers to a proposed innovation will reflect to some degree on the teachers below them. Since schools are constantly bombarded with change, teachers will possibly gauge how significant each particular proposal is from the importance attached to it by the headteacher. It is unlikely that ordinary teachers, who already have countless demands on their time, will dedicate much effort in taking on board a change their headteacher is clearly lukewarm about.

The research of Hall, however, points to the fact that headteachers do not only play a crucial role in initiating change, but also in creating the right conditions for it to be successful in practice. This, of necessity, entails involving others in the process:

The key is not merely having other change facilitators active at the school site; the important difference seems to be related to how well the principal and these other change facilitators work together as a *change facilitating team*. It is this team of facilitators, under the lead of the principal, that makes successful change happen in schools.

(Hall 1988:49)

This research points to the fact that Tere Beiso, headteacher at St Paul's School, Gibraltar, has adopted the attitude to change that makes successful implementation quite likely. Her decisions to pilot both the national curriculum, before she was required to, and the SATs, demonstrate her desire to develop her school. Also implied is a recognition that change is inevitable and that the greatest value to the school lies in managing it properly, rather than trying to prevent it from happening.

Neither of the headteachers of Bishop Fitzgerald School and Bayside School has embraced the national curriculum in quite the same way. It could be argued that since they started to implement the curriculum only after it became a legal requirement, they have been under greater pressure to organise implementation. This is one possible reason why the structures to achieve and maintain 'shared meaning' of the curriculum have not been put in place. It might be considered desirable that this problem be addressed in the short term, since this would improve the chances of them providing 'one education for all', as advocated by the national curriculum.

15:7 Future implications

It seems more than likely that the next few years will see a continuation of changes in schools, with the development of literacy initiatives in response to societal and government pressures to raise standards. Gibraltar schools, though removed from the front line of these changes, will no doubt also follow along broadly similar lines, if past performance can be used as an indicator. The issues in the implementation of change are, therefore, likely to grow in importance. It could be argued that if the benefits of future innovations are to be maximised, many teachers would need to adopt a more positive attitude to change. Beare and Slaughter maintain that many of the problems currently associated with the implementation of change in schools are due to the reluctance by teachers to accept a basic reality of our lives:

To realise the potential of the twenty-first century we will need to put aside the obsessions of the 20th century, especially the fixation on what we may have, and return our attention to the perennial question of what we may be.

(Beare and Slaughter 1993:167)

This posture effectively challenges teachers to look for ways of improvement and advancement rather than try to remain rooted in the past. Beare and Slaughter argue that some of the conflict in schools is due to the changing role of teachers that many have not internalised. They highlight that schools used to be responsible for imparting most information to people, but that a counter-culture currently exists to carry out much of this function. This comprises the technological advances of the past few years including the internet and satellite television. They further maintain that this role of technology is likely to develop greatly in the coming century (Beare and Slaughter 1993:101). All of this implies and requires a change of emphasis by teachers on

how they view the role they perform in schools. Beare and Slaughter maintain that this shift in attitudes is a necessary first step if teachers are to become generally more receptive to future innovation:

The central importance of changes in values, in ways of knowing, in assumptions of meaning – in short, the implication of paradigm shifts – has too often been overlooked in educational discourse.

(Beare and Slaughter 1993:5)

If teachers accept this argument, the whole purpose and manner of education would require reconsideration. Changes to current practices would be seen as inevitable and based upon that premise, individuals would, in all probability, be more receptive to the process. This would have implications for the future introduction of innovation at all schools including those in Gibraltar.

15:8 Future implications for St Paul's School

Where does this scenario leave the schools that have formed the basis of this study? It can be argued that the way they respond to any further developments in the English Orders or to the future introduction of a literacy project in Gibraltar will most likely be determined by the structures they currently have in place. The various approaches to innovation in some ways reflect the teacher culture that exists in each school, a concept defined by one educational observer in the following terms:

Cultures of teaching comprise beliefs, values, habits and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers who have had to deal with similar demands and constraints over many years.

(Hargreaves 1994:165)

Hargreaves argues that four main cultures exist: individualism, collaboration, contrived collegiality and balkanization (Hargreaves 1994:166). All are reflected, to some degree, in the schools that have formed the basis of this study.

The main teacher cultures observed at St Paul's First School, Gibraltar, comprised collaboration and contrived collegiality. The advantages of the culture of collaboration have been described as potentially taking teacher development beyond the personal level to a situation where teachers can not only learn from each other, but also share and develop expertise together (Hargreaves 1994:186). Significantly, educators consider it a sound basis for the introduction of innovation:

If collaboration and collegiality are seen as promoting professional growth and internally generated school improvement, they are also widely viewed as ways of securing effective implementation of externally introduced change.

(Hargreaves 1994:186)

Critics of the process focus on difficulties in implementation with particular regard to the problems of finding time in busy school schedules for this collaboration to occur.

The structure in place at St Paul's School implies and imposes a form of collegiality that promotes shared meaning of the curriculum. It is fair to say that the meetings held to establish a school interpretation of the English Orders, viewed in tandem with the requirement for parallel teachers to produce records of work together, undoubtedly

enhance uniformity of content. In some ways, however, it could be said that this does not constitute a true collegial approach but a received one, since the path to be followed has been chosen by the headteacher and directed through implementation strategies. Hargreaves terms this 'contrived collegiality' and observes that:

It replaces spontaneous, unpredictable and difficult-to-control forms of teacher-generated collaboration with forms of collaboration that are captured, contained and contrived by administrators instead.

(Hargreaves 1994:196)

Hargreaves claims the benefits of the approach are that subsequent results become more easy to predict, but he also describes two major negative consequences of contrived collegiality as being inflexibility and inefficiency. These stem from teachers not meeting when they should or indeed meeting when there is no business to discuss. Nevertheless, Hargreaves maintains that the central issue regarding contrived collegiality is the degree of willingness, or otherwise, on the part of schools to allow teachers responsibility for developing as well as implementing the curriculum (Hargreaves 1994:208-9).

In essence, the negative features are presented as deriving from the imposition of the structures and the failure to allow individual teachers a meaningful input in the procedures adopted. This does not reflect the scenario at St Paul's School, Gibraltar. It is true that some of the features of contrived collegiality exist. Teachers were compelled to attend meetings to decide on the school interpretation of each part of the English Orders. They do also have to produce records of work in teams. The factor that makes inflexibility and inefficiency less likely in this case, however, is the high degree of ownership of the strategies that have been developed. All the teachers of English at the school were

involved in the process of arriving at 'shared meaning' of the English Orders. This clearly contributed to a smooth implementation of the new curriculum reflected by the attitude to the innovation adopted by the teachers. Ten of the twelve teachers surveyed (84%) considered that the national curriculum had been 'a positive experience' (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:7). Furthermore, all twelve teachers claimed to have felt fairly well prepared for the new curriculum, with eight of these (67%) stating they were 'very well prepared' (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:3). These figures indicate success in developing a positive attitude to the national curriculum. This contrasts with an initial negativity among most staff members, which was noted by the headteacher when she first mooted the idea of its adoption (Beiso I/V 1996:2).

It could further be argued that the imposed structures outlined above are all totally practical in nature and are seen as useful tools to aid day-to-day teaching. This is evident from the fact that when asked about the features of national curriculum implementation at their school that they disliked, not one teacher mentioned involvement in unnecessary meetings, or unhelpful, tedious procedures (St Paul's Questionnaire 1996:7). All this points to the likely existence of true collegiality having developed at St Paul's School given the real role each teacher has played in shaping the school's response to the challenge of the new curriculum. Teachers are therefore reaping the benefits of shared meaning and this is probably largely down to the innovative and positive approach to change adopted by the headteacher.

Two factors have, arguably, made the greatest difference to the current degree of implementation of the English Orders. The first of these was the decision to pilot the national curriculum two years before it was required of them; and the second was the general involvement of

all the teachers at the school in drawing up the procedures for implementation.

It is clear that the extra time gained by the school was put to good use in planning curricular content and in forming a school view on matters which were open to interpretation. As a result, the English syllabus was completely up-to-date and, moreover, the teachers had been actively involved in its elaboration and were thus well conversant with its content. Furthermore, St Paul's School has also put in place a system to tackle the potentially thorny issue of monitoring the curriculum. By having all the classes in a given year working parallel to one another and having the teachers prepare their records/forecasts of work together, each set of teachers effectively monitors itself. The system also provides a useful form of induction for new teachers to the school, since colleagues in the year group in which they are placed will be able to guide them in the crucial, and often difficult, first weeks in a new post.

The assessment procedures in place, and in particular the use of the SATs for formative purposes, provide additional monitoring of the language provision. Very positive here is the active involvement of the headteacher and deputy headteacher in the more time-consuming elements of testing reading in the SATs. This relieves the pressure on the teachers' workload and permits the formative features of the process to emerge.

It can be asserted, from the above, that St Paul's School is very advanced in its implementation of the English Orders. This factor would permit those at the school to view any future developments in the subject in context. Proposals for change could then be considered from an informed position and the internal adjustments required of the teachers would arguably be less marked than for those at other schools

where implementation of the English Orders is not so advanced. Moreover, the foundations of a collaborative approach have already been firmly laid and the staff is largely forward-thinking and willing to work on the development of new procedures together.

Care would need to be taken, however, to ensure that all pupils at the school were helped to develop their individual potential to the full. The evidence of this study would suggest that whereas this is certainly the case for the more able pupils, the special needs provision does not appear to be as ambitious in nature.

15:9 Future implications for Bishop Fitzgerald School

The prevalent teacher culture that was observed at Bishop Fitzgerald School was that of individualism. Hargreaves argues that where teachers prefer classroom isolation, it is often to do with reasons of diffidence, defensiveness and anxiety (Hargreaves 1994:167). Ashton and Webb support this view and suggest that individualism often exemplifies insecurity on the part of the teachers:

On the psychological level, insularity functions to protect the professional image of individual teachers by placing a buffer between them and the criticism they fear they might receive if others saw them at work.

(Ashton and Webb 1986:47)

It is highly unlikely, nevertheless, that all the teachers of English at Bishop Fitzgerald School should harbour doubts about their ability adequately to deliver the English Orders. A contributing factor to the high degree of individualism apparent at the school is, undoubtedly, the lack of guidance at management level in this school. This is what

Hargreaves terms 'constrained individualism' and he describes it as a situation where:

...teachers teach, plan and generally work alone because of administrative or other situational constraints which present significant barriers or discouragements to their doing otherwise.

(Hargreaves 1994:172)

This study has shown that little guidance exists for teachers of English at Bishop Fitzgerald School. The English syllabus in use was found to be hopelessly out of date and did not even accurately reflect current policy at the school. This was evident since Ginn was still promoted as the core for language provision and yet in practice was used for only one lesson in five throughout the school. Furthermore, 57% of the English teachers at the school claimed the English syllabus was 'no practical use at all' (Bishop Fitzgerald Questionnaire 1998:2). The headteacher primarily emphasised the importance of changing assessment procedures, but did not outline any advances made in achieving curricular uniformity (Gladstone 1998:1). Additionally, the procedures for streaming pupils operated by the school meant no classes of parallel ability exist in any year. This situation again encourages individuality.

The resulting situation observed was that every teacher in the school was implementing the curriculum as he or she saw fit, without reference to anybody else. This disjointed approach was evident from the multifarious approaches to marking and recording work, which have been described in detail in Chapter 9. Much of the individualism apparent at the school could be said, therefore, to be of the 'constrained' variety. This would appear to be a considerable obstacle to the achievement of shared meaning of the language curriculum at

Bishop Fitzgerald School. It is an issue that logic dictates would best be promptly addressed in the interests of the success of the current and any future educational initiatives.

The evidence presented in this thesis would suggest a need to formalise the procedures in place at Bishop Fitzgerald School in order to make the implementation of the English Orders more coherent. In fairness, circumstances, largely outside the control of the school, have created a situation in which a standardised teaching approach has not been developed. It should be recalled that there was a change of headteacher and deputy headteacher immediately prior to the advent of the national curriculum in Gibraltar. Coupled to the fact that no fewer than three teachers have held the Head of Language post in the space of four years, the resulting scenario could hardly be expected to provide the continuity that would facilitate the elaboration of strategies to implement the English Orders.

Notwithstanding this, there is evidence in the records of work of a general awareness among teachers at the school of the need to balance delivery of the three attainment targets for English. This study would maintain that the school would benefit from a more systematic approach that, in making better use of the framework provided by the English Orders, would assure the desirable range and continuity in the curriculum. It seems logical that a comprehensive updated syllabus is the ideal vehicle to bring this about. If all the teachers of English are involved in drawing up this document, the process could serve various purposes. To begin with, it would help familiarise many of the teachers with the content of the English Orders so they became more aware of what exactly they were trying to implement. Additionally, the elements of progression in the curriculum could be given due prominence and better continuity would be provided as pupils advance through the

school. A closer definition of the programmes of study would permit the elaboration of assessment procedures that would test what was taught, rather than direct the content, as is happening to some degree at present. Finally, the problems associated with monitoring the curriculum would undoubtedly be helped by having a clearer picture of what teachers should be doing with each group of children in the school.

The opportunity could also be taken to update school policy on marking and record-keeping and the overall effect would be a tighter implementation of the English Orders than is currently the case.

It could be argued that it is not worth investing the time and effort required to implement the above if, in all likelihood, further changes to the English curriculum could well ensue in the year 2000. This study would disagree with that school of thought, however, since it would maintain that whatever changes are made in the future will be a development of the current English Orders. In this respect, the adjustments required of teachers are likely to be more comprehensible, and easier to make, if the procedures for implementing the current Orders are understood and up-to-date. For this reason, it is maintained that meeting the challenges of implementing the English Orders today will better equip Bishop Fitzgerald School to benefit from future changes.

15:10 Future implications for Bayside School

Balkanised teacher cultures are commonplace in secondary schools where subject divides often fragment institutions and make the maximisation of learning opportunities more difficult to achieve. This is certainly apparent at Bayside School and is seen by some educationists

as unavoidable because of the current composition of secondary schools:

The historical and political strength of academic subjects as sources of political identity, career aspiration and public accountability means that most secondary schools continue to operate as micropolitical worlds, with conflict and competition between their departments being an endemic feature of their existence.

(Hargreaves 1994:236)

This study has already shown the importance of the external examination syllabuses in determining what is taught throughout years 8-11 at Bayside School, Gibraltar (Chapter 11). This would appear to indicate that success at GCSE is considered of primary importance to the English Department. Furthermore, it has also been seen how individual teachers, with the official blessing of the school's English syllabus, base most of their teaching on external examination procedures. This, it could be argued, serves further to balkanise departmental divides at the school. It is a situation that, Hargreaves argues, has implications for the general education of the students. Yet, as can be seen from the following argument, the negative features of the culture do not really relate to the teaching of English but have wider implications to do with the purposes of education generally:

In a postmodern world which is fast, compressed, uncertain, diverse and complex, balkanised secondary structures are poorly equipped to harness the human resources necessary to create flexible learning for students, continuous professional growth for staff and responsiveness to changing client needs in the community.

(Hargreaves 1994:235)

It could be argued that the current balkanised culture at Bayside, with its emphasis on the achievement of external academic

qualifications in English, does meet the current requirements of a Gibraltar society that demands this level of linguistic achievement from aspirants to most white-collar jobs. In reality, therefore, teachers at the school are under considerable pressure to ensure their students do well in GCSE examinations in English.

Additionally, the shared values that are implied in belonging to any balkanised group encourage the adoption of collaborative strategies within it, given that all teachers in the department are working towards the same defined aims. The English teachers at Bayside School, therefore, acquire a shared meaning of the demands of the language curriculum through meetings to discuss changing GCSE requirements. The agreed approaches are then formalised through inclusion in the English syllabus. Moderation of coursework also exposes all English teachers to the work carried out by colleagues with different classes. This in turn promotes an interchange of ideas and a degree of professional development.

The balkanised culture at Bayside School can be considered adequate, therefore, to allow for the implementation of future initiatives which deal solely with the teaching of English as a subject. This should not be taken to imply, nevertheless, that the procedures in place at the school are, necessarily, ideal.

The desirability of a better definition and monitoring of the language programme for years 8 and 9 can be considered a logical conclusion of this research. It seems clear that much of the lower school teaching at Bayside is based upon the examination requirements for GCSE. The probable reason for this is that there are no procedures to test for progress at the end of Key Stage 3. Teachers therefore appear to concentrate their efforts at preparing the pupils for the GCSEs in the knowledge that it is on the basis of the results achieved in these

examinations that they will be judged. The problem lies in the fact that, in so doing, the teachers are abandoning the framework of the English Orders and working back from the assessment procedures which mark the end of the national curriculum programme. This effectively misses out most of Key Stage 3 altogether.

A possible answer might lie in the use of the SAT's examinations at the end of year 9. Viewed as a formative tool, in the same manner that they are currently utilised by St Paul's School, the SAT's could provide the focus that appears to be missing at this stage of Bayside's English programme.

Though considerable evidence has been presented that Bayside School is delivering the English Orders well, there would appear to be a weakness in their rejection of individual record keeping. Whereas the approach adopted undoubtedly relies heavily on the professionalism of teachers, and it is true that records in themselves do not guarantee what goes on in the classroom, yet other potential benefits of record keeping are lost. Records can help teachers to ensure correct curricular balance in what they teach, as well as help them gauge the range of learning activities undergone with each group. It could be considered an impossibility otherwise for a teacher to recall just what has been covered with each of the seven or eight teaching groups that he/she might take in any given year.

The introduction of the 'Certificate of Achievement' examination constitutes a significant attempt better to provide for the less able at Bayside, though the evidence in this thesis points to the additional need to develop the 'one-year course'.

Overall, Bayside School seems in a good position to adapt to any future changes and a reason for this might lie in the importance of the public examination requirements in determining the teaching

programmes. The GCSE boards have continued to make frequent changes to the content and style of their tests since Sir Ron Dearing announced a five-year moratorium on changes to the English Orders from 1995. This has meant that the Bayside English teachers have grown accustomed to revisiting their teaching programmes on practically an annual basis and, as shown above, they have also adopted a largely collaborative approach to this issue. It is likely, therefore, that they will be well equipped to adapt to any future demands made of them by curricular innovations after the year 2000.

15:11 General conclusion

The schools which have formed the basis of this study have adopted three very different approaches to national curriculum implementation. St Paul's School has developed the English syllabus into the central document that interprets the form language teaching at the school must take. This has led to a standardised approach that is systematic and structured. Additionally, the school has promoted collaboration and collegiality between teachers, as well as ensuring shared meaning of the language curriculum.

Bishop Fitzgerald School relies less heavily on the syllabus and instead seeks to promote curricular cohesion through the assessment procedures it implements. This places great demands on individual teachers to ensure that they are covering the range of requirements of the English Orders. This has encouraged a culture of individualism that is probably responsible, to some degree, for the disjointed delivery of the English Orders observed in this study. It also makes the monitoring of the implementation of the language curriculum more problematic.

Bayside School, for its part, also relies on the professionalism of each staff member and the content of the teaching is largely directed by the GCSE examination requirements. Uniformity of interpretation is provided, however, by the school's language syllabus, which promotes collaboration and collegiality, though little monitoring of the teaching taking place in the lower school is carried out.

It could be argued that the approach adopted by St Paul's School offers the greatest chances for success in maximising the opportunities provided by the structure of a national curriculum. The better defined the content of the language curriculum is, the greater the chances for pupils to progress smoothly through the various stages and realise their potential. Furthermore, Gibraltar enjoys a privileged position, owing to the limited number of schools that exist on the Rock, to promote much greater curricular uniformity than is possible in England and Wales. This research has revealed evidence of a lack of co-operation among certain Gibraltar schools and this is a matter that should be tackled by the Department of Education so that obstacles and suspicions between schools are removed. In this way Gibraltar could advance in the new millennium with an education service that takes full advantage of the potential benefits of the framework provided by the national curriculum English programme.

15:12 Limitations of the research

Gibraltar does not have a long history of educational research and the conditions for carrying out any investigation project are very different from those the researcher would find in England and Wales. To begin with, given the small size of the territory, all research unavoidably takes on a personal perspective. The reason for this is that there are only 12

schools on the Rock and all the teachers working in them therefore know one another, if only at the level of acquaintance. Additionally, with a population of only 30,000, family ties interweave the teaching staffs of the various schools. Furthermore, since the majority of the built-up areas of Gibraltar cover little more than 2 square miles, face-to-face encounters with colleagues from all levels of the education system are commonplace.

The above situation provides certain advantages for the would-be researcher, but these are accompanied by certain constraints. The personal relationships that all local teachers enjoy, not only with other teachers but also with the decision-takers at the Gibraltar Department of Education, undoubtedly facilitate access to information. This was apparent in this research, with no problems being experienced in interviewing the headteachers and staff members at the schools selected for study, or indeed the past and present personnel at the Education Department.

The constraints stem from the fact that the evaluation of the work of individuals and of the decisions they have taken, which will form a part of much educational research, must be presented in a tactful manner. The researcher needs to be sensitive to the fact that he will have to continue his career working with and under the very individuals whose work he may have criticised. This should not be taken to mean that issues pertinent to the research are ignored or avoided, but rather that the manner of their presentation may at times be somewhat more discreet than if a neutral, unknown third party were being discussed. The above conditions apply to this researcher and this study.

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Ainsley, Robert. Chief Moderator for English for 44 centres of the Southern Examining Group (SEG), among them Bayside School, 12 December 1997.

Alcantara, Julio. Former Director of Education, Gibraltar, 3 June 1996.

Alcantara, Paddy. Teacher in charge of English, St Paul's First School, Gibraltar, 20 November 1996(b).

Beiso, Tere. Headteacher, St Paul's First School, Gibraltar, 23 April 1996.

Britto, Joseph. Former Head of Language, Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School, Gibraltar (1993-1996), 25 February 1998.

Durante, Charles. Chairperson of the National Curriculum Working Group for English, Gibraltar, 28 November 1995.

Gladstone, Antonia. Headteacher, Bishop Fitzgerald School, Gibraltar, 20 February 1998.

Gonzalez, Martin. Head of English at Bayside School, Gibraltar, 19 May 1997.

Jones, John. Careers and Social Education Co-ordinator (senior teacher) at Bayside School, Gibraltar, 19 June 1997.

Lenane, Isabella. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator at St Paul's School, Gibraltar, 4 July 1997.

Lester, Leslie. Director of Education, Gibraltar, 23 April 1996.

Mañasco, Priscilla. Head of Special Needs at Bayside School, Gibraltar, 23 June 1997.

Montovio, Mark. Peripatetic Teacher employed by the Department of Education, Gibraltar, 3 July 1997.

Parody, George. Former Head of Language at Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School, Gibraltar (1982-1993), 25 March 1998.

Povedano, Ernest. Deputy Headteacher at Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School, Gibraltar, 14 July 1998.

Scott, Patsy. Senior Education Adviser with Department of Education, Gibraltar, 26 June 1997.

Trinidad, Alfred. Educational Psychologist of the Department of Education, Gibraltar, 11 December 1996.

APPENDIX A
SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THOSE LISTED IN SECTION 3 OF THE
BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTERVIEW WITH HEAD OF ENGLISH AT BAYSIDE
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Interview was conducted on Monday 19 May 1997.

(1) What changes would you say have taken place in the way English is being taught since the introduction of the national curriculum?

I would prefer to use the word development rather than changes. There is now certainly a wider range of activities to be covered than in the past and there is greater emphasis on literature throughout the school, and in particular Shakespeare. More emphasis has also been placed on the basics of spelling, punctuation and grammar. I can certainly say that this is true of my own teaching. It is very difficult, however, to monitor what everyone is doing all the time. I have too heavy a work-load to be able to go round monitoring everyone in a large school like Bayside. Besides, as we all know only too well, if we were to introduce something like the individual records of work that we had in the past, it is only too easy to have these contain whatever you want them to. I can vouch for the fact that the Shakespeare is certainly being done by everyone, and this is evident from the use the books are getting.

(2) How are the pupils grouped when they arrive in school?

There is a panel that meets for this purpose which comprises the Head of English and the Head of Mathematics, or their representatives, the Special Needs Co-ordinator and the year 8 Year Tutor. For the last few years in fact the English Department has been represented at these meetings by the Assistant to the Head of English. This panel examines the interim reports provided by the middle schools as well as any verbal information passed on to the Head of Year during a series of visits he/she carries out to the middle schools from which our pupils come. The sort of information that might be passed on verbally is mainly of a pastoral nature like that a particular student is light-fingered, but all the educational information is recorded in writing.

The panel puts pupils mainly into two very broad ability bands though certain pupils will also be referred to the special needs department and exceptionally to the Special Unit. This banding is carried out for both English and mathematics, though the two subjects

are considered separately and it is possible for a boy to be in an upper band for English and a lower band for mathematics or vice versa. Distribution of pupils into these bands is flexible and we work towards having a larger upper band than lower band so the teacher-pupil ratio is improved for the lower ability children. In deciding which band to place a pupil in we look at the reading age, and the middle school report. We also take account of anything extra that might be contained in the pupil's school record. We must remember that the middle school reports are designed with transition in mind, so they provide the information we need.

(3) How accurate do you find the middle school reports to be?

I would say that basing myself on subsequent knowledge of the pupils involved, the reports tend to be generally accurate. Personally I like to see what the teacher says in his comment on one pupil or another. This I find gives the most honest assessment which portrays what a child is like and is more use to me than an elaborate tick-list which then becomes almost impossible to interpret.

(4) Have there been any changes in the way you deal with ability groups since the advent of the national curriculum?

Not really, and certainly at lower level no. You must consider that the banding system implemented by the school dictates what we can and cannot do. We couldn't, for example, choose to have more than two ability bands if we wanted to. Where there have been some changes, and these have not really come about because of the national curriculum, is in the banding system for years 10 and 11. The year 10 and 11 pupils who follow a two-year course have been banded now for as long as I can remember. There is a top group of boys, generally around 45 in number, who are split into two language /literature groups and follow courses leading to two GCSEs in the same time allotted to other classes which simply take English language. The remaining pupils (i.e. those who solely follow a language course) are divided into six groups: 2 upper, 2 intermediate and 2 lower. Each of these pairs of groups in the past have been parallel to one another. This year for the first time we have also streamed the 2 upper groups since we have long found that if you have two parallel upper groups, the range of ability is too wide. This means in essence that we have created a further band though we have not told the pupils about it. I feel that this will give the top boys a better chance of success since they will be stretched more, and the others will also benefit with lessons more accurately pitched at a level they can handle. I have actually asked to have all year 10 and 11 classes of

English timetabled at the same time for next year so I could stream the classes more rigidly, but it remains to be seen whether my request is granted. I feel that streaming is very important to English teaching. I have a very low opinion of mixed-ability teaching because in my view most if not all children suffer from the system to a greater or lesser degree.

(5) Has the national curriculum English programme meant a need for additional resources and if so what did these comprise?

It has meant a need, but it is a need that has not really been met. To begin with the national curriculum created a need for a wider range of text books for language and more especially for literature which the national curriculum has given a more prominent role to, in language studies. I cannot provide all the books that I need. We make do by sharing the sets of books that are available, but it means that we cannot issue textbooks to individual classes and this can be very inconvenient, particularly when it comes to doing homework.

Another need that has been created but not met, relates to computer work. The computer needs of the English Department have not been met at all by the school. My department does not have a single computer and this means we need to rely on the Information Technology department to cover such skills as word-processing, because we do not have the equipment to do it ourselves. The inspection of the English Department carried out by the education advisers for the Department of Education some four or five years ago, recommended that a number of computers be provided for the English Department, but these have not materialised.

(6) The national curriculum implies efforts at standardisation across the class groups. How is this achieved for English and were similar efforts made before the national curriculum was implemented?

Well quite simply all teachers should be following the national curriculum and be conversant with it. To the best of my knowledge they are, though I refer you to an earlier answer where I explained that it is not possible for me to check up on what each person is doing all the time. I just don't have the time to do it. It is not an activity that is time-tabled for the head of department, nor are there any helpers working with the department who might release me on occasions to carry out such a task. The record of work as I have explained would be no guarantee, because at the end of the day I have to rely on the

professionalism of those around me and base myself on what they tell me.

This apart the potential for standardisation is helped by occasional in-service activities where we look at material on assessment and grading of work. This is provided for us by the external examining board. We all also follow the same syllabuses, and this too promotes standardisation.

(7) How is this situation you describe affected if you have non-English specialist teachers working in the department?

In practice that is a rare occurrence. I am against the use of non-specialist staff being deployed to teach English at this level, but this rarely happens. Until recently we have had enough English teachers to cover the classes required, though the number of these teachers who have left for other schools in recent years and not been replaced by English specialists, means I am not so sure what the situation will be in the immediate future.

(8) Are any efforts made to achieve or monitor standardisation with the girls' comprehensive school, Westside?

Formally no, though informally I get on very well with the head of English at that school, Charlie Durante, and his assistant, Guy Noguera. We often have contact over the phone whenever either party uncovers what we consider some interesting matter. We also lend one another material: I recall lending them the illustrated Shakespeare texts when we first got them and they have lent me some interesting spelling work published by Heinemann. The contacts are of a totally informal nature and this I consider positive since formal processes sometimes do more to inhibit co-operation than promote it. Take for example the national curriculum working group for English: some heads have refused to provide access to schemes of work drawn up by their schools and others have instructed their school representatives in the group not to speak at all. I feel my informal contacts with Westside work much better.

(9) How well prepared would you say the staff was for the implementation of the national curriculum English and what form did this preparation take?

I would say we were as prepared as could be. The truth is we have devoted a great deal of time to studying the English documents and also to worrying about them, perhaps to an excessive degree. Considering

our geographical isolation and the time it takes to get material out from UK, I feel we do pretty well. Our worries were unnecessary because English is after all fairly straightforward, and though the emphasis may have changed with the national curriculum, English is English and it is basically the same meat with different gravy.

(10) What are your feelings on staff members who are involved in teaching in more than one department in the school? Does this create any problems for the delivery of English?

This does not create delivery problems so much as administrative ones. Since more than one head of department is vying for the services of a particular teacher, you can find that you put him/her down for certain classes and then they don't get them. This creates logistical problems. On occasions I have had teachers who are not English specialists taking the odd class in the department. In these cases I generally ask the person concerned to read and follow our record of work. I do not ask him to go through the English Orders.

There can sometimes be a problem when it comes to in-service activity since some of the members of my department can be required to participate with another department. On the last occasion there were only three teachers involved in up-dating the English syllabuses for the entire school because the other English teachers were required elsewhere. To be fair, however, this situation will only occur in in-service sessions which have no external input. On those occasions that we have external speakers, the whole department attends.

(11) Does Spanish inhibit progress in English in any way? If so to what degree?

Yes, and it is not just the fault of the pupils. Too many teachers all too readily lapse into 'llanito' and fail to provide a proper linguistic role model for the pupils. A lot of the boys arrive at Bayside expecting to be spoken to in English and then find some teachers will address them in Spanish. Ironically this even happens sometimes with members of the English department.

(12) Are there any areas of language that our pupils seem to have particular difficulty with?

There is a wide range of linguistic ability among pupils at this school but one area that seems to cause many pupils problems is the use of prepositions. This is because many of them have a tendency to translate literally from the Spanish and thus say things like 'He came out on

television', 'he went to his house' instead of home, and 'to don't have'. This form of language interference from the Spanish is quite common.

(13) How satisfactory would you say the format of the English report is and would you like to see any modifications made to it?

I feel the format of the reports is adequate, though I disagree with the procedure which requires us to write them out in rough before copying them onto the final form. I do not see the need to do them twice. It is time-consuming and needless.

(14) How much guidance is given to those tasked with filling in the English reports and what form does this take?

First of all teachers are asked to adhere to a numbering system while marking general work. This system entails grading an item of work under two categories, effort and attainment. In each case a mark out of 10 is awarded. This year-round activity provides practice which facilitates filling in the reports which similarly require the awarding of marks out of 10 for effort and attainment. Most teachers require no guidance in doing this because they have been doing it for years, but in the case of a new teacher I go through it with him/her in person. I might point out since we are talking of reports that the procedures currently in place are not adhered to. In theory each English teacher is supposed to clear his reports with me before copying them out. This is not happening in practice. I dislike the system anyway for reasons outlined in a former answer and have complained about it to the academic council.

(15) To what degree does the national curriculum determine the content of the English taught and to what extent is it based upon the requirements of the GCSE examining boards?

It is the national curriculum which determines what is taught. That is what you follow. The GCSE does form a part of it. In the old days of GCE and CSE what you did with these classes in years 10 and 11 filtered down to years 8 and 9. The situation is still the same in terms of exercises and approach. Remember that GCSE is primarily a formal assessment of the national curriculum at Key Stage 4 in the same way as the SATs are in the earlier stages. The reality of the situation is that national curriculum English activities are so wide that we are really doing them in years 8 and 9 anyway. For example tackling and responding to a Shakespeare play is common to both the national

curriculum and GCSE. National curriculum English is all one document from 5 to 16; what we are talking about really is refining skills.

(16) How well does the national curriculum cater for the lower ability students of English?

Well the national curriculum doesn't cater for levels of ability it covers every level. The fact that it is one document and written in levels means that everyone must be catered for. The real difficulty comes in the class when you have a very wide range of ability with say some boys at levels 4 or 5 and others at levels 8 or 9. It then becomes very hard for the teacher in deciding the level to pitch the lesson at. This is one of the reasons for my dislike of mixed-ability teaching for English.

(17) Would you explain the new course being introduced for low ability pupils in years 10 and 11?

This follows from an in-service session earlier this year which involved John Commerford, the Regional Director, Teacher Support Services for London the South East and overseas, of the Southern Examining Group/ Associate Examining Board (SEG/AEB). He informed us that the total number of entries for English at GCSE in the UK last year amounted to around 600,000. However a further 50,000 students were not entered and this amounts to some 10% of the pupil population. They saw the need, therefore, for an alternative form of assessment below GCSE standard. As a consequence they introduced the 'Certificate of Achievement'.

In Gibraltar we have sensed the need for something of this kind, prior to this. In some ways though the need has never been as great as in the UK. We are lucky that the school-leaving age is 15 in Gibraltar as opposed to 16 in the UK. The consequence of this is that many of the boys who would form part of this lower-ability 10% for whom GCSE does not cater, leave school during year 10. Some leave to seek employment, others to follow apprenticeship courses but the fact that they leave means that we do not have anywhere near the UK percentage figure of pupils unable to do GCSE English. The truth is the UK figures prove the GCSE course is not for everyone, because it is too demanding.

The SEG 'Certificate of Achievement' will be a two-year course which will run parallel to the GCSE and be for the weaker pupils. We are talking about the children who function at national curriculum level 3 or so. It is especially useful to Bayside, because the school does not offer remediation in years 10 and 11. As a result, pupils who are withdrawn from the mainstream for English in year 8 and 9 to receive

extra help in the special needs department, go straight into a mainstream academic course in year 10. They generally find that they cannot cope and this new course will fulfil a very real need. It is important that the course will work towards the award of a certificate validated by the same board as the GCSE. This will give it a currency. We shall start it with the two lower groups in year 10 next September and enter at least some, though not all, the pupils from these groups. This will create some problems for the teachers involved in class organisation and pitching, but I feel it will be a worthwhile exercise.

(18) Are pupils assessed against the national curriculum levels for English and if so when and how?

No. We do not assess by levels even though we follow the national curriculum document.

(19) Is any assessment carried out at the end of Key Stage 3? If so what does it entail?

The only assessment carried out at this stage is for the purpose of grouping the pupils for the start of their English programme in Key Stage 4. As I said in answer to the previous question, this assessment does not attempt to judge what level individual pupils are at. I don't think that is done by any subject in the school. Furthermore I don't think it is needed. The way national curriculum and the GCSE classes work, the teacher must aim to deliver lessons within a band of levels. To give you some examples, when teaching a literature group the teacher pitches the lesson at students working around levels 8 to 10. An upper language group would cater for the levels 7-9. Intermediates would be pitched at levels 5-8 and lower groups would cover a range of levels 3-7. This would be for Key Stage 4, but the same is applicable lower in the school for Key Stage 3. Lessons for an upper band in year 9 might be pitched at levels 5-7 say.

The nature of the beast is such, that the subject is not content based, so what you are doing is teaching certain skills and revisiting them regularly. Essay writing, directed writing, comprehension would be tackled in middle school and again at secondary level. What varies is the level of response to the activities. It makes sense therefore to pitch lessons to various levels.

Remember too that the national curriculum hasn't resolved a basic incongruity. Take for example the literary canon for Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers are supposed to cover works of fiction by two major authors pre 1900. They are also supposed to do Shakespeare. On the other hand there is the drive for basic standards in literacy, with a large group of

pupils having been identified as leaving school without achieving a basic standard. How do you bridge the gap between these two aims? It is not properly thought out. You want to ensure that the low ability pupils achieve a certain standard in literacy and yet create a requirement for every pupil to do the likes of Shakespeare and pre 20th century literature. I would like someone to show me how they would tackle Shakespeare with remedials. In practice we devise strategies to work round these requirements using simplified texts, videos etc.

(20) What are the purposes of assessment in English at secondary level?

By tradition parents expect and require feedback on pupils' progress. As a department we are also keen to assess progress for the purposes of grouping, for standardisation across class groups and year groups. Furthermore the fact that we assess provides a sense of direction for both teachers and pupils in their work. Both parties know they are working towards achieving certain aims which will be assessed at some point. In this form assessment is a motivating factor.

(21) Does remediation follow assessment?

At classroom level yes since the teacher will respond to any weaknesses or gaps in skills made apparent by the assessment procedure. In the wider sense of providing for special needs that may be identified through assessment I find that unless a pupil was identified as having special needs when he first arrived at Bayside, he will not subsequently be catered for by the special needs department as a consequence of our internal assessments. This remediation incidentally is not always welcomed by pupils and parents either. There is a form of stigma attached to being a pupil in the special needs department in this school. I know of quite a number of cases of parents who prefer to have their children struggling in the mainstream. In a practical sense there is very little movement of pupils down from the mainstream to the special needs department. The element of stigma is curious in a way, because there is no such stigma attached to pupils who are identified as being dyslexic. There is a current awareness drive on this issue which in some ways permits allowances to be made for pupils. They can be given more time in examinations and the condition can explain weak spelling.

(22) How is a balance created between the various components of 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing'?

This is largely up to the individual teacher. One cannot monitor exactly what each teacher is doing though we do provide clear guidelines in the schemes of work. Teachers clearly organise the work at their convenience; for example when the workload is particularly heavy when the school is involved in exams or reports, some teachers will do their oral work which can relieve some of the pressure on them. They are conscious of providing a balance over the year however and influenced by instructions like that from SEG on oral work which states that activity should be spread out throughout the year and not concentrated in a burst towards the end of the course.

(23) What would you say is the place of literature in the English curriculum at Bayside?

Literature has been gaining in importance in this school in the last few years. I remember some six or seven years ago it was only offered as an option at Key Stage 4 and blocked against an emerging subject, Information Technology. As a consequence few people were opting for literature and I can remember one particular year when only four students chose it. Now it is integrated with language, and done not only at Key Stage 4 but also lower down the school at Key Stage 3 with the requirement for Shakespeare and pre 20th century authors etc. This has given literature a greater role in English than it has ever had before in this school. Proof of this can be found in the popularity of the simplified classics. Most lower groups in years 8 and 9 now do some Dickens, Conan-Doyle, simplified Shakespeare plays and so on. Additionally the status of literature has been raised because it is now a subject for which the top boys are recommended to follow a GCSE course in years 10 and 11. The result is that pupils in years 8 and 9 aspire to make the literature group in year 10 and this has greatly enhanced the status of literature not only among the pupil population, but also among parents. This reflects positively in the attitude adopted to literature in years 8 and 9.

(24) What provision is made to cater for English for 1-year course students?

The 1-year course provision largely depends on the teacher who is taking it. This is an extremely difficult group to teach because of low motivation, poor discipline and attitude problems. The teacher therefore has a pretty hopeless situation to start with. Regardless of this

the pupils at least do recognise that English and Mathematics should form a part of their curriculum. The teacher for his or her part has quite a lot of freedom regarding what to cover with them. There is an 'English for Life' course which some teachers like to follow. However this course is not everyone's cup of tea and the teacher who is currently taking them prefers to concentrate on forms of essay work and readers. I find this quite acceptable. With this kind of child one cannot be too dogmatic because he will not respond. Thankfully the school can devise the English curriculum that they follow and is not bound by the national curriculum in their case. This is due to the situation in Gibraltar and the fact that the school leaving age is 15 as opposed to 16 in the United Kingdom. The pupils thus leave a year before GCSE and cannot be bound by the entitlement factor of the national curriculum which ends with GCSE. The English curriculum we offer 1-year course students is broadly based on the national curriculum, but is devised by the school.

(25) To what degree do you think teachers of other subjects should involve themselves in teaching language skills?

This is a philosophy that dates back to the 1970s and was epitomised by the statement that every teacher is a teacher of English. I firmly believe in this and it is a concept that is afforded greater status by the GCSE boards who have included a 'SPAG' (spelling, punctuation and grammar) mark in papers for all subjects. And this is correct because all teachers must correct the language of the pupils in their charge. English is the form of communication. If the English is bad then the student cannot communicate in any subject.

(26) Would you say national curriculum English has been an improvement from what went before?

Yes in the sense that it stipulates what has to be done clearly. It leaves no room for teachers to leave out what might be crucial areas. Remember in the past there were problems in some UK schools which followed trendy ideas promoting creativity to an extreme or looking to integrate all subjects and so on. The national curriculum now tells teachers what has to be covered. It is reassuring for teachers. It also helps with standardisation, though the exercise must be conducted thoroughly. There are still some contradictions as I pointed out earlier with the literary canon.

What I am more critical about is the way the process was developed. I feel it was unfair on teachers to make them absorb the content of the very lengthy English Orders and then have this very

greatly streamlined following the Dearing review. The whole thing should have been better thought out before being presented to the teachers. This apart I have no other real dislikes of the national curriculum and feel it is nothing to worry about.

APPENDIX B1
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUBJECT TEACHERS AT ST
PAUL'S SCHOOL GIBRALTAR ON THE TEACHING OF
NATIONAL CURRICULUM ENGLISH
MAY 1996

12 TEACHERS OUT OF A POSSIBLE 15 RETURNED COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES REPRESENTING 80% OF THE TOTAL STAFF AT THE SCHOOL.

(1) How many years have you been involved in teaching English to pupils at first school level?

Answers: 2,12,3,12,17,5,22,30,22,4,8,1.

Average experience 11 years teaching: 6 over 12 years experience, 6 under 8 years experience.

(2) If you were teaching before the advent of national curriculum English in Gibraltar, to what degree have you had to change your teaching style when it was introduced?

	(9)
(a) To a great extent	1 (11%)
(b) To a fair extent	5 (55%)
(c) To a small extent	3 (33%)
(d) Not at all	0

(3a) Are any new demands placed upon you as a teacher of English?

Of the nine teachers this question applied to, 8 said 'yes' and 1 said 'no'.

Five teachers highlighted computer literacy as placing new demands on them. These ranged from getting to know how to use the programs themselves, to administrative problems in ensuring that each child has the time available to use the word-processor and that he/she can indeed cope.

One teacher highlighted additional demands on teacher time. Stated that more time is taken up in revision of what is to be taught and how, what assessed and how. Also lack of time to cope with additional paper work.

One teacher highlighted the demand placed upon her of getting to grips with the attainment targets.

(Appendix B1:2)**(3b) In what ways have you had to change your teaching style/approach?**

Variety shown in answers to this question. 3 teachers mentioned assessment, 2 referred to concentration on punctuation and 2 teachers claimed they had not had to change at all.

Individual answers:

- Allow children to play greater role and not permit lessons to be teacher directed all the time.
- None
- Teaching style, not much. Approach, much more time needed at night and during holidays to organise reading of new documents, materials and to sort paper work generated.
- Grammar lessons and punctuation have become more structured, creative writing is stunted.
- In assessments and individual recordings.
- Different books and equipment introduced. Concentration on different areas, e.g. punctuation and hand-writing assessments. Assessments, more paper work and recording.
- None
- Greater emphasis on teaching points both for myself and for making children aware of these.
- More attention to attainment targets, assessments.

(4a) What qualification do you hold in English?

	(12)
(a) 'O' level or GCSE	10 (83%)
(b) 'A' level	1 (8%)
(c) First degree level	1 (8%)
(d) Above first degree level	0

(4b) (For teachers involved with the reception year) Did you receive specific initial teacher training relating to under-5s? If so what did this entail?

Of the 5 teachers this question applied to, 3 said 'no' and 2 teachers said 'yes'. Of those answering 'yes', one did not specify what the training entailed and the other said it was of a practical nature involving observing teaching in nurseries and teaching pre-school children. One

(Appendix B1:3)

of the teachers who answered 'no', pointed out that she had read on the subject.

(5) If you achieved qualified teacher status in or after 1988, how useful was UK initial teacher training as preparation for teaching national curriculum English?

This question applied to 3 of the teachers surveyed.

	(3)
(a) Extremely useful	1 (33%)
(b) Fairly useful	2 (66%)
(c) Not very useful	0
(d) Not useful at all	0

(6) How useful have local in-service training sessions been in preparing you to teach national curriculum English?

	(12)
(a) Extremely useful	3 (25%)
(b) Fairly useful	9 (75%)
(c) Not very useful	0
(d) Not useful at all	0

(7) In general terms how well prepared and confident do you feel of being able to deliver national curriculum English to your pupils?

	(12)
(a) Very well prepared	8 (67%)
(b) Fairly well prepared	4 (33%)
(c) Not very well prepared	0
(d) Very poorly prepared	0

(8) How well resourced do you consider the school to be to enable national curriculum English to be taught?

	(12)
(a) Very well resourced	5 (42%)
(b) Fairly well resourced	7 (58%)
(c) Not very well resourced	0
(d) Very poorly resourced	0

(9) Are there any particular resources you feel the school needs or requires a greater supply of, for the teaching of national curriculum English?

(Appendix B1:4)

Three teachers identified the need for more library books, 3 a requirement for more PCs and 3 wanted more tape-recorders. 3 teachers also stated no extra resources were required.

Individual answers:

- More reference books.
- More copies of a reading scheme to be introduced in September.
- No.
- No.
- More tape-recorders and headphones, outside speakers.
- Reading help, bilingual support.
- Workbooks.
- Resources for 'speaking and listening'.
- More PCs, tape-recorders, library books and text books designed for the national curriculum.
- More PCs, a cassette and greater variety of library books.
- No.
- More PCs.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF ASSESSMENT OF PUPILS.

(10) How often do you assess your pupils against the attainment targets and levels of achievement and what forms do these assessments take? (i.e. formally by way of examination or informally while working with peers in a normal class situation)

Formal assessment:

Eight teachers claimed to assess in this fashion once a term.

Two teachers claimed to assess in this fashion twice a term.

Two teachers did not refer to this style of assessment.

Informal assessment:

All agreed that informal assessment was on-going and continuous. One reception teacher highlighted assessments as being carried out, one to one, and testing sounds, word-building, literacy and creative writing.

(11) Are pupils assessed as individuals or as part of groups?

Three teachers said they assessed pupils in both fashions.

(Appendix B1:5)

Nine teachers said they assessed individually.

(12) Does remediation follow assessment?

All 12 teachers answered 'yes' without reservation.

(13) How useful do you consider the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs)?

	(5)
(a) Extremely useful	4 (80%)
(b) Fairly useful	1 (20%)
(c) Not very useful	0
(d) Not useful at all	0

The remaining 7 teachers who completed the questionnaire did not give an opinion since they teach years where the SATs are not applicable.

(14) In what ways do you consider the SATs useful/not useful?

Six teachers answered this question. 2 said the SATs were useful to identify any teaching weaknesses, 2 to identify pupil weaknesses and 2 said they helped with the filling in of reports.

Individual answers:

- Clarify teaching points (ATs).
- Extremely detailed examination of pupils' work which gives real indication of how they are doing.
- Helpful for filling reports and regrouping for following year. To identify pupil weaknesses and areas not covered properly.
- As an evaluation of teaching and of the schemes used.
- As a form of assessment and to ensure continuity at this stage.
- For filling in reports.
- Useful for remediation purposes.

(15) To what extent, if any, does teaching for the examination occur?

Seven teachers answered this question and all claimed that no teaching is done specifically for SATs. The consensus is that they teach national curriculum English and the attainment targets.

(Appendix B1:6)Individual answers:

- All concepts in test are covered beforehand.
- Exam covers work already covered by national curriculum English.
- We follow national curriculum document and then assess; we do not teach for examinations.
- Does not happen. We follow national curriculum teaching.
- SATs directly linked to programmes of study so whole year's work is complementary to the SATs.
- Teach to attainment targets, not SATs.
- Are aware of SATs.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF REPORTING TO PARENTS.

(16) How good do you consider the format of the reports to parents to be?

	(9)
(a) Extremely good	0
(b) Fairly good	7 (78%)
(c) Not very good	2 (22%)
(d) Not good at all	0

Three reception teachers did not answer this question pointing out that they report internally and not to parents.

(17) What aspects of the reports do you like/dislike?

Ten teachers answered this question. Three of them highlighted their dislike for the extra end columns introduced for the attainment section. Two teachers also complained the reports are too time-consuming to fill in.

Individual answers likes:

- Opportunity to focus on areas which need attention or pupils encouragement.
- Tick-boxes making it less time-consuming.
- The averages.
- Like the comments.
- Good means of stating clearly to parents how the child is doing.
- They are shorter. Parents will hopefully interpret them better.

(Appendix B1:7)Individual answers dislikes:

- The risk of categorising children and presenting parents information which might not be understood and hence not be constructive.
- Having to place reception children in above and below average categories.
- Dislike grades.
- The five attainment sections. The previous three were more appropriate.
- Too time-consuming.
- Dislike extra end columns.
- Five columns for attainment. I would have had 'above average', 'average' and 'below average'.
- Too time-consuming.

(18) To what degree do you feel most parents will be able to understand the information as it is presented in the reports?

Four teachers did not answer this question stating that it depended on the parent.

	(8)
(a) To a great extent	0
(b) To a fair extent	7(87%)
(c) To a small extent	1(12%)
(d) Not at all	0

(19) What changes, if any, would you make to the reports?

Four teachers mentioned they would change the grades to 'above average', 'average' and 'below average'. Of these two had not made this point in answer to question 17.

Individual answers:

- Would have less grades. No need for 'very good' and 'above average'.
- Would omit 'very good'. Just have 'above average', 'average' and 'below average'.
- Omit 'average' for reception children.
- System of grades.
- Would make no changes.
- Would make reports more specific.

(Appendix B1:8)

- Some of my ideas are already reflected in the present reports.
- Return to three columns, 'above average', 'average' and 'below average'.
- Make them shorter.
- Would want a more specific report for teachers at transitional stages, i.e. first school to middle school, and middle school to secondary school.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF REPORTS FOR TRANSFER TO MIDDLE SCHOOL.

(20) How much time would you estimate goes into filling up the English section of the reports for transfer to middle school for one class?

This question was only answered by the four teachers taking year 3 classes. One of them stated that no English report exists for transfer to middle school so only three went on to reply to question 21-23.

Individual answers:

- A great deal.
- Many, many hours.
- A lot.
- No English reports exist for transfer to middle schools.

(21) How good are the guidelines you receive for filling these reports in?

One teacher made the comment that she preferred to use her own comments when filling in reports.

	(3)
(a) Extremely good	0
(b) Fairly good	1(33%)
(c) Not very good	2(66%)
(d) No good at all	0

(22) How accurate an assessment of the pupil would you say is contained in this report?

	(3)
(a) Extremely accurate	0
(b) Fairly accurate	2(66%)

(Appendix B1:9)

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| (c) Not very accurate | 1(33%) |
| (d) Not accurate at all | 0 |

(23) To what degree do you feel these reports are taken as accurate assessments of pupils by the various middle schools?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| | (3) |
| (a) To a great extent | 0 |
| (b) To a fair extent | 0 |
| (c) To a small extent | 2(66%) |
| (d) Not at all | 1(33%) |

GENERAL QUESTIONS

(24) Do you feel national curriculum English has been a positive development?

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| | (12) |
| (a) Extremely positive | 5(42%) |
| (b) Fairly positive | 5(42%) |
| (c) Not very positive | 0 |
| (d) Not positive at all | 2(16%) |

(25) What areas of it do you particularly like/dislike?

Individual answers likes:

- Focus on what is to be taught and assessment to reveal progress so constructive steps are taken to ensure teaching is effective. Targets and programmes of study are very welcome and assessment essential and helpful.
- Emphasis on grammar. Also new approach to reading, speaking and listening.
- Idea of a common curriculum and that all schools should do the same. Better continuity.
- Teaching English for different purposes.
- That the subject is tackled fairly thoroughly.
- That pupils are given plenty of opportunities to talk and are taught to listen carefully. Also that they are encouraged to participate in drama.
- That things taught are laid out for you.
- Like English for different purposes.
- More concise.

(Appendix B1:10)Individual answers dislikes:

- More resources are required, including human resources. Will not work to potential unless properly funded. Too many people working at schemes, not enough carrying them out. Has created administrative problems: where to put files and papers so they are at hand but not in the way. Would be vastly more satisfactory with bit of time and space.
- Punctuation stunts creativity.
- Keeps changing.
- Time allocations.
- Standardising a child. Pressure to achieve specific attainment targets. Labelling.
- None.
- A bit too rigid at times.

APPENDIX B2
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUBJECT TEACHERS AT BISHOP
FITZGERALD SCHOOL GIBRALTAR ON THE TEACHING
OF NATIONAL CURRICULUM ENGLISH
MARCH 1998

ALL 14 TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AT THE SCHOOL COMPLETED THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THEY WERE FIRST ASKED THE QUALIFICATION IN ENGLISH THAT THEY HOLD.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| (a) 'O' level or GCSE | 8(57%) |
| (b) 'A/O' level | 1(7%) |
| (c) 'A' level | 2(14%) |
| (d) Degree level | 3(21%) |

(1) Have you read the national curriculum English Orders?

(14)

- | | |
|---------|--------|
| (a) Yes | 8(57%) |
| (b) No | 6(43%) |

(2) How many times have you read the English Orders?

(8)

- | | |
|-------------|--------|
| (a) Once | 1(12%) |
| (b) Twice | 4(50%) |
| (c) Three | 2(25%) |
| (d) Several | 1(12%) |

(3) When was the last time you read the English Orders?

(8)

- | | |
|----------|--------|
| (a) 1998 | 2(25%) |
| (b) 1997 | 1(12%) |
| (c) 1996 | 2(25%) |
| (d) 1995 | 1(12%) |
| (e) 1994 | 1(12%) |
| (f) 1993 | 1(12%) |

(4) In what ways has your teaching of English changed as a consequence of the national curriculum?

This question was not applicable to 5 teachers who were not teaching prior to the implementation of the national curriculum. Bullets separate the views of different teachers.

- Oral assessment.

(Appendix B2:2)

- Do less defined grammar work.
- Greater emphasis on oral work.
- No real changes.
- Not changed at all.
- Do more record keeping. Made easier to focus on elements of the subject.
- Use framework provided to set targets for children.
- Less time to reinforce concepts.
- More emphasis on literature. Look to provide greater balance between components of the subject.

Most common replies:

- Do more oral work 2(22%)
- Not really changed 2(22%)

(5) How familiar are you with the English syllabus at Bishop Fitzgerald School?

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| | (14) |
| (a) Perfectly familiar | 1(7%) |
| (b) Very familiar | 5(36%) |
| (c) Fairly familiar | 1(7%) |
| (d) Not very familiar | 2(14%) |
| (e) Not familiar at all | 5(36%) |

(6) How closely do you follow the English syllabus in your teaching?

- | | |
|----------------------|--------|
| | (14) |
| (a) To the letter | 0 |
| (b) Very closely | 3(21%) |
| (c) Fairly closely | 3(21%) |
| (d) Not very closely | 1(7%) |
| (e) Not at all | 7(50%) |

(7) How practical a document do you consider the school's English syllabus?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| | (14) |
| (a) Very practical | 2(14%) |
| (b) Fairly practical | 4(29%) |
| (c) Not very practical | 0 |
| (d) Not practical at all | 8(57%) |

(Appendix B2:3)**(8) Do you ever assess your pupils against the national curriculum levels for English?**

(14)

- (a) Yes 3(21%)
 (b) No 11(79%)

(9) If so, what do these assessments comprise?

- I assess informally and not in written form. I translate the creative writing mark in my mind to the level I feel the pupil would be at. I keep this assessment to myself.
- In speaking I attempt to place pupils in levels during class activity. I do not record these but bear the assessment in mind for reporting at the end of the year.

(10) Do you attempt to standardise your teaching with other teachers in your year and if so in what way?

(14)

- (a) Yes 10(71%)
 (b) No 4(29%)

- Through year meetings we co-ordinate what each person should be doing.
- We have already worked out which text books and GINN levels pertain to each ability set. We stick to these.
- There are some common elements: GINN 360, weekly spelling tests, formal creative writing assessments.
- Informal discussion with colleagues.
- Discussion with colleagues.
- Not a great deal because of different sets, but try to pool resources and ideas on an annual basis.
- Is a year approach but contact is mainly oral and on-going.
- Meeting at the beginning of year and informal contact with colleagues.
- Informal contact with colleagues.
- Informal discussion with colleagues.

(Appendix B2:4)Most common replies:

- Informal contact with colleagues. 6(43%)
- Annual meeting at start of year. 3(21%)
- GINN 360. 2(14%)

(11) Do you attempt to standardise your marking with other teachers and if so in what way?

(14)

- (a) Yes 2(14%)
 (b) No 12(86%)

- Only standardisation comes about as a consequence of following agreed criteria for the award of rewards for DFL. None in grades.
- I use my own marking schemes since I was never told how to grade when I first arrived.
- I vaguely recall an in-service on marking work held 3 to 4 years ago.
- Use creative writing marking scheme to mark all extended writing and thus measure work against a recognised standard. Follow the year policy of correcting all spelling mistakes and insisting pupils write any misspelt words 10 times correctly.

(12) How comparable do you consider the content of English teaching across parallel teaching groups?

(14)

- (a) It is the same 1(7%)
 (b) It is very similar 3(21%)
 (c) It is fairly similar 3(21%)
 (d) It does not compare at all 1(7%)
 (e) I have no way of knowing 6(43%)

(13) What records of pupils' work and achievements in 'speaking and listening' do you keep?Year 4:

- Oracy for listening. Mark out of 5 or 6. Speaking: one talk per term (sometimes two). Mark out of 5 as per Oracy criteria. 1= poor, 5= excellent. In third term make notes on individuals based on general class performance for reporting purposes.
- Oracy on weekly basis. Speaking grade out of 5. Listening Oracy is graded out of 5 for 'Oracy 1' and out of 6 for 'Oracy 2'. Don't record anything from normal class activity.

(Appendix B2:5)

- Oracy listening mark out of 5 depending on book. Speaking grade out of 10 (10 being the highest). No other records on class oral activities.
- Listening from Oracy. Speaking use formal talk graded on scale of 1-5 as per Oracy criteria. One mark per student per term.

Year 5:

- Oracy: mark out of 7 for answers. Award separate mark out of seven for discussion in groups. (a purely subjective mark).
- Keep two records, one in the first term, one in the second. In first term based on general discussion (possibly cross-curricular). Evaluate and focus on fluency, tone, clarity, vocabulary, listening skills. Write a comment on each student but do not give a grade. In second term do a prepared talk. Focus on speed of delivery, confidence to speak, over reliance on notes. Grade on scale of A-C. No assessment in the third term.
- Oracy sheets. One mark out of 8. For speaking award a mark out of 8 and add a comment. Additionally grade two talks for each pupil during the year. Each of these receives two marks out of 8, one for effort and one for attainment.
- Oracy for listening. One mark out of seven per unit. Speaking, grade 2 two minute talks per term using scale of 1-10.

Year 6:

- Oracy, one mark out of 8. Speaking, one talk per student to class per term. Mark out of 8 based on preparation and delivery. Add a comment.
- Oracy once every three weeks or so. Listening graded out of 8, speaking out of 10. Additionally, use two forms of oral assessment depending on the set being taught. All sets are formally assessed once a term. For the two lower sets, this takes the form of individual talks to class. For the top two sets the activity varies each term. Term 1 = individual talk; term 2 = talk in debate; term 3 = role play. These graded on scale of A to D-.
- Oracy speaking and listening. Prepared talk per term graded out of 10.
- Oracy listening. Speaking, one talk per term graded out of 9 as per the Oracy criteria. Also one oral book review during the year. Grade according to intonation, clarity and content.

(Appendix B2:6)Year 7:

- Assess once a term on scale of 1-9. Usually on a prepared talk which would ordinarily be based on a book they had read.
- Formal assessment once a term comprising individual speech, pair work and group work. Generally graded out of 20. Also delivery. Here award mark out of 90. This arrived at by giving marks out of 10 for each of 9 categories ranging from use of gesture, to tone of voice to holding an audience etc.

(14) What records of pupils' work and achievements in 'reading' do you keep?Year 4:

- Keep two reading records. The first is for GINN. Record pages read by group (2 groups in class) and if prepared. Near reports make notes on level of fluency of each individual. General record: record pages read as group using supplementary readers. Also do class reading once a week but do not record anything here.
- GINN: record pages read in week and the work that goes with it. This is a class record, not an individual one. Mechanical reading done 3 times a week with low sets. Record when they read. No grade (comment recorded if work is unprepared). Words not known recorded and tested again the following day. I read to the class as well.
- GINN do in whole set. Read in alphabetical order. Record when they read but no grade on how they read. Also use supplementary readers. Have class divided into 3 groups of 9 for this activity. Done twice a week and record the pages read by each group.
- GINN work in two groups of 13 pupils. Record marks on supplementary work done on cards and duplicating masters. Don't record pages read because this information if needed could be obtained by working backwards from the cards done. For mechanical reading split class into 4-5 groups. Record pages they need to read and prepare in advance. No grade for mechanical reading.

(Appendix B2:7)Year 5:

- GINN date what read as a class. No grade for reading. Mark for worksheets. Make notes on how they are reading for reporting purposes and update a few times a term. Additionally keep record of what books pupils take out from class library. Also record what books pupils take during book auctions held once a term. Insist on written book reports though these are not graded.
- GINN once a week. Record what they read and follow-up cards. Also record absences and work done at home. Mechanical reading depends on ability of set. For low sets read in two groups 3-4 times a week. Record when and what they read. Do not record how well they do it. Have additional silent reading for 2-3 sessions a week each of some 15 minutes duration. No records of this at all.
- GINN record pages read and will mark with a tick when an individual student reads. Mark follow-up written work out of 10. Don't grade reading otherwise. Mechanical reading record pages read.
- GINN don't record this at all. Keep daily record of reading. Listen to each pupil individually while the rest work. Will listen to each pupil 3-4 times a week. They read a page and are graded on the following scale: + = reasonable, ++ = good, +++ = very good. If they do not come under these three categories, they must repeat next day.

Year 6:

- Keep one reading record. Keep an individual record. Record date and pages read. No grades, just frequency. Try to ensure that lower group reads every day where possible.
- Keep 3 records. GINN once a week. Record when pupil reads at rate of 1 page each. Also separate record of work kept on duplicating masters and cards. Carry out random tests on vocabulary but do not mark this. Class reader. Record when each pupil reads. Have monthly book reviews. Each child reads a book and writes a summary and an impression on the work. They grade this work themselves and I provide a later additional grade on a scale of A-D.
- GINN record pages read. Also mark work-sheets, cards, duplicating masters. Mechanical reading record pages read by groups (all must follow and prepare).

(Appendix B2:8)

- GINN record who reads (ensure each pupil reads at least once a week either for GINN or mechanical reading). Make notes on problems of individuals. Follow-up written work using worksheets, cards and additional vocabulary work of my own. This all graded on scale of A-C (+ or -). Mechanical reading is not graded. Record when they read.

Year 7:

- Use 2 systems. B1s use GINN duplicating masters, record book, level, work done. Cs use GINN and do more mechanical reading practice as a whole class. Record pages read and when an individual reads. This tends to work out at 3 times per week for the group Cs, and once a week for the B1s. In addition there is reading generated by other work they do.
- GINN and class additional readers. Only record when individual pupils read. Do not record quantity read nor assess the reading.

(15) What records of pupils' work and achievements in writing do you keep?Year 4:

- Don't grade work. Use comments. Range from 'very poor work', 'work carelessly done' to 'very good', 'excellent'.
- Grade work with comments only. Range from 'you must try harder' to 'very good' which would be accompanied by a merit mark. Some comments also point out areas of weakness like 'mind your spelling', 'remember full stops and capital letters'. I correct spellings and insist corrections are written out 10 times.
- Don't grade. Write comments which I do not record. Range from 'poor, see me' to 'excellent'.
- Grade most pieces of work. Use same criteria as for formal assessment of creative writing i.e. grade purpose and organisation, style and grammar. Mark out of 12. Also point out weaknesses in work using comments.

Year 5:

- Grade all pieces of work. Normally out of 10 but out of 17 or 20 occasionally if it suits the exercise.

(Appendix B2:9)

- Don't grade pieces of work. Used to but found my marks did not relate to anything when the time came to complete the reports. Now use comments. Range from 'see me' through 'could do better' to 'very good'.
- Grade all comprehension pieces out of 10. Writing, just add my comments on how the work could be improved.
- I mark and grade all work using scale of A-E (+ or -). Don't record these marks because it would be too cumbersome. Grade 3-4 pieces of work per child per week. Pupils also do some self-assessment which I re-grade later.

Year 6:

- Set individual targets for pieces of work though I do not grade them. Write comments, not only on completion, but also during stages of production, on drafts etc. Comments range from 'poor work, not good enough' to 'excellent'. Also insist on corrections for remediation.
- For most work record date, book exercise taken from, nature of the work and a grade on scale of A-D. For spellings record mark out of number of words learnt, 10-18 words generally. I grade all creative writing as per the official marking scheme for these assessments.
- Mark all pieces out of 10. On average will record some 7 marks per pupil per week.
- Grade all pieces on scale of A-C (+ or -). Also add comments which normally point out shortfalls in answers. Grade about 5 pieces of work per pupil each week. For spellings insist they write correctly 10 times each.

Year 7:

- No grades for written work just comments. Range from 'poor' or 'work not done' to 'excellent'.
- Grade all pieces of work on scale of A-E (+ or -).

(Appendix B2:10)**(16) Do you feel the national curriculum caters adequately for all abilities at Bishop Fitzgerald School?**

One teacher did not feel able to comment on this question.

	(13)
(a) It does so fully	0
(b) To a considerable degree	5(36%)
(c) To a fair degree	5(36%)
(d) It does not really do so	2(14%)
(e) Not at all	1(7%)

(17) If your answer to the above is anything other than 'a', in what way would you like to see the situation improved?Year 4:

- More help for reading for individuals. Handwriting practice and skills. More variety in schemes.
- Better co-ordination between teachers. More standardisation so everyone covers the same things. Better liaison, continuity between year groups.
- I feel we are failing the lower part of the mass of pupils in the middle of the ability range. These are the low ability pupils who are not quite poor enough to be withdrawn from the mainstream. They are set 'C' or possibly set 'B2'. I feel these children require more help than we are giving them.

Year 5:

- At present I feel the components of the subject are too disjointed. We need to adapt the national curriculum more to our needs here in Gibraltar. Literacy skills I think are higher for this stage in England.
- Insufficient materials are available for those with specific learning difficulties. Lower groups need to be better catered for.
- I feel we do not work closely enough with the Orders document. We are too flexible with it.
- I would like to see more standardisation.

(Appendix B2:11)Year 6:

- I would like to see targeting of areas of weakness by first identifying them and then resourcing them. If more reading is needed, for example, we must provide the books, the time and the circumstances. I would also like to see more teachers adapting what is available to the particular needs of each child, particularly at the lower end of the spectrum.
- I would like to see the implementation of a whole-school policy. At present we are trying to do something like this, but only at year level.
- We need to reduce the size of groups. We also need structured extension work available for the more able pupils.
- I would like a skeleton structure I can follow though this should allow for some leeway. There are too many books available. I want more guidance on which we should be using with certain classes.

Year 7:

- Need greater support for lower ability pupils in terms of materials. Greater availability of spare time reading material is important. The library should be open at break time.
- Some top groups are too large so there is a tendency to deliver to the mass in the middle.

(18) Has the national curriculum affected the way you write reports to parents?

This question did not apply to five teachers who were not teaching prior to the advent of the national curriculum.

- (9)
- | | |
|---------|--------|
| (a) Yes | 5(56%) |
| (b) No | 4(44%) |

(19) If the answer to the above is 'yes', specify in what ways.

- Comments need to be more positive.
- I read level descriptions to correlate with personal assessments.
- I have to be positive, even with underachievers. Can lead to confusion. Some parents do not always get the message and feel their children are doing better than they are. Has led to some problems in the past.
- I try to reflect a child's progress against the attainment targets without using too much jargon.

(Appendix B2:12)

- Much wider use of jargon. Some parents probably do not understand what we write. I also feel the reports are too positive and hence unbalanced. They should also point out failing so these can be addressed.

(20) When teaching year 4 groups are you aware of the first school reports of the children in your class?

This question did not apply to three teachers who had never done any teaching in year 4.

(11)

- | | |
|---------|--------|
| (a) Yes | 7(64%) |
| (b) No | 4(36%) |

(21) If the answer to the above is 'yes', do you accept the information as accurate or wait to draw your own conclusions from the pupils' work?

(7)

- | | |
|---------|--------|
| (a) Yes | 3(43%) |
| (b) No | 4(57%) |

(22) What do you consider the main advantages of the national curriculum?

- Provides a structure and defines the subject.
- Supposedly caters for all. I like the entitlement factor.
- Provides a safety net for pupils. Can make lazy teachers keep to programme. Provides a framework but must ensure that it is implemented by all.
- Defines the content. Steers you in the direction you should follow. Provides a structure.
- Provides a structure.
- Framework and targets. Also that it provides baseline assessment to compare with.
- Provides a structure and promotes uniformity.
- Standardisation.

(Appendix B2:13)**(23) What do you consider the main disadvantages of the national curriculum?**

- Too much bureaucracy and an over-crowded curriculum. I feel insufficient time is dedicated to English. We need to do more phonics for example and haven't the time.
- Is too restrictive. A strait-jacket.
- It is open to interpretation. School needs to very clearly define implementation or continuity will not be assured. The content is not at present clearly understood by all. I also dislike the lack of stability created by the constant changes.
- In practice I do not feel we are following the structure the national curriculum provides other than as regards working in the three attainment targets. I do not think it is strictly enforced enough.
- It is almost impossible to find the time to cover the programme fully. Record keeping is excessive and I feel there is an assumption that the national curriculum programme is adequate for all.
- Some levels are possibly a bit general. I would like to have them better defined.
- There is pressure on teachers to record a lot that is unnecessary.
- Not enough time to teach. There is too much bureaucracy and we are trying to cover far too much work.

APPENDIX B3
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS AT
BAYSIDE SCHOOL GIBRALTAR ON THE TEACHING OF
NATIONAL CURRICULUM ENGLISH
MAY 1997

ALL 10 TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AT THE SCHOOL COMPLETED THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THEY WERE FIRST ASKED THE QUALIFICATION IN ENGLISH THAT THEY HOLD.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| (a) 'O' level or GCSE | 1(10%) |
| (b) 'A/O' level | 0 |
| (c) 'A' level | 1(10%) |
| (d) Degree level | 8(80%) |

(1) Have you read the national curriculum English Orders?

(10)

- | | |
|---------|--------|
| (a) Yes | 5(50%) |
| (b) No | 5(50%) |

(2) If the answer to 1 is yes, how many times have you read the English Orders?

(5)

- | | |
|-------|--------|
| (a) 1 | 3(60%) |
| (b) 2 | 0 |
| (c) 3 | 2(40%) |
| (d) — | |

(3) When was the last time you read the English Orders?

(5)

- | | |
|-----------------|--------|
| (a) This year | 2(40%) |
| (b) Last year | 0 |
| (c) 2 years ago | 0 |
| (d) 5 years ago | 2(40%) |
| (e) 6 years ago | 1(20%) |

(4) In what ways has your teaching of English changed as a consequence of the National Curriculum?

This question was not applicable to 2 teachers who were not teaching prior to the implementation of the national curriculum. Bullets separate the views of different teachers.

(Appendix B3:2)

- Look for greater degree of balance between subject components. Affected way I mark. Do not give impression mark as in the past. Look for specific features of language.
- More precise in what I teach. Used to be more open.
- Hasn't really changed. Teach GCSE approach.
- Has not really changed in any way.
- Had to adapt some things because of coursework and syllabus requirements. Not really changed my teaching.
- I find I am spending too much time on coursework and not enough on teaching.
- It hasn't changed. Affected in trying to make sense of what they want. Get angry and critical of some requirements like literature. Matching prescriptive to descriptive is almost impossible.
- More aware of what I am teaching.

Most common replies:

- Hasn't really changed 4(50%)
- Look for more specific features of language 2(25%)

(5) Do you base your English teaching in years 10 and 11 on the national curriculum English Orders, or on the external examination syllabuses?

- | | |
|--|--------|
| | (10) |
| (a) On the national curriculum Orders | 0 |
| (b) On the external examination syllabuses | 6(60%) |
| (c) On a combination of both | 4(40%) |

(6) If the answer to the above is 'c', in what ways does the national curriculum determine what you teach to these years?

- I bear it in mind.
- Coursework requirements.
- I follow the national curriculum in Year 10.
- I use national curriculum for guidelines on areas to be covered. Determines 90% of what I teach in Year 10 and slightly less in Year 11.

(Appendix B3:3)

(7) Do you base your teaching in years 8 and 9 on the national curriculum English Orders or on the requirements of the GCSE examination syllabuses?

	(10)
(a) On the national curriculum Orders	0
(b) On the GCSE examination syllabuses	3(30%)
(c) On a combination of both	6(60%)
(d) On neither	1(10%)

(8) If the answer to the above is 'c', specify how the two are combined.

- In year 8 follow national curriculum. In year 9 start to bring in GCSE requirements for upper band students in latter half of year. Mainly coursework practice.
- Prepare for coursework and also follow national curriculum requirements.
- 60% national curriculum Orders, 40% GCSE syllabuses.
- Work towards goals of GCSE. Like to practice exam requirements and coursework. Also cover national curriculum requirements like Shakespeare, language awareness etc.
- Look for features of language. Mark as for coursework.
- Bear both in mind.

Most common reply:

- Practice coursework 3(50%)

(9) How closely do you follow the English syllabus when teaching in years 8 and 9?

	(10)
(a) To the letter	0
(b) Very closely	0
(c) Fairly closely	5(50%)
(d) Not very closely	4(40%)
(e) I do not refer to it at all	1(10%)

(Appendix B3:4)

(10) How practical a document do you consider the school English syllabus?

	(10)
(a) Very practical	0
(b) Fairly practical	6(60%)
(c) Not very practical	3(30%)
(d) Of no practical use	1(10%)

(11) Do you assess pupils in years 8 and 9 against the national curriculum levels for English?

	(10)
(a) Yes	2(20%)
(b) No	8(80%)

(12) If the answer to the above is yes, what do these assessments comprise?

- Only in year 9. In second half of year if doing coursework exercises. Otherwise no.
- I practice coursework essays graded against national curriculum levels.

(13) Do you assess the pupils in years 10 and 11 against the national curriculum levels for English?

	(10)
(a) Yes	6(60%)
(b) No	4(40%)

(14) If the answer to the above question is yes, what do these assessments comprise?

- Oral and written coursework exercises.
- Coursework assignments and exam practice at end of course.
- For oral and written coursework. Also for normal classroom work.
- For coursework purposes, both written and oral.
- For oral and written coursework
- For coursework.

Most common reply:

- For coursework exercises 6 (100%)

(Appendix B3:5)

(15) Do you attempt to standardise your marking with other teachers and if so in what way?

(10)

- (a) Yes 2(20%)
 (b) No 8(80%)

- Ask opinion of other English teachers occasionally. Across all years.
- Moderate and discuss informally. Done at random but frequently.
- I follow guidelines of Head of English and award effort/attainment grades.

(16) How comparable do you consider the content of English teaching across parallel teaching groups?

(10)

- (a) It is the same
 (b) It is very similar
 (c) It is fairly similar 4(40%)
 (d) It does not compare at all
 (e) I have no way of knowing 6(60%)

(17) What records of pupils' work and achievements in 'speaking and listening' do you keep?

- Keep a separate file from year 8 upwards. Record task done, how each pupil did and a grade. In years 8 and 9 I record 5-6 marks per term for upper bands and 1-2 marks for lower bands. For years 10 and 11 I record 4 marks per pupil per year or whatever the examination requirements dictate.
- For years 8 and 9 I record the topics they speak on, how they did and how they could improve as well as a grade. Mark as for GCSE out of 20 or 25. In years 10 and 11 follow GCSE requirements.
- Record marks given for oral work. Record a minimum of 2 marks per pupil in the lower school per year, and at least 5 marks for year 10 and 11 boys over the two years.
- In years 8 and 9 I award each pupil 3 marks out of 10 per year. I also write notes on the performance of individuals. For years 10 and 11 I grade 3 pieces per year out of 25 as specified in the GCSE syllabus.

(Appendix B3:6)

- I record marks and notes or simply marks when I do oral activity. In general I keep 4-5 grades per student each year regardless of the year group.
- I mark all oral work in the school out of 20 and record the grades.
- In years 8 and 9 I only award a grade for 3 oral activities a year. In years 10 and 11 I record the grades and comments on individual performances. Again these involve 3 activities or sometimes more for some classes.
- I am only involved in teaching year 8. I award marks for 3 exercises a year using a scale of A-E.
- In years 8 and 9 I award an impression mark for one oral activity each term. I use a scale of 1-20 that is the same one I use for year 10 and 11 students. My marks are more detailed for years 10 and 11. I record 2-3 entries per student each term and grade content, language, structure, delivery and presentation.
- I mark out of 20 throughout the school.

(18) What records of pupils' work and achievements in 'reading' do you keep?

- None.
- Record when each individual reads aloud but do not grade. Do reading a lesson a week and each pupil reads approximately every other week.
- None.
- None.
- Keep a record of when I read aloud which is quite often with lower ability groups. Each student might read 10-12 times in the year.
- Record when the class has read but do not grade individual performances.
- None.
- Keep a record for individual students using scale of A-G. Record how well the individual reads in specific exercises. Award each student a mark every two weeks.
- Register how often individuals read and award a mark out of 10. Sometimes add short comment. Tend to award each student 6-8 marks in the year from year 8 through to year 11.
- None.

(Appendix B3:7)**(19) What records of pupils' work and achievements in 'writing' do you keep?**

- Mark each piece of written work out of 10, 25 or 50 right from year 8. Out of 10 for a small exercise or essay plan, out of 25 for an essay and out of 50 for a project or extended essay.
- Award effort/attainment marks out of 10 for most exercises. If coursework like, grade out of 20 with accompanying GCSE letter grade. If dictation record number of errors made. Each student normally has 3-4 marks recorded per week.
- In years 8 and 9 grade all written work out of 10 for effort/attainment. Some things like spelling tests could be graded out of 20. In years 10 and 11 I follow the exam syllabus and am currently marking out of 25.
- For years 8 and 9 I award a single impression mark out of 10. If I want to praise effort, I write this in the exercise book. For years 10 and 11, I grade all pieces of work out of 25.
- I record one mark per week for each student using a scale of 1-10.
- All work in the four years is marked on the scale of 1-10 for effort/attainment.
- I grade all pieces of work for effort/attainment. Use scale of 1-20, however, since this is what is used for marking courseworks in years 10 and 11. Record approximately 1 grade per pupil per week.
- Record effort/attainment grades out of 10 for one major homework per week and possibly one other piece. Also record if work is submitted late or is incomplete.
- Award marks for all pieces of written work. These comprise 2 grades per week for year 8 and 9 students and 4-5 grades per week for year 10 and 11 students.
- Mark out of 10 for effort/attainment in lower school and as per exam criteria in years 10 and 11.

(Appendix B3:8)

(20) Do you feel the national curriculum English programme caters adequately for all abilities at Bayside?

	(10)
(a) It does so fully	0
(b) It does so to a considerable degree	1(10%)
(c) It does so to a fair degree	6(60%)
(d) It does not really do so	3(30%)
(e) It does not cater for differences in ability at all	0

(21) If your answer to the above is anything other than 'a', in what way would you like to see the situation improved?

- Current system geared towards average. Bright pupils are spoon-fed too much and low ability students cannot cope with demands.
- We aim our entire curriculum at exam levels. We don't cater for non-examinable boys.
- Need to devise a course geared for low achievers in upper school. Banding in lower school is fairly adequate as it stands.
- Higher ability pupils are relatively well catered for. For lower groups need language programme and spelling programme with some phonics. 'Pictorial and Practical' course we use now is not very good. Also need to use readers more and apply literature.
- Need an end to political changes and respect for established good practice. Also need an end to biannual changes to examinations.
- Need a better-defined programme and greater stability. All recent efforts seem to be undermined by constant changes to the national curriculum.
- Need to look at differentiation of work since even within bands there is a wide range of ability. In-service training is required on coping with different abilities in same group.
- Need to concentrate on basics including grammar. Some students, even a number from band 1, require remedial language teaching. Spanish interference aggravates problem.
- Is not really possible. There is an extreme lack of motivation among 15 year olds who are at school leaving age and of very low ability. They are not interested whatever you present them.
- Need to concentrate on basics more.

(Appendix B3:9)

(22) How adequate do you feel the English programme for 1-year course pupils is?

	(10)
(a) It is excellent	0
(b) It is very good	0
(c) It is fairly adequate	0
(d) It is not very adequate	0
(e) It is not adequate at all	6(67%)
(f) I am unfamiliar with it	3(33%)

(23) If the answer to the above is anything other than 'a', how would you improve the English provision for this group of students?

- Should be integrated curriculum. Not even subject-based. More vocational and practical. English should come into that. By this stage pupils are switched off to concept of subjects.
- Needs to be more along 'City and Guilds' lines. English for life involving signing cheques, reading recipes, speaking and showing manners. Answering the phone and interview techniques should also be covered.
- Need practical activities related to language. Course should have on-going assessment so a record is provided for the prospective employer.
- Need a structured programme. Need basic language work: spelling, coping with forms, lists, letters and practical exercises.
- Need to establish a practical course. Should be taught by those teachers concerned for such a group. Not everyone should take them. There is no course for them at all at present.
- They need a mixture of discipline and a carefully structured practical course. This should be along the lines of the 'Dockyard English' course for would-be apprentices which existed in the late 1970s early 1980s. The current course is totally inadequate.
- We need English for life. Basic reading and writing skills with form filling and basic letters. A practical not an academic approach is required and there should be no literature.
- Their course should be very practically orientated. It should be relevant to everyday life comprising form filling, job applications and reading instructions.

(Appendix B3:10)

- It should be very basic: reading, comprehension, composition, exercises, box analysis and just a little grammar.

(24) Has the national curriculum affected the way you write reports to parents?

(10)

- (a) Yes 3(30%)
 (b) No 7(70%)

(25) If the answer to the above is yes, specify in what ways.

- Have to try to be positive when I don't always feel it is appropriate.
- I comment on more aspects of the subject.
- In the sense that I make greater reference to the requirements in the three attainment targets.

(26) When teaching year 8 groups are you aware of the content of the middle school reports of the children in your class?

(10)

- (a) Yes 1(10%)
 (b) No 9(90%)

(27) If the answer to the above is yes, do you accept the information as accurate, or wait to draw your own conclusions from the pupils' work?

(1)

- (a) Accept it as accurate 0
 (b) Wait to draw my own conclusions 1

(28) What do you consider the main advantages of the national curriculum?

- Structure, better definition of the subject.
- More guided by information of what should be delivered. Made literature more accessible for all. Like introduction of pre 20th century authors requirement.
- Standardisation and the clearer definition of the aims and objectives of the subject.

(Appendix B3:11)

- I like the literature requirement though it penalises the low ability student. Standardised English teaching is also positive even if the balance of the content is not the desirable one.
- Standardisation.
- Standardisation across school barriers. Having a structure to follow.
- Possibility of allowing weaker students to achieve a grade at GCSE even if 'F' or 'G' which might not mean a great deal.

(29) What do you consider the main disadvantages of the national curriculum?

- Allows non-academic de-motivated pupils to remain in school and falsely aspire to academic qualifications. A fairly futile exercise. The new literature syllabus has increased the demands which will only mean that language teaching suffers as a consequence.
- I question the suitability of some requirements like Shakespeare which some boys cannot cope with. I dislike the pressure on teachers to keep up with the ever-changing requirements. I feel the benefits do not justify the upheaval.
- Record keeping detracts from teaching time and it has been very time-consuming and caused teachers much heartache.
- Distracts us from addressing basics because too many detailed requirements in course. Too much to cover and not allowed to get on with it.
- An enormous amount of time and effort go into coursework in years 10 and 11 that the percentage of marks they attract do not justify. Excessive coursework deadlines limit the teaching I can do. Don't have the freedom to teach the tools of language that I feel are necessary.
- Dislike the constant changes in content and assessment procedures. Lower abilities cannot possibly cope with what is required of them. The use of computers in language offers the student too much help with spelling and grammar. As a consequence many pupils don't bother to learn these things. GCSE is far easier than 'O' level so gap to 'A' level is too big. National curriculum was brought in by the Tories to justify educational policy by having statistics to support their claims.

(Appendix B3:12)

- I dislike the excessive bureaucracy. The curriculum is also over-ambitious in terms of promoting pre 20th century literature and Shakespeare for all.
- It is a straitjacket which restricts creativity. Word-processing encourages poor handwriting, paragraphing, spelling and grammar. The computer does these things for the students. Coursework that is not done in class is often not a reflection of the pupil's standard.
- Need a routine. Are too many changes. Curriculum is not properly standardised in school.

APPENDIX B4
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEMBERS OF THE GIBRALTAR
NATIONAL CURRICULUM WORKING GROUP FOR
ENGLISH
NOVEMBER 1995

11 HEADS OF LANGUAGE AT GIBRALTAR SCHOOLS AND THE SENIOR EDUCATION ADVISER COMPLETED THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THEY COMPRISED THE FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE WORKING GROUP.

(1) How useful a body do you consider the NCWG for English to be?

	Overall	First	Middle	Secondary
	(12)	(5)	(4)	(2)
(a) Very useful	0	0	0	0
(b) Fairly useful	6(50%)	2	2	1
(c) Not very useful	5(42%)	3	2	0
(d) Not useful at all	1(8%)	0	0	1

(2) The terms of reference for the working group, as set out by the Gibraltar Department of Education, are listed below. Indicate in each case the degree of success in meeting the various aims.

The NCWG will be a forum to exchange ideas and useful practices.

	Overall	First	Middle	Secondary
	(12)	(5)	(4)	(2)
(a) Very successful	0	0	0	0
(b) Fairly successful	9(75%)	4	3	1
(c) Not very successful	3(25%)	1	1	1
(d) Not successful at all	0	0	0	0

The NCWG will be a forum to promote continuity and co-operation.

	Overall	First	Middle	Secondary
	(12)	(5)	(4)	(2)
(a) Very successful	1(8%)	0	0	0
(b) Fairly successful	5(42%)	3	1	1
(c) Not very successful	6(50%)	2	3	1
(d) Not successful at all	0	0	0	0

(Appendix B4:2)

The NCWG will be a forum to advise on the planning, implementation and evaluation of the national curriculum.

Advise on national curriculum planning.

	Overall	First	Middle	Secondary
	(12)	(5)	(4)	(2)
(a) Very successful	1(8%)	0	1	0
(b) Fairly successful	7(58%)	4	1	1
(c) Not very successful	3(25%)	1	2	0
(d) Not successful at all	1(8%)	0	0	1

Advise on national curriculum implementation.

	Overall	First	Middle	Secondary
	(12)	(5)	(4)	(2)
(a) Very successful	2(17%)	0	1	0
(b) Fairly successful	5(42%)	3	1	1
(c) Not very successful	4(33%)	2	2	0
(d) Not successful at all	1(8%)	0	0	1

Advise on national curriculum evaluation.

	Overall	First	Middle	Secondary
	(12)	(5)	(4)	(2)
(a) Very successful	1(8%)	1	0	0
(b) Fairly successful	5(42%)	3	1	1
(c) Not very successful	5(42%)	1	3	0
(d) Not successful at all	1(8%)	0	0	1

(3) To what extent are you free to express your own views at the meetings as opposed to those of your headteacher?

	Overall	First	Middle	Secondary
	(12)	(5)	(4)	(2)
(a) Completely free	8(67%)	2	3	2
(b) Fairly free	0	0	0	0
(c) Some constraints	4(33%)	3	1	0
(d) Not free at all	0	0	0	0

(Appendix B4:3)

(4) Do you feel the group should be divided up into smaller entities looking at first, middle and secondary levels separately?

	Overall	First	Middle	Secondary
	(12)	(5)	(4)	(2)
(a) Yes for all meetings	1(8%)	1	0	0
(b) For some meetings	10(83%)	4	4	1
(c) Not at all	1(8%)	0	0	1

(5) What do you consider the most useful function of the working group?

Education adviser:

- Co-ordination, exchange of ideas, continuity.

First school replies:

- To inform, work together, evaluate.
- Exchange of ideas and opinions.
- Becoming aware of other schools' ideas. Pooling to solve problems or take decisions.
- Social gathering of clans.
- Should be to promote continuity and co-operation. Exchanging ideas and good practices to improve quality of teaching.

Middle school replies:

- Exchange of ideas.
- Exchange of useful practices.
- Sharing of problems in common areas, reading and writing.
- Blank.

Secondary school replies:

- Get together.
- Contact and exchange of ideas.

Most common replies:

- Exchange of ideas. 9
- Get together (social gathering). 2
- Continuity. 2

(Appendix B4:4)

(6) In what area do you feel the group is functioning least efficiently?

Education adviser:

- Evaluating national curriculum assessment.

First school replies:

- Little co-operation since some members are not able to exchange ideas freely.
- Implementing decisions.
- Discussions tend to revolve around middle/secondary schools. Need to split.
- Informing and working together.
- Blank.

Middle school replies:

- Co-operation between schools (middle).
- Needs to be more openness between schools as to kind of work covered.
- In implementing decisions taken.
- Blank.

Secondary school replies:

- In bringing some of the ideas discussed to fruition.
- In achieving anything concrete.

Most common replies:

- Lack of co-operation. 4
- Implementing decisions. 4

(7) What changes, if any, either in the composition of the group, the terms of reference or the practical way in which it functions, would you like to see?

Education adviser:

- Smaller groups to encourage more discussion. More participation by everybody.

First school replies:

- Division into school age groups.

(Appendix B4:5)

- Split into age groups.
- Working parties for different school age groups. No constraints placed on members.
- Blank.
- Blank.

Middle school replies:

- Headteachers do not seem to want co-operation between schools. Appreciate more freedom.
- Blank.
- Blank.
- Blank.

Secondary school replies:

- More specific terms of reference. Only meet when something concrete re national curriculum to discuss.
- Should perhaps meet in smaller groups. First, middle, secondary representatives meeting on set occasions.

Most common replies:

- Split into smaller age groups. 5
- No constraints on members. 2

(8) Please add any other comments you wish to make about the work of the group.

Education adviser:

- Would like to feel members come to contribute rather than because they are forced to attend as school representatives.

Others:

- No constraints should be placed on members.
- Like discussions and ideas on problems specific to each age group e.g. language problems on school entry, no English and poor Spanish.